Martina Kendrick Ballen

This nominee is umpire, judge, referee and timekeeper for finances in the Department of Athletics. For more than 30 years, Martina Kendrick Ballen has made the calls that keep the department’s budget balanced and healthy. She is highly valued as a member of the team. In the words of a colleague, “Martina encourages the best in all those around her. She understands what it means to work together, the value of teamwork and how we succeed together.”

When Martina joined Athletics as Director of Finance in 1987, department revenues totaled $16.5 million. Through the years, her responsibilities increased with the complexities of the budget. She was promoted to Assistant Director of Athletics for Business and Finance, then to Associate Director of Athletics. Today, as Senior Associate Director of Athletics and Chief Financial Officer, she administers a budget of $95.5 million. In the words of a colleague, “These well-deserved promotions signify her expertise in managing the department’s finances during times of unprecedented challenge. No matter the scope or complexity of the financial issue, Martina is able to find a viable solution.”

From 1997 to 1999, as the department faced a financial crisis, Martina guided a task force resulting in new funding resources and reduced expenses. “She must operate in an environment where competition is embraced, and resources are limited,” wrote a colleague. “The department never operated in the red again.” Martina’s ability to “speak truth to power” is key to her successful leadership. “There are times when she has to say ‘no’ to coaches or administrators’ requests for funds,” wrote a colleague. “... She is able to do this in a very professional yet profoundly personal way.” In the words of a former Athletic Director, “She is caring, deliberate, convincing and TOUGH. But there is no one in the department who is more respected.”
Martina graduated from the University in 1980 and has long been a role model for the integrity and heart inherent in The Carolina Way. She leads the Department of Athletics’ Diversity Committee and, four years ago, created and helped launch Tar Heel Trailblazers to honor African American student-athletes who paved the way for those who follow. “She is a trailblazer in her own right,” wrote a nominator. “She has set an incredible example for all of our students, staff and Carolina community.” Martina shares her extraordinary resources of mind and heart as a mentor and role model. “The staff she hired, developed, mentored, nurtured and cares so much about is a staff that — in my opinion — is second to none in our department,” wrote a co-worker. “It is a true extension of Martina: a staff whose character is beyond reproach and totally service oriented.” In Athletics, Martina also serves as primary sport administrator for women’s gymnastics and secondary sport administrator for women’s basketball. She contributes to numerous high-level University, Atlantic Coast Conference and national committees, and in her home community is past chair of the Board of Directors of the Autism Society of North Carolina. Her outstanding contributions to the University and society earned Martina the 2011 Harvey Elliott Beech Outstanding Alumna Award.

For these reasons, and for her complete devotion to the University, its mission and its people; for her thoughtful, smart and engaging personality and because — in the words of a colleague — “I count myself lucky to have someone of astute counsel with such unwavering integrity and compassion,” Martina Kendrick Ballen receives the 2018 C. Knox Massey Distinguished Service Award.