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University of Colorado Colorado Springs  
Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept my application for the position of Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. I draw on nearly twenty-five of experience in teaching, advising, and administration to affect change in all aspects of higher education culture, most specifically creating opportunities for minoritized staff, students, and faculty. This is an exciting moment in UCCS and I would be honored to be a part of its next step. The call for the VCDEI along with a newly launched strategic plan allows for an organizational shift and structural change that I have experience in successfully executing. I have demonstrated success in building equitable practices through faculty governance, founding an academic program, building and leading programs aimed at student success, and moving the needle on student and faculty recruitment and retention. The requirements for this position will demand organizational acumen, participatory and collaborative decision making, as well as principled, enduring, and community-endorsed leadership. I use the opportunity of this letter to present to you my vision showing how I would approach the work and providing some sense of how I have demonstrated success in engaged and enduring change. The opportunities for major shifts in organizations change are actually quite rare and so I offer my view for your consideration and with hopes that it will improve our chances of success as a collective in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus.

**Personal and Academic Background:** Permit me, if you will, a bit of biography. I am a Chicana from a working-class family from Colorado. Born and raised in Lakewood, I am the youngest of eight children. I started working when I was 13. Fun fact: I worked on a construction crew on the Castle Pines houses as a summer job in college. I have seen the area between Denver and Colorado Springs literally transform. In high school I benefited from programs like A Better Chance that helped me go to an elite Ivy League school. I served on my first diversity committee when I was 15 years old. My mission in higher education and diversity, equity, and inclusion springs from this personal background and it is informed by my research. My research interests started with documenting feminist practices of working-class Chicanas. I now explore how intersectional identities serve as sources of strength and resilience in navigating the very real structural limitations--economic, racial, gendered, and heteronormative--imposed on women of color in the workplace, in the arts, in access to health care, and in higher education. My academic research, my very entry into the professoriate, speaks to my long-standing commitment to diversity and student success. My reason for going into academe was to better serve the often-

underserved working-class people of color and those often not regarded as the college-bound. My most recent grant looks at neurodiversity resources for neurodivergence. Challenging the notion of the 'normative' student and bringing students, staff, and faculty into the university to reflect our local and global diversity requires more than aspiration, it is a push and pull of creating and constituting conditions under which diverse faculty and students thrive. I can see that there are many people at UCCS who have been doing this work for many years, and I am eager to join them, honor their work, and bring together these efforts in this next phase.

**Demonstrated Success in Structural Change:** I reflect on my career, and I draw from a wide range of experiences in a higher education context to bring to this VCDEI position. My history as a student at Yale and UCLA, an assistant professor at Metro and Duke, and my current long-standing role at Northwestern provide an expansive view of the issues facing higher education. I am a collaborator and I enjoy building programs. I have successfully built the Latina and Latino Studies Program at Northwestern and served as the inaugural director, creating all elements of the program. I addressed issues of inequity among adjunct faculty at Northwestern when I served as Associate Dean. In that capacity I created a new process for self-governance for non-tenure eligible faculty. Additionally, I addressed inequity by increasing contract lengths, improving titles, creating transparency in assignments and benefits, and elevating the requirements for successful reappointment. I accomplished this in three years and I earned for Northwestern a reputation for a uniquely important philosophical and structural change for non-tenure eligible (NTE) faculty. That affected our equity and diversity across all non-tenured faculty, and as you know this is also very much a diversity issue as Black women and Latinas are overrepresented in the non-tenure eligible ranks. I oversaw 150 full-time NTE faculty, 90 part-time NTE faculty, and 20 post-docs. I increased the number of minoritized faculty in areas such as Economics from zero of seven to three of seven in my stint in the Dean's office. In my last year I increased the number of URM faculty in the post-doc ranks by 50% from the previous four years by installing rigorous, intentional, and consistent recruitment practices. In short, I created better working conditions for contingent faculty and increased the number of minoritized faculty in full-time, multiple year contracts. I note that these accomplishments had tangible improved outcomes for our students and particularly for students who were less academically prepared (see Figlio, Schapiro, and Soter 2015). The outcomes of that restructuring have been reported in *Inside Higher Ed* and I was invited to speak at the American Council of Education in San Francisco. In that space, in order to be more effective in hiring diverse faculty I needed a university-wide infrastructure to support my initiatives. In October of 2018 I joined the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion where I understood my focus to be just that. My assignment then was to focus is on the diversity and inclusion among faculty, staff, and graduate students.

**My work with students and the importance of staff and faculty:** Because this VCDEI position and the strategic plan emphasizes the outcomes for students, I draw your attention to my long history working with *students* as an adviser (for six years), faculty member (for 25+ years), and curriculum developer in Latinx Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Ethnic Studies. I have considerable fluency in the issues facing students and the concomitant issues in teaching and instruction. I purposefully link the success of students to the importance of faculty and staff who teach and support them. In my current role as an Assistant Provost I convene *staff* affinity groups, including helping to found the OutNetwork and bringing to the fore the Veterans' Recognition Initiative. I serve on the Learning and Organizational Development group charged

with creating DEI content and training for staff. I am a trained DEI facilitator with focus on intentional group dialogue training and inclusive practices. In addition to my work with non-tenure eligible faculty I have an extensive experience working with tenure-line *faculty qua faculty* in all aspects of their faculty life, including the tenure process and training in their roles as directors and chairs. These are two crucial areas in addressing recruitment and retention particularly for underrepresented groups. Finally, I call your attention to my capacity to work across structures. I presently work in a *decentralized structure* and have learned to understand schools and administrative units with their unique cultures and practices. I draw out the emphasis here because it brings to bear on the VCDEI role will also work across the university and across the UC system. Nationally, I have organized across schools and universities to affect national change in institutions like the *Society of Senior Ford Fellows*, where I serve as on the executive committee and as a founding member of the organization as a 501-c-3.

**Values: Activating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** The daily work of structural change is quite a long-game to which I am accustomed, and it stands along-side the urgent need to be a voice of leadership in a time of crisis. I write on the heels of national tragedy of murders, based on race, based on perceptions of sexuality and masculinity, based on perceptions of foreignness, based on white supremacy. My values-anchored stance positions me to move forward with a vision for structural change and to respond to external events. This social justice position reflects the institutional courage identified in UCCS SUCCESS 2030. A close read shows that many at UCCS have long been practicing those values and I would bring them forward and together. My *modus operandi* is to work through a collaboratively developed, values-anchored lens as a change agent. I explicitly draw on the theories of change that are rooted in social justice and based on academic research. I have experience working both within and outside of the university on social justice issues and I have done so in ways that is authentic to my own voice and identities. I have also done this in ways that centers the experiences of identities that I don't hold. For instance, in leading our MLK Day, I centered the interests of Black and African American staff, students, and faculty, who expressed some fraught perspectives on the performative nature of MLK day. I revitalized the mission and intention of our events to address racism, economic disparity, sexual violence, and the carceral state more directly. With that charge we had an enormously successful and co-created Dream Week. Under my guidance our attendance grew from 68 attendees to a sold-out venue of 300, to 1,800 virtual audience members for our last keynote. This was a major success, and it became so by organizing through a values-based goals and strategies of community engagement, an approach that I hope resonates with you, kind reader.

I thank you for providing this opportunity to reflect on future opportunities to serve at the Vice Chancellor. I welcome an opportunity to discuss this further.

Atentamente,



Mónica Russel y Rodríguez