

Jose L. Cantu, PhD

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to express my strong interest in the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management for the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. After reviewing your job announcement and reading over your job description, I am confident that I possess the experience, insight, and passion needed to lead your student success and retention efforts to the next level of excellence.

My expansive work experience in higher education stems from leading in various roles at institutions of different sizes. Over the years, I have built strong infrastructures to expand the knowledge of our student populations and excel in their delivery of student success. The common thread among the institutions I have worked for has been supporting underserved, first-generation, and low-socioeconomic student populations with the focus on access and opportunity. There are clear differences among the type of institutions across nation, but there are also many similarities impacting many students entering any form of postsecondary education program. Through my 29 years in higher education, I have worked in urban and rural institution settings-- small to large, public and private, and open to selective admissions standards. I am a highly versatile individual who understands that institution's cultures, systems, and engagement. I do feel that my experiences in working within different facets of the industry lends itself to my versatility and ability in providing strong levels of leadership. As noted on my resume, each institution brought many new opportunities to build infrastructures that were thoughtfully planned behind our diverse populations, enabling enrollment growth and the increase of student retention and graduate rates. In understanding our populations, I have successfully created and launched several strategic efforts enhancing each institution's profile by increasing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates, developing new academic and co-curricular programs, streamlining operational systems, writing and delivering effective policies and procedures, establishing fruitful relationships, building cross campus synergy among faculty, staff, and students, and prioritizing and completing campus wide initiatives. My work philosophy is centered on leadership through collaboration, good communication, transparency, and a shared vision.

Although student success has been the priority in our industry, higher education has shifted throughout the years with new opportunities of student access leading to new level of work of refining efforts to retain and graduate our students. As the Chief Enrollment Officer, it is imperative to launch strategic plans providing pathways and opportunities for all students. There are several layers involved behind creating a thriving institution, especially when you gain better understanding of your own student population. The key to each institution's success has been to establish a student-centered culture with a robust campus personality. Having an opportunity to conceptualize and implement new strategies helped propel these goals and expectations. I am a firm believer that continuing the status quo is not an option and the most successful institutions are those that can establish their own identity to differentiate themselves. There are clear differences among the type of institutions across the state of Texas, but there are also many similarities impacting the increasing Hispanic population entering any form of postsecondary education program. I am a highly versatile individual who understands that institution's cultures, systems, and engagement. I do feel that my experiences in working within different facets of the industry lends itself to my versatility and ability in providing strong levels of customer service and supportive education platforms. As noted on my resume, each institution brought many new opportunities to build infrastructures that were thoughtfully planned behind our diverse populations, enabling enrollment growth and the increase of student retention and graduate rates.

The strength of an institution comes from the direct result of building meaningful relationships. I live by the philosophy that every member of our institution's community is valuable, and relationships must be established well before there is a need for support. Throughout my career, I have been able to build a foundation on trust that has created more unity among our faculty, staff, and students. I am a firm believer of shared governance and have worked effortlessly in creating open, transparent, and approachable environments. This has given way to remove barriers and expand lines of communication not only to enhance our campus wide performance, but to also support building a safe and inclusive campus climate. Over the course of my career, I have also accumulated a wide range of experiences as an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. I believe that diversity centers around the concept of recognizing and accepting the differences of people. Diversity should always be included in an institution's mission as a sign of support of access and success for all individuals. Much of my experience comes from working primarily at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSI).

In my experience, collaboration moves at the speed of trust and I find that having open dialogue brings a wealth of knowledge toward a variety of resolutions. I have learned that unforeseen opportunities often arise impacting our efforts in moving forward, but with the commitment of a supportive team, we can continue our momentum in helping students reach their academic goals through the trials and tribulations impacting our institutions. My role has been to always understand and identify resources required to improve performance at the institution and system level. Recently, the pandemic changed our way we work for many of us especially when it came to student services and course offerings. Through this experience, I learned much about the needs and challenges of our faculty, staff, and students. At University of Houston-Victoria, we serve a large number of underserved students and it was important for us to keep in mind the need to balance resources for faculty and students through this shift. As the pandemic was evolving, I brought in a core pandemic team that included our Information Technology, Marketing and Communication, and Enrollment teams to create a virtual model that wouldn't feel too foreign for our students through their transition. Although we were uncertain of what would happen, by the first day of our campus closure, we launched all of our enrollment and student services on a Microsoft Teams platform that included a virtual lobby, one-on-one meeting capabilities, and a series of how-to workshops. During this virtual transition, we had the unfortunate incident of having our student service building experience a fire. My key focus was the physical and mental health of my team, especially while experiencing a high volume of unknowns at one time. As I led the virtual transition for enrollment and student services, I also collaborated with our academic partners in the development of course modalities to support Fall enrollment. Our enrollment increased by 12% in Summer 2020 and 9% in Fall 2020 with first year retention at 80% and graduating classes at an all time high.

With respect to my leadership style, I am viewed as a visionary and enthusiastic leader that holds a high level of integrity and respect. I understand the importance of being a continuous innovator, a focused decision maker, and a complex problem-solver who focuses on enhancing performance for the betterment of the campus community. I believe that an inclusive, strategic and creative thought process is essential to the success of reaching our goals. I am a good listener and continuously involve others in decision-making scenarios in the spirit of shared governance. I am highly skilled at developing relationships across multiple constituencies that include faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends, government policy makers, media, prominent community members, and philanthropic entities of all types. Furthermore, I am very approachable and good at consensus building. Every stage of my professional career has given me the opportunity to become more innovative with approaches by moving forward with ambitious goals centered in achieving academic excellence. I have an innate work ethic with the skills to develop and execute strategies effectively. Change is inevitable and there are challenges with change but engaging the entire campus community with a unified approach of reaching and surpassing our goals will provide a more dynamic, thriving institution setting.

The opportunity to serve as your next Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management for the University of Colorado Colorado Springs is highly appealing to me. I believe that the demographic and economic diversity of both Colorado Springs and Colorado positions us to serve as a major catalyst for the desired change needed for our institution and community. In reviewing the leadership components for the position, my background aligns strongly with a proven record of successful strategic planning and implementation, fostering partnerships, championing diversity, equity, and inclusion, enhancing the student experience, and building a strong level of campus engagement. My leadership will not only be one that will support the opportunities of student success and retention, but also create a contagious level of pride in supporting our students in and outside the classroom. Our potential is boundless and we will be able to work together to gain momentum and perspective through our collective journey.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information.

Sincerely,



Jose L. Cantu, PhD