

Thomas J. Aicher, Ph.D.

taicher@uccs.edu

Dean George Reed, PhD
Search Committee Chair
College of Business
University of Colorado Colorado Springs

Dean Reed and Search Committee,

I am delighted to submit my application for Dean of the College of Business (COB) at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS). As you will see from my record, I meet both minimum and preferred qualifications for this position, and I believe my background, vision, and values align well with the COB and UCCS as a whole.

In line with the minimum qualifications outlined in the position announcement, I am currently a tenured Associate Professor in the Sport Management Program with a PhD from Texas A&M University in a discipline housed in the COB. I also have demonstrated leadership experience and a record sufficient to merit appointment as a full professor. My leadership experience includes serving as the Associate Dean and Interim Dean for the COB at UCCS. In addition, I served in a variety of leadership roles (e.g., program director, college faculty senate president) for 6 years at my prior institutions, including regional comprehensive and research intensive institutions. Additional leadership roles I have held at former institutions are outlined on my CV. Credentials outlined on my CV will also show a record consistent with the guidelines for promotion to full professor in the COB. Prior to submission, a colleague within the college reviewed my credentials since earning tenure with members of the faculty (8 of the 10 full professors), and they were all supportive of my application for full professor. I plan to submit my packet for full professor this summer, and I have communicated my intentions with the primary unit committee chair.

Vision and leadership experiences appropriate for a College of Business

My leadership is driven by the philosophy of serving others to strengthen the organization from the bottom to the top. Through this posture of service, I place significant value on consensus building in pursuit of collective goals and ensuring everyone has a voice in the process. My role as a leader is to support others to ensure they have the resources they need to achieve personal and organizational goals and provide recognition and rewards when they do. This approach thus far at UCCS has afforded me the ability to build strong collaborative relationships with many individuals and begin to create a shared vision that is consistent with the mission and goals of the University and College.

As Interim Dean, I am responsible for all fiscal and academic decisions. I work collaboratively with leaders in the COB, and UCCS more broadly, to advance the mission of the College and strengthen relationships with internal and external stakeholders. In a period of instability within the COB and in the greater environment, one of my key roles as Interim Dean has been to bring the college together and establish a sense of unity among both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, I have focused my efforts on developing a shared culture of supporting and helping others. These efforts are reflected in the “take off your shoes” initiative I recently implemented in the College. The goal is for people to recognize those who have taken the time to learn about and help others throughout the College to strengthen a collective bond of creating successful futures for those who engage with the College. Externally, the majority of my work focuses on strengthening existing relationships and developing new ones that will broaden community, industry, and government partnerships that support College programs and provide external resource enhancement.

A successful track record in securing funding, external partnerships, and diversifying revenue streams

Since transitioning into the Interim Dean role, I have concentrated my efforts on developing strong relationships with various internal and external stakeholders. I have established a strong relationship with the UCCS Office of Advancement, and through joint efforts, we have begun raising funds for scholarships and finalizing funding for the Ed's Place project. I focused my immediate efforts with members community advisory board, key partners with the economic forum and career development center, and members of the alumni association. Centering conversations around the impact these individuals would like to have on the COB has allowed me to cultivate strong relationships with potential for future contributions and expansion of current partnerships. A specific example is my efforts on the Real Estimate Property Management emphasis. Collaborating with the Office of Advancement and building on prior discussions, I worked with key internal and external stakeholders to assist in program development and pro forma, outlined the program's budgetary and curriculum expectations, and created a proposal for potential partners to support the program.

I am also in the process of evaluating how external relations are managed for the COB. Currently, we have three areas, Economic Forum, Career Development Center, and Advancement Office, reaching out to potential partners. In the past, this method has created a level of competition and protection across groups that does not serve the COB or its stakeholders well. Once new staff are in place, I will bring these groups together to construct a stronger method for how organizations can partner with the COB and achieve the impact they hope to create, as well as ensure the COB serves as a hub for our community.

Another external partnership I am expanding is our relationship with Zschool, a company designed to connect universities and business executives to provide a variety of curricular opportunities. Zschool created a Women in Leadership Program they manage and market on our behalf, which has been extremely successful for the COB thus far. After a recent meeting with Zschool representatives, I am now discussing the best programs that align with the COB's mission and values with other College leaders to determine the best path forward. One important role as the new Dean will be to increase and diversify revenues from both traditional and innovative sources through novel and sustainable opportunities for professional and executive education that align well with our mission to empower learners at every stage of their educational journey.

Experience in managing College and departmental budgets, balancing allocation of resources to faculty professional development and research

As a faculty member, I served on the University Budget Advisory Committee. The committee reviews recommendations to the Chancellor in detail concerning the university's short-term and broad outline for long-term budget policy. The committee also examines all sources of revenue, including but not limited to general fund, tuition, other cash, auxiliaries, contracts, and grants. The knowledge I gained while on the committee was beneficial in my transition to Associate Dean as I managed the graduate program and technology budgets. As Interim Dean, I work alongside the Financial Program Manager to manage and execute fiscal policies and procedures effectively for the current budget. Knowledge of these areas as we transition into the new budgeting model provides me with a strong foundation to assist with strategic planning for the College, especially with challenging fiscal issues on the horizon. I am currently evaluating budget projections for the next fiscal year and developing plans to manage projected shortfalls to ensure minimal impact on personnel. Decisions around funding are largely guided by the College's mission and strategic plan.

At prior institutions, I served on reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) primary unit committee equivalents and developed mentorship programs to ensure faculty success. Mentoring new scholars has

always been a passion of mine, and I have volunteered with the North American Society of Sport Management student–faculty mentorship program every year since 2009. Developing our newer scholars is of major importance to the future success of the COB, as is ensuring clear and transparent guidelines for faculty members to be successful. To accomplish this, I served on a committee that reviewed the RPT policies, and in the second year, I chaired the committee. The committee was able to update the policy to align with regent policy changes while receiving faculty input and building consensus to ensure a process that includes shared governance. My knowledge of the COB policy, as well as system- and campus-level policies associated with RPT and annual review, will be of particular importance in overseeing faculty development and evaluations. As Interim Dean, I reviewed and wrote candidates' RPT letters for initial, comprehensive, and post-tenure reviews during this term, demonstrating my knowledge and abilities associated with this process. In line with this work, I tasked a new research committee with evaluating the journal list, research awards, and mentorship programs. My goal is to create a research infrastructure to assist faculty members in seeking sponsored and unsponsored research opportunities and further the research mission of the COB and UCCS.

An ability to be entrepreneurial, creative, and innovate in attitude and approach

Throughout my academic career, I have assisted with several different strategic planning initiatives. At the University of Cincinnati (UC), I served on the leadership council for the college as we embarked on a 5-year strategic plan. Once the plan was in place, it was then filtered to the school and program levels to prioritize, develop, and implement strategies to achieve the goals outlined in these initiatives. In service to the North American Society for Sport Management, I helped develop the organization's strategic plan, which included assisting with collection and analysis of data from the membership and marketplace, as well as developing nine priorities for the organization to focus on over the next 10 years. I then led the team responsible for developing communication and outreach initiatives in the strategic plan. At UCCS, I co-chaired a committee with the Assistant Dean for Internal Operations to develop a measurement plan for the COB's strategic plan in preparation for our next AACSB review.

In each of these endeavors, I have focused on ways to capitalize on the strengths of faculty, staff, or organization to meet the needs and opportunities of business and education environments. Recently, I worked with the COB education technologies team to develop a state-of-the-art recording studio that can be used to promote quality academic programs that meet students' and external constituents' educational requirements. I also am guiding the evaluation process of the MBA specializations to ensure we are offering relevant and marketable programs that can create sustainable and outstanding graduate programs through a variety of partnerships. In addition, I am examining opportunities with other campus leaders to develop interdisciplinary programming and curricula to determine ways to forge strong partnerships that benefit the campus community. As Dean, I would continue to develop campus-wide partnerships to further the mission of both the COB and UCCS through creative strategies.

A background aligned to UCCS values demonstrating the highest level of integrity, ethics, and professionalism.

I have consistently demonstrated alignment with the values espoused by UCCS in my leadership, research, and teaching. I believe some of the aforementioned examples show a history of *innovation, collaboration, and dynamic responsible growth*. In addition, I have a record of being *student focused, integrating research and teaching as interdependent activities, fostering diversity and inclusion, and maintaining high ethical standards*.

A large part of my service in higher education has been curriculum development and assessment with a *student focus*. Through these efforts, I place students at the forefront of decisions to ensure the curriculum is designed to meet challenges they will encounter in the business environment and provide them with

tools to continue their education journey. During my first academic appointment at Northern Illinois University, I served as both Department Curriculum Committee chair and College Curriculum Committee cochair, overseeing approval of new courses, assessment plans, and new degree and concentration proposals. While at UC, I was appointed to lead the development and approval processes for the master's degree in sport administration, which included researching the sport marketplace to develop a curriculum that used the strengths of our faculty and location to ensure a high-quality, experience-based education. The graduate program was developed for both on-campus and online delivery with a curriculum designed to enhance students' ability to succeed in an evolving global sports marketplace. In the course development process, I worked with faculty members to develop a program assessment plan that included measures for course consistency across sections, scaffolding of curriculum from one class to another, assessment accuracy of course learning outcomes, and a method to ensure program learning outcomes were met. These experiences have served me well during my time at UCCS, as the sport management program developed an emphasis in the MBA, and my time serving on the undergrad team enhanced my knowledge of the COB and UCCS process and offerings. This background was also instrumental in the development of the Real Estate Property Management emphasis for the bachelor's degree.

In line with my curricular focus on students' outcomes, I *integrate* my scholarly work to engage students with practical application of theoretical concepts, as well as in consulting work in the industry. Over the years, I participated in educational technology conferences, teaching workshops, and other development opportunities to broaden my ability to improve my communication with and assessment of students' learning. I often brought my consulting work into the classroom, as well as partnered with organizations within the community to provide experiential learning opportunities tied to course learning outcomes. As Dean, I would look for more opportunities to further develop faculty in pedagogical methods, enhance experiential learning opportunities, and create collaborations to engage industry professionals with the faculty. I also plan to create pathways for other faculty and staff members to engage in areas where their work can create a better outcomes or opportunities for the community. This plan includes developing an efficient process to support faculty members applying for external funding and a method for those seeking consulting or educational opportunities in the community to have the support they need to be successful.

An area of major importance to me is engaging with traditionally underrepresented groups and prioritizing work that advances *inclusive diversity*. My early scholarly work focused on nontraditional leaders in sport organizations and how a culture focused on diversity could provide greater opportunities for underrepresented groups. Since entering the academy, I completed ally training and have continually strived to create space in my classrooms and work environments that allow all voices to be welcomed, heard, accepted, and valued. At UCCS, this work expanded to include V.E.T.S. training, as I value our active duty and veterans greatly. Given the high percentage of students at UCCS and in the COB with a military background, this training has proven to be invaluable to understand how to support their needs more effectively. I also served on the COB Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (now known as Inclusion, Excellence, and Belonging) Council, and assisted with a variety of initiatives focused on members of our community to foster an environment where all feel welcomed and supported. I am currently mentoring a student in the Diverse Doctorates of Business program and plan to continue initiatives designed to increase the diversity of the COB faculty. Specifically, I would continue to fund the PhD project, which was designed to provide historically underrepresented students with models of achievement and businesses with a powerful way to enrich the talent pipeline to create a more inclusive pool of candidates.

In all of my work, I aim to uphold the highest standards of *integrity* and ethics. In 2019, I was a Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Fellow and used this time to increase my understanding of the ethics initiative

principles. As part of my fellowship, I worked on the curriculum in one of my classes and led a case study team in a competition focused on ethics in intercollegiate athletics. I hold myself to the highest standards of professionalism, and in particular, I place tremendous value on ethics initiative principles in how I lead and interact with others. Specifically, I act in a manner that is focused on building trust through my integrity, transparency, fairness, and respect. These traits are what I am trying to reinforce with faculty and staff in the COB through the “take your shoes off” initiative outlined above.

Experience chairing or being a member on an AACSB accreditation visit team

As the program director at UC, I served on the school leadership team, which evaluated the programs’ assessment plans and assisted with the various accreditation processes. At the programmatic level at UC, we created an internal assessment plan consistent with our accrediting body with plans to acquire and maintain accreditation. Since arriving at UCCS, I have engaged in various capacities with the AACSB accreditation process and attended the recent seminar focused on changes to the accreditation process and how best to prepare. My role as Associate Dean afforded me the opportunity to assist in developing and providing feedback on the initial reports and accreditation plans for our upcoming review. I worked closely with the Assistant Dean for Internal Relations to engage the curriculum teams as we adjust our assessment plans based on the feedback received from our last visit. We also developed methods of collecting data around changes that have occurred and ones in progress so we are able to articulate a strong rationale for how we are achieving the College’s mission and goals. I am confident we will have a successful AACSB review in 2024–2025 based on the strategies in place.

My experience closely aligns with the qualifications required for the position of Dean of the College of Business at UCCS. On a personal note, I have spent the last 5 years at UCCS, and I absolutely love the College, campus, and people. I plan to continue to provide leadership and stability to COB to usher in a new era of success for the College, faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and discussing my qualifications further and fit as the Dean of the COB at UCCS.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Aicher, Ph.D.
Interim Dean and Associate Professor
College of Business
University of Colorado Colorado Springs