

Dear Search Committee Members –

Please accept my application for the position of Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Colorado – Colorado Springs. I learned about this exciting opportunity through a colleague who believed that the position/institution and I are a good match. After reading the job announcement and visiting the university website, I am very enthusiastic about this opportunity. I am confident that I meet the qualifications based on my extensive leadership and expertise in higher education and commitment to providing relevant and high-quality graduate education for all students (across genders, ages, ethnicities, cultures, abilities, languages, and learning styles) in engaging on-campus and online educational opportunities.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP HISTORY

I was selected to join SDSU in 2017 as *Professor* and *Chair* of the Department of Child and Family Development after a national search. I held that role until I became the *Senior Associate Dean* in the College of Education in January 2019. In October of 2021, I was appointed as *interim Dean* of SDSU Global Campus by President de la Torre and Provost Ochoa. Before joining SDSU, I provided leadership in many capacities at the department, college, and university levels while at Kansas State University, including directing graduate programs, where I demonstrated forward-thinking, value-based, data-informed decision making. I have held many positions of leadership in my primary professional organization, the National Council on Family Relations. I believe that this wide range of leadership experience has helped me prepare to successfully execute the responsibilities as Dean of the Graduate School at UCCS.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

One of the tools I have used to explore and understand my leadership style is the Gallup Organization’s Clifton Strengths (www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/home.aspx) – an evidence-based, reliable inventory that ranks 34 “themes of talent.” My top strengths according to this assessment are:

- *Activator*: I am a catalyst. When others are stuck, I get the process moving forward.
- *Strategic*: I quickly spot relevant patterns and issues, and identify multiple options to facilitate success.
- *Woo (Winning Others Over)*: I prioritize interacting with people, am energized by these contacts, and am adept at making each person feel comfortable in my presence.
- *Positivity*: I bring an energy, optimism, and enthusiasm to my work that is contagious.
- *Individualization*: I recognize, value, and appreciate the uniqueness in each person.
- *Achiever*: I bring commitment and concerted effort to meeting identified goals.
- *Communication*: I stimulate conversation and clearly express ideas, goals, and strategies.
- *Developer*: I prioritize identifying, supporting, and cultivating potential in others.

In sum, I bring vision, strategic thinking, integrity, stability, energy, passion, and compassion to my leadership. My style of working with others is based on collaboration, transparency, and positive interaction. I listen, share information, and follow principles of inclusion in decision making and I am eager to use these skills and talents to make a powerful and significant contribution to UCCS.

GRADUATE PROGRAM LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Graduate Program Leadership

San Diego State University:

SDSU Global Campus (GC) is a self-support College within Academic Affairs that receives no state funding. A wide variety of degrees, classes, seminars, and certificate programs for career advancement and self-enrichment are delivered through GC mostly online. The programs and courses are available to individuals locally, regionally, and around the world. GC currently offers 15 master's degrees, 7 undergraduate degree completion options, more than 50 graduate and professional certificates, English language programs, and many lifelong learning opportunities for about 5000 students. New programs are continuously in development in response to student and workforce needs. As Dean of SDSU GC, my role and many of my responsibilities are closely related to those of the Dean of the Graduate School. For example:

- My team is responsible for student recruitment, admission, enrollment, retention, graduation evaluation, and tracking students' progress throughout their journeys. In fact, GC has its own registrar, evaluations team, recruiters, cashiers, data and market analysts, marketing team, and programs strategists. Of course, all of this is done in partnership with the university's offices of Enrollment Services, Graduate Studies, and Student Services.
- All of our graduate programs are offered in collaboration with the academic colleges and faculty who make all decisions regarding the content and curriculum. They also provide the student advising and mentoring.
- GC conducts outreach to local partners for training opportunities and collaborations.
- I serve as an advocate for providing extended education for diverse student groups, working with partners across campus to ensure student needs are widely expressed, understood, and met.
- GC compiles and analyzes appropriate data about extended education and the student experience to share with our partners.
- I promote cooperative and beneficial relationships among the departments/schools, colleges, and divisions.

SDSU's College of Education enrolls more than 500 post-baccalaureate teaching credential, 600 masters, and 150 doctoral students each year in the education and helping professions. It is one of the region's top producers of high-quality teachers, counselors, therapists, school administrators, and community college leaders with 30 graduate programs and certificates.

As the Senior Associate Dean in the College, I worked closely with the graduate program directors and department chairs to:

- create and implement academic course schedules,
- establish and apply strategies to meet department and college enrollment targets,
- develop and implement student recruitment and retention strategies,
- maintain appropriate accreditations,
- sustain delivery of high-quality instruction throughout the College,
- support research, scholarly, and creative activities for faculty and students,
- recruit, hire, supervise, and support College staff members, and ensure staff and faculty personnel processes were in accordance with University and College policies, the Collective Bargaining Agreement,
- serve as College liaison with various divisions across SDSU and CSU – including Graduate Studies.

Kansas State University: I served as the Graduate Program Director for the Family Studies unit at K-State from 1999 through 2015. The K-State Family Studies MS and PhD programs enrolled 75-100 students each year with an diverse student body regarding gender, age, and ethnic, and international status (e.g., Taiwan, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Korea, Jamaica). When I left K-State, 60% of our PhD students were from underrepresented groups or were international. Upon graduation, they were employed by a variety of organizations, including colleges and universities, mental health agencies, school systems, churches and religious agencies, social service agencies, and governmental offices.

I successfully led the unit faculty through the process of extensive curriculum change from a focus on Family Life Education to a broader preparation in Family Studies in the early 2000s. This revision was prompted by our program assessment efforts. To guide this revision, we:

- Closely reviewed our assessment data to identify strengths and areas that needed improvement;
- Surveyed three groups:
 - current students and graduates to examine their perspectives on student needs, program strengths, gaps or weaknesses in the program, and how well prepared they felt for entering their chosen careers and
 - colleagues in the field regarding the level of preparedness of our graduates;
- Applied the requirements for Approved Program status for the Certified Family Life Educator designation, so that our curriculum met the standards of the profession and graduates would continue to be eligible to apply for CFLE without having to complete the exam; and
- Reviewed curricula at highly ranked similar programs across the country.

We used information gathered through these multiple means to create a new curriculum that met student and discipline needs and was competitive with other research-intensive institutions. This, of course, was then put through the curriculum approval process of the university. We continued to conduct rigorous assessment of the MS and PhD programs and made adjustments over the years to maintain a high-quality program.

Mentorship of Graduate Faculty

In my role as unit chair and graduate program director, I served as a formal tenure mentor for three faculty members as they settled into their responsibilities. I helped them prepare their course syllabi and assignments, make connections with other scholars and students, launch their research programs, and navigate the department, college, and university systems. After they had been at the university for a few years and had served on MS students' committees, each of them also served as a co-chair of a PhD student's committee with me. When the students were completing their dissertation projects, we worked collaboratively to support them. For example, as the students were writing, they would first turn in a draft to the junior faculty member who would enter her comments. She would then pass it on to me and I would add mine. Then she and I would meet to discuss our ideas and suggestions before sitting down with the student to go over the document together. The farther along the process went, the more responsibility the junior member would take. This system was very successful. Each faculty member learned the roles, methods, expectations, and responsibilities of serving as a dissertation chair and went on to do so individually. It also served the students well – they had two faculty members guiding them through the process in a cohesive and collaborative manner.

Graduate Teaching, Advisement, Mentorship, and Research Supervision

The focus of my teaching efforts between 2005 and 2017 were almost exclusively at the graduate level. I taught the introductory/foundational Family Studies course, several courses focusing on specific content in the field (e.g., Human Sexuality and Parent-Child Relations), the qualitative research methods course series, the doctoral-level course on Theory construction, and the capstone courses for both MS and PhD students.

In addition to teaching courses, I have worked as an advisor, mentor and/or research methodologist for over 150 graduate students. I served as the major professor for 28 PhD students and 46 MS students. Additionally, I was on the supervisory committees for an additional 27 PhD and 46 MS students. Building relationships with these students has been one of my greatest joys. I feel very honored to have supported these students in their professional and personal growth as they developed their talents and skills, increased their knowledge in the discipline, and prepared to improve the lives of individuals and families through research and practice.

Innovative and Multimodal Programs

Currently, as the Dean of SDSU GC, creating and implementing new innovative academic programs is one of my central strategic goals. To facilitate this process, I have met regularly with leaders and faculty members from across campus to connect the work of GC to the university's goals, to increase understanding of GC and what we can

offer, to listen to their needs and preferences, and to demonstrate a commitment to collaboration. Additionally, in order to increase the incentives for creating and implementing new academic programs through GC, I have worked with the leaders in Academic Affairs and Business & Financial Affairs to create a new budget model that provides the colleges with more discretionary funding. This has resulted in increased interest in collaborating with GC and we have launched several new degree programs with several others currently in the stages of exploration and development, curriculum approval, and pre-launch marketing campaigns. This expansion of programs has helped SDSU to:

- extend access to new populations (locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally),
- meet current and future workforce needs in the area and beyond,
- build the reputation and visibility of SDSU and SDSU Global campus, and
- increase the revenue generation to help support SDSU's initiatives that are not funded by the state.

Shared Governance and Collaborative Decision-Making

Collaborative decision-making is at the heart of my leadership. I believe that shared governance is built on a foundation of inclusion and genuine involvement. Interested and invested parties are identified, invited, treated with respect, and their input is incorporated whenever possible. This takes place as leaders facilitate and direct conversations and decision-making processes without dominating. Listening, engaging, responding, and solving problems together are necessary components of collaboration and shared governance.

Specific example:

While at K-State, I provided leadership for revising the General Education (GE) program for K-State's 20,000/year undergraduate students in over 250 majors. We held dozens of listening meetings with faculty, administrators, staff members, and students from all nine colleges over two years. This resulted in an iterative process that led to many revisions and subsequent rounds of presentations and additional modifications. We included as many perspectives as possible and used multiple approaches to hear diverse ideas. We met with focus groups of students and faculty, standing committees, and students in their course settings and organizations. We conducted surveys and held open Town Hall meetings. As a result of these concerted efforts, a revised program, *K-State 8*, was presented to and approved by the campus Senate and has been successfully in place since 2009.

Establishing a Positive and Healthy Environment

It is important to establish and foster a positive, welcoming, supportive environment that includes mutual respect, transparency in decision making, open bidirectional communication, clear expectations, equity in opportunities and rewards (including promoting from within), and a reasonable degree of flexibility. Establishing and maintaining this kind of environment helps to increase satisfaction, retain employees and students, and recruit others.

One method I use to create this type of strengths-based environment is by using Clifton StrengthsFinder. This assists in building a positive, welcoming, inclusive, equitable, and supportive environment for a variety of diverse groups of faculty, students, and staff. This helps individuals:

- focus on positives rather than negatives,
- treat themselves and others with respect for their talents and contributions,
- identify tasks and responsibilities within their positions that best use their strengths, and
- apply a constructive and creative attitude in life and work.

Examples of when I have employed this strengths-based strategy:

- Kansas State University (K-State) became a strengths-based campus in the 2010s with an institutional membership that provided all first-year students and faculty members with access to the Clifton Strengths assessment. I used this tool in my capstone courses with both graduate and undergraduate students to enhance their self-reflection as they navigated the transition from their student role to whatever step came next. I also employed it with the faculty group I led to build effective collaborations and mutual respect for each person's contribution to the team.

- At San Diego State University (SDSU), I used Clifton Strengths as a new Child & Family Development Department Chair to help me learn to know and appreciate each faculty member in my new environment. This was especially helpful in course and workload assignments as well as during any conflict resolution I facilitated.
- As the Dean in SDSU GC, all employees have been provided with an introductory text (StrengthsFinder 2.0) and a code to complete the assessment. Then we have explored our strengths as individuals and in teams during an all-staff retreat. GC supervisors also have been provided with training and resources to use a strengths-based approach with their teams in their everyday interactions and decisions.

In both of the SDSU contexts, I was brought in as a leader to create a healthy and positive environment in which to support the groups to move forward after they had experienced difficult and conflict-ridden situations with former supervisors. This tool helped me create psychologically and emotionally safe environments, because a strength-based approach acknowledges the complexity of working in groups, while also providing a practical and tangible method for building and supporting collaborations. In both situations, it was extremely important for me to build trust – by being trustworthy and by trusting them to be and do their best. The climates in the department and the college changed dramatically under my leadership. Retention and satisfaction improved significantly and the groups became cohesive and productive. One tangible outcome of this approach is the \$10M increase of revenue generation within one year for SDSU Global Campus (a 30% increase). Once the staff members felt valued, trusted, and empowered, the organization was able to thrive.

LEADING WITH A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

I strive to address issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice in all my endeavors – in managing resources, hiring, supervision, recruitment and retention, and day-to-day interactions. The use of an intersectional empowerment perspective in all my work guides my attention to issues of inclusion and social justice. I believe that genuine collaboration requires that everyone feels invited to the discussion. I commit to continuously learning and growing in this area by continually seeking multiple perspectives and ideas, and truly listening to others.

As Dean of the Graduate School, addressing issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice would be central to all of my decisions. Continuing to examine representation and involvement in processes would be constant. It is easy to continue to go to the same people again and again, but I would work to make the table bigger by questioning who has been involved in decisions, who has had influence, who is missing, and who is silenced, for example. This is hard work, but authentic equity and justice cannot be reached without it.

I also broadly define the term diversity. For example, beyond the highly discussed and important aspects of diversity – race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation and identity – in academia, preference is sometimes given to certain fields over others, especially related to the allocation of resources. Again, these are important issues to examine within processes and policies. We must identify any policies or procedures that lead to bias and inequity before we can address them. And once identified, we must act to reduce and eliminate these injustices. All members and disciplines within the UCCS community deserve respect and to know they are valued.

In sum, I believe that I align well with the qualifications, characteristics, and experiences you seek for the Dean of the Graduate School. As a leader I

- work hard and possess a great deal of stamina,
- enjoy turning thoughts into action,
- identify possibilities along with challenges and paths to success,
- use data to improve systems and policies,
- truly enjoy building connections,
- have an enthusiasm that is contagious,

- recognize and cultivate the potential in others,
- seek and respect others' opinions and ideas,
- encourage critical and creative thinking, and
- help diverse groups to work together productively.

If selected for this position, I commit to partnering with the faculty, staff, and students to make a significant positive contribution to this inclusive, forward-thinking, growing institution to support and achieve the visions of Chancellor Reddy and Provost Marchand-Martella.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen S. Myers-Bowman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Karen S. Myers-Bowman, PhD, CFLE