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October 31, 2022

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

It is my honor to submit in consideration as the President of Eastern Illinois University. I am excited by the opportunity to serve EIU as my values and experience align with yours in commitment to effectively serving all students with an emphasis on equity and applied learning opportunities. Currently, I serve as Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs at Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania (CU). I was appointed to this position following the merger of Bloomsburg, Lock Haven and Mansfield Universities within the Pennsylvania of Higher Education system. In addition, I serve as the Campus Administrator of the Bloomsburg location of CU. Bloomsburg is the largest of our three campuses with approximately 7500 students.

I believe my leadership experiences to date have prepared me well for the presidency of Eastern Illinois University. I have led at rural regional comprehensive institutions with a strong first-generation emphasis. Each has had a strong grounding in the liberal arts and have been American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) affiliated institutions. Two of the three are within state systems of higher education; I understand the challenges and benefits to working within a large state ecosystem of higher education. With the changing landscape of higher education, EIU is well poised for the future. Visionary initiatives like the Center for Clean Energy Research and Education, extensive dual credit, and integrated research opportunities for students demonstrate the university's commitment to meeting regional and state needs as leaders in higher education.

As a first-generation student, and the first woman in my maternal lineage to complete high school, I fully understand the impact EIU has upon its students. The personalized experience provides students access and builds on their existing strengths toward fulfilling their goals. Serving as Eastern Illinois' next President would allow me to both support a mission that is the heart of my history in higher education and lead EIU in continuing to grow in service to its students, the community, and Illinois.

My background and experiences align with many of the areas of need articulated in the position profile. These opportunities were grounded in equity and required extensive collaboration to come to fruition. I illustrate those below for consideration.

### **Expertise in leadership, financial management, strategic planning and legislative relations**

The past two years has provided me the unique opportunity of proving comprehensive leadership and vision to the development of a new university. Being designated as the lead provost for the merger required analysis of all functions of the university to assess best practices from each campus in creation of new aligned mission, vision, curriculum, and practices. I developed *functional integration teams* that were inclusive of all faculty and staff to ensure stakeholder engagement and commitment. Budget alignment was a challenge as one of the merging partners was operating at a deficit thus, I had to use clear metrics to distribute equitable resources across the new five college model. Embedded in this process was providing critical feedback to assist movement toward healthy sustainability for each campus. I also have provided leadership and oversight to the committees engaged in the strategic planning process. Moving this merger forward required extensive engagement with the local legislative leaders in the regions for each campus. Initially significant opposition occurred due the fear of a loss of local identity for each institution. In collaboration with President Hanna, we conducted extensive town halls to address

concerns and were able to create the legislative alliances to successfully launch Commonwealth University on July 1, 2022.

### **A resilient problem solver who can successfully implement innovative solutions to respond to the challenges facing universities today**

As a leader, I value a collaborative strategic planning process that incorporates data as a tool for determining our future path. In illustration, I utilized this process while dean at Southeast Missouri State to launch a one-to-one infused technology initiative across the four colleges that offer educator preparation. This initiative organically came forward as a “problem” when data from our alumni and principals indicated that we were weak in utilizing educational technology. As a result, we collaboratively analyzed data from multiple sources including our external advisory boards, student advisory board, and open forums. Key among those data was feedback that educator preparation must be able to provide teachers that were “tech independent” and “innovators in curriculum development”. To prepare for implementation, I conducted a failure analysis. As a result, three key potential obstacles were identified: infrastructure (wifi), curricular spaces, and faculty development. The solutions for the initiative included a capital campaign to renovate the technology lab and classrooms, a professional development plan for faculty and students, and an implementation committee with the Instructional Technology staff and other stakeholders. Finally, to capture the spirit of the curriculum renovation, we rebranded under the concept of EDvolution®. The success of the initiative is represented by the later recognition as an Apple Distinguished School.

### **A successful record of academic leadership and executive experience**

I offer over twenty-five years of academic and administrative experience in at similarly sized universities. Sixteen of those years include leadership roles as a chair, director, dean, and currently provost. I was chosen among the three provosts involved in the merger to serve as the founding provost and senior vice president of Commonwealth University. I also serve as one of three “lead” provosts for the PASSHE system organizing our state level agendas and reporting on CAO initiatives to the Executive Leadership Group (system presidents) at their monthly meeting.

My management style is framed by the belief that leaders should serve as a mentor to those they serve. I use the *Strengths-Based Leadership* model to help us each see the talents of the individuals within the team. This has been critical as the new CU leadership team consists of a blend of members from each campus as well as some new hires. Each member is provided two personal coaching sessions to support their leadership development. I also assist my direct reports in the creation of a three to five-year plan that includes personal/professional goals as well as goals for their unit. This allows me to assist my team members in meeting their long-term aspirations while simultaneously advancing the institutional mission. Goals for units are linked directly to institutional metrics aligned with our strategic plan.

### **A strong commitment to student success and innovative teaching practices involving students of every intersectional cultural background**

Student success is at the core of my work as a leader. As provost of Bloomsburg, we successfully launched Starfish, and similar to EIU, success coaches, as tools to support student retention. We have closed the retention gap between undeclared and declared students as well as increased retention among underrepresented students. Our focus on student support has resulted in Bloomsburg demonstrating higher retention and graduation rates than our sister institutions within the merger although we serve

similar student populations. BU increased its retention rate by 2% during the first year of the pandemic due to the supports provided by our initiatives.

I also have experience at supporting faculty excellence and curriculum development. I partnered with the Association of College and University Educators to provide faculty high quality professional development that focuses on equity in the curriculum. To date 60 faculty have completed the training. I also developed a partnership with the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Research Institute to support increased development in grant writing for our faculty.

**Excellent communication and interpersonal skills and a demonstrated track record in collaborating with faculty, students, staff, alumni and community stakeholders to achieve the universities mission**

As provost at BU, I built a strong, collaborative relationship with our faculty leadership. My faculty union president and I have an open-door relationship with frequent “walk and talks” to promote dialogue and understanding as issues arise. Amid the consolidation and the pandemic, I have transparently created timelines, organizational charts, and led meetings and town halls to seek feedback and listen to all internal and external stakeholders. It is this leadership style that I would bring to your town, campus community, and region promoting an integrated, empowering learning experience for students.

**An inclusive approach to management and leadership, including an ethic of care and a commitment to excellence in recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse faculty and leadership team**

I offer EIU a commitment to diversifying the faculty and leadership team. As provost I have supported engagement with the Frederick Douglass Scholars program recruiting diverse doctoral candidates at the candidacy stage into faculty lines. I support these faculty with a mentor and research resources to assist them in completing their degree. CU has two new FD Scholars this year, and we are currently working to secure a cluster hire of diverse faculty in our colleges of science and technology and health professions. I have also diversified my leadership team with the hiring of two deans from underrepresented populations.

**Experience working with diverse student populations and an ability to communicate with and understand the needs of students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels**

As we launched CU, I applied and was accepted to participate in the AACSB Student Success Equity Intensive. This program allowed the CU team to assess all practices from an equity framework as we developed our new institutional processes. We are currently in year two of this data-informed transformation project, assisted by Gates Foundation funding. Our process incorporates deep listening to others’ experiences of racial injustice and supports creation of an anti-racist agenda as an integral piece of the foundation for the university. This work is allowing our team to identify our most challenging equity gaps and initiate structures that promote social justice practices across the multi-campus university. This, in turn, will help us narrow the retention and completion gap for underrepresented students. My experience in this arena would support your focused energy toward equity at Eastern Illinois.

**Experience managing and establishing priorities for complex budgets and a demonstrated ability to introduce and implement innovating funding initiatives**

I have the acumen to lead EIU as the university continues to strengthen its financial position. As provost as BU, I developed a strong partnership with BU’s Chief Financial Officer. We meet weekly to address the effective and efficient operation of the university. We collaboratively shared ongoing institutional budget

information monthly with the campus in our planning and budget committee. I have found this process helps support deeper understanding of faculty and staff as we strive to balance our budget. As the CAO for CU, I have developed a new budget moving the allocations from three universities into a new model for implementation that will create equitable allocations to support students and faculty. The new process will include an incentive budget process for departments that meet target recruitment and retention goals.

**Understanding of major fundraising initiatives and an ability to represent the university compellingly with stakeholders, alumni and donors**

Friend and fundraising are strengths I offer EIU. Most recently I supported my liberal arts dean in the development of a \$5.3 million gift for our Communications program. In addition, I helped facilitate a \$1,000,000 gift for the Honors College, and a \$500,000 foundation gift to support the SIM lab for Nursing. As a dean, I had the opportunity to lead a capital campaign for my college to support the infusion of educational technology throughout the curriculum. Finally, I have supported estate gifts to strategically fund scholarships for minority and returning adult education majors, provide opportunities for students to engage in international travel, and as an emergency fund for students in crisis through use of a \$2.2 million gift. I believe my past success in building relationships would allow me to grow the endowment and support the continued affordability of EIU via scholarship development.

**An ability to communicate effectively and build partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, union representatives, alumni, donors, business leaders and state policymakers**

I am one of two CAO's on the PASSHE negotiation team as we navigate the next faculty union contract. I also meet monthly with the presidents of all three unions (faculty, clerical, and professional staff) to support shared governance and promote alignment of practices post-merger. Input from both internal and external stakeholders is critical for CU's success. We are launching a new university senate in Spring 2023 to also support communication channels across our campuses. This model will support both local and cross-campus needs. I also work closely with the Council of Trust

**A strong commitment to shared governance and a willingness to circulate widely and listen carefully, including a commitment to collaboration and transparency in decision-making**

EIU has demonstrated success in shared governance, and as president I would continue this commitment. In developing CU, I have worked collaboratively to develop a new shared governance model that incorporated strengths from all three campuses. This new university senate includes both local campus and unified university structures to ensure individual campus needs come to the surface and are collaboratively addressed. It has membership from all areas of campus and will set all policies not impacted by a collective bargaining agreement. I also lead the "meet and discuss" process for faculty concerns specific to the faculty collective bargaining agreement and meet monthly with the presidents from all unions. I have also developed informal listening structures such as provost coffee hours that provide opportunities for all members of the campus community to meet informally to share ideas or discuss concerns. I also offer town halls to share critical information and gather feedback. Transparency has been critical while working through the merger to support all stakeholder through the transition.

**A commitment to, experience with, and understanding of the importance and significance of community engagement and the ability to collaborate effectively on region-wide initiatives**

A theme of my career has been a commitment to the regional mission of regional comprehensive public institutions like EIU, and I would work to ensure that EIU remain a strong leader in service to its region. While building CU I have been heavily engagement with our regional partners to better understand local and regional needs. I also participate in a variety of local community organizations including the chamber of commerce and women’s charitable organizations. As a provost and dean, I leveraged the strength of academic programs to provide additional resources to the community. For example, our counseling program provided low-cost services to the community. As president, I would be active in supporting alliances that promote mutual benefit and solutions for the region.

**A dedicated advocate for EIU with city and state government and business partners**

As president I would serve as a proud advocate for the institution. I understand the economic impact an institution like EIU has on the region. As a leader I am a visible presence on campus and in the community. My involvement at arts, athletics, and other events signals the importance of all aspects of university life in supporting the quality of life in the region. My passion for equity and social justice has helped change practices and policies in state government. For example, Missouri’s overreliance on expensive standardized assessments had disproportionately affected underrepresented students. As President of the state organization in educator preparation, I successfully led charge to make changes that supported diverse students while maintaining high standards and quality educators. I know I have the skills to assist the legislature in understanding how institutional objectives align to state and federal priorities and how resources support the EIU mission on behalf of Illinois’s citizens.

In closing, I am excited by the mission and vision demonstrated by Eastern Illinois University. It would be an honor to serve the students, Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and alumni. I believe my experiences illustrate how I would think and act strategically to position EIU within the state, national and international higher education environment. My curriculum vitae illustrates how my experiences to date have prepared me for service as your President. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

*Diana Rogers-Adkinson, Ph.D.*