

Dear Search Committee:

December 20, 2016

I would appreciate your consideration of my application for the position of Dean of the College of Education and Allied Professions (CEAP) at Western Carolina University. Currently, I serve as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in CEAP. I am confident that I possess the personal, academic, and administrative goals and experiences to allow for my success as a dean. My professional career in academia includes three universities: Western Carolina University, the University of Texas at Arlington, and Georgia Southern University. As a full-time administrator in CEAP, my primary role is that of an administrator, which includes a number of responsibilities: director of teacher and professional education, licensure officer, accreditation coordinator, and head of Suite 201. Additionally, I am a full professor in the School of Teaching and Learning, with the responsibility of teaching a 1:1 load in the middle grades program. I believe that I can make a strong case for consistent research and scholarship in my field, teaching effectiveness, institutional commitment, and national service to the field of middle grades education.

The associate dean position within CEAP has evolved since I was hired during the summer of 2012. At that time, I supervised two positions: licensure specialist and assessment director. My job duties included serving as director of teacher and professional education, licensure, assessment/reporting, accreditation, student affairs, curriculum, teaching one course per semester, and serving on/chairing various committees. I have continued those duties described above while also taking on a number of additional responsibilities. During the summer of 2013, we transitioned to what is now referred to as Suite 201. This unit came about as a result of our efforts to reorganize and facilitate major transitions in Teacher Recruitment, Advising, and Career Support (TRACS). A self-study and proposed reorganization took place throughout the first few months of 2013, during which time I met with all staff and facilitated a unit study of TRACS goals and objectives. Suite 201 includes fifteen staff who represent recruitment and retention efforts, field and clinical experiences, advising, assessment, licensure, special programs (e.g., the WHEE Teach Living Learning Community/student organization as well as the grant director for the Language Enhancement Afterschool Program, known as LEAP), technology, and induction support for beginning teachers in 18 partner school systems. I function as the unit head, team facilitator, and budget officer while leading our efforts to recruit, retain, and support students through program completion into the beginning years of teaching and beyond.

In addition to these duties, I coordinate teacher education and professional accreditation for the university. During September of 2015, we had a legacy visit for continuing NCATE (now Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation, CAEP) accreditation. This facilitation involves years of collaborating with programs in three colleges on the collection and analysis of key program assessments, while also guiding synthesis and interpretation of summative assessments (such as edTPA, for example) within teacher education. These efforts culminated in an institutional report, hundreds of exhibits, an addendum with additional data exhibits in response to an off-site review, as well as the facilitation of the final, onsite visit by the Board of Examiners. While a host of faculty and staff continually collaborated on this process over time, there is no way to briefly describe the enormity of the accreditation process. I should add that I have also reviewed programs for the Association for Middle Level Education from 2006 to 2015 and now serve as an accreditation site visitor for CAEP. All of these experiences have provided me with essential background, skills, and perspective needed for a deanship.

During my 17 years in academia I have persistently studied the research in my field, devoured the literature on young adolescents and middle grades education while engaging in research and collaborative writing projects with faculty and middle level teachers to inform my teaching and practice. I have presented annually at the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) conference since 1996, and have been involved in the joint American Educational Research Association (AERA)/AMLE SIG on Middle Level

Education Research (MLER) since its inception. At this time, I co-chair the educator development subgroup for the MLER SIG as we have redefined the research agenda for middle grades education (completed in fall, 2016). Over time, I have developed a network of colleagues in which to collaborate and share resources, which has provided leadership opportunities in a variety of organizations such as AACTE and the National Professors of Middle Level Education (NAPOMLE) group, the latter of which I was elected to serve as president through 2018. These experiences have greatly impacted both my teaching and scholarship. Furthermore, my experiences working with a variety of grade levels in both Texas and Indiana, as well as my experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, most certainly influenced my work to help develop teachers who have had a variety of rich clinical experiences and are globally-minded, consistently striving toward social justice in our schools and communities.

My work has been published in well-respected, peer-reviewed periodicals. *The Middle School Journal*, *Current Issues in Middle Level Education*, and the research summary series put out by the Association of Middle Level Educators (AMLE) are highly valued in the field of middle grades education. Three of the book chapters were edited by preeminent authors and researchers, requiring extensive peer-review and revision. In fact, both *Evaluating Teacher Education Programs Through Performance-Based Assessment* (2016) and *International Perspectives on Teaching in a Globalised World* (2013) required a blind review of proposals and chapter drafts prior to acceptance. In addition to collaborating with peers, I have also been first and sole author on a number of publications. The *CREATE Teacher Induction Study: The Relationship of Mentor Support to Novice Teacher Retention and Student Achievement* (2007) represents three years of work and two years of extensive research with 451 novice teacher participants. As a Co-PI on this study, I interviewed 117 of these teachers and contributed to the data analysis and report writing on the same level as the PIs for the study. Additionally, I have three manuscripts under review, two research projects underway, and one additional manuscript in preparation.

In addition to being an active researcher, I have been involved in a number of externally-funded grants. One large research project studied novice teacher retention in Texas, while another focused on implementation and study of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program in teacher education, and a third involved the development of gaming software for use with teacher preparation candidates. Most recently, I partnered with representatives from a local partner district and faculty/staff at WCU to secure an After School Quality Improvement Grant from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). The grant ends this year and we will complete an application for a new 21st Century Community Learning Center in January, 2017. This grant is sponsored by NCDPI and funded through the Department of Education, and would bring \$825,000 over a three-year period and offer continued support to our LEAP program. In short, I have been PI or Co-PI on grants totaling more than 2.4 million since 2003. I firmly believe that bringing external funds to the university significantly enhances the total student experience as well as our partnerships and engagement in the region, helping the university achieve its core values.

Another vital component of achieving our mission and core values is university service. I have demonstrated significant institutional commitment as an active and enthusiastic servant to the vision of this university. Since coming to Western Carolina, I served on the Campus Master Planning Committee as we worked with consultants and many university and community stakeholders to develop the new campus master plan. Over the course of 18 months, the committee engaged in extensive work by visiting every WCU building, facility, and property in an effort to gain a realistic sense of present and future needs, and develop a list of plan priorities. The committee developed an RFP, reviewed proposals, and worked with vendors over the course of a year, meeting with units and entities all over campus, reviewing maps, and designs before a final version was complete. During the summer of 2013, I chaired the search for a new Assistant/Associate

Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness. This search took place over three months and, because of the level of the position, required coordination with offices and groups all over campus. I have continued serving as a member of various search committees, including the Associate Dean of the Graduate School and the Associate Director of Employee Engagement for the Center for Career and Professional Development (both in 2016). Additionally, I have served on a wide variety of university groups: Registrar's Advisory Board, Student Community Ethics Hearing Board, and the Academic Space Committee. As Director of Teacher and Professional Education, I chair the WCU Professional Education Council.

From 2013-2015, I served as Provost Fellow for Curriculum and the responsibilities of that professional opportunity and service were extensive. Fellows received a course release each semester and although I did not teach during the 2013-2014 academic year, I did maintain all other job duties. As Provost Fellow, I was responsible for university curriculum review, program prioritization implementation, as well as the adoption and implementation of Curriculog, an online curriculum management system, adoption and implementation. The curriculum process included reviewing each and every curriculum proposal at WCU, including those for general and liberal studies education as well as forms required for University of North Carolina General Administration. During university program prioritization implementation, I worked to design templates and a handbook to guide university programs. I served as the liaison to those programs in the development and review of teach-out plans as well facilitation of the action plan process, including serving as chair of the Action Plan Task Force on our campus.

As a candidate for Dean of the College of Education and Allied Professions at Western Carolina University, I bring more than proficiency in managing programs and revising curriculum. I have extensive knowledge of and experience preparing reports and data analysis related to assessment and accreditation of professional programs at the college level. I have worked closely with chairs/department heads, associate deans, directors, faculty, and deans in these roles and have had the opportunity to observe and be mentored by several strong leaders. As mentioned earlier, I manage staff as head of Suite 201, the student support services unit for professional education, and have grown in my ability to lead a group of personnel and manage a large, state-funded budget for teacher recruitment, retention, and partnerships. I work diligently to be a strong advocate for my unit and for teacher and professional education as a whole. Suite 201 created a strategic plan in alignment with those of the CEAP and WCU and this document outlines goals and strategic actions in seven sections: recruitment, retention, clinical field experiences, assessment, licensure, beginning teacher support, and P-12 partnerships. Even further, I recently led the creation of a Teacher Recruitment Plan for the CEAP and two other colleges as part of our accountability to the University of North Carolina General Administration. The goals of both documents are aligned with the college and university strategic plans as well as state needs as they relate to teacher production, and the action plans outline personnel involved, completion dates, and evaluation methods. These concerted efforts to work collaboratively in order to provide strategic direction is exactly the kind and quality of work I will be responsible for as a dean. Because of these experiences I feel ready, lacking any apprehension, regarding my ability to move to the next level. I am not afraid to work hard as diligence, passion, and energy are key attributes that I bring to the table. As an active scholar, I feel comfortable promoting scholarly activity and grant writing. My curriculum vitae and a list of professional references are included with this application. I look forward to discussing my skills and other valuable experiences with you further. Please know that I would be happy to provide additional information upon request. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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