

Swagata Banik, M.Sc., Ph.D.

March 18, 2022

**Dear Members of the Search Committee
Dean of the College of Health Professions
Cleveland State University
Cleveland, Ohio**

I am honored and excited to submit my application for the Dean of the College of Health Professions (CHP) at Cleveland State University (CSU). As a future leader of the CHP at reimagined CSU 2.0, this position requires critical thought, a vision for the future of health profession education, collaborative leadership, community-engaged approaches to teaching, scholarship, research, and services, an interdisciplinary knowledge base, innovative enrollment and educational practices, and promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion. I have brought these principles to all aspects of my current role as the Dean of Graduate Studies & Research and, in my previous role, as the Chair of the Department of Public Health & Prevention Sciences at Baldwin Wallace University (BWU). In addition, I am the founding Director of the Center for Health Disparities Research & Education (CHDRE) at BWU. I have had extensive administrative and leadership experiences, and I see a strong fit between the position and my interdisciplinary experience gained over two decades in public health education, teaching, research, service, and academic leadership in diverse settings.

As a public health scholar who began his post-doctoral academic journey at CSU, I know the deep commitment of faculty and the valuable experiences that students encounter during their years as Cleveland State Vikings. One of my deepest professional dreams has been to return to CSU and to use my skills and expertise to give back to the health professions education that tremendously shaped who I am today as a leader, teacher, and researcher. As you will see by my *curriculum vitae*, I maintained an affiliate graduate faculty status at CSU until 2016. I have deep professional ties to Northeast Ohio healthcare organizations and communities, and would welcome the chance to work to sustain and elevate the incredible work being done by the faculty and students at CHP as CSU envisions to become a “beacon” institution as a leading urban research University.

Over the breadth of my career, I have built a proven record of visionary leadership based on collaboration, transparency, ethical principles, and strategic creativity. I believe that the single greatest strength of my leadership approach is my reliance on collaborative processes through committed partnerships. These themes have emerged time and time again in my higher education career as I have built a record of excellence in teaching,

scholarship, and leadership on the path to tenure and a full professorship at BWU. As a Chair, I have not only assembled a team of highly effective faculty and staff, but I have also mentored many of them through the tenure-track and promotion process. I helped grow the Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) program at BWU from the inaugural class of 3 in 2011 students to over 100 students in 2020, while teaching 15 credits or more /year. I led the development of the groundbreaking partnership between BWU and the MetroHealth System (MHS) that resulted in the establishment of a successful BWU-MHS Master of Public Health (MPH) Program. Besides managing the departmental budget, as a PI or Co-I, I managed several grants funded by NIH, CDC, HRSA, CNCS, other Government agencies, and private foundations. As a member of the leadership team within the College of Education & Health Sciences (CoEHS) at BWU, I have closely collaborated with the Chairs from the Department of Nursing, Department of Physician Assistant Program, Department of Speech and Communication Disorders, and the Department of Education to develop several interprofessional education (IPE) initiatives for MPH, PA, Nursing, Speech&Language Pathology, and MAED students. In addition to my role at BWU, I have been involved as an affiliate faculty member in Indiana University, University of Minnesota, and the University Hospitals.

In the wake of the COVID-19 and the emergence of digital opportunities for learning, higher education has entered a time of intense transformation that opens new possibilities for the more collaborative, dynamic, engaging scholarship even as it unsettles well-established institutional structures academic practices. Importantly, it allowed me to recognize the need to implement innovative strategies to offer educational support services to the students. As a Dean, I helped expand the on-campus housing for graduate students, secured 24/7 telemedicine services to meet students' mental health needs, and helped develop infrastructure, programming and policies to enrich graduate students' learning experience at BWU. I have helped transformed BWU's research & grants portfolio. My current role requires knowledge and experience in strategic areas, including strategic planning, management and forecasting, budgeting and financial management, graduate enrollment growth, continuous data review and analysis, planning and development of new programs, and assistance with several health sciences programs' accreditation. For successful outcomes in each area, I closely collaborate with the University Senate, Graduate Program Directors, Department Chairs, Dean and Associate Dean of each School or College, Provost, and the President's cabinet. In what follows, I briefly provide examples of significant accomplishments in response to the major roles included in the position description, linking my experiences and abilities to the competencies described.

Build a bold vision for and lead the CHP effectively: A successful Dean needs to be creative, agile and forward-thinking in the vision for the College, pursuing new avenues for financial development, increasing enrollment, retention and graduation of students, advocating for and supporting faculty & staff initiatives, and seeking opportunities to develop programs that are pedagogically sound and valuable both in the domestic and increasingly global spheres. At BWU, I have accomplished these goals and have created a vibrant department, a rich graduate student culture, and an increasingly successful Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. As a PI or Co-I, I was part of securing external funding in the amounts of over \$2.8 millions. To further experiential learning, community-based scholarships, and employment opportunities for our students, I frequently leverage the

appointment of diverse groups of adjunct and practitioner faculty and community leaders. Recently, I helped secure \$1.5 millions for an endowed Professor of Public Health sponsored by Medical Mutual of Ohio. In addition, I helped secure endowed scholarships for Public Health students. I currently collaborate with a national educational firm to develop and market HyFlex delivery of BWU's graduate curriculum. I currently serve as a member of the President's leadership team and have been involved in developing the next strategic plan for BWU. I would enjoy engaging faculty, students, staff, and community and healthcare industry partners in implementing a shared vision and strategic goals for the CHP that aligns with the strategic vision outlined in CSU 2.0.

Expand Academic Programming & Enrollment: Building new programs require calls for bold but unified vision through collaboration, analysis, structure and resources. This process requires a deep understanding of higher education's future and the ability to forecast the future climate for years to come. This knowledge will be critically important for the new Dean to grow the diversity of the curriculum offerings and the student population. This insight is particularly relevant in the field of fast-changing and evolving health professions. I have built a thriving undergraduate and graduate program at BWU. As a Dean, I have recently helped develop a new graduate program in Exercise Physiology, and certificates. I am currently facilitating the development of a graduate program in Nursing; a graduate program in Data Analytics; a graduate program in Population Health; and several graduate certificate programs. I helped develop affiliation agreements with four medical schools to secure early assurance agreements for our PHAP students. Three essential pillars of academia, which include leadership, collaboration, and innovation, bring together the foundation for the maximal learning potential of students through engaging practices within the classroom and community and industry partnerships, and allow each student to reach their fullest potential.

Advance research and scholarship: My dedication to, and genuine enthusiasm for, excellent scholarly work and research are immediately apparent with whom I interact. Serving as a mentor for and providing support to students and faculty colleagues on scholarly projects and grants are among the great joys of my academic life. I helped reshape the research and grants landscape of BWU, including the establishment of an interdisciplinary research council, an effective office of Research and Sponsored Programs, an internal grant review process, training, and professional development resources for faculty and student researchers, and developed several research partnerships with outside entities. As a result, BWU has experienced a 60% growth in grant applications by the faculty members to NIH, NSF, EPA, USDA, and others. I have strengthened BWU's research partnerships with the local hospitals and Medical Schools. As a leader of CHP, my goal will be to support ongoing research and expand and promote interdisciplinary research collaborations. My public health research expertise and connections not only will foster new connections and grant opportunities for colleagues at CHP but will also contribute to the development and growth of the new *Urban Public Health Institute* within CHP.

Clinical and Community Partnerships: As you will see from my CV, I have developed an extensive academic-clinical-community partnerships throughout my my research and academic careers across Northeast Ohio and beyond. I have strengthened BWU's research partnerships with the local hospitals and Medical Schools. For example, recently, I have provided leadership for BWU to be part of a regional grant application to the American Medical

Association (AMA) led by CWRU School of Medicine in partnership with the University Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic Foundation, The MetroHealth Systems, and Veteran Administration Hospitals. I helped develop unique partnerships with three medical schools to establish a Primary Healthcare Advancement Program (PHAP) at BWU. Several strategic initiatives, first as a Chair and currently as the Dean, I have implemented include partnerships with local high schools, summer camps for students from underprivileged backgrounds, health professions workshops for high school career counselors, weekend Public Health and Pre-Med clinics, partnership with some regional Colleges and health and social service agencies. Additionally, I facilitated partnerships formation with local and international community-based organizations and universities to facilitate student internships, placement, and faculty research collaborations.

Enhance the CHP's commitment to building a community that fosters, celebrates, and appreciates diversity and inclusion: Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are paramount to the prosperity of an organization. It goes beyond recruiting diverse employees and students to lay a solid foundation that not only invites but accepts everyone to the proverbial table. Within health and human services in particular, where questions of justice, equality, access, and fairness predominate, differences in viewpoint, socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability status, national or regional origin, and religious and cultural background support the development of a deep and thorough understanding of the healthcare and human service–related policies and their social implications. As a member of a minority community myself, I have considered the notions of DEI from a personal perspective. Yet, like many, I am a work in progress in building an understanding of my role in this process. My career to date has been devoted to these ideals, from my scholarship, which focuses specifically on stigma and health experiences among sexual and gender minority groups, to my professional service. I currently serve in BWU's Diversity & Equity Taskforce, which implements several innovative initiatives to foster diversity and equity across all sectors at BWU. I have successfully recruited excellent and diverse faculty, staff members, and students and contributed to the building an academic environment where diversity across curriculum, ideas and identities are celebrated.

An academic leader should also be a good educator and mentor. I get inspired by the exchanges of innovative ideas and diverse perspectives in our classrooms. The experiences throughout my career have helped me grow as a caring faculty member and a servant academic leader. I value consensus building through open and honest discussion and deliberation. In addition, my commitment to social justice and interdisciplinary approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of all people contribute to my leadership vision.

On a personal note, I am genuinely enthusiastic about the opportunity to lead the dynamic and growing CHP at CSU. As someone who graduated from a public university, I strongly value the quality and affordable education a public university provides. My cross-cultural and multidisciplinary experiences and expertise will help the CHP achieve the distinction, visibility, reputation, and success the university, faculty, staff, alumni, and students seek to attain.

I appreciate your consideration, and I look forward to furthering conversations with the search committee. I am happy to provide references upon request.

Sincerely,



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Professor, Public Health & Prevention Sciences
Director, Center for Health Disparities Research & Education
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