

March 4, 2022

Dear Search Committee Members:

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my application for the position of dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Cleveland State University. I hold a PhD in United States History from the University of Cincinnati. In 2007, I was promoted to the rank of full professor at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. During my career, I have held several administrative positions, rising from department chair to associate provost and to dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, which is the largest college at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL), located in the state's most diverse city. I am applying, because I believe that my commitments to academic excellence; to student-centered higher education; to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and to innovation along with my experiences, skills, and vision for a brighter future will help Cleveland State University grow and develop. We are in a historic moment that requires us to be bold, strategic, and inclusive so that universities can be engines for economic growth, forces for social betterment, and institutions of the American dream.

So, why another deanship? I am drawn to this position, because it affords a unique and exciting opportunity to build a new college. Collaborating in teams, we would establish the college's culture, set policies and procedures, serve our students, and create a leadership team, all within a framework of inclusion, equity, and diversity. In other words, we have a chance to fashion a college, ready for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st Century, grounded in CSU values and promoting student success and enhanced DEI efforts, in alignment with CSU 2.0. With a mix of boldness and practicality, I would lead CSU's new College of Arts and Sciences to establish a vision as well as strategic priorities so that we can accelerate Cleveland State University's pace of transformation.

Why Cleveland State University? I am inspired by CSU 2.0 and by the goals for establishing the University as a premiere, urban higher education institution for the 21st Century. The leadership profile presents an amazing opportunity to bring together all aspects of the college into a wholistic planning framework to develop the University in terms of student achievement, research and creative activity, and community impact. I have had extensive experiences with academic strategic planning and implementation at several institutions. Most recently, I was involved deeply in the development and implementation of the strategic plan at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. As an urban, research institution much like Cleveland State University, UMSL focused on many goals including: improving student access and success; narrowing achievement gaps; creating more degree flexibility; expanding the research portfolio; capitalizing on interdisciplinary teaching and research; and fostering an inclusive community where all students—no matter who they are or where they come from—are welcomed. As dean, I would work collaboratively and within the traditions of shared governance to implement CSU 2.0. Together we can capture the momentum and launch into the future to grow enrollment, to raise retention and graduation rates, to expand research and creative activity, to advance the college culture of inclusion, and to build stronger partnerships in the community. Cleveland State University will become the exemplar of a 21st Century urban, research university.

Building upon my experiences as a dean at UMSL and the University of Idaho, I would set diversity, equity, and inclusion as the framework for the new College of Arts and Sciences. In other words, I would champion DEI efforts. We would work collectively to employ strategies so that the college has an inclusive teaching and learning environment. At UMSL, we implemented several programs and innovations to help provide a sense of belonging and foster student achievement. For example, on the fifth anniversary of the killing of Michael Brown, I led a team in the College of Arts and Sciences to create the first Common Read program at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, dealing directly with justice issues and the justice system. Our book was *If Beale Street Could Talk*. As we implemented the program, I thought we would be happy if a few first-year courses adopted the book and engaged in the related programs. I was surprised to find that more than 50 classes assigned the book and 1000 students read the book. Our co-curricular and community programs, including film screenings, lectures, and an hour-long interview on St. Louis Public Radio, were highly successful. Similarly, in the Spring of 2020, I led a team in the College of Arts and Sciences to create an event for the growing Hispanic population of St. Louis to introduce them to the university. The inaugural Día Familiar was successful beyond my expectations as more families participated than we had anticipated. We were expecting 20 families to attend, and more than 50 did. And, we increased the admission of students of Hispanic heritage.

In terms of student success and with an eye toward equity and inclusion, as dean at UMSL, I have supported several initiatives to improve student achievement. The first thing that I did was implement a college-wide review of curriculum focusing on time to degree and course-level student learning outcomes. This review, which was done in close collaboration with the provost's office, not only streamlined all degree paths while reducing overall time to degree, but it also exposed degree bottlenecks. By using Starfish Analytics, we identified several courses that needed special attention such as Calculus I and General Chemistry. Collaborating with department chairs, faculty, and the UMSL Center for Teaching and Learning, I established several faculty learning communities that worked diligently and successfully to improve the teaching and learning environment for many courses. The results have been terrific and have helped establish UMSL as the national leader among our peers with a 62% graduation rate and an 81% first year retention rate.

DEI also frames my approach to recruiting and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators. As dean, and as a co-PI of an NSF ADVANCE grant, we not only provide professional development for search committees, but we also make sure that we reach into all disciplinary, interdisciplinary and professional networks so that we broadcast widely our employment opportunities and make them well-known and easily accessible. This NSF ADVANCE grant has also given us an opportunity to review and revise departmental by-laws and promotion and tenure procedures. Finally, even before our new hires are on campus, we help them connect with others who share common areas of teaching, research, and community involvement. These early engagements become the foundation for developing new faculty and staff. Once on campus, it is important to continue to provide networking, professional development opportunities, and mentoring. Taken together, these elements – a DEI framework, networking, and mentoring – have allowed me as dean to hire talented individuals, foster a supportive culture, and move new hires (both faculty and staff) toward promotions. During the last four years as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UMSL, we have used this method to hire nearly 40 faculty and 20 staff members. Of the faculty, 49% were women, and 30% have a

diverse background. Of the staff members, 85% were women, and 25% have a diverse background. We have also been successful in establishing a new faculty network and a new staff network for new hires to help people adjust.

Owing in part to the connections we have built with new faculty, we have been able to increase our research, scholarship, and creative activities. At the University of Idaho and at UMSL, we have been successful in taking advantage of edge-funding and sabbaticals to promote more scholarship and creative activities. Additionally, I have placed an emphasis on interdisciplinary grants, particularly from federal agencies. For example, in the Dean's Office, we have been coordinating a two-part grant process with the federal Economic Development Agency, which would fund the creation of a digital twin of St. Louis to aid the city's goal of equitable development. We secured the planning grant and are now applying for the implementation grant. Overall, the promotion of grant and scholarly activities, some through interdisciplinary teams, has produced impressive results. From 2020 to 2021, we increased the dollar amount of proposals by 81% from \$21 million to \$57 million. At UMSL, I have also encouraged new ways of thinking so that community-engaged research and scholarship are valued. UMSL is an R2 with an anchor mission. As such, I have begun a process with department chairs to revise by-laws and research supports to make the college's environment more inclusive in terms of research agendas and more connected to the communities that surround us.

The new research as well as new teaching initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences at UMSL has allowed us to strengthen and promote collaborations across UMSL. Let me provide two examples. Recently, an alumna who is an assistant vice president at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, asked me to help lead an effort to create a graduate certificate in personal finance education. Working with a team from my college and UMSL's College of Education, we have built the nation's first collaborative certificate program between a university and a federal reserve bank. Another example of collaboration that strengthens ties across the university and with the community deals with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA). The NGA is now building a new campus in St. Louis. This \$2.7 billion facility is the largest single federal investment in the area and will create thousands of new jobs in the advanced, geospatial technology ecosystem. Our response in UMSL's College of Arts and Sciences was to build a new center, the UMSL Geospatial Collaborative, which not only works with corporate partners like ESRI but also with faculty at UMSL including those in the College of Business Administration, the College of Education, the College of Nursing, and the College of Optometry on issues ranging from supply chain to the evaluation of eyesight.

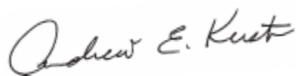
Some partnerships have created opportunities for new revenue streams and opportunities for fundraising. As dean at UMSL, I have worked diligently to seek new funds in both traditional and innovative ways. Since the pandemic started, many corporations are seeking new avenues to build talent pathways into high tech jobs. Recently, Verizon approached me with an opportunity to help them provide an educational experience to low-income residents of St. Louis and accelerate them into jobs that require significant technological components. Right now, we are launching a program to train more junior full stack developers. Verizon is funding the instruction. Graduates of the program will immediately begin working at Verizon, and because we are structuring the curriculum, these new Verizon employees will have the opportunity to have their experiences credentialed at UMSL using credit for prior learning, thus setting them on a path toward a computer science degree.

Our efforts at workforce integration have enhanced relationships and allowed for increased donations through private philanthropy. I have nearly eight years of experience in developing external relationships and successfully soliciting outside resources to support the institution. As a college dean at both the University of Idaho and at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, I have held primary responsibilities for fundraising and external partnerships. Working in concert with college-based development directors, I raised millions of dollars over the past eight years. As Dean at the University of Idaho, my development officer and I raised a total of \$6.7 million in private donations to my college in the fiscal years ending in 2015, 2016, and 2017. In 2017, we raised \$3.4 million alone, which was a growth of 179% over the prior year. 41% of donors were new donors. Additionally, in 2017, my development officer and I booked a \$10 million estate gift to the University. At UMSL, my development team and I raised an average of \$1.5 million per year in scholarships and program support, including an \$800,000 gift in 2020 to support a center for world ecology in the college. We raised a record amount this past year during the pandemic, \$1.8 million.

The future and continued upward trajectory for Cleveland State University are eminently achievable through collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators not only within the college but also across campus and in the community. That collaborative spirit rests in large part on a culture of collegiality, empathy and mutual respect. As dean, I will be dedicated to engagement with shared governance, to transparency, and to open communication. Inclusive decision-making is foundational as we reach out to build bridges for the next stage of development and to bring along our stakeholders. As an academic leader, I pride myself on being forward-thinking and optimistic. I thrive on big challenges and would expect that we would all see the *urgency* of this moment in time and work relentlessly toward our planning goals; that we would all be *curious* about ideas and open to various ways of implementing our plans; and that we would approach our work — if not our lives — with *joy* and share uplifting and supporting views with others. I feel that these imperatives are key for us to endure the pandemic and emerge ready for growth. Finally, I consider myself a person who values community, who approaches life with respect for others and with a healthy dose of humor, and who is loyal, honest, and trustworthy. In all things, I try to model the attitudes and behaviors that I expect from others.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to furthering the conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Andrew E. Kersten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrew" being more prominent.

Andrew E. Kersten