

# LINDA THOMPSON



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January 29, 2021

President Search Committee  
Westfield State University

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

With this cover letter and the enclosed *curriculum vitae*, I would like to indicate my candidacy for the position of **President of Westfield State University**. My background in university and public policy leadership makes me uniquely qualified to lead Westfield State University into a bright future where faculty, students and staff can reach their goals.

This is a time of extraordinary opportunity for regional universities to address the “Grand Challenges” of higher education: student success, financial health, reputation and relevance to the community, and, external competition. As President, I will work collaboratively to advance a vision of a fully engaged community partner, organized with a global focus, recognized for innovative student-centered academic programs, inquiry and engagement opportunities to meet the workforce and research needs of the region, the nation and abroad.

Permit me to summarize the philosophy and experience I bring to this opportunity.

My academic and administrative philosophy is student and faculty-centered; grounded in principles of social justice and human rights. I believe, like Horace Mann, in the ideals of the public university. The public university is the secular anchor of our culture, the foundation of our democracy whose general mission encourages societal improvement, community building and democratic development. The university trains our leaders and prepares its students for the responsible exercise of citizenship. Education is intrinsically valuable; it transforms people and prepares them for a lifetime of change and transformation. While this has always been true, it is more critical today as new technologies are developed, new social problems emerge, and ethical issues command attentions unimagined in the past.

If we are to prepare students to create a world where problems are recognized, studied, and debated, then we must practice these principles ourselves. I have a strong commitment and clear record on shared governance, collaborative partnerships and outreach scholarship. I am open, both to new ideas and diverse views and encourage a climate where different opinions are valued and accepted. I encourage debate and work to develop consensus and participatory decision-making. I have an orientation toward careful strategic processes with decisions based on information, study and consultation. I am committed to open and honest dialogue in the budget process as well as an open

door policy that empowers students, faculty and staff voices illustrating that the role of administration is to serve students, faculty and community. My leadership style is grounded in these tenets.

Student learning is the primary focus of any institution of higher learning. Consequently, all other activities, be they on behalf of faculty or administrators, must serve to attain the end of high quality, and continually improved, student learning. Westfield State must continue to collaborate with K-12 partners to develop talented students, encourage high expectations and give young people the "smart" tools for success. Many undergraduate students in regional universities are the first generation in their families to go to college and may work to pay for their education. Since public universities are in the business of transforming lives, student success will be the charge of everyone at Westfield State University.

Here are some Key Highlights of my achievements:

- Led development of an innovative pipeline program with Ford Motor, UAW and Henry Ford Hospital for displaced auto workers.
- Successfully secured over \$35M in external funding from individuals, corporations, foundations and government agencies while Dean at Oakland University
- Led development of internal and external collaborative partnerships to meet regional and organizational health and workforce needs through inter-professional translational research, practice and education.
- Influential consultant for decision-makers from the local level to the White House.
- Academic and administrative support, management, planning, and direction, with a focus on programs and prospects presenting the most opportunity for University expansion and excellence.
- Confident leadership of large, complex organizations and budgets, having directly overseen large staffs, multimillion-dollar budgets, and multiple campuses.
- Led the development and implementation of an inclusive strategic plan at the School, College and University level; accountable for all academic policy and program development, evaluation, and redesign.
- Substantially increased enrollment across undergraduate, graduate, and transfer student populations while simultaneously improving admission standards; revamped 15 policies across student admission, progression, and academic standing.
- Successfully increased diversity of students and faculty at both Oakland and West Chester University.
- Overhauled the development process for online, Web-based courses and managed a wide-ranging technology implementation initiative.
- Gained support of the American Council of Education for launch of a global intellectual exchange culture; introduced a living learning community program for honors and STEM students.
- Secured substantial grant funding, including \$6M in National Science Foundation funding for research, development, and implementation of HBCU Undergraduate Program (UP), North Carolina Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (NCLSAMP) Bridge to the Doctorate Fellowship, and TALENT 21 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs.

- Engaged in regional accreditation with Middle States, North Central, SACS; professional accreditation for most Allied Health including nursing, environmental health, public health, respiratory therapy, nutrition, kinesiology and athletic training.

## **Key Background and Accomplishments**

As reflected in my curriculum vitae, I bring over thirty years of academic and administrative experience in significant leadership positions in large, complex organizations.

Currently, I serve as the Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Science at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. As Dean, I recently led a strategic planning process that started with a vision of becoming a top 10 urban public research college of Nursing and Health Sciences in the United States. It was decided that the mission was to prepare a diverse population of students dedicated to the advancement of policies and practices that contribute to the greater health of individuals and the equitable distribution of health across populations. This mission will be achieved through the promotion of health equity, social justice, and population-based health. Five strategic goals were identified to achieve in three years: attract dynamic and diverse talent; promote academic equity and success; insist on/promote excellence in research and science; encourage innovative educational technology; and expand capital resources and infrastructure.

Other selected accomplishments include the following:

- Expanded hires of diverse faculty and professional staff; increased enrollment of black male students in nursing.
- Developed health and wellness learning community for first year student.
- Secured new student scholarship support of close to \$1 million from individuals, foundations and the health care industry and secured new philanthropic revenue streams for faculty.
- Expanded international collaborations with Brazil, Scotland, Northern Ireland and, Malawi.
- Collaboration was initiated with Verizon in the design of innovative educational and practice methods using 5G technology.
- Created an infrastructure to expand faculty research through mentoring and focused research cluster.
- Renovation of new clinical education space with state of the art laboratories simulating acute hospital and primary care settings.
- Created new collaborative partnerships with South Shore Health, Boston Medical Center, Nizhoni Health, the Mass Coalition of Community Health Center
- Developed faculty research scientist partnerships with New England Baptist Hospital, the VA and Brigham.
- Expanded new academic programs including psychiatric nurse practitioner, public health, and a 12 month on-line second degree in nursing.

## **Prior Higher Education Accomplishments**

Dean of the College of Health Sciences at West Chester University

Led a College with six (6) departments: Communication Disorders, Health, Kinesiology, Nursing, Nutrition and Sports Medicine. The college had close to 3,000 students and 200 faculty and staff, and offers 15 undergraduate, 16 graduate and one doctoral program.

Accomplishments included:

- Secured state funding for new Health Science Building.
- Secured funding to develop Mental Health First Aid Program for Chester County Public School System and creation of Contemplative Studies Center
- Secured seed funding to implement chronic disease prevention and management program for University faculty and staff in partnership with Human Resources
- Started the first Doctoral Program on the campus
- Expanded Faculty-led Study Abroad programs with Hong Kong, England, Spain, Italy, Turkey, South Africa and India.
- Led efforts to create inter-professional education and research programs within the College and University
- Expanded on-line and off-campus programs as well as partnerships with local community colleges
- Developed collaborative partnerships with Mainline Health, Chester County Hospital, the Brandywine Health Foundation and Government Agencies to improve Health as well as to increase diversity of the health care workforce.
- Created student and faculty success committee; focus on mentoring, increasing diversity and reducing gap in retention for minority populations.

#### Dean and Professor of the School of Nursing at Oakland University

I led the strategic planning effort for the School of Nursing obtaining input from faculty and staff, alumni and current students, key community leaders, academic leaders on campus and the health care industry.

This effort resulted in the establishment of four strategic initiatives: educational innovation and leadership; research centers of excellence focused on leadership and innovation and geriatric nursing; collaborative partnerships; and securing resources for a new building.

Other accomplishments included: achieving North Central Commission Accreditation to offer on-line education; collaboration with collective bargaining team to incorporate on-line course development and teaching into the contract; one hundred percent increase in our student population; opening of two off-campus simulation education centers; opening of a health career workforce education center; opening of satellite programs in Macomb County, Wayne County, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Marquette, Michigan and Washington D.C.; opening of the first Doctorate in Nursing Practice program in the State of Michigan; obtaining two endowed professorships, one in geriatrics and the second in leadership and management; obtaining two federal earmarks grants totaling \$500,000, one to open a simulation laboratory and the second to create a center for pre-symptom health and societal health research; state funding of \$40 million to build a human health building; and finally, increased recognition of the school by receiving national awards and recognition.

These accomplishments resulted in the School's nurse anesthesia program being ranked 6th in the nation by US News and World Report. The School was also recognized as a leader in the study of

children's' mental health and geriatric health care. In addition, I generated over \$30M dollars in external funds dedicated to supporting the advancement of the School of Nursing. My accomplishments in Higher Education resulted in my receiving the *Distinguished Leadership Award in Education* by the Michigan Business and Professional Association.

#### Chief Academic Officer at North Carolina A and T State University

Led the Strategic Planning process for the University and convened key University and Community Stakeholders in the development of the vision--Preeminence 2020. Six key goals were identified with specific strategies to meet these goals. I also collaborated with academic deans in the effort required by legislations to reduce the Academic Affairs budget by \$10M and eliminate 8 academic programs with low enrollment for the past ten years.

#### **Non-Academic Administrative Positions**

For the State of Maryland, I occupied two senior executive positions. I was appointed by Maryland Governor Parris Glendening as the Special Secretary for Children, Youth and Families. In this cabinet level position, I was the chief policy advisor to the Governor, chaired an interagency sub-cabinet which included the Secretaries of Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources, Juvenile Justice, Community and Urban Development, Developmental Disabilities and the Superintendent of Education and managed an interagency budget of \$100M and 1,000 state employees and volunteers to achieve eight statewide results for children.

I also served in Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke's cabinet as Director of the City's Office of Occupational Medicine and Safety. In this capacity, I managed the health and safety program for the city workforce of over 26,000 employees including, police officers, fire fighters, public works employees and teachers. Activities of this office included: health care services for injured workers, pre-employment physicals, injury investigation and surveillance, implementation of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and regulations, and coordination with workers compensation litigation and risk management.

In addition, I collaborated with the various city unions and department heads and advocacy organizations to implement new programs to promote the health and safety of the workforce and key new federal legislation including: reduction of workers compensation cost to the tax-payers by \$1.2M by implementing: a disabilities management program; the American's with Disabilities Act; a random drug testing program; and a program to reduce risk of HIV/AIDs.

#### **Accomplishments as a Scholar and Service on Boards**

I was one of the first nurses to assess the characteristics of incarcerated youth, risk factors for delinquent behavior, and the importance of collaborative partnerships to promote healthy behaviors. This seminal research was essential in the development of national policy to require mental health assessments of all detained and adjudicated youth. Further, this work led to my advocacy on behalf of vulnerable populations of children and the importance of the design of integrated, multidisciplinary models to promote the health and safety of children.

I earned BSN and MSN degrees at Wayne State University (MI), and Masters and Doctoral degrees in Public Health from The Johns Hopkins University (MD). I have a significant and productive full-time faculty career and am widely published.

My expertise and leadership skills have engendered respect and recognition among other leaders as attested to by my election to chair the Urban League Board in Maryland, invitation by President Clinton to participate in the White House Conference on Childcare, and selection by the White House Initiative on HBCU's to participate in a mission to Brazil. Most recently, I was inducted into Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society and was granted an honorary professorship from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Nursing and Health Science. I currently serve on the Board of Directors for the South Shore Health System.

My entire career has been marked by an ability to build bridges between individual faculty and administrative units; to initiate new innovative programs; to mentor faculty and students; to support diversity; to encourage educational, service and research endeavors; to leverage partnerships with civic and political leaders for fundraising; to manage resources well; and to make decisions based on both open discussion and data.

In closing, I believe that I am uniquely suited to put Westfield State University on a path to becoming a financially-sound, community-engaged university with a reputation for academic excellence. With new external pressures on public Universities to compete effectively for resources, to grow as a research university, to partner in community economic development, and to raise private funds to support Westfield's mission, the next President will need to focus on its strengths and opportunities to reach the next level of excellence.

Sincerely,



Linda Thompson  
Enclosures