

May 1, 2019

Mr. Bill Blackburn
Chair
Presidential Search Committee
Oakland City University
138 N Lucretia Street
Oakland City, IN 47660

Dear Mr Blackburn,

As a leader in higher education with 20 years of executive level experience, I would like to submit my letter of application and resume for the position of president of Oakland City University. I currently serve as Vice President for University Advancement at Winona State University, a comprehensive liberal arts university with the Minnesota State System with an enrollment of over 8,000 students at three campuses across Minnesota. I oversee the divisions of Development, Alumni Relations, Governmental Relations, Marketing and Communications. Winona State is a university with national distinction. *US News and World Reports* ranks Winona State University as the #1 university in the Minnesota State system and WSU leads the system in the areas of academic reputation, student retention and graduation, and job placement. Winona State is in the southeast region of Minnesota and is a vital partner in the economic development of the region. Winona State holds the Community Engagement Classification from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. WSU participates in the NCAA Division II Northern Sun Conference with 13 intercollegiate teams.

Private, Christian institutions have always held a special place in my heart as evidenced by my association with institutions such as Wake Forest, Presbyterian College, and Shorter University. I have spent the last thirteen years in the public higher education arena which has provided me a unique insight into the perception of higher education from state and business leaders. This time has allowed me the opportunity to oversee and manage two university foundation boards as chief executive officer. Still, my heart is drawn to the private, Christian institution and I long for a return to a place like Oakland City. I have deep Baptist roots and therefore have a unique affinity for Oakland City and its strong connection with General Baptists. I also am impressed with OCU's commitment to innovation. Oakland City has embraced innovation in way that other Christian colleges and universities have not. Your multi-campus structure and investment in online education sets OCU apart. Still, you have maintained your Christian heritage and values. I think that Oakland City could be the model for the Christian university in the 21st century.

My background in higher education has afforded me the opportunity to gain experience in a wide range of institutional areas including academics, development, enrollment management, strategic planning, fiscal management, and community engagement. I am student-focused servant leader who thinks and acts strategically and believes in collegiality, shared governance, and fiscal transparency. Examples of some of my career accomplishments are as follows:

- Service as a faculty member, an academic dean, a fundraiser/external relations officer, and CEO of two university foundations.
- 20 years of experience as Vice President at three institutions of higher education.
- More than \$35 million in student scholarships generated.
- \$300 million in funds raised for four institutions.

- Double-digit percent increases in annual giving at all three institutions I served as VP for Advancement.
- Part of an executive team that doubled student enrollment from 3500 to 7000 at Southern Polytechnic State University over a seven-year period.
- Converted the Winona State recruitment marketing operations from print to primarily digital media content which saved money and increased prospective student coverage.
- Served on the management team that developed SPSU Online, a separate entity within the university, to handle all the online educational offerings of the university from single courses to full online degrees.
- Connected with three institutions which had multiple campus sites focused on the non-traditional learner. My marketing team successfully managed the recruitment marketing and branding for these off-campus sites.
- Built new campus housing enterprises at three institutions which increased enrollment.
- Creation of multiple community partnerships including study exchange programs, entrepreneurial work space/incubators, work force development programs, and public/private partnerships for mixed use commercial developments.

Academics. I have been a teaching faculty member at all my institutions even as a fulltime administrator. Teaching has been the central focus of institutions I have served. As a faculty member and an academic administrator, I developed an understanding of the complexities of the academic program and I would welcome the opportunity to work with the faculty in creating, developing, and sustaining a necessary balance between traditional inquiry, innovative instruction, and professional preparation. I believe that the faculty is responsible for the direction and shaping of the academic curriculum and I would enjoy assisting the Oakland City faculty in that endeavor.

I have experience with institutions with a central campus and several off-campus sites. Shorter University had business and education programs in Marietta, Georgia and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Southern Poly had a state wide mission to bring applied science and technology to the State of Georgia so we offered multiple programs and partnerships through our technical college system. Winona State operates six off-campus sites throughout southeastern Minnesota with our main off-campus site in Rochester. All these programs focused on the needs and education of non-traditional students. My marketing team provided the recruitment marketing and branding for all of these off-campus sites. I taught in the off-campus programs at Shorter and Southern Poly. I understand the structure of Oakland City well and believe that it is a strong model for future higher education.

I have experience in raising the academic reputation of an institution. At SPSU, we transformed the institution into a first-choice institution, even in the shadow of Georgia Tech. We capitalized on our applied, experiential, and hands-on educational experience and through unique recruitment and branding efforts raised the institution's academic reputation even in a busy academic market like Atlanta. We also developed an extensive online campus which offered degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Our delivery method enhanced both the quality of the online delivery as well as the financial efficiency and return on investment.

At Winona State University, working with our College of Business and College of Science and Engineering, I have led our WSU foundation to begin the WarriorsINNOVATE challenge and establish a co-op work space in Winona, MN. Our College of Business students manage several companies in Winona. Our WSU Foundation has established a program where final year students in finance manage over \$150,000 of the foundation's endowment. I find this ability to combine the tenets of the liberal arts tradition with the practical experience of experiential learning to be a great educational model. A transformative education such as this comes first from a willingness to engage in transforming the structure that delivers that education. I have encouraged the development of career pathways which

parallel the academic curriculum as one means of transformative structural change. Oakland City, especially your off-campus sites, would benefit from such a structure because your students are focused on their careers.

Development: I have served in the development and fundraising role at four institutions where I oversaw all aspects of fund raising including annual giving, capital campaigns, planned giving, event planning, corporate and foundation relations, and endowment management. I have developed, implemented, and managed campaigns ranging from \$30 million to \$172 million, created new effective vehicles for engaging prospective donors. All three institutions which I have served as VP for Advancement have experience double-digit percent increases in their annual giving. Southern Polytechnic moved from the bottom of the University System of Georgia to being number six out of 36 institutions, many of which were much larger universities. In my short tenure at Winona State, we have launched four mini-campaigns which upon completion will become the largest campaign in the institution's history and increase annual giving to the university by 75%. Winona State has averaged about \$3 million/year in annual giving, but this past fiscal year, Winona State recorded its largest philanthropic annual giving of over \$7.2 million.

Enrollment Management: Enrollment management is a complex issue that requires a multi-pronged strategic plan. At Southern Poly, our executive team grew enrollment by 100% over a seven-year period. This enrollment growth occurred due to many initiatives including a significant branding campaign, significant increases in strategic scholarships, new marketable degree programs, extensive retention efforts, the addition of key facilities (mainly new housing), an emphasis on athletics, and recruitment penetration into new prospective student markets. Part of the strategy at Southern Poly was an increase in retention and graduation rates. Our early warning systems and professional advisor program helped us increase graduation rates from 32% to over 57% in seven years. At Winona State, we have experienced a plateauing of enrollment. My team is leading a new recruitment marketing campaign to stabilize enrollment which utilizes both digital marketing and a return to relational recruiting. **WSU leads the Minnesota State system in retention and graduation rates**, but we strive to be better by instituting co-curricular transcripts, digital certifications, and career advising.

Strategic Planning and Fiscal Management: I have led in the strategic planning efforts at all my institutions have overseen. I have developed seven strategic plans and managed the implementation and operationalization of many of those plans. Currently, I have been appointed by the president to lead the WSU's long-range strategy committee. **I believe that strategic planning must be coupled with continual agile planning in order to adapt effectively to the changing environment of higher education.**

Winona State and Southern Polytechnic allowed me the opportunity to not only lead its fundraising efforts but to oversee the fiscal management of the university's foundation. As CEO of the foundation, I work with board members who are involved in the management of endowed funds, campaign fundraising, student housing, and acquisition and development of properties on behalf of the university. At SPSU, the foundation purchase much-needed property contiguous to the University and engaged in public/private mixed-use develop project which enhanced the quality of life for our university as well as provide financial revenues for the foundation and the university. I am leading the Winona State Foundation to do the same through our new Experiential Living Task Force. I practice fiscal responsibility, conservative budgeting, and ethical policies and procedures in handling the financial administration of these foundations.

Community Engagement: Another major responsibility of a university president/chancellor is to advance the institution both on campus and in the larger community. In my job as the primary external affairs officer of the university, I maneuver daily between civic groups, alumni events, chamber of

commerce receptions, the system office, the legislative bodies, industry associations, and community dinners, as attendee, lobbyist, and speaker. Winona State operates branch campuses in three southeast Minnesota cities. I lead my division's efforts in the Southeast Minnesota Enterprise Group which addresses the economic and educational needs of the region through a collaborative effort between Winona State and three regional community colleges. I work closely with state legislators on economic development partnerships and workforce development. At Southern Poly, I helped establish the relationships and articulation agreements with Georgia's technical colleges which created a solid pipeline of transfer students.

Though my job duties push me off campus, I routinely make a special effort to involve myself in the internal life of the university. Whether it is teaching a class in the sociology of science and technology, meeting regularly with deans and department chairs, serving as a faculty representative for a student group, or just walking around the campus and sticking my head in an office to say "hello," I find these efforts to be necessary, worthwhile, and rewarding.

I believe a revolution is coming to higher education. Declining number of high school graduates, educational competition from corporate universities like Google, Ernst and Young, and IBM, the demand for individualized learning and degrees, and a generation of students who will need more holistic advising (academic, career, wellness) will alter the ways higher education does business. Oakland City University has demonstrated its ability to innovate and that innovation must continue. We must examine new forms of credentialing including certifications, badging, strategic minors, degree completion, three-year baccalaureate degrees and four or five year master degrees as a viable segment of degree offerings. We will need to offer holistic advising (academic, career, and wellness) from professional advisors or an advising team. We must determine the optimal synchronization between higher education as a public good, a private gain, and a region's economic generator as a new model for private higher education. We must develop new streams of revenue to supplement reliance on tuition dollars.

A revolution is coming in higher education and Oakland City has an advantage: the ability to offer all these innovations in a Christian environment. An environment guided by the gospel message of Jesus Christ where love, grace, servant leadership, and respect are infused into the university's vision, structure, and relationships. Oakland City University has the opportunity to be the model for the Christian university in the 21st century.

I am sure that Oakland City University has a bright future, but that future is dependent on how its leaders choose to address the coming revolution. I would be honored to engage with Board of Trustees, faculty, students, and staff in such a future as your president because of the university's commitment to addressing these challenges, to delivering a life-changing educational experience for its students in a faith-based environment, and to hiring and keeping excellent faculty members who are committed to maintaining a strong academic reputation and educating students for a life of significance.

I thank you for your consideration of my application. I have enclosed a copy of my resume and references. If you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron D. Dempsey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ron D. Dempsey