

October 3, 2022

Dr. Richard A. Wueste
AGB Search, Executive Search Consultant

Dear Dr. Wueste,

I am pleased to submit this letter of interest, a curriculum vitae, and a list of four references in support of my application for the position of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Emporia State University (ESU). I hold a terminal degree in my discipline (PhD, Biology), and my curriculum vitae provides a detailed record of my teaching, service, and research experiences.

I was hired at the rank of Associate Professor in the ESU Department of Biological Sciences at the beginning of the Fall semester of 2006. I have served in many different roles (e.g., faculty, department chair, dean, and interim provost and VP academic affairs) at ESU. In addition, I have lived in the city of Emporia for about 17 years. During that time, I believe that I have demonstrated strong dedication and commitment to the value of a ESU's collaborative links with the community that we serve, and I have a record of frequent and meaningful communication and engagement with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and members of our community.

Serving as either a department chair or a dean at ESU for nearly 14 years, I have established a long and largely successful record of working collaboratively with several university presidents, multiple provosts, numerous past and present academic deans, department chairs, faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and members of our community to advance the academic mission of our university. In addition, I have extensive experience managing budgets at the both the departmental and college level. Sadly, I also have many years of experience with managing declining budgets and addressing budget shortfalls that have only become increasingly more difficult and painful with time. As funding from traditional sources has continued to decline, philanthropic giving has become increasingly important to help support our academic mission. As a dean, I have significant experience with donor relations and have established a successful record of collaboration with the ESU foundation. Some examples include the establishment of endowed professorships, numerous scholarships, several high-impact learning funds, a unique pre-medical fellowship program, and obtaining funds for the construction of the Prophet Aquatic Research and Outreach Center (the only academic building at ESU built with philanthropic funding).

In addition, I have a record of collaborating with faculty and department chairs across the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in the development of new academic programs and partnerships. Some examples include MS Forensic Science, MA Applied Sociology, MS Informatics: Quantitative Economics, MS Nursing, online RN to BSN, a new concentration within the undergraduate communication major in emerging technologies, several articulation and transfer agreements with other institutions, and several unique internal 4+1 pathways between some of our own undergraduate and graduate programs.

I have served as a member of our HLC Steering Committee for the past eight years and led the team responsible for writing our assurance argument for HLC criterion 3 that focuses on the quality of teaching and learning at ESU. I have participated in many successful searches to hire both faculty and staff across the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences over the past eight years. In addition, in my past role as a department chair and my current role as dean, I have been directly involved in both yearly faculty retention reviews and promotion and tenure decisions.

I have years of experience working collaboratively with facilities, IT, fiscal affairs, and various academic departments on many past renovations and building and technology improvement projects. I have served as a standing member of the ESU Haz Mat Committee for the past 14 years and have spent years developing a basic understanding of university operations and fostering relationships with individuals across campus both inside and outside of academic affairs. In addition, I have accumulated a great deal of institutional memory that will continue to be helpful as the university navigates the future operational changes that are always inevitable.

Emporia is my home, and Emporia State University is my university. I am proud that both of my children are now students within the Hornet Nation. I care very deeply about ESU, our community, and our faculty, staff, and students. I am committed to this institution and to ensuring that ESU adapts to overcome the challenges that we face in the years to come. I am also committed to working with faculty, staff, and students to restore trust in our traditional model of shared governance and transparency as we move forward. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Brent Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

R. Brent Thomas, PhD