

April 7, 2023

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Chancellor Search Advisory Committee
c/o AGB Search
1666 K Street NW
Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Members of the Chancellor Search Advisory Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of interest and my curriculum vitae for the position of Chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As a premier Carnegie R1, flagship, land-grant university with exceptional faculty, relevant academic and professional programs; a robust research portfolio with a commitment to discovery, innovation, and translational research; the ability to strengthen economic development and community partnerships; and the desire to elevate student access and success at all levels, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is well positioned to provide the transformative leadership necessary to shape the future of higher education across our country and around the world;

and uncertain resource allocation models. The pioneers who envisioned universities as places where ideas were born, debated, tested, and refined set us on a course toward the core missions of teaching, research, and public service, with an unwavering commitment to excellence; but over time, these challenges and others have eroded the ability to fulfill these missions. M(ea)- 7 (od)-7 lr, mis2 of.2

would be to establish the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

University of Southern Mississippi for nearly a decade, I led the institution through a transformative rebirth despite resource constraints and significant challenges.

were once only a glimmer in our imagination. The ability to continue these pursuits from an entrepreneurial perspective to fuel economic development and bridge the gap to the consumer better ensures the university remains the leader in translating innovation to application. At USM, I was very intentional about creating and maintaining a culture of research innovation and support that led to earning an R1 designation. Realigning institutional economic development operations and outreach functions to become part of USM's research enterprise also strengthened mutual advancement between faculty work and entrepreneurial partnerships with business and industry. In the context of Nebraska's agricultural and natural resources industries and the associated impact of both on the economy, related work being conducted at the university is critical to the success and advancement of the state.

Universities and their home cities are fortunate to host athletic events that serve as economic drivers and key outreach tools for community, alumni, and donor engagement. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's storied athletic programs not only enable the institution to advance revenue generation, innovative marketing strategies, and best practices in the overall fan experience, but also provide a platform for the institution to lead national dialogue regarding critical issues facing today's student-athletes, including the NCAA name, image, and likeness policy; changes to the transfer portal; and ongoing conversations surrounding conference realignment. It is important that the university chancellor and senior leadership remain engaged in supporting student-athletes and coaches to maintain a competitive, yet balanced environment for all teams, while remaining committed to a culture of compliance, accountability, and overall student-athlete wellness and mental health

fundraising infrastructure and staff support to generate funding for critical student support initiatives, including the lead gift for an alcohol awareness and education center.

I am committed to elevating high-quality health and wellness, including mental health. I believe residents of the state of Nebraska are counting on the university to lead healthcare innovations that solve issues that are negatively impacting their health. If we do not have good health, nothing else matters, and I have a strong conviction for pushing the envelope on health-related programs and initiatives. During my time in Athens, Georgia, I was a member of the Board of Directors for St. Mary's Health Care System, which included a 196-bed hospital, 134-unit senior community, 34-bed Alzheimer's facility, 12-bed hospice house, home care agency, medical group, and ambulatory care outpatient center. In my role as Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Georgia, I managed oversight of a robust on-campus health center with more than 20 healthcare providers, which was continually accredited by The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, as well as a dedicated student counseling services unit that has grown to include more than 20 licensed providers. As President of The University of Southern Mississippi, I supported innovations in healthcare through partnerships developed by faculty as well as the expansion of student counseling services and mental health awareness education. I look forward to working with faculty and academic leadership at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to improve health and wellness for families and communities wherever the needs exist, especially in underserved areas.

My experience and skillset align with the position announcement for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as summarized in this letter and detailed throughout my curriculum vitae. I have the proven ability to bring together multiple internal and external stakeholders in the pursuit of shared goals, especially as it relates to engaging business and community leaders as well as elected officials at local, state, and federal levels. In order to be successful in the ever-evolving global landscape of higher education, we must create and maintain a culture of open, consistent communication, which fosters trust and respect among all institutional stakeholders. My greatest strengths include connecting with people, facilitating the free expression of diverse viewpoints, and building honest, transparent relationships, so that even when consensus cannot be achieved, each voice has been heard and considered to the extent possible.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has much to celebrate. I also recognize that there is tremendous opportunity to build on the institution's long tradition of excellence. I am excited about the opportunity to apply the work ethic from which I have approached enhancing the core missions of teaching, research, and service over the past decade to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Thank you in advance for your review and consideration.

Sincerely,



Rodney D. Bennett