

Margo L. Martin, Ed.D.

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Dear Santa Fe College Provost Search Committee:

I am enthusiastically submitting my application for the position of Provost at Santa Fe College. As I reviewed the position profile, I was excited to see that my education and professional background align quite well, particularly as SF navigates the “new normal” following the COVID-19 pandemic, the current economy, and additional social, political, and environmental pressures. I am confident that the most recent efforts that I have been leading at an HSI- and MSI-designated community college have prepared me to collaboratively work with the Santa Fe College faculty, staff, and community through the coming months and years as we enhance higher learning in Florida.

According to the Provost Search Profile, Santa Fe College stakeholders are seeking a Provost who will serve as a champion for the College’s academic and institutional priorities, using a collaborative and entrepreneurial approach to increase access and enrollment, cultivate funding, collaboratively support academic excellence and student success, and respond to internal and regional stakeholder needs. I have a history of engaging quickly and fully when I become a member of a community, demonstrating visibility and approachability as a leader.

I also recognize that Santa Fe College is looking for someone who has community college teaching experience and will work collaboratively across all divisions. In fact, I have experience providing instructional and support services directly to students, and I have enjoyed doing both. I started my community college career as an adjunct instructor and writing lab tutor; I have nine years of full-time community college teaching experience, earning tenure status, and I have continued to teach as an adjunct instructor as my schedule allows. I also spent several years as a multidisciplinary department chair at an urban campus with strong international demographics, providing me with many opportunities to hire and work directly with diverse students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, I have worn the hats of an academic dean, an adult education and workforce dean, and a student affairs dean, and I have served at the executive level for close to six years.

I bring experience in understanding current and emerging trends in higher education; developing and implementing strong internal policies, programs, and collaborations to promote student success; and building and sustaining significant K-12, community, business, and government partnerships. My professional background in community colleges spans more than 33 years in Florida and Nevada and includes progressively responsible administrative positions and experiences in multi-campus community college settings that meet the needs of diverse urban, suburban, and rural populations.

In my current institution, I have served as Chief Accreditation and Institutional Effectiveness Officer, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Acting President; for one semester, as Interim VP for Transition Activities, I assisted our new college president during his transition. I joined the College of Southern Nevada during a tumultuous time: the college was on warning with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) as well as with the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE); the

Nevada Board of Regents had mandated an organizational restructuring of CSN; the college's strategic plan had not been fully approved by the Board; the graduation rate was 7%; the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) had hired a new chancellor; and the CSN President announced his intention to retire less than two months after my arrival. Within a few months, the Chancellor asked me to serve as the Acting President of the college. Key tasks included working with NWCCU to resolve the accreditation warning status, addressing the USDOE's concerns regarding financial aid compliance issues, implementing the mandated reorganization of the college, and organizing a team to prepare for the college's mid-cycle accreditation visit, which was slated to happen within the year. I share this information because in an effort to lead the college during this difficult time, I received a vote of no confidence from the 36-member Faculty Senate after having been at the college for only two years.

Despite this unfortunate turn of events, I am pleased to report that within my first two years at CSN, the college completed a successful mid-cycle accreditation visit, resolved its financial aid issues, and returned to and remains in good standing with NWCCU and the USDOE. Additionally, the strategic plan was approved by the NSHE Board of Regents; the graduation rate is currently approaching 17% and on the rise year over year; and the reorganization of the college is well underway. Moreover, during my tenure at CSN, I have continued to cultivate and maintain positive interactions and effective working relationships with members of all employee groups, including faculty. In fact, I served as the lead administrative negotiator for collective bargaining, facilitating the ratification of CSN's first Nevada Faculty Alliance Collective Bargaining Agreement in 2020, and as CAIEO, I collaboratively facilitated CSN's reaffirmation as an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction and most recently led CSN's successful completion of our NWCCU Year Six report in 2021 and Year Seven accreditation report and reaffirmation visit in 2022. We are moving forward with our Students First mission!

So why do I do this work? I am energized by the challenging work of community colleges. I enjoy identifying persistent problems and barriers facing students and the community and finding ways to solve these challenges. Let me share with you a few examples as I address additional elements of Santa Fe College's Provost Position Profile.

Open Access Mission, Enrollment, Academic Offerings

In my various leadership roles, I have found that establishing and building on collaborative partnerships – i.e., K-12, business, industry, and government – allow for the development and implementation of creative solutions that result in broader access to higher education as well as innovative programs and degrees that will benefit the region, preparing students to engage as future leaders and to prosper in their respective communities.

I recognize that serving diverse student populations and fostering access are clearly a part of Santa Fe College's mission. During the past five years, I have had the opportunity to facilitate the launch of legislated programs such as the Nevada Promise last-dollar scholarship and tuition-free access to college for foster youth and the incarcerated. I have also engaged in student basic needs programming at CSN to include mental health care, food pantries, clothing closets, transportation support, emergency funds, and free laptops. My successful efforts to recruit, hire, mentor, and promote a diverse faculty and staff demonstrate my own commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. Additionally, I have recently led faculty and staff to address opportunity gaps in our underrepresented student populations through CSN's Academy for Retention, Completion and Student Success (ARCSS), Open Educational Resources, and Sankofa projects.

My professional development has enabled me to lead well-informed college-wide and community partnerships and initiatives that provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to develop diversity and inclusion programming that closes opportunity gaps. At the College of Southern Nevada, we are working closely with Complete College America, the Lumina Foundation, and Achieving the Dream to develop and implement strategies that lead to student persistence, success, completion, graduation, and/or transfer, and through this work, we are beginning to realize remarkable success. These ongoing efforts align with much of the Aspen-recognized work happening at Santa Fe College, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue the dialogue with you.

I noted Santa Fe College's new initiatives, such as ACB Excel and SF Achieve, focus on families and youth, providing resources and support as well as access to higher education that leads to gainful employment. I, too, have experience growing student pipelines through guided pathways and workforce alignment, utilizing the stackable credential, I-BEST, and ability-to-benefit models to create access for nontraditional student populations. Additional opportunities involve partnering even more closely with local school districts to create career and technical academy models, which I have collaboratively developed and implemented. I was most recently engaged in a partnership with a local public high school and Nevada Gold Mines, offering two-year concurrent credit programs in industrial maintenance and diesel tech repair that will lead 28 high school students to gainful employment – \$75K a year! – upon high school graduation. This two-year pilot is in its final semester, and we added a second 28-student cohort last fall. I also have experience developing competency-based programs and credit for prior learning, which are excellent educational models for other adult learners in the region.

One additional student pipeline in which I have been actively involved in growing during the past five years is student athletics. Since I have worked directly with athletics, we have expanded our collegiate sports from three (baseball, softball, and volleyball) to ten (men's and women's soccer, men's and women's basketball, dance and cheer, and men's and women's cross country), creating access for diverse local high school graduates to attend college through NJCAA athletics – and these students are high performers in the classroom, in the community, and on the court or field!

Certainly, developing guided pathways and relevant programming is key – but fostering credit momentum and program completion by offering the appropriate balance of courses and modalities across multiple campuses and centers is critical! Before I left Florida State College at Jacksonville, I was asked to co-facilitate a complete revamping of the college-wide class schedule, working with deans across the college to assess what was working and what needed to change so that we could better support student success, completion, and graduation. When I first arrived at CSN as VPAA, I partnered with our Institutional Research team and faculty department chairs to develop Microsoft Power BI scheduling dashboards to support the creation of more intentional class schedules – and to begin to “democratize” our data; I am currently engaged with student affairs teams, marketing and communications, and academic affairs leaders as we work to improve our strategic enrollment management efforts that focus on the full student lifecycle.

Academic Infrastructure; Strategic Planning

I understand that Santa Fe College serves as an important gathering place for local communities, whether for instruction, the arts, or other forms of community and workforce engagement. Regarding campus facilities, grounds, and infrastructure, I have had the opportunity to participate in the renovation, design, and construction of numerous buildings. Recognizing the importance of improving learning experiences for students and teaching experiences for faculty, I have solicited inputs from faculty, staff, and students about significant facility renovation and design projects. To respond to workforce needs, I have engaged

business and industry partners, community leaders, and philanthropists via the CSN Foundation to ensure that capital improvement projects are well informed and sufficiently funded.

To see a significant increase in the level and quality of teaching and learning that happens in a state-of-the-art teaching space that offers flexibility for each student – whether virtual or on ground – is dramatic. Understanding such tools as well as innovative chatbots, learning management and early alert systems, and the ways in which they can enhance the learning process is critical as an institution expands its use of technology and explores more diverse delivery methods and platforms.

Additionally, in an effort to streamline operational processes and improve student interactions with the college through technology, I led an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) integration of 25 Live room scheduling software with a college-wide PeopleSoft implementation and the development and testing of the class-schedule-building PeopleSoft module. Most recently, I collaboratively launched and facilitated an institutional technology infrastructure and organizational assessment, resulting in a new Chief Information Officer position and saving millions of dollars over a five-year period. I am currently engaging in the build-out of a new CRM, moving us away from a data warehouse model to a data lake model. Understanding, anticipating, and responding to evolving technology needs are critical to ensure that facilities and IT administrators as well as academic leaders at Santa Fe College have the means to provide students and faculty the educational resources that they need to be successful.

I have noted that the Santa Fe College Strategic Plan runs through 2024. In my varied administrative roles, I have collaboratively led the annual development, facilitation, and assessment of strategic plans and their respective budgets for campuses, disciplines, and district-level organizational units as well as nonprofit organizations, partnering with internal and external stakeholders through focus groups, environmental scan tools, and transparent sharing and updating of plans via technology tools such as Taskstream. Each year's collaborative, data-informed planning and assessment resulted in any number of enhancements and changes, including program development, revitalization, and inactivation when necessary, facilities redesign and remodeling, and faculty and staff hiring and reallocation among various sites, all of which impacted annual budgeting and forecasting.

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Engagement and Collaboration

Higher education leaders face daunting challenges that cannot be overcome in isolation. It takes collaboration and deep commitment from a team to solve problems and to ensure that we are providing the very best opportunities for students and employees so that they can realize their personal and professional dreams. To do this work requires the courage to collect and respond to institutional data. During the past four years, I have collaboratively utilized the Sawgrass Group survey, the PACE Climate Survey for Community Colleges, and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to better understand our faculty, staff, and students and to inform CSN's equity efforts in the learning environment and in the workplace.

I enjoy building effective teams that include both faculty and administrators and that achieve great things for students. In my daily work, I value shared governance, fostering opportunities to communicate broadly and frequently and giving a voice to internal and external stakeholders. My door is always open, and my direct phone number has been published in the college directory – anyone can reach me directly, one on one. I wear my nametag everywhere, providing an invitation for people to stop me and ask questions whether I am on campus, in the grocery store, or at a restaurant during lunch. Students and staff call me “Dr. Margo” and know that they can reach out to me, even if their query or concern is not in my direct

sphere of influence. I attend campus events at all of our campuses when my schedule allows. I connect my extensive community involvement to my college involvement (and vice versa) whenever there is potential for synergy. These efforts toward transparency build trust among diverse groups, promoting cooperation toward setting and achieving common goals. This is the kind of work that can be achieved only if it is embraced by faculty and staff alike.

Undoubtedly, building solid relationships is the key to moving forward with the good work of community colleges. I have had many opportunities, internally and externally, to hone my consensus-building, integrative leadership skills on many fronts in the last sixteen years, forging partnerships via economic and community development efforts by generating collaborative responses and promoting solutions to college, community, and workforce needs. For me, being a part of the community when you are a member of the “community’s college” is simply the natural order of things. I look forward to the possibility of engaging with the community that Santa Fe College serves. In closing, I am confident that I can contribute to the ongoing excellent work of Dr. Broadie and the SF team, strengthening and enhancing current Santa Fe College connections and cultivating new relationships and partnerships as your next Provost, not only by my own direct involvement, but by valuing and promoting this type of work among the entire SF community.

I am very excited about this opportunity, and I believe that not only are my experiences and professional interests clearly aligned with the goals and expectations of the role of the Provost of Santa Fe College, but so, too, are my knowledge of current and emerging trends in higher education, my style of leadership, and my capacity to build productive, long-term relationships within and beyond the college. I look forward to further discussion regarding this position. Go, Saints!

Sincerely,

Margo Martin

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