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Northern State University

Attn: Kayla Bastian, Chief Human Resource Officer, SD Board of Regents

Sent via Email: kayla.bastian@sdbor.edu

Dear Ms. Bastian and Search Committee Members:

As a follow-up to my letter of interest dated October 26, 2025, I am pleased to formally apply for the position of Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs at my alma mater, Northern State University. As a proud two-time alumna of NSU (B.S., 1994; MAT, 1999), I am inspired by the opportunity to bring my experience, energy, and mission-driven leadership back to the university that shaped my own educational and professional journey.

Born and raised on a third-generation farm and ranch just 40 miles southwest of Aberdeen, I carry a deep appreciation for the values, work ethic, and sense of community that define South Dakota. With two of my three grown children, three young grandchildren, parents, and extended family still residing in the Ipswich area, it is not only home – it's where my personal and professional commitments most fully align.

I have had the privilege of serving in higher education for twenty-six years—eighteen as Vice President for Academics at Presentation College, Aberdeen, SD, and eight as Provost and Vice President for Academics at the University of Saint Mary, Leavenworth, KS. Both institutions offer programs in nursing, education, business, allied health, and a range of other professional disciplines at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels, all grounded in a strong liberal arts foundation. As reflected in my résumé, my leadership at these institutions has encompassed nearly every facet of institutional life, providing a strong foundation for academic leadership in today's complex higher education landscape.

Throughout my career in higher education, I have been guided by a commitment to fostering academic excellence, empowering faculty, and supporting student growth in mind, body, and spirit. I have sought to create learning environments where both students and educators thrive by leading institutional initiatives, strengthening academic quality and assessment, mentoring faculty, and championing innovative teaching practices.

The following paragraphs highlight a few key aspects of my professional journey. Once the full profile for the position is available, I would welcome the opportunity to share additional details and examples that further demonstrate my alignment with Northern's vision and goals for this role.

Accreditation Leadership

Serving as a peer-reviewer, team chair, panel leader, accreditation liaison officer, and member of the Institutional Actions Committee of the Higher Learning Commission of North Central (HLC-NCA), I will bring an expansive knowledge of the national accreditation agency that provides the foundation for excellence and a model of continuous improvement of the institutions in which they serve. I have had the privilege to evaluate and consult with over 100 colleges and universities throughout a 10-state region, leading and serving on Comprehensive, Reaffirmation, Initial, and Focused visits and conducting numerous Substantive Change Requests for Distance Learning and Additional Campus Locations. The relationships built with these institutions, as well as HLC leaders and staff, will continue to be a valuable asset to any organization.

In addition to HLC accreditation, I have substantial experience in a variety of specialized accreditation agencies such as CCNE (nursing), ACEN (nursing), JRCERT (radiologic technology), CAAHEP (medical assisting, surgical technology), CAATE (athletic training), CAAPTE (physical therapy), ACOTE (occupational therapy), CSWE (social work), CATPE (education), IACBE (business), and many others.

Building and Fostering External Partnerships

In my years of leadership, I have fostered strategic partnerships that expand access to education and advance the common good. These efforts have included affiliate site approvals, dual credit programs, articulation agreements, and other initiatives. A recent example of this collaborative work is a partnership with a local community college that enables students to simultaneously pursue a trade certification while earning their bachelor's degree. This innovative dual-pathway allows students to benefit from a residential campus experience, participate in intercollegiate athletics, and pursue an undergraduate degree while gaining workforce-ready skills in a trade.

I have also worked closely with a diverse range of partners, including tribal entities, correctional facilities, healthcare providers – such as Avera and Sanford Hospitals, local businesses, and government agencies. These collaborations have created pipelines for clinical placements, internships, and employment opportunities—enhancing student outcomes while meeting regional workforce needs in education, healthcare, and beyond.

Community and Campus Engagement

Converting challenges into innovative solutions and focusing on continuous improvement through collaboration are hallmarks of my leadership style. I believe every member of the community is valuable, and I strive to develop meaningful relationships among my leadership team, other employees, students, community members, and other constituents.

Serving on the leadership teams of three different presidents, I have played a central role in designing and implementing strategic initiatives at both Presentation College and the University of Saint Mary. Beyond institution-wide planning, I have also led academic division planning efforts that aligned seamlessly with broader college initiatives, creating a unified focus across all areas of the institution. These efforts have contributed to measurable improvements in enrollment, retention, and financial performance. My leadership in strategic planning centers on collaborative, results-driven initiatives that promote institutional growth and sustainability, with a focus on aligning academic excellence and operational effectiveness. This work has led to new program development, stronger student outcomes, and greater institutional sustainability.

Strengthening Enrollment and Financial Sustainability

At Presentation College (1999–2017), I was part of a dynamic team that grew enrollment from 471 to 801 students (a 70% increase) and expanded academic bachelor's programs from 5 to 14 (a 180% increase). Since joining the University of Saint Mary in 2017, undergraduate enrollment has grown from 769 to 925 students (20%), with doctoral enrollment increasing from 120 to 191 students (59%) as of Fall 2024. This growth was achieved despite national enrollment challenges and the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

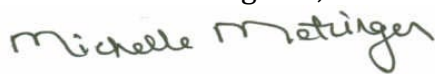
Since 2017, USM has launched seven new academic programs (including two doctoral programs), expanded distance delivery, added high school dual enrollment opportunities, and established three prison education sites. Retention has also improved, with fall-to-fall undergraduate retention rising from 73% to 76% and graduate retention from 85% to 89%, driven by initiatives such as a first-generation support program, a redesigned advising model, and a dedicated student success team. These experiences reflect my commitment to intentional, mission-aligned strategies that strengthen enrollment and long-term institutional health.

Financial stewardship is a cornerstone of my leadership. I currently oversee an instructional and academic support budget of approximately \$12 million, managed with integrity, transparency, and alignment to the university's strategic plan. Through careful planning, consistent monitoring, open communication, and clear budgetary processes, I work to ensure academic priorities are advanced within available resources.

For the past 17 years, I have calculated academic financial ratios to assess program sustainability. By analyzing data related to enrollment, class sizes, tuition revenue, course fees, and associated expenses, this method fosters transparency and accountability. It also empowers academic leaders with actionable insights to make informed decisions around program sustainability and continuous improvement.

Thank you for considering my application. I would welcome the opportunity to get to know your team, hear your vision for the university, and explore how I can contribute to the exceptional work already underway at NSU. The opportunity to return to my alma mater and contribute to its continued growth and student-centered mission is both deeply meaningful and energizing.

With Warmest Regards,



Dr. Michelle (Mickie) Metzinger