

April 26, 2011

Presidential Search Committee  
c/o Marda Reid, Human Resources, HAB 203  
SUNY New Paltz, 1 Hawk Drive, New Paltz, NY 12561

Members of the Presidential Search Committee:

Please consider this letter and the attached CV and reference list as my application for the Presidency at SUNY-New Paltz. My commitment to respect and support the search this past year has meant that I not be a candidate before now, consistent with SUNY Presidential search guidelines. With the committee's decision to seek additional applicants through a continued search, and the encouragement from search committee members and others that I apply, I have sought and received Chancellor Zimpher's approval to become a candidate.

As this year has progressed, I have found my work as Interim President increasingly interesting, rewarding, and enjoyable, despite our budgetary difficulties and the challenges of leadership transitions. I am gratified at the considerable affirmation, both internal and external, that I have received for my work. Although I was able to spend only a year in the Provost role at New Paltz, I now find a presidency an even more compelling "next step" in my career. I have particular interest in the New Paltz presidency because of my growing love and high regard for our institution, its programs, and our students, faculty, and staff; our promising future despite the economic challenges we face; my growing sense of good "fit" between institutional needs and my leadership and administrative style, values, and experience; and the attractiveness of New Paltz and the Hudson Valley as a place to live and work.

I am now in my 14<sup>th</sup> year of successful, full-time administration in positions of increasing responsibility and challenge. I served previously at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC), University of Montana (UM), and as a faculty member at University of Minnesota- Duluth (UMD). My academic background is in mammalian ecology, physiological ecology, and wildlife biology. The attached CV provides detail on my experience and accomplishments in research, teaching, student mentoring, and service.

My CV details my administrative history and the institutional contexts in which I have served. The variety of those contexts has given me a rich background, including recent experience at another institution (UWEC) with a profile very much like that of New Paltz (regionally recognized, highly selective, part of a complex state system). My understanding of the dynamics and challenges of such institutions has been reinforced and enhanced during my time here. These include balancing selectivity in admissions with access, especially for students in historically underserved groups; valuing and integrating professional and liberal education; integrating curricular and student life initiatives; finding, articulating, and supporting the right balance between high-quality teaching and student focus and essential expectations for faculty research/scholarship/ creative activity, in ways that differ from a research university; articulating value, for the many individuals and groups upon whose support we depend; diversifying revenue sources; working within a multi-campus public system; sustaining a sound and attractive campus environment; and others. The values, profile, and trajectory that make New Paltz such a special institution, as well as the challenges that we face, are at the heart of my academic and leadership experience, here and at previous institutions.

Certainly the background and record of success that I brought to the Provost position are relevant to the on-campus work of a President; this work is detailed on my CV. I have gained additional experience and perspective in these areas the past two years. Among others, these include personnel; budget; program support and development; work with faculty and staff unions and with governance; and strategic planning. My experience has given me a broad understanding of the workings of universities, an opportunity to work with many people in diverse settings, insights into major issues in higher education, and perspective on facilitating change.

My work as Interim President has introduced me to new challenges and roles. My growing familiarity with non-academic parts of the College has deepened my appreciation for the complexity of institutional management, leadership, and teamwork – and the opportunities therein. I believe I have worked well and effectively with the wonderful group of Vice Presidents at New Paltz, and with the leadership and advisory groups that I have either inherited or created. I have learned much about working with students, student journalists, and student governance groups, on different issues than in my previous academic experience.

My external interactions as Interim President have been extensive, diverse, and enjoyable, and I have received positive feedback, direct and second-hand, about my effectiveness in these roles. I have worked with the media in multiple capacities; individuals and civic organizations; presidents of regional community colleges, individually and as a group; state and federal legislators; in several advocacy capacities; the New Paltz Foundation, including helping to recruit new Board members and to support a future fund-raising campaign; College Council; alumni, supporters, prospective donors, and parents; SUNY leadership including the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellors, other central administrators, and campus presidents; regional business and industry leaders, as part of growing expectations for SUNY to support economic development. My highly positive working relationship with SUNY leaders would facilitate my transition into the New Paltz presidency.

This work has reinforced for me that the strategic positioning of New Paltz will demand greater external focus by the president, including but certainly not limited to fund-raising and development. While the President must maintain an appropriate on-campus presence and leadership/decision-making role, external demands will require changes in some of our expectations about how the president allocates time and attention. I would expect to build on my development and donor-cultivation experiences as Dean at UWEC and my outreach experiences this year to grow in my effectiveness at fund-raising and development; I also have views on needed change in institutional and Foundation Board capacity to support a stronger philanthropic effort. I have demonstrated my ability to communicate effectively and easily with diverse people and constituencies, to convey our needs and passion for our enterprise, and to think strategically about institutional opportunities and how we build support for them. Independent of the outcome of the current search, I have already arranged to participate in the July 2011 AASCU “New Presidents Academy” that includes sessions on fund-raising and development, and will seek other such professional development opportunities.

I worked well and positively with faculty unions at UMD and at UM, and have strived to do so as well at New Paltz. I am strongly supportive of the principle of faculty and staff collective bargaining and to sustaining positive working relationships with all of our employee unions. I have attempted to do this through clear and regular communication with the campus community about difficult issues, and through frank, honest interaction with union leaders.

U. S. colleges and universities must be concerned with equity, diversity, and inclusiveness, and must expect their leaders to advance these goals – while also recognizing that *everyone* must share in this work. I have a record of hiring that has enhanced faculty diversity, and I actively encourage women with strong potential or experience to pursue leadership and administrative roles and positions, with positive results. All three administrative/managerial appointments I have made at New Paltz have been of women, albeit two of them in interim positions. As outlined on my CV, I engaged in extensive efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusiveness during my time at UWEC and UM. The diversity at New Paltz (across many dimensions) is a strong and special part of our institution, although I believe much work remains to enhance our campus climate and institutional life by more fully embracing and reflecting the values we espouse.

My administrative and leadership style and values are long-established and consistent, and have served me well in all of my roles. In my 2008 application for the Provost position, I described my leadership style as collegial, personal, and consultative, and commented on my efforts to treat people fairly and respectfully and to model civility. I noted that in previous positions, people had described me as fair, balanced, hardworking, patient, and willing to listen to and consider conflicting viewpoints. I wrote also about reports that I communicate openly and extensively; about feedback on the clarity and honesty of my communication as well as my listening skills; and that I often exercise my quiet sense of humor in my work.

In a survey of my performance as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year Dean in 2006-07, well over 80% of respondents agreed about my administrative effectiveness; encouragement of high academic standards; respect for academic freedom; integrity; effective advocacy; approachability; openness to new ideas and opinions; and contributions to strategic planning. In a 2002 performance review, my overall effectiveness was rated as good or excellent by 96% of respondents; my academic leadership at 94%; effectiveness in interactions outside the unit at 88%; and consultation with faculty or staff senate at 93%. I received UM's Outstanding Academic Administrator Award in 2000.

I hope that this positive history and these same attributes have been affirmed during my time at New Paltz. They certainly will continue to define my leadership in any position I hold. I would add also that I place great value in building community in the units I lead, and would intend to continue my commitment to building a sense of shared value and common direction across the College. Those values are exemplified by my establishment of a new Administrative Council and Interim President's faculty brown bags and my support for an "early-career faculty" group this year.

I will share a sampling (incomplete) of elements of my current vision for the future of New Paltz and the direction of the presidency in the coming years, and will be pleased to discuss these and other ideas with you. Several of my own thoughts about key institutional needs and opportunities align closely with suggestions of the recent Middle States reaccreditation site-review draft report; these suggestions give a clear road-map for several key initiatives and directions in the coming years:

- Continue our quest to become the premier liberal-arts-based public comprehensive university in the northeast;
- Change and adjust our practices to sustain and grow our vitality and our notable quality of academic and student life, even in the face of severely diminished resources;
- Become increasingly student-focused, continue improving the student experience;
- Continue to advance student learning and increase retention/graduation rates;

D. Christian – President application, 4/26/2011

- Complete a successful, first-ever major comprehensive fund-raising campaign;
- Undertake a strategic planning effort to refine understanding of our vision and operationalize vision points for all units and link our plans to *The Power of SUNY* system plan. Such planning must build on our vision points, which have served us well and which we would abandon at our peril;
- Direct more effort to our public mission and to strengthening our regional role and contributions, including support for economic development;
- Support Provost and others in strengthening, refining, and expanding sound programs that enrich our core mission and that have considerable unrealized potential (e.g., honors, undergraduate research, living-learning programs);
- Support Provost, HR, and others in expanding programs for faculty and Department Chair development and support, and in strengthening profile and role of Department Chairs as academic leaders;
- Increase our efficiency and effectiveness by evaluating and modifying or replacing processes and operations that do not serve us well;
- Continue advocacy to enhance our taxpayer-funded resource base;
- Expand efforts to build an inclusive and equitable campus culture;
- Continue efforts to improve the campus physical environment to support our mission;
- Continue and expand focus on environmental sustainability, within resource constraints;
- Strengthen sense of community, shared mission and value, and integration across the College.

It is obvious that my assuming the presidency would have implications for our Academic Affairs leadership. If I were to be selected as President, as soon as possible I would position us to launch a national search for a Provost/VPAA at the start of the next academic year; the excellent materials developed for the search in 2008-09 would support this effort. The next Provost needs to have earned tenure and promotion to full professor at an institution of comparable quality and scope as New Paltz, and to have had extensive academic leadership and administrative experience including line-authority positions. As I have shared, I am honoring Dr. Garrick Duhaney's request to return to her former position this summer, and am in the process of identifying a new Interim Provost for 2011-12. It is perhaps unavoidable that if I am either President or Interim President next year, I may need to focus more effort internally in support of the Interim Provost than any of us might wish, but I am committed to simultaneously advancing our external goals.

I will be pleased to discuss other aspects of my capability and interests should you feel that my background aligns well with institutional needs for a new President at New Paltz. Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,



Donald P. Christian

Interim President

SUNY New Paltz, 1 Hawk Drive, New Paltz NY 12561

Attachments – CV, Reference List