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Juniata College  
Huntingdon, PA

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to apply for the Dean of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion position that you recently advertised.

I am presently enrolled in a doctorate program in American Studies, with a focus on the Black Expressive Tradition and hip-hop rhetoric from the Pennsylvania State University. I have completed all course work and other related requirements and I am presently in the process of writing my dissertation. I hold a Master's degree in public administration, with a focus on youth development from Cheyney University of Pennsylvania and two Bachelor's degrees in history and political science from Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

I presently serve as director of the Office of Access and Success at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. In my role as director of the Office of Access and Success, I lead a team of dedicated faculty and staff who are committed to supporting the unique needs of low income, underrepresented students. Programs within the Office of Access and Success includes the Act 101/Educational Opportunities Program, the Emerging Scholars Program, the Board of Governors Scholars Program, the Office of Diversity and Retention, the Basic Needs Shoppe, and the Out of the Classroom: Into the Community Initiative.

As director of the Office of Access and Success, I developed and implemented the Emerging Scholars Program. The Emerging Scholars Program is an intensive student support program that incorporates compassion centered academic advising, student engagement, intensive academic support, intentional conversations along with tutoring and supplemental instruction. The Emerging Scholars program is the core piece of a unique puzzle, that includes academic, cultural and social support programs along with initiatives designed to support students with housing, food and/or basic needs insecurities that has led to a 20% increase in the retention rates of some of the university's most marginalized students.

I have also taken a leadership role in the university's efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. Due in large part to my leadership, Bloomsburg University established its first credit bearing course designed to explore issues of anti-black racism from an academic perspective.

The course titled, Interdisciplinary Studies 120 (INT120): Anti-Racism, Equity and Social Responsibility was first taught in the fall of 2021. Due in large part to the success of Int 120, I led in the development of INT 220: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Exploring Black Studies and INT 320: Special Topics in Black Studies, both of which has been approved by the university's curriculum committee.

Not only did my commitment to issues of diversity, equity and inclusion assist in diversifying the university's curriculum, it is playing a leading role in recruiting students of color. Due in large part to my leadership, the university has established relationships with urban high schools, such as Simon Gratz and the Mastery Charter Schools system, in Philadelphia, PA to establish the "Partnership for Excellence". The Partnership for Excellence is designed to identify potential students, provide support to students while they are still in high school, conduct joint community service projects, provide internship opportunities for Bloomsburg University students and welcome students from the partner high schools into the Bloomsburg family.

As a student advocate, I recognize that it is imperative for me to use my role as a leader to advocate for all students, especially those who may be the most marginalized. Accordingly, I played a leading role in the development and continued sustainability of the Basic Needs Shoppe. The Basic Needs Shoppe is a food and basic needs pantry, where low-income students can shop for the items they need. I also played a leading role in the development of the BU Campus Snap program. The BU Campus SNAP program provides information on the SNAP program. Students also receive hands on assistance in applying for SNAP benefits. In addition, I played a leading role in the development of the SEE Yourself Healthier and Happier program. SEE Yourself is a wraparound program designed to support students who may be facing housing insecurity.

During the 2020-21 academic year, I served as interim Dean of Students at Bloomsburg University. I viewed my role as Interim Dean of Students as that of Chief Student Advocate. I provided oversight and direction for all aspects of the Office of the Dean of Students. I led the university's efforts to provide an equitable and educational based student judicial process. I worked in partnership with the Fraternity and Sorority Life program to develop a system which incorporated leadership development, community engagement and promoted positive decision making. I also provided leadership over the university's efforts to provide high level student assistance and support. I served as chairperson of the Student Behavioral Intervention Care Team. In addition, worked in partnership and collaboration with departments across campus, including Financial Aid, TRIO, Access and Success, Counseling Center and the Office of the Provost to identify students in crisis and to provide the necessary support.

Prior to my appointment as Director of the Office of Access and Success, I served as the Director of the Frederick Douglass Institute for Academic Excellence at Bloomsburg University. Under my leadership, the department grew to become a true academic based institute focused on the intersection of academic excellence, retention, and race. In partnership with faculty and staff, the institute developed and implemented academic based initiatives such as a symposium focused on the scholarship of African American researchers and an academic retention program that explored issues of mental health, academic support and community engagement.

In addition to my experience at Bloomsburg University, I have had an opportunity to enhance student life at several institutions of higher education. I formerly served as an Area Coordinator and Coordinator for Diversity Initiatives at Villanova University. I also served as an Area Coordinator at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and Keystone College, where I also coordinated multi-cultural programming.

I recently served on the faculty of the Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg. I developed and taught three courses; Hip Hop History, Living While Black and Jazz and the African American Experience. I have also served on the faculties of Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, Chestnut Hill College, Holy Family University and Neumann College. At each of these institutions, I worked inside and outside of the classroom to provide academic support and promote retention.

Prior to coming to Bloomsburg University, I served as Founder, President and CEO of Helping to Inspire Positive and Healthy Opportunities for Progress Inc. (HIP HOP Inc.), a youth development organization focused on reducing the high school dropout rate in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Pottstown is a community that is struggling with the harsh realities of addiction, poverty and crime. The work of HIP HOP Inc. was nothing short of amazing. Because of our research based, youth development programs, ninety percent of HIP HOP Inc. participants demonstrated an increase in academic performance.

In addition to my work in Pottstown, my community-based leadership experience includes serving individuals with intellectual disabilities, the LGBTQA community and low-income youth and their families. As the former Executive Director of Special Olympics Philadelphia, I expanded the services of Special Olympics to low-income communities such as North Philadelphia. As the former Executive Director of the West Philadelphia Alliance for Children, I partnered with the School District of Philadelphia to develop and implement a program that provided essential in-school library services to over five thousand students. As the Founding Executive Director of the Campbell Street Family, Youth and Community Association, I partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Health to develop and implement a youth focused mentoring program. As the former Executive Director of the COLOURS Organization, I developed the first comprehensive academic based, youth development program focused on increasing the high school graduation rates of low income, LGBTQA youth in Philadelphia.

In closing, I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications in more detail with the search committee.

I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Thank you,

*Ralph E. Godbolt*

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