

Colorado State University  
College of Agricultural Sciences  
Fort Collins, CO  
Manager of Student Life and Diversity

Dear Search Committee:

Please accept this letter as my application for the position of Manager of Student Life and Diversity. I am particularly interested in this position because of its focus on the promotion of positive inclusion, equity, and diversity (IED) through research and developing professional inclusive standards for the those engaged in the agricultural disciplines. Specifically, this position interests me because my experiences and expertise with IED, including developing research publications on chief diversity officers and teaching courses that are centered on inclusion and diversity, are potentially well suited for the goals and objectives of the position. What follows is a brief summary of my educational background, experiences, professional goals, and qualifications describing how I could contribute to the position's focus of developing a robust strategic plan for supporting an inclusion, equity, and diversity mission that demonstrates cultural competence and inclusive excellence of all faculty, staff, and students.

I am currently a doctoral candidate in the department of Agricultural Sciences, Education and Communication at Purdue University with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion and higher education leadership. My current responsibilities include serving as the Social Media and Marketing Coordinator for the Mentoring@Purdue (M@P) Program. The M@P program is designed to equip faculty and graduate students with the tools and skills for engaging in a diverse mentoring relationship. Further, I have served as an instructor/teaching assistant for two courses: Communicating Across Cultures (undergraduate, online) and Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Social Justice & Inclusion (graduate, lecture). My dissertation focuses on using Critical Race Theory to examine Predominantly White Land Grant Universities use of Chief Diversity Officers. Prior to pursuing my doctorate, I was employed by the United States Department of Agriculture Veterinary Services as an Animal Health Technician and served on the U.S.D.A.-APHIS National Civil Rights & Diversity Leadership Advisory Board.

In terms of my qualifications for the position, I would like to highlight three major areas. Foremost, I have gained numerous relevant experiences that connect diversity and inclusion with higher education through advocating for the advancement and support of Historically Black Land Grant Universities and the mentoring of underrepresented and women graduate students. Second, I have engaged in scholarly activities and assisted in programming efforts that I can draw from that would benefit your students, faculty, and the broader Colorado State University community. Third, I believe you will see that I have the background and experiences of developing courses with emphasis on higher education, social justice, developing inclusive excellence programs, and service in various leadership roles that would be expected from someone who serves in the capacity of the Manager of Student Life and Diversity .

To best illustrate how my experiences could contribute to the position's signature area of diversity, equity, and access; I will focus on the four points outlined in the position description which include: 1) conducting research related to higher education and social justice, 2) a focus on critical race theory, 3) assisting with minority student organizations to foster a inclusive

campus climate, and 4) contributing to the educational experiences and leadership for undergraduate and graduate students through curriculum development. As indicated on my curriculum vitae, I have led or contributed to numerous research projects with a particular focus on minority-serving institutions (MSIs), the mentoring of underrepresented minority and women graduate students, and examining higher education leadership, most notably the Chief Diversity Officer position. In particular, my contributions to the scholarship of MSIs has focused on Historically Black Land Grant Universities, experiences of graduate students and faculty in mentoring programs. Additionally, my dissertation uses Critical Race Theory to examine the role of Chief Diversity Officers at 1862 land grant universities. To date, my most notable scholarly contributions was a recently published article in the *North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Journal* titled “An Evaluation of a Mentoring Training Program Focused on Women and Underrepresented Minorities in Ag+STEM Programs: A Case Study” where my co-authors and I examined participants’ perceived satisfaction from attending a mentoring program workshops and seminars with emphasis on women and underrepresented minorities. Further, I am also the lead author on a research brief released in July 2018 for the Center for Minority Serving Institutions (CMSI) titled “*Historically Black Land Grant Universities: Overcoming Barriers and Achieving Success*” where we examined the disproportionate funding disparities between 1862 and 1890 land grant universities and how 1890 land grant universities still outperform their counterparts in the graduation success of Black students. Recently, I was the lead author of a manuscript that was accepted for the 2019 American Education Research Association (AERA) conference that used Critical Race Theory to examine the *Standards of Professional Practice for Diversity Officers*. Currently, I am on a research team that is exploring the relationship between MSI and Predominantly White Institutions engagement on NIFA-funded grant projects that were focused on climate and water studies. Additionally, a grant that I serve as a Co-PI on was recently funded for \$750,000 intended to develop a faculty mentoring conference that seeks to assist in fostering inclusive mentoring programs at both 1862 and 1890 land grant universities.

In addition to these traditional scholarly outputs, I have also had wrote three Op-Eds and had them published in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* that sought to provide a counter narrative to the rhetoric surrounding HBCUs. For example, in February 2016 my first Op-Ed was published titled “*Changing the Political Rhetoric Surrounding HBCUs*” which aimed to reframe how political figures view and use HBCUs to their political advantage while still having a negative perception of our institutions. The second Op-Ed was published in March of 2018 titled “*Uplifting HBCUs as Models of Student Success*” which describes how HBCUs have managed to be leaders in the education of Black students despite challenges imposed on them to remain relevant within the current higher education landscape. The third op-ed entitled “*PWIs and HBCUs Need to Create Partnerships and Not Competition*” centered on finding the balance and common goals of Predominantly White Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. A fourth Op-Ed is scheduled to be released through *HBCU Times* that highlights the contributions of Historically Black Land-Grant Universities in the development of African American students.

In December 2017, I was awarded the *Purdue University One Brick Higher Award*, considered one of the most prestigious awards you can receive at Purdue University for my role in organizing several social justice initiatives. First, in 2016 I raised over \$6,000 through my #FlintWaterDrive campaign and took students from various Purdue and local community organizations to Flint, MI on three separate occasions to deliver water and other supplies to residents devastated by the Flint Water Crisis. In October of 2017 through my

#Boilerup4Houston campaign, I was able to raise over \$3,000 and send a semi-truck full of supplies to the Houston, TX area following the impact left behind by Hurricane Harvey. In addition to the efforts previously mentioned, I have designed programs for organizations to work with local youth detention centers for Earth Day & MLK Day of Service and high school agricultural engagement programs through JR MANRRS.

I have had the pleasure of serving on various student and professional organizations during my time at Purdue and even prior. For example, prior to coming to Purdue University, I was employed by U.S.D.A. Veterinary Services as an Animal Health Technician and served as the African American Program Manager for the National Diversity and Civil Rights Leadership Advisory Committee for U.S.D.A.-APHIS. I also served as a national officer for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) from 2012-2014. Since coming to Purdue, I served as the Community Service Chair for the Black Graduate Student Association, President of MANRRS, and President of Toastmasters International Purdue-Tecumseh Club. My experiences within each of these organizations have afforded me the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills including organization financial management, interpersonal communication skills, program planning, grant writing, and professional and leadership development. In April of 2019, I received the *Frances A. Cordova Leadership in Action Award* from Purdue University for my leadership efforts centered on my community service and professional development leadership initiatives throughout my career.

I have had the opportunity to serve in different capacities that assist in the instruction and design of undergraduate and graduate courses with a unique focus on cross-cultural communication, social justice, and inclusive excellence. Currently, I serve as the teaching assistant and primary instructor for *Communicating Across Cultures*, as an online course designed to help undergraduate students gain knowledge of inclusive excellence and diversity and its benefits to being able to work and communicate in collaborative and all-encompassing environments. I also served on the planning committee and as an instructor for *Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Social Justice & Inclusion* course where graduate students learned and discussed how the intersectional lens of various disciplines can be utilized to provide a framework to address social justice issues. I formally served on the *Inclusive Excellence Graduate Certificate Taskforce* to develop a curriculum that seeks to provide a set of graduate-level courses that can best equip participants with the tools, skills, and knowledge of inclusive practices.

I have three primary professional goals. First, I would like to build a center or program that seeks to connect social justice activities within disciplines that have systematically (and in some cases deliberately) limited diversity within their institutions and disciplines. Second, I aspire to develop a scholarly expertise that focuses on expanding leadership opportunities to marginalized communities (e.g., gender, race, people with disabilities & LGBTQ community). Third, as the world becomes more globalized and the aims of higher education shift to producing students who can thrive in such a society, I would like to engage national and state policymakers on how to develop better accountability systems that better support inclusive, equity, and diversity in higher education. The end goal of this latter effort will be institutions gaining access to the resources they need to help expand their outreach efforts resulting in the increased diversity.

In summary, I believe my experience, interests, and professional goals are a strong fit for the Manager of Student Life and Diversity. As requested, I have enclosed my current curriculum

vitae and three references. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Brandon Allen  
Doctoral Candidate (ABD)

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