Dear Search Committee,

I am writing to express interest in the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Iowa State University listed on the Spelman Johnson website. I have direct experience with being a catalyst in mobilizing institutional and community stakeholders to promote equity and inclusion and producing strategic diversity planning. This has included cultivating diversity programs, change management-assessment and metrics, along with the recruitment and retention of diverse students, and faculty/staff. Diversity initiatives on college campuses have been interwoven into my career journey since my master’s thesis, “Demographics of Minority Recruitment and How it Affects Their Retention at PWIs” at Iowa State University (1996). My research and work in this area has continued through two decades, into my dissertation, “Diversifying the Professoriate: Creative Strategies to Increase Minority Representation in the College Classroom” at the University of Georgia (2016). Further, I have co-authored my first book with Lever Press published in May 2021, which is a continuation of my dissertation research, titled Academic Pipeline Programs: Diversifying Pathways from the Bachelors to the Professoriate.1

As a native of Waterloo, IA, and two-time alumnus of Iowa State, and it would be an honor to help my institution to meet Goal 4 of the university’s strategic plan to cultivate an environment for everyone to feel welcomed, supported, included, and valued. Many years ago, I found an inclusive environment at ISU, with the help of faculty and administrators that helped me succeed. If selected I hope to do the same for others at my alma mater, the Ames community, and the state of Iowa. Based on my experiences, I know firsthand the rigor and work ethic needed to be successful in this type of position. I have international, national, regional, and local networks that involve diversity and inclusion of underrepresented populations in collegiate settings that I would bring to any institution. The following addresses in detail all my qualifications as it relates to this position and my own experiences.

**Leadership Skills in Diversity Programming & Collaboration:** Over the past 25+ years, I have had many opportunities at several universities (Iowa State University-ISU, Arizona State University-ASU, University of Georgia-UGA, University of Florida-UF, Clark Atlanta University-CAU, Morehouse College, and Georgia State University-GSU) to serve as a thought leader of strategic diversity programming for students, and faculty/staff. Currently, I work with the President and Provost at GSU, as Special Advisor for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Since arriving back at GSU, I have served as a consultant to the Next Generation of Faculty, Implementation Steering Committee (ISC) working on institutional faculty diversity recruitment and retention efforts. We recently used Harvard University’s COACHE survey to assess faculty satisfaction, with a focus on underrepresented minority (URM) faculty. We used this data to support an Action Plan for change. As we developed the action plan the racial and social reckoning, ignited by the George Floyd killing (and countless other police altercations) in summer 2020 accelerated our efforts. I worked with the ISC members to create the Diverse Faculty Alliance (DFA) and Faculty Affinity Groups in the fall of 2020. Further, I have developed GSU’s first DEI website and “Diversity Database” (https://dei.gsu.edu/) based on my THRIVE diversity assessment tool (used in my book) to inventory the campus and developed a clearinghouse of campus initiatives. This instrument is now being used as a metrics for DEI efforts at GSU. In response to the events of summer 2020, I developed and advised GSU’s Task Force on Racial Equity (with our President and Provost),

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1 Lever Press- https://www.leverpress.org/
which added to our action plan on moving the institution forward toward inclusive excellence. I regularly work with campus leadership (President, Provost, Cabinet members and Deans) on various diversity initiatives and developing sustainable planning to support our strategic plan. Much of my work at GSU has aligned with the needs of this large Research I university, producing a sense of belonging among colleagues and community leaders. At Georgia State, I serve as the institution’s lead DEI advisor, because we do not have a Chief Diversity Officer. I created and work with a Diversity Council for campus to implement much of our new diversity programming. Also, I work with each college, Senior VP of Student Affairs, student leaders and Atlanta community leaders to build bridges to our institutional leadership. Finally, I have developed the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Faculty awards which were given this first year to the members of the Task Force on Racial Equity in September 2021. Also, much of the DEI work we created in 2020 was recognized by Insight into Diversity, when Georgia State was given the 2021 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.

I have had the opportunity to work for two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). At Morehouse College I serve as a research consultant, assisting with successfully writing an NSF grant and using my THRIVE inventory to evaluate national HBCU STEM diversity initiatives at the affiliate institutions. In 2011, I took the role of Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, where I managed all the graduate recruitment and retention efforts for CAU. In 2015, the Office of Graduate Studies and Graduate Dean were eliminated (budgetary issues) by CAU administration and I was transitioned into the Senior Associate Director of Graduate Enrollment Services. I maintained my recruitment and retention responsibilities and headed our graduate enrollment and residential efforts. As an HBCU, we were charged with looking at diversity as it relates to working with International and Latinx students, while working with the underrepresented population of African Americans. In fact, I developed an enrollment management initiative working with faculty and deans, using our strategic plan to guide our progress. We developed an inclusive marketing campaign to reflect our campus diversity, through various brochures and advertisements. In this role, I served as the advisor to the Graduate Student Alliance (GSA) where we coordinated the “Wakanda University” Conference, inspired by the Marvel Universe Black Panther movie. As the adviser of GSA, we worked diligently to craft an interdisciplinary, intersectional research conference. I worked with CAU’s Alumni Affairs office to promote giving for various graduate fellowships. Further, I developed CAU’s first international orientation for our students coming from outside of the United States. CAU had experienced a drastic increase of students from the Middle East and Asia, based on our recruitment efforts. In turn our international students faced cultural challenges. I developed programming for their transition to our campus (i.e., workshops on campus living, food to accommodate religious beliefs, providing areas for worship and prayer). CAU is a United Methodist institution, so we developed discussion groups among our various faiths to have inclusive dialogue on religion with our Muslim groups. In my last few years at CAU I developed campus surveys and focus groups for graduate students to assess their experiences at CAU. Based on these assessments we developed funding opportunities and better administrative services for graduate students.

Prior to this position, I served as Director of the McNair Scholars program at University of Florida and Georgia State University. In both positions I managed a one-million-dollar budget by effectively coordinating their URM undergraduate research programs. During this time, I conducted workshops to prepare students for graduate study, maintained and updated websites, wrote annual reports, and developed policy and budgets at the local, state, and federal levels. In 2006, before my McNair Scholar experience, I was nominated and selected to be the Executive Director of the Peach State Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation at the University of Georgia’s Office of Institutional Diversity. In this position I recruited, developed programs, coordinated, and managed this grant (sponsored by the National Science Foundation) which included the following six institutions: University of Georgia (UGA), Southern Polytechnic State University, Savannah State University, Fort Valley State University, Georgia Perimeter College
and Bainbridge College with an emphasis on working with students from underrepresented populations.

At the beginning of my tenure at UGA (2000), as Director of Minority Graduate Student Recruitment and Retention, I created a successful and aggressive five-year recruitment/retention plan to increase the enrollment URM graduate students. The plan included: researching successful recruitment initiatives of peer institutions, assessing admissions and recruitment initiatives of UGA colleges and schools, providing seminars to faculty on best inclusionary practices, coordinating an interdisciplinary summer research program for URM undergraduate students, and developing URM fellowship/assistantship program. I worked with academic departments on diversifying their graduate student and faculty ranks. Also, in this position I was selected to participate on the advisory board and collaborate with stakeholders around campus on the creation of the Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) at UGA. While on this committee, we created the initial campus climate survey which drove the OID strategic plan. During this time, I worked closely with our LGBTQ+, minority affairs and international services offices. I also created a retention policy while at UGA’s Graduate School to monitor graduate students from acceptance to graduation. I developed a local database which allowed us to review and track graduate students, to observe if they were having any academic challenges. Also, in this role created a variety of graduate student “success” orientation workshops.

While at Arizona State University (ASU), I served as the advisor to the American Indian Graduate Student Association, Hispanic Student Association, and the Black Graduate Student Association. There, I conducted workshops on graduate education on Reservations (for Native American students) around the southwestern United States. Also, I recruited and retained diverse graduate students at ASU.

Prior to ASU, as a graduate student at Iowa State University I assisted Dr. George Jackson (my master thesis advisor & mentor) in successfully writing the first TRIO-Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement program and served as a role model in the Graduate Minority Assistantship Program (GMAP).

**Change Management:** As a consultant for the HBCU STEM Undergraduate Success Center I facilitated their latest retreat (Oct. 2021) to review challenges and successes in meeting the center’s goals, using Appreciative Inquiry techniques. In November 2018, I served as a diversity consultant to Seattle University, College of Education-Center for Social Transformation and Leadership. The classes I taught introduced the concept of “Leveraging Difference” (Davidson, M. 2011) that reveals innovative strategies to enhance diversity within organizations. Further, in August 2018, I conducted similar seminars for Jamestown LLC (international company, with nearly 100 employees). In 2016, I completed my doctoral program where I served as an action research consultant to the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) Doctoral Scholars Program (Atlanta, GA). During my four years in graduate school, I used change management (appreciative inquiry-AI framework) to assist this organization with finding innovative strategies to recruit and retain diverse doctoral students as they prepare for faculty positions, and placement into academic positions. We developed a workshop on creating pipelines into the professoriate at the Compact for Faculty Diversity, Institute of Mentoring and Teaching, with a panel of Georgia Chief Diversity Officers from the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Kennesaw State University and Georgia Regents University. Finally, because of my doctoral research study a formal relationship was developed between the SREB Doctoral Scholars program and the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NA DOHE). Currently, I am using AI in my consultant work with the Morehouse College HBCU-UP program in coordinating their evaluation objectives, per the grant proposal.

**Oral Communication, Report/Grant Writing and Collegiate Infrastructure Skills:** As stated earlier, I am writing a book called the Academic Pipeline Programs: Diversifying Pathways from the Bachelors to the Professoriate (https://academicpipelineprograms.com/). This book will illustrate my knowledge and leadership in programming that supports diverse students. In March 2020, I presented my book project at the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher
Education (NADOHE) conference, which was viewed by conference attendees as a valuable resource to CDOs. At Morehouse College in 2019, I helped them successfully write for an NSF HBCU Undergraduate Program grant for $9 million dollars, that began in October 2020. Prior to this I successfully wrote for the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) Graduate Enrollment Management Research Grant on how my doctoral research can be a tool for collegiate administrators looking to enhance their diversity among their graduate students and faculty. I served as director for two McNair Scholars Programs and wrote policies and procedures for scholars based on requirements of the U.S. Department of Education. I assisted with the development of handbooks and view books for the Graduate School at UGA. Also, at UGA I constructed a legally tenable assistantship program for students from underrepresented populations, called the Graduate Recruitment Opportunities (GRO) Program, which funded newly admitted URm graduate students. I co-authored a successful grant with the Associate Dean of the Graduate School at UGA, which we received from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and Peterson’s, that supported faculty working with diversity students. As a result, my office coordinated three years of training for faculty at the University of Georgia to support diversity. Further, I produced assessments, reports, data analysis and metrics for all events, programs and initiatives conducted in the recruitment and retention of diverse students and faculty to senior administration at GSU, UF, CAU, UGA and ASU.

As you can see, my background directly reflects the requirements of the Vice President of Diversity Equity and Inclusion position at Iowa State University. I have considerable experiences in building and working with teams to achieve institutional DEI goals. My skill sets directly align with qualifications of having a record of leading DEI efforts, implementing diversity strategic planning, partnering with university and community constituencies, using best practices and metrics for DEI purposes, and gaining resources for DEI programming. While I have enjoyed the position I currently hold, I am excited to advance my career in DEI strategic planning at my alma mater. It is my hope that you will find my experience consistent with the demands of this administrative position. To that end, I will contact representatives from Spelman Johnson by November 15, 2021, to discuss any questions you might have regarding my application. I thank you in advance for your time and look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Curtis D. Byrd, Ed.D.