

October 31, 2017

Dean Chakrabarti and Search Committee
RE: Associate Dean for Research Position

Dear Dean Chakrabarti and Search Committee,

It is my pleasure to respectfully submit my material in application for the Associate Dean for Research position in the College of Arts and Sciences. As my record and experience show, I am well-qualified for this position. Moreover, I am very excited about the possibility to serve and lead in this capacity. The diversity of research, scholarly, and creative endeavors of our college is both impressive and very rich. I have a great deal of breadth in both my scholarly and administrative experience that fits with the scope of the college and has prepared me for this opportunity. Below I discuss my experience and strengths as they pertain to this position. Attached please also find a copy of my CV and a statement about my leadership and management style.

Key Strengths and Experiences

Collaborative – I am deeply collaborative in my orientation to research. In my scholarship and administrative work, I regularly bridge colleges and units and work effectively with those from different disciplinary homes and perspectives, while still seeing the priority of Arts and Sciences.

Across Colleges – I have worked with faculty in the College of Agriculture and have an academic background that spans Arts and Sciences and Agriculture. My PhD was granted by a department in one College (Letters and Sciences) while supervised by faculty in another College (Agriculture). The mutually respectful relationship between Sociology and Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin is a terrific model for enhancing scholarly production and training students. Interestingly, K-State has a very strong relationship between faculty in Sociology and the College of Agriculture. I have also worked extensively with faculty in Human Ecology, particularly the Marriage and Family Therapy program. I have served on approximately 15 dissertation committees from MFT and participated in their successful search for a Program Director. Additionally, I am collaborating with faculty from Nutrition and Personal Finance in the College of Human Ecology on a study of K-State students and their experiences with food insecurity. I am currently working with Bonto Faburay in the College of Veterinary Medicine on an NSF proposal around zoonotic diseases in West Africa that builds on both my rural sociology background and my work with community engaged research. Also, I have a good working relationship with faculty in the Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning department, having served on several of their dissertations. Finally, I have a strong connection to the Center for Engagement and Community Development and currently am working to explore the social capital dimensions that separate successful and struggling rural grocery stores in Southeastern Kansas.

Across Departments and Disciplines – I have strong relationships across many departments within the college. For example, I have served on several History dissertation committees and worked with the History faculty. I served as the Interim Head of American Ethnic Studies. I received a small award from the Chapman Center to complete a study of Washington County. For the project, I trained graduate students from my research methods course in the basics of field research. Students conducted interviews and gathered primary documents to generate case studies of individual communities in the county. I am collaborating with Wayne Goins on a book that explores the history of the Blues through the life of a key participant in what is commonly referred to as the “Blues Revival” of Chicago. This project combines our areas of expertise in Blues History, Southern History, and Race and Inequality, and uses historical well-established qualitative sociological research methods.

Experience with Diverse Research Agendas and Needs – I have considerable experience with a variety of research projects and research methodologies. I have worked as a participant in, as well as to help establish, collaborative centers. I have benefitted from opportunities for social scientists to collaborate and strengthen natural and biological science projects. In addition to quantitative methodologies, I have engaged in qualitative research including ethnographic work, and historical research. These projects range from directing the major

focus of large surveys to conducting in-depth historical research using primary sources. While I truly value all creative and scholarly endeavors, I also realize that many of the largest and most influential external awards are problem driven requiring collaboration across multiple fields. Being able to bring people together is key.

Experience with Competitive Grants and Budgets – I serve as part of the Executive Committee administering the North Central Region of the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education competitive grants program. The program awards approximately \$5 million annually. In particular, I chair the review of the NCSARE Research and Education competitive grants. These are the largest of the awards given out through the program and typically go to faculty at research universities. This is an extensive and intensive process. In 2016 we received roughly 180 preproposals. Of those, we invited approximately 30 for full submission. Then, through a deeply deliberative process that I facilitate, we awarded around nine grants. The deliberations are an amazing process in which approximately 20 scholars and stakeholders, including farmers and ranchers, meet for two days to discuss the merits of the proposals. Over the course of our time together, we often disagree but importantly also change our minds as evidence is presented by experts on the committee. By far and away the majority of proposals are based in the biological sciences. That the North Central Region has chosen me, a rural sociologist, to lead this process speaks both to the vision and trust in the group and to my breadth as an academic. I continue to learn broadly through this and truly value the experience.

Familiarity with Quality Publications in Sociology – I have 14 peer-reviewed and 17 additional publications. Among these I have two peer-reviewed publications, and another under review after minor revisions, in *Rural Sociology* a top-ten journal in sociology. I also have published in the American Sociological Association's flagship journal on Race and Ethnicity. Currently, I am finalizing a book manuscript, chapters of which are being reviewed by the University of North Carolina Press. With the positive feedback I am receiving from UNC Press, I anticipate pursuing full-professor next year.

Supportive of Diversity – I have an established record of embracing issues around diversity both in higher education and my personal research. I am very supportive of programs such as ADVANCE and efforts to strengthen underrepresented groups in successful acquisition of external funds. I have worked extensively with diverse and underrepresented groups as research partners. Most notably I have a longstanding strong relationship with Black farming communities across the US and we have worked collaboratively on issues ranging from land loss, to community development, to legal services.

Connected Regionally and Nationally – I have earned the respect of my peers and stakeholders at the state, regional, and national levels. I serve on the board of the Kansas Rural Center, the leading organization in the state promoting rural development through sustainability. I am part of the leadership of the NC-SARE as discussed above. I am the national Secretary of the Rural Sociological Society. Finally, I was selected to serve as editor of the Rural Studies Series, the 30-year-old book series of the Rural Sociological Society.

Faculty Senate – Finally, my service on faculty senate has provided important opportunities to learn about University and College budgets while also managing and appreciating diverse perspectives on academic and administrative matters. A major component of faculty senate involves listening to quite diverse opinions and being willing to learn from others. I have been very successful at this and bring these skills to my interactions with colleagues across the college.

I am eager to embrace this opportunity at leadership within our amazing college. I have a deep respect for the many forms of scholarly and creative endeavors across the college. I bring a strong breadth of valuable skills and well-rounded experiences across academic and administrative matters. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and learn more.

Sincerely,



Spencer D. Wood, Associate Professor