

March 29, 2024

Executive Director, K-State Student Union Search Committee
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS

Re: Executive Director, K-State Student Union

Dear Search Committee,

I am certain my 25+ years of diverse higher education experience and professional leadership well qualify me to serve as the next executive director of the K-State Student Union. My resume illustrates a level of inclusive leadership that will provide continuity and enhancement to the programs and services associated with the legacy of the K-State Student Union. I believe my broad range of professional experiences, initiative, critical decision-making skills, financial acumen, experience in engaging with students in many aspects of campus life, and policy development lend to the many facets of this position.

The K-State Union director position aligns with the leadership role I held at Iowa State University with oversight for event management, student activities, art gallery and craft center functions, custodial and mechanical support, as well as other operational aspects of the historic Memorial Union. Serving on a multicultural advisory board at Susquehanna and supporting the development of a multicultural center space at Iowa State are early examples of my continuing work to nurture diversity, equity and inclusion.

Currently as the Director of Student Life at Georgia State University, I have oversight for student organizations, student activities, fraternity & sorority life, student media, program assessment and digital marketing for the Student Center. I have had the opportunity to collaborate on a broad spectrum of campus-wide initiatives, most recently chairing the Panther Welcome committee which onboards new students to campus each semester and the Homecoming student-facing events planning group. My various roles have required successful management of conflicting stakeholder requirements in strategic planning, development of policy initiatives and synchronization of assessment work while operating in a forward-thinking environment.

I have collaborated with colleagues to ensure that our students are given the opportunity to learn from their extracurricular experience as much as they learn from their curricular endeavors. I have positively influenced student engagement through my interactions via student employment, leisure activities and student organization development. This translates well into the vision for the K-State Union to be a community center supported, funded and governed by students. I've done considerable work with student organizations, student activities, student programming boards, student government associations, fraternity and sorority life and I've activated other forms of student engagement throughout my career.

My involvement as a campus collaborator has required engagement and collaboration with many departments within student affairs such as health and wellness, multicultural affairs, and university housing, but also with units beyond student affairs such as university police, facilities management, risk management, continuing education, conference services, university career services, academic units, dining, business affairs, human resources and donor relations. As the student union is seen as the "living room" of the campus, I truly appreciate that my work is often at the center of campus life and allows me to bear witness to our students' growth and development leading them from college into their careers.

My leadership positions at Georgia State, George Mason, Iowa State, and Susquehanna included successful preparation and management of operating budgets in excess of \$15 million and working in tandem with my staff to smoothly manage through a global pandemic, organizational restructuring and several major financial budget crises. My roles have included directly supervising both full-time professionals, unionized and merit non-student staff and part-time student staff, including advocating for position upgrades, addressing disciplinary issues, and terminations, when necessary. Primary large-scale advising roles have included the 6-campus Georgia State student government association and the Iowa State Government of the Student Body

legislative and executive branches, and Iowa State's VEISHEA programming board (annual spring week celebration, a campus tradition which has since been sunsetted).

Active committee participation on multiple campuses has included major events scheduling groups, social media planning groups, division-wide assessment committees, orientation and welcome week planning groups, a campus-wide event authorization committee, policy development groups for things such as student organization recognition policy and free speech discussion, and most recently the student engagement assessment committee. Policy development work has included both creation of policy and revising existing policies to reflect contemporary generational changes on a campus.

Having the perspective of working in both small and large school environments has served me well in the various university settings that I have worked in. My national network of professional colleagues, including vendors, that I've developed while working in several different ACUI regions and having volunteered in various ACUI leadership roles has been a critical resource throughout my career.

There is a certain excitement that comes from the constantly changing workplace of a university which allows me to thrive in a dynamic environment in whatever capacity I can best serve the campus community. My key professional skills include financial management savvy, analytical competence, diplomacy, integrity, and a track record of collaboration with others in the development of ideas. These are the qualities I have enjoyed imparting to staff and students that I have mentored and advised. My leadership style is inclusive, transparent, collaborative, detail oriented, consistent, fact based, and I greatly value input.

I look forward to having the opportunity to further discuss the relevance of my professional experience and how it can benefit the position of Executive Director, K-State Student Union. Your anticipated search timeline lines up well with my ability to transition to the next institution in my career path.

Sincerely,

Gail Sutton

Gail Sutton

GAIL L. SUTTON, *CSAEd, CSAEd-CU, CSAEd-CA*

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT UNION – STUDENT LIFE

Accomplished administrator with 25+ years of higher education experience within both large public and small private institutions with diverse campus settings. Adept at technical analysis, data organization, diplomacy, collaboration and networking with campus colleagues. Strong network of professional colleagues across the country related to all aspects of student affairs work. Invested in ensuring that student development happens both inside and outside of the university classroom.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- Skilled in managing multiple stakeholder priorities and points of view
- Analytical data driven decision making
- Experienced manager of diverse university staff, volunteers, and other campus community stakeholders in facility operations, events management, student organization development, fraternity & sorority life and student activities programming
- Demonstrated collaborator within student affairs, interacting with residence life, multicultural affairs, orientation, volunteer services, technical services, student media, and judicial affairs.

WORK EXPERIENCE & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia

July 2016 – Present

Director of Student Life

Responsible for overseeing all aspects of student activities and student life across six campuses in the Atlanta metro area at Georgia's largest public university including fraternity and sorority life, programming board, student organizations administration, student media, and advising the student government association. Directed up to 21 professional and full-time staff associates (4 as direct reports), multiple graduate assistants and over 100 compensated student leaders.

Notable Accomplishments:

- **Optimized use of technology** to encourage student engagement via OrgSync, Engage, MSTeams, and other available platforms. Advocated for adoption of Hop-In platform to support critical interactive events throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Established a new POUNCE Rewards program utilizing Engage paths to incentivize student attendance at university events.
- **Navigated various levels of change and growth** related to moving from a division of Student Affairs to the division of Student Success and a more data driven assessment environment; adjustment of reporting lines for student life staff from centralized to decentralized model with six campus-centric focal points; and reorganization of space allocations to economize on student interactions throughout all areas of student life.
- **Chaired Panther Welcome** university-wide committee involving 20+ departments/60 representatives. Contributor to university collaboration committees, including MLK commemoration week, Destress Fest, Campus Safety planning group, Homecoming, Data Cookbook, and Student Affairs/Student Engagement assessment planning.

Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia

October 2015 – May 2016

Professional Advisor - Consultant

Managed a diverse array of complex projects and special initiatives for the Student Center and Auxiliary Operations. Assisted in the implementation and problem solving related to current practices for improvement. Provided professional support services and made recommendations on projects based on research of other institutions and national trends. Supported marketing of student fee referendum campaign for student center renovation and expansion.

George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia

January 2012 – September 2015

Director of Student Centers

Responsible for facility management and program operations within three Fairfax campus student unions comprising over 540,000 SF of program space and \$16.3 million operating budget as well as event services support at multiple auxiliary venues on Mason's regional campuses for the Commonwealth's largest public university. Directed 26 professional and full-time staff associates (6 as direct reports) and over 90 part time student employees in the management of event, building, and fiscal services as well as staff and student professional development.

Notable Accomplishments:

- **Established a 5-year facility planning forecast** process for the Student Centers capital projects and infrastructure improvements which allowed for greater advance planning both fiscally and structurally.
- **Initiated a budget accountability planning process** which supported staff members in creating their individual unit budgets. The process was successful in engaging staff to promote innovation and efficiencies.
- **Managed multiple revenue sources** to successfully balance the fiscal needs of multiple facilities, services and operations between multiple campuses – sources included self-generated, E & G, and student fee funds.
- **Collaborated with Auxiliary Enterprises, Campus Dining (Sodexo), and Facilities** on over \$8 million of facility improvement and capital programming projects. Notable improvements included the independent leasing and renovation of multiple retail tenants for such brands as Starbucks, Panera Bread, Starbucks, Taco Bell, Chick-fil-a.

Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa**December 2004 – December 2011****Associate Director of the Memorial Union**

Responsible for the administration of building operations & student services within the Memorial Union (MU), a landmark building with 259,000 SF of program space. Proforma responsibility for \$2.5 million operating budget and operational responsibility for event management, hotel operations, parking ramp operations, student activities, mechanical and custodial support, information technology and oversight of facility and program improvements. Directed 25 professional and merit hourly staff members (5 as direct reports) and over 50 part-time student employees.

Notable Accomplishments:

- **Engaged students in MU operations** by establishing a student building manager program which resulted in improved customer service to guests within the MU.
- **Lead operations manager** in \$20.8 million of building and program renovations & improvements which included 30,000 SF food court rebranding, development of a multicultural center and \$3.8 million renovation/full automation of the 533-stall parking structure, including conversion of access and revenue control system.
- **Contributed to the creation of a Student Organization Recognition Policy statement** impacting 800+ campus organizations. Participated in weekly Event Authorization Committee review process.
- **Collaborated with University Facilities planning** in the development of economical solutions to modernize aging 81+ year old historic building incorporating sustainable and energy conservation improvements.
- **Improved budget accountability** thru the development of a comprehensive budget monitoring and developed practices which resulted in collaboration between units and improved budget balancing. Net annual savings of \$34,000 through restructured student wage management practices.

Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania**January 1994 – November 2004****Director of the Campus Center** (promoted from Assistant Director in 1995)

Administered building and student services within the Degenstein Campus Center. Member of the Dean of Student Life's core leadership team. Supervised five full time professional and part time staff associates and 65 student staff providing event/technical services, summer conference operations, campus activities, campus master calendar planning, and served as university Greek advisor.

- **Chaired facilities planning study committee** in preparation for a \$12 million renovation of the Degenstein Campus Center facilities which resulted in the upgrade of dining and meeting spaces, reorganization of office placement.

Allegheny College, Meadville, Pennsylvania**August 1990 – August 1993****Assistant Director of the Campus Center**

Responsible for the facility operations and programs of the Campus Center. Advised Campus Center Cabinet activities board in all aspects of program planning, leadership training and officer transition. Provided marketing support for performing arts series. Responsible for building security, room reservations and management of game room.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS / LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Association of College Unions International (ACUI)

2023-2025 Capital Campaign Planning Committee member – 2022-present. Received 2024 Legacy Leader Award. **Marketing Tools & Plans Digital Badge Course co-facilitator** – 2022. **Seasoned Professionals & Retirees Community of Practice Region III liaison** – 2021-present. **Role of the College Union Task Force member** – 2017. **Inaugural Region VI Director** – 2013-2015. Received 2015 Gretchen Laatsch Outstanding Service Award. **Other national leadership positions held** - Student Programs Team chair, National Academic Quiz Team transition chair, College Bowl Program Team chair.

Teaching Instructor

Georgia State University – 2019, 2022, 2023: GSU1010 first year student orientation course. **Susquehanna University** - 2000-2004: “Leadership for Tomorrow” futures course and College 101 first year student orientation classes.

Other Professional Development

Leadership Susquehanna Valley – 2000. **ACUI Women’s Leadership Institute** participant. **ACUI/Indiana Professional Development Seminar** graduate – 1997.

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Student Affairs Educator (CSAEd). Received January 12, 2023. Certif. # CSAEd-051.
Specializations: **College Union**, Certif. # CSAEd-CU-007; **Campus Activities**, Certif. # CSAEd-CA-009.

EDUCATION

Master of Science in Counseling. Central Connecticut State University. New Britain, Connecticut.
Specialization: Student Development in Higher Education. Two-year operations & activities graduate assistantship.

Bachelor of Arts in Computer Information Systems. Wartburg College. Waverly, Iowa.
Specialization: Business and computer systems management courses.