



February 15, 2021

Brian Levin Stankevich, Provost
Search Committee, CH
Eastern Washington University

Dear Provost Levin-Stankevich and Members of the Search Committee:

Please observe that this note extracts relevant passages from my cover letter.

I have an abiding interest in promoting cultural competency, diversity, equity and inclusion, which I take as positive goals requiring actions both small and large. In the dean's chair, this often involves communicating information about EWU initiatives on behalf of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and encouraging faculty to attend events held by Faculty Commons. As EWU moves toward becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution, how do we welcome and nourish Hispanic students who choose to become eagles. Promoting a diverse learning community also includes ensuring that searches for faculty and staff are inclusive, which means that we work closely with Human Resources. I am looking forward to the promised Search Advocates program, as it stands to raise the level of attention to diversity in searches. I must point out, however, that hiring is only a first step. In Theatre and Film, we have had one faculty of color depart EWU for a tenured leadership position and one Special Faculty of color leave for a tenure-track position. While it would clearly be very difficult to retain non-tenured faculty who land offers of tenure or the tenure-track, it does not make the losses any less disappointing.

Our first priority, perhaps especially in the current budget environment, must be to retain the faculty who now support diversity and inclusion. As I have discussed with key persons such as the Chair of English and the Director of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, we need to be creative here, and this is especially true in CHSS, which will need a trend reversal in enrollment to see a significant number of new hires. At this moment, we must ask whether we are doing all that we can to support faculty once they arrive at EWU. Do we have a faculty mentor system that is sensitive to questions of personal identity and background? Do we write faculty review letters that are honest with candidates about their achievements and that clearly point the way to promotion and tenure? I have made it my personal goal to check in with faculty who might need encouragement. Now that we have collected some university-wide data for student evaluations, can we address the suspicion that these reflect biases about faculty identity? How do we respond, if we find that they do? How might this affect our promotion, retention, and tenure deliberations? How might we create a community that embodies inclusivity? I agree entirely with Dr. Shari Clarke and Ms. Kim Davis that this inclusion is an ongoing effort, rather than a task that will reach completion. The question then becomes, how will we measure progress? EWU must expand its toolbox of building a community of learners that is diverse and inclusive. I am committed to this goal.



If you will allow me a disciplinary digression: in film and media, it has been a perennial struggle to find diverse voices, a challenge that is resisted by a dominant handful of studios. Unfortunately, a long-standing and commonly cited study uses the Top 100 box-office films as the barometer of success, and then it focuses the question on the role of director. Doesn't this simply affirm that how studios make money now is how they will continue to make money, forever in an endless feedback loop? Also, does this not erase the many films that achieve modest box office success and silence the voices that represent diversity and inclusion without occupying the director's chair? Thankfully, this particular benchmark has coincided with greater representation, but the real breakthrough in diverse media representation has been Netflix and other distributors who have championed inclusive filmmaking. Progress seems glacial until you stop waiting for a handful of studios to change their ways and stop believing that only directors matter. When I program for SpIFF, we typically screen a majority of films by those marginalized in the industry; films by women, Latinos, African Americans, the LGBTQIA+ community, Indigenous and Aboriginal filmmakers and others are out there once you know where to find them. I am deeply proud of my efforts to share them in our community.

In my role as Director of the Spokane International Film Festival, I aimed to grow cultural competence in the region and reached out to constituent groups to invite them to participate. I am especially proud of my work at SpIFF with the LGBTQIA+, feminist, and Jewish communities, which have strong ties to my upbringing and family. I also collaborated with colleagues to involve students in SpIFF as applied community service, which can be transformative for both the student and the organization. Given my personal identity, I aim to be a strong ally for diversity, inclusion, and equity, which often means actively listening and educating myself, whether this includes taking an online course, reading books and scholarship, watching films, or attending reading groups. As Dean, this has meant supporting efforts to promote cultural competence and diversity. In the fall of 2020, CALE supported and assisted Dr. Joseph Lenti in presenting [Segunda Semana de la Lengua Española](#) and the One Heart Native Arts and Film Festival. In the spring, we are planning to support and assist Ms. Nicole DeVon in presenting The Lucy Covington Symposium, which looks poised to become an opportunity for student involvement via the EWU Film Society. The inaugural dean of CHSS must create and encourage such intersections between academic knowledge and applied learning if we are to grow and thrive as we can and should.