

Gary Liguori, PhD

February 28, 2024

Provost and Vice President Search Committee  
Shippensburg University

Dr. Morin, Dr. Ruiz, and members of the provost search committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to be considered as the next Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Shippensburg University. With nearly 30 years working in public higher education, and a master's degree from East Stroudsburg, I understand and value the mission of Shippensburg in providing an outstanding, accessible, and affordable education that is firmly focused on student success. My entire career, all at public institutes and with experience at regional comprehensives, has been spent establishing myself as a student-centered leader who promotes academic excellence and student equity. And with numerous family members recently relocating to PA, I would be excited and honored to bring my experience and skills to Shippensburg to help lead the university forward in its mission.

Having spent the past 12 years in increasingly complex leadership roles, I feel confident that I am well prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the provost role at Shippensburg. I have a good grasp of the challenges facing Ship, and the entire PASSHE system, particularly the recent gubernatorial suggestions around tuition subsidies, system-wide mergers, and performance-based funding. I have worked in two PBF states and understand those intricacies quite well. I also understand the pressure around enrollment. In fact, Ship's nearly 20% decline in overall enrollment since 2016, will require the administration to take an entirely new approach to enrollment management. For instance, taking calculated risks, targeting different demographics, offering multiple degree completion options, aligning majors with careers, and placing a premium on retention and progression. Maybe most importantly, though, is basing these decisions on sound data, not anecdote or history. I fully grasp the seriousness of declining enrollment and will engage everyone on campus to make it a priority from day one.

As a leader, I bring many other relevant experiences, such as using online options to generate revenue, developing high-demand majors to increase enrollment, working closely with institutional and discipline accrediting bodies, and negotiating new CBAs. Operationally, I have led units of 1,000, 3,200, and 14,000 students, respectively, with annual budgets up to \$95MM and as many as 21 direct reports. I started a campus-wide community partnership at one school, while leading a similar externally facing initiative at another. I've created policy change by working closely with elected officials and large healthcare providers, and as provost, I was the direct liaison to the BOT and worked regularly with the states Board of Governors.

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I'm an early adopter, teaching online since the early 2000's and having developed a unique 2-university MPH program. I've secured funding from private corporations to support teaching and research, and helped create a novel virtual school health program, partnering with private IT providers, local physicians, and the K-12 system. I've led the development of cross-discipline degrees, started new degree programs, and have been a proactive leader in DEI initiatives.

As a student focused leader, I've led or been part of teams that reduced unnecessary barriers, implemented HIP's, aligned with FirstGen programs, supported student organizations, and implemented online learning. I've helped develop cohort models to ensure class sizes and seat availability, which leads to higher retention rates and subsequently, improved progression and graduation. Other efforts included creating seamless and trackable student progressions measures, removing 'curriculum complexity' from graduation plans, investing in professional academic advising, and re-imagining faculty workload. I've been a champion of undergraduate research, impactful experiential learning, funding study abroad, and developing and leading international field trips. More recently, my efforts have also focused on closing the achievement gap between Pell and non-Pell students.

As Founding Dean, I developed the college's initial strategic plan, along with budget and resource allocation processes to support the plan, which led to many successes. As Provost, I was responsible for the entire academic budget, and ensured the Deans were fully informed and fully participated in the process. As a leader, I have always been able to increase resources on a nearly annual basis, am adept at resource reallocation, and have regularly secured external support. My history also includes creating non-tuition revenue streams from public-private partnerships, certificate programs, patient serving clinics, and sponsored research. My teams have proudly ended every fiscal year positive, and typically with last minute dollars to spend on individual department needs.

In each of my leadership roles I have been intentional in supporting faculty throughout their career, and I firmly believe that faculty support begins with the recruitment process. Therefore, I have been part of numerous faculty recruitment workshops and revised recruiting and hiring protocols to be more proactive and inclusive. I have revised T&P documents to ensure they are fair and unambiguous, and I have developed numerous professional development task forces, workshops, Academy's, and opportunities. I am a committed mentor and want each faculty to have the opportunity and resources to reach their individual goals.

I have a deep portfolio of community partnerships, working with other universities, creating student experiential learning or exchanges, and helping to support the local economy through workforce development. Shippensburg, like many similar schools, is an important economic partner to the local region, and it will be important that as Provost I understand how we can do our part to support the region's needs for growth and prosperity. I've been directly involved in

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workforce development, particularly in healthcare, with a primary focus on bringing new workers into the fold and increasing career advancement through upskill opportunities.

To support DEI, I've taken several important steps, but should be clear most of these were legislatively muted in Florida. First, I've instituted a proactive, multi-phase, diversity-hiring program. As Dean, we committed funding to under-represented undergraduates to participate in faculty-lead research. Similarly, we committed funding to recruit and retain more diverse graduate students. And maybe most importantly, I secured funding for a full-time Assistant Dean of DEI & Justice, who worked directly in supporting students, staff, and faculty in their paths towards growth and success.

One critically important intangible for a successful leader is having exceptional communication skills, which is one of my strengths. I can clearly articulate a vision and am just as comfortable and effective talking with a group of incoming first year students as I am with state legislators and corporate CEOs. I am comfortable with different communication platforms, but particularly excel in-person. Some of this is evidenced by my strong relationships with both the faculty senate and the faculty union, in part due to my willingness to listen and act in the best interest of the faculty, and some is evidenced by my success in philanthropy and fundraising.

Overall, my leadership includes being an inclusive, thoughtful, decision maker and a dedicated mentor. I appreciate a culture of kindness and respect and treat people with such. I value the past yet anticipate the future; I am thoughtfully bold and strategically aspirational; I hear all perspectives and am not afraid to have a change of mind; I value big data just as much as personal relationships; and I can make difficult decisions, or have difficult conversations, with a high level of compassion.

In closing, as Provost, I expect to be seen as a true partner to President Patterson, one who is trusted, counted upon, and able to deliver. I will be held accountable, promote what is important to the university, and achieve critical outcomes. Ultimately, my success as Provost will be measured by progress; progress that includes student recruitment, retention, and graduation; progress that includes faculty recruitment and success; progress that includes enriching academic programs and a sound fiscal plan; and progress that embraces community partnerships, diversity, and equity. Achieving these marks will no doubt elevate the stature of Shippensburg University for many years to come.

Thank you again for your consideration of this tremendous leadership opportunity.

*Gary Liguori*

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