

August 10, 2021

Dear Search Committee,

It is with enthusiasm that I apply to become the dean of the College of Public Health and Human Sciences (CPHHS) at Oregon State University (OSU). This position brings together the threads of my multifaceted career in higher education administration and leadership, high-impact NIH-funded research focused on public health, innovation in health sciences education, meaningful community engagement, and genuine commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. In this letter, after briefly describing my training and background, I will outline specific synergies I perceive between my experience and this role.

I applied for this position 5 years ago. Although I was a semi-finalist, I did not advance beyond the airport interview phase. Over the past 5 years, however, I have held two dean positions at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Arkansas that have substantially bolstered my experience and expertise in ways that make me a much stronger candidate now. For example, as I will discuss in more detail below, in my dean positions I have been successful at significantly increasing student enrollment, faculty success in research, and community engagement—all areas of specific interest for CPHHS at this time.

### **Academic Training and Background.**

I graduated from Yale magna cum laude in 1991 with degrees in English and mathematics and moved to West Africa to teach middle and high school students. I subsequently returned to the U.S., where I received my master's degree in human development and psychology from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. My program was similar to human development and family studies (HDFS), which is housed in OSU's CPHHS.

In 1995, I matriculated to Emory University School of Medicine on a full academic scholarship and finished first in my class with a 4.0/4.0. In addition, based on my experiences in urban Atlanta and rural North Georgia, I won the Gaston Award given to a single individual for impactful community service. I chose to pursue residency in family medicine—a field rich with opportunities to further my interests in public health, health promotion and disease prevention, social justice, and community engagement.

After completing family medicine residency at a community hospital affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), I joined the Pitt faculty and received multiple grants (including 2 career-development awards, 2 R21s, and 3 R01s) centered on public health innovations. During this time, I also obtained both the MS (2008) and PhD (2011) degrees at Pitt. While formally these degrees were in Clinical and Translational Science, in content they focused on fields of public health, including behavioral and community health sciences, epidemiology, biostatistics, and health policy.

Over the past two decades, I continuously advanced in terms of leadership, serving as (1) Founding Director of an NIH-funded research center on public health and new technology, (2) Assistant Vice Chancellor across the Pitt Schools of the Health Sciences (e.g., Public Health, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Rehabilitation), (3) Dean of the Pitt Honors College, and (4)

Dean of a large, complex college at the University of Arkansas (UA) that includes not only public health but also multiple other health and human service fields.

### **Leadership and Service.**

My current deanship is at the UA College of Education and Health Professions (COEHP), which serves 4000 undergraduate students, 1400 graduate students, and 500 faculty and staff members. In addition to public health, COEHP houses nursing, speech therapy, rehabilitation, mental health counseling, K-12 education, higher education, education policy, occupational therapy, exercise science, recreation and sports management, and more. It is the third-largest college at the University of Arkansas' R1 flagship campus in Fayetteville. In this role, I oversee a \$70 million budget and operations in 17 different buildings. As the anonymous evaluations of my performance from various constituencies indicate, I have been highly successful in areas including but not limited to human resources, fiscal management, alumni relations, accreditation, strategic planning, communication, and meaningful collaboration with various stakeholders across the University, region, and nation.

I also have a strong record of fundraising. Total production in my College was \$2,798,241 for FY20 and \$2,516,194 for FY21, even during the time of COVID-19. This represents a combination of major gifts, foundation and corporate monies, annual giving, and planned gifts. I also currently steward about \$40,000,000 in gifts currently owned by the College. When I was dean at the Pitt Honors College, I strategically jump-started what had been stagnant fundraising. I have enjoyed success in fundraising because of my focus on developing authentic relationships with stakeholders and finding strategic win-win solutions.

It is no secret that the past 18 months brought unprecedented difficulties into higher education. My team and I brought COEHP through critical challenges including (1) adapting to substantial budget cuts, (2) pivoting thousands of students and faculty to and from their clinical sites, (3) maximizing physical and emotional health of a cohort of nearly 6000 students, staff, and faculty, and (4) working closely with organizations including the Arkansas Department of Health, the Arkansas Department of Education, and the state legislature to mitigate the crisis.

I am aware that CPHHS is interested in increasing enrollment, and I am excited to work with other CPHHS leaders to achieve this. As a result of careful planning, strategy implementation, and messaging, COEHP has had excellent increases in enrollment. Last year, during a peak of COVID-19, we had a small increase in enrollment, while most similar colleges around the country had decreases. And for fall 2021, COEHP's first-year undergraduate student enrollment for new degree-seeking students is up 39.1% over last year. While enrollment is up overall at the University of Arkansas, my college has by far the largest increase, and the largest overall growth in the past several years has been in specifically in our Public Health unit.

Immediately prior to my current role, I was Dean of the Pitt Honors College, responsible for the academic, social, and emotional lives of 1600 undergraduates with outstanding academic achievement, strong intellectual curiosity, and a deep desire to work for the public good. More than 60% of these students pursued careers in the health sciences, which was one of the primary reasons I was tapped for this position. While in this role, I developed a series of programs that significantly increased student engagement and success. For example, we

significantly increased the number of Fulbright Scholarships students received and forged new connections between our undergraduates and graduate coursework in public health, nursing, medicine, and pharmacy. We also increased student enrollment and quality. Prior to my arrival, matriculation was 21% for those who received our best scholarships. By working closely with staff, faculty, and students, we transformed our recruitment process, and matriculation among this cohort increased to 53% the following year.

Before becoming dean of the Honors College, I served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research on Health and Society across the Pitt Schools of the Health Sciences—which includes Public Health, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Dental Medicine, and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. In this capacity, I participated in strategic planning and budgeting for hundreds of millions of dollars in research and educational funds. This experience and perspective would help me strategize with other leaders at OSU around cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Each of these key leadership experiences substantially improved my ability to perform essential tasks including strategic planning, budgeting and financial management, human resources management, conflict resolution and mediation, preparation for audits and accreditation, building consensus, negotiating, developing innovative transdisciplinary programs, and adherence to relevant institutional, municipal, and federal guidelines.

I have also carefully honed my written and oral communication skills. I relish public speaking and work hard to form authentic relationships with audiences—whether it is a small committee or a crowd of thousands. I am experienced in high-pressure speaking environments; for example, I lectured on the main stage at the annual TEDMED conference in San Francisco and was a commencement speaker at Yale before thousands of people.

Finally, I have had other meaningful service experiences at the national level that would be useful as CPHHS dean. For example, I have served on multiple NIH study sections (review committees) that assessed career development, research, and program project grants (i.e., K, R, and P grants). This includes a standing position on the study section Community Influences on Health Behavior (CIHB), which is directly relevant to many areas in CPHHS. These experiences have connected me with some of the nation's leading public health thought leaders.

### **Research and Scholarship.**

I have a strong record of interdisciplinary scholarship centered on public health that will help me work with various faculty and students at CPHHS. I am currently Principal Investigator on a R01 award from the National Cancer Institute (R01-CA225773) related to cancer communication that will be active until at least 2023. I have also been PI or Co-I on grants from other NIH units including NIDA, NICHD, NIAAA, NIMHD, NHLBI, and AHRQ. The diversity of the source of these awards testifies to my multifaceted research interests and my passion for bridging disciplines—each of which would be valuable for an incoming CPHHS dean. I have had 23 research grants as principal investigator totaling over \$10 million. My work has spanned high-impact areas of public health, including health communication, cancer control, mental health, substance use, innovation in health education, health literacy, and health policy.

I currently have 274 peer-reviewed publications, including 134 original research papers in top-tier journals in public health, medicine, and social science such as the *American Journal of*

*Public Health, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, JAMA Pediatrics, JAMA Psychiatry, American Journal of Medicine, Preventive Medicine, Tobacco Control, Journal of Adolescent Health, Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Addiction, Cancer Causes and Control, and American Journal of Medicine.* One of my first-author articles was selected as the #1 article of 2017 for the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* ([https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(18\)31937-8/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(18)31937-8/fulltext)). My team's research has been frequently cited in leading international news sources including the *New York Times, US News and World Report, the BBC, NPR's Here and Now with Robin Young, and NPR's All Things Considered.* My publications have been cited over 10,000 times in the medical literature (10,206 as of this writing), giving me an h-index of 54 and an i10-index of 112.

I have a book coming out September 14, 2021 from a major publisher (Chronicle) on how to maximize emotional health and wellness in an increasingly technology-driven society (<https://www.amazon.com/You-Are-What-Click-Experience/dp/1797203649>). This book has already been nominated for a major nonfiction book award (<https://nextbigideaclub.com/magazine/81-books-coming-fall-cant-wait-read/28520/>) alongside books by Katie Couric, Michael Dell, Steven Pinker, Reid Hoffman (creator of LinkedIn), Indra Nooyi (CEO of Pepsi), and many other *New York Times* bestselling book authors.

I was elected to membership in the American Society of Clinical Investigation (ASCI) in 2019. This society honors a very small proportion of physician-researchers based on lasting impact on medical science (<https://www.the-asci.org/>). For example, there are only 14 living ASCI members in the state of Oregon, nearly all of whom are at OHSU. To my knowledge, I would be the first member at either OSU or the University of Oregon.

### **Teaching and Mentoring.**

I believe it would be valuable for the next Dean of CPHHS to have a deep and demonstrated commitment to the science of education. I studied education for my master's degree at Harvard, where I learned about young adult development, educational theory, innovation in education, and technology in education. I have worked with students and trainees at various levels not only in public health but also in medicine, pharmacy, and nursing. Thus, education is something that I do with intention and passion.

My CV details selected research mentees and their outstanding accomplishments, which include RO1s, K-awards, and other prestigious grants, multiple first-author publications (even for public health, medical, and undergraduate students), scholarships, and choice faculty and other job positions. I am, so far, the only individual to win the University of Pittsburgh's Outstanding Medical Student Mentor Award twice, in both 2013 and 2014. I also received the University of Pittsburgh's Innovation in Education Award to develop and implement a series of interactive experiences around patient-provider communication.

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.**

I am very pleased that a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is prominently featured in the description of the position. I have continuously prioritized attention to these issues throughout my career. In my current role, I have had two outstanding years for

faculty and administrator recruitment, which has included the first Latina director of Athletic Training and the first African-American assistant dean of the college.

When I became dean at the Pitt Honors College, the college had not had a non-white staff member in its 31-year history, and only 6% of its 80 faculty fellows were non-white. I hired our first African-American, Latina, and transgender staff members, and I increased diversity among Honors College Faculty Fellows, quadrupling the proportion of non-white faculty to 24%.

About 80% of my current and past pool of research mentees are from groups traditionally underrepresented in academic medicine, including women, African-Americans, Native Americans, members of the Latinx community, and people with disabilities. My expertise in this area led to my receiving funding from the National Institutes of Health to help develop and teach two modules of a national online course aimed at improving mentoring skills for mid-career health sciences faculty members around diversity called PROMISED (Professional Mentoring Skills Enhancing Diversity).

Finally, many of my research studies have centered on issues in health disparities. For example, my study published in *Public Health Reports* on racial and ethnic targeting by the tobacco industry was covered in the *New York Times*.

### **Summary.**

In summary, I believe I can leverage my administrative, leadership, scholarship, educational, and service experiences to help CPHHS thrive in the next stage of its development. I hope to be invited for an interview to communicate in person my enthusiasm for this position and to discuss in more detail your vision for this role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. Primack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Brian A. Primack, MD, PhD  
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Henry G. Hotz Endowed Chair  
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