

October 7, 2021

Mr. James Carter, Chair
Board of Supervisors University of Louisiana System
1201 North Third Street, Suite 7-300
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Presidential Search Committee
Northwestern State University

Dear Search Committee:

It has been my pleasure to be associated with Northwestern State University as a student, employee, and alumni for the past twenty-eight years. The university has a long 137-year history of making a difference in the lives of the people in the Ark-La-Tex region. It is my desire to be the next President of Northwestern State University. Please accept this letter as my application for the position.

My passion for students, twenty-two years of higher education experience, vast administrative experience at multiple institutions, and my love for Northwestern, provide me with a unique perspective on how to move the university into the future. This letter and attached resume' will demonstrate my qualifications that will be valuable to Northwestern's future.

Philosophy of Student Success

I start here because it is my belief that everything we do, commit resources toward, or spend our time developing, should have a direct impact on the success of our students. Above all else, this must be our largest priority, guiding principal, and we cannot lose focus on why we're here, to education and help our students find employment. For many, an education is a pathway to a better future.

Experience

I began my first foray into higher education immediately after completing my bachelor's degree at Northwestern. For two years I traveled throughout the country working as a field consultant for Kappa Kappa Psi, National Honorary Band Fraternity. During the two-year period, I conducted over 150 college campus visits where I helped students develop service, leadership, and fundraising skills. It was in this position that I realized that I had a passion for helping students succeed.

Prior to returning to my alma matter, I spent a year helping public school teachers develop the skills necessary to seamlessly incorporate technology into the classroom. The position gave me direct experience on public school operations, the changing world of technology in the classroom, and teacher development. This experience will be useful for the next President since the university works closely with its public-school partners. Additionally, I have extensive experience working with public schools in the development and execution of dual credit and early college high school agreements.

It has been my pleasure to serve at five higher education institutions that vary in size, location, and type. I've served at a regional university, small urban community college, small rural community college, large multi-campus community college, and a large urban community college. I have a wide variety of work experiences in higher education, including leadership positions in Academic Affairs, academic advising, educational partnerships, enrollment management, recruiting, and Student Affairs. With each move, I have advanced through the administrative structure from a coordinator, advisor, director, dean, vice president, provost, and now interim president.

Three years ago, I was hired by Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) to transform all areas of the college and increase student success. An example can be found in the change to our Academic Advising department. We changed Academic Advising into a student centered intrusive advising model where advisors are their student's representative at the college and the advisor not only helps their students with course placement, but they also help students navigate their total college experience, such as financial issues. This and many other changes have resulted in the college's first enrollment growth in five years, even during a pandemic. Oklahoma City Community College has bucked the national trend and was only one of two colleges in Oklahoma to show an enrollment growth in Fall 2020.

In my current position as Provost and Interim President, I supervise a diverse staff which annually serves over 17,000 credit students. For the past ten months I have led the college through the challenges related to COVID-19, worked with local and state legislators to find new avenues of funding, and have begun the first strategically developed facilities plan. During this interim period, the college has begun a complete overhaul of our human resource policies, business practices, and reorganization of how we offer services to students. Additionally, OCCC is finishing up preparations for a successful Higher Learning Commission review next month.

Over the past twelve months, we have focused on the word community. We made drastic changes that improved the culture and morale of college employees. We've begun outreach efforts to our local chamber, community partners, civic groups, and political leaders. OCCC has held outside community events on campus and sponsored various events throughout the metroplex. For example, this past weekend we opened our Capitol Hill Center terrace to Fiestas de las Americas for VIP viewing during their Latin American cultures parade. It was the high point of the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration.

During the next twelve months:

- OCCC will execute a capital campaign to coincide with the institution's 50th anniversary
- submit American Rescue Plan proposals to expand health programs and engineering
- add a Division of Online Learning to improve our delivery and success
- start an Esports team, start soccer as the college's first sports program
- expand our outdoor facilities to include an outdoor stage
- partner with local school districts to add early college high schools to their campuses
- work with state legislators to remove barriers for students.

Government Relations

As the interim president, I serve as the institution's representative to local and state leadership. I began the role just thirty days prior to the beginning of the legislative session requiring that I quickly developed relationships with state and local leaders. I choose to focus on five to ten state leaders that would have the greatest impact on the college. Through developing positive relationships, I was able to provide input on legislation and funding priorities that directly impacted OCCC. These relationships have only continued to develop and expanded since the legislative session ended. Additionally, I am often invited to provide input on various workforce and higher education priorities through testimony and data gathering.

My activities have not just been limited to state leaders. I have met and worked with the staff of several United States Representatives and Senators, including Representative Tom Cole and Senator James Lankford. Senator Lankford's office specifically asked that I help them gather data concerning Oklahoma higher education costs as compared with other states in our region.

Alternative Funding

Funding sources have changed drastically and raising money through grants and donations have become a big part of college budgets. While at OCCC, I led the rewriting of our TRiO Student Support Services grant which received full funding at just under \$1.4 million. Other examples include funding from Boeing to fund veteran engineering programs, the Arnall Foundation to fund programs for former foster youth, funding from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to help establish an Electric Vehicle Charging Station, and funding from our industry partners to support our automotive program.

Private donations through one-time and ongoing giving also play a big part in our funding needs. This is a long-term process which requires us to develop relationships with our benefactors. I have experience developing those relationships with individuals who have the means to make a difference in the lives of our students.

Partnerships

It will be very important to continue, enhance, and develop new partnerships to move the university forward. These partnerships will come in many forms, but will include partnerships with secondary schools, other higher education institutions, business and industry, government agencies, and private individuals. I have experience working and developing partnerships that could prove useful to the university. While at Blinn College, I was in charge of the award-winning TEAM program with Texas A&M University (TAMU), which allows students who were qualified to enroll at Texas A&M, but did not meet the class size cutoff, a path to full enrollment through Blinn College. During my time at Blinn, we developed an alternate program just for engineering that not only guaranteed students a path

into the university, but guaranteed them admission into their choice engineering major. Students who participated in this program performed better than the native TAMU students. This helped increase enrollment at the college's largest two campus, while addressing the large need for more engineers in Texas.

OCCC is the largest provider of registered nurses in the State of Oklahoma. OCCC is currently working with two large community colleges to submit a grant proposal to an American Rescue Plan legislative committee to increase the number of nursing graduates by over 1,000 in the next five years. This plan requires the cooperation with multiple state agencies, hospitals, and other institutions of higher learning. The level of cooperation has been praised by legislators as how we should conduct business in Oklahoma.

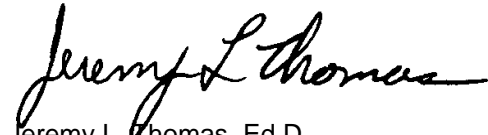
Commitment to Northwestern State University

My affiliation with Northwestern has quite frankly changed my life. I benefitted as a first-generation college student, young professional, and soon as the father of an NSU student. I received a top-notch education, benefited from outstanding faculty, and have had the pleasure of developing relationships with individuals who have helped me throughout my career. I have always attempted to emulate the experience I received at Northwester in my career, and it defines how I strive to help students succeed.

My experiences on the community college, university, public school, state, and national levels, will allow me to make a positive contribution to students at Northwestern State University.

Everyone who knows me, knows I bleed purple, and I have a true love for Northwestern State University. I would consider it my greatest achievement to be the next president of the university. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy L. Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeremy L. Thomas, Ed.D.

Jeremy L. Thomas, Ed.D.



Highlight of Qualifications

- Exceptional verbal and written communication skills
- Over 22 years of experience in higher education as an administrator, advisor, recruiter, and instructor
- Strong computer skills
- Outstanding management and leadership skills in developing student programs and administrative procedures

Professional Experience

Interim President

Oklahoma City Community College

01/2021 - Present

Oklahoma City, OK

- Serves as part of the Executive Leadership Team
- Facilitates OCCC's strategic plan
- Coordinates with the OCCC Board of Regents to further the goals of the College
- Liaison between OCCC Board of Regents and college employees
- OCCC representative with Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
- Acts as a liaison between the College and political leaders
- Represents the College's fundraising efforts, community engagement, partnership development and other opportunities to foster student support and institutional stability.

Provost and Vice President for Student Affairs

Oklahoma City Community College

07/2020 - Present

Oklahoma City, OK

- Serves as chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer
- Supervises and coordinates both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs leadership teams

Vice President for Student Affairs

Oklahoma City Community College

07/2018 – 07/2020

Oklahoma City, OK

- Served as chief Student Affairs Officer
- A member of the President's Cabinet
- Supervised nine departments within Student Affairs

Dean of Student Success

Blinn College

08/2014 – 07/2018

Brenham, TX

- Provided leadership to departments on multiple campuses with over 19,000 students
- Supervised departments of academic advising, personal counseling, Blinn TEAM Program, disability services, student activities, and health clinics
- Served as director of the college's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)
- Coordinated the assessment efforts of the college's Student Services units

Professional Experience (continued)

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| Director of Admissions and Enrollment Services
Angelina College | 08/2008 – 08/2014
Lufkin, TX |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinated counseling services, recruitment, student retention, and admission program• Coordinated the college's portion of the Gear-Up grant and the East Texas Partner Program with Stephen F. Austin State University• Served as one of three individuals on the student discipline team• Supervised academic counselors, classified admission personnel, admission counselors, concurrent enrollment coordinator, coordinator of student activities, health services assistant, and welcome center. | |
| Director of Advisement and Dual Credit Services
College of the Mainland | 08/2007 - 08/2008
Texas City, TX |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed resources and services necessary to assist new advisors• Developed and conducted professional development activities for faculty advisors• Managed college recruitment activities• Examiner for GED and TExES Exams | |
| Distance Education Advisor
College of the Mainland | 05/2006 - 08/2007
Texas City, TX |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinated the advising and outreach activities for distance education students• Developed resources and services necessary to assist online students• Interpreted THEA and other placement test scores• Advised students as needed | |
| Coordinator, Academic Center and Instructor
Northwestern State University | 09/2003 - 05/2006
Natchitoches, LA |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expanded and strengthened the Summer Bridge early admission program• Advised undecided and general studies students• Developed and implemented a nationally certified tutor training program• Taught Orientation, Academic Skills, Critical Thinking, Service Learning, and Tutoring courses | |
| Assistant Director of University Recruiting for Honor Students
Northwestern State University | 06/2001 - 09/2003
Natchitoches, LA |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed marketing strategies and recruitment materials• Recruited students, evaluated applicants for scholarships, served on the admissions committee, tracked applications, and interviewed applicants• Collaborated with Residential Life to coordinate freshmen housing• Instructor for Microcomputer Applications course | |
| Instructional Technology Facilitator
Quinlan Independent School District | 08/2000 - 06/2001
Quinlan, TX |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitated "Technology Integration into Education" (TIE) grant• Instructed teachers on integrating technology into the curriculum• Taught community computer courses and General Educational Development (GED) preparation courses | |

Professional Experience (continued)

<p>National Chapter Field Representative Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served as student services representative to over 170 college campuses • Facilitated public relations seminars at local and national events • Provided workshops on discrimination, hazing, and substance abuse 	<p>05/1998 - 06/2000 Stillwater, OK</p>
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Other Professional Experience

<p>Oklahoma Council of Presidents Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education</p>	<p>01/2021 - Present</p>
<p>Oklahoma Council on Student Affairs Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education</p>	<p>07/2018 - Present</p>
<p>Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Lead Evaluator Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges</p>	<p>10/2016 & 10/2017</p>
<p>ApplyTexas Advisory Committee Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</p>	<p>09/2009-7/2014</p>
<p>Texas Academic Advising Assessment Advisory Committee Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</p>	<p>02/2012-04/2012</p>
<p>Expert witness on Academic Advising Texas State Senate Committee on Higher Education</p>	<p>07/2010</p>

Education

<p>Doctor of Education Grambling State University Major: Developmental Education Concentration: Student Development and Personnel Services GPA: 3.92 Dissertation: Successful Developmental Math Students in Traditional Format and Online Delivery: A Comparative Study.</p>	<p>Grambling, LA</p>
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<p>Graduate Certificate in Academic Advising Kansas State University GPA: 4.0</p>	<p>Manhattan, KS</p>
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<p>Master of Education Northwestern State University Major: Educational Technology GPA: 4.0</p>	<p>Natchitoches, LA</p>
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<p>Bachelor of General Studies Northwestern State University Minor: Music Performance</p>	<p>Natchitoches, LA</p>
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Education (continued)**Associate of Arts in Music**

Trinity Valley Community College

Athens, TX

Associate of Arts

Northeast Texas Community College

Major: Music

Mount Pleasant, TX

Other Training

Jeanne Clery ACT Compliance Training

04/2018

Mental Health First Aid

02/2018

College/University Service

Oklahoma City Community College, HLC Leadership Co-Chair	2018-Present
Oklahoma City Community College, President's Cabinet	2018-Present
Oklahoma City Community College, OCCC Behavioral Assessment Team (OBAT)	2018-Present
Oklahoma City Community College, Title III Internal Monitoring Team	2018-2020
Blinn College, RELIS Student Engagement Committee with Texas A&M System	2017-2018
Blinn College, Academic Appeals Committee Chair	2014-2018
Blinn College, Calendar Committee	2014-2018
Blinn College, Enrollment Management Committee	2014-2018
Blinn College, Graduation Committee	2014-2018
Blinn College, Graduation Student Marshall	2014-2018
Blinn College, Quality Enhancement Plan Leadership Team Co-Director	2014-2018
Blinn College, Texas A&M Engineering Academy Steering Committee	2014-2018
Angelina College, Calendar Committee	2008-2014
Angelina College, Dean's Council	2008-2014
Angelina College, Graduation Committee	2008-2014
Angelina College, Graduation Student Marshall	2008-2014
Angelina College, Institutional Planning and Evaluation Council	2008-2014
College of the Mainland, Achieving the Dream Core Committee	2006-2008
College of the Mainland, Achieving the Dream Data Committee	2006-2008
College of the Mainland, Student Services Council	2006-2008
Northwestern State University, Grade Appeals Committee	2005-2006
Northwestern State University, Curriculum Review Council	2003-2006
Northwestern State University, General Studies Council	2003-2006
Northwestern State University, Louisiana Scholars' College Admissions Committee	2001-2003

Other Service

Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Board of Advisors	2021-Present
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Education Policy Committee	2021-Present
TEAM South – South Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce	2021-Present
Moore Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors	2018-Present
Santa Fe South Charter School Board of Education (ex officio)	2021-Present
OU Community Health Needs Assessment External Advisory Committee	2018-2019
Leadership Moore Class XXI	2018-2019

Teaching Experience

Oklahoma City Community College
 PLC 2112 President's Leadership Class

Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA
 ACSK 1010 Study Skills Improvement
 ACSK 1020 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
 IDS 2000 Service Learning
 OR 1010 Orientation
 SCSC 1810 Microcomputer Applications I
 SOR 1010 Scholars' College Orientation
 TUTR 1010 Introduction to Tutoring
 TUTR 1020 Tutoring Methods
 TUTR 2010 Developing Tutee Critical Thinking Skills

Quinlan Independent School District, Quinlan, TX
 General Education Development (GED) Preparation Courses
 Community Computer Application Courses

Awards

Graduate Scholarship, National Academic Advising Association	2007
Graduate Scholarship, Texas Academic Advising Network	2013
Lifetime Achievement Award, Texas Academic Advising Network	2014

Affiliations

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
 Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity
 National Academic Advising Association, Scholarship Committee Chair
 Phi Delta Kappa International
 Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia
 Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
 Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity
 Texas Academic Advising Network: President 2010-11, VP Technology 2008-10
 Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

Presentations

Baldauf, J., & Thomas, J. (2011, February). *Displaced workers: A model for community college intervention*. Presented at the Texas Academic Advising Network Conference in College Station, Texas.

Barnett, S., Thomas, J., Hicks, S., & Maggio, C. (2005, October). *Developing a campus-wide academic advising program from the ground up*. Presented at the National Academic Advising Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dickens, B., & Thomas, J. (2019, March). *It takes a community: Improving African American male student success*. Presented at the College Board: A Dream Deferred Conference in Los Angeles, California.

Dickens, B., & Thomas, J. (2018, October). *It takes a village: Collaborations with an African American male mentoring program*. Presented at the NACADA Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

Presentations (continued)

- Hernandez, V., Smith, B., Thomas, J. (2017, October). *Survey says: How to become a better advisor Round 3*. Presented at the NACADA National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.
- Hernandez, V., Smith, B., Thomas, J. (2016, March). *Survey says: How to become a better advisor Round 2*. Presented at the NACADA Region 7 Conference in Manhattan, Kansas.
- Hernandez, V., Smith, B., Thomas, J. (2016, February). *Survey Says: How to become a better advisor*. Presented at the Texas Academic Advising Network Conference in Austin, Texas.
- Liner, A., & Thomas, J. (2015, November). *SACSCOC: From the perspective of student services*. Presented at Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Conference in Houston, Texas.
- Thomas, J., Naiser, J., & Graves, R. (2016, November). *Blinn and Texas A&M partnership*. Presented at Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Conference in Horseshoe Bay, Texas.
- Thomas, J. (2019, May). *Keynote Speaker: What is a hero?* Presented at the Oklahoma College Student Personnel Association Conference in Durant, Oklahoma.
- Thomas, J. (2017, September). *Keynote Speaker: Who are the students of East Texas*. Presented at the Texas Academic Advising Network East Texas Conference in Tyler, Texas.
- Thomas, J. (2017, February). *Successful developmental math students in traditional format and online delivery: A comparative study*. Presented at the Texas Academic Advising Network Conference in Austin, Texas.
- Thomas, J. (2015, February). *Keynote Speaker: Who are you and why are you here?* Presented at the Texas Academic Advising Network Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas.
- Thomas, J., Maggio, C., & Vinson T. (2007, March). *Summer bridgen on the bayou. A statistical evaluation of Northwestern State University's Freshmen Summer Bridge Program*. Presented at the National Association of Developmental Educators Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.
- Thomas, J., Hicks, S., & Vinson T. (2005, March). *Summer Bridge: five years later*. Presented at the Louisiana Academic Advising Association Conference in Hammond, Louisiana.
- Thomas, J., Hicks, S., & Maggio, C. (2004, October). *Summer bridgen on the bayou. An evaluation and roundtable discussion of Northwestern State University's Freshmen Summer Bridge Program*. Presented at the National Academic Advising Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Thomas, J., & Hicks, S. (2004, February). *Summer Bridgen on the Cane. An evaluation and roundtable discussion of Northwestern State University's Freshmen Summer Bridge Program*. Presented at the Louisiana Academic Advising Association Conference in Natchitoches, Louisiana.
- Thomas, J., & Weaver S. (2003, November). *Improving Adult Student Transfers with Postsecondary Partnerships*. Workshop presented at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning International Conference, San Diego, California.