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Dear Members of the COTA Dean Search Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit this letter of interest for the position of dean of the College of the Arts at CalState Fullerton.

For the past 25 years, I have dedicated myself to developing artists, art, and audiences for Southern California theater. I have done this as the Associate Producer of New Play Development at Center Theatre Group where I had the privilege of realizing the Kirk Douglas Theatre and nurturing over 100 new plays for the American theater; as a theater critic for KCRW, Southern California's local NPR affiliate reaching a weekly audience of over 300,000; as Director of Cultural Relations for USC; as a teacher at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts; as a producer, general manager, and managing director for several local theater companies; and in my current role as Chair of the Theatre Arts Department at CSULB and program head of the joint MBA/MFA degree in Theatre Management.

In all of these engagements, my leadership draws on my profound respect for artists, creative practice across disciplines, the audience, and an appreciation of the broader artistic ecosystem and communities we serve. I believe the arts are not only critical within a university, I believe they are the essential weavers of the fabric of a just society.

Our Moment.

As we continue to emerge from a global pandemic, it is clear that our artistic fields and our academic environments are forever changed. We may not yet be able to fully grasp how, but the shifts are undeniable. The performing arts are welcoming audiences back in diminished numbers. All of our artistic disciplines are grappling with a new awareness of the critical work necessary to represent our communities and carry art forward.

Our students, changed by learning via full days on zoom and having missed rites of in-person passage, come to our classrooms bearing greater burdens and needs than before. Our faculty and staff are stretched beyond capacity as we tackle an enrollment shift that reverses the rising tide of the past decades. The pandemic is revealing already existing cracks in our institutional foundation. The same reckoning that roils the professional field challenges generational assumptions that have held for decades in our classrooms.

Against this backdrop, why would I want to be the dean of the College of the Arts at CalState Fullerton?

Why now? Why CalState Fullerton?

Your students at CalState Fullerton are the future of our fields. I would argue that the very viability of our varied respective artistic disciplines depends on them. As the future artists and leaders of Southern California and beyond, our civic fabric and the health and richness of our communities relies on your work. We fulfill not only our mission as a State University but also our calling as artists by diversifying our fields and extending their promise for the next generation.

I believe that the College of the Arts at CalState Fullerton is uniquely positioned by the strength of your programs, the talent of your faculty and alumni, and the commitment of your staff to meet these challenges and ensure that the future of the arts is more diverse and our students more prepared and engaged than any previous generation. The rising awareness of the cost of tuition at private universities

and the societal challenges of the student debt burden create an opportunity for CalState Fullerton to emphasize the access to and quality of your extraordinary arts programs and to provide curriculum and degrees of sustainable value for your students.

We have a once in a generation opportunity.

Managing CSULB's Theater Arts Department through the pandemic, I have come to more acutely appreciate the essential role of a dean in a college's success and direction. Having provided steady and compassionate leadership through this extraordinary crisis myself, I am confident that my unique combination of professional experiences, academic work, and service as an advocate/liaison/voice for the general public provides me with the breadth and depth of skills and capacities from which to successfully lead the College of the Arts at Cal State Fullerton into the future.

I believe the dean of an arts college should be a listener, translator, storyteller, manager, partner, and champion. Or more simply, a dean should make things better. That 'better' can only be discovered after listening carefully to the institution, recognizing the essential values and mission already contained within the practices, programs, and people; from there, the job forks into expanding that mission and focusing it so it delivers its greatest impact while building the additional revenue and partnerships that make the conditions of its production more efficient and clear; through identifying, crafting, and championing the compelling stories of impact and excellence from across the institution, the dean shares those stories will all that will listen (and even some that won't) — all the while managing college resources, not only the financial, but also the physical and human, in a transparent, equitable, and efficient manner to best serve students consistent with the mission and values of the college and the university.

In the following pages, by using your search prospectus as an organizing principle, I share how I would approach the role of dean at COTA. While I will briefly mention specific qualifications from my attached curriculum vitae, I will focus on my vision and leadership style. Should you find my approach compelling, I would welcome the opportunity for further conversation.

It's about the students. It's about the future.

STRATEGIC ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

20% - Fosters Inclusive Education and Scholarship

If we believe our students are the future of our disciplines, we value our fields, and we embrace our responsibility to the communities we serve across Southern California, we have no choice but to dedicate ourselves to inclusive education and scholarship.

There are many similarities between CSUF and CSULB. And while I, of course, realize that I can only understand the full complexity and needs of CSUF's COTA by listening closely to the differences and details shared by members of your community, at a top-level, the demographics at both institutions reveal similar challenges. You are serving a brilliantly diverse student population with a faculty that does not look like your students. If the challenges at Fullerton echo those at Long Beach, that gap in representation carries into the curriculum and pedagogy. Do our students see themselves reflected in their learning?

As our respective fields grapple with a lack of diversity, changing audiences, and shifting philanthropy, choosing not to face this challenge is not an option.

I'm reminded of wise words Gordon Davidson shared as founding artistic director of Center Theater Group: "You direct the play with the cast you have for the audience you've got."

Your current faculty are essential partners in the shifts in culture and practice that our time requires. Only through championing their growth, success, and development will the culture evolve.

At CSULB, in addition to my ongoing support of existing faculty through their tenure, evaluation, and creative practices, I am grateful for the faculty of color I have brought to the department as adjuncts who are providing essential representation, mentorship, and support for our students. These adjunct faculty have helped me to further recognize both the structural and cultural shifts necessary to support their work and presence on our campus.

My advocacy and support of students at CSULB is steadfast and my commitment to their success foundational. The barriers and obstacles that come with a career in the arts demand that we support their learning with degrees and skills that allow them to craft meaningful, sustainable careers. I draw on my work with the graduate program I lead, an MBA/MFA in Theatre Management, recognizing that the skills that lead graduates to their first job out of school, can also—through careful preparation and a diverse curriculum—help them 'leap frog' into their second and third positions. By understanding the needs and challenges of the field now (not as we experienced it when we were our students' age) and addressing those needs and skills directly in a program's curricular structure, our students can graduate with degrees of value leading to careers that support them. Partnering with our professional fields through understanding, access, programs, and direct support strengthens our work in the classroom or rehearsal hall or studio and helps clarify it.

At CSULB, I am particularly proud of my work diversifying our curriculum and championing equitable resource allocation at both the department and college level across multiple dimensions for our entire student population. My creation of a robust curricular database that can be quickly and efficiently updated has been key to this work. Seeing and understanding the data has helped the department understand itself both historically and currently. It also serves as a powerful strategic, forward planning tool. Building on my work as a University Data Fellow, I was able to draw from four distinct university data sources. This allows curricular discussions and department planning to consider multiple dimensions quickly and in an integrated manner rather than in a segregated manner through a series of isolated conversations where student unit loads and faculty compensation (WTU's) are discussed separately. With the database as an essential strategic instrument, we are able to consider multiple budgets at once: the student unit 'budget', the instructional budget, the personnel budget, and the space budget. This accessible database has served as the foundation for curricular and resource allocation discussions amongst faculty replacing vague or selective institutional memory with a shared and accepted set of data transparent to all parties. The success of this tool at the department level has led to a broader college-wide implementation discussion. As I will revisit below, this project is indicative both of my collaborative, data-driven, transparent leadership style and my approach to working within the existing structures of a large bureaucratic organization.

The importance of the whole.

STRATEGIC FISCAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

25% - Strategic Leadership and Portfolio Management

10% - Resource Stewardship

15% - Developing and Leading Teams

The discrete curricular project described above demonstrates one of my strengths as a leader and thinker. Throughout my professional career, an appreciation and understanding of the broader ecosystem or 'whole' has guided my approach. As the curricular database project demonstrates, I am able to recognize connections across an organization or community, think across a system—be it a department or an entire institution—and analyze and understand those connections, the dependencies of underlying structures, and how their strategic disposition can yield particular results. Beyond

recognizing and understanding these connections, I am able to make them visible and comprehensible to others while collaboratively designing strategies to either change the structure through new policies or practices or work within them to change the outcomes.

These strategic skills equip me to not simply manage the resources of the institutions I help lead, but to expand their capacity in alignment with a broader institutional mission and goals.

Building the teams and consensus for these changes requires exquisite listening.

Listening before acting is a core tenet of my leadership approach and I know that success as a dean will require me to listen deeply to the diverse community of stakeholders and constituents at COTA and from across the university, including and perhaps especially those who may not have been included in these conversations in the past. In order to build constructive relationships and successful strategies to carry an institution forward, one must first listen: listen closely to one's partners, one's constituents, one's audience, one's context. I believe that it is from this highly attuned and informed position that one can cultivate productive partnerships, develop effective strategies, and connect and communicate successfully with a community.

I find my value is often in describing an organization to itself in the terms defined by that organization. This is true when I'm critiquing a play and when I am leading a department or an organization. Only after listening can we begin to understand the problem we are trying to solve and develop solutions. I find this especially true championing the arts within a university. The language and practice of the arts is not always consistent with those of the university and vice versa. We often find ourselves speaking, it seems, different languages. An adept and facile leader translates between those languages helping to make visible the values and demands of the one to the other while championing the common goals and values that are intrinsic to both.

The job of dean, as I see it, is to appreciate and translate between the discipline specific and the university goal with an ability to solve challenges authentically for both sides. This process, while data-driven, requires a sensitivity and ability to articulate those essential qualities of the arts that are impossible to reflect on an excel spreadsheet. Building consensus requires someone who can lead and communicate speaking in the terms valued by each constituency while presenting a vision and a strategy that has integrity and possibility for everyone.

At Center Theatre Group, using and honing these skills, I was able to take the long-held dream of a 'second space,' a project attempted many times in the organizations then 30 year history, and realize it as the Kirk Douglas Theater—a public/private project that was completed on time and on budget in 2004 for \$18 million. I can offer additional examples from each of my professional engagements that demonstrate not only how I am able to effectively manage a challenge, but how I have a track record of expanding an organization's capacity consistent with its mission and sensitive to its culture and communities.

Telling Our Stories

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

25% - Advancement Through External Partnerships

My success both personally and professionally is always the result of an integrated approach around strategic engagement. At its best, strategic engagement marries communication with advancement and community outreach consistent with an institution's values, culture, and mission. This integrated approach begins with knowing and telling the stories that capture the significance and impact of the organization. Your Visual Arts Modernization Project, for example, provides a perfect opportunity to

expand and strengthen the story of COTA at CSUF. The excitement of this new building project should carry with it a message that celebrates the strength and community impact not only of the Department of Visual Arts, but also of the School of Music and the Department of Theatre & Dance. This is the same promise that already exists in your partnership with the City of Santa Ana and the Grand Central Art Center. Identifying the strategic opportunities to leverage the arts natural ability to serve as a gateway to community is central to successful and meaningful partnerships. While always protecting the integrity of the art, every engagement should carry with it the story of the excellence and impact of COTA and every department.

When we were first beginning fundraising for the Kirk Douglas Theatre project, we made a trip to the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. They had just completed a similar project and as we walked through they regaled us with the story of an unexpected million dollar gift. During the soft launch of their capital campaign, two brothers read the posters in the lobby that articulated the goals and impact of the project. Several days later, the director of development got a call from two first time donors. Their gift was both a shock to the theater and significant enough to merit a naming opportunity.

Several years after this Goodman trip, I was leading a community hard hat tour at the soon-to-be-completed Kirk Douglas Theatre. The walkthrough wasn't a development event, but a way to engage the community. Several days after the tour, our director of development received a call from a first time donor. I wish I could say that \$100k gift merited a naming opportunity, but it did cement for me the importance of treating every engagement, both internal and external, as a part of a larger, holistic strategic engagement process. We are always fundraising, we are always telling our stories, and we are always serving our communities.

The Kirk Douglas Theatre project also taught me the stewardship necessary for a strategic partnership. The project was a public/private partnership between Center Theatre Group and the City of Culver City. Through several years of City Council meetings and forging partnerships not only with donors but also community partners, I learned the continual attention and effort required to forge the kind of successful partnerships that yield successful outcomes.

Beyond direct involvement in fundraising and strategic partnerships, I see the role of dean as a conduit, collector, and champion of the many impact stories within the college. While we have many examples of the impact we have on the lives of students and the communities we serve, it's the role of the college to craft a narrative approach where all of those stories point back to and reinforce the unique whole that is the College of the Arts at CalState Fullerton.

This cohesive, integrated approach to strategic engagement is what helped me increase and maintain the revenue of an already successful annual gala at Shakespeare Festival LA by 50% (\$500k) year over year while creating and maintaining a successful partnership with the West LA Veterans Administration.

We must enjoy ourselves.

THE CULTURE OF PLACE

5% Other Duties as Assigned

To close, I share my commitment to enjoying what we do. All of us—staff, faculty, and administrators alike—entered academia because we love what we do. The past years have been hard on us all. I believe we should all enjoy doing something that we love and the people with whom we have the privilege to work.

While no dean can remove all obstacles, solve every challenge, or seize every opportunity, I believe they can set a tone for the culture of the institution and an appreciation for everyone who works and studies there. I bring to my work a playful joy and appreciation for the opportunity to do what I love.

I would be honored to share that joy and passion with you and to have the opportunity to discuss my candidacy further.

Thank you for your time and attention,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Byrnes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Byrnes