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“Strong Commitment to Undergraduate Teaching”

ALVERNO COLLEGE

Alverno is an international leader in teaching innovations, and colleagues and institutions worldwide admire and emulate its methods. Alverno students receive an education rated by U.S. News & World Report as among the best in the Midwest among liberal arts schools.
THE SEARCH FOR A PRESIDENT

The Presidential Search Committee and Board of Trustees of Alverno College have initiated a search for the president of the College. The search begins as Dr. Mary Meehan prepares to retire from the presidency in June 2016 after twelve years of distinguished leadership. Alverno College is a four-year liberal arts, independent women’s college, chartered 128 years ago by the School Sisters of Saint Francis (SSSF). The College offers graduate programs to both women and men. The presidency of Alverno College is an exceptional opportunity – certainly one of the most attractive leadership positions currently available in American higher education.

As the presidential search process began, the Board of Trustees and Presidential Search Committee reflected on the context within which the next president of the College will provide leadership. It is our hope that this search profile, which outlines current and future issues and opportunities, will help prospective candidates determine whether to express interest in the position. The descriptions that follow reflect the committee’s perception of what Alverno is today and what it seeks to be in the future.
AN INTRODUCTION TO ALVERNO

History
Founded in 1887, Alverno College is a Catholic institution of higher education sponsored by the School Sisters of Saint Francis (SSSF) and dedicated to the undergraduate education of women. Alverno has excelled for many years and is poised to succeed far into the future. Alverno’s mission is informed by the Franciscan charism of the School Sisters and is rooted in the Franciscan values of serving with compassion, valuing diversity in community, living in right relationship with all of creation, advocating for social justice and taking risks to respond to the needs of the time. The student—her learning and her personal and professional development—is the central focus of the Alverno community. The College extends its mission of service and strengthens its ties to the community by offering graduate and adult programs to both women and men. For more information about the history of the institution, please visit alverno.edu/aboutalverno/missionhistory.

The Uniqueness of the Academic Program
Alverno’s ability-based curriculum and performance-based assessment process requires students to demonstrate excellence in their chosen fields while practicing and perfecting skills most in demand by today’s employers. The ability-based curriculum, developed over 40 years ago, remains one of the most iconic examples of an innovative and revolutionary liberal arts curriculum.

The curriculum combines acquisition of knowledge with the development of eight critical performance abilities needed to put that knowledge to work. When students graduate, they have highly developed communication, problem-solving, social interaction, ethical decision-making, and other abilities that they use routinely in their careers, communities, and homes. This emphasis on abilities takes learning from knowledge to performance, from thought to action, from belief to practice.

Alverno College also has a unique grading system. A single letter doesn’t tell students whether they have mastered the content for a course and know how to apply the theories in the real world. That’s why Alverno doesn’t give traditional grades. Instead, teaching and learning at Alverno College are enhanced by assessment of student progress and by giving meaningful feedback. Instead of a GPA, Alverno provides a narrative transcript. It is documentation that showcases growth, painting a detailed picture of student accomplishments as they move through the developmental curriculum.

The assessment methods the College has developed to assure both command of subject matter and mastery of the eight abilities have been adopted by many colleges and universities in North and South America, Europe, and Asia. Additional information about the eight critical performance abilities and assessment methods can be found at alverno.edu/academics/ouruniquecurriculum.

The Alverno Student
Alverno attracts highly motivated and engaged students. Enrollment for the 2015-16 academic year is 2,250. Of this number, 1,449 are undergraduates, another 150 are in the undergraduate adult evening and online programs and in the hybrid bachelor’s completion programs, and 651 students are in graduate programs.
The Alverno student body is largely from southeastern Wisconsin (90%), and primarily from the metropolitan Milwaukee area (68%). Nearly 75% are among the first in their family to attend college; 59% of undergraduates are age 22 or older (the average age is 25); many are employed, often full-time; and 90% qualify for need-based financial aid, with 61% qualifying for Pell Grants. Forty-seven percent of Alverno’s undergraduate students are women of color—16% African-American, 21% Hispanic-American, 5% Asian-American, 1% Native American, and 3% Multiracial—the highest percentage of minority students for any four-year public or private college in Wisconsin. In order to serve students of modest means, Alverno’s tuition is kept as affordable as possible. Among Wisconsin’s 24 private colleges, Alverno ranks among the lowest in tuition ($25,660, including fees, in 2015-16).

About 226 students live on campus in two residence halls. There are over 40 student organizations on campus; among the most active are: Circle K, a community service club; Alverno College Student Nurses Association, which has sub-groups of Asian, Black and Hispanic Nurses Associations; the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM); Team Green (an environmental group); and various multicultural student groups. The Student Activities Board is also a very active leadership group that plans student events on campus throughout the year, such as dances, comedian shows and bands. The College offers seven sports at the NCAA Division III level – tennis, volleyball, cross country, basketball, softball, soccer and golf.

8 CORE ABILITIES

COMMUNICATION makes meaning of the world by connecting people, ideas, books, media and technology.

ANALYSIS develops critical and independent thinking.

PROBLEM SOLVING helps define problems and integrate resources to reach decisions, make recommendations or implement action plans.

VALUING IN DECISION MAKING approaches moral issues by understanding the dimensions of personal decisions and accepting responsibility for consequences.

SOCIAL INTERACTION facilitates results in group efforts by eliciting the views of others to help formulate conclusions.

DEVELOPING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE requires understanding of — and respect for — the economic, social and biological interdependence of global life.

EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP involves making informed choices and developing strategies for collaborative involvement in community issues.

AESTHETIC ENGAGEMENT integrates the intuitive dimensions of participation in the arts with broader social, cultural and theoretical frameworks.
Living and Learning in Milwaukee
The institution’s location in Milwaukee is particularly appealing. It’s the largest city in Wisconsin, and the 26th largest city in the United States, with a metro-area population of approximately 1.2 million, and located just one hour north of Chicago. The city is an exciting, safe and manageable urban area located along one of the most beautiful stretches of Great Lakes waterfront. More than 70,000 students study at 21 colleges and universities in the greater Milwaukee area, and Milwaukee ranks sixth among the largest U.S. cities for number of college students per capita.

Milwaukee is large enough to offer world class cultural, arts, dining and sporting options, but also small enough to navigate and personal enough to make friends. Residents who enjoy the arts can experience live theater and music performances at 25 venues within the city limits alone, and will also be wowed by the nationally renowned Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, as well as the Florentine Opera, and the Milwaukee Ballet. Museum-goers can explore 17 different museums—from the iconic Milwaukee Art Museum designed by Santiago Calatrava, to the Milwaukee Public Museum, which is one of the largest natural history museums in the country, to a children’s museum, hands-on science museum, the Harley-Davidson Museum and so much more. The city’s park system—encompassing 150 state and county parks—has won the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation. Offering 130 miles of bike trails along beautiful lake vistas, sandy beaches in the summer and ice skating and cross country skiing in the winter, sports complexes, public golf courses, fishing, outdoor music series and even beer gardens, the parks are favorite spots for all Milwaukeeans. Sports fans cheer on the Milwaukee Brewers at Miller Park, the Milwaukee Bucks NBA team, the Milwaukee Admirals minor-league hockey team, and make the two-hour trek to Green Bay for Packers football.

Because of Milwaukee’s northern location, residents can truly enjoy the beauty found in each of the four seasons—the cherry and apple blossoms of spring, the refreshing lake breezes of summer, the brilliant colors of fall, and the clean white snow of winter. For more information about Milwaukee, please go to visitmilwaukee.org.

The College currently ranks 3rd—only after UW-Milwaukee and Marquette University for top-of-mind awareness within its primary market of a 100-mile radius of Milwaukee.
THE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

Alverno College is well positioned to meet the many challenges that lie ahead in the next decade. Nevertheless, there are priority needs that must be addressed by the next president to ensure that Alverno continues to grow and prosper. The following priorities obviously are interrelated and are not listed in order of importance:

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT: Continue Alverno’s commitment to innovation and thereby enhance the national and international reputation of educational creativity and excellence in the service of student learning.

Alverno has nearly two hundred faculty, evenly divided between full- and part-time positions. Of the 108 full-time faculty, 93% have achieved the highest degree in their field. The faculty continue to renew and create an ability-based curriculum to meet the needs of each new generation of students. Their dedication as educators is proven daily by the hard work of making the phrase “student-centered” meaningful, and they are highly collaborative within and across disciplines. There is openness to new ideas and an excitement and creativity in the teaching/learning process at Alverno seldom found in other educational settings. The ability-based curriculum, assessment of learning, and the use of technology to document student performance established Alverno on the cutting edge of change and innovation.

"...Alverno College is a shining example of teacher preparation.
U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, 2010"

Faculty and staff of the College continued this tradition as they developed additional degree programs, including graduate programs in Community Psychology, a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner option to complement the Family Nurse Practitioner masters, a M.A. in Education, and a M.B.A. degree. In the last two years, the College has also added several undergraduate hybrid degrees designed for adult students.

Currently, the faculty and academic staff are preparing for a Higher Learning Commission accreditation review set for the spring of 2017. They are also implementing a number of initiatives aimed at improving retention and graduation rates. These include a new Academic Excellence program for high-achieving students; a Promise Scholars program for first-generation students that includes intensive advising; and, a targeted peer-mentoring program.

The next president will support faculty and staff leadership in the design and implementation of programs to meet market needs. As a public intellectual leader, the president must have the broad capability to lead and inspire Alverno to higher levels of academic quality and distinctiveness. The president in collaboration with the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs will direct the pursuit of significant academic goals and educational policies and will need to be able to participate effectively in long-range strategic planning.
**STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FUND**

In 2015, the Alverno Board of Trustees approved a $3 million revolving fund designed to provide start-up funding for programs created by faculty and staff to increase retention and recruitment. Some initial programs faculty and staff have submitted to this fund that have been approved by Alverno’s Administrative Council are the following.

**Promise Scholars**: An intensive advising program for first generation students that will serve 250 undergraduates. The pilot for this program increased graduation rates for Promise Scholar students to 98%.

**Center for Academic Excellence**: The Center designs and supports cross-disciplinary seminars, course offerings, speakers and events to bring together high-achieving students who are seeking even more opportunities to challenge themselves academically.

**Peer Mentoring in Sciences**: The Behavioral Sciences and Natural Sciences departments have created an intensive peer mentoring program that pairs stand-out juniors and seniors with students just entering the majors. The program brings students, faculty and alumnae together for tutoring, mentoring and social activities. A pilot program showed retention for participating students increased 8 percentage points.

**Girls Academy of Science and Math**: This program brings 75 high school girls from 20 Milwaukee schools to Alverno every Friday night to study science and math with Alverno faculty. A pilot program showed participants increased science reasoning scores on the ACT, increased interest in going to college, and increased interest in studying science in college. Impressed by the pilot program results, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has provided a 2-year grant to help support this program.

**SUCCESSION PLANNING, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY**: Build capacity for driving new initiatives while preserving and building upon Alverno’s renowned curriculum and diverse community.

Several key senior academic administrators and faculty are nearing retirement, including the long-term Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs who recently announced her retirement from this position to work on other needs throughout the College. An Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs will assume the role in January 2016.

In addition, just over a decade ago, Alverno’s academic programs were structured into four Schools: Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, and Nursing. At that time, dean and associate dean positions were added to oversee each school. Continued support and training for new deans and associate deans in leadership, strategic planning, and project management will help ensure each School builds upon and implements thoughtful strategic plans to support enrollment, retention, and completion goals.

In developing faculty and staff, Alverno is also committed to fostering a learning environment that is culturally diverse and pluralistic and seeks to implement an intentional strategy to diversify the faculty and staff to better reflect the needs and aspirations of the student body. It strives to recognize human dignity, difference and equality that includes, but is not limited to: race, age, class, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities/qualities, and ethnicity. The College has implemented a variety of initiatives to facilitate a more diverse community of faculty, staff, and students and is also committed not just to recruiting but also to retaining diverse populations on campus.
The next president’s partnership with Alverno leadership on succession planning, leadership development and building diversity in staff and faculty will set the College on a path for a strong future.

**FISCAL RESOURCES:** Maintain financial stability and achieve stronger fiscal foundations for future growth and development.

Alverno’s annual budget is approximately $43.3 million. While the majority of Alverno’s annual revenues come from tuition (75%) and auxiliary revenue (12%), philanthropic support through the Annual Fund (4%), government and special project grants (6%), and endowment withdrawals and investment income (3%) close the gap. Financial aid discounting stands at an enviable 28%.

The College’s debt level is a manageable $22.3 million with anticipated principal payments over the next five years (funded by donor pledges) reducing the debt to $10.8 million.

Alverno has produced operating surpluses in nine of the last 10 years due to sound fiscal management embraced by the entire college community. The College has accumulated and maintained a strong cash position, which has allowed it to create a Strategic Initiatives Fund of $3 million to invest in innovative programs developed by faculty and staff.

The new president is expected to serve as the driving force to secure financial strength for the institution.

**ENROLLMENT:** Create and implement a strategic enrollment management plan to sustainably grow enrollment through both recruitment and retention, with focus on determining an appropriate mix of traditional, non-traditional and graduate students.

Enrollment peaked at 2,800 in 2009-10, and then began a decline seen by most colleges and universities. Despite a decreasing population of 18-year-olds in the region, Alverno’s traditional population has grown. Graduate enrollment has also increased dramatically (225% in a decade). However, this impressive growth has not been able to offset dramatic declines in non-traditional, adult student enrollment.

Alverno’s fall 2015 enrollment is trending up. First, a new hybrid adult program (Alverno Adult Evening & Online) surpassed its first-semester enrollment goal by 30% and hybrid bachelor’s completion programs opened in 2014 also grew. Second, the incoming high school class is the largest since 2010, buoyed in great part by new facilities, increased athletic recruitment, and strengthened enrollment and financial aid management processes. Finally, graduate programs are at near-record enrollment.

It is important for this pattern to continue, and to do so, the college must formalize a strategic enrollment management plan with clear targets, action plans and resource allocation for recruitment and retention efforts across market segments.

Alverno is in a strong position to achieve this plan with faculty committed to program improvement and creation to better meet market needs; a reputation as a welcoming environment for students of all backgrounds; new campus facilities and an expanded campus life program; more engaged
alumnae; growing corporate, community, and technical college partnerships; and new hybrid delivery models that meet student needs for flexibility while also ensuring an exemplary Alverno-style education.

The College is poised for continued success under the leadership of a president who can build upon strategic cross-departmental connections to complete and implement an enrollment plan.

**CAMPUS LIFE:** Increase student engagement in co-curricular opportunities in order to expand campus vibrancy and increase retention and graduation rates.

Alverno’s student population has changed quite dramatically in the past decade. While the average age of Alverno students was 32 in 2004, today it is 25 due to an increasing number of students coming to Alverno directly from high school. To support this larger traditional-aged population, the College has been working to implement thriving co-curricular programs. These programs are designed to not only increase the vibrancy of the campus, but also assist in increasing student success, retention, and graduation rates.

Significant efforts are underway to enhance the student experience through residence halls, student organizations and activities, NCAA Division III athletics, campus ministry, and orientation programs. Particular emphasis has been placed on: creating a seamless transition to Alverno for new students; engaging parents/families as retention agents; and, incorporating Alverno’s ability-based curricular focus into the co-curriculum, thereby enhancing and expanding the classroom experience.

The next president’s support for enhancing these campus-wide efforts will ensure continued success.

**COMPENSATION:** Create and implement a sustainable compensation plan for faculty that is economically viable and market competitive.

Alverno’s educational model—with its integral emphasis on small class sizes and very personalized feedback—focuses a higher percentage of dollars on instruction than most colleges. In fact, among 13 similar Wisconsin private colleges, Alverno ranks third in the number of full-time faculty and fifth in the total dollars allocated for faculty salaries. However, the individual salaries for all levels of faculty are among the lowest of all comparison schools. While the College has made a concerted effort to remedy this situation, these efforts must continue to achieve greater parity with similar schools.

The Board of Trustees views this as a high priority and is seeking to work closely with the new president to identify innovative avenues and opportunities to strengthen faculty and staff compensation.
FUNDRAISING: Support fiscal health and rapidly increasing need for student aid.

Alverno has recently completed a highly successful four-year capital fundraising campaign in which $33 million was raised against a goal of $30 million. Over that same period, fundraising for general operations increased 30% from $2.6 million in FY10 to $3.4 million in FY15. Among private Wisconsin colleges, Alverno has distinguished itself as one of the most successful in fundraising in recent years.

Even with this success, however, it is critical to intensify fund development activities and the next president will be at the heart of this important work.

Next Major Fundraising Effort on the Horizon: Alverno’s endowment stands at $25 million, which is short of the best-practice average of at least 1.5 times the annual operating budget. Therefore, the College is undertaking a feasibility study for a concerted endowment fundraising effort that will help increase the endowment to at least $65 million. The consulting firm Campbell & Company has been engaged to evaluate the capacity, timing and structure for this effort, and is testing a potential comprehensive $60 million multi-year campaign focused on endowment, annual fund, and potentially two smaller capital projects. Pending results of this feasibility study, which will be completed in December 2015, a quiet phase for this campaign could start in spring 2016.

It will be important for the next president to bring considerable skill, dedication, and experience to this effort.

Alumnae Relations: Much of Alverno’s future fundraising success rests on the ability to increase alumnae engagement. Nearly fifteen thousand women and 250 men count themselves among the alumnae of Alverno. More than half have graduated in the past two decades, and the majority live in either Wisconsin or the greater Chicago area, i.e. they are within easy physical access. Historically, the College had not involved its alumnae as actively as it might. However, in recent years, aggressive goals have been set to incorporate alumnae fully into major initiatives. This has resulted in dramatically increased alumnae participation in: College events (up 500% since FY10); alumnae giving; alumnae leadership on the Board of Trustees, Advisory Councils and the Alumnae Council; and an active Vanguard Society that connects high-achieving alumnae with students.

The new president needs to engage with local alumnae as well as across the United States and the world and identify a number of strategies to connect the alumnae with the College.

GOVERNING BOARD: Continue the growth and strengthening of the Board of Trustees.

Currently there are 34 members of the Board of Trustees, including six School Sisters of Saint Francis. The sisters have an allocation of six seats. The maximum number of Board members is 40, and with several trustees recently moving to Emeritus status, there are a number of vacant seats. There are 10 Trustees Emeriti, most of whom remain active in their support of the institution.

The Alverno Board operates as an independent Board of Trustees with some reserved powers retained by the School Sisters of St. Francis. A description of these selected responsibilities of the School Sisters of St. Francis can be found in the Alverno College bylaws.
The growth of Alverno has been in part the result of a strongly committed and actively engaged Board of Trustees. There is, in fact, a direct correlation between the quality of a Board of Trustees and the achievements of the institution. As a result, it is critically important for board leadership to place particular emphasis on the nominating process, making certain that, as board vacancies occur, only persons of the highest quality are recruited to fill these positions. Nominations sought are based on specific skills needed and on the desire to maintain a diverse board (age, ethnicity, geography). Moreover, Alverno has been successful in maintaining long-tenured trustees who develop strong personal ties to the College as evidenced by the trustees’ commitment of $12.5 million—nearly one third of the $33 million total—to the recently completed capital campaign.

While trustee development and nomination is primarily a board responsibility, the president will engage with board leadership in identifying and engaging strong talent. The new president will be critical in continuing to develop long-term relationships with board members.

**VISIBILITY AND MARKETING:** Continue to grow awareness, build greater geographic diversity of student body, and support enrollment and fundraising growth.

According to market research, Alverno is the only college in the greater Milwaukee area that has significantly increased market awareness in the last few years. However, with a shrinking college-aged population in this market, the College continues to seek new ways to build awareness in niche markets in northern Illinois and south central Wisconsin.

In professional education circles, Alverno is perhaps one of the best-known liberal arts colleges not only in the United States, but in the world. Yet this visibility can be further translated locally and regionally to expand enrollment, fund development, and public relations success.

To that end, the president has a meaningful role to play in broadening the College’s reputation and will be required to be a visible and actively engaged leader in the Milwaukee community and beyond.

**FACILITIES:** Continue progress on the master facility plan, building and renovating facilities to both attract students and support student learning.

Alverno finalized a master facility plan in 2010 that encompasses building and renovation needed over the next few decades. Guided by this plan, the college recently completed the largest construction and renovation project in the institution’s history. This project resulted in new classrooms, a state-of-the-art healthcare simulation lab, and increased spaces for student success services and community building. While this project addressed the most pressing facilities-based campus needs, a few items remain to be handled in the next decade, including renovation of an existing residence hall, expanded athletic facilities, and updating the campus Early Learning Center.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING:** Alverno’s current strategic plan has served the College well in further solidifying the institution’s values, defining goals and ensuring key annual deliverables. It is expected that the new president will initiate a major planning effort, and the issues outlined in this document can serve as a basis upon which to begin.
THE QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

In addition to an earned terminal degree and significant demonstrated leadership in higher education, the next president will understand and embrace the Franciscan charism and the Catholic intellectual tradition. The successful candidate will demonstrate a number of presidential qualities listed below.

- **Articulate** Alverno’s mission and commitment to core liberal arts values in the education of women;

- **Enhance** the visibility of Alverno as a liberal arts college based on the Catholic intellectual tradition and excellence in every facet of the educational enterprise in an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to leadership;

- **Support** the Vice President for Academic Affairs in developing a comprehensive vision for a liberal arts undergraduate program as well as graduate programs and commit to high quality, collaborative, interdisciplinary learning and teaching; keep Alverno’s liberal arts curriculum relevant as well as anticipate and stay ahead of upcoming trends;

- Show a record of **bold and visionary leadership** experience and a record of professional achievement suitable to the position of President;
THE QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP (continued)

- Promote women’s leadership and **serve** as a role model for students as well as the larger Alverno community;

- Demonstrate outstanding **communication**, analytical and interpersonal skills including the ability to engender meaningful and constructive conversations around difficult issues, promoting an environment of trust; engage in consultative and inclusive decision making skills; exhibit a personal philosophy that is grounded in administrative transparency; and be able to thrive in an environment where everyone works on a first name basis.

- **Lead** the development and implementation of an ambitious strategic plan;

- Demonstrate a proven track record of persuasive and enthusiastic **fundraising skills** demonstrating the ability to successfully connect with private donor sources (e.g. friends, alumni, corporations, and foundations);

- Ensure a strong **public presence** in the city of Milwaukee and serve with great pride as a leader of a women’s college that is the most diverse college or university in the state;

- Demonstrate success in working with complex budgets and **fiscal prioritization** with an understanding of higher education business models;

- Show a commitment to **academic freedom** and to an inclusive campus culture where both intellectual curiosity and healthy internal communication flourish;

- Understand enrollment **growth**, management and retention as well as a strong commitment to student recruitment and retention;

- Commit to **student development**, educational fulfillment and success of students, including nurturing campus life and the academic community;

- Show successful **experience** in hiring, mentoring, developing and retaining exceptional senior management and staff;

- Demonstrate commitment to growing a more **diverse** faculty and staff; commitment to supporting a diverse student population; and,

- Demonstrate understanding of **technology** as well as appropriate strategic application across branding, marketing, systems and processes.
THE PROCESS OF CANDIDACY

To apply, candidates should address a reflective letter of interest to Mr. Don Layden, Jr., Board Chair and Chair of the Presidential Search Committee, highlighting the ways in which they meet desired presidential characteristics in relation to the challenges and opportunities described above. Applications should include a current resume and the names and phone numbers of at least five professional references (these will be called only at a later, semi-final stage, with the candidate’s foreknowledge.) Letters of nomination and reference are welcome but not requested. By College policy and search-committee affirmation, information from and about all candidates will be kept in strict confidence.

For full consideration of your application, please submit your materials electronically by December 9, 2015 to alvernopres@academic-search.com.

Alverno College is being assisted by Dr. Jacqueline Doud of Academic Search, Inc. in Washington DC. Jacqueline may be contacted at jpd@academic-search.com and 310-597-9042. Please visit the Alverno College website at alverno.edu for more information.

Alverno College, consistent with its mission, is an equal opportunity employer, seeking to be diverse in its people and programs.