

Judy Beck, Ph.D.



March 13, 2025

To the CERRA Executive Director search committee members:

I am excited to apply for the position of Executive Director at the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, & Advancement (CERRA). With a deep commitment to strengthening the educator pipeline and a proven record of leadership in teacher preparation, recruitment, and advocacy, I am eager to lead CERRA's vital mission. My experience in professional development, program innovation, and strategic partnerships aligns with CERRA's goals to recruit, support and retain high-quality educators across South Carolina. I welcome the opportunity to leverage my expertise to advance the center's impact and build sustainable solutions for the state's evolving educational landscape.

Throughout my 25 years in higher education, my focus has been on the advancement of faculty, staff, and students. As an academic leader, I have developed and refined a philosophy focused on building positive relationships through honesty, fairness, collaboration, and clear communication. My varied experiences in academic administration, accreditation, personnel development, advocacy, and fiscal management have allowed me to hone my application of these critical skills. I believe these prior experiences will ensure I make a positive impact at CERRA. Allow me to share my story as it aligns to the qualifications you desire in your next Executive Director.

From the onset of my career in higher education, I have been involved in developing, coordinating, and assessing academic programs. As a program director at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL), my focus was on program development, assessment, and accreditation. While serving in this position, it was my role to develop an assessment plan, determine appropriate assessment tools, guide the implementation of the plan and design data driven program improvements. This was my introduction to the importance of the liberal arts to a robust and rigorous academic experience and the critical nature of program assessment. While at UWL, I received the first of many grants that now total more than \$1,000,000. Additionally, I was awarded the first of my five teaching excellence awards.

At the University of South Carolina Upstate, I served seven years as the Director/Associate Dean of Teacher Education Programs on the Greenville Campus. In this role, my focus extended to include the recruitment and retention of quality faculty and students. As a program, we developed a strong partnership with Greenville Technical College to ensure a seamless transition for their students. Additionally, we strengthened our partnership with the local school district to enable our teacher candidates an immersive field experience. During this time, my commitment to the Boyer scholarship model was strengthened. As a faculty team, we investigated problems

of practice that enhanced our students' achievement and contributed to current research. It was through supporting, mentoring, and evaluating junior level faculty, that I developed an appreciation for the importance of highly skilled, strongly committed, and diverse faculty members. During a leadership transition at USC Upstate, I served as the Interim Vice Chancellor/Executive Director of the Greenville Campus for 14 months. During this experience, I directed short and long-range academic planning, working with the academic Deans to strengthen and expand degree programs. I managed the collection and analysis of both financial and program effectiveness data to determine alignment with strategic planning goals. In collaboration with the Student Affairs Office, we developed and supervised campus activities designed to support an engaged learning community. Throughout this experience, the power of collaboration across campus and between institutions of higher education was reinforced.

Based on my belief in the liberal arts tradition, I was again drawn to a comprehensive regional university grounded in this philosophy. Currently, I am the Dean of the School of Education at the University of South Carolina Aiken, and my journey continues to be one of growth and achievement. My skills related to fiscal management, program development, and accreditation have broadened and strengthened, as I am now responsible for the success of eight academic programs and the overall unit. Under my leadership, we reaffirmed our accreditation with the Council for the Accreditation for Teacher Education (CAEP) with no stipulations or areas of improvement cited.

As part of our strategic planning process, the School of Education developed and implemented a recruitment and retention plan focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This past fall, we celebrated our first graduate from our Call Me Mister program. This collaborative partnership with Aiken Technical College and Aiken Public Schools, recruits underrepresented populations into the teaching profession. I have partnered with 2-year institutions to develop transfer pathways to our Teacher Education programs including Piedmont, Aiken, and Horry Georgetown Technical Colleges as well as the USC Sumter campus. We have developed an enhanced advising system and expanded academic supports to assist in student retention. Additionally, we have created a greater sense of belonging for our students through intentional programming and touch points throughout the academic year.

In my time at USC Aiken, we have put forth a new online master's degree in Educator Leadership designed for teachers to develop leadership skills and enhance their pedagogical skills to take on new instructional roles in their school district. Additionally, we added our Special Education – Multicategorical program to Palmetto College (the University of South Carolina System's online degree completion program). Through this process, I have worked closely with our Office of Online Learning and Support to ensure these online programs were accessible and follow best practices in online and adult learning.

Through elected positions in state, regional, and national professional organizations, I have interacted with thought leaders across the nation and around the world. In my role as President for the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), I advocated for educator preparation to legislators on Capitol Hill and was invited to discuss current challenges in higher education with business and education leaders. The power and importance of

all voices being heard, a foundational piece of my leadership style, has been reinforced throughout this process. The theme I chose for my year of presidential service continues this emphasis: *Our United Voices Building a Crescendo: Advocating for Inclusiveness, Equity, and Excellence in Teacher Education*. Additionally, I served as the Chair of our statewide Education Deans group and President of the South Carolina Association of Teacher Educators where I advocated for educator preparation on issues related to testing and scholarships. These positions have empowered me to mentor faculty as they seek out national and state level positions of influence.

My educational journey has led me down a stimulating and exhilarating path that has prepared me to tackle the opportunities and challenges that accompany the position of Executive Director of CERRA. As a first-generation college student, I understand the impact and value of higher education on an individual's future success and self-fulfillment. My experience with program assessment and improvement allows me to focus on ensuring that the needs of all students regardless of race, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, or socioeconomic status are not only met but celebrated through academically rigorous and contextually supportive programs. As a dean, I have learned to identify faculty strengths and empower them to cultivate and nurture those strengths as they push their own boundaries and advance along their career path.

It is my sincere hope that this letter illustrates how my diverse experiences and positive character make me a strong candidate for being the Executive Director of the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, & Advancement. I am eager to bring my passion for educational excellence, proven leadership skills, and commitment to inclusive academic environments to CERRA. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to the possibility of further discussing how I can contribute to CERRA's mission of supporting and sustaining South Carolina's educator workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy".

Dr. Judy Beck