

CELESTE MCCORMICK

Dear Search Committee:

Please accept my application for the position of Chief Technology Officer / Director of Information Technology at Lewis-Clark State College. Included in my material you will find my resume, contact information for references, and unofficial transcripts.

The fact that I am an internal candidate who has worked at LC State for 16 years means that I have a long trail of work-history “bread crumbs” you can follow to ascertain my skills, knowledge, and aptitude. Your application requirements request three references, but you could potentially find hundreds of LC State constituents with whom I have worked, each of whom might have an observation or opinion. My employment familiarity and continuity bring an understanding of core values and native intelligence. The preparation and follow-through that have been a part of my past endeavors would continue in a new role. The quality of my written and oral communication would continue. My experience with, and deep understanding of, LC State’s most important enterprise systems would continue to benefit the institution as CTO.

As an internal candidate, I risk being perceived as narrow-minded and parochial, with a tendency to focus on how things have always been done. However, that has never been the case with me because I have always taken advantage of opportunities to explore new approaches. I have a long history of collaboration with IT managers and leaders at other institutions in the regional Northwest Ellucian Users Group, a mix of institutions both large and small, public and private. During my time as interim CTO, I expanded my professional collaboration to include the CIOs at the other higher education institutions in the State of Idaho, who face the same state-level challenges and initiatives with varying resources and opinions. My professional networks have helped me explore an array of options to choose the kernels that make sense for LC State.

The CTO position at LC State is complex, in that it requires someone with both operational and visionary strengths. LC State’s IT department is too small for the CTO to have a purely executive role, thinking only big picture and leaving the details to others. The CTO must also be hands-on, and able to support operations and projects.

At LC State, the CTO reports to the President and is part of the President’s Cabinet as well as the President’s Council. This organizational standing requires diverse skills. The CTO has one eye on the horizon, even as she manages the daily minutiae of projects, operations, and employees. For example, during my time as interim CTO I have witnessed the impact of the pandemic on education in general, and public higher education in particular. Idaho’s approach to higher education in January 2021 is significantly different from January 2020. LC State has needed to be nimble as the college navigated environmental factors that changed with unprecedented speed, and I have led the IT Department as it supported employees and programs negotiating constant change. I am ready to lead the department if the pandemic forces a continued state of flux, or if there is a return to an environment that is closer to what was previously considered “normal.”

During recent weeks, the country has learned of a massive compromise of government and private technology systems via the SolarWinds breach. This unfolding incident brings to the fore the double-edged sword represented by digital systems. LC State’s computer systems are invaluable to survival and success yet can potentially be used as a Trojan Horse that

compromises security. My role as CTO will be to imagine the best tools and techniques for protecting the college, and then making certain that daily operations reflect the best laid plans.

Idaho's State Board of Education has discussed changes to the way that data are collected and shared among the eight public institutions, especially including the four-year schools. Considerations include the selection of a common ERP. I am the perfect resource to lead LC State during this on-going conversation. For 15 years I have worked with the current ERP, and I know its structure, processes, and data repositories. I can provide historic expertise in a statewide consideration of next steps, and – potentially – can lead the college through any transition to another product.

I truly enjoy working at LC State with other passionate, dedicated people committed to serving the common good and educating students. I am an experienced and capable leader and communicator. I am organized and a hard worker – I get the job done. I respect and enjoy collaborating with everyone I work with, both within the department and across campus. I am the best of both worlds: a known and respected internal candidate with the resources and energy to bring a fresh perspective. I have a proven track record as a strong and effective manager, but I have the ideas and drive of a visionary leader. I am excited and eager to move to the next level in this leadership role. I believe I am the right candidate for LC State's CTO, and I am eager to help the college fulfill its role and mission.

Sincerely,
Celeste M. McCormick