

DANIEL GURSKIS
113 Somerset Avenue
Garden City, New York 11530

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Dear Search Committee Member:

With a deep appreciation for the rich heritage and outstanding reputation of the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, I am, with great enthusiasm, submitting my application for consideration as your next dean. Inarguably, CCM ranks among the nation's foremost comprehensive arts colleges, and the deanship represents a singular leadership opportunity. In reviewing the prospectus, I find that my interests and experience fit well with your expectations for the position. I have met with success in organizational leadership, academic visioning, faculty development, external engagement, fiscal and resource management, and fundraising. What's more, I have been an energetic and effective spokesperson, advocate, and recruiter in a variety of settings.

Demonstrated leadership in a complex, multidisciplinary environment.

As the dean of the College of the Arts at Montclair State University, I steward an annual budget of \$35 million, which funds four academic units, four professional departments, two centers, and two service offices. I provide leadership and executive-level management for nearly 500 full-time and contingent faculty members whose ranks encompass artists, scholars, researchers, clinicians, and practitioners. They are supported by over 200 full-time and contingent staff, among them thirteen direct reports to the dean. Together, we serve nearly 3,800 majors and graduate students pursuing degrees in 60 different programs. Also in my portfolio is the oversight of twelve campus buildings and those theatres, studios, galleries, workshops, laboratories, and classrooms there.

Promoting and sustaining excellence.

The College of the Arts has long been designated a New Jersey State Center of Excellence in the Arts. All programs eligible for accreditation are accredited by, respectively, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the National Association of Schools of Dance, the National Association of Schools of Music, and the National Association of Schools of Theatre. During my time at Montclair, our programs in Musical Theatre, Dance, and Music Therapy have risen in profile, while strong but lesser-known programs like Theatre Design, Technology & Management and Product Design have consistently seen 100 percent job placement rates for graduating seniors.

For students in the College of the Arts, the studio and the classroom are just the beginning of the educational experience:

- The college is among the most active producers of live performance and cultural events in New Jersey, annually presenting over 500 concerts, recitals, theatrical

performances, exhibitions, colloquia, public lectures, and screenings. Included in those offerings are numerous new works in dance, music, and theatre.

- Ensembles in music, dance, and theater perform off-campus at landmark venues such as the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Dizzy's Club at Lincoln Center, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Joyce Theater, the 92nd Street Y, and the Martha Graham Studio. Of particular note, the University Singers are the go-to large vocal ensemble (160+ voices) for the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, jointly appearing in five concerts during the current academic year alone.
- For the second time in four years, remote field documentary projects by students in the School of Communication and Media earned two of the seven College Television Awards (colloquially, "Student Emmys") presented by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.
- The Office of Arts and Cultural Programming (ACP) is the college's professional performing arts presentation arm. Its signature *Peak Performances* series consists of full seasons of music, theater, and dance. The New Jersey State Council on the Arts has recognized Montclair State University/ACP as an Institution of Major Impact, and the Association of Performing Arts Presenters has honored it for programmatic excellence and sustained achievement.

Establishing programs that make a difference.

Curriculum is, of course, the bedrock of any academic institution. One of my salient strengths has been the capacity to spark programmatic innovation that can lead an institution in new directions. In the process of program development, I can play, depending on need, any number of roles: calm and steady facilitator, probing critic, proud godfather – sometimes all three at once.

Under my aegis at Montclair, thirteen new programs have been introduced, including a unique low-residency MFA in Dance aimed at mid-career dancers and a BA in Recording Arts, offered jointly by the School of Music and the School of Communication and Media. The latter, a recent addition, is attracting an entirely new population of students to the college and the university. Essential to growth in student competencies has been a willingness to cast a critical eye on even ostensibly successful programs. For example, two well-enrolled but slightly dated programs – the BFA in Filmmaking and the BA in Television/Digital Media – were retired and replaced by a more contemporary BFA in Film and Television. The BFA in Animation and Illustration was serving neither area as well as it could, so the subjects were uncoupled and replaced with a BFA in Illustration in the Department of Art and Design and a BFA in Animation and Visual Effects in the School of Communication and Media.

While at Brooklyn College, I successfully spearheaded the establishment of the Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, which is located at Steiner Studios, the largest film and television production facility outside Los Angeles. Until I left Brooklyn for Montclair, I was intimately involved in the ground-up development of the school and its new satellite campus in all facets: architect selection, facilities design, budget modeling, curriculum planning, staff planning, and fundraising. Throughout, I collaborated with representatives of the New York City Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, the New York City Office of Management and Budget, the New York State Assembly, the Office of the Chancellor of the City University of

New York, and Steiner Studios. Recently, *The Hollywood Reporter* named the Feirstein School one of the top twenty-five film schools in the nation.

Successfully cultivating and maintaining external relationships.

The College of the Arts is the most outward-facing academic unit at Montclair. It is, to borrow the phrase du jour, the front porch of the university. A priority for me has been actively pursuing industry partnerships that not only provide valuable educational opportunities for students but also generate resources for the college. Montclair, through my outreach and oversight, has become acknowledged as the leader among universities in New Jersey in the engagement with the growing film and television industry there. We provide state-of-the-art facilities, production services, and location services to a broad range of clients that have included Google, Charles Schwab, CBS Studios, NBCUniversal, Hulu, ESPN, MSNBC, National Public Radio, the New Jersey Lottery, and the Red Bulls II Pro Soccer Team. Longer-term partnerships include the Royal Shakespeare Company, New York Public Television, New Jersey Public Television, Ghetto Film School, Montclair Film Festival, Montclair Art Museum, Movado, and Atlantic Health System.

To further enhance our students' career prospects, I expanded the staff of the College of the Arts Office of Career Services from one to four members, with the goal of creating a more robust internship and job placement program. Today, the list of companies that come to campus specifically to recruit in the College of Arts is long: ABC, CNBC, Coyne PR, Ingersoll-Rand, MLB Network, NBCUniversal, Sirius XM, Under Armour, and ViacomCBS, among others.

A record of acquiring resources to support the academic mission.

Like any academic leader operating in today's challenging fiscal climate, I spend a good deal of time focusing on the acquisition of resources. To that end, I work hand in glove with both the Office of University Development and the College of the Arts' two dedicated development officers in an array of fundraising efforts. Since my arrival, we have secured more than \$23 million in gifts, bequests, and in-kind donations for the college. Our current priority is the cultivation of gifts of \$50,000 or more. In my previous position at Brooklyn College, I was a principal in the team that raised \$20 million in startup funding for the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, and I was directly responsible for the solicitation that brought \$6.7 million of that from the City of New York. For me, in the final analysis, fundraising is a form of investment advising, and I enjoy the role of matching investors with the investments that best suit their interests.

Growing enrollment.

At Montclair, enrollment management is conducted through a coordinated effort at both the university and the college levels. This has meant my direct involvement in all its aspects, from recruitment and admissions to retention to degree completion. Since I arrived at the university more than a decade ago, the number of majors and graduate students in the college has grown by 45 percent – 25 percent in the past four years alone – peaking in the current 2023-24 academic year. While it is true that we have a large population to draw upon in our recruiting, it is equally true that we have a large number of competitors in our region, many of which have done less well in recent years, some significantly so.

To foster enrollment growth in the college, we begin with a critical, central premise: everyone – from the longest-serving professor to the latest staff hire – is both an educator and a recruiter. We conduct more than 100 college-specific recruiting events each year on campus and off. We support and expand upon those with a digital-first marketing and promotion strategy, overseen by a web content and digital communications manager, a position I created in the Office of the Dean. Extensive personal contact rounds out the efforts. We rely on our staff to maintain relationships with high school counselors in New Jersey and our faculty to establish connections with select high school teachers in their subject areas across the country. During the admissions cycle, we also count on faculty and staff to be in touch with highly desirable candidates as well as those who are clearly undecided about enrolling. Finally, we work with the university's Financial Aid Office and the college's own MSU Foundation funding to ensure that need is met.

A proven team builder.

Whether as a dean or, previously, as a department chair, I have always enjoyed the role of mentor, and I take pride in the careers that I have helped launch and advance. At Montclair, I have overseen the hiring of approximately 60 percent of the full-time faculty in the College of the Arts and close to 80 percent of the full-time managerial and professional staff, more than 100 colleagues in all. Earlier, as the chair of the Department of Film at Brooklyn College, I was directly involved in the hiring of eight of its fifteen full-time faculty members. Virtually all the hires at both institutions have been permanently retained or are on track to do so. I am gratified to have played a role in the reappointment and promotion processes leading to their success, and I continue to support professional growth through reassigned time for scholarship and creative activities, funding for research and travel, and other avenues of professional development.

In sum, my professional journey in the arts, media, and higher education has provided me with a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for all of us working to prepare the next generation of artists. My goal is always to support and build upon existing strengths, fostering an environment where both tradition and innovation coexist harmoniously for the benefit of students and the broader arts community. I am keen to bring my expertise, along with a commitment to collaborative growth and sustainable excellence, to CCM and the University of Cincinnati.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that we may have the opportunity to discuss the deanship and my qualifications in greater detail.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Gurskis', with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

Daniel Gurskis