

KERRI PARKER JARZABSKI

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express interest in the position of Director of Student Activities at the University of Connecticut. As a senior leader with over 20 years of experience in higher education, I am passionate about supporting students holistically and value collaborative relationships across divisions to assist students in not just persisting to graduation, but in thriving. Serving in progressive leadership roles in Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs throughout my career has afforded me the opportunity to understand the challenges and opportunities colleagues face within their divisions as we work together to center and elevate the student experience. A current doctoral candidate in Higher Education at UMass Amherst, I am a life-long learner seeking to apply current research and data to practice, collaborating with colleagues across departments and divisions to support holistic student success and development.

A strategic leader who works to cultivate a team within each department and across the division, I encourage innovation, inspiring staff to be proactive, creative leaders and problem solvers. A data driven decision maker, I bring vision and transparency. I am an energetic, highly visible student advocate, who works with staff to create powerful learning environments that shape the student experience. As VPSA, I had direct oversight of Health Services, Counseling Services, Residence Life, Community Standards and Education, Student Involvement and Leadership, International Student and Scholars, Career Services, University Advising, Student Success, New Student Programs, Diversity Program and Services, Community Engagement, Spiritual Life, NCAA DIII Athletics and Recreational Sport.

At Western New England University, I launched University Advising and led the reorganization of the division of Student Affairs, creating the Office of Inclusive Excellence, and merging Health and Counseling Services. In addition, I developed partnerships with local colleges, Smith College and Springfield College, to bring 10 graduate interns to campus from their graduate programs in social work and athletic counseling to meet the growing mental health and counseling needs of our student population. Recognizing the importance of student leaders and mentors, I led a collaborative effort among the directors to develop shared leadership competencies in the division, creating joint leadership trainings. I also developed an executive council made up of undergraduate and graduate student governance to provide recommendations and develop programs to serve all students.

I served as a key member of the University's Emergency Planning and Response Team (EMRT), working on the development of the fall opening plans during the COVID-19 pandemic, assuming oversight of testing for the campus. I collaborated with academic affairs colleagues in proposing a repricing of summer courses, cutting the cost of summer courses by 50%, making them more accessible to students who might have needed to repeat a course due to challenges faced in adapting to online learning. In addition, I served on the subcommittee that developed a new grading system for the spring

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2020 and fall 2021 terms. Finally, I worked on a subcommittee to assist students financially, distributing CARES Act funds, residential room and board refunds, and a Community Foundation grant.

As the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Retention, I evaluated data related to retention and worked to develop and recommend programs to assist students in persisting to graduation. I co-chaired a university-wide retention committee reporting to the President that ultimately led to the development of a professional advising model. I collaborated with colleagues to develop several retention initiatives; a one credit first year seminar for pre-pharmacy students, first generation student programming, a college success coaching program, a criminal justice cohort program, a women in STEM learning community, a sophomore programming series, a summer bridge model, a first year seminar course for international students, and enhanced the community experience for honors and commuter students. I have worked to support undecided students, making curricular recommendations to the Academic Deans, and have enhanced the transfer student experience with a program series led by a Transfer Ambassador. Serving on a committee to implement a new enterprise resource planning tool for the campus, I launched the early alert tool, CRM Advise, and developed a care team at Western New England.

My doctoral research is centered on understanding the college experience for neurodivergent students and the systemic factors that help or hinder their success. As a first-generation college student myself, I have worked with colleagues to develop and further initiatives to foster inclusive environments, contributing to student belonging. My current work in the Office of Student Affairs and Campus Life at UMass Amherst with the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Life and Wellbeing and the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Advocacy and Inclusion is centered on belonging, connection, and inclusion. It is important for me to be a part of a community that puts students at the center of the institution. I feel it is a privilege to be a part of our students' educational journey and genuinely enjoy seeing the growth that takes place during their collegiate journey because of the work that the campus community does in creating experiences for students to learn in and out of the classroom. I look forward to discussing my experience with you. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Warmly,

Kerri Jarzabski