

Michael R. Evans

Dear Chancellor Turman, Mr. Bieganski, and Members of the Search Committee,

A student once asked me, “What makes a good life?” I was impressed by the question, and after some consideration I gave a four-part answer: close relationships with family, friends, and colleagues; a rich understanding of the world around us; a rewarding career that puts our values into action; and a purpose that extends beyond ourselves.

As a longtime leader in Higher Education, I like to think my work helps students achieve this worthy goal. By creating relevant and transformational experiences in and out of the classroom, we give students opportunities to deepen their values, broaden their horizons, and launch careers that bring them joy and rewards. In so doing, we make positive contributions to the world both directly and through the good work of our students.

I was thrilled to learn that Peru State College is searching for a new President. I share the College’s values, its goals of providing access and affordable opportunities to all learners, its emphasis on hands-on experiences and place-based education, its commitment to academic excellence and service to the region. These goals and values translate into educational journeys that allow students to move toward their dreams with increasing confidence and a deepening sense of purpose.

I am the Vice President for Academic Affairs for Southern New Hampshire University’s on-campus College. We have 4,000 students, graduate and undergraduate, on a classic residential campus, and we work in concert with SNHU’s adult-focused online program. Like Peru State, we harness our success to our students’ success; we succeed only when they do. Our mission is to provide opportunities to students for whom college was not necessarily a given—and then welcome them, inspire them, challenge them, and give them the support they need to learn, grow, earn a diploma, and launch rewarding lives. I would be honored to bring that same dedication to Peru State College.

SNHU is a national leader in innovation and institutional transformation. For example, we offer a workforce-development program that operates on a business-to-business model; we provide educational programming to the employees at a large number of companies, and the companies pay the discounted tuition. The program allows the companies to develop the skills of their workforces while also giving the employees the opportunity to earn a college degree. Initiatives like this, however, do not have us resting on our laurels. For the past year, we have been tackling a top-to-bottom transformation of our campus-based programming, aiming for a \$10,000 tuition, highly experiential educational opportunities, and a new approach to education that frees itself from standard assumptions. The process is thrilling, and everyone here is working hard to make all of this succeed; we are contacted often by leaders from colleges and universities around the world, hoping to learn how we are bringing about significant institutional change. Innovation is essential for colleges to meet students where they are and help them achieve the dreams they hold dear.

Peru State College is exceptional in many ways, and its success is not accidental. All healthy colleges prosper by crafting a clear and compelling vision around which everyone can rally. I believe in building a vision together, as a community, with a shared understanding of the future we want to create. A distinctive vision requires us to ask distinctive questions that engage our collective imagination and that reach beyond the borders of the institution. What should Higher Education be doing better—and how can we help? How can students' rapidly evolving learning styles lead us to build new, more relevant educational experiences? How can the College engage with the city of Peru, the state of Nebraska, and communities throughout the region to create even stronger partnerships and relationships to benefit students and support the local workforce? How can Bobcat athletics, co-curricular activities, and other experiences deepen learning, sharpen leadership, and bolster pride? By asking these and many more questions together—and by listening carefully and respectfully to people's contributions—we can craft a distinctive vision that can elevate Peru State in the Higher-Education landscape.

Opportunities that ignite students' potential require vision, innovation, agility, and an unwavering commitment to strategic planning and continual improvement. To keep our programs relevant and strong, we have to be bold enough to challenge our own thinking, to reimagine the ways we help students gain knowledge, to embrace creativity as a fundamental driver of our progress. And then we must gauge our success against concrete metrics and iterate in a never-ending effort to give our students the very best experiences possible. The key is to maintain a steady emphasis on innovation, not for its own sake but to give students meaningful educational experiences and opportunities that help them learn and grow.

At SNHU, for example, I wanted to find better ways to support students whose life circumstances make it difficult to tackle five courses a semester. Some work full-time. Some are taking care of children, siblings, or parents. Some come from high schools that did not prepare them well for college work. To help these students, I created "Degree In Five," a unique program that allows students to slow down to four courses a semester and take five years to graduate—without incurring a fifth year of tuition debt. The program costs the University very little, and it is making the difference between succeeding and dropping out for many of our students.

It is also imperative that we help students take the ideas they grew up with and strike them against the flint of differing views. Part of the coming-of-age experience that college offers is the opportunity to discover that my normal is not your normal, and that together we can achieve a broader view of reality than either of us accomplished alone. Education requires diversity—diversity of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, and ways of engaging with the world. Difference must be respected, but it also must be valued for the richness it brings to our understanding. Everyone at the College must feel fundamentally welcome, appreciated, and free to bring their full selves, all the facets and fractals of their identities, into every part of their lives and encounters. I am a member of the Inclusion Council at SNHU, and I serve on the Restorative Community Response Team. I participated in the drafting of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan, and I work with our Office of Diversity Initiatives to continually weave DEI into the fabric of our campus. At its best, a college community embraces the vibrant exchange of views, and that dynamic energy can flourish only when the community comprises a rich mosaic of backgrounds and ideas, where everyone feels safe and valued.

Someone once commented that a College President has more power than they think—and not nearly enough. I am a passionate believer in shared governance, in our collective ability to

generate new ideas and bold plans that far exceed anything a single mind can create. I often tell people that a hallmark of intelligence is not necessarily coming up with the best idea; it is recognizing the best idea in the room. My approach to leadership is built on a strong foundation of respect, listening, integrity, and care. That approach requires active engagement with all corners of the institution, and I build intentional opportunities for people to share their thoughts and express their concerns. For example, I work closely with our Faculty Senate and our faculty union, taking *questions* to them—rather than premanufactured solutions—so we can craft the answers together. I hold Faculty/Staff Breakfasts and Town Hall sessions with no agenda beyond the issues on people’s minds. I walk the campus often, chatting with faculty, staff, and students about their experiences and their goals. And every semester, I remind the campus that I eat lunch in the same section of the Dining Center every day, and everyone is welcome to stop by for a moment or a meal.

I bring that same dedication to my work with students. I make a point of being visible and accessible on campus, teaching independent studies, giving guest lectures, sitting in on the Student Senate, dealing blackjack at a student club’s Casino Night, serving blueberry pancakes at Late Night Breakfast. This engagement energizes me, and it gives me opportunities to hear what students are thinking.

I believe in maintaining a similar, active relationship with the larger community, serving on boards and volunteering at nonprofits, talking with business and governmental leaders, and weaving strong connections between the region and the campus. When I was Provost of Unity College, one of the most rewarding of these experiences involved working with the Wyeth family—the extended family of painters N.C., Jamie, and Andrew Wyeth—to build a relationship that gave our students and faculty access to their private island for long-term research projects. (One of our faculty members even discovered a new species of tardigrade on the island, officially naming it *Echiniscoides Wyethi*—much to the delight of the family!) At SNHU, I worked with our faculty to forge a relationship with Boston Children’s Hospital, giving our students the opportunity to create virtual-reality simulations of their operating rooms for use in their nurse-training programs. These connections bring benefits to everyone involved: students, the University, and the community.

All of this requires resources, and for institutions like Peru State, external funding sources are essential. I love fundraising, and I relish the opportunity to do more of it as President. Peru State has an impressive story to tell, and as President I would be tireless in sharing that story widely and working with alumni, donors, and friends to find ways for the College to help them fulfill their dreams. I believe in building multi-layered relationships, inviting people and organizations to support the College financially but also identifying additional ways—internships and job-shadowing, public-private partnerships, co-branding opportunities, and more—to make those relationships deep and robust. In addition, student recruitment and retention must be among a President’s top priorities. By supporting the Admissions and Marketing teams, by engaging with the community, the state, and the region to elevate the stature of the institution, and by working with the faculty and staff to create attractive and relevant educational experiences, a President can help strengthen enrollment and keep the College’s finances healthy.

I believe wholeheartedly in the value and power of experiential approaches to education. Here at SNHU, we just received a \$186,000 grant to launch a Center for Project Based Learning, and we will use that center as a support hub for hands-on work throughout the curriculum. Among other initiatives, I also award dozens of course releases each year to faculty members who will use the time to plan, implement, and manage experiential-education opportunities for

our students. The projects range from field trips around New England to several-week trips to Appalachia, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. These experiences both enhance learning and strengthen retention, helping students get to the finish line with the skills and ways of thinking that will serve them well in their lives and their careers.

I do not believe in sitting still. In my work at three different institutions, both public and private, I have a track record of innovation, creativity, and the creation of hands-on educational opportunities for our students. I cherish collaboration and transparency. I have experience at liberal-arts institutions and a professional school. I am a big fan of athletics and the pride and leadership skills students learn when they pull together as a team. And I believe passionately in devoting the time, energy, and hard work needed to make a difference for our students.

I have dedicated my career to creating opportunities for students to broaden their horizons and pursue their dreams. I grew up in the Midwest, spending important years of my childhood on a farm in Greencastle, Indiana, where I raised chickens and sold eggs, took part in 4-H competitions, and gained a deep appreciation for small towns and rural life. I know the values such communities instill in their citizens, and I know how important colleges like Peru State can be for helping people reach for the stars.

Peru State represents opportunity, a means for generations of students to launch their own good lives. It would be an honor to help the College thrive, build a strong and bright future, and continue its important mission of access and excellence.

Respectfully,

Michael Evans

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HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Southern New Hampshire University
Manchester, New Hampshire • 2015–present

Chief Academic Officer for the on-campus College. 3,000 undergraduate students, 1,000 graduate students, 145 faculty in five schools. Academic Affairs operating budget: approximately \$40 million. Report to the campus President.

Included in my portfolio:

School of Arts and Sciences • School of Education • School of Business • School of International Engagement • College of Engineering, Technology, and Aeronautics • Institute for Language Education • Study Abroad • International Student Support • Center for Teaching and Learning • Undergraduate Research Program • Academic Program Assessment • Student Success and Advising • Student Life

Highlights:

Created unique “Degree In Five” program • Created School of International Engagement • With others, created College of Engineering, Technology, and Aeronautics • Created Individualized Major/Minor program • With Arts and Sciences, launched Digital Simulation Studio • Contributed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan • Serve on Inclusion Council • Serve on Restorative Community Response Team • Implemented Continual Improvement Model • With School of Education, launched unique para-educator program • Played key role in the creation of our campus Strategic Plan



EDUCATION

Ph.D., Indiana University,
Bloomington. Folklore
(ethnography), journalism minor.
1999

Master of Arts, Indiana University.
Folklore. 1997

Bachelor of Arts, Bowdoin College,
Brunswick, Maine. English &
Philosophy. 1981

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Cornell University. Certificate in
*Teaching and Learning in the
Diverse Classroom*. 2020.

Northwestern University, Kellogg
School of Business, through
Allstate Foundation. *Nonprofit
Management Essentials*. 2020.

CIC Executive Leadership Academy.
2019–20.

Harvard University. Institute for
Educational Management. 2014.

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Unity College, Unity, Maine • 2013–15

Chief Academic Officer responsible for all campus programs. 42 full-time faculty in five Centers, \$16 million operating budget, \$14 million endowment. Reported to the President.

Included in my portfolio:

Five academic Centers • Marketing • Admissions and Enrollment Management • Retention • Registration • Donor stewardship • Career and Internships • Student Life • Library • Community-Based Learning

Highlights:

Created foundation for graduate program • Developed online program • Developed Strategic Plan • Exceeded enrollments goals and records • Led two Board of Trustees Committees • Forged partnerships with foundations and other organizations

Interim Dean

Associate Dean

Indiana University School of Journalism
Bloomington and Indianapolis. 2009–13

Responsible for leadership, planning, direction, and quality of the School and its operations on two campuses. 900 undergraduate students, 70 graduate students, 39 full-time faculty. \$7.7 million operating budget. \$19 million endowment. Reported to the Provost.

Included in my portfolio:

Undergraduate and Graduate programs • Budget and finance (RCM) • Fundraising • Registration and Scheduling • Career and Internships • Alumni Affairs • Strategic Planning

Highlights:

Created Director of Online Learning position • Philanthropic stewardship • Created American Student Radio • Created Alumni Expert Workshops • Advised National Association of Black Journalists • Improved critical foundation relations

TEACHING AWARDS

Frederic Bachman Lieber Award for excellence in teaching. IU's "oldest and most prestigious teaching award." One awarded each year out of entire system's 9,000+ faculty. \$2,000, plus \$2,000 annual bonus. 2006.

Gretchen Kemp Award for teaching excellence. Top teaching award in IU School of Journalism. \$10,000. Earned twice: 2010 and 2004.

Trustees Teaching Award. Chosen from among all IU faculty statewide. \$2,500.

Teaching Excellence Recognition Award, IU. \$1,000. 1997 (twice), 1998, 2000.

AWARDS AND GRANTS (selected)

Fulbright Fellowship. Supported nine-month ethnographic research project in Arctic Canada. 1998–99.

IU Summer Faculty Fellowship. Supported three-month ethnographic research project in Australian Outback. \$6,500. 2001.

IU Incentive Grant. Supported grant proposal to National Science Foundation. \$10,000. 1998.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Professor, Unity College. 2013–2015.

Associate Professor, Indiana University School of Journalism. 2006–2013.

Assistant Professor, Indiana University School of Journalism. 1999–2006.

Adjunct Professor, IU Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, 1999–2013, IU School of Journalism, 1995–1999.

BUSINESS, MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS LEADERSHIP

Prior to my doctoral program, I worked in the publishing and marketing industry, leading creative and independent people while meeting goals and deadlines.

Publications Editor, Northfield Mount Hermon School. Northfield, Massachusetts. 1989–94.

Nationally syndicated newspaper columnist, “Finders.” 36 newspapers in 22 states. 1990–97.

Regional Editor, *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, Northampton, Massachusetts. 1985–89.

Managing Editor, *Western Massachusetts Magazine*. 1982–84.

Freelance writer, scores of published articles. 1973–present.

BOARD SERVICE

Association of Chief Academic Officers. On Executive Committee as Secretary. 2019–present.

World Affairs Council of New Hampshire. Marketing and Development Committee. 2019–present.

Seven Eagles, a Penobscot Nation cultural organization. Board Vice President. 2012–present.

Global Citizens Circle. 2020–present.

The Center on Congress. Faculty Advisory Committee. 2011–14.

Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame. 2012–14.

COMMUNITY SERVICE (selected)

Lead and serve on numerous committees for Concord, New Hampshire, and Bloomington, Indiana, Quaker Meetings.

Volunteer service at food banks, soup kitchens, other venues.

Former Big Brother

BOOKS

Isuma: Inuit Video Art. McGill-Queen's University Press. 2008. Scholarly book exploring issues of culture, politics, economy, and artistic expression in Inuit filmmaking. Supported by \$8,000CAN grant from Canadian government.

The Fast Runner: Filming the Legend of Atanarjuat. University of Nebraska Press. 2010. Scholarly book providing exegesis of acclaimed Inuit film.

The Layers of Magazine Editing. Columbia University Press. 2004. Textbook for magazine-editing courses in journalism and communications departments.

Island Wars. Down East Press. 2012. Young-adult novel. Serialized on downeast.com website and released as Kindle ebook.

68 Knots. Tanglewood Press. 2008. Young-adult novel.

No Experience Necessary. Performance Publishing Company. 1979. One-act play.

ARTICLES (selected)

"Artistic Courage in Small Groups: Identity, Intermediality, and Indian Country." *In The Role of the Individual in Tradition*, eds. Pravina Shukla et al. Indiana University Press. 2011.

"The Promises and Pitfalls of Ethnographic Research." In *New Frontiers in International Communication Theory*, ed. Mehdi Semati. Roman & Littlefield. 2004.

"Hegemony and Discourse: Negotiating Cultural Relationships through Indigenous Video." *Journalism: Criticism, Practice, and Theory* 3:3. 2002.

Numerous other articles, reviews, etc.

PRESENTATIONS

(selected)

"Institutional Innovation in Higher Education." Council of Independent Colleges Senior Leadership Academy. 2020.

"The Spirit and the Earth: Southern New Hampshire's Relationship to Ecology and the Divine." Halki Summit, sponsored by the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Istanbul, Turkey. 2019.

"One Tin Soldier: Cultural Negotiation of Identity in Legends of the Sole Survivor." American Folklore Society. 2016.

"Sock v. Toy: Truth, Legend, Folklore, and Journalism." American Folklore Society. 2013.

"Guns and Messengers: Advocacy, Investigation, and News From Indian Country." American Folklore Society. 2008.

"The Murmur of Many Voices: Identity, Representation, and Multivocality in Cross-Cultural Communication." International Communication Association. Seoul, South Korea. 2002.

