

February 17, 2025

Dear Search and Screen Committee:

I am writing to apply to the Chair and Professor position in your department. I am currently a Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York (UB). I obtained my Ph.D. in the field of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. I believe that my extensive leadership and administrative experience, my research interests in adolescents' school-based peer relations experiences and socio-emotional development and well-being, partnered with my strong record of publishing and external funding, and my commitment to teaching and mentoring are an excellent fit with your department and for your position.

The position description indicates that you are seeking a candidate with an established record of administrative and leadership experience. Thus far, I have gained and excelled in such experiences within my department and university and within professional societies. In my department, I have served as Director of Undergraduate Studies. I have also chaired graduate admissions and recruitment and happily served on more committees than anyone else in my department (we recently counted!), including our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Policy and Planning Committee, and Personnel/Promotions Committee. I am told that I was voted onto these committees due to my open, respectful, and collegial approach to all my service work. I enjoyed these experiences very much, especially being the Director of Undergraduate Studies, which allowed me to also serve on our Department Executive Board alongside our Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Director of Research, and to work closely together to strengthen the department and its members' experiences, and I am eager to take on more.

My experiences outside of my department, but within UB and in the international professional society, the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (ISSBD), are also relevant and have prepared me well for your position. I am currently serving my second term as UB Faculty Senator, which has allowed me to learn more about the similar, but also sometimes competing, needs and interests of different departments not only in my college, the College of Arts and Sciences, but also within other colleges at the university, including the UB Graduate School of Education, the UB College of Engineering, and the UB Medical School. In ISSBD, I have served on the Executive Committee in several elected roles, including as Member At-Large, and currently as the Membership Secretary. As Membership Secretary, I also serve on the ISSBD Steering Committee and Biennial Meeting Planning Committees. I also chair the ISSBD Membership Committee. In addition, separate from my role as Membership Secretary, for the past ten years, I have chaired the ISSBD Early Career Scholars Travel Grant and Preconference Workshop Committee, which every two years makes culturally-sensitive ratings (with different ratings employed for those from low income and lower middle income societies) and financial decisions to grant travel awards to early career scholars from around the world to attend the ISSBD Biennial Meeting. My service in ISSBD has helped me further develop my leadership and teambuilding skills as well as my management and communication skills, all of which are

essential when working with ISSBD members from different academic backgrounds in different time-zones and different cultures. Although a newer role for me, I am also now Vice-President at the Child and Family Blog (which focuses on research dissemination to parents) and have been involved in building a shared vision for the future of the blog, problem solving and project implementation, and financial decisions.

Finally, I believe that my work with community partners, and specifically local middle schools, has prepared me well for your position. Throughout my career, I have met with principals, teachers, and counseling staff to discuss my research program and findings, and to discuss their concerns about students. As a developmental psychologist, I enjoy these opportunities to “give back” to and collaborate with schools. In general, I believe serving the profession, university, and community is an important part of being an educator and leader at an esteemed public research and teaching institution because doing so reinforces departmental strengths and relationships, reminds us of the students we serve, and connects our research to community partners who may make use of the knowledge generated here to enhance psychological well-being.

I am looking forward to combining my expertise from these different experiences and taking the next step to become Chair of a department like yours. If selected, I would be a *consultative* leader who emphasizes open communication, transparency, teamwork, and creative and respectful problem-solving that explores solutions which meet diverse interests. I will have a strong commitment to further developing existing strengths in research and teaching excellence and extension programming. I will also work collaboratively with faculty to develop a shared and credible vision of the future of the Family, Youth, and Community Sciences Department, which will include growing the undergraduate program and outreach efforts. As in my current department, I would form an Executive Board (comprising other members of the department in leadership positions) and hold regular meetings with this Board. These meetings will allow for expert input on all matters, including budgetary and personnel issues. I would also meet regularly with faculty members in both large and smaller group meetings to build relationships and trust, better understand diverse research and educational needs, and gather input. I would also be a passionate and active advocate and ambassador for the Department, and at the same time, work collaboratively with external audiences within the University and the larger community.

Of note, I would be particularly excited to do this in your department as it is much more like the departments in which I completed my undergraduate and graduate studies (at Cornell University and University of Maryland, in Human Development and Family Studies) than my current department. Indeed, in my current position, I am in the Clinical Area of the UB Psychology Department. There is no Developmental area or program. I was hired with the promise of developing a developmental program in addition to our Clinical, Social, Cognitive, and Behavioral Neuroscience programs. While we did develop a developmental certificate program, it is now clear to me that that an actual developmental science program for undergraduate and graduate students is very unlikely to develop. Thus, I am motivated and ready to make the move to a department like yours and return to my “roots” with the emphasis on not only human development but also the land-grant mission, interdisciplinarity, and extension.

Your ad also indicates that you also seek candidates with strong established records of research and funding. My research program focuses on school-based peer relations experiences (e.g., friendships, victimization) and psychosocial development and adjustment (e.g., anxiety, loneliness) during late childhood and early adolescence (10-14 years). To better understand the significance of peers in the lives of children and young adolescents, my research program investigates: (1) the impact of peer experiences on psychosocial adjustment, in dynamic and novel ways (e.g., distinguishing between different types of friendship loss, examining romantic crushes, considering the larger cultural context); and (2) how peer experiences function as risk and protective factors for youth at risk for such internalizing and externalizing difficulties as anxiety, depression, and aggression (e.g., shy or overweight young adolescents). As negative peer experiences during childhood and adolescence can have lasting negative developmental implications, the long-term goal of my research is to advance the understanding of peer relations to aid in the design and implementation of interventions that promote psychological health and well-being. These emphases are reflected in my published concurrent and longitudinal studies on friendship loss, stability and change in peer experiences, mixed-grade peer experiences (i.e., friendships involving two peers of a different school grade), social withdrawal and solitude during adolescence in Western and non-Western societies (in the United States, India, Singapore, Nigeria), and peer influences on child and adolescent obesity. My work has been published in top-tier publication outlets (e.g., *Child Development*, *Developmental Psychology*), has used sophisticated analytic techniques (e.g., structural equation modelling, hierarchical linear modelling), and has been funded by federal (e.g., National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; R01, R03; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), and university grants. The National Science Foundation presently funds my research on young adolescent friendship and peer victimization and NIH/National Institute of Aging presently funds my interdisciplinary research on social withdrawal and solitude.

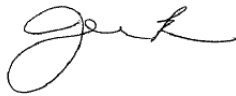
Also in-line with your job description, I am strongly committed to undergraduate and graduate teaching, and believe that teaching is one of the most important ways that professors of all levels can contribute significantly to the academic community. As my curriculum vitae indicates, I have taught small, upper-level specialized courses (e.g., in adolescent development), and large, introductory undergraduate courses (i.e., in research methods and developmental psychology) at the University at Buffalo. At the graduate level, I have taught highly specialized graduate seminars in my primary field (e.g., advanced developmental psychology) and in my research area (e.g., graduate course on social withdrawal and shyness). Also, I have developed and taught a graduate-level course on undergraduate teaching, which introduces graduate students to educational theory and research, and prepares them to thoughtfully manage and develop their future careers in academia. These courses have been very well received by undergraduate and graduate students at UB, and I regularly receive positive teaching evaluations from my students. I look forward to teaching these courses and others in the future.

In all my courses, I seek to foster critical learning environments and encourage students to explore the significance of their studies both to their broader collegiate interests and to their own lives as scholars, adults, and citizens. In addition to teaching psychology courses, I enjoy supervising and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in research. During my time at UB, I have had the great pleasure of supervising six outstanding Clinical Psychology doctoral students. My primary goal is to prepare my graduate students for later professional success in

academia and research. Thus, I actively teach them, in individual and group meetings, about all phases of the research process, including study conceptualization, participant recruitment, data collection, data entry, data analysis, and writing and presentation. All of my graduate students work on laboratory projects and also studies of their own. They have also all made peer-reviewed presentations at national and international conferences and worked on empirical manuscripts for publication. I consider mentoring and advising to be important parts of the role of a teacher and genuinely welcome any future opportunities to work closely with students, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, inside and outside of the classroom.

In addition to this letter, I have included my curriculum vitae. I would be happy to send you additional materials. I have also included the contact information for three professional references, Professors Kenneth Rubin, Robert Coplan, and Leonard Simms. I can be reached at (716) 645-0187 or by email at [juliebowker5@gmail.com](mailto:juliebowker5@gmail.com). Thank you for giving my application your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie', with a stylized, flowing script.

Julie Bowker, Ph.D  
Professor of Psychology  
University at Buffalo, SUNY