

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY



College of Science and Health
Office of the Dean
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Office: 773.325.8300

February 27, 2025

Dear University of Florida Chair Search Committee,

I write to express my enthusiastic interest in the Department Chair position in the Family, Youth, and Community Sciences Department at the University of Florida. My career has integrated leadership with research, teaching, mentoring, and collaboration, and I have a record of accomplishments and experiences that fit well with this position and the mission of the Department.

I am interested in this role, as it integrates leadership with focal areas that I care deeply about – prevention, families, youth, and communities. As a clinical community psychologist, these foci have been central to my work, and it would be exciting to be a part of an interdisciplinary department that prioritizes student competencies, cutting edge research, and innovative outreach programs within these areas. On a personal level, I connect with the nesting of the Department in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and the centrality of extension activities. I grew up on a farm in Iowa, was immersed in agriculture across many levels, relied on extension resources, and was actively engaged in 4-H for 10 years.

I have served in several leadership roles within DePaul University, as well as in my professional field, that have led to important and systemic changes. I am currently serving as Associate Dean for Research (9 years), and previously served as Psychology Department Chair (5 years), University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair (6 years) and Community Psychology Doctoral Program Director (6 years). I have also been elected to three national roles within Division 27 of the American Psychological Association (Society for Community Research and Action); these include Chair of the Council of Education, National Regional Network Coordinator, and President. I provide more detail regarding some of my experiences below:

- As Associate Dean, I have had the pleasure to oversee research-related activities for the college, collaborate with and mentor faculty and department chairs across disciplines, oversee internal and external grants, troubleshoot challenges, and develop new initiatives. I have also taken leadership roles in faculty development and graduate programs and have built infrastructures to promote student and faculty success across the college. I have fostered opportunities and created structures to share our interdisciplinary work, recognize outstanding scholarship, and build community with

research as a central focus. I have proactively worked with Advancement and donors to enhance funding for research within our College of Science and Health.

- As Psychology Department Chair, I led the department in serving 1,000 undergraduate majors (B.A. and B.S., with 8 concentrations), as well as over 130 graduate students within 2 masters and 4 doctoral programs. I also oversaw 6 staff, an Associate Chair, 6 Program Directors, and 40 full-time faculty. Our faculty and programs have received national recognition for research, teaching, training, mentoring, and diversity. I hired and mentored faculty, staff, and students, secured a new staff position, oversaw a \$7.2 million budget and \$14.5 million in external funds, and improved budget management. I also led strategic planning efforts, promoted interdisciplinary collaboration, and improved faculty-staff relations, space allocations, and sense of community. We created new undergraduate concentrations in cognitive neuroscience and healthcare and new graduate student policies and funding structures, improving our programs, educational options, and student experiences.
- As University IRB Chair, working with our Director of Research Compliance, I revised policies, facilitated IRB-researcher collaborations, conducted trainings, mentored faculty and students through the IRB process, and created templates and tools that made the work and review process more efficient.
- As Community Psychology Program Director, I promoted curricular and policy improvements including refining sequencing of coursework, expanding focus on research training, generating additional options for comprehensive projects, and creating an undergraduate concentration in community psychology. Our program received the national Society for Community Research and Action Excellence in Education Program Award under my leadership.
- In my 3-year term as President of the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA, Division 27 of the American Psychological Association), I led a collaborative, strategic planning process over the course of the first year. As President, I oversaw the work of 15 volunteer teams and a leadership team of 18 elected representatives to implement this strategic plan with 5 pillars and 10 strategic priorities. I played a lead role in decision-making regarding all the activities and initiatives of this national organization with over 1500 members. I created new positions, hired new staff, supervised 4 staff, and managed a \$1.6 million budget. As Chair of the Council of Education Programs for SCRA, I collaborated with a national group of representatives to provide strategic support to educational programs, create electronic tools to raise the visibility of the field, and conduct program surveys, sharing the results with the membership to identify trends, strengths, and challenges. As Regional Network Coordinator of SCRA, I recruited new Regional Coordinators and built relationships with existing Coordinators around the world to foster regional and international activities, such as student recruitment, conferences, and community building events.

While serving in leadership roles, I have been actively engaged in research, teaching, and service throughout my career. As a scholar, I have published 108 peer-reviewed articles and

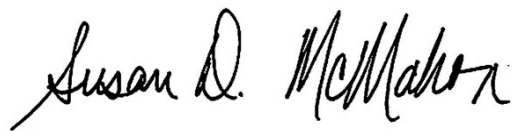
invited book chapters and 1 book and given 243 scholarly presentations. My work has been cited over 11,300 times according to Google Scholar, and I was recently recognized with the *Excellence in Research Award*, *Spirit of Inquiry Award*, and the *Faculty Recognition Grant* at DePaul University honoring my research accomplishments.

My current major research focus is Chairing the [American Psychological Association \(APA\) Task Force on Violence against Educators and School Personnel](#) that was formed in 2019. We conducted a comprehensive assessment of educator, school psychologist, school social worker, school administrator and school staff perspectives of school violence, safety, and climate before, during, and after COVID-19. We collected online survey data from July 2020 to June 2022, resulting in 10,000-15,000 participants from 50 states at each of three timepoints. Educators and school personnel shared their experiences, including nature and frequency of violent events from a variety of aggressors (students, parents, colleagues, administrators), effectiveness of strategies, training needs, school and community climate, and recommendations. I am spearheading this interdisciplinary initiative that spans eight Universities and organizations, and five national partners across education, psychology, and social work. We conducted a congressional briefing that which contributed to legislation that funded educator training programs (+\$25 million; total of \$2.319 billion), school-based mental health programs (+\$135 million; total \$1.756 billion), and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (\$2.3 billion over 5 years). This congressional briefing also led to significant public awareness, yielding 1396 articles with an estimated reach of 749 million impressions, with an estimated advertising value of \$19 million. This study is the first of its kind, and the policy implications, recommendations, and impact are exciting.

Over the past 28 years, my various leadership roles at the department, college, university, and non-profit levels, community-based research in schools, as well as my passion, skills, and interests make me an excellent fit with this position. I look forward to discussing this position and your needs.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan D. McMahon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" and last name "McMahon" clearly legible.

Susan McMahon, Ph.D.
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College of Science and Health
Vincent de Paul Professor of Psychology
Past President, Society for Community Research & Action
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