



**LAMAR UNIVERSITY  
PROVOST, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS  
QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES**

You will need to save this as a new document before entering your information. The boxes below expand as you enter in your responses. Please provide an example of an accomplishment, process used, and your role. You may provide as much information as you like. Please enter N/A if not applicable.

NAME

LYNDA BROWN-WRIGHT

Current budget managed?	\$ 850.000
Largest budget you have managed?	\$1,500.000
Current staff?	9
Largest total number of FT & PT Staff and Faculty led?	30
Largest private gift or outside funding you have asked for and received?	\$1,027,397
Are you a full professor with tenure (Yes/No) and date each was awarded?	Yes
Discipline?	Psychology

- 1) **What is your understanding of the leadership opportunities at Lamar University and the role of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs** (e.g. current situation, future growth and vision)?

Lamar University is seeking a dynamic and visionary Provost who can facilitate the creation and implementation of a strategic plan to take a growing and increasingly diverse institution to the next level of excellence. It is currently a Carnegie Level Doctoral Research institution with more than 100 bachelor, masters and doctoral level degree programs. While attracting and hiring the most talented faculty to provide a high quality education that will prepare students for an increasingly global society, the university also seeks to increase its extramural research funding and entrepreneurial and fundraising activities. The development of focused centers is an approach they wish to take, which is intriguing; this approach requires that the Provost must be able to provide the leadership needed to facilitate the connection of these focused centers to relevant national trends, in order to build a stronger research university that can compete with top universities in selected areas of expertise.

- 2) **What background do you have in creating new vision and direction for a sizeable organization and in leading such an agenda for strategic change?** Explain your experiences and provide examples of your accomplishments, the role you were in, and the process you used.

A most significant experience of creating a new vision and direction for an organization and leading an agenda for strategic change happened when I was a department chair. I was selected to become a department chair when I was the only person of color in the department. I had been a member of the department for twelve years prior to becoming chair. Due to the high level of racism and discrimination that had been evident in the department, I had many “scars” from my tenure there. Over time, and after some retirements, my colleagues recommended me as their departmental leader—I must admit, because of past decisions, I was very surprised. I become the very first person of color to serve as department chair in the college during its 120 year history. Based on initiatives I knew were important, my vision for the department was to create a more welcoming and inclusive department for all. I shared my vision with my colleagues, and after candid discussions, they confirmed that they were on board with my vision. The approach took a lot of time, effort, and hard work. As faculty, we spent significant time together engaged in activities that would enhance our ability to become more inclusive. We read and discussed books and articles around issues of diversity and inclusion. Additionally, we wrote a grant and received funding to support 3 national consultants to come to the university to work with us. It was key for me as leader was to create an environment where each faculty member’s input was welcomed and valued—they were involved at every level. The amount of personal and effort my colleagues expended was evidence of the commitment they made to the effort. The results were outstanding! A department that had once been extremely toxic in climate for persons of color transformed in to a welcoming all-inclusive environment. Under my leadership, and with much work on the part of my colleagues, there was a significant increase in the diversity of students who were admitted. Two faculty of color were hired, curriculum development changes were made to be more inclusive and my colleagues voted to become a department with three programs that were known for embracing social justice and social change. Because of our efforts, I was recognized for my leadership and vision by receiving the University of Kentucky’s President’s Award for Diversity. I was successful in my vision because I, as a leader, was able to inspire my colleagues to “stretch themselves,” to allow themselves to “feel comfortable with feeling uncomfortable,” and to engage in hard work, while providing a safe environment where they felt valued.

- 3) **Describe your experience establishing and executing initiatives focused on increasing opportunities for faculty development, research growth and partnerships?** Also, please provide an example which displays an outcome that is now considered a best practice for your organization. What was your role?

I am the inaugural Associate Provost in the newly formed Office of Faculty Affairs. My role is to provide leadership for all matters related to faculty. In the newly created office, I have brought several initiatives to Georgia State. I will highlight one of those here. Based on my professional knowledge and conversations with university leaders, including department chairs, I planned and implemented a New Faculty Development Series that includes eight sessions during the academic year. The topics are: An Introduction to the Georgia State University Culture; Getting your Research Off to a Good Start; Promotion and Tenure Lite; The University's Strategic Plan and Student Success, Dealing with Difficult Students, Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation, A Conversation with the President and A Conversation with the Provost. I facilitate all sessions and present the session on Promotion and Tenure. Based on the feedback from junior faculty as well as their chairs and mentors, the new faculty development series was an overwhelming success. The participants report that the sessions have been invaluable to them in adjusting to the university's culture and providing them with knowledge about our students, campus and resources. There has not been enough time to collect data that shows a correlation between our initiative and the retention rate for faculty. However, our qualitative data suggests that this New Faculty Development Series has made an impact. The New Faculty Development series has become a 'best practice' for Georgia State University.

Regarding research growth, I provide leadership for the Provost's Faculty Fellowship Program that was created to encourage faculty to write applications for prestigious and funded research awards. This is particularly important in the humanities, arts and professional disciplines where extensive external research funding is less available. The Provost's Faculty Research Fellowships provides one semester salary support to selected faculty members to facilitate their completion of applications for preeminent international and national fellowships or awards. Our office places the call for applications. I answer questions regarding the process, collect the application packets, organize a selection advisory committee, and make recommendations for funding to the Provost.

**4) What is your experience in seeking outside resources for an institution/organization?**

To explain your experiences, provide examples of an accomplishment, the role you were in, and the process you used.

My current experience in seeking outside resources has been primarily in the form of grants because the leadership experiences I have assumed have not typically included seeking resources as a part of my role. I have received over 2 million dollars in extramural grant funding. As department chair, I was involved with the establishment of two endowed student fellowships - from a former student and a retired professor. In each case, they were interested in leaving a legacy and I spent time talking with them to learn their wishes for the Fellowships. Currently, each of the fellowships are funded for \$3,000 a semester to a deserving student.

While seeking outside resources has not directly been a part of my responsibilities as a leader, I have had extensive training and development in this area while involved in the three leadership development programs. I have participated. In addition to the sessions

on development, in each of the leadership programs, as an ACE Fellow, I attended the CASE Development for Deans meeting and found it very helpful in deepening my understanding of the process even more. As a result of my experiences with the development process and with interacting with, and engaging people in the community, I have no doubt that I have the requisite skills necessary to seek additional outside resources for the university.

- 5) **What is your experience with hiring smart, developing talent, delegating, and holding people accountable?** Explain your experiences and provide examples of your accomplishments, the role you were in, and the process you used.

Unless there are guidelines and multifaceted systems in place to monitor faculty hiring, I have found in my experience that many faculty hires take place that should not. Because of this concern, as department chair, I was ex-officio member of all search committees in the department. I am pleased to report that those hired under my leadership have successfully been promoted and tenured. At least two were promoted early.

Currently, I provide leadership by taking a very candid look at the quality of the faculty we are hiring in either "special" (university-wide) or "normal" (departmental or college) allocations. We are in the process of establishing a system of rewards that ensures that only faculty who would truly be competitive in the best departments anywhere in the United States are hired, tenured and retained. Since, as most universities, we are resource-short, this is an even greater problem because we are aware that we simply do not provide compensation packages to faculty at the same levels of competing private (and some public) universities. I have found that in a rush to fill faculty teaching positions or in a reluctance to make difficult personnel decisions at the local level, some have had a tendency to sometimes compromise our standards and our future as a competitive research university. This is a very important initiative for the future of the university.

I believe if adequate work is done during the hiring process, the pool of candidates for positions can be very competitive.

- 6) **Please give an example of the results of your involvement in any major diversity initiatives.** Explain your experiences and provide examples of your accomplishments, the role you were in, and the process you used.

My involvement and commitment to diversity and creating an inclusive environment has been evident at the departmental, college, university, community and national levels. I have provided an overview of my departmental efforts in Question Two. At the College level, I served as the chair of the College of Education's Inclusiveness Committee and the Diversity Standard Steering Committee for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). As chair of the Inclusiveness Committee, I assisted the Dean with constructing college-wide guidelines for conducting faculty searches. At the university level, I was asked by the Provost to develop and coordinate a university level diversity workshop for Deans which I entitled The Strategic Planning Diversity Briefing. It

was a two-day initiative designed to, provide tools for and, encourage Deans to commit to ways of enhancing diversity in their college at every level; in effect among faculty, staff, students, and the curriculum.

At the community level, I served as a member of the Executive Board of the UK- Fayette County Schools collaboration: The Great Schools Initiative, which was designed to increase the achievement levels of low-performing students. In support of this project, I served as Co-PI on a grant funded by the Charles Knight Foundation. I served as Co-Director of the UK Future Physicians Program Planning Committee, a collaboration between the University of Kentucky's College of Medicine and the greater Lexington Community. The goal of the program is to develop a pipeline to increase the number of persons of color who become physicians. Also, I served as a member of the Executive Board of the State of Black Lexington, 2007-2009, which was a collaboration between, the University of Kentucky, the Urban League and the city of Lexington. Nationally, I was recently elected Chair-Elect of the Commission on Access Diversity and Excellence (CADE) of the Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU). This commission is charged with developing a comprehensive plan of action to address relevant diversity and social change issues impacting learning, research and community engagement at U.S. colleges and universities.