

March 8, 2015

New Mexico Highlands University  
Presidential Search  
R.H. Perry & Associates

Dear Search Committee,

Please accept this as my letter of application for the position of President at New Mexico Highlands University.

Currently I am serving as the Interim President of Friends University, an independent private Quaker-heritage regional university in Wichita, Kansas. Previously, I served at Friends University as the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and as a tenured member of the teaching faculty and taught TESOL, World Literature in Translation, Writing, and Indian Literature and Film.

Prior to Friends University, I worked with the University of Connecticut's TRIO programs for six years as a tutor, a teacher and administrative coordinator. I have also served as an accreditation liaison with the Higher Learning Commission and as a peer reviewer for institutional accreditation. With over 20 years of combined teaching and administrative experience in higher education, at both a state research university with an elected board and a private liberal arts and professional studies university with a volunteer board, I believe that I could aptly advance New Mexico Highlands University's brand of higher education. With so many changes in how public education is funded, experiences at private tuition-driven, enrollment sensitive institutions have become relevant for public colleges and universities as they search for additional revenue streams from fundraising and program innovations.

Founded in 1898 with a first class of less than 20 students, by the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Friends University had grown to 3,000 students. The University strategically restructured in 2005 into three colleges and now maintains a total student population of approximately 2,000 with specialized accreditations for graduate programs in Marriage and Family Therapy, graduate and undergraduate programs in Education, undergraduate programs in Music, and undergraduate professional studies programs. The University continues to offer a residential traditional undergraduate liberal arts experience for 50% of its students and through its College of Adult and Professional Studies, a low-residency (with the option of fully online) adult and professional studies undergraduate programs, and a dozen graduate programs such as Masters degrees in Marriage and Family Therapy, the Masters of Arts and Teaching, an MBA with several emphasis tracks such as Global Studies, Organizational Development, and Accounting, a Masters of Healthcare Leadership, and a Masters in Information Security.

All three academic colleges focus on applied learning with required internships, practicums, service learning experiences and for two of the graduate programs and two of the undergraduate programs, a class-based faculty-led short-term study abroad experience as part of the degree requirements. Students, many of whom are first-generation college students and many who had never been outside the country before, have completed Global MBA practicums in China and Bolivia and our MSOD graduate students have consulted in Ghana and the United Kingdom as part of their programs. At the undergraduate level, each year our Spanish majors spend a month in Mexico while our pre-med/Health Sciences students, most recently, completed their service abroad course in Cuba. Our faculty who have led these courses have presented, nationally, on these experiences which has helped to increase the university's local, regional, and national profile and to communicate market the university's mission. Because of this emphasis on "Education Beyond a Textbook" our faculty also support student research by collaborating with undergraduate students on research projects. In fact, just this week, faculty members have returned from state and national conferences where they have co-presented with undergraduate students. Graduates have also shared with us how transformative these experiences have been and how valuable the experience as something that sets them apart from other graduates when competing for post-graduate work or graduate school enrollment, and our faculty and staff indicate that they are rejuvenated by out-of-the-classroom research opportunities and these short-term intensive study-abroad experiences because they can see, every day, how the work they do changes lives. In terms of students, our largest source of financial aid comes through Pell Grants. We have augmented this financial aid with scholarships from private donors committed to our mission.

One of the aspects of Friends University that I am most proud of is the way in which we serve real people in our region. We have partnered with the Pottawatomie Nation to provide college adult education and professional studies at their Educational Center so that tribal elders can audit classes such as our introduction to computers classes and those interested in pursuing degrees can pursue bachelors degrees without leaving the reservation. We have also partnered with the Mountain Plains Minority Council to provide small business education workshops and graduate credit programming, as well as access to the resources of our Garvey Institute for Business Law.

As the interim President of Friends University in Wichita, Kansas (through June 2015), I have been authorized by the Board of Trustees to act with all the powers and authority of president and because of my 17 years of experience at Friends University, I have been able to use this time to make important progress in strategic ways. I moved up through the faculty and administrative ranks as a Division Vice Chair, Director of the Honors Program, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Academic Affairs. I am also a tenured professor of English and have continued to teach one course a year. I have 15+ years of strong academic and administrative leadership. Having served as a member of President's Cabinet and senior leadership at Friends University, and now as the interim President, I have developed and demonstrated a record of building consensus, resolving conflict, addressing personnel and student issues with sensitivity and fairness, and have a demonstrated record of effective financial management. My charge from the Board of Trustees, following the resignation of a president

midway through his third year, was to transition the university back to fiscal health, renew the community's understanding of the institution's heritage and mission, and transition the college to more responsive academic model, one that involved helping the institution get a better understanding of what it means to be a regional university and to serve not only the long-term transformative needs of individual people, but also the immediate economic and human needs of the region.

To accomplish these goals, I have expanded what was a very small president's cabinet comprised almost entirely of vice presidents to include a larger number of stakeholders and constituents so that faculty and staff have a greater voice in "how" these Board of Trustees goals will be operationalized. I work closely with both the Chair of the Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Staff Senate to ensure that enterprise-wide communication occurs each week so that all 300 of the college employees understand the valuable ways in which their service helps the university accomplish its goals and serve its mission. I also write a weekly newsletter that goes out to all faculty and staff and to our volunteer Board of Trustees called "Just the Facts Friday" that weekly addresses enrollment management (recruitment and retention), and weekly celebrates and highlights the work of faculty and staff, and the success of current students and alumni, so that the true mission of the college (student success) is always in our minds.

Having reviewed the position qualifications prospectus, I believe that I could serve New Mexico Highlands University well. I think my leadership style and my experiences with accreditation, program prioritization and resource reallocation, budgeting, faculty and staff development, strategic planning, enrollment management and fundraising and commitment to personal life-long learning and continuing professional development would make me a good fit for the institution. I also have extensive experience with online education, with outreach and transfer and articulation relationships, and in development of high school academy enrollment pipelines through innovative dual credit partnerships. Having served as the interim president of Friends University, I have also had the opportunity to enhance my fundraising skills and success in working with state and regional stakeholders as a member of the KCAC Presidents, the Kansas Independent College Association, the Wichita Chamber of Commerce, the Wichita Leadership Council, the Business and Education Alliance, and through involvement with local boards and service organizations such as Rotary.

I look forward to hearing from you about the possibility of serving New Mexico Highlands University.

Best wishes,

*Darcy A. Zabel*

Darcy A. Zabel

# Darcy A. Zabel

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## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Harvard University, 2014  
Graduate School of Education  
Institute for New Presidents  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

## EDUCATION

PhD, English, 2001  
University of Connecticut  
Storrs, Connecticut 06269  
Doctoral Dissertation— *“Two Trains Running”*: *The Train as Symbol in Twentieth-Century African American Literature*

MA, English, 1994  
University of Connecticut  
Storrs, Connecticut 06269

Bachelor of Arts, 1990  
Major: English Minor: Religion  
Mount Holyoke College for Women  
South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Summary:** Experience with academic governance, accreditation, budget development, budget management, academic cabinets, faculty senates, staff assemblies, president’s cabinet, donor relations, alumni relations, academic support services, student affairs, enrollment management, fundraising, marketing and branding, strategic planning and implementation.

**Interim President of Friends University**— March 2014- June 2015  
Friends University, Wichita, Kansas

### **Vice President for Academic Affairs**

Friends University • Wichita, Kansas  
Served as Interim VPAA 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 during a Presidential transition.

Interim status changed to permanent VPAA June 2013

Accomplishments:

- ✓ Authored the application for acceptance into the John Gardner Institute's national cohort *Foundations of Excellence: The First Year Experience* and launched the institution's participation in the project.
- ✓ Led the institution's successful re-affirmation of accreditation on-site visit and served as chief author of the institution's self-study/institutional portfolio/federal compliance documents.
- ✓ Collaborated with the Faculty Senate to update and revise the Faculty Constitution and the Faculty Handbook.
- ✓ Integrated the newly created Staff Assembly into the AQIP Continuous Improvement process of engagement.
- ✓ Initiated a review of General Education Assessment resulting in a revised General Education assessment plan shared by both the traditional undergraduate college and the adult undergraduate college.
- ✓ Initiated a new partnership with the Human Resources department that included development of a new position to support adjunct faculty recruitment, orientation, training, and ongoing adjunct faculty development.
- ✓ Expanded Graduate School Workshop (non-credit) offerings to fund program expansion and development.

**Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs— 2009, 2010**

Friends University•Wichita, Kansas

Accomplishments:

- ✓ Initiated assessment and program review of academic support services: Library, Tutoring, Retention, Assessment, Online Learning and Academic Technology, University Registrar, offsite Education Centers.
- ✓ Collaborated with faculty to revise International Travel and Study Abroad approval process and policies.
- ✓ Collaborated with directors of specialized programs for successful program re-accreditations and revised budgeting process for managing the accreditation budgets for programs with specialized accreditation.

**Honors Program Director— 2008**

Friends University•Wichita, Kansas

Accomplishments:

- ✓ Conducted a year-long self-study as part of the Strategic Planning Task Force assigned to study the institution's current Honors Program.
- ✓ Initiated and completed a curriculum revision emphasizing "honor in action" and applied learning.

**Vice Chair for the Religion and Humanities Division— 2002-2007**

Friends University•Wichita, Kansas

Accomplishments:

- ✓ Creation of a discipline specific protocol for mentoring adjunct instructors teaching in the first-year writing courses.
- ✓ Creation of a TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) course to be cross-listed between the English department and the Education department.

**Summer TRIO Programs — 1992-1998**

**The Center for Academic Programs**

Summer English Coordinator, Teacher & Tutor

University of Connecticut•Storrs, CT

Accomplishments:

- ✓ Moved tutoring to the residence halls which increased use of tutoring by first-generation students.
- ✓ Designed and produced a “literary magazine” celebrating the summer writing by first-generation students.
- ✓ Initiated staffing changes which resulted in substantial savings. This allowed for strategic resource reallocation and the hiring of additional tutors.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**Professor of English (Tenured)— 1998-present**

Friends University, Wichita, Kansas

Teaching Areas: American Literature, World Literature (online and on-ground), TESOL, Creative Writing, Composition (online and on-ground), Women’s History and Literature, Indian Literature and Film, Contemporary Literature, The Search for Meaning in a Changing World, Freshman Seminar, and Honors Seminar.

**Instructor — Summers, 1992-1998**

University of Connecticut’s TRIO SSS/CAPS program

Teaching Areas: ESOL, Developmental English, computer-assisted college writing.

**ACADEMIC AWARDS**

☐ Phi Beta Kappa, 1990

☐ Aetna Teaching Award Finalist, 1995

☐ Sigma Tau Delta, 2001

☐ Friends University Research Grant, 2003

☐ The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International Group Study Exchange Team Member, Host District 31705, India, 2003-2004

☐ "Certificate of Outstanding Teaching," 2005. Friends University Kansas National Education Association Student Chapter, Friends University

☐ Sabbatical, Friends University, 2006

☐ Alpha Sigma Lambda, 2013

## **PUBLICATIONS (Selected Samples)**

### **Books**

Zabel, Darcy, Ed., *Arabs in the Americas: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Arab Diaspora*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2006.

Zabel, Darcy. *The "Underground" Railroad in African American Literature*. Book series, *African American Literature and Culture: Expanding and Exploding the Boundaries*. Series Editor: Dr. Carlyle Van Thompson. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004.

### **Reviews**

Zabel, Darcy. "R. J. M. Blackett's Freedom: The Underground Railroad and the Politics of Slavery" (UNC Press) in *The Journal of American Studies* (Cambridge University Press). Forthcoming, 2014.

Zabel, Darcy. "Arabs in America: Building a New Future," in *MELUS: The Journal for the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*. Special Issue: Arab American Literature. (Winter, 2006).

### **Articles/Entries**

Zabel, Darcy. "Mary Wollstonecraft: Influences on American Women" in *Women's Rights in the United States: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Issues, Events, and People* Ed., Tiffany Wayne. Greenwood Publishing/ACB-CLIO, forthcoming, September 2014.

Zabel, Darcy. "Shareefeh Hamid Ali: East and West in Cooperation" in *Feminist Writings from Ancient Times to the Modern World: A Global Sourcebook and History*. Ed., Tiffany K. Wayne. Greenwood Publishing/ABC-CLIO, 2011.

Zabel, Darcy. "African American Science Fiction" in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of*

*Multiethnic American Literature*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. Greenwood Publishing: 2006.

Zabel, Darcy. "Amiri Baraka" in *African American Dramatists: An A to Z Guide*. Ed., Emmanuel S. Nelson. Greenwood Press, 2004.

Zabel, Darcy. "Robert O'Hara" in *Contemporary American Gay Poets and Playwrights*. Ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson. Greenwood Press, 2003.

Zabel, Darcy. "Ghost-story train": Robert Hayden's "Runagate Runagate," in *The Explicator*. Volume 60, Number 2 (Winter 2002).

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (Selected Samples)**

"Quantifying Culture: Education Beyond a Textbook and Assessing Student Learning," presented at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching. California: March 11-12, 2011.

"Higher Education Practices in the United States." Rotary International Conference District #3170, India. GSE Exchange speaking engagements in Mapusa, Sirsi, Dharwad, Bagalkot, Bijapur, Snagli, Kolhapur, Sankeshwar, Belgaum, Panji, and Margoa. India: January 4-February 4, 2004.

"'Too strong for beke': The Feminist Critical Response to Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966 to the Present," at the 118<sup>th</sup> Modern Language Association Annual Convention, New York: 2002.

"'A Continuing Education': Fit and the Small College English Department," at the 116<sup>th</sup> Modern Language Association Annual Convention, Washington DC: 2000.

### **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Selected Samples)**

*Higher Learning Commission Peer Reviewer Training*. January 2013. Trained to serve as a systems portfolio reaccreditation team reviewer for the AQIP pathway of the Higher Learning Commission.

*Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Leaders' Institute Training*. November 2012. Trained for "Partnerships for Promising Practices in Student Success." The *John Gardner Institute*.

"*Five Ways to Increase Interaction in Your Online Classes*." Online training as part of the MagnaOnline Professional Development Interactive Webinar Series. April 2011.



*Creating the Climate for Continuous Improvement,” Training at the AQIP Strategy Forum for Academic Quality Improvement in Programs. Sponsored by the Higher Learning Commission and AQIP. February 2010.*

### **SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION (Selected Samples)**

Elected Vice President of KAQIP, the Kansas Association of AQIP institutions. Representatives from two- and four-year colleges and universities in Kansas meet twice per calendar year to collaborate for the purpose of continuous quality academic improvement at each member institution (2013).

Served as a Higher Learning Commission Accreditation AQIP Systems Portfolio Peer Reviewer Team Member. Peer reviewers are charged with the task of reading institutional portfolios to affirm institutions’ fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation and Federal Compliance (2013).

### **SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY (Selected Samples)**

Wichita Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Council

Wichita Business & Education Alliance

Wichita Friends School, Board of Trustees

Rotary Club of Wichita (Club#30)

Salvation Army Volunteer

### **ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Assistant Acquisitions and Development Editor**, Garland Publishing, 1991  
270 Madison Avenue  
New York, New York

**Editorial Assistant**, College Acquisitions Division, St. Martin’s Press, 1990  
175 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York