

IBJ Nomination Form, Due Friday, Aug. 23, 2019

Nominee's First Name: * Susana
Nominee's Last Name: * Rivera-Mills
Nominee Title: Provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs
Company: * Ball State University
Address: * 2000 W. University Ave.
City: * Muncie
State: * IN
Zip Code: * 47306
E-mail: *sriveramills@bsu.edu
Business Phone: * 765-285-1333

Nominee's Assistant: Angie Zahner
Assistant's Phone: 765-285-1333
E-mail: ajzahner@bsu.edu

Nominator's First Name: * Kathy
Nominator's Last Name: * Wolf
Nominator's Company: * Ball State University
Address: * 2000 W. University Ave.
City: * Muncie
State: * IN
Zip Code: * 47306
Nominator's Phone: * 513-470-3420
Nominator's E-mail: * kmwolf@bsu.edu
Nominator's relationship to nominee: * Colleague

Nominee's Educational Background: (college attended)

She earned her bachelor's in Spanish in 1991 and a master's in Spanish linguistics in 1993, both from the University of Iowa. She earned her doctorate in romance languages in 1998 from the University of New Mexico.

Professional excellence: list specific business accomplishments demonstrating excellence in her field

As provost, Dr. Rivera-Mills is Ball State's chief academic officer and leads the University's division of Academic Affairs. She oversees all seven of the University's academic colleges, plus the Graduate School, University College, and Honors College. Several entities report directly to her, including the Division of Online and Strategic Learning, Sponsored Projects Administration, University Libraries, and the Center for Medical Education. In addition, the provost is responsible for faculty, curriculum, assessment of teaching and scholarship, and leading Ball State's Innovation Corporation Technology Transfer initiative.

Dr. Rivera-Mills came to Ball State from Oregon State University, where she has an impressive track record of academic excellence and student success. Since her arrival at Ball State in July 2018, she has accomplished much in a short time.

In addition to her leadership roles in the development of the University's strategic plan and new budget model (more on that under Leadership), she has:

- led the reorganization of Academic Affairs that is proving to be more efficient and effective
- led Academic Affairs' alignment and implementation of the strategic plan
- expanded leadership initiatives and training for academic department chairs, including developing onboarding and orientation for new administrators
- streamlined operations, policies, and procedures through an equity lens
- elevated the importance of student success, particularly equalizing student success and access to education for all students
- hired three new deans on the University's leadership team

Her proudest accomplishment is more personal. When she was child, Dr. Rivera-Mills' family fled war in El Salvador and immigrated to the United States. Her parents made sacrifices for her to have opportunities and were not able to save for retirement.

"My proudest moment in my career was when I got my first paycheck and was able to write a check to my parents at home. My goal was to help them," she says.

Leadership: list specific examples of how she has demonstrated leadership

Dr. Rivera-Mills has high standards and expects it from others, and she has taken lead roles in key University initiatives. She played a crucial role in the development of our new strategic plan, Destination 2040: Our Flight Path, which outlines five ambitious goals for Ball State to achieve by 2040, and she will be instrumental to the plan's implementation.

Based on input from the University community, she, along with our chief strategy officer, co-chaired efforts for our University to move from a centralized budget model to an incentive-based budget model, which will better align the allocation of resources with the priorities of our new strategic plan.

Improving the University's retention rates is another institutional priority in which Dr. Rivera-Mills is taking the lead, along with the interim vice president for Student Affairs. Over the summer, the University has created college toolkits and has put in place initiatives to help support all students, in particular first-generation students. During Fall Opening Convocation in August, she urged faculty and staff to support these efforts and help create a welcoming environment that will let students know that they belong at Ball State as part of the Cardinal Family. In September, the two vice presidents will present their recommendations to the campus community.

Her leadership extends off campus. She is leading the Ball State and MCS' Joint Academic Innovation Council (AIC), part of a community-wide effort to transform the local school district from financially troubled to a national model (more details under Community Involvement).

Vision: offer examples of how nominee has demonstrated vision as a leader

Dr. Rivera-Mills' vision can be summed up in what she told faculty and staff during the Fall Opening Convocation: "Ball State is a university deeply committed to student success, academic excellence, and community engagement—in one word, we are about IMPACT—we are here to positively impact and transform lives through education."

She has devoted her career to having all students fulfill their potential and fostering a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive community. Dr. Rivera-Mills chose higher education as a career path because her

own high school teachers made an impact on her. In higher ed, she would be teaching the teachers and had an opportunity to make a greater impact. She moved into administration to change systems so that thousands of lives can be improved at once.

Her vision is shaped by her experience as an immigrant from El Salvador. At age 12, she had to learn a different language, different culture, and different way of doing things. It taught her perseverance to overcome obstacles and unexpected challenges.

As a first-generation college student, she encountered the same issues. The university was “a different world,” where she had to learn a new culture and a new language. First-generation students are not familiar with concepts of tenure and faculty ranks. They don’t understand the role research plays in their education, what the acronyms mean, what forms to fill out, or where to go for assistance. Nor do they have relatives at home to guide them. About one-third of Ball State’s freshman class identifies as first generation.

“If there is any way to smooth the road, to remove obstacles, to make it easier for students, I will do it,” she says. “I want students to have fewer issues to navigate than I did. It’s my responsibility to pay it forward.”

Community service: describe community involvement

Dr. Rivera-Mills believes the mission of higher education is to serve the public good, and she cannot imagine higher education without community involvement.

“I believe in paying it forward,” she says. “Now that I have achieved my success, it’s my responsibility to bring others along. I have been blessed, and I want to help others achieve their dreams and goals too.”

She speaks to nonprofit organizations about leadership, volunteers at Muncie Community Schools (MCS) and for the United Way Day of Action, and serves on the boards of National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) and Delaware Advancement Corp. (DAC), a local organization to advance economic development.

Her most visible role is her leadership on Ball State and MCS’ Joint Academic Innovation Council (AIC), part of an initiative to transform the local school district from financially troubled to a national model, and she is grateful for this opportunity.

During a special legislative session in May 2018, the Indiana General Assembly adopted legislation to grant Ball State authority to appoint the MCS Board of Trustees, which started its term that July. The AIC is creating innovative programs and strategies that improve the academic performance of MCS students. The council is developing a long-term Academic Innovation and Financial Viability Plan to be presented to the Indiana legislature in June 2020. As part of those efforts, it will sponsor the Innovation Summit in Muncie in September. At the summit, MCS administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders will come together with nationally recognized educators to imagine the possibilities for this historic partnership.

Future possible partnerships include working with IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital to improve health and wellness in Muncie, using the resources of the brand new Health Professions Building at Ball State;

helping business startups, especially with financial literacy; and having Ball State CAP: INDY partner with industry and neighborhood to revitalize the area.

Mentoring: give examples of how she has mentored others

Dr. Rivera-Mills says mentoring others is one of the most rewarding aspects of her career. At Oregon State, she mentored professors when she was a senior faculty member and administrator. At Ball State, she continues that role with faculty, department chairs, and deans through a period of change at the University. Through her mentorship and collaboration, her colleagues are becoming a high-performing team that will move the institution in the direction it needs to go.

“I am proudest when I can help someone see that what they thought was impossible is actually possible for them,” she says. “That’s empowering. That’s exciting.”

She has a soft spot for mentoring women, who she believes often sell themselves short. Recently, she asked a female colleague to step into a leadership role, even though the colleague did not see herself as a leader. With Dr. Rivera-Mills’ encouragement, her colleague is now excelling in the role and mentoring others.

“I like helping women see their strength and find their voice,” she said. “I love that. It’s so rewarding when women empower each other.”

Additional background: send any additional information that may help us make a decision, including a current resume, a personal biography and/or articles.

Dr. Rivera-Mills’ story is a quintessential American story. She and her family fled a war-torn country and immigrated to the United States with very little. Through her and her family’s hard work and sacrifice, she has achieved success and believes deeply in helping others achieve success through the transformative power of education.

As the Latinx population increases at Ball State, as it has in Indiana and in colleges and universities nationwide, she sees opportunities to engage. She is quick to point out the Latinx population is diverse. This group includes students from the Southwest whose families have been in America for several generations, first-generation immigrants like her, and students whose situations are in-between.

“That said, this population is deeply rooted in family values,” she says. “They have seen firsthand the sacrifices and struggles that their parents and grandparents have made for them to have opportunities. It gives us a sense of responsibility to pay back within our own families and for future generations. There is a sense of urgency to get a degree, get a good job, and support the family who supported you. When we engage with Latinx students, we engage not only with the individuals but also with the families.”

During her first year at Ball State, she traveled throughout Indiana, getting to know communities better. She appreciates the sense of legacy, even as communities look to the future.

“What I love about Indiana is the real sense of community,” she says. “Hoosiers are engaged in what is happening in schools and communities. Everywhere I travel in Indiana, I go to a welcoming environment, where people have each other’s backs.”

You can read more about Dr. Rivera-Mills on the Ball State website (<https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/provost/contactus/staffdirectory/riveramillssusana>), an article that appeared on Experience Muncie's Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/experiencemuncie/posts/2304041999916775?comment_id=2305621229758852&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R%22%7D), and Oregon State's Terra Magazine (<http://terra.oregonstate.edu/2013/02/a-place-of-belonging/>). Kim Rendfeld, who works with me, will email her CV to Patty Johns.