

January 9, 2026

DSU Presidential Search Committee
Dakota State University
820 N Washington Ave
Madison, SD 57042

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

It would be the honor of a lifetime to serve as the next President of Dakota State University. As a three-time alumna, I am deeply rooted in DSU's mission, vision, culture, and responsibility to South Dakota. I built my career at DSU by choice, choosing long-term stewardship over short-term opportunity. I have intentionally stayed at DSU to build resilient programs, partnerships, and systems that strengthen DSU and serve the state.

I believe Dakota State is on the right path. DSU's next chapter requires sustainability, disciplined execution, and long range financial and organizational strength that protects what makes DSU distinctive while expanding what is possible for students, faculty, staff, and partners. Building on DSU's strong momentum, the next president must ensure DSU remains unique, while enhancing sustainability, improving operations, and increasing the institution's impact for generations to come.

My leadership reflects that approach. With my teams and partners, I have secured more than \$26.5 million in grants and contracts, built statewide and national partnerships, and delivered outcomes that matter to South Dakota and the nation. I founded DSU's Digital Forensics for Cyber Enforcement Lab, which now supports more than 110 local, state, and federal law enforcement partners. I helped create and scale cybersecurity service models for local government through Project Boundary Fence and SecureSD. Through CybHER, I helped secure more than \$2 million in philanthropic support and contributed to a 350 percent increase in women enrolled in DSU computer and cyber sciences programs. These efforts strengthened DSU's reputation while expanding paid student work experience, practical training, and pathways into high demand careers.

As President, I will build a strong and transparent partnership with the South Dakota Board of Regents grounded in steady communication, clear accountability, and no surprises. DSU succeeds when the system succeeds, and I will align DSU priorities with statewide goals for education quality, workforce readiness, and public service while ensuring DSU's national leadership in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and digital innovation continues to complement and strengthen our sister institutions.

Ashley Podhradsky

In my first 90 days, I will focus on listening, alignment, and execution. I will meet broadly across campus and across SD, including students, faculty, staff, shared governance leaders, executive leadership, athletics, and campus support teams, as well as alumni, donors, legislators, business leaders, and federal and state partners. From those conversations, I will confirm a small set of institutional priorities and publish a clear 12-month execution plan with accountable owners, timelines, and measurable outcomes tied to student success and long-term sustainability. I will also conduct a focused review of enrollment, retention, persistence, and placement data to strengthen the student success plan through early interventions, advising capacity, experiential learning, and support for both residential and online students. Finally, I will review the sustainability and operational alignment of DSU's applied research ecosystem, including MadLabs®, the Applied Research Lab, and DSU Applied Research Corporation, so mission aligned growth is matched by durable financial systems, clear governance, and predictable operations.

Sustainability must show up in budgeting discipline, through shared governance, careful growth decisions, and transparent reporting. As President, I will set clear expectations for stewardship and ensure DSU commitments are backed by the people, processes, and resources required to deliver. I will lead with presence, approachability, and high expectations, building and developing a strong leadership team and creating a culture where talented people choose to stay, teams are supported, and accountability is paired with clarity and trust. I will also strengthen external relations and philanthropy by building durable donor relationships and a campus wide culture of engagement that supports DSU's mission, research, student experience, and infrastructure.

My family is committed to supporting the demands of this role. My husband, Nick, is a two-time DSU alumnus and former student athlete, and we are raising our two children here. We understand the presidency extends beyond campus, and we view this role as a commitment to Madison, to SD, and to DSU's growing national impact.

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience and leadership align with DSU's priorities and the goals of the South Dakota Board of Regents.

With respect and appreciation,

Ashley Podhradsky, D.Sc.

Ashley L. Podhradsky, D.Sc.

Curriculum Vitae

Executive leader with deep experience building statewide partnerships, scaling applied research, and delivering measurable outcomes across education, research, and workforce development. Track record includes more than \$26.5 million in competitive grants and contracts, the creation and expansion of statewide cybersecurity services for local government and small businesses, and sustained pipeline development through CybHER reaching more than 50,000 youth. Grounded in the classroom as a cybersecurity and digital forensics professor with 14 years of teaching experience and proven academic leadership as an Associate Dean supporting program growth, faculty success, and student outcomes. Experienced in complex governance environments, including c-suite/VP-level higher education governance and operations, board service at First Bank and Trust and non-profit service at SD Biotech.

Leadership Scope

- Executive leader for DSU research and economic development functions, sponsored activity growth, and external partnerships
- Support of applied research and mission aligned entities and operations, including MadLabs and DSU Applied Research Corporation in collaboration with institutional and lab leadership
- Long standing statewide partnerships supporting cyber services, digital forensics, workforce development, and public sector impact

Selected Achievements

- Secured more than \$26.5 million in competitive grants and contracts as principal investigator and co-principal investigator advancing research, workforce development, and impact on statewide and national initiatives
- Founded and scaled Digital Forensics for Cyber Enforcement Lab supporting more than 110 local, state, and federal law enforcement partners with total program funding exceeding \$10 million
- Co-created and scaled SecureSD and Project Boundary Fence delivering cybersecurity services, awareness, and assessments for cities and counties across SD
- Expanded student based applied service delivery through the Google Cybersecurity Clinic supporting small businesses, local governments, and community organizations while strengthening workforce readiness
- Co-founded CybHER and secured more than \$2 million in philanthropic gifts and grants reaching more than 50,000 youth and contributing to a 350 percent increase in women enrolled in DSU computer and cyber programs
- Appointed by the Governor to the Governor's Resilience and Infrastructure Task Force supporting statewide resilience priorities and cross sector coordination

- Serve as an independent board member for First Bank and Trust providing governance, risk oversight, and strategic planning experience within a complex multi-billion-dollar organization
- Serve on the SD Biotech Board of Directors supporting statewide innovation, research strategy, and commercialization initiatives

Boards and Appointments

Appointed Member (2025 to Current)

Governor's Resilience and Infrastructure Task Force (GRIT)

Board of Directors (2021 to Current)

SD Biotech

Independent Board Member (2019 to Current)

First Bank and Trust

Education and Credentials

Doctor of Science in Information Systems (Specialized in Information Assurance & Computer Security)

Dakota State University, Madison, South Dakota, 2010

Master of Science in Information Systems (Specialized in Network Security)

Dakota State University, Madison, South Dakota, 2007

Bachelor of Science in Electronic Commerce & Computer Security

Minors: Business Administration, Computer Information Systems

Dakota State University, Madison, South Dakota, 2006

Continuing Education

National Security Seminar

United States Army War College

Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania - 2025

Academic Leadership Academy

Penn State University, State College Pennsylvania - 2019

Honors / Awards Selected List

Infosec Henry Rollins Award | Wild West Hacking Fest (2020)
AAAS IF/THEN Ambassadors (2019-2020)
New America Cybersecurity Fellow (2017 & 2018)
Merrill Hunter Award for Excellence in Research, Dakota State University (2017)
Young Women of Achievement Award, EmBe (2017)

Professional Experience

Vice President of Research & Economic Development (October 2020 to Current)
Dakota State University

Provide executive leadership for DSU research and economic development. Expand sponsored activity and partnerships. Support faculty and staff success through policy, infrastructure, and strategic initiatives that strengthen research impact across SD and beyond.

- Establish and implement university research and economic development policies and processes through shared governance
- Lead a staff of nine and oversee budgets, resources, and short- and long-term goals
- Partner with the Applied Research Lab and DSU Applied Research Corporation to pursue and secure external funding and applied research opportunities
- Provide executive oversight for MadLabs, aligning applied research capacity with institutional priorities and partner needs
- Lead and sustain strategic partnerships with the SD Attorney General's Office and SD HealthLink to advance statewide cyber, digital forensics, and health technology initiatives
- Represent DSU on the SD Biotech Board of Directors and the SD Research and Commercialization Committee and other state level research and commercialization efforts
- Serve on President's Cabinet and the Cabinet Executive Committee
- Translate partner needs into programs, funding, and deliverables that expand DSU impact across SD

Associate Dean, Beacom College of Computer and Cyber Sciences (August 2018 to 2021)
Dakota State University

Provided academic leadership and operational support across college priorities aligned to institutional priorities, with a focus on program quality, student growth, and external engagement.

- Partnered with faculty and university leadership on strategy, operations, and program priorities
- Created the new faculty mentoring program to support and retain faculty
- Coordinated planning and execution across key initiatives and stakeholder needs, including cross college collaboration

- Supported accreditation alignment and ongoing compliance with applicable standards and expectations
- Represented DSU at DHS Center of Academic Excellence activities and related external academic and cybersecurity forums
- Developed and supported programming that strengthened student recruitment and engagement
- Aligned adjunct staffing with course demand and scheduling needs to ensure instructional coverage and continuity

Professor of Digital Forensics and Information Assurance

(Aug 2012 to Current)

Dakota State University

Teach and mentor undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students in digital forensics and cybersecurity. Advise PhD research from concept through dissertation completion and support applied work aligned to student learning and partner needs. Develop research agenda and support outreach efforts for workforce development

Rank Progression at DSU:

- Instructor Fall 2008 to 2010
- Assistant Professor Fall 2012 to 2016
- Associate Professor with tenure Fall 2016 to 2020
- Professor Fall 2021 to Present

Selected responsibilities and impact:

- Mentor PhD students through research design, execution, and dissertation completion
- Chair of four PhD students as of Spring 2025 and serve on additional dissertation committees
- Teach a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses in cybersecurity and digital forensics
- Conduct research and applied work in digital forensics and cybersecurity in support of students and partners

Assistant Professor of Digital Forensics and Cybersecurity

(August 2010 to 2015)

Drexel University

Assistant Professor of Digital Forensics and Cybersecurity (2010 to 2012) and Adjunct Faculty (2012 to 2015). Developed and delivered cybersecurity focused coursework while building an early-stage research agenda within an R1 environment. Established foundational scholarship, collaborations, and mentoring experience that carried forward into later tenure and full professor roles.

- Taught cybersecurity and related courses, supporting student learning through applied, real-world content
- Built and advanced an early-stage research agenda within an R1 environment, establishing the foundation for later tenure and promotion

- Balanced teaching, research, and service responsibilities while developing publications, collaborations, and student mentorship experience
- Continued instructional support as adjunct faculty (2012 to 2015), maintaining engagement with students and the department while transitioning to DSU

Publications and Proceedings– Selected list, additional information provided upon request

- **Podhradsky, Rowland, & Narukonda.** (2025). CybHER: 10 years of expanding access, building talent, and reimagining the cybersecurity workforce. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 114(4), 27 to 47.
- Herrera, Van Sickle, & **Podhradsky.** (2024). Bridging the protection gap: Innovative approaches to shield older adults from AI enhanced scams. 2024 Cyber Awareness and Research Symposium (CARS), Grand Forks, ND, United States, 1 to 9.
- AL Liebl, P Rowland, A **Podhradsky**, M Redlin (2021). “Salaries in Higher Education Systems: A System-wide Perspective on Career Advancement and Gender Equity.” *ADVANCE Journal*, 26009.
- Casey, & Podhradsky. (2016). Steganography and the Xbox: How terrorists may be hiding in plain sight. Conference on Digital Forensics, Security and Law, Daytona, FL, United States.
- Miller, Stroschein, & **Podhradsky.** (2016). Reverse engineering a NIT that unmask TOR users. Conference on Digital Forensics, Security and Law, Daytona, FL, United States.
- **Podhradsky, LeBlanc, & Bartolacci.** (2014). Personal denial of service attacks and online misbehavior: The need for cyber ethics and information security education on university campuses. *Journal of Cyber Security*, 3(3), 1 to 18.
- **Podhradsky, & Higgens.** (2014). The current state of modern mobile media and its impact on the digital forensics community: An analysis of smart phones and tablets. Hawaii International Conference on Business, Honolulu, HI, United States.
- **Podhradsky, D’Ovidio, Engebretson, & Casey.** (2013). Xbox 360 hoaxes, social engineering, and gamertag exploits. Hawaii International Conference on System Science, Maui, HI, United States.
- **Podhradsky, Casey, & Ceretti.** (2012). The Bluetooth honeypot project: Measuring and managing Bluetooth risks in the workplace. *The International Journal of Mobile Network Design and Innovation*.

Grants and Contracts Funded – Selected list, additional information provided upon request

- **Attorney General’s Office: SecureSD Cybersecurity for Counties and Municipalities**
Principal Investigator
\$7,000,000 (2024 to 2028)
- **SBA: CyberSafeSD Cybersecurity for Small Businesses**
Principal Investigator
\$1,034,000 (2024 to 2026)

- **Tides Foundation: Google Cybersecurity Clinic**
Principal Investigator
\$1,000,000 (2024 to 2030)
- **National Science Foundation: iCorps**
Principal Investigator-DSU, NDSU is lead
\$793,692 for DSU (2023 to 2028)
- **SBA: CyberSafeSD Cybersecurity for Small Businesses**
Principal Investigator
\$999,993 (2022 to 2023)
- **National Security Agency: CyberSkills2Work**
Principal Investigator for DSU
\$1,294,741 (2021 to 2025)
- **Governor's Research Center: Center for Understanding Illicit Underground Economy**
Co-Principal Investigator
\$3,900,000 (2021 to 2026)
- **Attorney General's Office: Project Boundary Fence**
Principal Investigator
\$1,874,265 (2021 to 2028)
- **National Science Foundation: Research Experience for Undergraduates (IoT Security)**
Co-Principal Investigator
\$357,487 (2019)
- **National Security Agency and National Science Foundation: GenCyber Girls in CybHER Security Camp**
Principal Investigator
\$1,107,164 (2015 to 2025)
- **Attorney General's Office: DigForCE Digital Forensics for Cyber Enforcement**
Principal Investigator
\$3,452,159 (2018 to 2028)
- **National Science Foundation: National Research Traineeship: Collaborative Cyber-Physical Social System for Understanding & Thwarting the Illicit Economy**
Co-Principal Investigator and DSU Principal Investigator
\$2,980,000: \$373,608 for DSU (2018 to 2023)
- **National Science Foundation: ADVANCE Plan, South Dakota Working in STEM for Equity**
Principal Investigator- DSU, SDSU is lead
\$749,873 (2015)