

July 23, 2013

Search Committee

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Lafayette, Louisiana 70504

Dear Colleagues:

Please accept this letter of application for the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The mission of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the local culture combine to create a unique set of expectations of a chief academic officer, and I believe that my personal background and academic experience make me singularly qualified to join the University of Louisiana at Lafayette community as the leader of the academic program. My parents lived in Lafayette in the 1970's, with my father working in the oil industry, so I've spent a considerable amount of time in Acadiana. From the age of 14 until my junior year in college, I also worked in the oil fields during the summers, acquiring a profound respect for the people who earn their livelihood in oil exploration and production. I've gained a tremendous appreciation for both the local culture of south Louisiana and the economic impact of the oil industry for many years. I'm eager to return to Lafayette to serve the region and facilitate the growth of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's national recognition.

The next Provost at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette must have a deep appreciation for the broad array of academic programs at the University, and the ability to provide leadership in the University's rise in national stature. For the past five years I've led the College of Natural and Social Sciences, the largest and most complex college at California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA). With fifteen academic programs in the College, including anthropology, biology, chemistry all of the University's ethnic studies programs, geoscience and environment, history, mathematics, physics, political science, psychology and sociology, I've worked hard to understand the unique opportunities and needs of these diverse programs. The College has approximately 150 tenured or tenure track faculty members, and I have annually reviewed each probationary faculty member, giving me a good understanding of the different disciplinary norms and expectations. My earlier experience teaching at Colorado College, a national liberal arts college, also gave me a broad exposure to academic programs outside of my discipline of mathematics. While at Colorado College I co-taught with faculty in English and economics, and reviewed the tenure files of faculty in every discipline at the College. In my last position at Colorado College, I served as Dean of the Summer Session, where I

determined the curriculum and teaching assignments for all courses. While there are disciplines where I have not had direct academic experience, I've shown through my work at CSULA and Colorado College that I can quickly understand the context and disciplinary nuances of disparate academic programs. As Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Enrollment Management at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, I had the responsibility of providing advising and academic support for all disciplines, as well as leading the recruiting for all undergraduate programs.

The ability to provide academic leadership depends on gaining the trust and respect of the faculty, department chairs, and academic leadership. At CSULA I've created an atmosphere where faculty governance contributes to a sense of shared leadership with the goal of improving student success rates. One of my key priorities has been to provide a governing environment where all units are aware of fiscal restraints, funding opportunities, and College initiatives. In addition to convening meeting of the Council of Chairs every two weeks, I've met on a regular basis with a College wide Steering Committee to set College policy. Outcomes have included a College strategic plan adopted by the faculty, a shared understanding of budgetary allocations, and faculty input in to hiring priorities. As a result, the College has led the University in achieving enrollment targets while operating within approval fiscal guidelines in a difficult budgetary environment, been authorized to hire eight additional faculty members next year, and leads the University in interdisciplinary instruction.

CSULA is an incredibly diverse institution, with almost 20,000 students where the majority are Pell eligible and the first in their family to attend college. This student population was the primary attraction in bringing me to CSULA. Having been a first generation college student, I understand a great deal about the challenges these students face. As a result, I've worked hard to provide students with the support that will lead to their success. The College of Natural and Social Sciences led the University in setting up a college based advising center to provide focused advising that complemented the advising provided by faculty in the disciplines. As budgets have tightened in California, I've worked with an effective team of the Associate Dean, College Resource Manager and the academic program chairs and directors to ensure that our schedule of classes meets the needs of the most students. For example, this past year we moved our limited enrollment from a summer session that doesn't attract larger numbers of students to the fall, winter, and spring terms when more students can be served at a lower cost.

While most academic administrators have a good feel for student needs, I've served as the chief student affairs officer and head of enrollment management at a regional comprehensive university, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. As Vice Chancellor for Student Success and Enrollment Management, I had the oversight for academic advising, academic support services such as the math learning center and writing center, financial aid, counseling, the registrar, and admissions. My ability to work on enrollment management and the support of first

generation college students was greatly enhanced during this appointment. As a result, I have unique insights into how the roles of advising, counseling, academic support, and registrar policies interface with academic programs to improve student success. As Provost at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, I'll use this combination of academic and student success experience to ensure that graduation rates improve as a part of the efforts to increase the University's stature both within the State of Louisiana and nationally.

As Dean of the Summer Session at Colorado College, I oversaw the operation of fourteen study abroad programs, staffed by Colorado College faculty and covering programs in countries that included China, Vietnam, Japan, Italy, Peru, Mexico, France, Spain, and England. I've traveled to Taiwan, South Korea, and Colombia to negotiate possible exchange programs. I've seen the transformational nature of such programs, especially on first generation college students, so the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's focus on globalization for students reflects my priorities as well.

The effective role of technology remains both controversial and appealing in meeting the needs of students. As a Dean in the California State University (CSU) system, I've witnessed first-hand some of the more recent attempts to use technology to meet student demand when resources are severely limited. Last spring I met with the Provost and President of San Jose State University, a part of the CSU. While they both touted the partnership with an online provider, Udacity, recent reports have confirmed that the projects to teach remedial or introductory mathematics have not been as successful as they had hoped. Given that over 60% of the incoming freshmen at CSULA need remediation, we've experimented with using technology to teach those classes, finding that personal attention for remedial mathematics is more effective. At the same time, we've very successfully taught astronomy online for several years. My view is that neither a wholesale use of technology nor a wholesale rejection of online courses will serve our students well. I'm committed to an effective use of technology, including class response mechanisms in lecture classes, to increase student success. As Provost at UL Lafayette, I would foster a sense of experimentation and exploration, to allow faculty to pilot new programs to determine where technology enhances student learning, but I would also ensure that our actions were based on a carefully crafted technology strategic plan that includes effective assessment measures.

Throughout my career I've made an effort to understand how budget allocations and funding formulas influence academic programs. As the president of a local school board in Colorado, I had to understand the complex K-12 funding formula. Working within the University of Colorado system, where funding formulas depended not only on the size of the institutions but also the range of programs and financial needs of students, provided an excellent education in funding issues. As Vice Chancellor, I had to effectively cut 25% of the general fund budget in two years while serving more students each year. The 23 campus CSU system, with the fiscal constraints in California, provided additional experiences in

budget development and management. I've been highly effective in focusing on student success as I work with my colleagues in the College to ensure the best use of all funds to support instruction and research programs. I'll bring experience from these three budgetary environments to bear on the support of the academic program at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. I don't expect state funding for higher education to increase, but we will all have to collaborate to increase funding from private sources, granting agencies, and foundations to meet the needs of the academic program.

Ph.D. programs require a higher level of funding, whether for small classes, fellowships, teaching assistantships, or additional faculty hiring in specialized areas. I'm impressed with the Ph.D. programs at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and I applaud the strategic initiative to grow doctoral programs that serve demonstrated needs. The need both to recruit graduate students for those programs and to provide the resources to support the graduate programs requires the direct involvement of the Provost, Deans, and the faculty engaged in those programs in securing the needed resources. I look forward to working with the UL Lafayette University Advancement office to obtain funding from foundations, local industry, program directors at the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes for Health, and the National Endowment for the Humanities to that end. Given the current initiative to move federal funding for undergraduates and graduates in the STEM fields to the Department of Education, it will be important to monitor that proposal and ensure that connections with the Department of Education are developed to anticipate this change.

In closing, I believe that the position of Provost and Vice President at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette provides a unique opportunity for me to provide academic leadership for a university that celebrates its vital connections to its local community while reaching out to serve more students nationally and internationally. I look forward to developing partnerships internally with all members of the University, whether staff, faculty, students or administrators, to help reinforce the strong sense of community on the campus. At the same time, I will be an effective advocate for academic affairs to the local community that plays a vital role in the health of the University. Finally, I've proven to be an effective public advocate with foundations, federal agencies, and state governments in supporting higher education, and I am eager to bring these talents to Acadiana. I look forward to discussing my application with you.

Regards,

James P. Henderson, Ph.D.