

September 21, 2023

Mr. Joe Stanley
Senior Executive Search Consultant
Greenwood Asher and Associates
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Dear Mr. Stanley,

I write to express my interest in the position of Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (ArtSci) at Texas A&M University. I currently hold the title of Interim Dean of Arts and Sciences and for the last year have been the Executive Associate Dean of the new college. I have worked closely over the last year with our leadership team in ArtSci, our 18 department heads, our many directors of college programs, centers and institutes and our staff, both those appointed through the college and those central personnel associate with us. Since June 1, 2022, I have led many of the initiatives and processes associated with merging the three legacy Colleges of Geosciences, Liberal Arts and Science. I believe I am uniquely equipped to lead the Arts and Sciences through its earliest years due to my experience with the recent unit merger and my knowledge of our departmental and college leaders and the status of the college's ongoing initiatives, for example, our faculty and staff hiring, our budgets, our academic programs, and our development plans. In this letter, I provide for you a summary of my professional credentials and how I believe they position me as a particularly qualified candidate for this deanship.

I received my undergraduate degree in Biology from Augustana College, Illinois, a small liberal arts college on the Mississippi River between Illinois and Iowa. There, educated by wonderful faculty across a broad range of the arts and sciences, I gained a life-long appreciation for both scholarly pursuits. Without access to the research experiences that we offer undergraduates here at Texas A&M, I pursued a master's degree in the biological sciences to see if a research career in science was for me. Those graduate years fostered my love for teaching, something I did not know was in me, but also greatly enhanced my passion for discovery. This led me to pursue neurobiology for my doctoral studies and lead to my career in science. My wife Debra, now a professor of veterinary medicine, and I moved to Bryan/College Station over 30 years ago, in January of 1992 as we began our independent academic careers.

After being promoted with tenure, and then 5 years of service as the graduate director in Biology, the Dean of Science Joe Newton asked me to join his team as the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. Part of my academic efforts at TAMU have been in administration since those early years of the early 2000's. Sequentially, I was asked by a series of science deans to take on additional responsibilities, including Faculty Affairs, eventually becoming Executive Associate Dean. In these administrative positions, I gained the knowledge and leadership experience necessary to handle the full and broad management roles of a dean, as well as the personnel and resource management obligations of such an immense task as leading ArtSci. Personally, I believe I bring to my administrative roles a fair and level mindset and compassion for the disparate duties overseen across such a large and complex organization. That said, I have also benefitted from the experience of working closely with a diverse set of colleagues, mentors and bosses through which I have gained insight and skill in navigating difficult situations and decisions.

From 2001 to 2007, I served as the chair of the Interdisciplinary Faculty of Neuroscience and during these years we created the doctoral program in neuroscience from its initial idea to its Coordinating

Board approval. We also produced the strategic plans that would lead to the later creation of the Texas A&M Institute for Neuroscience and the undergraduate minor in neuroscience, which set the stage for the neuroscience majors that now exist in Biology and Psychological and Brain Sciences departments. In 2017, I was asked to lead the then Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS), an organization of 30+ faculty and staff overseeing the administrative functions associated with the education and training of over 15,000 graduate and professional student Aggies. That year as Acting Associate Provost gave me the opportunity to lead, evaluate and promote a large team, manage the budgets of a significant academic enterprise and engage with a diverse student body, its leadership and governance. As Executive Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, I was asked to help build the teams that would take three legacy colleges, each with unique cultures and complexities, and create the new college. In this role, I drew upon these many past administrative roles when planning, advising and seeking input to guide this task. In particular, I work with others to stand-up a Faculty Affairs team that has worked to generate many of the committees and guidelines that govern and support the shared governance of our college faculty, the foundation of any strong and impactful academic organization. I take pride in that team's work and what they have accomplished in a very short time.

Similarly, in the legacy College of Science, I was tasked by Dean Valen Johnson to co-lead several year-long strategic planning efforts across our five departments. This began with co-chair Dr. Deborah Bell-Pedersen and I assembling an inclusive group of life science leaders and experts across the university to develop an innovative and bold strategic plan, together with the faculty of Biology, to create a goal-oriented strategic research plan. I believe the significant and impactful outcomes have emerged from that strategic planning initiative. Therefore, I believe that inclusive and shared approaches to planning exemplify of how a collaborative vision, coupled with commitment of resources and effort, can move the needle of academia. I also feel that planning strategically for the future of the College of Arts and Sciences, with similar engagement of faculty and staff, collaboration and cooperation of leaders and infusion of targeted resources, will produce equivalent successes across a broader set of units with diverse academic cultures, research and teaching missions and organizational structures.

I have provided in this letter a summary of my academic history in support of my application for, and interest in, being named the inaugural Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Texas A&M University. The task ahead of building a premier college with impacts both inside and outside of the A&M campus brings with it significant challenge and equal opportunity. Many people have asked me if I have enjoyed the last 16 months of work merging colleges to build a new one. My answer is that the greatest joy has come from interacting across a much broader range of colleagues and students, discussing with them their teaching and scholarship, some of it largely foreign to me after 40 years as a scientist. I do not see my engaging and learning about the humanities and social sciences as a burden of responsibility as an arts and sciences dean, but an absolute joy to expand myself and my academic impact on Texas A&M and the world across a broad and foundational set of disciplines- much as the faculty of my youth engaged my young mind on the hills above the waters of the Mississippi.

Accompanying this letter of interest, I provide you with my current C.V. and list of references. Thank you for your consideration of my application materials.

Sincerely yours,



Mark J. Zoran
Interim Dean
College of Arts and Sciences