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Search Committee Members
Florida State University

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the position of President. I am keenly interested in serving Florida State University in this important capacity.

Relatively early in my career (six years after completing my PhD), I had the opportunity to lead the development of a new interdisciplinary research center at Penn State with ten new faculty lines and a research mission to promote collaboration and faculty hiring across several departments. I have led a nationally ranked research enterprise or college ever since, and have had the distinct pleasure of examining and working within the management styles and structures of two very different AAU universities as a dean, at Penn State and at the University of Texas at Austin. Currently, I serve as the Director of a highly prominent national laboratory – the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

In many ways, the challenges facing U.S. public universities are very similar – declining state support and a reduced sense that public education is critical to the common good, the transition to a tuition-driven economy balanced by the need to provide an affordable education to all of the citizens of a state, and a growing importance of philanthropy in ensuring institutional success, unfortunately combined with reduced endowment incomes. Financial challenges are not the only significant issues. We can add the balance between the public need for greater oversight and accountability and the associated administrative burden, the critical need to ensure a diverse student body, faculty and staff while being responsive to changing guidelines on admissions and recruiting, and the challenge of managing institutional competitiveness in salaries and start-up in a manner that ensures that we can attract and retain a quality faculty. Despite the similarity of the issues, each university has a unique culture that bears on how we face these challenges.

The approaches at Penn State and at the University of Texas were distinctly different. Penn State built a culture around a strong leadership hierarchy, with a focus on efficiency and consistency in process. Efficiency and consistency certainly resulted in a more effective use of resources. Budget reductions over several years were still required, yet there was also a deliberate trade-off – one of removal of low priority areas followed by new opportunity funds for initiatives that would continue to move the university forward. Despite budget stress, Penn State maintained a commitment to competitive faculty salaries and to recruiting and retaining excellence. In contrast, the excellence at the University of Texas resided in engendering a competitive spirit in its units. Deans wielded considerable authority, often governing independent foundations, and

many elements of university function were negotiable college by college (tuition rate, indirect return, titles, creation of centers, etc.). Each of these factors tended to promote a level of self-interest among deans but also a considerable entrepreneurial attitude.

Although these institutions are quite different, both Penn State and Texas are driven by an enduring commitment to quality, and both are highly competitive in terms of improving their rank in comparison with peer institutions. Both recognize the interplay of research, education and service to their states and to the nation. Both value the role of athletics, as a student opportunity and experience, as a factor in recruiting, as an opportunity to connect to alumni, and as a opportunity for fund-raising. Clearly, both institutions are highly successful with similar goals yet very different operational models. They can still learn much from each other.

My experiences at Penn State and Texas were very different for a number of other reasons. The College of Earth and Mineral Sciences consisted of five departments and four research institutes, including seven ABET engineering degrees, two departments with science degrees and one department with a social science degree. These highly ranked programs were well-established, with high research productivity. The land-grant mission brought service to society to the fore. I worked with limited budgets to continue to promote innovation, excellence and interactions across the units. My College led all other colleges at Penn State in research expenditures per faculty member. I am also proud that we excelled at teaching and the College emerged as an innovative leader in a renewed focus on students and student services while I was Dean.

Texas recruited me to be Dean of the newly formed Jackson School of Geosciences. The School was formed because of an unrestricted gift by an alumnus that was valued at 282 million dollars. The new School's Foundation was valued in excess of 450 million dollars. I could not pass up the opportunity presented by a truly transforming gift and abundant resources despite considerable allegiance to Penn State. The newly formed School lacked a cohesive sense of community as it combined units that previously reported through separate lines. The School also had no finance office, no development function, and no alumni organization, but these were areas in which my experience enabled the newly formed School to move forward quickly. Today, the Jackson School is executing a strategic plan developed while I was dean that was designed to expand the faculty, transform student recruitment and services, develop a life-long connection to our alumni, create a much stronger sense of community, and develop a highly-functional School.

I left Texas to become the Director of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR). I was drawn to the prospect of leading the premier facility in atmospheric research. NCAR presented immediate challenges, including a budget shortfall that exceeded 10% of our base funding. My challenge was to solve this problem in the first two months of my tenure. I am pleased to report that in my first year we developed an actionable strategic plan that was tied closely to budget. This plan was lauded by the National Science Foundation for its transparency and commitment to the future. This year we have the greatest annual increase in nearly a decade and, including stimulus funding, we have \$271M in available research support this fiscal year.

Again, the management of NCAR offers many insights into the operations of large organizations. NCAR is an FFRDC (Federally Funded Research and Development Center), with management

delegated by federal authority to a non-profit (University Corporation for Atmospheric Research) with a Board of Trustees elected by 75 member organizations. The directorship requires considerable interaction with federal agencies, the White House, and Congress. As just an example, during the last year I have met personally with more than 50 congressional staffers as I worked to promote legislation to develop a new interagency program (this legislation has been passed by the House and has passed through Senate committee). I also met with the President's Science Advisor at the White House Office of Science, Technology and Policy, numerous members of the Office of Management and Budget, appropriations staff in the House, and the NSF Director in my efforts to construct a \$100M+ high performance supercomputing center. I am very comfortable in working with elected officials by articulating a concrete vision for my institution. The national laboratory funding process is not without challenges. We receive our budget from Congress via NSF well into the fiscal year, yet we are not allowed to carry a deficit nor are we allowed more than a small carry-over. This requires careful planning and a careful balance between being fiscally conservative and appropriately vested in the future. Again, despite the challenges, NCAR is an exceptional research organization. For example, the ISI web of science ranks NCAR as having more journal citations across all the Earth sciences, per paper, than any other organization in the world.

I would also like to add my perspectives on philanthropy. Working with alumni, foundations and corporations to raise funds for Penn State and for Texas provided some of my most memorable and enjoyable experiences as a dean. Again, the two universities were quite different in their approach. At Penn State, fund-raising was a highly managed partnership between central administration and deans. Penn State developed a well-oiled machine, with much of the philanthropy coming from a very large number of small donations. My responsibilities as Dean began near the close of the Penn State's first billion dollar capital campaign, and I am proud to state that our college significantly exceeded our goal (raising in excess of \$100M) and, importantly, we were able to continue the growth in philanthropy after the campaign through a well-established vision that connected with our alumni. At Texas, I was dean during the process of planning for their first billion dollar campaign. The approach was very different from that at Penn State. Fund-raising was college-centric, with the deans providing the resources for their own development staff and deans guarding their alumni prospects in fund-raising campaigns. The Jackson School had many additional challenges. Alumni interest in philanthropy dropped precipitously after the receipt of the Jackson gift and the Jackson School had no development office. In addition, Texas tended to focus largely on major donors, without the investment required to also attract a large number of donations. During my tenure I established a professional development office and significantly increased the number of donors while also focusing on large gifts. In my last year, the Jackson School raised between 12 and 13M from alumni and corporations from a base of only 4600 alumni. I am keenly aware of the impact of "transforming" gifts on a university and I am equally aware that smaller gifts multiplied by a large number of donors yield great opportunities. Philanthropy is an extraordinarily important function of the President, and it is a task that I take on with pleasure.

Several other aspects of my career are perhaps noteworthy. Ever since I was invited to develop a model for cross-department collaboration at Penn State, I have been committed to developing interdisciplinary programs that work and that advance the research agenda of the university. The clear objective is to set the stage for creating a whole that is greater than its parts and to promote

innovation while minimizing competition and enabling buy-in with existing units. I was instrumental in developing the model for the university-wide Penn State Institutes of the Environment. I also chaired the committee that developed the university-wide Energy Institute at Texas.

Each of these experiences has made me adept at the formulation and execution of strategic plans, budgets, and priorities within different environments and under very different resource conditions. In terms of management style, I am committed to promoting collaborative and thoughtful discussion and to building consensus by seeking the wisdom of my leadership and my constituents, but I also recognize that it is my responsibility to make timely decisions. I am equally committed to thinking strategically, and to working to build a vision that is innovative, realizable and has the buy-in of the institution. My colleagues frequently note that I am committed to transparency and to effective communication. I also have a long history of promoting growth in research, as a leader of research centers and as an investigator on more than 20 million dollars in competitively awarded grants. I have also been honored for my contributions to the scholarship of education, both in terms of teaching and curriculum development.

I have had the pleasure of serving on boards and committees that seek to align sometimes disparate voices into collective agreement or to promote community-based advice. I served continuously as a chair of National Research Council activities from 1990 to 2006, with two terms as chair of the Climate Research Committee and two terms as chair of the Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate. I served as the chair of two non-profit boards and I recognize the value and importance of having an engaged Board of Trustees. I was twice elected to the School Board in my community. I have been active in advising NOAA, NSF and NASA, and in providing congressional testimony on science priorities in federal budgets. I am proud that my service and leadership has crossed many disciplines, each involving highly ranked programs and nationally prominent enterprises. My hope is that I have been so honored to lead exceptional programs focused on more than one discipline because my colleagues know that I am not focused on my personal discipline. Rather, I am committed to promoting success, that I work to represent and promote the entire community fairly and thoughtfully, and that I have their trust. I do not know this to be the case, but it is certainly what I strive to achieve.

Although my experiences are with science and engineering, I do not believe a university can be truly exceptional without an enduring commitment to the broadest possible spectrum of excellence. Florida State University has a significant number of superb programs. If I am President, you will find me to be an ardent supporter and advocate for the full spectrum of excellence in the arts and humanities, law, and business (as examples) as well as in science and engineering.

My vita tends to be a record of professional accomplishments, and I have not included functions such as taking on the chair role in Penn State's United Way campaign, or my role as chair of the K-12 outreach program *Explore UT* in Austin, or my experiences chairing promotion and tenure committees, or my participation in the recent SACS accreditation at Texas and ABET accreditation at Penn State. Each of these adds to my base of experience and, importantly, demonstrates my role as a citizen in the full educational enterprise.

Finally, I am committed to people. I believe that any institution should work to promote the success and development of its workforce. This is a commitment to professional development and to ensuring that we provide opportunities for evaluation and feedback that promote the success of our employees. Attracting and retaining talent is a key to the success of any institution. I am personally committed to promoting diversity and equity in the workforce. From one perspective I view this as a moral imperative. At the same time, if we are to provide the workforce for the future, it is also a strategic imperative. I believe in public education and my strong interest and my sense of obligation cross the entire educational spectrum – from serving two elected terms as a School Board member, to serving as a distinguished faculty member, to serving as a Dean committed to the success of my program and the University as a whole, to leading a national laboratory.

Truthfully, I am not ready to leave NCAR as I have been in place for a relatively short period of time. I have an excellent job, but I miss the interactions with students, faculty and alumni. I also miss the excitement and contributions of major athletic programs to the campus environment. But, it is also my aspiration to lead a public university and, certainly, I am drawn to my alma mater. I view myself as a scholar, driven to advance education and research and committed to service, who shares the values and aspirations of the faculty. At the same time, I believe I am an enthusiastic student of good management and a strong leader, with the fund-raising skills and political acumen that serves my institution well. I believe that my personal experiences and commitment are a good foundation for taking a leadership role at Florida State University.

Thank you for the opportunity to apply. I look forward to further discussion should my application be of interest to the search committee. Please don't hesitate to ask if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Barron
Director
National Center for Atmospheric Research