

October 23, 2020

Search Committee  
Austin Peay State University

and

Brian Bustin  
Storbeck Search & Associates

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I write to express my strong interest in the presidency of Austin Peay State University (APSU). As this letter and my other application materials will demonstrate, I have all of the requisite qualifications for the position. Beyond the basic qualifications, I feel that my leadership experience, and my commitment to ensuring that higher education prepares students to be effective and responsible citizens, will make me a perfect fit for the position at APSU. Further, APSU's commitment to education as a public resource resonates with me. It is my firm belief that public universities like APSU are positioned well to serve this vital purpose while producing an educated citizenry. I am convinced that universities like APSU are the best at producing talented, motivated alumni, who then go on to make significant contributions to the workforce and their communities. Universities such as APSU, in other words, are truly universities *for* their states. I have spent nearly my entire career in such environments, and my commitment to advancing the status of institutions like APSU is reflected in my participation in many conferences hosted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). My leadership experiences at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and currently at Indiana State University (ISU) have prepared me well for my next step.

I am interested in the position at APSU because it is a great university with an important mission. Certainly, APSU is on a clear path forward, and has enjoyed success ranging from academics, enrollment, athletics, and fund raising. The academic mission is adjusting to meet the needs of students and the state, the overall enrollment trend is favorable, there is a strong commitment to student success, and there have been investments in campus facilities. The university is certainly situated to continue living its mission and is able to tackle – from a position of strength – the uncertainties that will be faced by all institutions of higher education in the coming decade. I am ready to lead the institution, building on its existing strengths and seizing new opportunities. Indeed, I am proud to have provided leadership for my current institution's recent successes. As Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at ISU, I have led our student success initiatives, developed a forward-looking strategic enrollment plan, worked closely with Faculty Senate on promotion and tenure revisions, pushed to develop new academic programs and other curricular innovations, helped move the university forward with experiential learning and career readiness, led the development of the current strategic plan, and am providing leadership for our next comprehensive campaign, among many other important projects. I have done this by fostering positive, successful relationships with my cabinet colleagues, faculty and staff leaders, as well as with personnel across the other divisions.

*Approach to Leadership:* My fundamental approach to leadership is based on the servant-leader model. My motivation is to serve the larger organization and its students by providing leadership on strategic goals, and to find ways to surround those within the organization with an environment that fosters communication, creativity, and a commitment to personal and professional development. This approach permeates my life, and helps me be an effective academic leader and an energetic volunteer within the community. My servant-leader approach also provides the "fuel" needed for me to repeatedly step up to meet unexpected challenges or to take on additional responsibilities. For example, I stepped in to serve as Acting President at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) while retaining the responsibilities of interim Provost. In the five years I have been in Terre Haute, my portfolio of responsibilities has increased dramatically at ISU, and I have taken on leadership roles in a variety of community organizations. I embed myself deeply in my community, and have provided leadership for a number of organizations, from the local Chamber of Commerce, to the Symphony, Rotary, Boy Scouts, and local schools. In other words, I am not afraid of work, and my can-do spirit means that I never take my eye off the goal of advancing the organization I am serving.

I also understand the need to strike a balance between strategic leadership and day-to-day management. Obviously, if a leader gets bogged down in the day-to-day paper shuffle, the institution as a whole will not move forward. On the other hand, Thomas Edison supposedly said that vision without execution is simply hallucination. Strategic vision is worthless if the internal management of the organization is not equipped to do the work needed to realize that vision. Over my years as an academic administrator, I have learned how to strike the balance between the two, and I rely upon a talented team of people around me to help in both of the areas of strategic vision and day-to-day management.

*Capitalizing on Institutional Momentum and Vitality:* Clearly, APSU is operating from a position of strength. I am ready to lead the university by ensuring the university's mission is clearly articulated to both internal and external constituents. As you will see in this letter, I am committed to engaged, transparent, and collaborative leadership, so that the campus community shares a common understanding of the mission, vision, and values of the university. External constituents – such as the local and state communities, the state legislature, corporate and military partners, and donors and friends – must also understand the mission, opportunities, and value of the university. As all universities face the uncertainties of the coming years, it will be important to establish and grow these relationships, while ensuring the APSU is innovative, entrepreneurial, and committed to students and their academic success.

As both university marketing and enrollment management are in my portfolio, I am keenly aware of the importance of capitalizing on institutional momentum. Opportunities to raise awareness of APSU and to enhance its reputation must be seized. These efforts serve multiple goals, from enrollment, to fundraising, to governmental relations and state appropriations, and beyond.

*Advancing the University's Mission:* As mentioned above, the public mission of APSU is one that resonates with me personally, and is one that I have worked hard to support throughout my career. My focus currently at ISU is on providing students with access to higher education, as well as experiential learning, community engagement work, and career-ready skills. My

leadership at ISU has helped distinguish the university as a leader in providing students with co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities that reinforce our educational mission. Often, this involves corporate partnerships to secure internship sites, industry mentors for students, and financial support for programs. Importantly, I was also able to provide leadership for a recent curricular enhancement around career readiness. The initiative required collaboration with another vice president on campus as well as close work with the Faculty Senate. This will keep the university on the leading edge in the shifting landscape of higher education, and will ensure that ISU students are set apart as employees, citizens, and entrepreneurs.

I also worked in close collaboration with the faculty senate to change the university's guidelines for promotion and tenure. These had not been written in a way to reflect the university's mission, leading to mixed messages for faculty about relative priorities. Over the course of an academic year, I worked closely with faculty senate leaders to revise the documents so that faculty would "get credit" if they engage in research with undergraduate students, provide learning experiences outside the classroom, publish a diverse array of types of scholarship, or engage in professionally-related community and university service. This enhances the university's ability to live its mission, and faculty morale is improved as expectations are in better alignment with the university's mission.

I have successful experience establishing and supporting the development of new academic programs and units. Recently, for example, we developed the Criminology department into the School of Criminology and Security Studies by adding programs in cyber-criminology, security studies, and intelligence analysis. I also led the development of an engineering program in our College of Technology. It is now well-established and prepared for ABET accreditation in the fall. Early in my time at ISU, we launched a graduate program in Genetic Counseling and with my support we were able to quickly secure accreditation. The past three cohorts have had about 125 applicants for the 6 spots each year. Alongside this, we have been able to run a vibrant Center for Genomic Advocacy, and establish a genetic counseling clinic in partnership with one of the local hospitals. Finally, when I arrived at ISU, I found a variety of programs had just been founded, such as the Flight Academy, a doctoral program in Physical Therapy and a Physician Assistant program. All of these were brand new, in need of accreditation or compliance with stringent guidelines, and requiring institutional investment. Since my arrival, I have been able to run the Flight Academy in the black, add aircraft to the fleet and help establish an important corporate sponsorship. The medically-related programs have been accredited and are flourishing.

Another important accomplishment was taking the Honors Program and establishing the Honors College. This required a reinvestment of resources, but has resulted in the further growth of an important academic and recruitment asset for ISU.

Throughout my career, I have placed an emphasis on student academic success. Through initiatives such as enhanced advising, reinvented programming for conditionally admitted students, more prescriptive supplemental instruction, completely overhauled academic department success plans, improved collaborations between Residential Life and the University College, and a focus on targeted help for juniors and seniors to reach the "finish line", ISU's student success metrics have moved in the right direction. The result is for the current budget biennium, ISU was able to

hit all of our performance budgeting targets, leading to an increase in state appropriations. I am proud to have provided leadership that has promoted academic success. This continues my track record from UNI, where programs I helped develop and implement also led to increases in retention and graduation rates.

ISU's mission is not unlike APSU's and I am excited about the abundant opportunities that this position provides. That is the spirit I will bring to APSU: a can-do attitude that will ensure the university is able to live its mission, stay responsive to student expectations, and serve the state in a way to preserve and enhance the institution's reputation.

*Strategic Enrollment Management:* I have a wealth of leadership experience with Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM). Clearly, since tuition is the key revenue stream, enrollment growth will continue as a fundamental priority for almost any institution. Of course, enrollment growth can happen through increases in new students to the university. However, enrollment can also be enhanced through increased retention of existing students, so I view SEM as an integrated approach combining both recruitment and student success. Student success also includes affordability, so my team is working to redeploy scholarships in ways that both recruit students and promote their progress toward their degrees. Further, a good SEM plan is one that aligns recruitment with academic programs around issues such as capacity, student demand, and workforce needs. Finally, a good plan will also need to incorporate strategic attention to enrollment streams other than just traditional freshmen. Graduate student enrollment, military personnel, adult learners (especially online), transfer students, and in certain cases international students, will play significant roles in a good SEM plan.

I have a decade's worth of experience in leading some or all of a university's enrollment efforts. Early in my administrative career at UNI, I was able, as graduate dean, to increase graduate student enrollment to record levels. At the same time, I created the Retention Council to focus on enhancing the first-year experience of students, with the goal of boosting retention and graduation rates. Also at UNI, I helped lead the revamping of that institution's enrollment management structure, including creating the position of Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management who reported in part to me while I served as interim Provost. Since the fall of 2018 at ISU, I have been responsible for all enrollment efforts, and over the last year have instituted dramatic enhancements in recruiting, scholarships, coordination with academic units, and alignment with student success goals. In advance of the COVID-19 crisis, our incoming freshman class for fall of 2020 was on track to see about an 8% improvement over the previous year. ISU's retention hit a record high this year, as did our four-year graduation rate. All of this has been done as a result of careful analysis and pilot projects using proper experimental design; I even moved a member of the Institutional Research team to the Enrollment Management area to help with data-informed decision making.

Looking forward, there is a great deal of enrollment uncertainty for higher education in the coming decade. To address this, I have created an innovation taskforce in collaboration with the Faculty Senate. Co-chaired by myself and the previous year's Senate Chair, this taskforce is reviewing targeted enrollment opportunities: adult learners, an increasingly diverse population of college-goers, and other non-traditional enrollment streams. The task force is also determining what university processes, curricula, schedules, and policies need to change in order to best serve

those students. ISU is built to serve traditional students, and as the enrollment landscape changes over the next 5 to 10 years, the institution needs to transform now in order to be ready.

Finally, I am leading the university in innovating for the post-COVID future and ensuring that ISU is ready to face challenging demographics in the next 5 to 10 years regarding high school graduates in the state and region. We are re-tooling a number of academic programs to be more attractive to working adults taking classes part-time and online. I had our transfer student admissions processes and our online environment thoroughly reviewed in order to ensure ISU is competitive in enrollment markets and is providing the best educational experience we can. I have also lead the university in a strategic enrollment “pivot” toward a focus on student success. To help with this pivot, I have secured nearly \$3 million in grant funding for student support and curricular innovations, and have established a dual-enrollment pathway partnership with the local community college which got underway this fall.

I am confident that my ability to provide vision, along with my demonstrated success in collaborating with faculty and staff leaders, will be key assets for APSU.

*Supporting and Enhancing Engagement with Military Constituencies:* I am excited about APSU’s strong connection to military constituencies. I have been committed to these connections throughout my administrative career. At UNI, I revised university policy to improve that university’s ability to support active duty and veteran students. At ISU, I have ensured the university maintains a flexible approach for students as they are deployed or have other assignments. ISU also has a close connection to the Community College of the Air Force, and under my leadership we have deepened that relationship through additional articulation agreements and program offerings. Terre Haute, Indiana, where ISU is located, is a finalist for the U.S. Air Force’s F-35 Foreign Military Sales Training Center, and I have ensured that ISU is a partner in support of the community’s efforts to secure the center. Finally, I have invited the U.S. Army to recruit on campus, which had not been allowed prior to my arrival at ISU.

I am deeply impressed by APSU’s ability to help military personnel and their families achieve their educational and professional goals. I am excited at the prospect of helping to preserve, strengthen, and grow that engagement with Fort Campbell.

*Shared Vision and Building a Strong University Community:* I hope it is apparent that my style is based on collaboration, communication, transparency, and seeking a common understanding of goals. I have spent all of my administrative career partnering with those across campus. Indeed, my efforts as chair of the UNI Retention Council were recognized by an award from another division of campus (Student Affairs). At ISU, I spend a great deal of time interacting directly with campus constituents, ranging from a standing weekly meeting with faculty senate officers, my annual visits to each academic department, regular meetings with the staff council, and ready willingness to participate in the activities of student organizations. I enjoy guest lecturing (or perhaps just taking questions from students), and have even shown up with breakfast for the class. I often eat lunch in the commons of the student union, and have lugged refrigerators and other material up flights of residence hall stairs on move-in day.

I do all of this because it is important to be connected to the university community. I want to be a leader who is approachable, caring, and engaged, and one who builds on past success, protects important traditions, and respects the prior good work of faculty and staff. This can only be done by listening to students, staff, and faculty. My approach translates directly into being able to work with the university community when it comes to articulating the institution's mission, charting a course and providing a vision for the institution, for strategic planning, for SEM purposes, and for fundraising. Universities are diverse organizations, with multiple internal and external constituencies, and providing unity and a shared understanding of the mission of vision comes from having credibility and familiarity with those constituencies. I led the development of the current strategic plan at ISU, and have led a variety of other efforts (such as the promotion and tenure document revision), designed to build a stronger academic community. I think the fact that I first came to campus leadership via the faculty senate (including serving as senate chair) is an important benefit. In short, I value the principles of shared governance and I have a demonstrated commitment to them because I have engaged in shared governance both as a faculty member and as an academic administrator.

Also important to APSU is continuing to build an inclusive environment that extends the university's commitment to diversity. Indeed, this is a commitment of mine currently at ISU. To support this, I created the Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence position, which reports to the Provost. With other staff for Title IX and discrimination investigations, the AVP can focus her energies on helping change institutional culture in order to hire and retain diverse employees, providing support to search committees during the recruitment and hiring phases of new faculty and staff, and ensuring the campus community has resources to promote a work environment where all can be successful. I have supported the training for students and professional development for faculty and staff. One initiative launched this spring was the "culturally inclusive pedagogy" series, which will continue next academic year. These and other efforts all fall under my "Excellence Through Diversity" initiative that I started in my first year at ISU.

*Leadership Development:* My goal as a leader is to create an environment where people can be confident, creative, and happy at work. This leads to increased morale and better results. My approach is to create this environment by managing carefully. I am sensitive to places and times where greater discretion and responsibility can be given to one's staff and leadership team, and when the situation calls for more hands-on leadership. At all times, however, some portion of the institution's work needs to be such that people are experimenting, are outside the institution's comfort zone, and that we learn from those experiments (especially when they fail).

This promotes my ability to open doors for others. Those who have greater responsibility will grow more quickly in their own careers, and I provide professional development support for those who have career aspirations beyond their current position. I expect my direct reports and others in positions of responsibility in my division to improve as leaders and I help them attend seminars, conferences, and other activities. I also support the leadership development of students, having a steady stream of students shadow me, and I happily guest lecture in a variety of classes.

Although my goal is to create a positive environment, I do recognize that sometimes difficult personnel decisions have to be made, and I have made them. I do not shy away from these challenges, since avoiding them simply creates further problems for the institution in the future. In other words, part of creating a positive institutional culture is to provide ways to promote creativity and confidence while holding people accountable for results. This is particularly important in the legal and regulatory environment of universities today, with Title IV, Title IX, NCAA, and other legal ramifications always just one bad decision away from seriously damaging the reputation of a university.

*Institutional Support:* As a public institution, APSU must maintain its strong position within the state. At ISU, the state of Indiana is our largest “donor” and maintaining and strengthening our relationships with key people in the legislature and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education is critical. I am comfortable and experienced in developing positive relationships with key constituents and I know how to be a team player in a network of institutions. I am very comfortable working with elected officials and government agents, and have been successful in developing positive relationships with key external stakeholders. I have experience preparing and making presentations, including appropriations requests, to state commissions, governors, legislative committees, and system officers.

The other critical revenue stream is tuition. It is my current institution’s largest single component of general revenue, and as a result, enrollment growth will be necessary in order to achieve institutional goals. The conundrum is that since enrollment growth adds to the workload of the university, we must invest appropriately in additional capacity while pursuing efficiencies that will help slow increases in costs. Resources will need to be quickly moved to target growth areas, entrepreneurialism can be rewarded, and greater personnel, organizational, and facilities/infrastructure efficiencies will be required.

In order to avoid such a reliance on just two revenue streams, additional diversification is needed. I am an enthusiastic relationship builder and have experience leveraging institutional strengths to enhance those connections and begin to raise money through philanthropic giving. Those dollars can make all the difference in providing a margin of excellence in programs, or relieving pressure on the general fund by freeing up dollars for use elsewhere, or providing new and exciting opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. Clearly, APSU Athletics is a source of pride, and can be used to showcase the university. Other campus traditions and areas of academic excellence can excite alumni and corporate partners as well. I see tremendous opportunities for APSU, given its size, reputation, and proud history.

At ISU, I have taken the lead to collaborate with the Advancement Division. I helped the university act upon the findings of a CASE peer review, chaired the search for the new vice president for the division, and have established clear fundraising priorities so that the deans and the foundation board could develop a shared vision. I am serving on the steering committee that is planning the university’s next comprehensive campaign, and I serve on the development committee of the foundation board. The advancement team has me actively engaged with donors and friends, whether it is traveling with the football team to be able visit with athletics donors, visiting new high-value prospects alongside the Advancement VP, developing cases for support, or working directly with corporate leaders to secure gifts in support of faculty and students.

In conclusion, my long and varied experience as an academic and my success as an administrative leader make me particularly qualified for the presidency of APSU. I have extensive, successful, leadership experience at two similar universities that have many of the same opportunities and challenges as APSU. My open, forthright, and collaborative approach to leadership will serve the institution well. My down-to-earth, approachable style and can-do spirit allow me to engage easily with faculty, staff, and students on campus, or with external constituents such as state elected officials, community members, donors, and parents. In short, I am a trusted, effective, and collaborative campus leader.

I am devoted to the educational mission that APSU values. My record demonstrates that I am not afraid of work and I am committed to serving those around me. I am excited to have the opportunity to apply for the presidency of Austin Peay State University. Thank you for the opportunity, and I look forward to hearing from you. Good luck with your search.

Sincerely,

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