



October 11, 2024

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to express my interest in the Dean position at the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) at Texas A&M University-Commerce. I am eager to leverage my extensive leadership experience in higher education and industry to advance CASNR's strategic initiatives and reinforce its commitment to academic excellence, community engagement, and inclusive success for students, faculty, and staff.

With over 15 years of experience as a higher education administrator and industry executive, I have developed a proven ability to guide strategic initiatives, manage complex budgets, and foster collaborative partnerships. I have successfully overseen large-scale strategic projects that align with institutional priorities, spearheaded initiatives addressing critical issues such as public health and agricultural resilience, and federal funding to advance mission-critical research efforts. My passion for higher education, combined with extensive leadership roles in industry, positions me well to lead CASNR's strategic initiatives and contribute meaningfully to its mission.

Strategic Leadership and Vision

As the current Director of Health, Food, and Agricultural Resilience at Purdue University and Senior Principal Strategic Research Development Administrator, I have led several high-impact projects that directly align with the responsibilities of the Dean role at CASNR. For instance, I spearheaded a national research consortium addressing food, health, and agricultural resilience, securing over \$575,000 in federal funding to support collaborative research. These efforts aligned institutional goals with national priorities outlined in National Security Memorandum 16 and 22. This experience has sharpened my ability to lead cross-functional teams, secure funding, and deliver on complex research and operational goals – key responsibilities that are mirrored in the Dean position at CASNR.

Administrative Excellence and Fiscal Stewardship

As Chief Operating Officer at MCS, LLC, I managed a \$10 million budget and led a team of 10 direct reports. I successfully implemented operational changes that resulted in a 56% increase in total specimen count and \$22,000 in monthly cost savings. My efforts in securing \$620,000 in federal tax credits further underscore my financial acumen and ability to maximize resource allocation. Leading large-scale operations, developing staff, and ensuring fiscal responsibility are cornerstones of my leadership style – skills I am eager to bring to the Dean role to ensure that CASNR's strategic initiatives are implemented with efficiency and financial prudence.

At CASNR, I would build on my existing experience in leading interdisciplinary collaborations and advocating for federal research funding to develop strategies that align CASNR's long-term academic and research goals with national and regional priorities. My experience in managing diverse

stakeholders and overseeing large-scale research projects positions me well to drive strategic initiatives that enhance CASNR's impact as a national leader in applied research and higher education.

Driving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

CASNR's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion resonates deeply with my professional values. Throughout my career, I have worked to foster inclusive environments that empower individuals from all backgrounds to contribute their best work. As a seasoned higher education leader, I am deeply committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in all facets of the academic and research enterprise. This commitment is grounded in continuous learning, active engagement in critical conversations, and a dedication to dismantling systemic inequities within higher education, especially within the unique context of land-grant institutions. My commitment extends to understanding and proactively addressing the historical and current systemic inequities deeply ingrained within higher education. I firmly believe in dismantling inequities through decisive, transparent leadership, data-informed decision-making, and the implementation of evidence-based strategies. At CASNR, I would continue to champion DEI by promoting initiatives that support a welcoming campus culture, ensuring that every individual – student, staff, and faculty – has the opportunity to succeed.

Strategic Partnerships and External Funding

One of my key strengths is building strategic partnerships that generate funding and drive research excellence. As the inaugural Director of the University Consortium for Health, Food, and Agricultural Resilience (UCHFAR), I led efforts to establish a national network of universities, governmental agencies, and industry partners to advance research in agricultural and public health resilience. By securing \$575,000 in federal funding and leading multi-university collaboration efforts, I demonstrated the power of cross-sector partnerships in driving institutional success.

This experience translates directly to the Dean role at CASNR, where developing partnerships with government, industry, and community stakeholders will be vital to advancing CASNR's mission. My proven record of accomplishment in securing external funding and leading complex projects will allow me to contribute meaningfully to CASNR's strategic planning process and help the college maintain its leadership position in tackling social, technological, and economic challenges.

Research, Teaching, and Faculty Development

In my role at Louisiana State University, I not only contributed to research and curriculum development but also mentored faculty and students. As the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, I oversaw significant curriculum revisions and was responsible for the development of our first asynchronous courses. I have mentored numerous undergraduate and graduate students, guiding them through research projects, internships, and career development opportunities. These experiences have provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing students and faculty. I am eager to bring this expertise to CASNR to enhance faculty development, student success, and overall academic excellence.

Personal Background and Commitment

As a FFA and 4-H member, I grew through the coaching and mentoring from outstanding extension personnel. As a graduate of a regional university agricultural program, I experienced the dedication of faculty committed to transforming their students' lives. I have seen the power of research to develop practical solutions and services for agriculture, communities, and food systems in both academia and industry. These multi-faceted experiences have fueled my enthusiasm to lead CASNR to continued success in preparing students to succeed in the agriculture and natural resources sectors.

My varied experiences have strengthened my commitment to being a servant leader and my competence as a thoughtful leader. My higher education experiences in agriculture have given me the opportunity to interact with various stakeholder groups to discover, design, develop, and deliver relevant education. In creating programs, our staff coordinated efforts that aligned faculty input with client expectations. These initiatives successfully forged relationships and partnerships with industry, improving the efficiency of the food and agribusiness value chain. As a team, we worked to create a collaborative culture of mutual accountability in delivering value to key stakeholders, including faculty and participants. I brought what I learned from these industry partnerships into the classroom and leveraged those contacts when advising and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students.

Conclusion

I am inspired by CASNR's commitment to innovative research, community engagement, and student success. I am confident that my experience in higher education administration, fiscal management, strategic leadership, and partnership development will enable me to make a meaningful contribution as Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Together with CASNR's talented faculty, staff, and students, I look forward to advancing the college's mission and ensuring its continued success as a leader in higher education.

Thank you for considering my application. I am excited about the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further and share my vision for contributing to CASNR's strategic initiatives.

Respectfully,



Joshua D. Detre, PhD