



OGDEN COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

13 October 2022

Dean Search Committee
UofL College of Arts & Sciences

Dear Colleagues:

I am honored to have been nominated for the position of Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Louisville and am grateful to colleagues there who have encouraged me to apply. Please accept this letter and the accompanying materials as my application for the position.

At heart, I am an avid problem-solver and team-builder. I believe those traits along with my leadership experiences and personal knowledge of the College make me an excellent candidate to serve as Dean of A&S. I bring relevant experience as a Dean on one hand and as a member of the UofL community on the other. I am proudly and successfully serving as Dean of the Ogden College of Science and Engineering at Western Kentucky University (WKU) in Bowling Green. I have also served as a program director, department chair, faculty senator, and associate dean at UofL. Serving as a dean at WKU is a wonderful role but there are many aspects of Louisville that I miss. I would love to return to UofL and would be proud to count myself once again as a Cardinal.

When I came to the University of Louisville in 1996, I was being recruited by two other schools. To my mentors, Louisville was a clear third choice – it did not have the size or reputation of the other institutions. But it was the obvious choice for me. At Louisville I saw a great but under-tapped potential. I also saw an opportunity to make a real and meaningful difference. As I progressed through my career my vision expanded from the local, departmental level to the broader College and University levels. In my 25 years at UofL, I believe I did make a difference. Now I see once more in the faculty, staff, and students of the College of Arts & Sciences a great potential, again under-tapped, and an opportunity to make a real and meaningful difference. I believe I have much to offer as a leader and I am excited to apply for the position of Dean of the UofL College of Arts & Sciences

The College is at a critical juncture with its possible future paths affected by many factors: a pending announcement of a new President, a Provost who may return to the job having spent less time as Provost than as interim President, a relatively new Budget Model, an Interim Dean and soon to be new permanent Dean, but also meager budgets, low pay, and palpably low morale. For the College of Arts & Sciences to thrive, I believe there are two primary needs: a drastic

The Spirit Makes the Master

Office of the Dean | Western Kentucky University | 1906 College Heights Blvd #11075 | Bowling Green, KY 42101-1075
phone: 270.745.4449 | fax: 270.745.6471 | e-mail: ocse@wku.edu | web: www.wku.edu/ogden

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turnaround in the climate of the College, and a real investment in the many things we do. There are significant challenges ahead for the College, but I know the faculty, staff, and many of the students, and I trust us to be able to work as a team to meet those challenges and emerge as a strong and well-respected College!

As Dean, I would draw on my many experiences in teaching, advising, budget development and implementation, and diversity initiatives to help A&S meet oncoming challenges. Please allow me to unpack some of those experiences here.

Shortly after starting at UofL, I learned that Kentucky's Council on Postsecondary Education was considering discontinuation of our Bachelors programs in physics due to the low graduation rate of 2 to 3 physics majors per year. I voluntarily created an Undergraduate Program Director role within the Department, taking over advising and adding new roles in recruiting and team building. I employed large numbers of undergraduates as student assistants in my research and encouraged other faculty to do the same. Our enrollment and graduation numbers rose significantly, with our annual graduation rate for Bachelors degrees consistently in the double figures, reaching a high of 26 in one year. Four of the students from my research group won the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship, with several more earning honorable mention, and three earning NSF Graduate Research Fellowships as they began their graduate careers. Three earned the Woodcock Medal for outstanding graduate in the College of Arts & Sciences, one won the Phi Beta Kappa Award, one was student commencement speaker, and one was named outstanding graduate in the School of Music (yes, Music). We were quite successful in addressing the Bachelors in Physics graduation problem.

As part of the effort to grow the number of students in the department, I got involved with the local chapter of the Society of Physics Students (SPS), officially becoming faculty advisor in 1998. SPS was a big part of making the department a more welcoming environment for all students (not only physics majors) and even played a significant role in recruiting visits to high schools or college fairs. We increased the number of officers to increase the sense of ownership among the group members, and we established a regular weekly meeting time so that attending meetings would become a habit like attending class. Officers were taught how to warmly greet visitors to the organization, to plan meetings, to develop younger students into future officers, and to ensure that records were kept so that the organization would continue to flourish after they had all graduated. SPS became the vibrant heart of our department whose meetings often reached standing room only! That first year, we were honored by the SPS National Council as an Outstanding Chapter – a distinction that goes to a relatively small percentage of the 700+ chapters nationwide. It took some considerable work to push the organization in the right direction, but it soon developed a momentum of its own and I'm proud to say that they had received their 23rd consecutive Outstanding Chapter distinction before my departure from UofL!

As I stepped into the role of Chair of the Department of Physics in 2004, the number of active faculty on the day I took office was 10, and the Ph.D. program in Physics had been stripped a quarter century before when the University joined the state system. Morale in the Department was very low. This was another case in which need was obvious, but the potential was not. By the time I stepped down for family reasons at the end of 2009, there were 17 faculty members

and a renewed sense of possibility in the Department. And it had grown more diverse in the process. We had likewise created new shared staff positions by working creatively with the Departments of Mathematics and Chemistry, bringing our staff size from six to eight. The general fund budget for the department passed the two million dollar mark as did our peak annual external grant funding. Perhaps most importantly, we had gotten a new physics Ph.D. program approved and an inaugural doctoral cohort accepted, against all conventional wisdom at the time. Our graduate program grew from fewer than 20 enrolled students to more than 40 when I moved to my current position. We have nearly half a dozen graduate alumni at Intel, have a program director in the DOD Office of Research, have alumni as Physics and Astronomy faculty, and have helped place several graduates in good post-doctoral positions. Through fundraising I was able to help create a named graduate fellowship and several undergraduate partial scholarships. I was flattered to receive the Dean's Outstanding Departmental Leadership Award for my role in the Department.

When the position of Associate Dean for Graduate Education opened in summer 2018, I saw again an opportunity to effect a meaningful difference for some very specific needs: increase declining graduate enrollment, particularly for minority and international students; streamline processes and forms that waste time for our faculty and graduate students; and improve morale among the College's graduate students and graduate education staff. Though I did not serve a full term in this position before being offered the position of Dean at WKU, there were many indications that we were succeeding in moving forward with Graduate Education. The greatest compliment I received in the position came from the Assistant to the Dean of the College who, unsolicited, wrote a ringing endorsement of my contributions to the climate and operations in A&S Graduate Education.

I became Dean of the WKU Ogden College of Science & Engineering on July 1, 2021, which was an interesting time. The most contagious wave of COVID-19 was still ahead of us. We had all spent the previous sixteen months living a strange combination of isolated detachment and protest over social ills exemplified in the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. In the Ogden College, there was an added issue: the College had been contracting in faculty and staff size for a decade. The 2020-2021 academic year had been particularly bad: approximately one eighth of the faculty and staff had been lost, without replacement, due to a 'Voluntary Separation Incentive Program.' People were tired and morale was low. My first mission was clear: to improve the climate in the College. I made a point to meet faculty and staff in their own spaces, to recognize their work, to thank them, to ask for their input and to value it, to remind them of the importance of our shared work, and to present them with clear and specific goals aligned with the objectives of the College. I met with faculty, went to departmental events, surprised departments with flowers, donuts, and other gestures. By all accounts, this was successful. Even though our numbers of faculty were down, we submitted four more grant proposals than the previous year and increased grant and contract funding in the College from \$3.2M to \$6.2M. We did a College focus on retention and brought our first to second year retention up to over 78.5%, which was not only high for the College, it was tops among all the academic colleges at WKU for the year. With only a few days' notice, I was able to work with an associate dean and directors of our research centers to produce a half-million dollar FIPSE submission which appears on track for funding. I was subaward PI for the WKU portion of a million dollar NSF

award, and was lead on a white paper submission for a large NSF Regional Innovation Engine Type-2 grant proposal worth \$160M, that was selected to move forward for full proposal submission. More importantly, my first year was also the first year in a decade that the College saw a net growth in faculty and staff. Serving as Dean has required a significant investment of time and energy, but I have found it rewarding.

As a scholar, my specialization is in high energy physics (HEP), in which we try to understand the fundamental constituents of matter, their interactions, and the laws and symmetries governing them. My particular interests include production mechanisms for baryons, a class of subatomic particle including protons and neutrons, and Lepton Flavor Violation, a phenomenon which could allow non-composite subatomic particles to spontaneously change identity. High energy physics experiments are huge undertakings in which hundreds or thousands of Ph.D. physicists from multiple institutions in a dozen countries around the world collaborate. They may spend a decade or more designing, testing, and building their experiment, perhaps another decade operating the experiment to collect voluminous data, and often another decade to tease precision measurements out of the data. Given that these collaborations have sizes like that of the faculty of a large college or university, are geographically dispersed, bring together people from many countries and cultures, contain an ample supply of egos, yet maintain a singular focus and continue to produce exciting results, is a testament to international cooperation and teamwork. In fact, one of the collaborations I've been part of has been the subject of a dissertation in sociology. Because of the large cooperative efforts, high energy physics collaborations produce large numbers of high-impact, high-precision papers. The author lists are large to acknowledge that none of the work would be possible without contributions from the many. Because of this, you will see that I am author or co-author of well over 500 peer-reviewed journal articles, and approximately twice as many conference proceedings. Collaboration has allowed me to work in some of the finest laboratory facilities in the world and to take many leadership positions working with colleagues from many different countries. As one example, consider my multiple-year role as deputy chair of the Speakers Bureau for the BaBar Experiment at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC). The chair of the bureau was from the University of Paris, the secretary was from the University of British Columbia. The members came from institutions such as CalTech, Stanford, Wisconsin, MIT, Rutherford Appleton Lab, Dresden, Milan, Frascati, and others. I was responsible for training the bureau members and assigning them (and me) conference talks for which to arrange practice, review, and vet. I was the primary quality control for the presentations - over 100 per year at peak - by collaboration members. This work allowed me to interact with many of the top physics researchers in the world. And it was apparently a very successful experience – the BaBar Collaboration was named in the citation of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Physics as having made the prize possible due to our findings. Likewise, the ATLAS Collaboration was named in the citation for the 2013 Nobel Prize in Physics. My experiences have given me insight into the workings of multiple top research institutions as well as funding organizations. Most of all, I've taken away from this collaborative work two important lessons: (i) a large, diverse group can accomplish amazing things when it works with a common goal, and (ii) leaders are most effective when they lead not from above or outside the group, but from within.

UofL is in a great *place*: a diverse metropolitan community situated where Midwest meets Southeast, an easy drive from other major cities as well as abundant natural beauty. It serves as a gateway to interstate travel and commerce.

A&S is in a great *time*: having weathered years of contraction punctuated by COVID and civil strife, it is poised to rebound in a big way. Just this morning, Interim Provost Gerry Bradley commented at the Campus Update: “The College of Arts & Sciences is our biggest program on campus – it’s the one that feeds all our other programs – it’s critical for the University that that college grows. If that college grows, we all grow... We can’t cut our way out of problems. We have to grow our way out of problems.” I know and respect my colleagues in the College of Arts & Sciences. With the right A&S advocate in the Dean’s office, I believe the College can grow into greatness. It will not be fast nor will it be easy. I would be honored to be the advocate to help A&S take the steps that start us moving in the right direction.

I appreciate your time and look forward to discussing my application with you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David N. Brown".

David N. Brown, Ph.D., Dean
Ogden College of Science & Engineering
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY 42101
david.brown@wku.edu
he/him/his