



May 25, 2022

Dear President Welch and Members of the Search Committee,

It is with great interest that I write to apply for the position of chancellor of Arkansas State University. Having served as the former dean of the Graduate School and International Education and, since June 2013, serving as dean of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, I am very interested in the position of chancellor of Arkansas State University. I currently have the privilege of serving more than 360 tenure track faculty, over 300 non-tenure track faculty, over 700 graduate students, and approximately 8,000 majors across our 3 schools, 16 departments, and 40 programs. Fulbright College generates approximately 57% of the yearly student semester credit hours across campus and we generate over 100 million dollars in tuition annually. Successfully leading a large college of Arts and Sciences and managing its teaching responsibilities, particularly during times of substantial growth, while exceeding our research objectives, fundraising priorities, and service missions required objectivity, discipline, transparency, and deliberate action. These are skills that I learned in unique administrative experiences, and they reflect my vision for leadership at Arkansas State University. It would be an exciting and inspiring privilege to have the opportunity to serve the faculty, staff, and students at Arkansas State University.

I fully embrace the “Discover 2025 Strategic Plan,” and the responsibilities outlined in the position announcement. I share Arkansas State University’s goals to be an institution that promotes critical thinking, insists on the conscientious expression of ideas, celebrates, and promotes belonging and inclusion among faculty, staff, and students, and makes possible the uninhibited pursuit of knowledge. To reach these goals, the Arkansas State University family should have strong support from the chancellor’s office – not only for research, but support that will strengthen teaching and service, which will enhance the experiences of students and the value of their degrees. Similarly, the community must have the strong support of the chancellor’s office, not only for identifying major priorities, but also successfully partnering to continue the success of the growing and thriving community. Arkansas State University is in a strategically advantageous position to play a central role in the future success of Northeast Arkansas. It would be an honor and a privilege to be a part of that success.

*Leadership experiences*

I have been fortunate to have opportunities to serve in a wide range of administrative positions at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, and my appreciation for our shared academic mission has deepened from working closely with diverse units across the campus. Perhaps most formative, I served as chair of the department of political science from 2000 to 2008. As all department chairs know, they have a tireless and exceedingly difficult job. Through these experiences, the position hones invaluable management skills that are difficult to learn elsewhere. During my tenure as chair, with the guidance of several mentors and with the support of the political science faculty, we exceeded several well-defined benchmarks, including updating our curriculum, increasing our research productivity, improving our teaching evaluations, participating fully in the capital campaign,

improving our student success rates, making substantial improvements in the diversity of our faculty, and strengthening our graduate student training. Further, every candidate who went up for promotion and/or tenure while I was department chair was provided clear expectations about standards, processes, and mentoring, which resulted in success with all of our applications for promotion and/or tenure.

Our departmental development efforts during the Campaign for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century resulted in the establishment of the Diane D. Blair Center of Southern Politics and Society, an interdisciplinary research center where I served as founding director. Similar to my past role as associate director of the Fulbright Institute of International Relations, serving as Blair Center director forced me to confront disciplinary boundaries that too often divide programs and led to the creation of research, teaching, and programmatic offerings in interdisciplinary areas where 21<sup>st</sup>-century students often gather. To remain relevant, all centers must be creativity, collaborative, and undergo constant reinvention. Over the past decade, the Blair Center and its exceptional partners have produced several books, articles, edited volumes, compiled extensive national and state polling data, and held numerous events on topics ranging from presidential legacies to a symposium on the continued influence of second-wave feminism in American politics.

Based on these distinct experiences as department chair and Blair Center director, I was asked to serve a one-year term as associate dean of the President William Jefferson Clinton School of Public Service, a graduate academic institution that maintains a substantial emphasis on public service across numerous local, state, and global programs. I worked closely and diligently with faculty and staff to develop policies related to annual evaluations, grievances, and tenure and promotion, and I led the first year of a strategic plan designed to establish the Clinton School as an academic leader in both international education and service learning. In return, I gained tremendous insight from witnessing firsthand the benefits of study abroad programs and infusing global awareness throughout every aspect of the curriculum.

Simultaneously, and for a period of three years, I had the opportunity to serve as dean of the Graduate School and International Education (GSIE), a unique position that required collaboration and communication with central administration, deans, faculty and staff from every college and unit across campus. We functioned as an umbrella college and our mission was critical to the success of a research university. We were responsible for the recruitment, admission, retention, and graduation of nearly all masters and doctoral students, as well as for all international scholars and students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Working successfully with leaders across campus from the fall of 2010 through the summer of 2013, we increased graduate student enrollment and increased the number and diversity of international students. These results directly reflected our decision to hire diverse graduate student recruiters who held a passion for building relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as well as Hispanic-serving institutions, Tribal Colleges and Native American-serving institutions. Further, at that time, the graduate school was responsible for overseeing the required seven-year review by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education of every program on campus. Through those experiences, I became deeply aware and involved in all programs across the campus, including the college of business, engineering, agriculture, education, architecture, and the health professions.

In addition, because the graduate school administratively oversaw all graduate-level interdisciplinary programs - such as cell and molecular biology, environmental dynamics, micro-electronics and photonics (now called Material Science and Engineering), public policy, space and planetary

sciences, and data analytics - I gained direct experience working with the over 200 graduate students enrolled in these interdisciplinary programs that involved many colleges and faculty. The position required pragmatism, respect for expertise, creating collaborative teams, and inclusiveness of faculty across the entire campus. Responding to the demands of these programs, as well as learning about graduate programs across all colleges on campus made me a much better administrator.

As the current dean of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, I have relied upon all these leadership experiences to learn how to successfully advocate for students as well as for faculty and staff, who labor daily in service of our mission to “cultivate the free and inquiring mind.” During the past several years, we have we addressed concerns related to the annual evaluation process, increased our revenue, effectively managed additional growth, worked successfully with faculty and staff to strategically improve retention and graduation rates, increased research expenditures, exceeded fundraising goals, adopted and expanded online programs, increased diversity, and improved morale. We have also made substantial progress in addressing pay inequities and have retained faculty who were being recruited by other top-tier institutions. We also conducted a strategic reallocation of funds to improve student success and improve inclusiveness across the college. While these are only samples of the progress we have made, they represent successful collaborations built on strong relationships between my office and the faculty and staff working in departments and programs across the college.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not include my years of teaching - whether I was analyzing statistical models in my graduate research methods courses or recounting how a bill becomes a law to my large undergraduate sections of American national government - as leadership experience. Balancing a heavy teaching load, at times teaching three or more courses a semester, with extensive publishing and substantial grant writing expectations, demanded time management skills and demonstrated the necessity of collegiality and mentorship. In the best of times, our research, teaching, and service become mutually productive. For example, as the co-principal investigator and evaluator of “Breaking Barriers: Pathways to Graduation for Underrepresented Talent” - a program designed to improve recruitment and retention of under-represented students in the College of Engineering - my training in survey research and statistics informed our National Science Foundation grant application that, when received, enhanced the diversity of our student population and resulted in conference presentations and interdisciplinary research, as well as a freshman engineering program that has become wildly successful in all areas of student success. We must all strive to reach our research goals while fulfilling the mission of a university, but such synergy is only possible in a college with leaders who make it a priority.

### *International Education*

True to the legacy of our namesake, Fulbright College has championed international education as fundamental to solving global problems in an increasingly interdependent world. For the past few years, we have supported campus-wide international education efforts and worked to diversify our campus student population and curriculum. We have, for example, successfully expanded our course offerings and student enrollment at the University of Arkansas Rome Center. And prior to Covid, we sent over 700 students on study abroad programs to more than 40 countries, an increase of 40% from previous years. Moreover, through successful collaborations, our student body now includes record numbers of international students, representing approximately 120 countries, and we now employ hundreds of international scholars. International students and faculty not only participate in cutting-edge research, but they provide the international interactions that our students need to be

successful in an increasingly global society.

### *Development Opportunities*

While funding for Fulbright College has increased during the previous several years, especially with generous and significant private giving during our most recent fundraising campaign, the financial needs of our growing and vibrant college grew at a fast pace. Without increases in state support or tuition, we spent an enormous amount of time devoted to fundraising. As department chair during the Campaign for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I had the opportunity to work closely with Fulbright College development officers and learned well how to develop prospects and identify connections between campus needs, priorities, and donor's passions. Fundraising is a process that begins with building close relationships with individuals, understanding their interests, and persuasively communicating the college's most pressing priorities, a process I find energizing and rewarding, especially when it yields new opportunities for the university.

As dean of Fulbright College, I have worked to maintain the college's momentum during Campaign Arkansas and have met with hundreds of prospects to discuss supporting various initiatives, including the Faulkner Performing Arts Center, the Razorback Marching Band, the All-Steinway School initiative, and scientific equipment acquisition in physics, chemistry and biology. Additionally, we worked successfully with the Geosciences Advisory Board to promote the departments doctoral program and we successfully established a world class school of art. Ultimately, we were able to raise over \$230 million as well as an additional \$90 million in software and equipment gifts. Of course, other funding needs remain, but fundraising and capital development are a crucial part of any administrator's position and must be a central component of continued progress in higher education.

### *Administrative Philosophy*

Since my first day as an administrator, I have led by example, setting high standards for myself and for those with whom I work. I believe in developing a shared vision within an organization through open and honest discussions with students, staff, faculty, administrators, and external stakeholders. I do my best to avoid making assumptions about either situations or people, and I insist on hearing all sides. I do not shy away from making difficult decisions when consensus is not obtainable, but I always work persistently and creatively to find solutions that are encouraging and empowering to everyone involved.

I emphasize direct and clear communication, and I strive to understand what motivates people. I work hard, and I respect the work ethic of the faculty, staff, students and my fellow administrators. In the academy, we often toil in isolation, and, at times, the stakes seem small. Thus, I am adamant about articulating specific goals, gathering talented people who can establish detailed plans of action, and then celebrating their victories, as well as the victories of their colleagues and students.

I am a positive, fair, and meticulous person, and I have dedicated my career to helping others succeed. I am proud to say that many of my former associate deans have become very successful deans, provosts, and vice chancellors. If selected to be the chancellor of Arkansas State University, we will continue the work you have already started until we reach our goals. I welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas and many more with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Shields". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "T" at the beginning.

Todd Shields  
Dean, Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences  
<https://fulbright.uark.edu/thecollege/dean.php>  
University of Arkansas  
526 Old Main  
479.575.4804