

Dr. R. Neely

March 31, 2016

Dr. Linda Schott, Chair
Vice Chancellor Search Committee
University of Maine System

Dear Dr. Schott,

Please accept this letter as my application for the position of Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in the University of Maine System of Higher Education. On the basis of both the position description and Chaffee Report, this position contains an intriguing array of opportunities, challenges and expectations to which I seem a good fit. The depth and breadth of my experience in higher education and academic administration is conveyed in detail in my CV; thus, I will not belabor those details in this letter. Rather, I will highlight some aspects of my experience that seem relevant to the unique aspects of this Vice Chancellor opportunity.

- American universities are facing enormous pressures, particularly related to financial uncertainty, increased competition, compliance mandates, technological change, alternative credit, including competency-based education, student debt, campus safety, etc. I have spent a lifetime working in a public University setting, the last 17 years of which include leading and navigating change in leadership positions of increasing responsibility. My colleagues would describe me as adept at navigating complex issues, as well as not only managing under challenging conditions, but building a system of collaboration that leads to improved morale through transparency.
- Texas Woman's University operates three distinct campuses in Denton, Dallas and Houston, all of which I oversee as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The challenges and current plans for the University of Maine System are akin to the type of challenges we face everyday in a three-campus situation. I am familiar with the degree of effort it takes to have faculty and staff think and plan in the context of a "one university" mentality. The primary obstacle in such situations is to build a culture of trust whereby each campus at least understands the rationale underpinning decisions related to financial allocation, programmatic efficiencies, strategic investment to maximize distinctiveness as needed, and an array of other issues. The keys to building such a culture are not earth shattering and simply involve honesty, constant planning, continual analysis, and governance structures that provide representation, transparency and a voice to all constituencies. I believe my TWU references would characterize my administrative approach as having been

particularly open and conducive to the type of change that has both advanced TWU and improved campus morale.

- Whether one is discussing a single university or an entire system, faculty, staff and students are the heart of the educational enterprise, and each of these constituencies face their own unique challenges. Having dedicated my life to higher education, this is an area in which I have cultivated deep knowledge through working in public universities with long histories and deep traditions - universities encompassing union and nonunion environments, broad graduate and undergraduate programming, independent Boards, and reputations for engaging underserved populations. Throughout this work, my history includes innovative curricular revision, institutional planning, financial restructuring, and immense infrastructure development.

In addition to the more generalized information above, some of the highpoints regarding my work and contributions at TWU that seem to intersect with the expectations of the next Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs in the Maine System are as follows:

- Finances - restructured the instructional financial model to provide more financial flexibility to disciplines by using program fees, an instructional enhancement fee, and differential tuition, while eliminating course fees and distance education fees;

- Online and Hybrid Instruction - created the Office of Teaching and Learning with Technology to assist not only in TWU's extensive online programming, but assist faculty with utilization of cutting-edge technology in face-to-face classes;

- Use of Data - reorganized, refocused, and enlarged our Office of Institutional Research and Data Management to provide a focus on predictive analytics and modeling, with nearly every aspect of our decision-making now underpinned by metrics;

- Partnering - TWU has entered into partnerships with the University of North Texas to develop and share joint academic programs, e.g., Journalism, Social Work, and math-engineering, among others.

- Leadership - The TWU Faculty Senate conducts each year an 18-question faculty survey of the performance of the Chancellor and Provost. For the February, 2016 review of my performance, 80% of the faculty strongly agreed/agreed that the "provost demonstrates excellence in leadership; 79% that the "provost follows through with what he says he will do," and 88% that the provost demonstrates integrity and professional ethics. Similar response patterns are evident in all questions, and I would be happy to share the complete results from this past evaluation or any previous year.

For the reasons briefly described, I believe I have the academic administrative experience and skillset that would be useful in helping The University of Maine System achieve its current objectives. I believe in the institutions of higher education to which I commit; and, by all indicators, the Maine System is embarking on a challenge to which it would be a

privilege to offer my wholehearted commitment. I hope my background will be of interest to you, and would welcome a conversation about the match between my experience and your needs.

Sincerely,
Robert Neely,
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Texas Woman's University