

Jaime R. Taylor, PhD

October 6, 2020

Dear Chair Michael O'Malley and Presidential Search Committee Members:

Please accept this letter of application for the position of President of Austin Peay State University (APSU). My vita addresses the outcomes for which I was directly responsible or played a major role during my twenty-five-year career serving in Higher Education. The intent of this letter is to bring clarity to my leadership style, how I have been successful in creating organizational cultures focused on obtaining results, and how my experience has prepared me to be the next President of APSU.

Campus Culture and Shared Governance. Campus culture is the critical component in excelling in nearly everything a university does. My experience has taught me that a strong, open campus culture—a culture that goes well beyond simply embracing shared governance—is not only desirable, but also necessary to move forward with a bold strategic plan. One of my primary strengths lies in understanding complicated problems, breaking them down into manageable components, communicating those components, and then putting people in a position where they can contribute to a solution while playing to their strengths.

I was fortunate to gain experience in establishing that type of culture during my two years as interim provost at APSU; APSU made the Honor Roll of the Chronicle of Higher Education's *Great Colleges to Work For* survey and was recognized for *Confidence in Senior Leadership* and *Collaborative Governance* both years¹. Giving people the opportunity to apply their strengths and make genuine contributions to solving problems creates the type of culture in which they can excel and thrive.

My first goal when starting my position as provost at Marshall University (MU) was to work with President Gilbert to create that type of culture. The fact we were able to create this type of results-oriented culture is evident by the amount of success MU has seen in just two short years.

Enrollment Growth. I have worked on enrollment growth from the department to the university level; in all cases faculty and staff enthusiasm for their academic programs has been the critical element to extraordinary growth. During my second year as interim provost at APSU, I worked with the Admissions Office to put together a plan that resulted in a 26.3% increase in the freshman class in its first year of implementation (1,554 in 2015 to 1,962 in 2016). The story I heard over and over from parents was that even though they visited several universities, there was something

¹ <http://www.chronicle.com/interactives/greatcolleges15#id=hr>

special about APSU. That something special was the enthusiasm and pride the faculty and staff demonstrated for their academic programs, their students, and the university.

The first goal I was asked to tackle at MU was growing the university's enrollment. To accomplish this, we radically revamped our Green and White (G&W) Day recruiting event to center around an Academic Showcase. I worked with the Athletic Director at MU to host the first G&W Day on the same day as a football game, increasing the attendance of the G&W Day by 83% over the previous year. MU had the largest growth in the freshman class of any university in the State of West Virginia during my first year with a 5.6% increase, compared to five of the universities in West Virginia that had double-digit percentage decline in their freshman class. The energy of the G&W Days was contagious, igniting a positive energy on campus that led to many of the other successes MU has experienced over the past two years.

This past March, during the first couple weeks of the pandemic, I worked with the Director of Athletics to develop a plan he called *Operation Walk-on*. His coaching staff created 120 additional opportunities for walk-on student athletes. This plan resulted in an additional \$1.6 million in tuition revenue due to the fact the majority of these student-athletes were from out-of-state, and they were required by NCAA regulations to pay full tuition. The entirety of the plan from conception to full execution took place from March 2020 to August 2020. This initiative was successful in large part because I managed to leverage the name recognition and popularity of MU football, and I am sure I can do the same for APSU.

Student Success and THEC's Outcomes Based Funding. In just two-years at MU we increased both our fall-to-fall freshman retention by 5.0% and our six-year graduation rate by 4.7%. These results are incredibly difficult to obtain; many universities are working on retention, but very few have obtained such striking results. I have been successful at not only increasing retention rates once, but twice. While at APSU, we increased fall-to-fall freshman retention by 5.9% for the 2013 freshman cohort, and 9.2% for the 2013 Black freshman cohort during my first year as interim provost, and we maintained that success through my second year as interim provost.

In 2010, the State of Tennessee was the first state in the nation to adopt a 100% outcomes-based funding formula for its universities. Understanding the complexities and challenges of such a funding model, APSU far outpaced all other universities in the State of Tennessee in increasing its outcomes resulting in an 86% increase in its state appropriations (\$25.4 million in 2010-11 to \$47.2 million for 2018-19). The funding formula provides APSU with an added incentive to increase Student Success metrics. Applying the 4.7% growth in the six-year graduation rate we had at MU to APSU would translate into approximately \$1.5 million in additional funding per year for APSU. (Note that the increase in funding results from the percentage increase of the six-year graduation rate and the additional number of graduates.)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. When I first arrived at Marshall, it was immediately clear to me that there was a great deal of unproductive competition and redundancy of services between the offices of Student Affairs and Intercultural Affairs. I recognized these problems resulted from a legacy organizational structure that had not been addressed. For example, MU's Black Scholars program and the LGBTQ+ centers were placed organizationally in Intercultural Affairs, but the African American center was placed in Student Affairs. To ensure that all students and services received the best quality support and resources, I moved quickly to bring together these

organizations under Maurice Cooley (a reference for my candidacy) and established a single VP and Dean of Student and Intercultural Affairs. What was a struggling part of MU's campus is now becoming one of the campus bright spots. To further support this reorganization and recognize the importance of diversity on MU's campus, we are establishing a large physical space to serve as the new Intercultural Center that will house the Black Scholars program, the African and Black Student Center, the LGBTQ Student Center, and our International Student program. Additionally, President Gilbert and I are making diversity, equity, and inclusion the focus of MU's upcoming Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative, an integral part of HLC accreditation and a university's ongoing process of institutional improvement.

Alumni Relations and Fund Raising. Alumni tend to stay connected to the university due to a positive experience with their academic department, and "friends of the university" tend to connect to the university through meeting faculty and/or staff that are excited about the work they are doing. You can't underestimate the potential that just one enthusiastic member of the university can have. When I became Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics (CoSM) the university was considering selling "The Farm". The Farm was something nearly all the agriculture alumni were intimately connected to. Dr. Don Sudbrink, a young faculty member that had just been appointed to Chair of Agriculture, generated a huge amount of enthusiasm to not only keep The Farm, but to do something meaningful with it. We put together a strategic plan, and starting with the gift from Dr. Ernie and Joan DeWald, we were able to raise \$1.2 million to build an Animal Husbandry Laboratory. The Farm is now one of the spotlights at APSU.

Similar stories have already played out at MU, from Brad Smith's \$25 million gift to establish programs at MU to help stimulate the economy in West Virginia, to the \$800,000 gift from Lake Poland to support our efforts in Student Success. These individuals donated to Marshall University because we involved them in developing a plan on how their gift would be used, and they trusted we could accomplish what we promised with their gifts. The secret of successful fund raising is working hard to build personal and positive relationships, thereby learning about your donors and offering them an opportunity to contribute in ways that are genuine and meaningful to them.

Government Relations, New Academic Programs, and Grants. Clarksville Tennessee was ranked as the *Best Place to Live in America*². This is in no small part due to the ability of the Clarksville/Montgomery County Industrial Development Board (IDB), in collaboration with APSU and Fort Campbell KY, being able to show they can provide industry with the workforce necessary to be successful. My first major task as Dean of the CoSM was to help attract Hemlock Semiconductor (HSC) to the region. We developed and executed a plan to provide HSC with the necessary number of chemical engineering technologists. This required me to work with President Hall to secure \$6.4 million in State Funding for a building dedicated to chemical engineering technology (ChET), secure a gift of a chemical pilot plant (valued at \$2.2 million) built specifically for APSU to educate students, and to develop and gain approval of a chemical engineering technology degree. This was all accomplished under a very tight timeline; in three-years the CoSM was able to go from nothing to graduating 90 ChET students, many of them former military, in the first year's graduating class. Although as we know circumstances worked against Hemlock's opening, APSU demonstrated for its part an ability to provide a high-quality, well-educated workforce.

² <https://www.clarksvilletned.com/idb/rankings-and-recognitions/>

APSU likewise proved its value as the IBD recruited Hankook to the region. My role was to oversee the development of a mechatronics program at APSU, make sure transfer pathways were in place for graduates of regional community colleges, and obtain funding for mechatronics equipment and faculty training. I helped secure over \$600,000 through grants to support this effort. To maximize cost-savings and outcomes, we were able to use the Hemlock facilities, built an advanced manufacturing program, and duplicated the Hemlock initiative.

I repeated this success at MU when in my first year the university started a M.S. degree in Digital Forensics. I worked with the V.P. for Research to obtain a \$4.5 million grant from Homeland Security to provide support for investigations in the dark web. I was also asked to start a fixed-wing flight training program at MU. I have worked to obtain \$4.56 million in grants from federal sources and foundations to help with the start-up of this program. Overall, research expenditures at MU have increased from \$32.2 million in FY 2018 to over \$50 million in FY 2020, a 55.3% increase during my two years at MU, contributing to MU's achieving an increased R2 Carnegie Classification in research.

My unique qualifications for the APSU Presidency. I have a deep understanding of the relationship between APSU, Montgomery County, Clarksville TN, and Fort Campbell KY, and the opportunities those relationships present for the region when they are brought together. I still hold vivid memories of what the region looked like when my family moved to Fort Campbell when I was three, and I have had the opportunity to see firsthand the phenomenal growth the region has experienced over the past fifty years. What is really exciting is knowing the leadership in Clarksville and Montgomery County has positioned the region so that the best is yet to come.

I spent twenty-three years at APSU, from assistant professor up through interim provost. I am intimately familiar with APSU's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities the university can successfully take advantage of. A little over two years ago I made the purposeful decision to leave APSU. It was one of the toughest decisions I ever made. However, I knew that in order to grow as a person and an administrator, I would need experience beyond the place that means so much to me. I'm confident that this tough decision was the right one, and that I gained the experience to be a truly great university president.

My time at MU has been ridiculously exciting and fulfilling; we have accomplished some amazing things in a very short time. However, APSU and Clarksville will always be my home.

I'm confident that you are not going to find anyone who has better prepared themselves to be the next President of Austin Peay State University.

Sincerely,



Jaime R. Taylor, PhD
Provost/Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs