



Valen E. Johnson, Ph.D.
University Distinguished Professor
& Interim Dean of Science
Texas A&M University

January 8, 2019

Patrick Stover, Ph.D
Chair, Dean Search Committee
College of Science
Texas A&M University

Dear Dr. Stover,

I wish to apply for the permanent position of Dean of the College of Science at Texas A&M University. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to apply at such a late date, as well as offer my apologies to the search committee for the inconvenience that my late application causes.

When I initially accepted the offer to serve as interim dean in June, my intention was to serve in this capacity for one year and then return to serve a second term as Department Head of Statistics. Statistics is a dynamic department with wonderful growth opportunities, and I genuinely enjoyed leading the department as it developed its new undergraduate statistics major, the expansion of its campus and distance graduate programs, and the recruitment of world class faculty.

At the same time, my experience as interim dean has revealed many new ways for me to contribute to the success of the college and university. These opportunities are equally exciting. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, I feel that my leadership of the College of Science at this juncture in time may be critical for its success, at least into the near future.

Before describing my goals and leadership philosophy, let me begin by providing a brief description of my background.

I graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Rensselaer Poly-

technic Institute in 1981. I attended RPI on an Army ROTC scholarship and was subsequently commissioned as a military intelligence officer (yes, I've heard that joke). While in the Army, I twice served as a platoon leader (once in the Republic of Korea and once at Fort Hood, Texas) and as the Chief of the Technical Control and Analysis Element for the 2nd Armored Division. The leadership training that I received in the Army has been very valuable throughout my career.

After completing my military service and a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Texas (while on active duty), I attended The University of Chicago, where I received a Ph.D. in Statistics. After that I accepted a faculty position at Duke University, where I was eventually promoted to Professor of Statistics and Decision Sciences (with tenure) and for a time served as the undergraduate advisor. I left Duke in 2001, and after brief stints at Los Alamos National Laboratory and the University of Michigan, I moved to the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in 2004. In 2007 I was appointed/elected Deputy Chair of Biostatistics. I became interim Head of the Division of Quantitative Sciences and Chair of Biostatistics in 2011. The Division of Quantitative Sciences contained two departments, Biostatistics and Bioinformatics & Computational Biology, and employed over 175 people. The primary mission of the division was to oversee the statistical design and analyses of all clinical trial protocols conducted at MDACC (> 100 per year).

In 2012, I returned to academia by accepting a position as Professor of Statistics at Texas A&M. I was appointed as Department Head of Statistics in 2014, and was selected as a University Distinguished Professor in 2016. I received overwhelming support from the statistics faculty for reappointment as Department Head this year.

The following is an abbreviated list of accomplishments that my colleagues and I achieved during my tenure as DH:

- We revamped the graduate program. Shortly after becoming DH, I instituted changes in the graduate program's leadership to shift its recruitment focus and to increase the rigor of the program. Graduate examination procedures were completely revised. These changes resulted in a dramatic improvement in the quality of students recruited to the department, their success rate in obtaining doctoral degrees, and their employment prospects upon graduation.
- We created a B.S. degree in Statistics. Since its inception in 2016, the

number of undergraduate statistics majors has grown to over 130. I expect that the program will grow to over 300 undergraduate majors by Fall 2021. A fast-track master's program to supplement the B.S. program has just been approved by the Faculty Senate.

- I successfully ameliorated faculty retention issues. In the two years prior to my appointment as DH, the Department of Statistics lost four very prominent mid-career faculty members due to salary, equity and environmental issues. I leveraged the salary associated with one of these lines to resolve several equity and salary problems. I also instituted major changes in the administration of the department. As a consequence of these changes, the department lost no research-active tenured faculty members during my service as DH .
- Recruitment and mentoring of junior faculty. I am very proud of the department's recruiting efforts and the mentoring program that I initiated while DH. This combination of recruiting and mentoring resulted in new and junior faculty receiving a Noether Award (a prestigious NRC award), three ENVR young investigator awards (an American Statistical Association award for research in statistics and the environment), a David Byar young investigator award (an ASA award for research in biometrics), and two NSF CAREER Awards.
- Enhanced diversity. Increasing the diversity of faculty depends on the selection and training of search committees and a perception among faculty, delivered by leadership, that diversity is valued. During my tenure as DH, I insured that search committees were balanced in terms of gender and ethnicity, and that all faculty on search committees underwent STRIDE training. Approximately half of the tenure-track offers made by Statistics since 2014 have been made to female candidates, although many of these candidates unfortunately accepted offers elsewhere. Two faculty recruited within the last year include a Hispanic female and an Asian female. Two of the recipients of the ENVR young investigator awards and the recipient of the David Byar award are female faculty in the department. Three external, distinguished female professors were invited to the university to be named as recipients of the Department's prestigious Ronald Hocking Lecturer (Annie Qu, UIUC and Merlise Clyde, Duke) and H.O. Hartley Lecturer (Susan Murphy, Harvard). I received Aggie Ally training and display the banner on my office door.

[As interim Dean of the College of Science, I required all departmental

search committee members to have STRIDE training. In a meeting with DH's in the summer of 2018, I emphasized that it was important to bring a diverse candidate pool to the university this year. In fairness to the college leadership, I note that current department heads, associate deans, and assistant deans in the college have an established record of strongly supporting diversity efforts and actively recruiting diverse faculty candidates. My message was familiar to them and was enthusiastically endorsed.]

Looking forward, I anticipate that several of my major achievements as Dean of the College of Science will be the following:

- Restored a sense of faculty governance and faculty participation within the College.
- Assisted in the development of new science majors that increased the retention rate of undergraduate students in the college and improved their marketability after they received their degrees.
- Built on the foundation provided by the College's Strategic Plan to enhance interdisciplinary collaborations between college faculty.
- Improved the success of non-science majors in gateway courses.
- Increased the diversity of College of Science faculty.
- Supported faculty recruitment, research and training initiatives.
- Endowed the Science Leadership Scholars program.

Let me close by making a few comments that reflect on my philosophy of leadership.

I believe that it is imperative for the Dean of the College of Science to support the Department Heads as they lead their departments. I endorse the adage that it is not possible to delegate responsibility without also delegating authority.

I feel that it is also imperative that faculty have a voice in determining the direction of the college and in selecting their leaders. It is my view that novel research initiatives will be proposed and led by faculty within the college. It is essential that the college support these initiatives whenever possible.

In my view, the primary role of the dean is to support faculty innovation and guide departments as they advance their research, teaching and service missions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valen E. Johnson". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Valen E. Johnson, Ph.D.
University Distinguished Professor