

July 23, 2019

Search Committee for Vice President for Research,
Office of Research and Economic Development
Tennessee Technological University

Dear Search Committee

It is with great excitement that I submit this application for the position of Vice President for Research at Tennessee Technological University (TN Tech). From 2007 until the summer of 2018 I served as a senior academic research administrator at UNC Charlotte (UNCC) and at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCAT). I took an early retirement from the UNC system to partner in the launch of a biotechnology startup company. Though I have enjoyed a return to entrepreneurship I have greatly missed serving the faculty and staff at the university. When I read the position description for the Vice President for Research at TN Tech it stirred an enthusiasm in me that I hadn't felt this past year. Before moving to North Carolina in 2007 my family and I spent 24 years in Oak Ridge, TN, while I worked at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) for 14 years and then launched an engineering services company that grew to 150 employees before I exited after 10 years. My diverse professional experience served me well as Associate Director of the Charlotte Research Institute and as Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development at NCAT. During my six years as the chief research officer at NCAT we grew the sponsored research awards from \$51M to over \$64M, an increase of over 25%. We also greatly increased patent applications, patents issued, intellectual property licenses, and royalties. NCAT is a research intensive doctoral research institution similar in size and academic programming to TN Tech. I believe that the strategies we used successfully at UNCC and NCAT will translate effectively to TN Tech.

My experience touches all the bullet points in your position description. At NCAT I supervised a staff of nearly 50 in the Division of Research and Economic Development (DORED) including the Office of Sponsored Programs (pre-award), Office of Contracts and Grants (post award), Office of Research Compliance, Office of Research Services (proposal preparation, technical editing, training), Office of Financial Compliance, Office of Undergraduate Research, and Office of Technology Transfer in addition to other responsibilities such as economic development, entrepreneurship programs, and development of research facilities. Most of my over 200 publications were generated during my years as a researcher and principal investigator at ORNL. Although my PhD is in nuclear physics I became a manager at ORNL in an engineering division and then spent ten years leading an engineering services company in Knoxville that I launched with two partners. I have found that the combination of research experience in both science and engineering plus national lab and private sector management experience gives me a credibility with faculty that helps foster respect and collaboration.

During those 24 years at ORNL and TPG I lead projects across the DOE complex including ORNL, Y-12, K-25, Savannah River, Fernald, Idaho Falls, West Valley, Hanford, Pantex, Nevada Test Site, and collaborations with Sandia, Los Alamos, and Lawrence Livermore National Lab. I also lead projects sponsored by NASA and several offices within the

Department of Defense. During the past 12 years I have extended that Federal agency network to include many more offices in DOD, NASA, NSF, USDA, DOL, DOT, NIH, and USDA.

My work experience in the nuclear industry exposed me to a level of planning, safety and quality control not found in many university settings. My leadership style integrates the best aspects of the formal DOE structure with the agility and creativity that we enjoyed at a small business. I consistently emphasize that in research administration we are a customer service organization. Our faculty learned that I am approachable and will personally do everything I can to help them succeed. When I started my job at UNCC it was like going back to school. Part of my job was to meet with as many faculty as possible and learn enough about their research so that I could represent them to prospective funders and collaborators. That was a time of renewal for me that continued at NCAT as I learned from an entirely different group of faculty. TN Tech offers the opportunity for me to help yet another group of faculty obtain the resources needed to balance their teaching loads with innovative research.

My academic career has been a bit unconventional having worked at a national lab and in private industry first but it was great cross training. When you manage large projects or a private company as I have you learn quickly to manage budgets, build effective teams, and obtain R&D funding. At UNCC I became heavily involved in economic development and continued that emphasis in the Greensboro area. My private sector entrepreneurship experience lends added credibility when I engage in business recruitment or other economic development activities. I understand well the responsibility especially of state universities to serve the local and regional communities in addition to educating students and conducting research. You are looking for a proven research administrator who can provide leadership to the faculty, staff and students at TN Tech. I believe that the future is bright for TN Tech and the state of Tennessee and relish the opportunity to apply my leadership skills and energy in partnership with the other senior administrators, faculty and staff at TN Tech.

Thank you for the time that you are investing to review the candidate pool for the Vice President for Research. This is an extremely important position in the continued progression toward the long term university goals under the leadership of President Oldham. I am sure that you will receive applications from many very well qualified candidates for this very attractive position. I hope that you will agree that my experience has prepared me well to manage the TN Tech research operations, build and expand the research enterprise, and help TN Tech become an even bigger economic engine for the state of Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Dr. Barry L. Burks