



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice President for Research™

April 2nd, 2017

Dr. Al Sacco, Jr., Dean and Search Committee Chair
Vice President for Research Search Committee
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas

Dear Dr. Sacco and Search Committee:

I respectfully submit to you this letter and my resume for consideration for the position of Vice President for Research (VPR) at Texas Tech University. It is an exciting time to be a part of the Texas Tech family for so many reasons. One of which is that Texas Tech is uniquely positioned to advance its stature as a great public research university. The opportunity to contribute to this advancement, along with the encouragement of colleagues from both within and outside of the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), motivated me to be a candidate for the position of VPR.

In many respects, I find myself as an *accidental* candidate in that when I came to Texas Tech University in 2010, I did not foresee an administrative role in my future. In fact, I never even considered the potential of an academic career when I graduated from the University of Sydney with a degree in veterinary medicine (BVSc). At that time, it was my sole goal to gain advanced professional expertise in the U.S. and then return to private practice in Australia.

My career aspirations unexpectedly changed while at Colorado State University when a growing awareness – and then the inescapable tug – of research, creative inquiry and problem solving became too great for me to ignore. My new career path took me through graduate training in epidemiology, population medicine and related aspects of public health. With newly acquired knowledge and problem-solving skills, I embarked on my academic career at West Texas A&M University (WT). My appointment at WT was research oriented and I was successful in soliciting federal and private sponsors in pursuit of my research in the general fields of animal health, zoonotic pathogens, and issues pertaining to antimicrobial use and resistance in animal populations and implications for public health.

As is the case for many lines of research inquiry, I discovered that complexity reigns and my appreciation of complex systems emerged as did my enjoyment of systems thinking. For example, antimicrobial use and resistance frequently displays a very simple cause and effect relationship. However, the decision to administer an antimicrobial to an animal – or group of animals – is complex and influenced by many subjective and normative values. To influence the behavior of a system (to say decrease antimicrobial use), one must, therefore, have an awareness of the actors and agencies, their values, and their interdependent relationships across the economic, political and moral economies. I provide this example because I came to understand that universities too are complex systems and the intended products of which – whether that be graduates, publications or intellectual property – result from the interaction of the many parts that make up a university as a whole. Referring back to the antimicrobial example, a parallel is that effecting meaningful change in a university requires an understanding of its many parts and their values (or culture).



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The primary reason for this move from WT to Texas Tech University was that I wanted to expand upon the work I was pursuing at a university that had a growing focus on research. In many ways, I felt that I had found the boundaries of what could be achieved at WT given its primary mission is teaching. During the transition to Texas Tech, I experienced the joy and frustration that invariably comes with any academic move – even between two closely located state agencies. Moving grants, setting up FOPs, getting graduate students hired and enrolled (or vice versa), securing IACUC approvals for protocols, completing required training, finishing out laboratory space, and so on can be exasperating at times but also very rewarding. I say *rewarding* because during these processes, I gained an appreciation for the critical roles of staff and faculty service (e.g., on say IACUC) in making universities work. Since my move, I successfully expanded my research pursuits through federal and industry awards, and philanthropy. I have also had the opportunity to participate in the protection and commercialization of intellectual property on several occasions.

In 2013, I yet again felt the need to expand my horizons and explore collaborations outside of my comfort zone. I also wanted to more fully understand how a public research university functioned, and I wanted to contribute to Texas Tech in some way. An opportunity presented itself and three years ago I became a faculty fellow in the OVPR in part to pursue these goals.

During this time, my understanding grew of how our University functions, the many roles of the VPR, the vital role of staff (and intricacies of the interaction between staff and faculty), and the challenges of pursuing new programs such as the proposal for a new college of veterinary medicine. In April of last year, I became the interim VPR. At that time, my goal was to address specific needs within the office such that the incoming permanent VPR – the result of the current search – would have a solid foundation upon which to launch successful programs. At that time, I did not envision I would submit myself as a candidate. However, I increasingly found myself working with others to solve problems and develop plans to further the success and advancement of Texas Tech University. In particular, under the leadership of President Schovanec, the opportunity to shape what we as a university will look like as we reach our centenary became very appealing; as does helping to formulate and implement the strategy to achieve this.

The OVPR is a large division and it serves many functions of the research enterprise. At its core, the office is responsible for facilitating research for investigators, from helping identifying sponsors, proposal preparation and submission and post award contracting. There are many other related functions that branch out from this activity and include strategic planning, faculty start-up support, to protection and commercialization of intellectual property as well as many more. Equally important is the OVPR's contribution to compliance functions from ever-more diverse sponsor requirements, to laboratory safety, issues of export control, to the use of animals and humans in research and so on. Despite all these functions, at its core, the office must focus on ways to facilitate (and attract) faculty engagement in research, scholarship and creative activities. We must reassess from time to time to make sure that processes do not become barriers or disincentives to engagement in research.

I believe that Texas Tech University is in a wonderful – maybe unique – position to achieve truly great things. If achieved, however, it will not be the outcome of one office alone. The OVPR is just one component of the many-component, complex system that is Texas Tech. As such, coordination across the university is fundamentally important. Central to coordination is communication. In my short tenure as interim VPR, I have tried hard to improve communication which involves both listening to and conveying ideas and goals. This is an area that needs constant work and improvement.



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I have also worked hard to improve communication with the OVPR staff. The OVPR includes many dedicated individuals who are committed to their roles and to Texas Tech. I have worked very hard to be accessible and treat all with whom I interact with integrity and respect. I very much believe that in most instances, the most productive decisions are those in which the participants have a stake in its success. Yet sometimes decisions have to be made that are unpopular or unpleasant but that is the nature of any leadership position. Ultimately, however, my philosophy is to empower and support others with the understanding that the buck stops with me so to speak.

I believe that the OVPR is well positioned to be a productive and collaborative component of the University to advance the research enterprise at Texas Tech. It has an excellent team of leaders, and motivated and skilled team players. During my tenure as interim VPR I:

- Worked with our federal affairs team and the colleges to identify cross-campus research strengths and priorities for which we can and will strategically pursue federal funding either through large-competitive programs or other means.
- Appointed directors of the Center for Genomics and Biotechnology (Yehia Mechref) and the Texas Tech Neuroimaging Institute (Eric Walden). Under their leadership, they have increased the financial performance and customer base of these centers/institutes. Further, I appointed Annie Sobel as the director of GLEAMM after Russell Thomasson assumed the chief of staff duties for Rep. Arrington. Finally, I oversaw the establishment of a new institute (the Institute for Materials Manufacturing and Sustainment; IMMS) and hired Dy Le, former Chief of Mechanics Division at the Army Research Lab as the director of IMMS.
- Appointed David Snow as the director of the Office of Research Commercialization (ORC). With the support of the CFOs of the System and Texas Tech, we were able to formulate a sustainable budget for the office. Further, we narrowed the focus of the office onto its core mission by removing non-core, entrepreneurial programs over to the Innovation Hub at Research Park (IHRP). This has enabled the ORC staff to spend their time on what they need to do – namely working with faculty on all things related to their intellectual property.
- Transitioned all entrepreneurship programs to the IHRP and strengthened our relationship with entrepreneurship sponsors through alignment of programs with their expectations. This work, now under the leadership of Kimberly Gramm, has been tremendously successful.
- Have, in all activities, brought my experience as a faculty member of Texas Tech as well as being an advocate for the OVPR staff to share different perspectives in order to promote constructive faculty-staff interactions to advance our University's mission.
- Have worked to promote inter-institutional collaboration within our System. In addition, I have advocated sharing expertise – such as that of our Research Development Team – to advance opportunities at our sister institutions.

The research enterprise at Texas Tech does face headwinds however. Most noticeably, we are unlike our peer institutions or those we aspire to be like in terms of our federal research expenditures. In particular, federal sponsors account for 50% or greater of total research expenditures at most research institutions. Our percentage is close to 20% and this percentage has been declining over time. In other words, a greater and greater proportion of our total research expenditures are funded through means other than those associated with restricted research grants and contracts.



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Texas Tech must grow the proportion of its overall research portfolio that is sponsored by federal agencies. The challenge of which is that federal sponsorship of research is declining in real terms. Despite this decline, certain universities have meaningfully increased their federally sponsored research; I believe we can do the same. It will take learning from others, and then being more strategic, more visionary and more competitive. This is something Texas Tech is well positioned to do, yet it will take coordination with faculty and staff, the deans, offices of the Provost and President, and our System in terms of federal affairs, and building partnerships across our System and beyond. The broad buy-in that exists for this coordinated, strategic approach is what excites me.

We also face other challenges such as uncertainty of the amount of State funding from biennium to biennium, and of the quality and quantity of research space. Bringing ESBII on line will most certainly help but we still need find ways to improve the efficiency of use of laboratory space as well as the quality of space.

In summary, it is a great time to be a part of the Texas Tech family. We have achieved many impressive achievements; designation as a National Research University (2012) and a Tier 1 (R1: Doctoral Universities – Highest research activity) Research University are just two examples. We have a committed and unified leadership team that shares a vision of what we ought to look like by our centenary and that is a truly great public research university whose faculty enrich the world through discovery, translation and community engagement. As we strive to achieve our potential, we must embrace doing some things differently yet we must also hold dear and foster those things that make Texas Tech great – the student experience, PI-led research endeavors, and the diverse scholarship and creative activities that have made us what we are today. We must also find ways to continue to internally support (as well as seek extramural funds for) pursuits in the arts, humanities, education and social sciences as we strive to advance our STEM research.

I have been humbled to serve as the interim VPR for the past year and I am excited for the future. As such, I submit this application for consideration as a candidate for the VPR position.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide more information.

Yours sincerely,

Guy H. Loneragan, BVSc, PhD
Interim Vice President for Research
Professor of Food Safety and Public Health
Texas Tech University