

May 14, 2017

Dr. Ernie Minton, Search Committee Chair
Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs
Associate Director for KSRE
College of Agriculture
112 Waters Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506

Dear Dr. Minton:

It is with humbleness and excitement that I submit this letter of application to express my interest in serving as the Interim Director of the Food Science Institute (FSI) at Kansas State University. I have had the privilege of calling the FSI my professional home since its inception, and through the years I feel that I have benefited tremendously from its interdisciplinary and interdepartmental structure in both the research and teaching components of my appointment. The knowledge and understanding of the history, programmatic goals, faculty and staff, students (on-campus and at distance), industry stakeholders, and interconnections of the Food Science program across campus that I have gained over the last 25 years at Kansas State University will serve me well in leading the FSI as its Interim Director.

In all transparency, I am interested in serving in this Interim Director position for what I anticipate to be a relatively short period until the search for a permanent FSI Director occurs, for which I will strongly consider applying. The Interim Director position description is robust, but I feel that the right leader selected to fill this role can make, or begin to make, significant accomplishments towards all of the listed responsibilities. Since the retirement of Dr. Kastner as FSI Director, the faculty and staff have done an admirable job keeping the Food Science program steady and secure and making sure that our students are well tended to in their academic pursuits. We have an infusion of new/relatively new faculty, are collectively evaluating our curriculum to determine adequacy to meet student needs and presentation of contemporary concepts, continue to improve our program assessment approaches, and are implementing a more focused and aggressive new student recruitment and retention program. However, there is a bit of stagnation and even divisiveness that can be felt. As the Interim Director, one of my most pressing objectives will be to reconcile the faculty for the common good of the program. I will do this by first having one-on-one visits with each of the core and affiliated Food Science faculty across all of the departments involved in the program. I will also visit with the primary administrative leaders who support the FSI and our degree programs with their personnel and resources. I will listen to their assessments and concerns with the interdisciplinary Food Science program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, gain a perspective of how each person feels the FSI can enhance their performance and their disciplinary area, and will engage in a conversation to try to bridge differences that are sure to exist. This information, in combination with facts, opinions and comments recently gathered in the formal Food Science program review facilitated by OEIE, will provide me a good

platform to advocate for necessary program changes that will help us meet our collective goals and milestones. I do not think that change for the sake of change is appropriate with a program that has been as successful as ours for such an extended time; however, new ideas and approaches should be considered to improve key areas of what we do. I am not afraid to try new things.

Kansas State University is one of the, if not the, most important institutions in the world offering world-class research, teaching and Extension programs in diverse academic disciplines that support the global food system. I will always remain supportive of the land-grant mission of our university, and feel that our history of outstanding undergraduate teaching is the cornerstone for all that we do. The Global Food Systems Initiative (GFSI) at K-State is a noble and logical program that I strongly believe, with the leadership of its new coordinator Dr. Maureen Olewnik, will help us establish a definitive advantage in our student recruitment, extramural funding, and recognition of our research, teaching and Extension faculty. I have interacted with Dr. Olewnik for several years and feel that we can synergize our efforts to better coordinate, expand, and improve the impacts of both the FSI and the GFSI. The FSI program must be integral to the GFSI. Likewise, I have established very productive working relationships with the Center of Excellence for Food Safety Research in Child Nutrition Programs in the College of Human Ecology, the Baking Science/Milling Science/Feed Science programs, the National Agricultural Biosecurity Center and the Biosecurity Research Institute, with some components of the USAID Feed the Future Innovation Labs, with the College of Veterinary Medicine's DMP department, and with our Food Science and Horticulture programs at the K-State Olathe campus. I feel that I can serve as a visionary and conduit to all of these programs to infuse more opportunities and relevance into our FSI program, and to perhaps mutually enhance what each of these individual programs offer.

This is a personal opportunity, and an exciting challenge, for me in what is likely the last trimester of my academic career to change directions a little and focus my talents and energy towards being the leader who significantly enhances the Food Science program at our university. I feel that we are already one of the best Food Science degree programs in the country, a feeling that is confirmed almost every time that I am in the presence of food industry leaders, but we have not approached our ultimate potential. I have ideas, experience, academic and industry connections, energy, a vision, and a heartfelt passion that I will bring to this interim position with the primary immediate goals to:

- 1) Elevate the Food Science presence, footprint, and recognition on campus and across the nation;
- 2) Significantly increase the effectiveness of recruitment efforts to bring more bright students from across the nation to K-State, including expanding our geographic, racial, and cultural diversity;
- 3) Improve the professional development of our young faculty and help them build highly successful programs;
- 4) Support our invaluable staff to ensure that the daily FSI operations are effective and efficient, showing them the gratitude they have earned;
- 5) Enhance our ability to recruit and train students and conduct impactful research by improving our funding base via grants, industry partnerships, and donations---using these acquired funds to improve scholarships/awards/stipends and to improve laboratory equipment and pilot processing facilities; and
- 6) Integrate Food Science prominently into the GFSI, with an understanding of how programs and fund-raising can best be structured for the mutual success of both programs.

To summarize my leadership philosophy, I strongly believe in leading by example. My father, a successful entrepreneur and small business owner, instilled this philosophy in me my entire life. He showed me thousands of times that you must take the lead and do the hard things that are needed before you ask those working for you to do those jobs. He also coached me that you need to have a vision of where you want to go and a plan to get there. My other mentor in my professional life has been Dr. Curtis Kastner. From him I have learned how to listen to people to understand and respect their positions on issues, and how to bring people together to pursue collective goals. Dr. Kastner led the FSI by maintaining good communications and mutual respect with supporting administrators and with the Food Science faculty. I will strive to do the same. I feel that transparency and faculty governance are critical elements at an academic institution and will commit to these leadership concepts as Interim Director. I also feel that the betterment of the program must take precedence over the desires of the individual, but fairness and good will are essential characteristics of effective leaders. I also recognize that the Interim Director (and permanent Director) has no authority over the appointments and performance evaluations of the Food Science faculty, but can and should work diligently to encourage faculty to do well and be engaged with all aspects of our program.

Relative to my qualifications for this position, my CV and references provide detailed insight. I have excelled as a researcher at K-State, and currently co-manage the largest food safety grant ever administered by the USDA. Our 5-member executive management team has overseen a \$25 M budget over the past 6 years, and I personally have managed K-State's \$9 M portion of the grant's budget as PI. I was also highly engaged with one of the original federal grants to K-State from the DoD Natick Soldier Systems program to research the detection of select agents in food systems of military interest utilizing our Biosecurity Research Institute facility. This grant was in effect for approximately five years through our National Agricultural Biosecurity Center, and along with Dr. Richard Oberst (retired), I was the technical co-PI on the grant and worked with the program administrator on a budget of approximately \$10 M. I have been awarded several grants over the last 25 years and have been successful in meeting deliverables, technical and financial reporting, and budgetary and personnel management. For a period of a few years, I maintained a split appointment with K-State and STERIS FoodLabs, Inc. as Chief Technology Officer. In this role I also managed a number of food industry projects with substantial budgets, and oversaw company and industry personnel in sanitation, environmental control, food safety and quality activities. I have extensive connections with food industry stakeholders in the meat/poultry and the grain/flour/bakery sectors, along with many technology providers and government programs. My background in research and teaching is very strong and widely recognized, and although I have never formally had an Extension appointment, I have worked with several Extension specialists to address training and troubleshooting functions, have provided many forms of industry outreach (workshops, consulting, white papers, process validations, etc.), and have spent my entire college and professional days (over 35 years now) at land-grant institutions. I feel that my technical and lay audience communication skills, both oral and written, are among my best traits. I am honest, caring of people, hard working, ethical, and I believe well-versed in the broader fields of Food Science and public health.

There is some difficulty in applying for the Interim Director position as a fully engaged professor with continuing obligations in the laboratory and classroom. I cannot afford to step away from these functions entirely for what could be a short timeframe until a permanent Director is recruited, as I have

funding and contracts that are still active, graduate students who are at various stages of program completion, and courses to instruct that would place a notable burden on our existing core Food Science faculty if I did not continue their coverage (notably *FDSCI 302 Introduction to Food Science*). I hope that I can work with Dean Floros to envision and execute a workable and effective strategy to allow me to maintain a reasonable mix of my current professor duties, while taking the lead with the FSI directorship through this interim period. Those who know me well know that I am not hesitant to put in extended hours when necessary, and I feel that I can begin to take the FSI and its programs towards higher achievement and recognition immediately.

Thank you for consideration of my application and please do not hesitate to contact me for clarification or further information.

Sincerely,



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