



Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences
(816) 271-4510

December 28, 2012

Search Committee
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Angelo State University

Dear Committee Members:

I am applying for the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Angelo State University. The position interests me for the following reasons:

1. I graduated from Yale and very much value high quality liberal arts education for bright, motivated students.
2. As Director of the Honors Program at Colorado State University for ten years I gained considerable experience in working with intelligent, multifaceted students and in dealing with problems they can have in adjusting to college.
3. Your Vision 2020 Plan is comprehensive and quite interesting to me. I am particularly impressed by Academic Goal 2—Community Engagement; Goal 3—Support for student transition to college, and Goal 4—Research.
4. Master Goal 3 in the Vision 2020 plan—Increasing Retention and Graduation rates is of particular interest to me. This Master Goal links to Academic Goal 3, and it would be a pleasure working to make these goals reality.
5. My approach to education is very student centered, so I was interested to see that you have a similar focus.
6. I'm interested in your being a Hispanic Serving Institution. My wife is from Mexico and speaks fluent Spanish. We are working on a dual language household. She is a Nurse Practitioner/Hospital Administrator, and we have four children still at home.

My administrative experience is varied and includes the following positions:

1. I am in my fifth year as Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Missouri Western State University. The College has 10 departments with a total of 117 tenure track and 72 part time faculty. We have both undergraduate and master's programs. MWSU is a regional university of around 6,000 students located in Saint Joseph, Missouri. Two of our important foci are Applied Learning and Producing Job-Ready Graduates.
2. I completed four years as Chair of the Department of Biology at the University of Mississippi and four years as Head of the Department of Biology at James Madison University.
3. For ten years I directed the Honors Program at Colorado State University. I was acting or associate director for four additional years. The Program admitted around 200 students a year.
4. For eleven years, I was sole Principal Investigator and Director of a Cooperative Agreement between the U.S. Agency for International Development and Colorado State University. This project brought in over \$6.2 million in funding. I directed

research, field testing, training, and conferences involving students and faculty in over twenty foreign countries.

In this letter, I will spell out how these positions qualify me for your position, and I will give you an idea of my administrative style.

1. As Dean of the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences, I am enjoying working with a variety of disciplines in our ten departments.
 - I initiated and spearheaded a successful initiative in Music to make Missouri Western an All Steinway School. Only 109 schools worldwide have this distinction.
 - The College has reinitiated musical theater on campus after a long absence, as a fourth major production each year. Last year “The Phantom” was performed to four sold-out audiences. This year, we presented “Little Shop of Horrors” and “Annie.” Next year, “Sweeney Todd.” We installed on-line ticketing (by Vendini Inc.) to facilitate and increase ticket purchases. We have also begun a summer season of three plays. Plans to develop an on campus outdoor theater for summer productions are well underway. Backstage has been considerably improved and made cutting edge.
 - A BFA in Digital Animation is in its third year in the Department of Art and has 80 majors. The Department of Communication Studies, Theater, and Cinema now has over 60 majors in its Theater and Cinema degree program. We made targeted hires in each department to encourage program development.
 - With the help of the Governor, we avoided both tuition increases and budget cuts for two of the past four years while sustaining an 8% budget cut the other years with a roughly equivalent tuition increases. To accommodate a normal 5% increase in fixed expenses, we implemented a 30% decrease in operating budgets, but increased course fees and some program fees so that we could more or less break even.
 - MWSU is an open access university, so economic hard times are especially difficult for our students, many of whom are first generation college students and most of whom have at least one outside job. Working with the Enrollment Management Team, I have participated in numerous efforts to make economic hard times more bearable for our students and palatable for our Departments. Hard decisions have been made, but we have avoided layoffs and furloughs. Sabbaticals and faculty awards have been maintained for two of the past three years. We have had no hiring freeze and no construction freeze.
 - Recently, with the help of a million dollar grant from the Governor, we have implemented a plan to help local businesses send their employees back to college to complete degrees that make them more valuable employees. For example, more than 40 employees from our local regional hospital will begin work on business degrees this fall.
 - I have worked hard, in conjunction with the other deans, to markedly increase our on-line courses, our slate of dual-credit classes offered in area high

schools, and our use of new technology to facilitate enrollment, retention, and degree completion.

- We are a full participant in a state-wide plan to offer many upper division courses, in small programs, at several universities in a cooperative live video format.
- I am helping Art, Music, and Theater begin planning for a much needed new building, which will be the next major construction project on campus.
- By keeping tuition low we attract many students from the Kansas City metro area. For example, our tuition is 68% of the tuition at the University of Missouri's main campus in Columbia. Our enrollment has increased a total of 16% over the past four years.
- We are working actively with community college in the region to facilitate seamless electronic transfer of their students into our upper division programs.
- I have hired over 30 new and replacement faculty members in the College.
- I have taught four honors classes: (1) *Genetic Engineering for Non-Scientists*, (2) *The Monomythic Hero in Science Fiction and Westerns*, (3) *How to Get Better—The Role of Conventional and Alternative Medicine in Health, Career choice, and Healing*, and (4) *The Historical Roots and Future of Vampires, Starships, and Cowboys*. This spring I will offer a seminar on *Climate Change*. Our Honors Program is well developed and attracts many, excellent students. Despite being an open admissions university, our direct from high school freshmen have an average ACT composite of over 21. We cooperate fully with the IB program at one of our high schools.
- The President has announced a goal of markedly increasing MWSU's participation in international education. I have participated fully in ongoing projects to dramatically increase enrollments of students from China, India, and other countries. We obtained a Fulbright Grant to begin teaching Chinese last year. This year, our Fulbright Scholars are in German and Spanish.
- We anticipate the tight budgets are "The New Normal," and I participate in a number of initiatives to trim fat, reallocate funds, and obtain more outside funds.
- We recently completed construction of a new science classroom building, thus doubling our space for Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, and Physics. The building was designed with considerable input from Project Kaleidoscope.
- We are busy implementing major goals of increasing retention in the lower division and in increasing our 4-6 year graduation rate. These are state-wide goals in Missouri as well.

My administrative style as Dean is to maintain an open door and involve chairs in the decision-making process. Each department has a hiring plan, a detailed notebook of needs for donors to see, and a plan to increase the number of majors and graduates. I communicate via e-mail for routine information and in person for more substantial topics. I don't take things personally and have a robust sense of humor.

2. During my eight years as a Chairperson and Department Head, I formed learning communities, put in place safety nets to help entering freshmen, increased start up packages and graduate stipends, markedly increased outside grant revenue, made

- major efforts to allocate department space fairly, and introduced democratic procedures in department meetings. I also increased the footprint of cell and molecular biology and genetic engineering in both research and teaching. I tried to emphasize the strong points of each faculty member so that all felt valued and could contribute to the overall advancement of the Department.
3. As Director (Dean) of the University Honors Program at CSU, I accomplished the following.
 - In conjunction with Dr. Bernard Rollin, a philosopher and animal welfare expert, I developed and taught two semesters of freshman Honors Biology and obtained NSF funding to sustain the course. We taught the course for 20 years. Check out my recent interview with Dr. Rollin on my radio show at www.webtalkradio.net. That show aired 10/10/11.
 - I developed an interdisciplinary, four semester, required course, called Western Heritage, which involved faculty from English, History, and Philosophy.
 - I brought the Honors Program in line with standard course approval and evaluation procedures at the university.
 - I worked with Hispanic and Afro-American offices on campus to identify and recruit students and to make allowances for verbal scores (in the case of Hispanic students) that didn't reflect true ability.
 - Working with outside donors, I increased the Honors Endowment from \$10,000 to well over \$100,000.
 - I convinced the Provost to substantially increase funding so that the Honors Program could buy faculty time from Departments. This changed the long-standing *de facto* policy of honors courses being offered out of the faculty members' "hides."
 - Some faculty worried about the ability of a "scientist" to value and integrate all parts of the liberal arts curriculum into honors offerings. While I was Honors director, the liberal arts flourished as did interdisciplinary programs between the liberal arts and the sciences.
 4. My research has always been related to discovering basic information about how plants function. At one point, my basic investigations turned out to be on the cutting edge of plant tissue culture, which has a role to play in increasing world food production. Basically I selected cells resistant to salinity, drought, acidity, and specific disease toxins and then regenerated useful plants, which often carried the same traits. I directly managed the activities of 40-60 people and students and controlled a budget of over 1.0 million dollars a year.
 - I established and maintained 39 field-testing sites, in the U.S., foreign countries, and International Centers.
 - Our Project released over 30 lines of elite germplasm of rice, wheat, sorghum, and millet with increased tolerance to drought, salt, acid soils, and specific insects. The first salt tolerant plants in the world to come from tissue culture were produced by the Project. At one point, half of Mexico's elite salt-tolerant wheat lines came from us.

- We developed and ran almost a dozen, six-month training programs, in several locations, in both Spanish and English.
- We organized four large, international conferences in Fort Collins, Bangkok, Nairobi, and San José, Costa Rica. These conferences focused on scientific presentations by *local* investigators.
- I traveled widely in Asia, Africa, and Central America building relations and solving problems in biotechnology labs.
- I served as major professor for nine Ph.D. students and three MS students.
- I opened an early, active collaboration in the People's Republic of China.

As a result of these four administrative experiences, I have developed a style with several significant components. My overall administrative philosophy is to determine people's strengths and utilize them to build consensus by involving people in the decision-making process. I then make decisions in a timely and open fashion. I find debate to be stimulating and creative rather than stressful and unproductive. My door is open 90% of the time. I prefer to visit in person as opposed to sending e-mails.

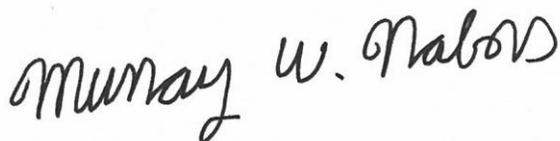
I took a one year leave of absence from Ole Miss, obtained a teaching certificate, and taught high school science on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation in the Four Corners near Durango, Colorado. I am part Native American (Seneca), and I am very interested in transition issues for students leaving high school and coming to college. I would like to reduce the 40-60% of students who take "developmental" (aka remedial) college courses, and to increase both retention and graduation rates. My son taught for Teach for America, and we are collaborating on a book.

My *Botany* text for non-majors was published by Benjamin Cummings and has been translated into five other languages. I served as a ranger naturalist on Rialto Beach at Olympic National Park in Washington. I led tide pool walks and gave evening programs focusing on the intertidal zone and on ship wrecks.

I am the author of a number of fiction and non-fiction books. Please visit my websites: www.MurrayNabors.com; www.ChristmasWest.com; www.MagicalDozen.com.

My wife, Adriana Chavez Nabors is an NP-C, APRN (Family Nurse Practitioner) and Nurse-Administrator with specialties in neurology, intensive/critical care, and labor, delivery, and pediatrics. Born in Mexico, she speaks fluent Spanish. She is currently Team Leader of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Pediatrics at Heartland Medical Center. We have six children ranging in age from 7 to 30.

Yours truly,



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