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Dear Search Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong interest in the position of Animal Sciences Department Chair at the University of Florida. I am currently a tenured Full Professor and Extension Dairy Specialist in the department of Animal, Veterinary and Food Sciences at the University of Idaho and have served as an Acting/Interim Department Head for the last year. I believe that you will find that my education, background, knowledge, appreciation of the Land Grant University mission, professional experiences, people skills, and vision for this position make me a strong candidate. I am a highly self-motivated and energetic individual with excellent communication and leadership skills. I work closely with people to successfully drive positive changes.

I obtained an undergraduate degree in agricultural engineering from the Lebanese University. My post-graduate studies in Animal Production were conducted at the International Center for Advanced Agronomic Studies in Zaragoza, Spain (CIHEAM), and my MS degree in ruminant nutrition was conducted at CIHEAM and at the Veterinary School in Barcelona, Spain. Additionally, I received my doctorate in Animal Sciences from the University of Minnesota. I have a very diverse background that allows me to understand the importance of agriculture as a whole and the critical role that the animal industries play in the state of Florida and globally.

As a faculty member at the University of Idaho for more than two decades, I have had Extension, Research and Teaching appointments. This split appointment has allowed me to experience the three intertwined missions of the Land Grant University and appreciate their importance. I maintain an active and productive interdisciplinary research program with a team of undergraduate students, graduate students, and visiting scholars from around the world. I have published over 90 peer-reviewed publications. I have also submitted multiple Hatch projects and have been a member of the Multistate Research Project NC2042 titled "Management Systems to Improve the Economic and Environmental Sustainability of Dairy Enterprises" for over ten years. I served in Leadership positions as NC2042 secretary in 2019 and chair in 2020.

I appreciate the University of Florida teaching mission as a core mission of the Land Grant University, and I have experience teaching classes at the undergraduate and graduate levels. I believe in the importance of producing skilled professionals with hands-on experience and classroom instruction who can contribute to our animal and food industries. I am passionate about encouraging undergraduate students' involvement in research and Extension to bring them real-life experience. Such experiences allow them to apply their theoretical knowledge while addressing real-world challenges.

As an Extension Dairy Specialist, I have worked to deliver relevant, practical information to stakeholders through a strong applied program in dairy management, always with the goal of improving their livelihoods. My research and Extension activities are grounded in the needs of the people I serve, which I identify through regular in-person engagement and the guidance of an active advisory board.

I have successfully obtained and managed grants and contracts from both public and private agencies, supporting complex, multidisciplinary projects. I collaborate effectively in team settings but can make timely, informed decisions when needed. My work reflects a strong record of improving people's lives by bridging the gap between knowledge and practice. I have partnered successfully with faculty across and beyond campus including colleagues in other University of Idaho departments and colleges as well as academics across the United States and internationally. Much of my research has taken place on commercial dairies, requiring close collaboration with producers, private businesses, and local communities.

I have played a national leadership role in developing and delivering producer-based information through eXtension via DAIReXNET where I served as a founder, a member of the Executive Committee and a Subject Leader. I have also served on dozens of committees at the national level, including the Western Dairy Management Conference, Waste to Worth, American Dairy Science Extension Committee, and National Mastitis Council Education Committee, to name a few.

I have a proven track record of leadership at the University of Idaho, where I have served as Acting/Interim Department Head for the Animal, Veterinary and Food Sciences (AVFS) department for the last year. I was chosen unanimously by all the faculty in the department. AVFS is the largest department in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences both in faculty numbers and undergraduate/graduate students. This experience has allowed me the opportunity to supervise a group of 30 faculty housed on-campus (60%) and off-campus (40%). My leadership style blends the strength of a warrior with the empathy of a relator. I am decisive when action is needed, yet I always lead with respect first, ensuring that individuals feel valued and heard. I am deeply passionate about the success and the growth of faculty and students, and I strive to remain calm under pressure, providing stability and focus even in challenging circumstances.

My more than two decades in academia allow me to make thoughtful, informed decisions that balance immediate needs with long-term goals. Above all, I love mentoring faculty, helping them navigate their professional paths, develop their strengths, and achieve their full potential. I am deeply committed to fostering civility and creating a pleasant, safe, and supportive environment where faculty, staff, and students can thrive. I believe that respect and trust are foundational to productivity and collaboration. While I am idealistic in thought, I remain realistic in action, ensuring that our strategic goals are achievable and grounded in institutional priorities. I place great value on building meaningful relationships, as trust and connection are essential for collective success. Above all, I emphasize clear, transparent, and timely communication that keeps everyone informed and engaged. I also recognize that in academia, responsiveness and decisiveness are crucial to maintaining momentum and achieving our shared goals efficiently and effectively.

I have extensive experience facilitating advisory and strategic planning meetings to identify and advance departmental priorities. I worked closely with our on-campus and off-campus dairy, beef, sheep, equine, swine, and aquaculture animal units to monitor performance and support their ability to operate in an entrepreneurial and financially sustainable manner. In the last year, I have successfully hired and mentored three new faculty members and secured approval for two additional positions to be filled in the spring semester. My service record includes participation on numerous committees, including Promotion and Tenure, the University of Idaho Faculty Appeal Board, and curriculum and graduate committees. For more than four years, I have also served as the Extension Team Leader for the Food Production Systems Priority Extension Theme, the largest group of Extension faculty at the University of Idaho, contributing to the development of the Federal Plan of Work and fostering collaboration across plant and livestock faculty. This effort has strengthened systems integration and enhanced both research and Extension projects. In addition, I lead the Extension component of the Idaho Sustainable Agriculture Initiative for Dairy, a \$10-million USDA Sustainable Agricultural Systems grant. Collectively, these roles have helped me refine and strengthen my leadership skills.

I greatly enjoy mentoring faculty and have a deep understanding of the Promotion and Tenure process. Throughout my career, I have worked both on-campus and off-campus, and I am proud to have served, formally and informally, as a mentor to colleagues across a range of locations and disciplines. Supporting faculty success brings me genuine joy and professional fulfillment. I offer a unique combination of education, experience, and accomplishments, and my long career within academia and the Land-Grant system has equipped me with the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed as a scientist, researcher, manager, and administrator. I understand the complexities of academic environments and am patient, adept at managing budgets, and skilled at reducing administrative barriers while adhering to required policies and regulations. I also bring strong interpersonal skills and fluency in four languages, enabling me to connect meaningfully with diverse individuals and communities.

The strength of the Animal Sciences Department will largely depend on the development of productive on and off-campus faculty members who feel valued. I envision a department chair's role as being the department's representative and an advocate of faculty. Having productive and collegiate faculty will substantially improve the reputation and further enhance the strength of a department while maintaining strong morale and job satisfaction.

Building effective relationships with students, allied industry, upper-administration, stakeholders, government agencies, and the general public is critical for the long-term success of a department. My diverse background and effective role as interim department head and Extension Specialist have prepared me for such an important endeavor. I will work on building relationships with both graduate and undergraduate student groups, department and college alumni groups, upper administration, potential donors, industry and stakeholder/producer groups as well as community colleges and government agencies.

I have extensive experience working collaboratively with the University of Idaho and the College development teams to advance fundraising initiatives that directly support current academic

missions and University and College initiatives. Such initiatives include the Idaho Center for Food, Agriculture and the Environment (CAFE), the largest research dairy in the nation, and also a brand new Meat and Innovation Center. Through these partnerships, I have successfully helped secure funding for programs, student opportunities, and departmental priorities, aligning donor interests with institutional goals. I take pride in cultivating strong relationships with alumni, donors, and community partners, communicating the department's vision in a way that inspires engagement and investment. My collaborative and strategic approach has resulted in tangible successes in fundraising, strengthening the department's resources and enhancing our capacity to serve students and faculty.

I understand the importance of the Food and Animal Industries nationally and globally. I know that my experience, education, skills and interest in this position offer you the qualities you seek in a candidate. I sincerely appreciate the consideration of my application. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (208) 308-5197.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Chahine', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

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