

November 10, 2025

Prof. Eric W. Triplett
Chair, Microbiology and Cell Science Department
University of Florida – IFAS
Gainesville, FL 32611
Email: ewt@ufl.edu

Re: #537393

Dear Dr. Triplett and Search Committee,

Please accept this letter as my application for the position of Professor and Chair of the Department of Animal Sciences at University of Florida. I am honored to apply for this position because I have always held UF in high regard as a leader in Animal Science. A recent opportunity to visit the campus as chair of the Dairy Unit's external review team only underscored that perception. As requested for the application process, I have also uploaded my CV detailing my career preparation for this position and contact information for three references. I would prefer that you not disclose my application to others until I may be a finalist for this position. If you require more details of my career here at University of Minnesota (UMN) or previously at Purdue University, I would be pleased to provide a copy of my entire activities document at your request.

After growing up on a small commercial Holstein dairy farm in central Minnesota, I attended UMN-Morris for two years prior to recognizing my desire to pursue education in Agriculture, and specifically Animal Science. I transferred as a junior to the UMN St. Paul Campus to major in Animal Science. I was a member of Block and Bridle, a founding member of Gopher Dairy Club, and a member of the 1983 Dairy Judging Team. I participated in internships with Kraft Foods in Melrose, MN and with Midwest Breeders in Shawano, WI. Those activities and internships have grounded many aspects of my education and career foci in milk quality and genetics. So, I value internships, international experiences, and student option clubs to create confident, competent, aware, and nimble graduates. Providing these experiences within and outside of the classroom requires dedicated faculty who remain abreast of changing science, technology, businesses, and farms.

Upon graduation, I remained at UMN to obtain my MS degree in Animal Breeding and then went on to earn my PhD in Animal Breeding and Genetics at Iowa State University. Prior to my arrival at Purdue University where I spent the first 22 years of my faculty career, I completed post-doctoral training in dairy cattle genetics at the USDA Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory in Beltsville, MD, and then, for two years, worked as Chief Geneticist for Canadian Beef Improvement. I led efforts in Canada to transfer beef cattle genetics programs from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to the private sector in Calgary, Alberta. In both of those early-career positions, I was strongly engaged with the stakeholders those organizations served. The experiences I gained in the beef and dairy sectors assisted greatly in broadening my

perspectives for roles in Dairy Extension, Agriculture and Natural Resources administration, and Department Head by sharpening my focus on issues affecting many stakeholders.

In 2003, I was named the Purdue University Animal Sciences Department's Extension coordinator and, in that capacity, coordinated the department's planning and delivery of the annual *Animal Sciences Training for ANR Educators*. Each year I went outside the boundaries of the Animal Sciences Department to include those specialists or outside speakers best suited to assist the ANR Educators in attaining the necessary level of understanding of key issues...such as the impact of dramatic swings in feed prices on livestock production in 2008, the moldy corn issues of 2009, the severe drought of 2012, or the agricultural flooding of 2015. Thus, while much of my career has been in dairy, I have been able to transition successfully to beef, equine, poultry, small ruminants, and other areas of Animal Science, and agriculture more broadly.

In the Extension Coordinator role at Purdue, I also led the Animal Sciences Faculty in planning initial responses to diverse issues such as potential for use of bioenergy co-product feeds and EPA'S Air Emissions Consent Agreement and National Monitoring Study. Furthermore, I have networked with many crop, livestock, and poultry commodity organization leaders through my participation in the Indiana Livestock Alliance and Livestock Roundtable discussion sessions. My representation of dairy industry views during the Confined Feeding Operation rulemaking process and my ongoing involvement in animal science issues have gained numerous interactions with the Indiana Board of Animal Health, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Indiana Board of Health, the Indiana Legislative Rural Caucus, and other state organizations.

While at Purdue University I had a majority Extension appointment, but I was actively committed to the other Land-grant missions as well. Prior to my appointment as Assistant Director of Extension in 2014, I utilized my engagement with the Indiana Dairy Industry to enhance co-instruction of Animal Sciences 444 (Dairy Production) and to conceive, create, and deliver Animal Sciences 485 (Dairy Farm Evaluation) to challenge advanced level undergraduate students to critically assess modern dairy enterprises. Attesting to the success of this course, Dairy Challenge Teams I coached as an optional activity won first place platinum recognition at the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge in 2008 and 2009. I also served as an undergraduate advisor to 20 to 30 students each semester and as an advisor for the Purdue University Dairy Club, which was frequently recognized as the top option club in the College of Agriculture.

Additionally, I supported my outreach program with multidisciplinary research in dairy cattle genetics and management in the areas of 1) pre-partum milking of dairy heifers, 2) genetic decision making for pasture-based dairy farms, 3) standardization of dairy cattle production records, and 4) technologies for early intervention to allow prevention and alleviation of animal disease. Perhaps the accomplishments for which I am best known include genetic evaluation of somatic cell scores, the Genetic Grazing Merit Index for selection of dairy sires and dams in pastoral management systems, and efforts in automatic body temperature recording of cows. My international reputation in dairy cattle genetics is evidenced by my previous appointment as Senior Editor of the Genetics section of the *Journal of Dairy Science*.

Immediately prior to my move to UMN in 2018, I served as the Assistant Director of Extension at Purdue University and Program Leader for Agriculture and Natural Resources. I also had a 20%-time faculty appointment as a Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences. Prior to my appointment as Assistant director in June 2014, I served as Associate Department Head of Animal Sciences at Purdue for one year, which included close collaboration with the Industry Advisory Board. Over time, I assumed an ever-greater role in mentoring faculty in Animal

Sciences and other departments in their career development and in utilizing methods for evaluating their programs, measuring impact of those programs, and strengthening their cases for promotion and tenure.

As Assistant Director of Extension at Purdue, I oversaw three Assistant Program Leaders, 1 Administrative Assistant, and 3 statewide Educators. However, I also reviewed, evaluated, and made salary recommendations for 92 county-based Extension Educators who reported to District Directors. I was involved in the recruitment, assessment, hiring, and training, of Educators, and we hired 40 new Extension Educators during my 4-year tenure from 2014-2018. Further, I advised and coordinated the efforts of approximately 60 campus-based specialists who reported directly to Department Heads. Because I had few direct reports and did not make final salary decisions, I depended on transparency and clear communication of desired outcomes and their importance to persuade multi-disciplinary teams to act and function at a high level.

Extension Educators and specialists were arranged in eight specialized Focus Groups, and one of my key roles was to alert those focus groups to emerging issues and often to recruit ad hoc teams to address important issues, such as invasive species, precision farming technologies, avian influenza outbreaks, water quality impacts, and many others. This required careful coordination with farms and allied industry. In the final two years, much effort was in the areas of conservation in response to Western Lake Erie Algae Blooms and hypoxia and in urban agriculture and local foods in response to rapidly growing demand. Through efforts in those areas, I got to know and work with many state agencies such as NRCS, SWCDs, and local and state food councils. If I am the successful candidate for your Animal Sciences Department Chair position, I would similarly network with outside stakeholders of the Animal Science Department. Further, I worked closely with the Extension ANR Advisory Team, which I expanded to create more demographic and ideological diversity. The ANR Advisory Team worked cohesively and served as a sounding board to create a forward-looking vision for ANR programs, but also to help communicate a clear vision for our programs.

Being Assistant Director afforded me the opportunity to develop skills in personnel management and to learn about my own leadership and management skills. In Extension, I had the opportunity to enhance my skills in 1) Leadership through the North Central Extension Leadership Development program, 2) Diversity through the Navigating Differences program and development of a cultural awareness program *Sharing More Than a Border*, and 3) Management decision-making through the North Central Agricultural Administrators Bootcamp. I served as chair of the College of Agriculture's Promotion and Advancement Committee for Academic and Professional (non-tenure) staff. Furthermore, I frequently attended College of Agriculture Academic Council meetings on behalf of the Associate Dean and Director of Extension, which I continue to do as a regular member here at UMN.

Since 2018, I have served as the Head of the Department of Animal Science at UMN in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). In this role, I lead 24 tenure track faculty, 4 term faculty, 1 senior lecturer, 3 support staff, and 3 livestock facility managers. Our Animal Science undergraduate major is home to 400 undergraduate students and is the largest in CFANS. Additionally, we have 36 graduate students and 5 post-doctoral researchers. Our facilities comprise approximately 175,000 square feet of space, nearly double any other CFANS department. Most of that space results from animal facilities on campus and under departmental management at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center. Managing facilities in support of the Teaching, Research, and Outreach missions of a Land Grant University have been a necessary focus of my efforts. I am pleased to be partnering with CFANS administration in pursuit of a \$480M investment in Future of Advanced Agricultural Research for Minnesota (FAARM) to support a "One Health" approach to livestock systems

research and replace scalable research that is cost-prohibitive in the middle of the Twin Cities Metro area.

Working closely with the CFANS Financial support team, I manage a budget of approximately \$5M in recurring funds (mainly faculty and staff salaries), and \$500K in non-recurring funds largely generated from shared tuition revenue and Indirect Costs of Research (ICR). I have worked tirelessly to manage budgets of our livestock facilities, and to redirect resources to offset budgetary deficits that accrued over many years. Taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in UMN Development Workshops for leadership and working with the CFANS Development Team, I have attracted support to designate and refurbish a teaching laboratory and support study abroad scholarships for undergraduate students. A present effort underway is to create an endowment to support dairy judging and animal welfare assessment activities. Further, I have worked with 3 key stakeholders to establish 2 undergraduate scholarships and one graduate student assistantship.

During my tenure as Head, I have striven to balance the Land Grant University roles of Teaching, Research, and Extension in the Department of Animal Science, while highlighting the role of service by our faculty. Among my key accomplishments in each area were: Research: increasing grants and gifts generated by faculty by 24% through strategic investment of available funds in emerging research efforts; Teaching: encouraging creative course offerings for the growing percentage of pre-veterinary medicine students and developing innovative approaches such as hosting the Midwest Poultry Consortium's Center of Excellence which attracts outstanding poultry science students from North Central Universities and the University of Florida; Extension: Increasing the number of FTE's in Extension by reinvigorating efforts in applied research and outreach in new areas of precision farming technologies and livestock sustainability while refilling programmatic gaps in dairy and beef management. Further, I am proud of my support of the efforts of the Inclusivity Committee in the Department of Animal Science and the faculty's efforts to codify expectations into our Promotion and Tenure guidelines.

My career path has afforded me the opportunity for steady growth in responsibility and accountability. I have gained experience in creating budgets, managing accounts, and balancing income and expenses. As treasurer of Indiana Professional Dairy Producers, I led all aspects of budgeting and advising the board of directors on financial matters. I also held national leadership roles with fiscal responsibility for American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) and Federation of Animal Science Societies (FASS). As Assistant Director of Extension, I managed a \$50,000 budget for ANR programming. Budget management has been a critical part of my faculty role in securing and managing grant funds, contributing to departmental budgeting as an Associate Department Head, and now assuming responsibility for a \$5.5M budget as Department Head.

Similarly, over the course of my career, I have had the opportunity to participate in leadership training opportunities such as the National Extension Leadership Development Program, the North Central Agricultural Administrators Bootcamp, Big 10 Committee on Institutional Cooperation Academic Leadership Fellow, and UMN Academic Development Leadership Program. Through these programs, I have had an opportunity to learn about strategies that contribute to effective university leadership, but also about my own leadership attributes and strengths as a leader. I have a very collaborative leadership style; and listen and balance diverse points of view before finalizing decisions. According to StrengthsFinder (now Clifton Strengths) assessment, my key strengths are "Learner", "Achiever", "Harmony", "Developer" and "Belief". These attributes indicate that I consistently get up to speed on projects, calm tense situations and negotiate mutually beneficial solutions, encourage teams, mentor individuals in their positions, and am dependable, ethical, and responsible. My faculty have indicated that I have increased

their trust in departmental leadership and that my listening skills and transparency have helped to create a more inclusive feeling and sense of belonging.

Presently, the vision of the Animal Sciences Department at UF is “To be the global leader in Animal Sciences, enabling faculty, students, and stakeholders to lead and shape the future of animal agriculture”. The Department of Animal Sciences has elite programs in undergraduate and graduate teaching, research, and Extension in Florida, the US, and the world that will continue to serve animal and food industries. As a listener and collaborative leader, it is important to me and, hopefully to the Department’s faculty and stakeholders, that we create a shared vision to advance UF’s leadership in Animal Sciences. I see the following as operational elements to propel an academic vision to success.

The Department of Animal Sciences will:

- support and value the tripartite mission of the Land-Grant University.
- attract, onboard, mentor, and retain the best students, faculty, and staff.
- develop life-long learners who understand and appreciate science and can utilize what they have learned to solve problems, communicate, and deliver appropriate solutions.
- deliver a balanced curriculum for students who wish to be engaged with production agriculture, veterinary medicine, or continued scientific pursuit.
- utilize technologies, including artificial intelligence and social media, to allow ready access for life-long learning and critical analysis.
- assist students in developing their plan of study, exploring career objectives, and obtaining internships and employment.
- support inclusion of all and encourage students and faculty to seek opportunities to encounter new cultures and experiences.
- conduct cutting-edge fundamental and ready-to-use disciplinary and multidisciplinary research.
- engage with industry collaborators in support of research and instruction.
- provide Extension programs that transform lives and livelihoods in the state, region, nation, and world.
- successfully compete for internal, external, and cost recovery funds to support our programs in all mission areas.
- celebrate successes and accomplishments.

The future of animal agriculture in Florida is evolving and bright with enormous possibilities to gain influence regionally, nationally, and globally. I hope that you will agree that my experiences have garnered leadership, fiscal responsibility, and communication skills to help guide UF Animal Sciences into the second quarter of the 21st Century. I would value the opportunity to discuss and explore this position in more detail as you proceed with the search process. Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me any time on my cell phone (765-427-3094) or by e-mail (mschutz@umn.edu).

Sincerely,



Mike Schutz
Professor and Head
Department of Animal Sciences