Dear Dr. Cross:

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the position of Head in the Department of Agricultural Economics. It is a distinct honor to be nominated for this important position and I want to thank you and the committee for taking the time to consider my application. I will discuss my motivations for applying, my qualifications, administrative philosophy, plans for external funding and how I plan to enhance synergies across teaching, research and extension. My aspiration is to lead the department to national prominence as a land grant institution. I believe we have the potential, the people and the resources to become one of the top tier departments in the country, but as noted in our recent external review, we have some decisions to make and some work to do first.

My approach will be vision led, engaged and highly active, participatory and facilitative, team focused, and mission oriented. I hope what is outlined below will help you understand how I might work with the department to achieve this vision.

There are several reasons I decided to apply for this position. First, the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M has the reputation of adhering to the land grant mission, an approach I strongly support and believe in. Second, I think there are opportunities to expand the role of the department in all three functional areas, and internationally, and I think I can contribute to those efforts. Finally, several colleagues and friends encouraged me to apply, and after much thought and reflection, I decided to do so.

**Qualifications**

My qualifications for department head stem largely from direct involvement in extension, research and teaching programs throughout my career. Fund raising, budget management and coordination of a diverse group of faculty and institutions characterize my administrative roles. I also have developed and delivered programs to a broad constituency ranging from producers and producer groups, agribusinesses, international trade facilitators, commodity organizations, trade associations, state and federal agencies, and state and federal legislative staff.

As examples, while serving as director of the Center for North American Studies (CNAS), we were successful at increasing the annual operating budget from about $80,000 to more than $1.0 million, employing 25 people. I led and coordinated programs at the four cooperating institutions including AgriLife Research and Extension, Louisiana State University, Texas Tech University and New Mexico State University. Major activities included preparation and submission of grant applications, participation in research and extension programs and the...
coordination of federal affairs offices to educate Congressional staff about trade issues and to maintain funding. While at Clemson University, I served as the Acting Director of International Programs in the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. In this role, I was responsible for the administration of grants and contracts related to international development projects.

Since 2005, I have led the department’s master’s program in Guatemala. The program involves ten TAMU faculty and is located at the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG) in Guatemala City. It provides a Master’s in Applied Economics and Business Administration awarded by UVG. Importantly, this program has strong similarities to our own agribusiness master’s, with emphasis on applied research, practical experience and hosting two cohorts of about 35 students. I lead and coordinate curriculum development and review, program promotion and advertising, budget oversight and administration, class scheduling and travel coordination. I also meet periodically with UVG program administration, and the Rector and Vice Rectors of UVG to discuss program progress, direction and administration.

**Administrative Philosophy**

In times of declining resources and increasing demand on programs, people and the unit, there is a need for vision, strong leadership, mentoring and teamwork, and effective management. I would bring those attributes to the position, emphasizing the land grant mission of providing practical educational opportunities for the public good.

Establishing a clear, unified vision for the department would be my first priority. Building Synergies through Diversity would be the theme. To capture these synergies, however, will first require a shared vision developed and supported by our faculty, our staff and, of course, our students. Our department is probably one of the most diverse in the country, with a large number of sub-disciplines, wide geographic dispersion across the state and strong support from a large, broad and diverse constituency base. Yet, we are very specialized and somewhat ‘stove-piped’ in our individual approaches. This is normal, and even a necessary condition in order to publish and achieve superior scholarship in any discipline. With limited resources, setting priorities is crucial, and may possibly mean letting go of some of the things we have done in the past and developing new goals and objectives. This won’t be an easy task, but one that I think is necessary in order to position the department to continue to accomplish our land grant mission well into the future.

One of the most important aspects of my administrative approach would be leadership by example. I’m not a cheerleader or great orator, but I am effective at harnessing resources for a common purpose and getting things done. I would plan to continue to remain engaged in my extension program, conducting educational programs for some key constituency groups. I also would continue to teach one of my two courses, remaining engaged with students. I have several research projects that are pending completion, and I plan to remain active in those until they are finished. International work has been a major part of my program for many years, and I would like to stay involved in the master’s program in Guatemala, at least in the near term, turning over leadership of that program after one or two years.

As department head, I plan to build strong relationships with our external constituents, including producer and commodity groups, state and federal agencies, businesses and policy makers, and
our former students. I also expect to spend more time in each of our extension districts meeting with faculty and staff to assess their needs, constraints and capabilities. As budgets get tighter, our effectiveness and continued visibility in the state are imperative, and our district economists are on the front line of this important task. Everything the department does to assist them and enhance their productivity helps us all and makes the unit even better.

The departmental administration does an excellent job. Maintaining excellence requires training, mentoring and professional development and would be one of the foundations of my philosophy. The department and its administration must function as a team, working together to achieve the mission and objectives of the unit. I would expect to have a highly effective administrative team focused on working with faculty, staff and students to achieve our agreed upon strategic priorities to develop national prominence in all we do.

External Funding
External funding is already of critical importance to our research and extension programs. Probably the greatest challenge our department faces is how to enhance external funding, while effectively delivering core programs. To develop the synergies noted above, I think it important to build faculty coalitions, or teams, capturing the diversity of our collective expertise. While USDA agencies can be a viable source of funds for some programs, most have experienced substantial reductions in funding in the recent past. AFRI/NIFA has potential for funding, but a clear and central leadership role for agricultural economists remains illusive. I recently led an effort attempting to elevate economics in priority for funding, with some limited success, but most of the opportunities seem to provide funding for economists to serve as analysts to evaluate results rather than lead multi-disciplinary research and extension projects. I believe we need to mount a national effort to enhance the role of agricultural economics in all aspects of federal program funding.

Foundations, commodity associations, corporations and private businesses may hold some potential for external funding as well. I’ve been somewhat surprised by the willingness of some state commodity associations to provide partial funding for economic analysis. More opportunities such as this will certainly arise in the future and there is potential to harness the synergies of our department in solving some of these highly relevant, practical social problems. Foundations, corporations and private businesses may hold less potential, at least in the near term, as many of them conserve cash to guard against economic and regulatory uncertainty. The economic climate will improve, however, and I think it imperative that the department be positioned to anticipate funding opportunities, muster our diverse set of faculty expertise and take an active role in capturing our share of these resources. I think we need to agree on several (3 or 4) top priority funding initiatives and be ready to make them a reality.

Building Synergies Across Research, Teaching and Extension
Finally, let me address the need to foster programmatic excellence and national prominence across all three of our functional areas: research, teaching and extension. Building Synergies through Diversity can be critical in times of limited resources and increasing demands on programs and people. I think it imperative that all of our faculty clearly understand and appreciate the different roles and responsibilities we each have. We certainly have a strong Agribusiness teaching program with several faculty receiving awards and other honors. We lead
nationally in many extension areas such as agricultural policy, finance and marketing. Our research program in natural resources and demand analysis is nationally recognized and often lauded. The challenge is to elevate other programs to this level of excellence and to continue to strive for national prominence in already strong programs.

To accomplish this goal, extension faculty need to appreciate the need for scholarship in extension and research, and research/teaching faculty need to appreciate the importance of delivering highly relevant, unbiased educational programs to a highly diverse constituency. All faculty should appreciate our department’s public trust to deliver a practical education to an ever-changing and diverse constituency. How to develop this understanding across not only functional areas, but sub-disciplines would be one of my top priorities. My initial approach would be based on the premise that we understand best by seeing and doing, and becoming involved and interested in the success of our colleagues, regardless of their respective roles in the department. I would like to foster an environment in which research/teaching faculty work with extension faculty to develop some highly visible educational programs and participate in the delivery of those programs. I would also hope our extension faculty would become more active in reaching out to their research counterparts for collaboration on applied research projects. Getting younger faculty more directly involved in graduate student mentoring and research, leading to higher research productivity would also be a top priority for me. I think we do some of these things now, but I also believe we can do more to take our individual and collective productivity to a higher level, building on our diversity rather than letting it be a barrier.

These are certainly interesting times, with news of the upcoming legislative session already intimating further cuts in state budgets. How we adjust and turn this impending shortfall into an opportunity will greatly influence our enrollment, research output, extension programs and delivery methods. My goal is to achieve some flexibility in our own budget to fill vacant positions, capture funds from unfilled vacancies for other uses, such as salary adjustment and operations, and explore the possibility of more joint appointments, where warranted.

Thank you again for the opportunity to apply for this critical position. I hope that my comments have addressed all of the questions mentioned in the position announcement. If I need to clarify anything or respond to other questions, please let me know.

C. Parr Rosson, III
Professor and Extension Economist
Director, Center for North American Studies