



Office of the Dean
College of Arts & Sciences

October 17, 2007

Ms. Alison Falk
Isaacson, Miller
334 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Alison:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the search for a new Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. After reading the call for applications and nominations and exploring the UHM website for more information, I believe that my skills and experience would be an excellent fit with this position. I enclose an updated *curriculum vitae* with bibliography and an annotated list of six references.

Since 1988, I have held a continuous series of academic leadership positions at the level of department chair and above, and prior to accepting my current position, I was very active as a leader in faculty governance. While I have proven management skills, I have never been satisfied with the idea of simply being a good administrator of the units for which I was responsible. Rather, I have endeavored to be the leader of those units, and I believe that this approach has been a major contributor to my success.

I am currently serving my sixth year as Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Stony Brook. At Stony Brook, the College of Arts & Sciences encompasses the fine arts, the humanities, the social and behavioral sciences, the biological sciences, the physical sciences, and mathematics, and is the locus for secondary teacher education within those disciplines, and thus corresponds to four-plus of the academic units that report to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. As Dean, I have responsibility for budget; faculty appointments, promotions, and tenure; and non-faculty personnel, as well as for educational programs and curriculum. The College of Arts & Sciences at Stony Brook includes more than five hundred full-time faculty and more than twelve thousand (full-time-equivalent) undergraduate and graduate students (2006-2007), and has an annual (all funds) budget of more than \$108 million (approximately \$65 million for 2007-2008, when one excludes pass through funds, such as the direct costs of sponsored research).

For the fourteen years preceding my current position, I chaired departments in the College of Arts & Science and in the School of Medicine at Vanderbilt University. During those years I was deeply involved in completely reworking undergraduate and graduate programs. I also was elected by my colleagues to many positions in faculty governance, including Chair of the University Faculty Senate, Chair of the Arts & Science Faculty Council, and Vice Chair of the Graduate Faculty Council (the highest elected office in that body), and I also served for three years as a member of the Executive Faculty of the School of Medicine. I have been recognized for my contributions to

affirmative action (1990 Vanderbilt University Affirmative Action Award), teaching and mentoring (1998-1999 Golden Apple Award), and faculty governance (1999 Thomas Jefferson Award). The breadth of my experience in leadership positions in Arts & Sciences, the School of Medicine, and in faculty governance organizations would be, I believe, a particularly strong background for Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. From my perspective, it is critically important for a Chief Academic Officer to understand the roles and to value the contributions of deans, department chairs, and leaders of faculty governance to appreciate fully what authority is (and is not) appropriately delegated to incumbents of each of those positions. Having experience at each of those levels would help me to be a Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs who would lead without encroaching on the responsibilities of deans, chairs, and leaders of faculty governance and to manage well without micro-managing.

The period during which I have served as Dean at Stony Brook has been an especially challenging one. Shortly after my arrival in July 2002, the bottom fell out of the New York State budget, a delayed effect of the stock market decline in 2000, followed by the 9/11 tragedy in 2001. As a consequence, the continuing base budget of the College of Arts and Sciences was reduced 5% for 2002-2003 and an additional 7% for 2003-2004. Since the base budget funds almost entirely personnel costs, this required a contraction in faculty, staff, and TA positions, while there was no concomitant reduction in students to be served. So, though I was recruited to build programs, one of my main tasks was to lead a controlled contraction, carefully maintaining the strengths that led to Stony Brook's recent admission to the AAU. I managed this without resorting to retrenchment, while bringing the budget back into balance by the end of 2004-2005. Rather, I did not fill any but the most critical faculty and staff positions opened by retirement or resignation, carefully contracted the pool of teaching assistantships, and audited course offerings and teaching loads to maximize the efficiency of the full-time and part-time faculty. In a University Senate survey of administrative performance carried out during the course of this contraction, I was given noteworthy high marks for academic leadership, suggesting that I have been successful in getting faculty and professional staff to buy into these difficult and painful measures.

I could not let bad economic times distract from moving the College forward. One issue that I began to address as soon as I arrived was that of the relatively poor graduation rate (52% reported in 2002 for the six-year cohort who entered as freshmen in 1995), given Stony Brook's selectivity and academic resources. A corollary issue is that while Stony Brook had developed an international draw for graduate students, in 2002-2003 only 4% of its undergraduates were from outside of the State of New York. Analysis of the algorithm used by *US News & World Report* suggested to me that improving the graduation rate could have a dramatic effect on rankings, which, in turn, could make us much more attractive to out-of-state students. Bringing this line of reasoning back to the economic condition of the College, changing the mix of students to include more out-of-state undergraduates, who pay more than twice the tuition of in-state undergraduates, could bring us back to economic health faster than any foreseeable increase in State support. During 2003-2004, a plan for organized out-of-state recruitment of undergraduate students beginning with the Northeast region was approved by the President. This plan was implemented during 2004-2005, and we matriculated in Fall 2005 the largest incoming class of out-of-state undergraduate students in Stony Brook's short history (9%), with a further increases in the Fall 2006 (12%) and Fall of 2007 (15%).

Analysis of retention data showed that of the 48% of freshman who did not graduate from Stony Brook in the 1995-2001 cohort, only about one-third of those (17% of matriculated freshmen) were lost between the freshman and sophomore years. One of the key reasons for failure to retain students beyond the sophomore year seemed to me to be the advising system. With the exception of a few majors in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, undergraduates are admitted to Stony Brook without affiliation with a specific academic college, gaining that affiliation when they declare a major, ideally during the third semester. This separates pre-major advising, which is carried out by an office that reports directly to the Provost, from major advising, which is carried out by the Departments and Programs and reports to the Dean. My office reached out to the new director of the office responsible for pre-major advising, and invited him and his staff to join our DUGS (Directors of Undergraduate Studies) group, a group convened by one of my Associate Deans. The results of their combined efforts have been all that we could hope for. In the summer of 2003, the number of upper division students (those with credit for three semesters or more of full-time course work) pre-registered for the Fall 2003 semester who had not declared a major totaled approximately 1,400. As a result of this initiative, by mid-semester, the number had been reduced to fewer than 400, and we have continued to keep this number down by encouraging and monitoring timely declaration of the major. An important result of this and other initiatives in enhancing retention (the current freshman retention rate is 89%) is a slowly but steadily rising six-year graduation rate, which is projected to surpass 60% this year for the first time in the recent history of the University. These improvements have also contributed to the rapid rise in Stony Brook's ranking for undergraduate programs (National Universities) in *U.S. News & World Report*, which has gone up twenty-one places in the past four years.

I have broad experience in faculty development, recruiting outstanding junior and senior faculty candidates and mentoring junior faculty through promotion and tenure. I am particularly proud of my record in promoting the careers of talented young faculty. When I moved to Stony Brook, I left a department with a Pew National Scholar and a Searle Scholar, young faculty whom I recruited, nurtured, and nominated for these awards, two of the most prestigious career awards in the biological and biomedical sciences. (One of the two is now a full professor and holds an endowed chair; the other recently received a MacArthur Award.) As a result of a nomination in which I participated as Dean, a young Stony Brook colleague was selected as a Pew National Scholar. At the senior level, though I was severely restricted by the budget circumstances outlined above, I brought back to Stony Brook a distinguished faculty member—who was elected last year to the National Academy of Sciences—who had left Stony Brook for a department chairmanship elsewhere at the time that I arrived. In my capacities as Chair and Dean, I have played key roles in the promotion and tenure process, including service at the school and university level on promotion and tenure committees, and on committees for appeal of cases of denied tenure. I am particularly proud of new programs of mentoring and of mid-probationary period review that I have implemented for tenure-track junior faculty at Stony Brook. I am also proud of what I have done to diversify leadership positions in the College, one result of which is that the proportion of departments chaired by women has doubled during my term as Dean.

I have been engaged in strategic academic planning and implementation at the Department, College and University levels. One important strategy for a research university to compete more effectively is to identify emerging areas of research that build on the strengths of the institution. Such emerging areas are often found at the interfaces between traditional disciplines; however, such

interdisciplinary initiatives must be undergirded by strong disciplinary units. In 1988, I founded the Molecular Biophysics Training Program at Vanderbilt, an inter-school graduate training program that spans the biological and physical sciences and involves faculty from several departments in the College of Arts & Science and School of Medicine. From 1989 until I left Vanderbilt, I secured continuous extramural funding for it. A more recent and more complex initiative was the Biological Sciences/Medical Research Building III (BioSci/MRBIII) project at Vanderbilt. BioSci/MRBIII is a 360,000 gross square foot research building that serves as a physical and intellectual bridge between the College of Arts & Science and the School of Medicine. Shared by the two schools east and west, most floors are organized into thematic research centers (*e.g.*, Center for Structural Biology, Center for Molecular Neuroscience), providing important interactions among faculty in several departments of both participating schools. I played a key role in this project from conceptual design through construction and occupancy. My central role in this project has been recognized both locally at Vanderbilt and nationally, in an invitation to give a plenary talk about this project at the Tradeline Conference—a meeting for campus planners, architects, *etc.*—in 2004 in San Francisco. At Stony Brook, I am currently putting this background to work in major renovation/construction projects. I am also involved at Stony Brook in building in another sense—the establishment of several new interdisciplinary research centers, in particular ones that primarily involve humanists and social scientists and that focus on a theme or an area, such as the Center for Global History, the Center for the Study of Working Class Life, and the Japan Center at Stony Brook. I worked closely with faculty in the humanities and lettered social sciences to create a new interdisciplinary Ph.D. track in Comparative Cultural Studies, which was recently approved at the State level, and for which the first graduate class was admitted in Fall 2007. I am a member of the advisory board for a new Institute for Chemical Biology & Drug Discovery. I have arranged several joint faculty appointments between Stony Brook and Brookhaven National Laboratory. These kinds of initiatives provide enhanced opportunities for faculty research in emerging areas and new venues for broadening graduate training.

To be successful, interdisciplinary research and training must be founded on strong disciplines, and for the foreseeable future, these disciplines will be organized in traditional academic departments. Departments can also serve as the organizational units for certain interdisciplinary areas, *e.g.*, in gender and area studies. Changes in disciplinary focus may require restructuring the spectrum of departments within a college. At Vanderbilt, I led the merger of the Department of Molecular Biology and the Department of Biology to form a unified Department of Biological Sciences, which became the principal Arts & Science tenant of BioSci/MRBIII, described above. At Stony Brook, I am deeply involved in the periodic (five to seven year) review of departments and programs, and I have been involved in the creation of one entirely new department, the reorganization and redirection of another, and the dissolution of a third (moving its faculty and staff to appropriate units without retrenchment).

For any research university, creative growth while protecting the core resources of the institution requires extramural funding. In my thirty years as a faculty member, I have written proposals to federal agencies and private philanthropic organizations that have drawn more than eighty grant-years of support. While a major fraction of that grant support has funded my research program, much of it has supported creation of new research resources or of new educational programs and educational resources. These include the graduate training program in Molecular Biophysics, mentioned above; the Vanderbilt Minority Summer Research Program, which I conceived and organized, and which I directed from its inception until my departure from Vanderbilt; a summer

M.S. in Biological Sciences program for secondary school science teachers; and various educational resources, *e.g.*, a computerized teaching laboratory for the introductory course in biological sciences, creating an environment that combined the attributes of a modern wet teaching laboratory and a computer classroom (not particularly remarkable now, but a radical innovation when it was created in 1992); the Stevenson Center Computer Classroom (1995), a state-of-the-art facility with thirty student stations; and equipment for teaching laboratories in genetics, cell biology, neuroscience, and Biomedical Engineering in the School of Engineering. More recently, I wrote a successful proposal to the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation that provides support for teacher candidates in Stony Brook's combined five-year bachelor's/master's teacher training programs in science, mathematics, and TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language).

In addition to extramural funding, current gifts and endowment income are critical to the fiscal health of the modern research university. I was involved with fundraising at Vanderbilt, *e.g.*, as the principal negotiator for the Stanford Moore Professorship of Biochemistry. I am now working hard to help bring Stony Brook, which has no tradition of funding through philanthropy, into the twenty-first century. For example, when I arrived at Stony Brook, the University had only one endowed chair, none in the College of Arts & Sciences. Funding for the first endowed chair in the College was recently completed, I have a signed pledge for funding the second, and I am in advanced discussions with a donor on a third, with more in the pipeline. We are also working on several other large endowments as part of the first Capital Campaign in Stony Brook's history. Active participation in soliciting gifts for endowment-building and current use is one of my responsibilities as Dean, and I would look forward to being active in this area as Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

I have, as requested, provided contact information for references not at Stony Brook in an attached document. I would also be happy to provide contact information for Stony Brook references should my candidacy reach an advanced stage at which that would be appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim Staros".

James V. Staros
Dean