

October 6, 2007

Dr James B. Appleberry
University of Southern Maine Presidential Search Committee
University of Southern Maine
Portland, Maine 04104

Dear Dr. Appleberry and Members of the Presidential Search Committee:

I write to apply for the presidency of the University of Southern Maine. I have considerable administrative experience which prepares me for the roles and responsibilities of such an appointment, and I am particularly interested in pursuing this opportunity because the needs and vision of the institution, as articulated in the search documents, appear to align well with my experience. While the documents which accompany this application offer a substantial overview of some of my most relevant professional experience, I note here two additional aspects of your university which resonate with me.

I am struck by the remarkable contextual resemblance which exists between USM and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) which I serve as Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The institutions are of similar size, are urban institutions with small resident populations, and offer degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. Both institutions offer a full complement of majors in the traditional arts and sciences as well as professional programs in business, education, engineering, and health. Both institutions have law schools. And while, unlike USM, UALR does not have its own school of public service, our stand-alone sister institution, the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, with which we collaborate on a number of projects and issues, is also located in Little Rock, five miles from our main campus and within a few blocks of the our law school. Like USM, UALR has three separate campuses, the primary campus, the law school campus, and a campus in Benton located 20 miles from the main campus. Like USM, UALR is a part of a multi-institution system, the University of Arkansas System which contains both four-year and two-year institutions, in addition to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, the Clinton School, and other specialized components. In addition, our two institutions share a number of demographic similarities including high percentages of both part-time students and students who are 25 years of age and older. And, as I point out in the accompanying materials, we share a mission based on commitment to community. Given this roster of similarities, it should come as no surprise that, in providing a framework for UALR's strategic plan, we identified USM as one of UALR's peer institutions with which we compared ourselves in a number of ways.

My point is that, not only is my experience in line with expectations for USM's next president, but also the context in which I gained that experience is notably similar to USM's.

While institutional fit is a fundamental parameter for me in considering a move to another university, the value of greatest importance to me is a commitment to a vision of excellence. This

value represents the core of who I am, and I am interested in USM because, from the evidence I see, the institution shares this passion. When community leaders and university supporters articulate in a statement such as *The Southern Maine Imperative* that their institution "...must become one of the top-ranked public, regional comprehensive universities in the United States in the quality, breadth, and the accessibility of its academic programs", I see a commitment to a vision of excellence. When an institution affirms community vision with an implementation plan such as *Transforming USM*, I see a commitment to a vision of excellence, not to mention a demonstrated commitment to the community. And when I see an institution dare to grapple with and successfully negotiate the complex philosophical and political landscape of general education reform – and thus actually make vision a reality, I see a commitment to a vision of excellence. This is the kind of academic community with which I want to be affiliated.

It is important for you to know that, should the Board of the University of Maine System hire me to be USM's next president, it will actually be hiring a team. My wife Susan is integrally engaged in the many obligations which accompany my career in university administration and balances those demands remarkably with those of her own professional commitments as a university instructor and performer (she's a singer of both opera and musical theatre) and involvement with community organizations. She would be a partner in leadership, and in a very real sense, we make this application together.

I have attached my *curriculum vitae* which details my professional experience, my personal statement of alignment with USM expectations, and a list of references which includes appropriate contact information and brief details of my professional relationship with each. I look forward to hearing from you and shall be glad to help facilitate the processing of my application in any way possible.

Sincerely yours,

David O. Belcher
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs