

Ben F. Bigelow

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Dixie Technical College Presidential Search Committee
610 S Tech Ridge Dr
St. George, UT 84770

Dear Search Committee members,

This letter is to provide you with more about my experience in educational leadership and administration, as well as my professional background as an applicant for the next president of Dixie Tech. I believe my background uniquely qualifies me for the position, and I appreciate your time and consideration of my application.

Since 2017 I have been the Director of the Construction Science Division at the University of Oklahoma. In this role I am a member of the Gibbs College of Architecture executive committee, but I am also solely responsible for all aspects of our construction education programs. In my time here we have successfully launched new programs, partnered with outside organizations, seen growth of over 55% in the student population, brought in over one million dollars in fund raising, and all of this has been done in the face of annual budget cuts.

These accomplishments have not been the result of chance. Upon my arrival, there was no plan or larger vision. As such, we immediately embarked on revision of mission and vision statements, and the creation of a strategic plan. The positive outcomes we've experienced over the last five years have stemmed from faculty and staff buy-in to the mission, vision, and strategic plan that drive decision making and guide administration of day-to-day operations. As the leader, I take ultimate responsibility for success or failure, but it is important to recognize that these accomplishments represent the collective work of all our faculty and staff, not just me.

Beyond leading toward a strategic vision, success has also been a result of an entrepreneurial mindset. As a younger man, I started my own business as a contractor. Success or failure rested entirely on me, so I had to find solutions to problems and look beyond constraints. That mindset has stayed with me and provides perspective in decision making that is unique and I believe beneficial in education.

There are certainly differences between a university and a technical college, but regardless of the type of institution, the principles that make an effective leader and administrator remain the same. Further, there is consistency in purpose between Dixie Tech and the discipline of construction. The aim of Dixie Tech to train workers in skills they will take to the workforce and enable them to contribute and advance in their careers, is consistent with the practical approach found in most construction education programs.

To ensure students have the practical preparation they need, I focus on relationships. As a result, I have a great deal of experience creating, developing, and maintaining relationships with individuals and organizations external to the institution. My success in doing so can be seen in the work I have been asked to do by professional organizations, but even more so in the professional advisory board

(PAB) I oversee and their engagement and investment with my students. Through these relationships, not only am I able to ensure that our curriculum is aligned with employer needs, but student placement is excellent. Every student has been placed in at least one paid internship and full-time job placement is 95%.

Through my focus on relationships, it became clear that the biggest concern to construction professionals and organizations is the dwindling construction workforce. As such, over the last ten years I have continuously been engaged in workforce development. My work has included research to better understand the problem and the variables at play, engagement on regional and national committees seeking to address the workforce shortage, creation and implementation of interventions that expose more students to technical education, and direct involvement with technical education programs in various capacities.

Technical education is also particularly important to me because of my personal experience. I was a student in a tech program at a community college. I took evening classes and was doing skilled and un-skilled construction work daily. That experience gives me perspective and insights that can only be gained from firsthand experience, but it also provides me with a common bond to connect with students in Dixie Tech's programs.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss in depth how my personal, professional, and educational experience would benefit Dixie tech and the Washington County community and thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ben F. Bigelow