

**Dr. James Y. Taylor**

January 31, 2025

Presidential Search Committee  
Casper College

Dear Presidential Search Committee,

It is with great interest that I humbly submit my materials for consideration as the next President of Casper College. My interest in Casper College predates this search. I have always appreciated, respected, and worked for institutions (colleges and universities) with identified purposes and beautiful places and that represent the most authentic campus and community culture in American higher education. Because of this commitment I have sought out stewardship for systems that serve populations that are both underserved and maintain a refuge for our great system of traditional access and authentic higher education. I have watched and respected Casper College for some time because of the unique location, size and importance and valued the long history and constant evolution of relevancy and innovation with strong community engagement.

My own executive background as a former President of a national online university and my traditional roles as Vice President, Dean, and executive working for both a nationally renowned land-grant university and previously a large regional community college in the Rocky Mountains, as well as a highly reviewed faculty member give me a strong background and understanding from which I can draw innovative strategies and continue to lead the College into the future with growth, trusted leadership and a unifying hand, relevancy, expanded reputation and most importantly engaging student experiences that increase student retention and completion.

I will explain further but my institutional leadership experience (decades) has been one fueled by a commitment to authentic leadership, increased enrollment (at every institution), improved student access and engagement, academic excellence (recruitment and retention of qualified faculty), and a strong commitment to people (both campus and regional communities) and place (sense of respect for historical evolution and values and celebrating connection to the natural landscape).

I am passionate about college leadership and the rapidly changing landscape of higher education in America and love leadership stewardship where the entire team works together to meet student and institutional needs, and where the President is a working member of the team. My personal leadership philosophy and mission-driven orientation comes from years as an institutional lead with additional refinement from decades as an international alpine mountain guide and doing backcountry natural resource research.

If selected, my dedication and innovative approach will help the College grow through strategic enrollment that is focused on both traditional demographics and expanding populations and build on historical successes with improved alternative programmatic and institutional funding while providing vision for improved strategic expansion for sustainable success and improved relevance.

Over the last nine years at Utah State University, I have held system executive roles over the Statewide Campus system including 30 centers and campuses, including two residential dual mission colleges with athletics and ties to the Navajo Nation and Ute Tribe. My leadership roles have allowed me to adopt best practices, create and enhance shared services with collaborative institutions, improve operational efficiencies all in alignment with improved access and engagement with a dispersed and diverse student population across 85,000 square miles. This work has required strong partnerships with the Utah System of Higher Education and the 16 other technical and degree institutions that also have geographic locations in the State as well as national online institutions. I am both innovative and collaborative and bring the approaches that support systemic improvement and fuel institutional success and improvement.

Over the last nine years my campuses and system have seen steady and consistent enrollment growth by diversifying those we serve and working to retain those who made a commitment to access higher education through Utah State University. The Statewide System is up 12.5% over last year (with an 18% increase in underserved populations) and we have expanded financial support (35%) decreased time to completion of a four year degree (6.9 to 4.2 years), increased counseling services through grants and private funding, and within the last 18 months have found more than \$100 million in outside (non-State funding) to build four buildings and new campuses and buildings: Uintah Basin, Monument Valley, Moab, and Vernal.

I have been able to increase enrollments at all institutions I have led consistently year over year through adopting best practices, improving the value of the educational and academic approach, recruitment and retention of the best senior administrators and faculty and strategic use of resources and broadening support. I was a chapter author in a recent national book on student engagement and mentorship related to institutional commitment to practices that enhance student experiences in person and remotely. I maintain a deep commitment to the student experience and the call to provide the valued education that individuals and communities expect from a college. I am open to hearing informal and formal feedback and in constant improvement and adaption to meet rapidly changing workforce needs and community expectations. I serve in the communities where I work in order to give back, remain connected, and developed trusted relations from which we can move regional sustainability and identity forward.

I hold a Doctorate in leadership and organizational development, and I am passionate about system culture, values, and reputation and that starts with the effective governing bodies and formal and informal shared governance. This is supported from the shared experiences of students, staff, faculty, and those industry partners with whom we strategically partner for workforce development and regional economic improvement.

I am student-focused and committed and one of the things that most excites me about the future of higher education and change is the rapidly changing nature of students and their adaptations for learning and engaging in the academic process. I find that some colleges are changing too slowly to remain relative to this change and look forward to leading with a nimble and adaptive approach to these changes and an increase reputation of success while holding firm to community values and identity.

In addition to being student focused, and I committed to the regional communities served by a college and look forward to outward service and collaboration for improvement. I also have been effective and leveraging relationships to expand student financial support, endowment development and expansion, and reduction in state funding with innovative funds around academic programs with regional and national importance. Working with donors and expanding the donor base regionally and nationally are well within my abilities and align with my desires. At Utah State University I have added more than 15 industry partners for programmatic support and student placement with private industry, K-12 partners, hospitals, and land-grant agencies. These partners have been instrumental in building enrollments as I have been able to develop or expand innovative academic programs that are regionally and economically important. I look forward to talking about these programs and enrollments as I am very proud of the innovative manner by which we have expanded the connection of the school with the broader community.

My ability to expand services for students and relevancy and funding comes from alignment with sister institutions and collaborative work for synergistic funding across the State. However, I am most at home on campus and with students, faculty, and staff but am comfortable working with both local and State elected officials and working to increase support, understanding, and outcomes from the State higher education system.

There are a number of additional reasons why I believe I am a strong candidate and have the unique background for substantial and measured success as President of Casper College. My leadership background has given me a strong background and the required experience. I have been the institutional leader of colleges and campuses with enrollments from 400 to 16,000 and operating budgets of \$3 to \$80 million. I have also had the opportunity to be the academic lead of small and dispersed and isolated institutions with 25 faculty to institutions with hundreds of dedicated professionals across varied colleges and academic departments and serving underserved and large

population centers of Native Americans and diverse populations. I have led both technical and academic institutions and those that have a dual mission. I have also been the institutional executive of institutions with important athletic identity and a culture of success and community pride around student athletes.

My academic and leadership profile has a history of documented and innovative results. I have ranked in the top 10% of faculty at institutions where I have been a faculty member, and I maintain a strong interest in interacting and mentoring students directly while leading an institution innovatively. One of the key elements of my leadership experience has been a desire to bring people together. I have led a number of institutions where there have been groups at odds and lack of leadership due to prior leadership approaches and models. My approach has always been to bring people and systems together and improve the vision of service and success through common goals. This is heavily influenced by my decades of high elevation guiding taking groups to the world's highest summits and my decades of leadership refinement and improvement that comes from introspection and personal reflection around the changing nature of students and faculty. I have also worked tirelessly to not only develop relevant programs that have grown but equally worked to help remove barriers and increase support. As I mentioned above, I have multiple recent book chapters and publications on student mentorship and retention in our changing educational environment and have success in improving all measures of student support and completion.

One of the challenges in higher education support of students and program development has been the decrease support available traditionally (state and other funds). This has narrowed the focus and ability of many institutions to adapt and be nimble while also remaining committed to financial health and a broad commitment to equity and respect for all students, faculty and staff. I am adept at leading the institution from an academic, operational (financial and facilities), and equity perspective and keeping all elements committed to student success and faculty and staff retention.

My teams and I have expanded enrollments at every institution I have led, increased diversity, increased endowments, student support and resources, partnership funding and pathways with other institutions, and decreased time to graduation. Of all of these measures and improvements, what makes me most proud is that that we worked to accomplish these goals and student successes as a team. I see my primary role in recruiting, retaining, and mentoring the best and most effective leadership team possible and thereby benefiting the students, staff, and faculty of an institution.

I am an articulate and passionate educational leader that is goal oriented and motivated by helping others and the larger community succeed through partnerships and individual mentorship. However, I see my place as an institutional leader as a steward and respect the opportunity and trust placed in me and the leadership team I develop.

I am very capable of visionary leadership and committed to strategic and master planning but also sensitive to supporting the vision of others and working collaboratively. When contacted, I know that my references (presidents, provosts, deans, faculty, and state officials) will enthusiastically outline the positive cultural and operational differences I make through trusted, innovative, energetic, and respectful leadership. Recent leadership reviews rank me in the top 1% of my executive peers. I also have academic reviews that remain consistently in the top 10% of my faculty peers.

Of all the metrics by which my leadership can be measured I am most proud of the fact that I have been able to recruit, retain, and mentor a seasoned and committed team that is committed to increasing institutional enrollments through retention while also increasing diversity and providing expanded access to higher education for those not traditionally served. Many of my direct reports are now college presidents around the intermountain west and nationally.

Finally, the diversity of my campus system in Utah (both residential and non-residential campuses) has increased in new student diversity three-fold. This increase has been accelerated due to substantial increases in the number of Ute Tribe members and members of the Navajo Nation enrolled at Utah State University and students remaining local by connecting the institution and campus to the regional beauty and purpose of the community. We have improved counseling services, safety measures and improvement of campus culture in ways that provides an umbrella that supports all students and improves recruitment, retention, and graduation success. My work with the Northern Ute Tribe and Navajo Nation has been a pleasure. Through the work of gaining trust and extending respect and collaboration, we have been able to recruit and expanded the number of both groups who work for Utah State University and opened satellite campus locations in places where access to higher education was not previously available.

As mentioned above, I worked for many years as both a biologist for Yellowstone National Park and seasonal alpine climbing guide around the world and enjoy running long distance trail and ultra-marathon races through mountains and deserts. Although I do not climb as high, run as far, or long I am still driven by goals and my belief in the human spirit. My professional and personal commitment to growth is driven and sustained by my goal-oriented lifestyle and my passion for progress. I am very proud of my faculty rank and the perspective and appreciation I have for quality academic instruction. I bring a balanced and collaborative approach to leadership that is founded in respect, gratitude, and appreciation.

Having worked and led institutions in multiple rural communities connected to scenic and natural places where the agricultural, natural resource, and recreational landscape are part of the community identity, I have had the opportunity to see both success and failures as the rate of change quickened and some communities were able to manage the

change while holding on to core community values and others lost connection to the historical significance of the region. I am a change agent fueled by my energetic passion for life but tempered by my respect for others and historical institutional and community values.

I know that my leadership style and seasoned and trusted approach will provide a vision for the future identity of the College while also respecting and building on the long-standing traditions of the past. I look forward to the opportunity to enhance the culture, expand enrollments, develop better student support, and engage with the community in expanded alliances of financial and programmatic support. Through my leadership as President, we will help create a stronger and more sustainable reputation of the College.

In summary, I bring extensive and seasoned leadership experience to the position but also a strong sense of respect and humility for the opportunity to be a part of the strategic changes to be sustained and made under the leadership of the next President. I am adept and capable of independent leadership and yet value collaboration and mentoring others. I bring a clear ability to advise and innovate but enough history to also listen and understand. I remain passionate about life and the opportunities that quality education and institutions provide and remember the stewardship that I accept in working to educate others and serving communities. I am confident that you will be very pleased and appreciative of the progress that will be made while I serve.

Sincerely,

Dr. James Y. Taylor