

October 14, 2008

Presidential Search - Webster University
c/o Mr. Jerry H. Baker
Baker and Associates, LLC
10 Glenlake Parkway – South Tower, Suite 140
Atlanta, GA 30328

Dear Colleagues:

Please accept this letter as my application for the position of President, Webster University. After careful reflection, encouragement and conversations with numerous colleagues, I am enthusiastically committed to continuing my leadership role as the chief executive officer of our outstanding University.

Webster is well poised for the future. We have a new strategic plan to implement. We have a strong fiscal profile that will allow us to invest in our strategic future. We have a bold master campus plan with opportunity for us to expand our home campus. We have a committed Board of Trustees ready to help push our institution forward. Our campus morale is excellent, and faculty, staff and administrative relationships are strong and productive. We have successfully completed key accreditations that now provide us with license to craft future directions. We have a solid academic portfolio of diverse programs and markets, including remarkable potential with online programs. We have sustained key partnerships and relationships (i.e., U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, Corporate and Civic Programs), we have maintained a very competitive market niche in selected geographic areas of our extended campus network (i.e., South Carolina and Florida). Most strategically, we have built an unrivaled footprint of international programs across Europe and Asia that gives us the potential to leverage new opportunities. We are a recognized leader in global education.

This strong institutional position, together with our shared vision and goals, encourages me to continue with the presidency. Webster University is well positioned, and needs to aggressively pursue these emerging initiatives and opportunities. However, current economic difficulties and unstable financial conditions will pose new complications and challenges for our educational enterprise. These factors will impact diverse aspects of our operations, including issues for fund raising, endowment support, affordability for new students, fiscal management, and they will require us to manage change effectively. Regardless of this current environment, our University is “different.” We need to capitalize on this strategic differentiation, and separate ourselves from the competitors in our diverse educational markets.

Although we are well poised, strong executive leadership is critical for the future. Webster University's stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, administrators) have all contributed to this current institutional position of excellence and strength. I believe my record of experience, my commitment to academic excellence and fiscal responsibility, and my management style of collaboration and teamwork facilitates this "one University" success. Key decisions lie ahead, and our current momentum and focus will benefit from an experienced executive. On reflection, I believe that some of my character strengths align with these needs: personal accountability, respect for others and their opinions, integrity, self-improvement, consensus building, perseverance, ability to manage change successfully, and communication skills.

My enclosed resume summarizes my professional work in higher education, both academic and administrative. I am proud of the contributions and initiatives that my colleagues and I have accomplished. These include: substantial growth and expansion of our extended campus network (both domestic and international); a robust home campus; the sustained growth and excellence of our full-time and adjunct faculty; the creation and development of our five colleges and schools; the growth and quality improvements of our academic programs; and the development of key corporate and civic partnerships and relationships. Most significantly, our efforts and success in international education and globalization have positioned Webster in a unique leadership role of which I am especially proud.

More important than these past accomplishments are Webster's future opportunities. I am confident that I can provide strong leadership as president of Webster University to pursue these opportunities while confronting future challenges. Since assuming the presidency last winter, I have especially enjoyed my heightened work in development activities and donor cultivation. As part of my duties, external events and solicitations, of course, have greatly accelerated. Interactions with corporate, political, civic, and international leaders have provided me with new opportunities to promote the institution where I have had the privilege to work for over three decades. These cultivations and solicitations will increase and will ultimately help our University development work.

A reasonable forecast of immediate goals and issues for the new president include work in the following areas:

- Completion of our Campaign Goals and Implementation of Significant Construction and Renovation Plans.
(Business School with general academic classrooms, science labs, renovation of Sverdrup and Loretto Hall, housing facilities in Geneva and Leiden)
- Launch the new Strategic Plan
(implementation of the identified priorities, strategies and tactics)
- Strengthen Human Resources and Succession Planning
(includes succession planning in our senior administration, campus directors, and faculty; as well as selective growth in strategic areas including full-time faculty)
- Transform Enrollment Management/Recruitment/Marketing/Public Relations

(includes enrollment planning for home campus, and institutional marketing and PR activities)

- Insure Access and Affordability for Students
(provide student access and adequate financial aid to maintain diversity, student quality, and retention. This will be tied to sustained fund raising for scholarships, and through improved operations.)
- Grow Online Programs
(continue the expansion of quality programs delivered by Internet based technologies)
- Create a Post-deployment Military Education System
(stabilize and grow these important military education programs in a post-deployment environment)

These are all initiatives, issues, and goals, that I am eager to achieve in the leadership role.

Webster is a private, tuition-dependent institution with remarkable strengths as a multi-campus, international university. On a personal level, I am so proud of our accomplishments. When I joined Webster over thirty-five years ago as a faculty member, I immediately became captivated with our “teaching and learning” institution. Although I am now an experienced administrator, I remain passionate about teaching, and about our “student-centered” focus. So many times my passion for Webster has been heightened by personal experiences with students whom I have met in St. Louis, at one of our extended campuses, in an international setting, or at a military base. Students have excited me while I was teaching, and they continue to inspire me today as an administrator. We make such a difference, one student at a time, for so many communities worldwide. The success of our work is contagious, and it energizes me to do my very best. I am committed to this work, and if given the opportunity, I look forward to discussing the presidency with the Search Committee.

Respectfully,



Neil J. George, Ph.D.
Interim President
Webster University