August 25, 2026

Sanders College of Business and Technology Search Committee
University of North Alabama
Florence, AL 35632

Dear Search Committee:

I am pleased to present my application for the position of Dean of the Sanders College of Business and Technology at the University of North Alabama. The College and University have offered an environment encouraging innovation and experimentation that has been instrumental in my growth as a faculty member, department chair, interim dean, and institute director. It would be an honor to continue to lead the College into the future. The greatest assets of any organization are the people, and it is my opinion that the Sanders College of Business and Technology has an amazing faculty and staff. President Kitts and the University leadership team have provided the opportunities to build and retain these excellent people.

During my tenure at UNA, I have had the opportunity to pursue interests in teaching, scholarship, service, and administration. Taking advantage of these opportunities has resulted in the great good fortune of having received the Academic Affairs Awards for Research and Scholarship, Service, and Teaching (the Lawrence J. Nelson Outstanding Teaching Award). During my years as Director, the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development has received recognition for innovation and workforce development at the international level through the Deshpande Foundation's Rising Star Award, as well as the national and statewide level acknowledgment as a finalist for both the University Economic Development Association Talent + Innovation Award and the Governor's Work-based Learning Seal of Excellence (for the Institute Fellows program).

My career at UNA can be divided into four sections. In the first few years, the primary focus was on teaching and scholarship. During this time, I had five A-level publications – two of which won awards for best paper in the journal, another for best paper in a conference. The teaching load consisted primarily of core courses for the BBA and MBA programs. My teaching evaluations always were among the best in the Department and College. In 1999, my colleague Jim Couch and I founded the Society of Business, Industry, and Economics (SOBIE) – a multidisciplinary business conference. Currently, we are preparing for the twenty-seventh SOBIE meeting at Sandestin, FL.

The second phase began following the granting of tenure. During this stage, my leadership roles in university service expanded. These included serving as President of the Faculty Senate, Chair of the Shared Governance Committee, Chair of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, and President of Phi Kappa Phi. In the former two positions, I played a key advisory role with Presidents Potts and Cale. In addition, I assumed the role of Assessment Coordinator for the College.

In 2008, I became Chair of the Department of Economics & Finance (now Finance, Economics, and Data Analytics). This role became the primary focus over the next five years. While research often took a backseat during this period, I continued to maintain a steady agenda as well as serving another term on Faculty Senate (including a stint on the Executive Committee). SOBIE also grew throughout these years. At the departmental level, we completed curriculum updates for our majors.

Dr. Greg Carnes became Dean in 2013, and set community and local business engagement as a top priority. Shoals Shift was the major initiative that emerged through a partnership with the Shoals Chamber of Commerce and the Shoals Business Incubator (then the Shoals Entrepreneurial Center). The methodology driving Shoals Shift is Strategic Doing – introduced to us by Ms. Janyce Fadden in her capacity as Executive-in-Residence. As a result of the impact of the process, I obtained certification as a Strategic Doing Practitioner, subsequently became a Strategic Doing Fellow, and became a member of the Shoals Shift Core Team.

Given the success of the Shoals Shift efforts in innovation, entrepreneurship, and local economic development, the College launched the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development in 2016. Since inception, I have served as Director of the Institute. In addition to the awards received, we were able to secure and support grants totaling over $1 million through the Daniel Foundation, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the United States Department of Agriculture totaling over one million dollars. Part of this funded our Institute Fellows program – an initiative that has paid out over two hundred thousand dollars to more than ninety UNA students. During this time, I was awarded the endowed LaGrange Eminent Scholar of Business.

As the College gained momentum through recognition of regional engagement and explosive growth of the MBA program, the College leadership team made the decision to pursue a doctoral program. We soon established the Executive Doctor of Business Administration Leadership Team (EDBALT), on which I served from formation until assuming the interim dean role. EDBALT developed the curriculum, dissertation process, and assurance of learning plan for the program. I have developed and taught three courses for the EDBA program, as well as chaired two dissertations and served on six additional dissertation committees.

Parallel with the genesis of the EDBA program, within the Department one undergraduate major transitioned from a BBA in Economics to a BBA in Data Analytics. Working with Dr. Jason Imbrogno and Dr. Tanja Blackstone, we developed the curriculum for the new program which officially began in Fall 2021. The Data Analytics major enrollment has grown to more than forty students.

During the past two years during my time as interim dean, the SCOBT has achieved the following: received over $8 million in external funding, including the naming of the Darwin D. Davis Department of Accounting and Business Law; developed a four-year career planning and development system; initiated the SAGE (Shoals Area Growth Engagement) program to support small business growth; added new engineering concentrations in the MBA program; added core artificial intelligence courses in the BBA, MBA, and EDBA programs); enhanced the system for tracking placement of graduates; formalized the Office of Regional Engagement; initiated the BIG Ideas program to foster student entrepreneurship opportunities; helped develop the strategic plan for Launch Tennessee Valley; and experienced successful accreditation visits.

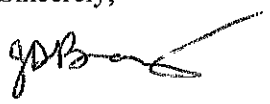
In addressing critical strategic issues, the College must continue to innovate and use tools such as Strategic Doing and Rapid Improvement (previously Lean Management in Higher Education). My familiarity and expertise with these tools can continue to be a chief asset. Fortunately, the College has some of the most qualified leaders and practitioners in the use of these crucial methodologies. The key is finding the areas for which application will yield the most fruitful results. The annual August SCOBT Leadership Team retreat and Fall faculty/staff meetings will be opportunities to determine initiatives for each academic year.

In my twenty-nine years at UNA, I have been able to accomplish many things. The vast majority of that has been through collaborations with colleagues within and outside the University. The key ingredient for success is *people*, and we have some of the finest faculty and staff in the country. I have made extra effort over the years to get to know people in the College and around campus. These relationships are vital.

With respect to decision-making, my philosophy is simple. The best interests of the College and University must be the driver. Creating and maintaining a student-centered environment that encourages innovation and experimentation has been my top priority as a faculty member, department chair, institute director, and interim dean. The continued focus is on what we can control – faculty, staff, and student support; curriculum; and community engagement. I would endeavor to expand on this as Dean for the Sanders College of Business & Technology.

Thank you for your consideration for this most critical position.

Sincerely,



J. Douglas Barrett, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, Sanders College of Business and Technology
LaGrange Eminent Scholar of Business
Director, Institute for Innovation and Economic Development
University of North Alabama