DEEP SPRINGS COLLEGE

POSITION SPECIFICATION

THE POSITION: PRESIDENT
REPORTS TO: BOARD OF TRUSTEES
LOCATION: DEEP SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

THE INSTITUTION

Mission

The mission of Deep Springs College is to prepare young people for a life of service and leadership. Deep Springs fulfills its educational mission by bringing students into intense contact with nature, work, and ideas.

Deep Springs' challenging and comprehensive educational program is designed for a few of the most promising students entering college each year. No tuition or fees are levied, but strenuous effort, self-governance, and selfless service to the community are expected of everyone.

The college takes sound principles of teaching and learning to their practical limits. Based on a cattle ranch in an isolated desert-mountain valley, the college enables its students to experience and take year-round responsibility for a largely self-sustaining community, ranch, and farm, while requiring them to engage in a two-year liberal arts honors program.

The program provides the curriculum necessary to obtain an Associate of Arts degree. Learning is pursued to solve real problems, both practical and social, for the joy of intellectual understanding and humane action. Those who are educated at Deep Springs incur a lifelong obligation to improve the human condition.

Overview

Founded in 1917 by L.L. Nunn, Deep Springs College is a unique institution of higher learning. The educational program is built upon three pillars: academics, self-government, and labor. The school is located 40 miles from Bishop, California on an isolated cattle ranch in Deep Springs Valley.

Between 12 and 15 students are admitted each year. A scholarship covers the costs of tuition, room, and board for every student offered admission. Deep Springs students are expected to dedicate themselves to lives of leadership and service. Alumni have gone on to exemplify this ideal in a wide variety of fields, including politics, science, journalism, academics, agriculture, medicine, law, business and design.

Most academic classes have fewer than eight students and require a high level of student participation, generally in seminar-style discussion. Professors are attracted by the highly motivated students and the close intellectual relationships that can be formed in such a setting. Topics range throughout the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Credit from the two-year program can be used to earn an Associate of Arts or transferred toward pursuit of a bachelor's at another institution.

The Student Body, which fluctuates between 24 and 30 members, significantly participates in deciding admissions, hiring faculty and staff, reviewing student performance, and many other aspects of running the college. In addition to academics and self-governance, students are expected to participate in labor for at least 20 hours each week. Labor includes farm and ranch work, but also other daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and maintaining facilities and vehicles. Not only practical, the labor done by students is considered to be essential to the educational program.

Both Deep Springs' program and finances are in a strong position after 108 years in existence. The physical plant has been continuously improved including a recently completed boardinghouse and three faculty residences. The caliber of the students is exceptionally high, with a history of alumni winning Rhodes and Truman Scholarships. The Truman Foundation has bestowed upon Deep Springs its Honor Institution Award. Alumni have won several prestigious awards, including grants from the MacArthur Foundation. Most importantly, Deep Springs is achieving its mission of preparing its students for deep and deliberate consideration of lives of service to humanity.

The Deep Springs Student Body was all-male for the first one hundred years of its educational mission and operations. Commencing in July of 2018, as the college launched into its second hundred years of educating young people for lives of service, the student body became coeducational.

THE POSITION

The President is expected to provide enlightened leadership for the college, to articulate and advance the aims of the college, and to protect its integrity and reputation.

Deep Springs is governed by highly participatory ideals and practices, but the President is ultimately held accountable for preparing and meeting the operating budget, as well as hiring and supervising all faculty and staff. The Student Body and the President share responsibility for admitting and re-inviting students. The President is responsible for orchestrating relationships with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for accreditation, handling press and public relations, and observing state and federal laws.

In Deep Springs' unique self-governance tradition, the President delegates very significant responsibility for many administrative functions to the student body and to other college officers including the faculty and staff, but s/he is held responsible by the Board for the results, and s/he is granted commensurate authority by it.

Areas of Responsibilities

The President is responsible for fiscal operations of preparing and managing the budget, fundraising for the college's operations and endowment, overseeing the hiring of faculty and staff, external relations, maintaining the college's accreditation, and ensuring compliance with all state and federal laws. The Applications Committee and the Re-invitation Committee, along with the President, are responsible for the admission and re-invitation of students. The President, in conjunction with faculty, staff, and student body, is responsible for the smooth day-to-day operations of the college. This is accomplished by the management of a staff team of highly experienced functional managers in the college's operations – business and physical plant, farming, and ranching.

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will possess:

Fiscal skills and budget experience. The Trustees of Deep Springs must depend on the President to lead in managing Deep Springs' funds judiciously and balancing the annual budget. The college must maintain credibility with all those who support the college by demonstrating sound management of its resources on an ongoing basis. The college's annual operating budget is currently approximately $3.5M. It is supported by annual fund contributions and major gifts (approximately 40%), as well as ranch and farm sales, and periodic draws from the college's $28M endowment that are governed by the college's investment policy.

Fundraising enthusiasm. The President must have this to sustain annual giving and attract funds for ongoing capital needs and increasing the endowment. The President must be credible, effective and balanced in this key set of responsibilities. The Trustees are seeking a President with a willingness to learn effective fundraising if s/he does not already have a demonstrated track record in this area; enthusiasm for the Deep Springs mission that translates into the ability to ask for funds to sustain said mission; and a strategic feel for fundraising, enabling her/him to work with a small team, including Trustees, to determine how, when, and of whom to seek the approximately $2M in annual sustaining revenues and contributions to increase the endowment.

Academic credibility and educational leadership. The Trustees, faculty, and Student Body strongly prefer the President be an intellectual leader, someone experienced and successful as a teacher and/or administrator at the college level. The responsibility of mentoring the other faculty, setting the academic tone, and providing educational excellence rests primarily on the President's shoulders. Ideally, the President's intellectual leadership sets the tone and example for an animated and vibrant community of ideas at the college. A gifted teacher will be highly valued by students and faculty alike.

Democratic instincts, patience, and a human touch. Keeping the Deep Springs community healthy and in balance is critical and the key to success. A strong leader is imperative, but s/he has to be one who works chiefly through setting high expectations, encouraging strenuous effort, and insisting on fair play among the participants in this bold experiment. The President treads a fine line between giving too much direction in daily decision-making here, and not giving enough to assure quality, consistency, and fairness.

The wisdom and courage to set boundaries. The President has to be sufficiently mature to endure making decisions that will likely be unpopular with one constituency or another -- from the students to the Trustees, and everyone in between, as groups or individuals. This is not easy at Deep Springs due to the size, isolation, and intimacy of the College. The President must be able to make hard decisions but must also know when hard decisions are called for and when they are not. Student admissions decisions and hiring and retention decisions are among the most crucial.

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

Passion for Deep Springs and its Location. To succeed at Deep Springs, one must love not only the aims and purposes of Deep Springs and the people who live here, but also revel in the rigors of living in a stark and remote environment. Deep Springs is a small community of only about 40 to 50 people, and prides itself on its isolation. Nunn spoke of being inspired by "the voice of the desert" and hopefully this is a voice that a strong candidate is seeking to hear.

Authenticity. Living and working at Deep Springs reveal one's true nature and character. The Trustees are committed to finding someone who knows who he or she is and puts on no airs. S/he will bring a high level of self-awareness as part of his or her genuine self.

Energy. Serving as President of Deep Springs is a seven-day-a-week, 18-hour-a-day role. The span of responsibilities is enormous, urgencies if not crises are regular occurrences, and when other staff or faculty are away from their posts the President is often the only knowledgeable backup. These conditions are at once the reward and the travail of this position. The position requires someone with prodigious energy to stay on top of it all and, therefore, to enjoy it enough to sustain his or her effort over a period of years.

Education: A Master's or professional degree is required; a terminal degree is greatly preferred.

Experience: We expect the President to have experience with educational administration, people management, fundraising, and classroom teaching although we are aware that each individual will have more strengths in specific areas.

COMPETENCIES/ATTRIBUTES

The successful candidate will be:

- A strategic and tactical delegator to his/her management team, ensuring balanced responsibilities to promote professional development of staff and avoiding presidential burnout.
- A facilitator of structured as well as informal interaction at the college, engaging students, faculty, and staff in a collegial and connected fashion that promotes community at Deep Springs.
- A gifted educator to inspire students and train and support faculty.
- Mature and seasoned to know when to pick one's battles, with a sophisticated understanding of human dynamics.
- Self-aware and accepting of himself or herself and others, in order to adapt to the "fishbowl" nature of the Deep Springs environment and community.
- Savvy about the question or challenge of the potential for his or her post-Deep Springs professional life and how she or he will address and handle it.
- Creative and innovative in his/her thinking about increasing diversity at Deep Springs at the student body and trustee levels.
- Able to organize his/her work processes to effectively fulfill the responsibilities reflecting a wide range of constituencies.

For the right person, the President position is like no other. Deep Springs is a place that changes lives and sustains a deep hold on the imaginations and visions of its alumni as well as their families and friends. Leading the college, and its transformative nature and experience, is an unparalleled opportunity and exciting challenge for a visionary leader.

COMPENSATION

The salary range for this position is from $225,000 to $275,000 plus benefits. Residence on campus is required, and room and board are provided in addition to cash compensation. Relocation assistance is available.

Deep Springs College is an equal opportunity employer and

encourages candidates of all backgrounds to apply.