



CARLSONBECK

EXECUTIVE SEARCH FOR PHILANTHROPY & NONPROFITS

Position Specification



President

17 April 2019



Carlson Beck advises **Deep Springs College** on the basis of an exclusive consulting assignment. The following details are for your information and should be shared with discretion.



POSITION SPECIFICATION

DEEP SPRINGS COLLEGE

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 to humanity. Leadership and enlightened service are the aims of Deep Springs, which 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.

History

Deep Springs was founded in 1917 by electricity tycoon and philanthropist L.L. Nunn. After building power plants across North America, he devoted his wealth and influence to developing new forms of education. His two surviving educational projects, Deep Springs College and the Telluride Association, are both imbued with his distinctive philosophy of education.

Nunn's career began in Telluride, Colorado, a small mining town where he operated a diverse set of businesses including several gold mines. Upon realizing the importance of electricity for mining, he used his assets to start what would become the Telluride Power Company. The venture built and acquired power plants across the western United States and in Canada and Mexico, and also pioneered methods for transmitting electricity over great distances.

To staff his company, Nunn devised a unique in-house education system. Bright and hardworking young men were recruited to receive extensive training for free so that they could take leadership roles at the plants. Each



student would begin by taking coursework in addition to their daily jobs. Then, successful students were given scholarships to continue their educations at elite universities.

Education soon eclipsed business as Nunn’s primary concern. In 1909, he established the first Telluride House to provide room and board for his pupils earning degrees at Cornell University. The Telluride Association was formally constituted to administer the house. Nunn had discovered in the American west, where small towns were largely autonomous, that self-governance could foster individual virtues. Thus, he incorporated the idea of self-governance into the Telluride Association. Both the Telluride Association and the house at Cornell continue to operate today. The association has since expanded to include another Telluride House at University of Michigan, as well as two summer programs for high school students.

His final project was to found an independent college that would prepare students for a “life of service to humanity” through a three-part program of liberal arts, student self-governance, and labor. After considering a number of possible locations, Nunn purchased a cattle ranch in eastern California that would become the campus of Deep Springs College. The college admitted its first class of fourteen in 1917.

Since Nunn’s death in 1925, the college has evolved while maintaining many tenets of his original vision. Alumni have gone on to become leaders in a number of fields, some receiving MacArthur Grants, Pulitzer Prizes, and Truman and Rhodes Scholarships. Today, Deep Springs is often cited as an example of the transformative experience that higher education can offer.

The possibility of coeducation had been debated by the Deep Springs community since the 1960’s. The Deep Springs Board of Trustees voted in 2011 to begin admitting women but a legal challenge was brought by the two dissenting trustees. After more than five years of litigation, the California Supreme Court resolved the issue with a ruling in June, 2017, permitting the college to proceed with plans for admission of women as students. Deep Springs welcomed its first coeducational class in July of 2018.

Overview

Founded in 1917, Deep Springs College is a unique institution of higher learning. The educational program is built upon three pillars: academics, self-government, and manual 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. In exchange, Deep Springs students are expected to dedicate themselves to lives of service to humanity. 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’s 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, 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.

The Deep Springs Student Body had been 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 as per the delayed implementation of a trustee vote in 2011.

THE POSITION

The President is appointed by the Board of Trustees. S/he is responsible for seeing that trustee policies are implemented. The President is also 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 training all faculty and staff. The Student Body and the President share responsibility for admitting and re-inviting students (for second and third years of residence and scholarships) and publishing all documents that represent the college. The President is responsible for publishing documents that represent the trustees, 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 these and other 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

After 11 years under its current President, David Neidorf, Deep Springs is in many ways stronger than ever. The litigation the college had been ensnared in has been successfully resolved in favor of coeducation, resulting in the admission of the first female students in Deep Springs' 101-year history. The physical plant is being improved with a new boardinghouse (funding already secured) to be constructed within the next two years. 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 grantees 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. Deep Springs needs a President who can build on its successes as well as continue, with commitment and integrity, the vision and fulfillment of the Nunnian model of education.

The position of President at Deep Springs is like no other because the college itself is unique. Deep Springs is the smallest college in America (it has thirty students), the least expensive (all students receive a full scholarship), and the most remote (the college is located on a ranch in a high desert valley near the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California). Students not only take rigorous, honors-level classes, but also work at least twenty hours per week on the campus and ranch with cattle and farming functions. And as a self-governing body the students have significant and meaningful input into the design of the curriculum, the selection of



incoming students, and the policies of the Trustees. In fact, the Board of Trustees always includes two students as full voting members. Deep Springs has three sides -- it is a working ranch with livestock and agricultural operations; it is an experiment in student self-government; and it is one of the most elite colleges in the world. The President must provide indirect leadership of the first area and deliver direct leadership to the second and third areas.

Specifically, 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, as well as 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.

The college has come through one significant challenge -- the transition to co-education -- and is now at an important pivot: maintaining the best of what Deep Springs is in the face of change in the external world; and also fundraising to ensure approximately \$2M annually for operating, capital, and endowment needs from a generous but not-large donor base. Hence, fundraising is critical. It is also essential for the President to preserve and foster the ethos of Deep Springs. The Trustees are looking for someone not only with a distinguished record of leadership, but with a **style** of leadership appropriate to the diversity and the participatory ideals of the college -- a leader who is neither authoritarian nor laissez-faire. The President has to promote openness and mutual respect among the students, faculty, and ranch staff, and s/he has to represent the college to parents, alumni, donors, foundations, government officials, potential faculty, and prospective students. The President is also responsible for dealing with the myriad headaches, crises, and bemusements that are part of life at a ranch and college. The Trustees seek to find a President who is energetic, humane, diplomatic, and patient, who will enjoy the challenges and rewards of the job, and who is committed to the ideals of the college and a Nunnian educational model.

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will possess:

Academic credibility and educational leadership. The Trustees, faculty, and Student Body strongly prefer the President be an experienced and successful teacher at the college level. The responsibility of mentoring the other faculty, setting the academic tone, and providing educational continuity 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.

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 have and are supporting the college by demonstrating sound management of its resources on an ongoing basis. The college's annual operating budget is currently approximately \$2.1M. 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 \$24M endowment that are governed by the college's investment policy.



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. It is a fine line the President must tread 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, because while one is living with one's only reference group and these are the only friends with whom the President is in daily contact. No one enjoys getting the cold shoulder (or worse) from his or her daily companions. This fact explains many of the snafus in the college's history. 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 faculty hiring and retention decisions are among the most crucial.

Fundraising enthusiasm. The President must have this to sustain annual giving and attract funds for ongoing capital needs. 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.

Writing and speaking. Deep Springsers past and present love words and ideas, and they pan those who can't use language well. As the primary interpreter of the college's ideals inside and outside Nunnian circles, the President must be capable of occasional eloquence. Words, well used, create a shared vision with and give courage to constituent groups.

CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

Passion for Deep Springs and its location. To survive or succeed for very long here, one would likely have to love not only the aims and purposes of Deep Springs and the people who live here (by and large), but also revel in the rigors of living in a stark and remote environment. 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. The location, operations, people and purpose of Deep Spring reveals 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. But it 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 preferred.



COMPETENCIES/ATTRIBUTES

The successful professional will **have**:

- Belief in Deep Springs' mission, which requires democratic daring in the interest of inspiring.
- A can-do attitude about solving problems and an ethic of social justice and responsibility.
- Common sense -- practical problem-solving (see "Patience" below) with people and things occupies a good portion of the President's time and energy every day.
- Courage to take heat from any of the parties with whom you must be credible, requires having a "thick skin" and a high level of even temperedness.
- Credibility with the:
 - Trustees of Deep Springs
 - Student Body
 - Faculty as a scholar-teacher
 - Staff as a problem-solver
 - Key alumni and foundation officials
- Instinct as an educator, where problems and conflicts are seen as teaching opportunities, not showdowns about power.
- Well-developed listening ability that is accurate, active, and compassionate.
- Genuine love of people, given the many different kinds engaged with at the college and its constituencies.
- Patience with people, animals, and equipment -- including accreditation officers, county inspectors, difficult faculty and staff members, and, of course, the college's physical infrastructure that can never be taken for granted (i.e., telephone, fax, and email service, electrical service, potable water, plumbing and heating, and everything else requisite for a remote location in the high desert of Eastern California).
- Honed, straight-to-the-point speaking and writing skills.
- Humility and a containable ego.
- Energy, stamina, persistence, and resilience required for the complexity of the role.
- A sustaining sense of humor.

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.
- Keenly interested in the coeducation transition at Deep Springs and ensuring its success.
- 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

A compensation package, including benefits, commensurate with experience and skills will be offered. Relocation assistance is available, if needed.

***Deep Springs College is an equal opportunity employer
and encourages candidates of all backgrounds to apply.***

For additional information on this opportunity, please contact:

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