

Dr. Stephen Baldrige  
Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences  
Professor of Social Work  
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021

Dear Dr. Baldrige,

I am excited to be applying for the Associate Dean – School of Natural Sciences position at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB). I look forward to continuing my excellence in teaching through this position and also adding more administrative duties to serve the school, college, university, and surrounding community. I believe my vast experiences in teaching, leadership, research, communication, and church involvement make me an excellent candidate for this position.

I am an Associate Professor of Biology, in my seventh year of serving in the UMHB Biology Department. Before UMHB, I served as a faculty member at Texas A&M, conducting innovative research and training students in the field of Regenerative Medicine while directing the Microarray Core facility. In addition, I have been serving at Renewal Church and at First Baptist Belton in numerous leadership roles. These experiences have molded me into a Christian leader who is communicative, strategic, and visionary.

I am a **communicative leader**. At UMHB, I have interacted with students, faculty, and staff across the campus. I have worked closely with my Biology colleagues in developing the curriculum, degree plans, courses, assessments, and research projects, while supervising junior and adjunct faculty and student workers. I have built strong relationships with my colleagues through these projects and have thoroughly enjoyed serving alongside them during various recruiting events and departmental initiatives. During the 2020 CRUflex teaching, I developed full hybrid courses that I shared with my faculty colleagues, thus aiding their preparations for the challenging semesters. I have also worked closely with other departments within the Natural Sciences and maintained great relationships with the faculty. I taught a course in the Chemistry department for a year providing assistance to their workload. I was also selected to serve as a Natural Sciences representative in the Student Success Collaborative Analytics Team, a role in which I worked with the other leaders across the university to identify student success markers, which I then communicated to the Associate Dean and department chairs. As a selected Partnership: Next representative of the Natural Sciences, I communicated with the faculty and students about various job-related functions (e.g. fairs and career panels) and attended the yearly senior etiquette dinner in support of the program. I have also served in the College of Humanities and Sciences Discussion group as a Biology representative and communicated with the other members of the group on college matters that pertained to the Biology department.

I am a **strategic leader**. I am always looking for new ways to promote innovative ideas and diverse modes of delivery in regards to teaching. As a co-chair of the Natural Sciences Pedagogy Innovations committee, I have organized numerous teaching training/discussion group meetings regarding the “best practices” in the field and have led several of these meetings. The feedback from the attending faculty has been very positive and this has promoted the application

of new innovative teaching techniques in various courses across the school. I have been interacting with newer faculty members in our college and provided them with teaching tips and guidance through peer-observations and discussions. I have also provided many faculty with full courses in Microbiology lecture and lab, complete with assessments and lessons to prepare the faculty for the semesters. My experiences with the Vocare initiative, through conferences and discussion groups, have been supportive of my personal views regarding the meaningfulness of life and how to guide students and faculty towards a faith-filled life with continuous service.

I am a **visionary leader**. I have always viewed myself as a person who is extremely organized and well prepared, allowing planning for the future. I have continuously evaluated and amended the courses I teach based on the best practices, observer comments, and student evaluations. We have to always look ahead and be pro-active and not only reactive, as COVID-19 has shown. We are a student-focused university with a great emphasis on student successes and we need to make sure to strive for excellence in providing programs that suit the students and prepare them for faith-informed discernment in the global society. I believe we have a great opportunity, within the Natural Sciences, to become even more collaborative between the departments and provide new learning experiences for the students, both in the classroom and on the research side. My experiences in the Faculty Council have provided me with great information and vision for the school, college, and the university.

I am a **Christian leader**. Since becoming a Believer as a college student, I have sought to further the kingdom of God through my life. Christ died for our sins on the cross and it is my privilege to serve Him in everything I do; not so that I would be saved, but rather because I am saved. My personal faith has led me to serve in numerous church leadership roles throughout my Christian walk and this is the backbone of who I am and who I desire to be. I served as a Sunday School teacher, a Deacon, and an AWANA leader at First Baptist Belton. Since 2018, I have been part of the new church plant of First Baptist Belton called Renewal Church. At Renewal, I am the Finance Team Director, a Home Group leader, and an A/V Team Manager. I am blessed to be able to work at a university who holds the same values as I do and promotes integration of faith and learning. I want to support these efforts and I will seek to provide even more opportunities for the faculty to learn about Christian teaching and practices while promoting the faith-based efforts of the school, college, and the university.

I have vast experiences in leadership, including running microarray core facilities at Texas A&M and Tulane University, running a research program at Texas A&M, spearheading the Microbiology curriculum for UMHB, serving as the chair for Educational Technology and Christian Planning committees at UMHB, and serving as the Finance Team Director, Home Group Leader, and the A/V Team Manager for Renewal Church. In addition, I am serving as an Editor for several journals and have been the main Editor for a recent special issue in Regenerative Medicine in the journal "Cells" and currently serve as an Editor for another upcoming special issue. Furthermore, I regularly serve as an ad hoc peer reviewer for numerous international journals, completing multiple peer reviews a month over the last several years. In my role as the Microarray Core Facility Director, I oversaw the operations of the core, hired and evaluated staff, worked on the budget, and collaborated with numerous scientists by helping them with their grant proposals and scientific publications. In my role as the Finance Team Director for Renewal Church, I select the rest of the Finance Team and prepare and monitor the

budget for the Church working together with the pastors, accountants, and other team members. As an A/V Team Manager I recruit and train the volunteers while maintaining a service schedule. I have truly enjoyed my role as a leader and supporter for my Church family, staff and faculty colleagues, and my students. I always look forward to interacting with students whether that be through sponsoring the Pre-Health-Professionals student organization, student advising, recruiting, or completing research projects together. My involvement with Texas Academy of Science and Texas Branch of the American Society for Microbiology, have provided me opportunities to affect students beyond our university as I am the Chair of the Biomedical Sciences section and coordinate and evaluate student research presentations.

I believe my experiences in leadership and teaching make me a well-rounded candidate to become the Associate Dean of the School of Natural Sciences at UMHB. I am excited about the opportunity to serve the school, college, and the university through the administrative efforts of this position while providing and promoting excellence in Christian teaching. Please do not hesitate to contact me in regards to my application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joni Ylostalo".

Dr. Joni H. Ylostalo  
Associate Professor of Biology  
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor