

Dear Members of the Presidential Search Committee:

The selection of the next president of Louisiana Tech University is highly consequential, and the discussion among the Louisiana Tech community around the most important qualities required in the next president has been lively and productive. In addition to strong academic credentials, deep higher education industry experience and demonstrated accomplishments, sophisticated understanding of the market in which universities compete, commitment to disciplined financial stewardship and transparency, and knowledge of Louisiana Tech and the nature of its particular opportunities and challenges, we want to emphasize the importance of a particular set of personal and professional leadership qualities. Leading a major public research university demands visionary leadership, strategic acumen, sound judgment, integrity, and the ability to inspire confidence and unite diverse constituencies around a shared purpose. At a time when higher education faces intensifying competition, financial pressures, demographic changes, and technological disruption, Louisiana Tech needs a president who can navigate immediate challenges while positioning the university for long-term excellence and growth.

The university needs a leader who can anticipate emerging opportunities, foster innovation, build strategic partnerships, strengthen academic excellence, and develop sustainable approaches to institutional growth. Equally important is the ability to communicate candidly, make difficult decisions responsibly, earn the trust of faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, community partners, and public officials, and translate an ambitious vision into measurable results.

It is with these essential leadership qualities in mind that we offer our endorsement for **Dr. Dave Norris, Jr., as the next president of Louisiana Tech University.** His 24 years of service to Louisiana Tech, including 13 years in senior leadership, demonstrate an exceptional combination of visionary thinking, entrepreneurial initiative, institutional knowledge, and proven results. We represent a mix of alumni and corporate partners of Louisiana Tech who have seen Dr. Norris's visionary leadership in action. Our business interests span diverse sectors from finance to AI, digital engineering, aviation, heavy industrial, marketing and communications, and software development.

Dr. Norris earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Texas at Austin and began his career in teaching, entrepreneurship, and economic development. He founded and led the Louisiana Tech Center for Economic Development and helped establish and direct the Center for Entrepreneurship and Information Technology. These experiences provided a strong foundation in academic leadership, innovation, economic development, and strategic institution-building.

As Chief Innovation Officer and Chief Research and Innovation Officer from 2013 to 2024, Dr. Norris's visionary leadership helped transform opportunities into lasting institutional strengths. He led efforts to develop the Enterprise Campus, including Tech Pointe I and II, expanded corporate partnerships, and positioned Louisiana Tech as the U.S. Department of Commerce's Regional Innovation Strategies Hub for north Louisiana and southern Arkansas. He also helped establish significant major research initiatives and new institutional capabilities connecting university expertise with industry and government priorities.

His leadership produced tangible results. During his oversight of the research enterprise from 2017 through 2021, Louisiana Tech achieved the highest total competitive external research funding in its history to that point. He also helped establish partnerships and programs that expand student experiential learning, support faculty research, strengthen the university's reputation, attract external resources, and contribute to regional economic development.

Another notable example is the public-private partnership involving Louisiana Tech, the University Foundation, Louisiana Economic Development, the City of Ruston, and Radiance Technologies to develop advanced microelectronics research capabilities in Ruston. This initiative demonstrates Dr. Norris's ability to bring together complex partnerships around strategic priorities that benefit the university and the broader north Louisiana region.

Perhaps his most consequential contribution is his leadership in developing the Division of Innovation and Advancement. Since 2024, Dr. Norris has served as Senior Vice President of Innovation and Advancement and CEO of the Louisiana Tech University Foundation. Under his leadership, this division integrates applied research, technology commercialization, public-private partnerships, student experiential learning, advancement, national security initiatives, and economic development.

This integrated approach reflects a sophisticated understanding of the challenges facing public universities. By connecting academic and research strengths with external opportunities, Dr. Norris is helping diversify revenue streams, strengthen financial resilience, and create new resources to support Louisiana Tech's core mission. He recognizes that financial sustainability and academic excellence are interconnected and that innovation must ultimately improve the educational experience and institutional impact.

Dr. Norris also demonstrates the collaborative leadership essential to a successful presidency. His accomplishments reflect an ability to build relationships across campus and with corporations, government agencies, elected officials, donors, and community partners. He understands how to establish shared priorities, earn trust, mobilize resources, and empower others to contribute to institutional success. His leadership philosophy recognizes that a

university's greatest accomplishments depend on the creativity and commitment of its faculty, staff, and students.

His deep knowledge of Louisiana Tech's culture and operations, combined with his extensive external relationships, positions him to lead with both institutional continuity and forward-looking ambition. He understands the importance of student success, faculty and staff support, research excellence, responsible financial stewardship, and meaningful engagement with Louisiana's economic and civic life.

Ultimately, Louisiana Tech needs a president who can inspire a compelling vision, make sound and difficult decisions, build consensus, and deliver results. Dr. Norris has demonstrated these capabilities through years of service and a record of institutional transformation. He brings the experience to understand the university's challenges, the creativity to identify new opportunities, and the leadership ability to unite people in pursuit of shared goals.

We strongly endorse Dr. Dave Norris, Jr., for the presidency of Louisiana Tech University and respectfully urge the Presidential Search Committee and the University of Louisiana System Board to give his candidacy their fullest consideration. We also urge all who care about the future of Louisiana Tech to add your voice to those providing input to the search committee. They want to hear from the Louisiana Tech family.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to securing the strongest possible future for Louisiana Tech University.

Joel Trammell, CEO, XpertLoop.ai; Member, Austin Technology Hall of Fame

Brian Chaney, Founder and CEO, Vista TechWerx

Brigadier General Gerald Goodfellow, USAF (Ret.), CEO, XSTAR Aviation

Martin Santora, President and CEO, Fenway Group

Jackie Rome, CEO, Crossmark Management Group

Dr. Sree Sanakam, Co-Founder and COO, BetaFlix, Inc

Ben Lee, Co-Founder and COO, Fletcher

Paul Bordelon, CFO, Crest Industries