

Dear Members of the Dakota State University Presidential Search Committee,

Please accept my application to serve as the next President of Dakota State University (DSU). As a serving university president with a demonstrated record of scaling technology-driven programs, expanding applied research, and building federal and industry partnerships, I am energized by DSU's leadership in cybersecurity and its mission to prepare graduates for high-demand careers. I am a U.S. citizen currently holding a Top Secret/SCI security clearance that support DSU's national security collaborations.

American higher education faces a moment of profound change and DSU could serve as an ideal community to help transform our educational approaches for the future. I lead with an entrepreneurial mindset that questions the status quo while honoring institutional identity. As president of the National Intelligence University, I expanded applied research capacity by securing \$7 million in federal and industry grants, launching the iRES Lab, and establishing multi-year partnerships with the Pacific Northwest National Labs, the University of Virginia and the University of Texas San Antonio. Those efforts increased research activity by 15%, created new employment pipelines, and positioned the university as a national innovation hub—outcomes I will pursue at DSU to strengthen MadLabs®, DARC, and the new Sioux Falls research lab.

Student success and workforce alignment are central to my leadership. I led curricular redesigns and employer-aligned credentialing that improved placement and retention outcomes—creating new hiring pathways for graduates and increasing high visibility job placement. I will work with faculty and employers to ensure DSU's programs continue to deliver the exceptional placement outcomes that distinguish the university. Dakota State's distinctive blend of liberal arts tradition and workforce-aligned programs resonates deeply with my own vision. I have designed scalable advising models, expanded experiential learning pathways, and strengthened retention efforts that measurably improved persistence and completion, especially for first-generation and underrepresented students. I will champion DSU's academic strengths while incentivizing interdisciplinary collaboration and program innovation in high-demand fields such as healthcare, education, and business.

I have successfully led successful enrollment and retention strategies based on market-aligned goals, improving graduate and certificate completion times and increasing graduation numbers. My approach is data-driven, using analytics to identify risk, optimize student development, and target outreach where it delivers the strongest returns. I will work to thoughtfully grow Dakota State's enrollment through focused academic offerings, strengthened pathways with community colleges and K–12 partners, and expanded experiential learning opportunities. I have grown enrollment across traditional, adult, and online portfolios by launching market-responsive programs and strengthening advising, student support and career services efforts. I will apply

those strategies at DSU to sustain growth in The Beacom College and across doctoral and graduate programs while preserving a close-knit, student-centered campus culture.

As a president responsible for a \$60M operating budget and 160 staff, I led a multi-year financial realignment that preserved academic priorities and improved fiscal resilience without reduction in program outcomes even during a 10% government funding reduction. I have also led successful fundraising efforts, including a campaign that raised \$7 in major gifts, focused on providing cybersecurity tools, new unmanned aircraft system (UAS) technology and higher speed computing equipment, and I will prioritize philanthropic growth and diversified revenue streams to support DSU's strategic investments. I have superb working relationships with senior leaders across the federal government, including NSA, Treasury and other cyber-focused agencies.

I lead with visible, collaborative engagement designed to build the team—holding regular town halls, convening representative planning committees, and partnering with state and industry leaders to elevate institutional profile. I am committed to transparent communications, shared governance and empowering faculty; I will be a present and accessible leader on campus while continuously serving as DSU's chief advocate and ambassador to alumni, donors, legislators, and local, state and federal partners.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience in technology-infused education, applied research, and external engagement can advance Dakota State University's mission. I have attached my curriculum vitae and a list of references below. I would be pleased to speak with the search committee at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John R. Ballard, Ph.D.

John R. Ballard, Ph.D.
Annapolis, Maryland

Seasoned university president with extensive experience in strategic planning, institutional transformation and student success. Proven ability to provide vision, drive innovation, ensure continuous improvement / accreditation, expand enrollment, foster partnerships and ensure financial stability. Adept at developing transparent Board relations, engaging productively with stakeholders, promoting shared governance, accomplishing transformative goals as a team, and advancing holistic student success as a priority.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

National Intelligence University, Bethesda, MD (2023 – Present)

President

- Leads the university's academic, research and engagement functions across multiple global academic centers.
- Oversees accreditation, budgeting, and other strategic initiatives to advance learning and research in national security and technology policy across the government.
- Engages with alumni, federal and state leadership, private sector partners, and other academics to enhance collaboration and institutional impact.
- Developed a new strategic plan, *Together We Transform*, in the first year.
- Opened a new research, education and solutions lab to foster innovation and collaboration with private sector.
- Developed new funding sources and earned new national laboratory status.
- Significantly improved university branding and engagement activities.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, NY (2018 – 2023)

Inaugural Provost

- Directed all academic operations, faculty development, and accreditation efforts for a federal service academy.
- Led strategic planning, curriculum innovation, student success initiatives, and technological advancements to modernize academic programs.
- Significantly increased funding for infrastructure improvements.
- Restored accreditation following previous institutional shortfalls.
- Managed the transition to and from COVID with no reduction in graduation rates.

American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC (2017 – 2018)

Vice President

- Served as Director of the Servicemember Opportunity Colleges program.
- Managed programs supporting student success across the nation.
- Adapted funding initiatives and research projects to enhance student learning and retention.
- Directed national military and veteran support programs.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (cont.)

National Defense College, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2013 – 2017)

Founding Dean

- Established and led an elite, national security studies institution, managing faculty, curriculum development, and strategic partnerships.
- Spearheaded accreditation and assessment initiatives, ensuring academic excellence and program effectiveness.

National Defense University, Washington, DC (2007 – 2013)

Dean, National War College

- Provided academic leadership for a premier graduate institution specializing in national security strategy.
- Developed innovative programs to enhance leadership development and strategic thinking.

Dean, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies

- Led faculty and research efforts focused on security, policy, and diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia.
- Directed international academic programs through high-level engagements with global policymakers.

Professor, National War College

- Taught graduate history, strategy and national security studies courses.

Multiple institutions, (1995-2007)

Associate Professor / Professor

- Inaugural Chair for Massey University Defense Studies Program in New Zealand.
- Taught undergraduate and graduate history, strategy and national security studies courses.
- Designed and coordinated construction of Okinawa Hall, housing the Owen Pickett Wargaming Center and the Ike Skelton Library.

EDUCATION

- **Ph.D. in History**, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, 1994
- **M.A. in History**, California State University, Dominguez Hills, CA, 1986
- **B.S. in History**, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD, 1979

RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT

- Scholar of **history, national security, and leadership.**
- Contributor to **multiple peer-reviewed journals and academic conferences** in security studies and education policy.
- Advisor on **higher education leadership, strategy, and institutional innovation.**

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Championed student success initiatives, **improving learning and alumni engagement**.
- Created team-developed strategies enhanced by **strategic vision**.
- Established partnerships with **government agencies, private sector leaders, and educational institutions** to enhance research and student opportunities.
- Launched **innovative academic programs**, aligning education with workforce needs.
- **Integrated technology and active learning** methods to increase retention.
- Successfully **secured institutional accreditation** at multiple institutions.
- Implemented **faculty development programs** that increased retention and instructional quality.
- Led **fundraising efforts**, securing resources to expand educational programs and facilities.
- Managed complex/multifaceted organizations.
- Improved **institutional brand / recognition** to aide recruitment and retention.
- Holds **Top Secret** clearance

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- With Robert Sharp and Sterling Jensen, *National Security Education: Developing Strategic Leaders for 21st Century Security Challenges*, (Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, UAE), 2021.
- With David W. Lamm and John K. Wood, *From Kabul to Baghdad and Back, the U.S. at War in Afghanistan and Iraq*, (U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD), 2012.
- *From Storm to Freedom: the Long American War with Iraq*, (U.S. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD), 2010.
- *Triumph of Self-Determination, Operation Stabilise and United Nations Peacemaking in East Timor*, (Praeger Security International, Westport, CT), 2008.
- “A Regional Recipe for Success: Multinational Peace Operations in East Timor,” in Joseph Soeters and Philippe Manigart (eds.), *Military Cooperation in Multinational Peace Operations, Managing Cultural Diversity and Crisis Response* (Routledge, London, UK), 2008.
- “Extinguishing the Insurgency in Iraq: A Civil Affairs Perspective,” in Thomas G. Mahnken, and Thomas A. Keaney (eds.), *War on Iraq: Planning and Execution* (Routledge, London, UK), 2007.
- *Fighting for Fallujah*, (Praeger Security International, Westport, CT), 2006.
- “MacArthur’s Counter-attack at Inchon, 1950,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Spring, 2001.
- *Continuity during the Storm: Boissy d’Anglas and the Era of the French Revolution*, (Greenwood, Westport, CT), 2000.
- *Upholding Democracy: the United States Military Campaign in Haiti, 1994-1997*, (Praeger, Westport, CT), 1998.

SERVICE

- Member, Military Education Coordination Council (2013-2016, 2023-Pres)
- Member, Society for Military History (1998-Pres)
- Member, American Historical Association (1996-Pres)
- Retired Colonel, United States Marine Corps Reserve (1995-2007)

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Holistic Student Success
- Curriculum & Faculty Development
- Strategic Planning & Institutional Growth
- Strengthening Enrollment and Retention
- Institutional Accreditation
- Technology Integration
- Fundraising & Stakeholder Engagement
- History, National Security, Leader Development & International Affairs
- Public Speaking & Media Relations

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Director of National Intelligence **Distinguished Service Award**, 2025
- Senior National Intelligence Service **Performance Award**, 2024
- Merchant Marine **Outstanding Achievement Award**, 2023
- Secretary of Transportation **Innovation Leadership Award**, 2023
- Senior Executive Service **Performance Awards**, 2019, 2000, 2001, 2022
- Secretary of Transportation **Superior Achievement Award**, 2019
- **Legion of Merit**, **Bronze Star Medal**, and multiple military awards, 2005, 2007
- Army Historical Foundation **Distinguished Writing Award**, 2002
- Department of the Navy **Meritorious Civilian Service Medal**, 1999
- **Society of the Colonial Daughters of the Seventeenth Century Award**, U.S. Naval Academy, 1979
- **General Horace Porter Award in History**, U.S. Naval Academy, 1979

CONTACT INFORMATION

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