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September 26, 2025
Search Committee
Deep Springs College
Dyer, California 93522

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am excited to apply for the Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Science at Deep Springs College. Deep Springs' founding vision—L. L. Nunn's integration of rigorous Academics, purposeful Labor, and democratic Self-Governance—aligns directly with my professional experience and educational philosophy. My career has combined field-based science, mentorship, collaborative governance, and community engagement in ways that mirror Deep Springs' whole-person education.

Academics: Knowledge as a Shared Creation

My teaching emphasizes student-centered inquiry, field-based learning, and integrative science. At Paul Smith's College I designed and taught courses from Conservation Biology and Herpetology to Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy and Advanced Ecology, mentoring more than 15 senior theses. My prior experience teaching at Deep Springs—leading an independent study on the valley's amphibians and reptiles and co-teaching a summer seminar on black toad conservation—confirmed my belief that students thrive when they are co-creators of knowledge in small, rigorous seminars.

In 2017, I deepened this approach through the Conservation Teaching and Learning Studio at the American Museum of Natural History (Center for Biodiversity and Conservation, NCEP program), a workshop devoted to evidence-based active learning and the development and assessment of critical thinking—skills I will bring to the Deep Springs seminar environment.

Labor: Character Through Work

Nunn believed labor was integral to forming leaders. In my teaching and research, I have organized bioblitzes, led desert and alpine field campaigns, and built courses where physical engagement—handling animals, measuring environments, managing data—

reinforces intellectual rigor. The Deep Springs desert is a profound laboratory where academic learning and manual work continually inform one another.

Self-Governance: Learning Democracy in Practice

As Faculty Senate President, I guided faculty governance, budgeting, and policy deliberation, cultivating habits of inclusive, reasoned decision-making. As a coordinator of conservation working groups (e.g., Amargosa Toad Working Group) and as an expert reviewer for the Clark County MSHCP, I facilitated collaborative agreements among scientists, agencies, and stakeholders—practical experiences in the democratic practice Deep Springs embodies.

Looking Forward

If appointed, I will mentor students in science and in the broader responsibilities of leadership and stewardship. I am prepared to offer courses such as Reason and Responsibility (logic, reasoning, and constructive criticism, informed by AMNH pedagogy), Life in Extreme Environments (animal physiology and biophysical ecology in deserts, alpine, and polar systems), and Nature, Policy, and Power (conservation decisions at the intersection of science, law, and politics). These courses join rigorous academics with the intellectual humility and civic engagement that Nunn envisioned.

I truly appreciate your consideration. I would be honored to join the Deep Springs community and contribute to its extraordinary educational mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric T. Simandle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric T. Simandle, Ph.D.