

# Cover Letter

Dear Search Committee

I am writing to express my enthusiastic interest in the Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Science at Deep Springs College. Deep Springs' mission of preparing students for "a life of service to humanity" deeply resonates with me. I am drawn to the college's unique educational model that combines rigorous academics, manual labor, and student self-governance. As an educator and researcher, I am eager to contribute to this *three-pillared* community by integrating deep scientific inquiry with sustainable, socially relevant education.

My personal journey has instilled in me a profound commitment to accessible and impactful science education. I grew up in Nepal, where access to advanced educational resources and technology was limited. As a teenager, I was fortunate to earn a NASA Student Achievement Award for an innovation I presented at an international competition. However, despite this early success, I often had to overcome significant resource gaps in my schooling. I could only attend university through prestigious scholarships, including the Wells Mountain Initiative, and through sheer perseverance. These experiences shaped my dedication to ensuring that quality science education is within reach for all, regardless of background. In 2017, for example, I co-founded STEM Foundation Nepal to inspire and support high school students in science, providing them opportunities I worked hard to obtain myself. This background gives me a personal understanding of Deep Springs' commitment to educating *the whole student* in service of society.

I am excited by Deep Springs College's *academics, labor, and self-governance* model not only in principle but in practice. Academically, I value close student-faculty engagement and interdisciplinary exploration. In line with the labor pillar, I have a hands-on approach to science—whether it's building a solar device or maintaining lab equipment—and I look forward to participating in the college's working ranch operations as a mentor and colleague. I also appreciate Deep Springs' tradition of student self-governance, having thrived in collaborative environments throughout my career. For instance, during my postdoctoral work I helped coordinate student-led seminars and lab groups, experiences that mirror the communal decision-making at Deep Springs. I am confident that I can contribute positively to the college's self-sustaining community, both in the classroom and on the ranch, guiding students in rigorous study while pitching in on the daily labor that binds the community together.

Finally, I want to emphasize my eagerness to join and enrich the community life at Deep Springs. Beyond my technical qualifications in physics, I see myself as a mentor and community member. I have lived and worked in small, close-knit settings before, from remote research stations to leading student teams. I am ready to engage wholeheartedly in the remote desert environment of Deep Springs—teaching classes by morning, helping with ranch chores by afternoon, and participating in self-governance meetings by evening. My international and interdisciplinary background will allow me to offer new perspectives to students, while I also learn from the unique insights of Deep Springs' exceptional students. I am committed to the college's founding ideal that those educated in this way "incur a lifelong obligation to improve the human condition", and I see the Herbert Reich Chair as a role through which I can live out that ideal daily.

Thank you for considering my application. I am truly inspired by Deep Springs College's mission and would be honored to contribute my experience in physics, teaching, and research to further its goals. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my background and vision can serve your community.

Sincerely,  
Rijan Karkee, PhD