

September 22, 2025

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am excited to apply for the Herbert Reich Chair of Natural Science position at Deep Springs College. I am currently a limited term Assistant Professor of Biology at DePauw University, a position I have held since January 2025. I am an entomologist with a background in taxonomy and systematics of beetles, and have recently become interested in insect biodiversity more broadly.

In my short time at DePauw, I have taught a variety of courses including introductory ecology and evolution, ecological and evolutionary genetics, and insect biology. I led a summer research project with four undergraduate students to survey the insect diversity at the DePauw Nature Park. This project represented the first attempt to document insect diversity at the nature park, and has so far generated over 4,000 research quality specimens representing over 400 species. Through my Insect Biology class this fall, I am continuing to survey the nature park and am working with an undergraduate student to generate a list of insect families and species found at the park, and compare family level diversity across habitats. My experience so far at DePauw has really helped me hone my teaching and mentorship skills. Additionally, it has helped to clarify my career goals, namely to work as a professor at a small, teaching focused institution.

I believe that Deep Springs College provides a unique and enriching opportunity for students and faculty that deeply aligns with my own values as both a professor and a human. As a professor, I am passionate about liberal arts education. I believe that broad, multidisciplinary education best sets students up for success, especially as the future remains uncertain. I also believe that scientific research in particular could benefit from cross-disciplinary work and understanding, including collaboration with the social sciences and humanities.

As a human, I believe that in order to ensure a safe and happy future for humanity, we need to learn to work cooperatively in our communities and practice community based self-reliance in food production, education, housing, and recreation. Additionally, I believe we need to be able to think creatively about solutions to existential crises we may be facing in the near future such as food shortages, energy shortages, refugee crises, and even economic collapse. Deep Springs commitment to service, shared labor, shared governance, and interdisciplinary education provides a training ground and sandbox, if you will, for students, faculty, and community members to practice the skills that I believe will be required for the success of our society in the future.

I am passionate about teaching and am well prepared to teach a variety of courses at Deep Springs, including biology courses in areas such as evolution, biodiversity, entomology, ecology, and conservation. I also have an interest in the broad concept of “how science is done”, including (1) how western/European culture and history influenced the “scientific method”, (2) how institutions and funding agencies determine what research questions are being asked (and answered) and (3) alternative approaches to science throughout history, including Indigenous

practices and knowledge. I am teaching a Winter Term course in January focused on part of this question, and am interested in teaching reading- and discussion-based courses in this area in the future. I would love to collaborate with professors in the humanities and social sciences on a course in this topic as they will certainly have many additional insights which I would not be able to provide as a scientist.

In my role as a professor, I am committed to supporting all students by being readily available and offering additional assistance to those who face challenges, whether due to health, family issues, or other obstacles. I believe that effective teaching involves recognizing and addressing a variety of student needs, including those related to family, financial difficulties, mental and physical health, and disabilities. My goal is to create an inclusive classroom environment where all students—regardless of background, including BIPOC, international, LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, and disabled students—can thrive. This philosophy extends to my approach to mentorship, where I aim to support students in their academic and research pursuits, as well as achieving a healthy work-life balance. I strive to foster a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their concerns and receiving the help they need.

As a faculty member, I would establish a research program focused primarily on assessing insect diversity in a variety of habitats. For example, I am interested in comparing insect diversity in the Deep Springs garden and orchard to that of the Deep Springs Valley as a whole. Essentially, my goal would be to compare insects that *are* present in and near the crops to those that *could be* present, particularly pollinators and natural enemies (predators and parasitoids which target pests). I would also work with students to develop research questions regarding local insect diversity or other questions that could be addressed with my expertise and resources available at Deep Springs, including insect evolution, conservation, taxonomy, and phylogenetics. Students working with me would gain expertise in a range of skills, including field methods, specimen preparation and identification, experimental design and analysis, and independently designing research projects.

In my current position, I am not required or expected to perform service for the university. I do, however, regularly attend and participate in monthly department meetings and university wide faculty meetings. Additionally, I have engaged in service to societies, including as a student councilor on the Coleopterists Society executive board and on an awards judging panel for the Entomology Society of America. Additionally, I performed service (which was not required) as a graduate student at Purdue, including serving as an awards committee member and as a department steward for the graduate workers organizing committee. I believe that faculty service is critical for university self-governance and am committed to taking service duties seriously and performing them to the best of my ability.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to contribute to Deep Spring College's Natural Sciences program and am eager to bring my research expertise, teaching experience, and commitment to student success to your institution.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the possibility of discussing how my background and vision align with the goals of Deep Springs College.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DMG', with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr. Olivia M. Gearer
DePauw University