

February 19, 2023

Dr. Justin Q. Moss
Professor and Search Committee Chair
Oklahoma State University, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
358 Agricultural Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078

Dear Dr. Moss and members of the search committee,

With great thought and care, I submit my name for consideration for the position of Professor, Assistant Director, and State Program Leader for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Community Economic Development with the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. I am a tenured Professor of nursery crop production and marketing (75% Extension, 25% Research) at Kansas State University. I also serve as the Extension Program Director in the Horticulture and Natural Resources Department and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Program Leader Coordinator for K-State Research and Extension (KSRE).

I'm grateful to you, Dr. Moss, for thinking of me for this role, reaching out, and answering my questions as I ponder this opportunity. I greatly enjoy my profession and am proud to be the product of multiple land-grant institutions. The skills I've learned at each career stage have enhanced my ability to meet community needs through engagement, collaboration, and leadership. In my faculty role, I have adapted and innovated to meet a variety of research and Extension needs in Kansas. After nearly 15 years as an Extension Specialist, I'm confident that I can provide value to Oklahoma's agriculture, natural resources, and community development Extension efforts.

About me: An Oklahoma native, I earned two degrees from the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture at Oklahoma State University: a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (2003) and a Master of Science in Horticulture (2005). I earned a Ph.D. in Horticulture at Auburn University in 2008 and then joined Kansas State University. In 2014 I achieved tenure and promotion and earned the rank of full professor in 2022.

At OSU, I worked with Dr. Janet Cole and Greenleaf Nursery in Park Hill, OK, to study Integrated Pest Management practices for reducing anthracnose on *Euonymus*. We evaluated the effectiveness of shade, sanitation, and fungicides in controlling *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides* in nursery settings and in-vitro studies in the lab. After graduation, I elected to learn more about nursery crop production with Drs. Charles Gilliam and Glenn Fain at Auburn University. I conducted some of the earliest studies (of recent efforts) evaluating alternative substrates (potting media) composed of a high quantity of wood. I worked with a timber waste product of the paper industry, "clean chip residual," to determine the influence of processing, particle size, and fertilizer on plant growth. I also conducted laboratory studies at the USDA-ARS facility in Auburn, working with Dr. Allen Torbert to measure microbial immobilization in wood-containing substrates.

When I joined K-State in 2008, I could never have imagined how the work of Extension and research would fit me so well and shape the person I am today. I love the craft of reaching people with education and information that can change their lives and livelihoods in ways that fit their learning styles and preferences. Our tripartite land-grant mission to teach, learn, and take the knowledge gained to people who need it to make better decisions is a motivation to engage and a mechanism to change the world. I firmly believe that the uniqueness of our mission—focusing on developing learning experiences in response to needs and issues identified through community engagement—sets us apart from other higher education institutions. Our work in Extension as the eyes, ears, feet, and hands across the state brings tremendous value to our citizens, campus colleagues, and legislative decision-makers. Land grant institutions were designed to provide opportunities for everyone to improve their lives and communities, and Extension is at the exciting forefront of delivering that promise.

Early in my career, my team at K-State researched using an invasive tree species, Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), as a substrate for nursery crop production in the Great Plains region of the U.S. We learned how to use the material in plant production and measured subsequent plant growth and development after being planted in the landscape. In 2012 I sensed a need to change directions to meet more urgent industry needs. I shifted my area of interest into horticultural marketing, evaluating new-media marketing tools (websites, e-newsletters, social media, e-commerce, etc.). My goal to help independent horticulture businesses market their products better using digital tools to continue operating in often rural locations is an ever-evolving achievement. This work led to ongoing opportunities in using digital tools to engage audiences and improve lives across the spectrum of agricultural and natural resources interests, including professional Extension audiences. During this shift, I developed a greater understanding of qualitative research and significantly improved my survey skills, which enhanced my program evaluation expertise.

As an Extension Specialist at K-State, I have had the opportunity to learn, teach, and lead in several areas of horticulture. I have developed programs for commercial stakeholders (nursery, landscape, etc.), consumers (Extension Master Gardeners, homeowners, youth), and Extension colleagues. With the co-creation of The Center for Rural Enterprise Engagement (CREE) in 2015, I collaborated with colleagues in Agricultural Communication and Agricultural Economics to conduct transdisciplinary (issue-focused) work related to new-media marketing for agricultural stakeholders. Working together in all three land-grant mission areas (teaching, research, and Extension) continues to be gratifying. Through it all, I focus on fostering positive changes in the lives of stakeholders, communities, and teammates.

A silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it allowed online programs to flourish, and I have enjoyed facilitating team-based programs to deliver content digitally. The first was the KSRE Digital Delivery Development course designed for KSRE staff and developed by the CREE team (over 500 employees are currently enrolled). Next, the Horticulture Program Focus Team (PFT) created the K-State Garden Hour webinar series and has delivered 50 sessions since May 2020 using a 1,000-seat Zoom webinar license I manage. Total audience participation is more than 44,000 (live + recorded views). I also led a team to collaboratively deliver online Extension Master Gardener basic training for the last three years to around 250 trainees across Kansas each year. Before the pandemic, the team had been resistant to changing the delivery of

the EMG program, and now they embrace multiple hybrid approaches, which has expanded the program's reach significantly. Other programs we pivoted to deliver online included pesticide applicator safety training, Turf and Landscape Conference, Field Days, and our CREE Insight Summit. The variety of programs has allowed me to develop decision tools for online program planning depending on the goals and objectives of the event. I have now amassed over 300 hours of finished program content, and online program delivery has become an area of expertise for me. I regularly engage with the KSRE system about hybrid programming.

I began serving as the Horticulture Program Focus Team (PFT) faculty co-chair shortly after arriving at K-State, in 2009. The PFTs are KSRE groups aligned around common programming themes, including local unit (county or multi-county district) Extension professionals and state/area Extension Specialists. Their purpose is to provide a means to communicate, collaborate on programs, and provide professional development opportunities for members and allied Extension staff. The Horticulture PFT has 40 members who regularly converse, meet, prioritize, plan, and share resources.

As the Extension Program Director for the Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources, I have the privilege of leading a team of Extension professionals across the breadth of horticulture and wildlife disciplines. We pursue a team-oriented approach to program development, delivery, evaluation, and scholarship that significantly impacts our stakeholder audiences. I supervise limited fiscal resources and budget allocations for our team's needs in this role as well as our body of departmental Extension publications and internet-based learning resources. I advocate for needed change, guide and support tenure and promotion dossiers, mentor new Specialists, and help shape a vision for our shared work. I am excited about the resources we are building together for the continued prosperity of Kansans.

Amid the 2020 pandemic, I stepped into the role of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Program Leader Coordinator (PLC; a part-time add-on role in KSRE). I serve alongside PLCs representing 4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Community Vitality. Our duties relate to leading the work of our associated PFTs (including budget management), screening local unit Extension agent candidates, and participating in Extension Administration Team meetings and retreats. I co-teach a component of new staff orientation (*Programming with a Purpose*) and related in-service training. In addition to the Horticulture PFT, I provide guidance and oversight for four other PFTs: Crop Production, Farm Management, Livestock Production, and Natural Resources. Working with PFTs to craft state-level action plans that Extension professionals can adopt in any of Kansas' 105 counties has allowed me to learn about many disciplines and stakeholder needs. My perspective as an outsider to the field is often an advantage for clarifying messages, developing evaluation tools, and summarizing impact reports. Establishing trust and fostering positive working relationships are essential for collaborative progress. My leadership strengths center on building relationships, and I enjoy listening and digging into challenges with Extension colleagues.

As the ANR PLC, I also participate in the regional ANR State Leader group for the North Central Cooperative Extension Association. Discussions with this group have broadened my perspective of regional and national issues and exposed me to multi-state collaboration possibilities. I value sharing ideas for engaging productively with state, area, and county staff for

continued professional development. At our Summer 2021 meeting (via Zoom, featuring legislative speakers), we joined with the ANR State Leaders in the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors. Representatives from each 1862 land-grant university expressed a renewed intention to engage with their 1890 and 1994 land-grant counterparts. Kansas does not have an 1890 institution, but we do have a 1994 tribal college (Haskell Indian Nations University), and I found the conversation valuable for expanding my awareness of needs, collaborative opportunities, and shared programming support.

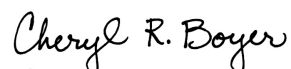
Monitoring community needs is an ongoing and multi-faceted pursuit. In addition to frequent communication among Extension teams, I remain active in national, regional, and state nursery and landscape associations and scientific organizations such as AmericanHort, the International Plant Propagators Society (IPPS), and the American Society for Horticultural Science. I regularly engage with the Kansas Nursery and Landscape Association and help plan and deliver learning opportunities with their executive board. In 2020 I facilitated the first-ever IPPS North American Summit (online) with 900+ participants from around the globe. I currently serve on the executive committee of the Southern Region North America IPPS, will be President for the 2023 meeting in North Carolina, and the local site chair for the 2024 meeting in Tulsa. Being a member of IPPS has helped me listen, understand needs, and create learning resources valuable to nursery growers across the U.S. and at home.

Increasingly, the most satisfying moments in my daily work life are investing in others and hearing about their challenges and subsequent successes. Celebrating big and small wins after working through complex issues together is a delight. Helping people develop and grow and cheering them on is a true joy I look forward to experiencing regularly.

My CV includes publications (31 refereed journal articles, 97 abstracts, and 16 Extension publications), funded grants (31; \$5.5M), and many awards, as any academic record of accomplishment should contain. I report meaningful programs and quality educational resources that engage a variety of audiences. I also list the names of graduate students whose stories are now a part of my own. You will find ample evidence of work conducted as “we,” not “I”: this is how I work best, “rowing the boat” in the same direction with colleagues I call friends.

In conclusion, I enjoy serving in leadership roles to contribute to organizational goals and develop people into skilled and engaged professionals. My top five Gallup® CliftonStrengths® are Relator, Learner, Achiever, Positivity, and Intellection. Collectively my leadership style is Relationship Building. I am a collaborative, innovative, big-picture thinker who enjoys working with others to improve life. I’m grateful for the opportunity to consider a new role that fits my strengths and interests, and I look forward to conversing about the future with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cheryl R. Boyer".

Cheryl R. Boyer, Ph.D.