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Professor
Texas A&M University School of Law

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Search Committee for the Dean of the College of Law
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I write with great enthusiasm to submit my name as a candidate to serve as the next dean of the Florida State University College of Law. The FSU College of Law occupies a genuinely distinctive position in American legal education: a nationally ranked public law school situated steps from the Florida Supreme Court, the State Capitol, and the Governor's Mansion, committed to exceptional scholarship and student success, and poised to build further on a strong foundation of academic excellence and public service. I believe my background as a legal scholar, corporate practitioner, and teacher—and my sustained engagement with the transformative forces reshaping law, markets, and technology—position me well to help the College advance to its next chapter of achievement.

I am particularly enthusiastic about this position for a number of reasons. First, the FSU College of Law has a long history of being in the forefront of legal innovation. Its culture of scholarly excellence, student preparation, and public engagement has always been a unique facet of the law school, and its reputation along these lines is first-rate. I remember when I was first starting out my career as a legal academic having several conversations about the FSU College of Law and its sterling reputation. It is an exciting prospect to join this remarkable institution at such a pivotal time, when the future of legal education and the role of lawyers in society are matters of significant debate, and to serve as the academic and administrative leader of the future. The energy of the law school, including its faculty, its students and its alumni, is truly something special. I would be honored to work with the committee, the faculty, and the university in charting the path of this great institution in the future.

Second, I would note the significant momentum of the FSU College of Law in recent years. It has hired brilliant scholars, recruited brilliant students, and carved out an increasingly influential role in the state and the nation. I believe this record of success has set a gold standard in legal education, and I would be excited to build on that momentum. The next few years are likely to prove even more instrumental in the FSU College of Law's progress. It is essential for the law school to demonstrate that its growing reputation is not a bug, but rather a feature, a reflection of the excellence of the institution as a whole and its continued striving for success. The law school must devote itself to sustained growth and engagement along all fronts if it is to stay on the cutting edge of the legal profession.

Third, I am particularly drawn to the law school's place within the broader Florida State University system. The university's dynamism, its energy, its broad-based pursuits, and its commitment to educating the next generation of leaders are great strengths in modern education. These strengths simultaneously contribute to and draw on the FSU College of Law's strengths. They offer the possibility of interdisciplinary collaboration, community engagement, and societal impact that are second to none in higher education. The law school's impact in areas such as business, criminal law, human rights, environment, energy, and technology are all assisted by its unique position within the wider university geography. This means that the FSU College of Law stands ready to address society's most complex and pressing political and economic issues.

Finally, I believe that there are unrealized opportunities available to the FSU College of Law in coming years. In a time of unprecedented changes in law and the legal profession, the law school has a truly once-in-a-generation opportunity to make its mark. The FSU College of Law's distinctive strengths—its location at the center of Florida government, its nationally ranked specialty programs, its unmatched value proposition, and its collaborative culture—provide an extraordinary platform for continued ascent. I am drawn to the opportunity not simply because the College is excellent, but because

it is excellent in ways that are deeply consistent with my own values and scholarly commitments. A law school that ranks among the best in the nation for value, that places its students in a capital city teeming with legislative, judicial, and executive practice, and that has cultivated nationally recognized programs in numerous substantive areas has not merely built a good school, it is in the perfect position for this moment. Under proper leadership, that trajectory can be accelerated and amplified by strengthening bar passage and employment outcomes, deepening the law school's engagement with the legal profession and the broader community, expanding curricular offerings, and leading major development initiatives that secure resources for faculty excellence and student success. Its impressive faculty, its talented students, and its placement in Florida provide an array of options to capitalize on this time of legal disruption. These assets create significant upside potential in terms of revenue, reputation, impact and student success.

Looking ahead, I believe the FSU College of Law is well-positioned to define pillars of excellence that would distinguish it nationally over the next decade. What those pillars are must be a matter of strategic discussion with stakeholders. But several opportunities are clear. By leveraging FSU's proximity to the levers of state power and its existing strengths, the creation of world-class centers of excellence in numerous areas could be transformative, including in areas such as public policy, constitutional law, criminal law, innovation, international law, energy and environmental law and financial regulation. These pillars would not only serve as beacons for elite faculty recruitment but would also provide a clear, marketable identity for students as they enter an increasingly specialized legal marketplace.

For all these reasons, I would be excited to join the FSU College of Law in this pivotal moment and play a part in helping it take full advantage of these opportunities.

Turning to my qualifications, I believe that my background has positioned me well to succeed as the next dean of the FSU College of Law. For one, I have significant industry expertise. Prior to joining Texas A&M Law School, I worked as a mergers and acquisitions attorney at Sullivan & Cromwell LLP in New York. This experience taught me the importance of unifying stakeholders, identifying strategic priorities, communicating clearly, building relationships, and executing flawlessly in the pursuit of a common goal. Practicing law at one of the nation's premier law firms also helped me build relationships in private practice, at large corporations, and with financial institutions. I understand how these environments work, and I would be excited to use this expertise in a decanal capacity.

For another, I have played a part in Texas A&M Law School's significant, indeed unprecedented, success of recent years. When I joined Texas A&M in 2016, it was a new law school that had to build its reputation, its student base, its faculty cohort, and many other elements essentially from the ground up. From the time I joined to today, the law school has risen 127 places in the U.S. News & World Report rankings to its current all-time high of 22nd in the nation. The law school has reached all-time highs in student metrics, both entering and exiting, and has recruited world-leading scholars to its ranks. I have played an active role in all of these matters, serving on student admissions committees, faculty hiring committees, promotion and tenure committees (both at the law school and university level), faculty governance committees and the curriculum committee.

In addition, in my role as director of the Corporate Law Program, I have overseen pathbreaking developments within our business offerings. In addition to foundational courses such as contracts, corporations, and mergers and acquisitions, I teach advanced courses on private equity, venture capital and hedge funds, and I regularly invite guest speakers from the private sector to join the classes. I have helped develop relationships with law firms, corporations and financial institutions that have served our students and our broader community. I launched the first-ever Corporate Law Symposium last year, and it has attracted widespread attention within the state and the nation. Speakers have included Chairman Paul Atkins of the Securities and Exchange Commission; Paul Grewal, the chief legal officer of Coinbase; the Honorable Leo E. Strine, Jr., former chief justice of the Delaware Supreme Court; and James H. Lee, chairman and founder of the TXSE stock exchange; as well as judges of the newly-created Texas Business Court, world-leading corporate law scholars and prominent private sector lawyers. This experience has taught me how to develop relationships with the private sector, organize conferences with public impact, and raise funds for future success.

Career placement has always been a priority for me as well. I believe that one element of a law school's success is its ability to create pathways for students to thrive in future careers. Against a backdrop of remarkable turmoil in the legal sector over the last decade, I have made extensive efforts to identify and maintain productive relationships with judges, government, law firms, and businesses to provide employment for students. These efforts have paid off. Texas A&M Law School's employment numbers have improved along all metrics, including graduate employment rates, clerkships, and large law

firm placements. These achievements are a testament to the hard work of students, the building of career pipelines, and the creation of a nation-leading career office.

As a scholar of the financial sector, I also have deep financial acumen. I know that financial stewardship is an essential plank in any institution's long-term success. This means diversifying revenues, containing unnecessary costs, budgeting in a responsible and sustainable way, and planning for the future. I have long focused on financial methods and would welcome the opportunity to use my expertise to advance the FSU College of Law's mission. My last book, *For Profit: A History of Corporations*, analyzed how corporations throughout history managed their own funding issues, from the East India Company of Elizabethan England to the private equity firm KKR today. This research has taught me about business models, structural changes, financial strategies, and the importance of refining business models. I enjoy financial management and would be honored to use my knowledge to support the law school's bottom line. Among other things, beyond traditional JD enrollment, I see significant opportunity to enhance the law school's business model through market-based academic programs. One of the major upside opportunities seen in modern legal education is the development of specialized masters of jurisprudence programs and executive education certificates, programed which could be tailored to Florida's robust healthcare, agricultural, international trade and financial sectors. These alternative revenue streams could provide significant value to the community and allow the law school to reinvest in its core mission.

I also have strong communication skills. Prior to law school, I worked as a journalist in the Rome bureaus of the Washington Post and the Associated Press. There, I honed my writing skills and cultivated my judgment, adaptability and ability to engage with the public. These skills are essential for modern deans. Public speaking and clear communication are necessary assets in this environment, and I believe that I could represent the law school well in both professional and academic environments. I am outgoing and extroverted and would be excited to build relationships both internally and externally, whether it be with central administration, faculty, students, employers, graduates or the wider world. I know how to build bridges and collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and these skills would enable me to establish deep ties with the private sector, government agencies and the local community.

The forces reshaping legal practice—technology, finance, and markets—are the very subjects I have spent my career studying. My scholarship reflects a sustained effort to understand and help regulate the technological transformation of law and markets. As dean, I would bring that expertise directly to bear: working with faculty to design programs that prepare students for a profession in which AI literacy and data competency are no longer optional; partnering with FSU's Institute of Law, Technology & Innovation and the Stoops Center of Law & Business to advance the law school's leading position in legal technology education; and cultivating relationships with technology companies, financial institutions, and government agencies as employers and partners for experiential learning. Florida's extraordinary depth in healthcare, finance, insurance, and government regulation makes FSU Law particularly well-positioned to develop students with exactly the skills these sectors increasingly require.

Finally, the deanship of a law school is not just about administrative skills or legal expertise; it is also about public leadership. In an era where the role of the lawyer is under constant public scrutiny, I intend to use my background as a published author and frequent commentator to elevate the FSU College of Law's brand. By positioning the faculty and the College at the center of important national dialogues, we can ensure that the "FSU Law" name is synonymous with intellectual leadership and civic impact, both in Tallahassee and across the country.

In sum, my approach to leadership is grounded in the conviction that a dean's most important work is enabling the people around them—faculty, students, staff, alumni, and community partners—to do their best work. I am a committed collaborator and listener who understands that academic governance depends on trust. A law school facing the pressures of a rapidly changing legal marketplace needs a dean who can build trust through both vision and execution. I am keenly aware that sustaining and advancing a law school of FSU's ambition requires cooperation. It means building meaningful relationships, deepening community connections, and making the case to all that the FSU College of Law is exceptional both because of who it is and what it does. Legal education at its best is a civic institution that shapes the lawyers, judges, legislators, and public servants who interpret and enforce the laws that govern our common life. I would be honored to serve as the steward of that vision and to work with the remarkable faculty, staff, and students of the FSU College of Law to advance it.

I hope this letter conveys both the depth of my interest and the seriousness with which I have considered what I could contribute to the FSU College of Law. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my candidacy further with you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Magnuson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Magnuson