

April 8, 2013

Chairs  
ESF Presidential Search Committee

Dear Chairpersons,

Attached you will find a letter authored by me, with significant editorial contributions by professors James Gibbs, Jacqui Frair and Ted Endreny. The Technology Committee of ESF's Campus Governance body held several discussions that guided the authoring process, and the committee voted unanimously at its March 28 meeting to endorse the final product.

Support was requested from number of faculty members. A large majority of those asked responded, all positively, resulting in 31 signatories. The opinions and support of many others would have been solicited had time allowed, but the letter clearly expresses a strong consensus that I have no doubt the larger community shares.

If you have any questions, I am at your service.

Sincerely,

Paul Otteson  
ESF Web Coordinator

4/8/13

ESF Presidential Search Committee

Dear committee members:

As you undertake the search for ESF's next president, we urge you to attend closely to candidates' records and attitudes toward technology in higher education. ESF's next strategic focus must involve significant attention to technological progress, and our next president needs the orientation, vision and savvy to lead such progress.

Information and communications technologies have exploded in importance to schools like ESF that aspire to achieve and maintain "first-tier" status. Colleges and universities in the top tier provide comprehensive, coherent technology solutions and support for teaching, research and outreach. They embrace major technology trends in online education, digital collaboration, e-journal publishing, academic web presence, mobile and dispersed learning, social media engagement and much more.

**A first-tier school is one at which learning, teaching, research, invention and outreach are fully technologically "scaffolded," and proactively so.**

However, the divide between the technology haves and have-nots is growing. Smaller, budget-constrained schools face significant challenges. Those that cannot sustain a competitive technological profile in today's increasingly digital world face a perilous future.

First-tier schools offer the following:

- Robust modeling, data analysis, and application development environments for researchers, with support for multiple platforms, server software, scripting and programming languages, etc.
- Web development support for online presentation and manipulation of complex research datasets to meet grantor requirements, enable collaboration, and meet service/education goals.
- Comprehensive media creation facilities and support for use of media in online and in-class instruction, as well as in commercial, e-journal, service, extension, marketing and other areas.
- Technology-enriched instruction, involving mobile "dispersed" learning, student e-portfolios, image/media course content banks, online and "blended" courses, remote location support, e-textbooks and more.
- Adequate technology staffing and resources to enable rapid, integrated solutions, timely and adaptive progress, and proactive training of faculty and professional staff.

Despite notable areas of success and the ongoing excellent efforts of current staff, ESF does not and cannot now meet these first-tier standards. Our next president will need to lead the technological advancement essential to realizing ESF's strategic vision and ensuring our competitive footing among the world's premier institutions, and we ask that this need receive a high level of attention as the search goes forward.

Sincerely,

Neal M. Abrams  
Thomas E. Amidon  
Colin M. Beier  
Eddie Bevilacqua  
Paul Crovella  
Claire B. Dunn  
Theodore A. Endreny  
Terry L. Ettinger  
John M. Farrell  
Elizabeth Folta  
Jacqueline Frair

James Gibbs  
Charles A. Hall  
David J. Keiber  
Karin E. Limburg  
Huiting Mao  
Stacy A. McNulty  
Myron J. Mitchell  
David H. Newman  
Christopher T. Nomura  
Paul Otteson  
William A. Powell

Bandaru V. Ramarao  
D. Dayton Reuter  
Mark A. Teece  
J. Scott Turner  
Timothy A. Volk  
Alexander Weir  
Steve P. Weiter  
Christopher Whipps  
Ruth D. Yanai

Endorsed by the  
Technology Committee  
of ESF Campus  
Governance

Watch "ESF's Digital  
Future?" a video letter by  
Scott Turner:  
[www.esf.edu/tech](http://www.esf.edu/tech)

## **Comments & Excerpts**

“The phrase "to advance knowledge and skills..." is built into ESF's mission statement. Today's commitment to modern technology will ensure that we fulfill our mission for tomorrow's learners and leaders. I fully support this letter.”

**Neal Abrams**

“I am completely comfortable to support the letter. It is well written and addresses an important need. Please add my name.”

**Tom Amidon**

“I'm definitely a signer and full supporter of this letter. ... I'll mention three of my projects that require more technological capabilities at ESF:

- 1) The Adirondack Park Regional GIS Consortium's is a long-standing project funded by NYS DEC and the Adirondack Park Agency to improve data used for management decisions in the Adirondack Park. Our data server and Adirondack Regional GIS Portal ([aprgis.org/argis](http://aprgis.org/argis)) is a cutting-edge resource for visualizing and sharing data, and was created entirely by ESF faculty and staff at the Adirondack Ecological Center. We could not host the server or run the site from anywhere on ESF's campus because of insufficient technical support and appropriate (climate controlled and wired) space for housing servers.
- 2) The newly funded NY State Climate Change Science Clearinghouse that ESF is building with Cornell, NOAA and NESCAUM. It was never an option to host the any of the site from ESF's campus although I'm building the geodatabase, web maps and interactive data visualizations for the site. Everything is being housed and hosted at Cornell instead.
- 3) The Forest Ecosystem Services Toolkit (FEST; [forestecoservices.net](http://forestecoservices.net)) is a USDA-funded project that includes web-based data sharing, interactive visualization and decision-support components. Similar to the above projects, lack of capacity at ESF costs my project approximately \$3000 per year in server hosting and related fees, provided by a company in Albany NY.”

**Colin Beier**

“I would very much like to have my name added in support of this letter that promotes the advancement of technology to strengthen ESF’s research and teaching activities.”

**Eddie Bevilacqua**

“...thoughtfully composed letter. I support the sentiment that it expresses.”

**Paul L. Crovella**

“I agree with the purpose and content ... thanks for bringing this issue to the selection process.”

**John M. Farrell**

“As a teacher of Systems Ecology you can certainly add my name.”

**Charlie Hall**

“... You can add me to the list. ... I support it.”

**Dave Kieber**

“... In particular I'm concerned that our expertise in geospatial technologies, mathematical modeling, and programming has become diminished through retirements and folks leaving. These are important skills that we need to have high capacity in and should be teaching our students.”

**Karin Limburg**

“...What you stated in the letter is key to the success of individuals at ESF and of ESF.”

**Huiting Mao**

“This is an excellent idea and I will definitely get involved. ... Thanks for promoting the college's broader technology needs as we move through this critical transition in presidents.”

**Stacy McNulty**

“I would be very happy to sign on to the letter. I am glad that you all are bringing this up.”

**David Newman**

“I agree to be a signer of this document. I also think you should reach out to Huiting Mao. There is no support for her to upload her data to the computing network necessary for her to process her large data sets. She can explain this more eloquently than I can, but the lack of support for this severely limits productivity.”

**Chris Nomura**

“Of course there are fiscal and personnel limits to overcome, but the technology challenge is also an issue of organization. Traditional tech islands must integrate and cooperate like never before. Computing, network, web, library, instructional technology, information systems, research, departments, units—all must take a fresh look at sharing assets, responsibilities and opportunities.”

**Paul Otteson**

“Yes, I will sign on to this letter. I don't do modeling, but I know how important it is to those who do. All the other points would support my teaching, research, and outreach. I believe achieving a first tier technology status would significantly benefit our college.”

**Bill Powell**

“I would be glad to add my name to this letter. This is an area where ESF needs to grow to remain competitive. Having faculty spend more time on these kinds of efforts because of the lack of support campus wide is not a good solution, but it the direction it is headed. In order to remain competitive in teaching, research and outreach ESF will need to keep up with the changes in this arena.”

**Tim Volk**

“I'm glad to see this being put forward.”

**Chris Whipps**

“Yes, sign me on. I would add that we would be more competitive in recruiting graduate students if we had an on-line grad application system (we lose a month every year scanning documents, while other schools are making offers).”

**Ruth Yanai**