December 18, 2025

To the Board of Supervisors and Search Committee,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic interest in the position of **President of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette**, as advertised in *Science*. I am a U.S. citizen and hold a tenured professorship of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine at the University of California, Davis, where I have served since 2006. Previously, I was an Instructor in Neurology at Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. I earned my Ph.D. from Rutgers University and completed postdoctoral training in Neuroscience at Harvard Medical School.

UL Lafayette's role as a **flagship R1 public research university for South Louisiana**, deeply embedded in its cultural, economic, and civic life, strongly resonates with my professional background and leadership philosophy. The opportunity to lead an institution that combines **research excellence, student access, regional engagement, and economic development** is both compelling and meaningful to me.

Leadership Experience

Since 2015, I have served as **Founding Dean and Yat-sen Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology** at Sun Yat-sen University (Shenzhen Campus). In this role, I led the creation and scaling of interdisciplinary academic programs, recruited and developed faculty, established governance and operational systems, and built global partnerships across academia, industry, and government. Founding and leading a new academic enterprise required long-range strategic planning, fiscal discipline, stakeholder engagement, and culture building—capabilities directly relevant to presidential leadership.

At UC Davis, a large public R1 university, I have held multiple leadership roles including Director, Program Co-Leader, and senior committee member across major institutional initiatives. My work has involved strategic planning, faculty recruitment and evaluation, budgeting, and cross-college collaboration in a complex shared-governance environment.

Research, Innovation, and Economic Engagement

My career has consistently integrated **research excellence with translational impact**. I have guided programs from discovery through preclinical development, built sustained academia–industry partnerships, and contributed to intellectual property development and commercialization. I have also secured competitive research funding and philanthropic support in both U.S. and international contexts.

My laboratory conducts interdisciplinary research at the intersection of neuroscience, immunology, biomedicine, and bioengineering, using advanced human cellular platforms and patient-specific models to advance personalized therapeutics. These efforts have produced high-impact publications, sustained external funding, and successful mentoring of diverse trainees.

Motivation to Serve UL Lafayette

I am inspired by UL Lafayette's momentum as an R1 institution and its unique responsibility to serve the people of Louisiana through education, discovery, healthcare, and economic development. I am particularly motivated by the opportunity to:

- Grow the university's research enterprise and national profile
- Expand public–private partnerships and workforce-aligned programs
- Strengthen student success, access, and affordability
- Advance diversity, inclusion, and community trust

As President, I would bring a **people-centered, mission-driven, and data-informed leadership approach**, grounded in transparency, collaboration, and accountability.

Please find my curriculum vitae and vision statement attached.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Wenbin Deng, Ph.D.

VISION PLAN
President, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

I. Presidential Vision

My vision is to advance UL Lafayette as a **nationally respected, regionally indispensable R1 public university**—one that delivers **student success, research excellence, economic impact, and cultural stewardship** for South Louisiana and beyond.

UL Lafayette will be known for translating discovery into opportunity, education into upward mobility, and partnerships into measurable public good.

II. Strategic Priorities

1. Student Success, Access, and Workforce Alignment

- Improve retention, graduation, and post-graduation outcomes through data-driven advising and student support.
- Expand transfer, adult-learner, and first-generation student pathways.
- Align academic programs with Louisiana's workforce and economic needs.

2. Research Growth and R1 Excellence

- Strengthen interdisciplinary research in areas aligned with regional and national priorities (energy, health, environment, data/AI, advanced manufacturing).
- Increase federal funding, industry-sponsored research, and graduate training capacity.
- Support faculty with strategic hires, seed funding, and shared infrastructure.

3. Public–Private Partnerships and Economic Development

- Expand collaborations with industry, healthcare systems, and government.
- Translate research into innovation, startups, and workforce development.
- Position UL Lafayette as a driver of regional economic resilience and growth.

4. Faculty and Staff Excellence

- Recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff through competitive support, mentoring, and clear advancement pathways.
- Foster a culture of shared governance, accountability, and professional respect.
- Support leadership development at all levels.

5. Financial Stewardship and Advancement

- Ensure fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.
- Expand fundraising, alumni engagement, and philanthropic partnerships.
- Align budgeting with strategic priorities and measurable outcomes.

6. Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement

- Advance equity, access, and inclusive excellence across all university functions.
- Strengthen trust and engagement with local communities and alumni.
- Honor and elevate the cultural heritage of South Louisiana.

III. Leadership Philosophy

I believe effective presidential leadership requires:

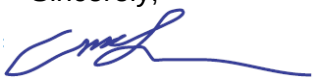
- **Listening before acting**
- **Building consensus while making timely decisions**
- **Balancing ambition with stewardship**
- **Placing students, faculty, and staff at the center**

The President's role is to **align people, resources, and vision** so the institution can fulfill its public mission with integrity and impact.

IV. Measures of Success

- Improved student outcomes and enrollment stability
- Growth in research funding and national reputation
- Expanded economic and community impact
- Strong financial health and philanthropic support
- High institutional morale and public trust

Sincerely,



Wenbin Deng

Enclosures

Wenbin Deng, PhD

Founding Dean and Yat-sen Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology
School of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Shenzhen Campus
Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU), China
Secondary Appointment: SYSU Institute of Advanced Studies (Hong Kong)

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Translational and regenerative neuroscience
- Stem cell biology, organoids, and cell reprogramming
- CNS drug discovery and precision medicine
- AI-enabled functional genomics and disease modeling

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scientist–leader with over 20 years of experience spanning **academic medicine, global higher education leadership, and biotech innovation**. Proven record of building research-intensive institutions, leading multidisciplinary teams, and translating fundamental discoveries into clinically and commercially relevant therapies, particularly in CNS diseases, regenerative medicine, and precision pharmacology.

SELECTED QUALIFICATIONS

- Extensive leadership in **academic strategy, faculty recruitment, infrastructure development, and global partnerships**
- Deep expertise in **stem cell platforms, genome editing, multi-omics, organoids, molecular imaging, and nanomedicine**
- End-to-end experience in **drug discovery and development**, from target identification to preclinical validation
- Strong record of **academia–industry collaboration**, IP development, and technology transfer
- Broad therapeutic experience across **CNS, oncology, inflammation/autoimmune disease, and regenerative medicine**

- Demonstrated ability to launch and scale **cross-disciplinary research consortia and translational platforms**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founding Dean and Yat-sen Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology

Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU), Shenzhen Campus | 2015–Present - Provide executive leadership to build a **globally competitive, research-intensive biomedical campus** - Lead strategic planning, faculty recruitment, program development, and international partnerships - Foster transdisciplinary research and a strong biotech innovation ecosystem in the Greater Bay Area - Engage funding agencies, government, foundations, and industry partners to expand research capacity

Director General

Guangdong Center for Stem Cell Technology and Innovation | 2016–Present - Provide scientific and operational leadership for provincial-level stem cell and regenerative medicine initiatives - Oversee research programs, awards, ethics, and talent development - Represent the Center nationally and internationally; promote DEI and research integrity

Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine

University of California, Davis | Assistant Professor (2006–2010); Associate Professor (2010–2014); Professor (2014–2016) - Founded and directed programs in **developmental neuroscience and stem cell biology** - Co-founded the **UC Davis Human Stem Cell Consortium** and led disease model and omics platforms - Mentored numerous trainees, including multiple postdoctoral fellows who achieved tenure-track faculty positions

Co-Founder and Scientific Leader

iStem Technologies & Therapeutics, Inc. | 2012–2015 - Led translational R&D in stem cell–based drug discovery and regenerative medicine - Oversaw target identification, assay development, preclinical pharmacology, and IP strategy

Instructor in Neurology / Postdoctoral Fellow

Harvard Medical School & Boston Children's Hospital | 2001–2006 - NIH-funded research on oligodendrocyte injury and white matter disease - Led preclinical drug repurposing efforts for neonatal brain injury

EDUCATION

- PhD, Biochemistry & Pharmacology, Rutgers University / UMDNJ, USA
- MS, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, Peking Union Medical College, China
- BM, Shanghai Second Medical University, China

HONORS AND DISTINCTIONS (Selected)

- NIH Outstanding New Environmental Scientist (ONES) Award
- NIH NRSA Fellowship; William Randolph Hearst Award (Harvard)
- Keynote and invited speaker at international neuroscience and stem cell conferences
- Editor-in-Chief, *Stem Cell Studies*

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

My research program integrates stem cell biology, glial neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and precision medicine to develop transformative therapies for central nervous system (CNS) diseases characterized by myelin dysfunction and impaired regeneration. We combine human iPSC-derived neural systems, scalable 3D brain organoids, and disease-relevant in vivo models with AI-enabled functional genomics and drug discovery platforms to elucidate disease mechanisms and accelerate translational outcomes.

We define transcriptional and epigenetic programs governing oligodendroglial lineage specification, myelination, and repair through integrated CRISPR-based perturbation, multi-omics profiling, and computational network modeling. These insights enable rational cell fate engineering using transcription factor–driven and small-molecule reprogramming approaches to generate clinically relevant glial cell types.

Patient-specific iPSC models and organoid platforms are used to model neurodevelopmental, neurodegenerative, and demyelinating disorders for precision target validation. AI-driven phenotypic screening and predictive analytics identify and prioritize glia-specific genes of unknown function as therapeutic targets. Lead small molecules, biologics, and nucleic-acid–based candidates are advanced through humanized preclinical models to establish translational readiness.

Core translational modalities include:

- iPSC-derived oligodendrocyte progenitors and glial precursor cell products
- Direct somatic cell reprogramming strategies
- Small-molecule, mRNA, and nucleic-acid–based therapeutics and delivery systems
- AI-accelerated drug repurposing and candidate optimization

This program establishes an end-to-end translational pipeline—from human disease modeling to preclinical validation—designed to de-risk CNS drug development and deliver scalable solutions for myelin repair and neuroregeneration.

PUBLICATIONS

180 peer-reviewed publications (2000–2025) in *Nature Communications, Neuron, Cell Stem Cell, PNAS, Journal of Neuroscience,* and related journals.

- Representative recent publication:
  Shi et al. mRNA vaccine developed for sequential selective organ-to-cell targeting of glioma. **Nature Communications**, 2025.

A complete publication list is available upon request or as an appendix.

MANUSCRIPTS SUBMITTED (Selected)

- Neuron (2025); Cell Stem Cell (2025); EMBO Journal (2025)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Issued and pending U.S. and international patents covering: - Oligodendrocyte regeneration and remyelination - Cell fate reprogramming technologies - Neuroprotective small molecules and biologics - Stem cell–derived glial therapeutics

(Representative patents available upon request.)

RESEARCH FUNDING (PI / Co-PI – Selected)

- **NIH/NICHD R01** – CNS White Matter Regeneration using iPSCs
- **NIH/NICHD R01** – Trisomy 21 iPSC Humanized Models
- **NIH/NINDS R01 & R21** – Oligodendrocyte Injury and Repair
- **National Multiple Sclerosis Society** – Remyelination Therapeutics
- **Industry-sponsored translational research** (Avanir Pharmaceuticals)

Total sustained NIH and foundation funding spanning 2002–2022; multiple R01s and translational awards.

LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION

- Founding Dean & Distinguished Professor, School of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Sun Yat-sen University (Shenzhen)
- Senior leadership roles across interdisciplinary research centers and graduate programs at UC Davis
- Extensive experience in **strategic planning, faculty recruitment, budgeting, global partnerships, and research infrastructure development**

MENTORSHIP & TRAINING

- Mentor to NIH, HHMI, CIRM, and foundation-funded trainees
- Successful placement of trainees into academic, industry, and clinical research careers

TEACHING

Graduate and medical education in: - Stem Cell Biology - Neurobiology and Neurotoxicology - Cellular Basis of Disease - MD/PhD and Physician Scientist Training Programs

PROFESSIONAL & NATIONAL SERVICE

- NIH Study Sections and Special Emphasis Panels (multiple institutes)
- International grant review panels (NIH, MRC, NMSS, EU)
- Editor-in-Chief, *Stem Cell Studies*
- Reviewer for *Science Translational Medicine, Nature Communications, Cell Stem Cell, Neuron,* and related journals

INVITED PRESENTATIONS (Selected)

Harvard Medical School, NIH, Stanford, UCSF, Duke, Johns Hopkins, Mayo Clinic, Gordon Research Conferences, ISSCR, Society for Neuroscience, and international institutions across Europe, Asia, and South America.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Society for Neuroscience

- International Society for Stem Cell Research
- American Society of Cell Biology
- American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Association for Clinical and Translational Science

LEADERSHIP SUMMARY

Visionary, pragmatic academic leader with demonstrated ability to build globally competitive research programs, translate discovery into impact, manage complex organizations, and align science, education, and innovation with institutional strategy. Experienced in international higher education, interdisciplinary team leadership, and academia–industry collaboration.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Extensive experience in FDA-facing preclinical development, IP strategy, and commercialization pathways
- Industry consultant for biotech and pharmaceutical R&D programs
- Strong commitment to mentorship, diversity, academic freedom, and translational impact