

September 9, 2016

TO: Search Committee Chair for President of Florida Gulf Coast University
FROM: Tony Atwater, Ph.D.
SUBJECT: Application for President of Florida Gulf Coast University

Dear Search Committee Chairperson:

By this letter, I hereby apply for the position of President of Florida Gulf Coast University. I am very impressed with the university's student-centered priorities and its legacy of excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and in professional education. I have served as a president and provost at major, comprehensive universities emphasizing the liberal arts and sciences, as well as professional education. And, my background appears to fit the profile sought for the next president of Florida Gulf Coast University. My experience as a senior administrator serving public comprehensive universities and public research universities includes assignments at Youngstown State University (Ohio), Rutgers University (New Brunswick) and the University of Toledo. I also am familiar with the culture, needs and demands of "state university systems" and state system universities. I previously served as the president of a "state system" university, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (the largest member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education).

I have experience with serving institutions that operate "regional" campus sites and universities that serve as strong and dynamic "stewards of place." And, I possess significant leadership experience in helping universities become centers of economic development, civic engagement, corporate partnerships and academic excellence. The next president of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) will have an exciting opportunity to continue the institution's momentum in the areas of experiential learning, student and faculty development, international education, economic development, on-line learning, graduate-professional programs and community engagement. My comprehensive professional background as scholar and administrator at seven universities has equipped me to take FGCU to the next level of national and international distinction.

My career in higher education spans 30 years and includes approximately 20 years in higher education administration. I have served effectively as a department chair, academic dean, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and university president. I have served as president at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) and at Norfolk State University. As you may observe in my curriculum vita, my professional background is quite diverse. It includes experience in the private sector (as a professional journalist), a productive career as a tenured, university professor (at Michigan State University) and significant leadership experience as both a university provost and university president. My community outreach efforts and service on community boards have been recognized and honored at both Norfolk State University and Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

The next president of Florida Gulf Coast University needs to advance and build upon the university's strengths in the areas of student academic success and teaching excellence. I possess the experience base, creativity and determination to achieve this objective in a higher education environment of reduced resources and changing market forces. An appreciation of the unique challenges and opportunities of today's state comprehensive universities will be an advantage for the next president. I possess this experience and insight to lead Florida Gulf Coast University in working productively with the FGCU Board of Trustees and state legislators. I would increase the university's resource base and strengthen its brand across the state, the region and the nation.

I have a demonstrated "skill set" in the areas of academic program development, economic development partnerships, fundraising, community college articulation agreements, undergraduate research, honors education, sponsored research, faculty development, graduate education and community outreach. As you review the sections of my curriculum vita, you will observe that I have a record of success in helping universities advance in the areas of instructional quality, scholarship and community service. The next president of Florida Gulf Coast University will have an opportunity to expand the institution's base of productive partnerships with the private, public and social sectors to increase external funding and to become a stronger "steward of place" in the region. I

have achieved these outcomes at other universities, and I wish to do so at Florida Gulf Coast University, if appointed as its next president.

Specific examples of my ability to serve successfully as the next president of Florida Gulf Coast University include the following. I possess extensive experience with successful “economic development partnerships.” These include administrative roles supporting a “business incubator” and a “small business development center” at Youngstown State University as university provost. I also oversaw the development and construction of a public/private collaboration which generated a \$53 Million (university-owned and operated) regional convention center in western Pennsylvania, the Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex. And, I established a major advisory board of CEO’s and corporate vice presidents to identify and launch major economic development partnerships for Norfolk State University as the university’s president.

I have enjoyed success in developing and implementing high-demand, professional degree programs. At the University of Toledo, I facilitated the development of a new Pharmacy Doctorate program in the College of Pharmacy. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania, I guided the development of a new Ph.D. in Nursing Education degree program. And, at Youngstown State University, I helped implement a new and innovative Nurse Anesthetist Master of Science degree program. I have been a champion of experiential learning, distance education and educational access throughout my administrative career, supporting innovative student COOP programming in the College of Engineering at the University of Toledo, post-graduate Loan Forgiveness, student placement initiatives at Northern Kentucky University and at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. And, I helped Norfolk State University’s distance education program earn full, national certification by the United States Distance Learning Association (the USDLA).

Diversity, mutual respect and accessibility are important core values of my administrative philosophy and practice. Those core values also include an “unqualified” commitment to “integrity” and to serving the “greater good” of students, faculty members and the institution. My core values also include a genuine appreciation for and a commitment to shared governance, collaboration,

transparency, civility and academic freedom. Such core values and leadership priorities would characterize my administrative style and philosophy if appointed president of Florida Gulf Coast University.

Several specific areas of strength and fit in my professional background are compatible with characteristics sought in FGCU's next president. These areas include (1) success in developing and guiding innovative faculty and student academic growth initiatives, (2) fundraising success, (3) a significant experience base with living/learning communities, international education and honors education, (4) a record of promoting faculty success in winning federally sponsored research awards and (5) success in guiding economic development and community outreach programs. I will provide "selected examples" of some of my major administrative achievements in each area. However, my curriculum vita includes a comprehensive listing of these and other administrative accomplishments.

1. Promoting Faculty and Student Academic Growth Initiatives

The success of any university is nurtured by its ongoing investment in the academic and professional development of the faculty. I have demonstrated a consistent and significant commitment to this goal as a senior administrator. At Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), I guided the development and implementation of a "seed grant program" to promote excellence in teaching and scholarship, the Academic Excellence and Innovation faculty development program. As an associate vice president for academic affairs at the University of Toledo, I developed and established a similar university-wide faculty development initiative. At both Norfolk State university and at IUP, I established Distinguished University Professor awards programs to annually honor the most outstanding and most productive teacher-scholars at each university.

As an experienced provost and university president, I have supported and enhanced faculty programs and initiatives recognizing excellence in teaching, research and public service at Youngstown State University, IUP and Norfolk State University. In 2012 and 2013, I facilitated the successful efforts of two NSU

professors to win the highly competitive, state-wide Outstanding Faculty Awards conferred by the State Council for Higher Education of Virginia (awardees Dr. Frances Williams and Dr. Rasha Morsi). I have contributed to faculty development by supporting “centers of teaching and learning” at the University of Toledo, Youngstown State University and IUP. I take special pride in facilitating an effort to enhance music education and faculty instruction at IUP by helping it achieve international prestige and recognition as an All-Steinway School.

Student “academic growth programs” also have been a priority throughout my administrative career. I established comprehensive Student Success Centers at both NSU and IUP. I also took the lead on helping implement Freshman Reader Programs at both universities. Also, I spearheaded the implementation of Undergraduate Scholars Forums at IUP and NSU to incentivize and promote undergraduate research institution-wide. My commitment to honors education and study abroad opportunities for students has been demonstrated at every institution where I have served as a senior administrator. I proudly served two terms as a member of the Board of Directors of the International Student Exchange Program, the largest “study abroad” consortium in the world. Also, I have worked closely with student organizations, including student government associations, graduate student associations and president’s student advisory councils. And, I have established regular, university “student forums” for students to communicate their needs, interests and concerns to the university administration and specifically to “the president.”

2. Fundraising Success

In the area of “fundraising and community outreach,” my record of achievement also is excellent. In two years, I helped increase the NSU Foundation’s endowment by \$3 million, and I completed successful annual fund campaigns that raised over \$4 million. My success in fundraising was demonstrated in securing nearly \$100 million in state capital funding to build two news class room buildings at NSU. Additionally, I helped secure major gifts, external grants and individual contributions to NSU in excess of \$1 million over two years. As president at IUP, I successfully completed the \$20 million “Gateway to Opportunity” capital campaign, and I raised an additional \$15 million to help fund

construction of IUP's new Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex. I increased annual giving at IUP by 200 percent, from \$4 million to \$8 million. Major grant awards that I have secured have come from nationally prestigious foundations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Heinz Endowment, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Prudential Foundation.

3. Advancing Living/Learning Communities and Honors Education

I have a solid and extensive background with learning communities and with honors education. My experience base in both areas started as a professor at Michigan State University and as an assistant director of the MSU Honors College. In these roles, I learned the instructional value of living/learning communities and residential colleges. I enjoyed advising students in the Honors College, with its focus on civic engagement and study abroad. And, later I became a champion and advocate for student learning communities, honors programs and international education. Consequently, I have developed, supported and advanced learning communities and study abroad initiatives at the University of Toledo, Youngstown State University, IUP and Norfolk State University.

At Indiana University of Pennsylvania, I oversaw the construction of a four-phase, \$270 million student residential housing project, which was originally designed to support living/learning academic programs, service learning initiatives and learning communities. The IUP "Student Residential Revival," as the initiative was called, was and is a major factor in IUP's enrollment growth and increased student graduation rates. At IUP, NSU, Youngstown State and the University of Toledo, I worked closely with Honors College directors, deans, department chairs and faculty members to make the living/learning concept (initiated at MSU), a reality for students and faculty members. And, at NSU, I worked to maintain and enhance a special honors, living/learning program devoted to high-ability students majoring in STEM disciplines. This program is known as the Desortz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences (DNIMAS).

4. Facilitating Federally Sponsored Research Awards

In my roles as a university provost and president, I have facilitated grant awards from such nationally known foundations as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Heinz Endowment and the Prudential Foundation among others. I have assisted the sponsored research efforts of faculty members to win competitive awards from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies. At Norfolk State University, I directed the official opening and start-up operations of the university's research and development cleanroom, one of only three such university centers in the state of Virginia. The MiNac or Micro Electronics and Nanotechnology Center is a \$6 million state-of-the-art research center devoted to developing products and devices not visible to the naked eye. At NSU and at IUP, I served as a member of research foundation boards (501c3 entities) that facilitated faculty research, applied research activities and economic development partnerships.

At IUP, I assisted faculty members in winning federal appropriations in excess of \$1 million on research projects relating to rapid forensic detection of biohazards and the development of a corrections certification program for university professors teaching in the nation's prisons. Another federally sponsored project (\$100,000 appropriation) that I helped to facilitate was devoted to coal mine safety and "mine map digitization." In my roles as provost and university president, I developed "research initiation grant" programs to increase faculty productivity in the areas of research grant writing and published research in scholarly journals.

5. Promoting Economic Development and Community Outreach

As noted earlier, at IUP, I guided the development and construction of IUP's \$53.4 million Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex (a state and privately funded project) to stimulate economic growth in the region. To increase economic development partnerships at NSU, I developed an advisory council of corporate

CEO's and vice presidents known as the Business and Economic Development Advisory Council (BEDAC). One of the Council's projects involved assisting with planning to guide the development of a 20-acre commercial district adjacent to the university, in consultation with the City of Norfolk, the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority and the NSU Research and Innovation Foundation.

I have developed and launched major community outreach initiatives to promote educational attainment. As the provost at Youngstown State University, I guided the development of an "early college high school" partnership between YSU and Youngstown City Schools, funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. At IUP, I helped launch a partnership between IUP and Pittsburgh City Schools (The Pittsburgh Promise Program) to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in urban school environments. This project was funded by the Heinz Endowment. And, at NSU, I launched a campus-wide program to promote college readiness through select partnerships with area elementary schools, junior high schools and senior high schools (the Spartan Crusade for Academic Success). This outreach initiative was funded by foundation grants from Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Dominion Resources, Norfolk Southern and TowneBank.

In closing, it would be an honor and a privilege to serve as the next president of Florida Gulf Coast University. I have a record of success in promoting student academic achievement, faculty teaching and scholarship, economic development, community outreach, experiential learning and fundraising. My background as an experienced president has equipped me to meet the challenges and opportunities facing FGCU today and in the years ahead. This excellent university deserves a leader who is a true champion of student success and academic excellence. I am such a leader, and I am confident in my ability to take Florida Gulf Coast University to the next level of national and international academic distinction.

Sincerely,

Tony Atwater, Ph.D.