

Bahman Ghorashi, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Tennessee Tech University
Personal E-mail: tennohip@gmail.com

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am pleased to submit my application for President of the Florida Gulf Coast University. My background in higher education administration has uniquely prepared me for this presidency and I am very excited about the possibility of having the opportunity to lead FGCU into an even brighter future. I am presently Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Tennessee Tech University, a Carnegie classified doctoral/research comprehensive institution.

My application for this position is prompted by the alignment of my interests and experiences with the Florida Gulf Coast University's mission, vision, and strategic directions. In particular, my commitment to student success, building on existing strengths, developing distinctive academic and research programs and services, as well as providing support for faculty and staff are all in line with your objectives. At every institution, where I have had the privilege to serve, I have attained a notable degree of success, as judged by independent observers, such as SACSCOC, NCA, ABET and other accreditors, state officials, private sector representatives, and other stakeholders. Enhanced student access and progression, distinctive teaching and scholarship, valued partnerships, community engagement and public service, regional economic development and sustainable institutional excellence and embracing diversity and inclusion, concisely describe the areas where I have demonstrated achievements both in my former position as Dean, and in my present position as the Chief Academic Officer.

My preparation to serve as President includes over thirty-five years of academic experience with some twenty-six years of documented success in progressively dynamic and challenging positions at levels including Faculty Representative to the University's Board of Trustees, Chairman, Assistant Dean, Executive Director of a large consortium, Associate Dean, College Dean, and finally Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. As such, I have been afforded the opportunity to serve and gain valuable experience in diverse, complex, and at times, multifaceted environments including both urban and rural settings, traditional and collective bargaining modes of governance, and liberal arts and STEM programs.

Leadership Philosophy

Throughout my career, I have learned valuable lessons which have reinforced my belief that effective leadership requires fairness, integrity, consensus building and a shared-vision. It is not enough to submit good ideas, rather, it is far more important to garner stakeholder ownership, energy, and enthusiasm; the foundational steps for bringing good ideas to fruition. I believe that honesty fosters trust among colleagues, and is a vital piece of effective leadership. Creative thinking, open communication and fair and, when necessary, flexible decision-making are other traits that I value. I also believe in open flow of information, budget transparency and the recognition of every member's contribution, big or small. As well, I believe in delegating authority to knowledgeable individuals and groups, and empowering them to make their own decisions.

Core Belief

I have always firmly believed that under the right conditions, every individual has the potential to flourish and attain extraordinary accomplishments. Certainly our most important assets, namely faculty, staff and students, will be able to achieve their greatest potential as long as an atmosphere conducive to their growth and development is created. As the Chief Academic Officer at TTU, I believe that I have earned the respect and confidence of the campus community via my advocacy, commitment to excellence, inclusive style, and strategic visioning. I have played a significant role in setting the direction to raise standards, identifying the

areas of core competencies, establishing innovative programs, maintaining fiscal responsibility, fostering faculty research and scholarship, and perhaps most important of all, ensuring student success.

Why I am Very Interested in This Position

I have been very fortunate to serve as the Chief Academic Officer for an outstanding institution and have had the opportunity to work with the campus community and the public beyond to bring to fruition, a multitude of very significant initiatives and projects. Throughout my career, I have always drawn immense satisfaction from being able to help others and as such, I look forward to continue helping others in more impactful and meaningful ways. This drive to help others, combined with the alignment of my experience with the stated needs of FGCU, constitute the motivations behind my interest to serve as President knowing that I have the necessary preparation to serve with a high degree of enthusiasm, confidence, and humility.

As the Chief Academic Officer at TTU, I helped to shape TTU's rise in academic standing and public reputation. When I first arrived at TTU, I spent the first several months of my appointment, getting to know the faculty, staff, history and community relationships of the University. As part of this period of reflection, I convened campus-wide meetings with faculty staff, students and community leaders and together we were able to surmount many challenges and initiate and establish numerous new projects, programs and entities to support student, faculty and staff development and success.

Prior to TTU, as Dean of Engineering, I was able to work with my faculty to introduce new programs/initiatives within a relatively short period of time to increase enrollment, cut costs, improve faculty and staff morale, increase productivity and scholarly activities and form new domestic and international partnerships. As a result, the college experienced a substantial and unprecedented increase in enrollment as well as increases in student retention and fund raising. Moreover, the College received substantial gifts, endowments and donations from alumni and supporters. A strategic plan was constructed and implemented and new academic programs were developed. Consequently, a college that was previously experiencing a continuous downward trend in enrollment saw a surge in enrollment that was unprecedented in its history. We also increased the number of underrepresented students significantly and the College received perhaps among the best accreditation reports in its history.

Financial Management, Resource Development, Fundraising and Community Relations

The President must be an active resource generator for the institution. As Executive Director of Fenn Academy, I worked closely with many corporate executives and brought substantial external corporate funding to the Academy for scholarships and operating funds. As Dean, I cultivated relationships with many alumni and philanthropic individuals who generously supported the College and helped us to exceed our fundraising goals. Our corporate donor base continued to grow, and included both public and private entities and Fortune 500 corporations. As Provost, I worked closely with my deans and the VP of Advancement to help each college with its fundraising strategic plan and have worked closely with the business community, legislators and community leaders toward achieving the University's goals. As the cost of delivery of higher education is on the rise, I believe there is a real need to resort to entrepreneurial creativity to generate enhanced resources. For that and other reasons, as Dean, I developed the Fenn Research and Development Institute and, as Provost, established the Rural Development Institute to establish closer ties with business communities.

Ability to Communicate with Diverse Constituencies

Effective communication is indeed the key in the development of a shared-vision among all the stakeholders. I have successfully worked with key legislators, state and federal government officials, civic organizations and the business community to advance our goals. In the process, I have been honored by the State of Ohio General Assembly and many of the government and business organizations with which I have worked. Internally, I have continuously informed our stakeholders of the latest developments via "Letters to Faculty", web-postings and social media. I believe in an open door policy and always welcome students, faculty and staff. Furthermore, to enhance the level of communication, I have arranged one-on-one visits

with my faculty, staff and administrators in their offices or laboratories, and have publicly posted my Deans' Council and Cabinet discussions as a means of encouraging and fostering collaboration.

Athletics

During my tenure at TTU, I have collaborated with the Director of Athletics, the Student Success Centers and our library director to ensure that our student-athletes make appropriate progress toward completion of their chosen academic degree programs. In that sense, we foster student scholarship and sportsmanship and facilitate opportunities for our athletes to participate in community service projects, receive tutoring when needed and become successful both in classroom and on the field. Most importantly, we make sure that ethical conduct and good sportsmanship is promoted among student-athletes and athletics department staff. As in the case of all programs, our Intercollegiate Athletics Program is committed to complying with Title IX regulations. I have met with Ohio Valley Conference Provosts to compare best practices among the member institutions and discuss pertinent issues, such as: NCAA academic policy, competition schedules and academic support for student-athletes.

Campus Development and Planning

As my vitae illustrates, I have been involved in campus development and planning for a very long time. My experience began as a faculty representative on the board of trustees, while the University was going through a period of major new construction and has continued through the years as I assumed new and growing administrative responsibilities. As Dean, I was involved in successful fundraising for various engineering facilities projects and as Provost, I proposed and received approval for a major renovation of an existing building to house our entire enrollment management division, received approval for a new international house building and presently am working with my Dean of Arts and Sciences, two department chairs and their faculty on the design of a major new science building. As such, my experience in this area spans several decades and I anticipate will prove to be very helpful at the presidential level.

In summary, my career has been marked by my ability to build bridges, between faculty and administrative units as well as the University and the communities beyond; initiate new programs; mentor faculty and students to support diversity; encourage educational, service and research endeavors; manage resources effectively; and make decisions based on both open discussion and dialogue as well as data. I have integrated the principles of diversity and inclusion in all my decisions and am proud of my track record in hiring outstanding individuals as well as my personal commitment to multiculturalism. My style is open, collaborative, and I take accountability very seriously. A major strength is my ability to actively listen and regularly communicate to all university constituencies. I recognize the transformative power of higher education when implemented effectively, and believe strongly in fostering student success. To that end, I am committed to work collaboratively with all stakeholders in order to enhance the quality and accessibility of public higher education.

Thank you for this opportunity to highlight my experience and attributes that I believe qualify me for the position of the President. I hope that my enthusiasm is apparent and I look forward to speaking with you about my candidacy.

Sincerely,

B. Ghorashi