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Dear Members of Florida Gulf Coast University Presidential Search Committee:

Florida Gulf Coast University's mission and vision, your commitment to academic excellence, student engagement and success, diversity and inclusion, and your institutional directions as articulated in your 2016-2021 Strategic Plan align very well with my professional and personal passions and commitments and have inspired me to aspire to become your next President. My experiences and successes attained over a progressive career in academia, along with my administrative skills, leadership qualities, core values, and personal strengths have prepared me to pursue this Chief Executive Officer opportunity at Florida Gulf Coast University. With humility I submit this letter as my formal expression of interest, along with my curriculum vitae, and a list of my references.

My experiences and leadership as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Texas A&M University – Commerce, a doctoral university (higher research intensity) Carnegie classified regional institution with a growing enrollment--currently just under 13,500 students--, near Dallas, TX and with six off-campus locations and among the leaders in Texas in online education, position me to understand the needs of your students, faculty, and staff and to appreciate the opportunities to partner with multiple constituents to continue to lead FGCU towards higher levels of regional, national, and international prominence.

I have progressed through the ranks of higher education in the United States, from the first individual in my family to set foot on a college campus, to graduate teaching assistant, to instructor and tenure-track faculty member... I have also sharpened my administrative skills as a department head and, over the past sixteen plus years, with my leadership qualities and personal strengths I have had a very a positive impact as Associate Dean, Dean and, subsequently, as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, in the lives of three comprehensive regional universities in the Texas A&M University System.

I believe that an ideal President must not only be a superior manager but, more importantly, an effective and inspiring leader. As a manager, I seek to do things right and, as a leader, with uncompromising integrity; I seek to do the right things.

As an experienced and effective manager I focus on processes, tasks, budgets, and projects and seek to bring them to successful fruition, I prioritize multiple projects, to break complex ones into subcomponents, and to identify critical paths for their successful completion within the time and resource constraints. I apply the principles of specialization and division of labor to assign

subcomponents of projects to the individuals or teams most capable of addressing them. I communicate clearly the purpose, reason, and importance of the entire project and its subcomponents. I believe that listening is a critical element in communication –through the principle of participatory management, jointly we determine and agree on completion expectations, deliverables, and timelines. I’m open and transparent. I don’t prescribe how to get things done, I don’t micro-manage; I empower people to be creative, resourceful, and entrepreneurial. I encourage collaboration. In return for the trust that I place on those working on projects, I expect accountability in the form of periodic progress reports and regular communication.

As an example, I would cite the process of searching, selecting, and implementing a new Learning Management System (LMS) for the delivery of online courses offered by Texas A&M University – Commerce. With a target date of January 1, 2018 for the new LMS go live, I have appointed teams with faculty, instructional design, information technology, and procurement services representation to develop an exhaustive list of instructional and technical requirements for a formal Request for Proposals (RFP). Another team is integrating the RFP into a matrix to evaluate the responses. Campus demos and presentation from the top three vendors are scheduled for early fall 2016 and selection and contract negotiations to consume into early 2017, followed by a migration of nearly 500 online courses. New and old LMS systems to run parallel for summer and fall 2017 before new system goes live in Spring of 2018.

In collaboration with the Division’s Budget Director, Associate Provost, Deans, and my other direct reports, I have overseen and managed the Academic Affairs Division’s budget of just over \$52 million annually, including funding for some 340 full-time faculty lines, approximately 250 adjunct faculty per semester, and funding for summer school, plus operating budgets for the Library, the Office of Global Programs, the Office for Research and Sponsored Programs, the Graduate School, the Center for Faculty Excellence and Innovation, and six off-campus locations.

Students, faculty, staff—people—are not pieces of property to be managed, I don’t manage people. Rather, as a leader, I inspire people towards a common cause and towards a common purpose. Therefore, as a leader, I focus on people rather than on tasks, processes, or projects. Interpersonal skills are, undoubtedly, my greatest strength. I maximize this strength to build genuine personal relationships and I work hard at earning the respect and trust of those around me. To the extent that they would allow it, I strive to learn and to understand their personal and professional challenges, celebrations, and aspirations. This enables me to be a leader who removes the obstacles that would keep others from realizing further accomplishments. Developing personal relationships and earning the trust and respect, one individual at a time, sets the foundation for fostering and nurturing an organizational culture conducive to forging a common purpose with a disposition and commitment towards mutual collaboration in the pursuit of continuous individual and collective improvement. Shared governance, inclusion, and open communication, and collaboration in their full spirit and intent, are central to my management practices and leadership style.

My leadership efforts have played a central role in revising the policy on tenure and promotion of faculty at Texas A&M University- Commerce. The common purpose and cause, around

which, eventually, we all rallied around was to celebrate the accomplishments in the professional lives of our colleagues and the need to foster a supportive environment for recruiting, hiring, mentoring, developing, recognizing, and rewarding our faculty—when a colleague is not tenured or promoted it's not just his or her failure, it's the university's failure as well. After nearly a year of countless meetings, electronic mail discussions, Faculty Senate and Council of Department Heads discussions, Deans Council sessions, and town hall meetings with faculty at large, the new policy was approved and implemented. I host a special dinner with the new class of tenured and promoted colleagues every year and this fall they will be honored at half time of a home football game. Through engaging leadership and guided by the principle of shared governance, we have accomplished this.

Student success is at the top of my priorities. To prevent being far removed from and to stay connected with students, as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Texas A&M-Commerce I make the time to teach Principles of Macro and Microeconomics courses in the seven-week terms of our online, Competency-Based Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences program in Organizational Leadership—the first such degree completion program in Texas that was launched during my tenure as Provost and VPAA. Moreover, I have partnered with the Division of Student Access and Success to engage the analytics services of the Educational Advisory Group (EAB) to develop data-driven strategies to improve the retention, progression to degree, and graduation rates of our students. I have worked with one of my deans to launch a low-cost textbook initiative guaranteeing that learning materials would not exceed \$25 per class. It piloted with a dozen classes in History and, in its second semester, it will expand to more than 40 classes across campus. This would remove one of the obstacles that keep students from being successful in the first few of weeks of their classes—their inability to purchase textbooks. I strive to be a positive, visible, and recognizable role model for our students, periodically, I drop by the dining hall to have unscheduled lunches with students—I just grab my lunch and sit with students to listen to their everyday issues and struggles.

Additionally, I have invested heavily in nurturing partnerships with the region's community colleges to ensure a seamless transition of their students into our university through a good number of two plus two articulation agreements. Most recently, I worked with our Mathematics Department Head to develop and implement the Math Pathways Project agreement with some 14 two year colleges in northeast Texas. We reached consensus on which specific math courses would satisfy the core, general education curriculum and also apply as prerequisites towards more advanced academic course work in specific majors. This agreement will ensure that specific math courses taken at community colleges will not only transfer into A&M Commerce but will also apply toward their chosen four-year degree.

I have worked closely with the Dean of Undergraduate Enrollment Management and with the leadership of the Graduate School, as well as with Deans and Academic Department Heads to align academic unit's objectives and goals with the university's strategic plan and to establish, monitor, and reach strategic enrollment targets and improve student success metrics, including first to second year persistence/retention rates, four and six-year graduation rates, time to graduation, and others.

As an active member of our university's Accessibility Taskforce, I have worked closely with our Faculty Center for Excellence and Innovation—where our Learning Management System for online course delivery resides—to ensure that online courses in which there are students with documented disabilities are fully accessible by the first day of classes.

Working with our Executive Director for Global Programs, we have expanded the educational horizons of our students. In a year and a half, we have gone from two faculty-led study abroad options to twelve, with over 200 of our students participating—including 12 social work students who went on a two-week study abroad course in Havana, Cuba and led by one of our professors. We have also established relationships and joint degree programs with several universities in China and South Korea. During my tenure at A&M – Commerce, we have restructured the Office of Global Programs, and the Student and Scholars Services Office to enhance the support services and provide more engaging opportunities for our international students with the campus community—the annual multi-cultural festival has become one of the highlights of the spring semester, attracting standing-room only crowds of students, faculty, staff, and broader community guests to sample culinary delights from a multitude of countries and to experience music, dances, and cultural traditions from around the globe.

My core values include: uncompromising integrity to not only doing things right but to doing the right things; commitment to student success and adaptability to changing circumstances through continuous learning and improvement; a passion for leading change through innovation—not just managing change; participatory management through shared governance, transparency, and open communication; and servant leadership through caring personal engagement that values and celebrates diversity and inclusion. I genuinely care about people, and celebrate the accomplishments of students, faculty, staff, and alumni and make it a point to be visible and recognizable across campus and in the community—I believe that engagement in activities on and off campus, including athletic events, provides excellent opportunities to develop a sense of community, school spirit and pride in the institution.

I have played important supporting roles in governmental relations. I participate in the development of Legislative Appropriations Requests (LARs) and prepare Special Funding Item Requests. I also coordinated the academic component of a Capital Project / Tuition Revenue Bond Proposal, submitted through the A&M System, to the Texas Legislature, for the construction of a \$55 million building for Nursing and Health Sciences. The request was approved and construction is expected to begin in January of 2017 with occupancy planned for Spring 2019.

I strive to listen attentively, speak clearly, write persuasively, and present professionally--my excellent communication, interpersonal skills, and my solid business acumen have served me well in cultivating and maintaining effective working relationships with the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents and regulators such as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges – I have served on numerous on campus and off-site SACSCOC accreditation review visits. Approval and implementation of several new degree programs and expansion of off-campus locations bear the fruits of these relationships. I am thoroughly familiar with discipline-specific accreditation processes and criteria (in business, engineering & technology, nursing,

teacher certification, counseling, and others). Additionally, I have worked closely with our Director of Compliance to ensure adherence to federal, state, and system laws, regulations, and policies, including Title IX, Title IV, FERPA, Celery Act, among others.

Given the very centralized nature of institutional development and fund-raising efforts at my current institution, my direct participation in these activities has been limited. Nonetheless, I have successfully been engaged in securing external funding for key projects—collaboratively with our Vice Provost for Research, we secured \$1.8 million grant funding from the A&M System Chancellor’s Research Initiative to implement the Biomedical Institute of Generative Research. In the infancy stage of this institute, we have recruited and hired three world-class research faculty in the area of heart muscle regeneration. They will very likely generate a continuous stream of externally funded grants and augment the two patents that have been granted. Moreover, I have collaborated and supported the efforts of the Dean of the College of Business to implement a donor engagement and cultivation plan to fund the first two endowed professorships at Texas A&M University- Commerce.

The economic, regulatory, legislative, demographic, accountability, and technological environment in which institutions of higher education operate, will continue to be increasingly complex and challenging. I strongly believe that I possess the visionary leadership qualities to work collaboratively with your teams to turn these challenges into opportunities.

With the start of this new academic year, I am returning to the faculty ranks to allow the new President of Texas A&M University – Commerce to form his own executive leadership team, following the untimely death of our former President Dr. Dan Jones. It has been very refreshing for me to see again the working of the university from a faculty member’s perspective—this humbling experience will make me as better President! I’m the prime of my career and I am very excited about the prospect of utilizing the full depth and breadth of my administrative experience, my leadership qualities, my uncompromising integrity and core values, excellent business acumen, and superior communication and interpersonal skills to further the mission, vision, core values, and strategic directions of Florida Gulf Coast University.

With much anticipation and excitement, I look forward to the possibility of advancing in this search process. I thank each of you, members of the search committee, for considering my credentials and I trust that you will find basis for continuing mutual interest—I would be most honored should that be the case.

I close with my personal regards and best wishes for a successful search for your next President.

Sincerely,

Adolfo Benavides