

November 1, 2016

Dear Search Committee,

I am writing to submit my application for the position of President at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU). I am fully devoted to my position here at Appalachian State University (ASU), Boone, NC. However, the expectations and responsibilities outlined in your job description are of professional interest to me. I believe that my experiences to date have well prepared me to take on the challenge of serving as your next President. I am intrigued by your commitment to the integration of the liberal arts and sciences with both professional and pre-professional programs along with prioritizing student success at FGCU. I've enclosed a copy of my vitae and professional references upon your request.

I am currently the Vice Provost for Research (VPR) at Appalachian State University. Appalachian State University enrolls more than 18,000 students and is listed No. 3 among top regional, public universities in the Southern *U.S. News and World Report's* 2016 Best College rankings. Over the last 21 years I have served in a number of leadership/administrative roles that have advanced my understanding of the complexities involved in leading a university. As a large comprehensive university with an extensive research component serving as the Vice Provost for Research has required considerable attention and involvement to prioritizing and implementing our university's strategic goals with the ultimate goal of enhancing student success.

In my current leadership role, I collaborate with a staff of approximately 20 individuals with oversight of the university's external research grants and contracts totaling ~ \$16 million. I am responsible for two research centers, one university-wide research institute and an annual operating budget of ~\$2.0 million. One of my first tasks as the Vice Provost for Research was leading an institutional effort to separate the Office of Research from our Graduate School. This separation was a complex administrative process that included significant collaboration from various constituents across campus and was successfully completed within my first three months. Institutional external funding for research grants and contracts has increased 50% from \$10.9 to \$16.2 million during my tenure as the VPR. The \$15 million benchmark was the first major metric to be accomplished in ASU's 2014-2019 Strategic Plan and was achieved within 2 years of my VPR appointment. I have a clear understanding of both Federal and State policies that govern compliance and interact on a regular basis with our General Counsel's office on legal matters that affect our daily operations and activities. This position has required high energy and forward thinking and at the same time required interdisciplinary collaborations to maximize ASU's intellectual capital potential.

My commitment to academic quality and ensuring student success might be best exemplified in my capacity to lead our university's efforts to engage more students in the research and creative endeavors process. In 2005, I was asked to serve as the Founding Director of our university's Office of Student Research (OSR). The mission of the OSR is to support and promote student (undergraduate and graduate) learning through mentored research experiences with Appalachian State Faculty and other national and

international scholars and professionals. To date, under my leadership the OSR has funded over 4800 student research/travel grants, started an Undergraduate Research Assistant program and increased student participation in the National Conference on Undergraduate Research and the State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research Symposium (highest participation out of the 16 UNC system schools and all private colleges within N.C.). During my tenure as Founding Director, the OSR has experienced significant growth and support from faculty across campus including the academic disciplines of theatre, dance, art and music. The Office of Student Research was recognized as one of the most significant accomplishments by our previous Chancellor who stepped down after a 10 year tenure. As your next President, I would foster a passionate commitment to a student-faculty oriented learning environment that combines discovery, knowledge creation, and applied scholarship at FGCU. I would be committed to ensuring that the FGCU continues to deliver the absolute highest quality academic experience to students in comparison to what I have been able to accomplish here at ASU. Additional examples of my administrative leadership with and for students/faculty can be found at: www.osr.appstate.edu and/or www.appstate.edu/research/. This above example of student success is driven by objective data to measure outcomes and allocation of resources to ultimately improve student performance including graduation rates and admission to graduate programs.

I believe one of my greatest strengths as an administrative leader is building internal/external relationships. I served as the Director of our academic degree program in Health Promotion/Public Health for an 8 year period. In this position I provided program oversight including curriculum development, faculty recruitment and development, program evaluation, student retention and evaluation, and adherence to university and College of Health Sciences policies for our 15 full-time faculty and ~150 Health Promotion majors. I have experience with SACS accreditation and have served as the Designated Leader for accreditation of our undergraduate Public Health degree by the *Council on Education in Public Health (CEPH)*. In 2009 we developed an online Degree Program in Health Promotion for our off-campus and non-traditional students. This degree program was established as a result of a collaborative relationship with Blue Cross/Blue Shield as they desired a continuing education program for their employees. Under my leadership this online degree program continues to thrive as it was the first in the State of North Carolina, one of the first in the country and also resulted in a significant financial donation on behalf of Blue Cross/Blue Shield to the university. This program has increased both the national visibility and brand of ASU as we currently have students applying from across the country on an annual basis. The ability to develop productive and effective working relationships with both campus and community partners as in the above case with Blue Cross/Blue Shield is an essential quality for any potential President.

I am very comfortable articulating the university's mission and academic programs with internal/external constituents (board of trustees, alumni, faculty, administration, students, industry and legislators) in which a potential partnerships may exist. I interact on a regular basis with our university's legislative liaison and have attended many meetings with our State House and Senate Representatives and Board of Trustees. I have

successfully lead national searches for hiring and then subsequently developing junior faculty and have served on search committees for senior level administrators including our current Chancellor, Director of External Affairs and Community Relations and previous Provost. I am an active member in our Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor's Cabinet and work with our faculty and senior leadership to improve the delivery of our academic programs. As a member of the Provost's Cabinet, I am integrally involved in strategic academic planning, assessment and accreditation processes, evaluation of educational effectiveness and developing academic policy. I have significant experience managing complex budgets and allocating resources both strategically and equitably to departments, colleges and research centers across campus. I have been fortunate to collaborate alongside our Director of Admissions on the Provost's Cabinet and serve as a member of our University College Council of which oversees the retention rate of our students. ASU has been extremely successful in both of these areas including receiving over 14,000 applications for the Fall 2016 semester and a freshman retention rate of 88%. I welcome the challenge of enhancing/managing enrollment, retention and graduation rates at FGCU and have the experience to do so.

As a former Division I collegiate student-athlete and Assistant Coach, I have a thorough understanding of the role that athletics can have at a university. During my time as an undergraduate student, I was very fortunate to qualify and compete in three NCAA Championships and be awarded the University of Pittsburgh Blue-Gold Award in 1990 for the outstanding student-athlete of the graduating class for all sports combined. It has long been my philosophy that student-athletes must be "students" first and "athletes" second. While we see increased demands being placed on student-athletes such as travel, we must continue to support and promote high academic benchmarks during their educational experience. The academic and athletic success of your athletics program at FGCU must be commended and speaks volumes to your commitment of educating true "student-athletes".

Evidence of my personal and professional character is exemplified within my respective discipline; I have had and currently hold leadership/management responsibilities which include extensive experience with my professional organization the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). In 2013, I was selected by my peers to serve as a finalist for President of ACSM. I have been elected to the ACSM Board of Trustees and President of the Southeast American College of Sports Medicine. I was also awarded the 2013 *Distinguished Alumni Award* from the Department of Health and Physical Activity at the University of Pittsburgh. I have also served as a finalist for our local Board of Education here in Watauga County, NC. These leadership positions have fostered a philosophy to provide professional freedom to our team and at the same time encourage and model open communication, collaboration, inclusiveness, shared governance, high-energy and innovative thinking.

Research has been an integral part of my academic experience here at ASU for the past 21 years. My involvement in research has led to publications (over 100 peer-reviewed scientific/medical journal articles), national and regional scientific presentations, invitations to international meetings and workshops, and extramural/internal funding.

With respect to funding, my research has resulted in external grants from both government and corporate entities. I also serve as an *Associate Editor* for the premiere research journal in our discipline: *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. Coming up through the faculty ranks I have a clear understanding of the value and importance of a student-centered faculty and shared governance in a university setting.

As funding for higher education continues to be constrained both public and private institutions must recognize and plan for these challenges. Aggressive fundraising, private philanthropy, securing external grants/contracts, strategic enrollment management and online education will all play a pivotal role in meeting these demands. I believe that my academic background and experiences have well prepared me to take on these challenges. I welcome the opportunity lead/shape the strategic vision, financial equilibrium, academic programming, faculty, staff, associated resources and students at FGCU.

In closing, I am excited to serve as your next President at Florida Gulf Coast University. I would welcome an opportunity to provide you more information and to meet the search committee. Thank you for your consideration of my candidacy.

Sincerely,

Alan C. Utter Ph.D., M.P.H., FACSM
Vice Provost for Research/Professor
Appalachian State University