

November 8, 2016

Dear Colleague:

Florida Gulf Coast University has a compelling mission and an exciting future. Hence, I humbly submit this expression of interest in serving as the next President of this remarkable institution. Having visited your beautiful campus numerous times over the last few years, I welcome the opportunity to lead the community forward as we build on your many accomplishments and become the architects of the University's future success.

To collaborate effectively with faculty, staff, senior leadership and external audiences a president must be inclusive, articulate, and decisive. Given the enrollment, financial and leadership challenges I have witnessed firsthand in recent years, I believe an educational leader also must be guided by a clear moral compass grounded in the personal values of authenticity, integrity, and prudence.

Over the course of my career in higher education – as a tenured professor of political science, department chair, dean, vice-president and provost– I have exhibited these qualities by leading faculty and administrative teams in a variety of initiatives designed to promote student success and institutional effectiveness.

Academically I have partnered with faculty from a wide variety of disciplines to develop graduate and undergraduate degree programs in numerous fields, including Art Therapy, Education, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Legal Studies, Health Informatics, Nutrition, Exercise Science, Nursing, Cybersecurity, Political Science, International Studies, Occupational Therapy, Forensic Science, Business, Engineering Science, and a low residency M.F.A. program in creative writing based exclusively in Europe.

In conjunction with these initiatives I have worked closely with faculty, instructional designers, financial aid officers and other administrative offices to develop flexible course delivery and scheduling options. This has included flipped classrooms, blended and online courses, service-learning classes, and accelerated courses.

One example of the vision I would bring to the role of president is my recent success in the realm of competency-based learning (CBL). Since 2012 I have collaborated with faculty at two institutions to develop CBL programs in the fields of business and computer science. I also have seized this opportunity to engage faculty about the benefits of more precisely formulating student learning outcomes across all types of academic programs, including general education. As a result, I have enabled these institutions to offer very innovative academic programs and differentiate themselves in

the market by articulating a compelling value proposition about the benefits of the educational experience they provide for both traditional students and adult learners.

To support such efforts, I have collaborated with campus leaders to raise over 6 million dollars since 2011. This includes a \$2 million dollar gift to support the establishment of a business school, a \$2 million Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education for instructional technology upgrades and faculty development initiatives, \$1.6 million to support the development of competency-based degree programs and several smaller grants dedicated to community outreach, including a \$160,000 grant to establish a training center for nonprofit organizations in southwest Florida and \$85,000 in funding to support the utilization of a nature sanctuary as a site for wetlands research. Prior to this, I also helped to secure a \$1.2 million dollar grant from two philanthropic organizations to promote civic engagement by integrating service-learning and other active learning techniques into the general education curriculum.

Administratively I have collaborated with an equally diverse set of leadership teams to promote major institutional goals in the realm of enrollment management and strategic communication. This has included the formulation of marketing strategies, branding campaigns and recruitment plans featuring both traditional and online media. In conjunction with these efforts, I have been a very vocal and public advocate of experiential education and inquiry-based learning, especially as this relates to student retention and persistence as well as student acquisition of the highly transferable skills that are valued by employers and essential to lifelong learning.

Complementing these initiatives, I have participated in statewide initiatives to promote degree completion among adult learners and research projects in southwest Florida to identify emerging growth sectors which can serve as a guide to the development of new academic programs. In addition to cultivating relationships with government officials and community leaders, I also have supported enrollment management goals by partnering with campus leaders in the formulation of retention strategies which serve the needs of both graduate and undergraduate students. These efforts have included enhancing the quality of tutoring services available through peer and online formats as well as implementing an early alert system to respond to the needs of at-risk students and first-time freshmen.

Similarly, I have partnered with local school district officials and business leaders in pursuit of grant opportunities available through Lumina and other sources to develop programs which would support first generation students, veterans, and international students who are transitioning to college. As part of my ongoing commitment to community outreach and civic partnerships, I also have concluded a number of articulation agreements with state/community colleges and four year institutions to create seamless transfer pathways, while also negotiating affiliation agreements and

internship opportunities with area businesses, government agencies and non-profit organizations.

Given the breadth of my academic and administrative experience, I am well-positioned to serve as a catalyst for enhancing the quality, distinctiveness and reputation of FGCU in regard to both graduate and undergraduate education. I am a highly organized administrator with an eye for detail, as evidenced by the work I have done to ensure institutional compliance with governmental regulations pertaining to curricular credit policies, state authorization and gainful employment requirements, FERPA regulations, Title IX procedures and the Clery Act. As part of this I have supervised as many as 11 direct reports, including department chairs, deans and the directors of administrative offices such as the registrar, institutional effectiveness, marketing, and admissions.

I also have the ability to think boldly and strategically about the future of an institution given emerging academic, enrollment and financial trends in higher education. Having played a leadership role in regard to numerous academic program reviews and the preparation of reports for SACSCOC and other regional accrediting bodies (i.e. MSCHE, NEASC) as well as several professional accrediting agencies (e.g. CCNE, AACSB, CSWE, AOTA, IACBE, ACEND, FEPAC, CACREP, AHIMA), I am well-versed in the organizational processes and diplomatic skills that are essential to the process of continuous academic improvement and the assessment of institutional effectiveness.

I possess excellent oral and written communications skills which enable me to interact very effectively with faculty, staff, students and a wide variety of external audiences, including prospective donors. As someone who is respectful of tradition but mindful of the future, I deeply appreciate the importance of promoting sustainable institutional change. Hence, I very conscientiously endeavor to promote a habit of shared governance and a culture of collaboration which applies to both internal and external stakeholders.

This commitment also extends to the management of an institution's finances. I have worked closely with senior leadership, academic departments and administrative offices in regard to the preparation and implementation of institutional budgets. As part of this I have been responsible for addressing the personnel needs of over 200 faculty and staff members, including the development of annual evaluation processes which support merit-based salary increases and equity raises, and promotion and tenure decisions. I also have supported the preparation of financial statements and institutional reports for presentation to accrediting bodies, governmental agencies, financial institutions, bondholders and Trustees.

By way of conclusion I will simply note that my philosophy of educational leadership is grounded in the tenets of constructivism, a leadership style which emphasizes the importance of active listening and inviting stakeholders across campus and throughout the community to lend their institutional memory and imagination to the process of

crafting strategic initiatives and operational plans. This approach has served me well when it comes to engaging faculty, staff and external audiences in an ongoing conversation about how best to address key issues without compromising an institution's mission or identity.

Thank you for considering this application. I would welcome the opportunity to lend my talents and imagination to the implementation of the University's new Strategic Plan. I look forward to speaking with you about how we can make this happen.

Sincerely,

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