



November 8, 2016

Dear Dr. Smith and Search Committee Members:

As part of preparing my application for the presidency of FGCU I read a few of the cover letters of early applicants. Each of them wrote exclusively about themselves, not about FGCU.

It's All About FGCU

I'd like to begin by discussing FGCU. Each university is unique and each is at a unique point in its lifecycle. Those that submit generic cover letters can't truly appreciate the challenge and opportunity facing FGCU's next president.

I doubt any of those involved in launching FGCU 20 years ago could have envisioned the tremendous success and popularity the university has experienced since its founding. Growing up in Boca Raton, I saw firsthand FAU's similar trajectory. FGCU is now at a critical juncture where the next president, if successful, can lead FGCU to an entirely different level of impact and benefit for society. As I will note below, one of the two hallmarks of a great leader is that s/he has led an organization from one level to a dramatically higher level, in terms of however impact is measured by that organization, and that is what FGCU needs at this point in its lifecycle.

As well as FGCU has done, the next president needs to lead it to even greater heights. Many strategic initiatives need to be delicately navigated. Most significantly, the university needs more resources to better achieve its mission. Although private fundraising has been reasonably successful, the next president, not University Advancement, needs to lead the charge in persuading more individuals and organizations to partner with FGCU in funding and other support. While serving as business school dean of a poor university, I raised an amount equivalent to the university's endowment when I started.

Similarly, the State of Florida is an additional source of funds. The next president needs to develop relationships with key stakeholders in the political process so that FGCU receives additional funding from the State for initiatives that will be of great benefit to

the State of Florida and FGCU. I have those personal relationships in North Carolina, where I most recently lived.

A culture change the next president needs to lead is from a small to a large university mindset. FGCU is now much closer to being the largest university in the country than it is to being the smallest. This means, for example, that some FGCU deans are leading organizations larger than most colleges in this country.

Business School Deans Make Great University Presidents

My story is the same as your consultant Lucy Leske has described. Business school deans make great presidents. Many universities today have found that a business school deanship is the perfect preparation for the role of President. More so than any other dean, or the provost, the business school dean has many of the external roles that mirror the president's - maintaining community relationships, raising money, establishing community-serving functions such as the Emergent Technologies Institute, fulfilling speaking engagements, and so forth. One of my mentors, Alan Merten, went from being the business dean at Cornell University to being the president of George Mason University.

Although the business school dean experience is the perfect preparation for a presidency, I also believe that a regional university should be headed by a scholar who is qualified to hold the rank of full professor in one of the university's academic departments. People from other levels of education, or people whose background is primarily in government or industry simply don't have the appropriate experience for a university such as FGCU. One of the primary differences is in leading faculty. The employment relationship of faculty is unlike that of any other organization. Faculty must be led participatively. I also have great appreciation for the shared governance model having been elected to serve in the Faculty Senate of three universities and also having chaired the Faculty Senate.

While I bring the experience of a seasoned academic leader to the role, in today's environment, it is also a tremendous advantage to have a president who is knowledgeable in leadership, finance, and the other business disciplines. A university should never be managed like a business. At the same time, expertise in these business disciplines is extremely helpful when budgets are stressed, marketing needs to be efficient, and partnerships need to be built. I am also an academic with a great interdisciplinary track record of publications in philosophy, psychology, business, education, volunteerism, sustainability, spirituality, history, behavioral sciences, counseling, and science journals.

Academic Excellence in Growth and Diversity

For five years, I served as the Dean of the School of Business. I oversaw several major achievements during those years. Our AACSB accreditation plan was deemed by AACSB to be so exemplary that it is the model they use for other universities to follow (Please see *Attachment 1: AACSB accreditation plan kudos*). I also spawned the Thomas Family Center for Entrepreneurship (TFCE) that has had a strong impact in assisting businesses and startup organizations in that region. During those five years, I led the School of Business through a tremendous amount of growth. The number of faculty increased by over 50 percent. Student growth was also significant. More importantly, I aggressively pursued growth in faculty diversity and credentials. In only two years, when I had direct responsibility for hiring, the percentage of female part-time faculty went from 16.7 percent to 25 percent. The percentage of white full-time faculty went from 82.4 to 70.8 with a corresponding increase in minority faculty. I also signed a number of international partnerships, bringing over 100 business majors, paying full, out-of-state tuition to the university.

Leadership

FGCU's next President needs to be a *leader*. One of the largest studies on leadership is documented in the book *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. His massive research project found that the most effective people who can provide sustained excellence in leadership have two main qualities - professional will and personal humility. These findings match perfectly with my own leadership style and accomplishments. Collins's team also found that "larger-than-life," charismatic leaders correlated *negatively* with leading a good organization to greatness. You may interview a candidate with more charisma or one who is more articulate, but these qualities do not mean that she or he will be a better leader. I have provided examples of the results of my professional will and determination. Now let me discuss humility.

A Serving Leader

A humble leader is one who also provides service. I have been active in serving my entire life. Please consult my CV where you will see a number of service awards for work on and off campus, including one from the Governor of North Carolina. A relatively thankless job is serving on the Faculty Senate, which I have done most of my career when I was eligible. I have been asked to serve in the cabinet of four different Faculty Senate Chairs at two universities and was elected to the position of Faculty Senate Chair in 2015-2016. It is rare for someone from a business college to be elected to such a position, but I am proud to say that it is evidence of the reputation I have had across my entire universities and the relationships I have built with faculty in colleges across campus.

Build Community

In my history I have worked very hard to build community both on and off campus. I have developed relationships with as many people on campus as I can from the housekeeping staff to the registrar's staff to the motor pool staff to the BTS staff (and

many more). Together with a handful of others, I founded the Robeson County Community Foundation (RCCF) and served terms as its President or other office holder. One of my first activities as Dean was to establish a Business School Advisory Panel of regional leaders to advise the university about the needs of the region. I also developed relationships with the two U.S. Congressmen who served my district over the years, as well as the State Senators and Representatives. Notably, some of them are Democrats and some are Republicans, so I can get good recommendations from both sides of the aisle.

Bold Thinker

I am a leader with vision who has grown (in reputation, revenue, enrollment, etc.) every organization I have led. As I alluded to above, based on my leadership consulting and research experience, an organization hiring someone at the level of president should primarily look for two accomplishments. First, has that individual led an organization from one level of excellence, however measured, to a dramatically higher level? I have done that as a corporate vice president where I led my organization to 68% revenue growth in two years. I also achieved that as a business school dean where the school took the steps to become AACSB accredited, where faculty credentials jumped markedly, where international students went from nearly 0 to over 100 in a short period of time, where fundraising increase dramatically, and so forth.

The second criterion to look for is whether or not a leader's work has been so excellent that it has drawn the attention of people outside that organizational unit. One way in which this criterion can be measured is through awards received. If you review my CV you will see a long list of awards ranging from project management excellence to service excellence recognized by the Governor of North Carolina. *Attachment 1* also shows how an accreditation plan I oversaw was considered to be noteworthy among hundreds submitted.

Because of my track record, you can be assured that I can effectively lead FGCU to excel in achieving the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan of Excellence, Entrepreneurship, Health Sciences, and Emerging Pre-Eminence.

Chief Ambassador

As president, you can count on me to be extremely visible both on and off campus. When I served as business school dean, I attended more events on campus – plays, musical concerts, sporting events, international festivals – than anyone other than the chancellor. As described above, it is my practice to be active in the community, which I have already demonstrated in my first year at FGCU, for example, recruiting seven companies to work with students in my first semester. I will be that tireless spokesperson, advocating on FGCU's part in settings from small student groups to Tallahassee. I am passionate, energetic, and enthusiastic and infuse all of my work with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Final Thoughts

In my life and career, I have a track record of success, and of making “big” and innovative actions occur. For example, when I co-hosted the radio talk show *LeaderTalk* I was able to recruit as guests Carly Fiorina when she was CEO of Hewlett Packard and Vance Coffman when he was CEO of Lockheed Martin. I was able to submit an accreditation plan that AACSB found noteworthy (among hundreds). I have raised funds equivalent to the entire endowment of a university when I arrived. I have founded a sustaining non-profit organization in the community. I’ve led organizations to rapid levels of growth (not just in numbers, but in reputation, quality, and stature). I have built one of the most cross-disciplinary publication records in academia. I would welcome the opportunity of making big and innovative actions happen in the role of President of FGCU.

Thank you for your time in this search process. If I can provide any additional information, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric B. Dent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric B. Dent, Ph.D.

Attachment 1: AACSB accreditation plan kudos

----- Original Message -----

Subject: accreditation plan
Date: Thu, 2 Aug 2007 15:43:27 -0400
From: Lucienne Mochel <lucienne@AACSB.edu>
To: Eric Dent <eric.dent@uncp.edu>

Dear Dean Dent:

When the committee discussed your accreditation plan the committee was very impressed with the quality of your plan and found it well written, complete and concise. In an effort to provide our members with appropriate guidance in their accreditation effort, we are currently looking for quality documents that we can use as examples to share with schools. We would like to ask you for your permission to allow us to share your accreditation plan with schools upon their request.

We are currently also looking at a variety of accreditation plans to be posted to our resource site and would like to ask you to consider allowing us to post your accreditation plan as one of the example on our website. This website has open access. Of course we are sensitive to issues such as confidentiality and competition and would certainly offer to take out all sensitive information, such as faculty related information and financial information.

We look forward to receiving your response to both requests, the use of your accreditation plan as example upon requests of individual schools and the use of your (modified) accreditation plan on our resource site.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would rather discuss this by phone.

Kind regards,

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