



December 20, 2016

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Presidential Search  
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**Dear Sir/Madam**

**RE: APPLICATION FOR THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT FLORIDA GULF COAST  
UNIVERSITY (FGCU)**

Please accept this as my letter of interest for the position of President, Florida Gulf Coast University. I believe that my experiences as the pioneer Vice-Chancellor/President and Chief Accounting Officer of Federal University Wukari, Nigeria where I just completed my 5-year tenure (2011-2016), the executive, managerial, and leadership skills developed therein, my extensive teaching, research and scholarship productivity, my professional and international outreach activities and other related assignments uniquely qualify me for the position of President of FGCU. Prior to that assignment I was Professor of Engineering at the University of South Florida(USF) in Tampa from 1989 to 2011 where I rose through the ranks to become a full Professor of Engineering as well as having served in senior administrative positions before being recruited as an expatriate personnel to become the Pioneer Vice-Chancellor/President, Federal University Wukari in February 2011.

Perhaps, equally important and having built a brand new University from scratch, and having hired all the critical academic and non-academic staff, and having managed the construction of all the major structures for the young university that started from zero staff and students to about 5,000 students and 2,000 staff when I completed my tenure, I clearly understand what is required to develop and grow both the academic and non-academic programs of a young University. As a result of those experiences, including over seven communal crises leading to over 700 deaths and a complete shutdown of the community during which we kept the University open, it would be safe to say that I have been well equipped, prepared, and positioned to bring a very unique and complimentary perspective to the transformational work required of the President of FGCU in line with the Strategic Goals and Mission of the institution. *(By way of perspective, Federal University Wukari was one of 12 new Universities set up by the Nigerian Government in 2011. Federal University Wukari had the highest number of students and staff of all the twelve new Universities by the time I completed my tenure).*

I am a US citizen from the State of Florida and recently returned back home to Tampa, Hillsborough County Florida from a 5-year Leave of Absence (LOA) in Nigeria where I served as Vice-Chancellor/President, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. By way of educational preparation, I completed my Baccalaureate in Industrial & Systems Engineering in 1975-1977 and an MS degree in the same area in 1979 from the Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio. This was followed by a Ph.D. in Industrial and Mechanical Engineering from the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio from 1980-1984. I have been a Florida resident since 1989 when I took up a job at the University of South Florida as an untenured Associate Professor of Engineering. I am a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Florida (70928), an elected member of the Nigerian Academy of Engineering, A Fellow of the

Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineering, and a member (since 1991) of the Board of Director of IEEE RAMS (the IEEE Reliability and Maintainability Symposium).

Before, I going further, I believe it is important that I share my very unique experiences at the Federal University Wukari where as the pioneer Vice-Chancellor I not only was the Chief Executive and Chief Accounting Officer, I was also the Chief Academic Officer of the Institution. In that position I was responsible and provided leadership for academic program development, program accreditation, library development, staff training and everything in between. As the pioneer Vice-Chancellor, I was directly responsible for the unprecedented infrastructural development at the young university including the design, development, and construction of the University's basic infrastructures. With the support of the skeletal pioneer staff and consultants, I led the effort to develop some of the basic planning documents as required by law before a University can take off, including the University Academic Brief, The Master Plan, The Mission and Vision, and the University Anthem. **Some of my pioneering contributions and accomplishments as pioneer Vice-Chancellor included:**

- As at the time Dr. Okogbaa completed his tenure, the University had over 5,000 students in three faculties namely, Agriculture & Life Sciences; Humanities, Management & Social Sciences; and Pure & Applied Sciences. The university had about 2000 staff in both academic and non-academic categories. These numbers are the highest of all the 12 new Universities.
- Professor Okogbaa saw the University through several (over seven) community crises none of which resulted in school closures, a feat that is unimaginable in the Nigerian University System.
- The University did not witness student or staff strike--an outstanding feat considering the fact that strikes are common and endemic problems in the Nigerian University system.
- Through a private donor, Professor Okogbaa was able to secure funding for a 90 bed University Hospital to be co-funded by TETFund (The Tertiary Education Trust Fund- an organization statutorily mandated by the Federal Government of Nigeria to provide interventions to Tertiary institutions for infrastructural development). For A new University, this is quite an accomplishment considering the fact that University Hospital are usually granted to those institutions that old enough to have a medical school. The University Strategic Plan called for the establishment of a medical School in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the University's existence. So the hospital was/is in anticipation of the medical school.
- Through his leadership, the University has secured over N4billion in TETFund Special Intervention projects. This is in addition to over N3.2billion of TETFund Normal Intervention that is part of the yearly allocation to Universities. More importantly, none of the projects undertaken under his leadership were been abandoned.
- Through his network, he was able to secure a commitment from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to provide N2billion in intervention funds for the construction of the Faculty of Engineering & Technology building.
- Through Professor Okogbaa's initiative as Vice-Chancellor, Federal University Wukari embarked on the JUNKUN Language Development Project in collaboration with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERC). This project received approval by the Federal Ministry of Education for the inclusion of JUNKUN Language as part of 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum for Primary 1-3, 4-6, and JSS 1-3. The Junkun language is the predominant language of the region where the University is located.

#### Awards at Federal University Wukari

- 2013: The West African Students Union Parliament Award of Excellence
- 2015: National Union of Nigerian Students (NANS) “ICON OF HOPE TO NIGERIAN STUDENTS” Award
- 2015: Man of the Year Award for 2014 by the Joint Action Coalition of Civil Society Groups
- 2015: Fastest Growing University Award by the Joint Action Coalition of Civil Society Groups

#### My Passion

Advances in information technology have forever changed the pace of globalization and by extension the fundamental framework and the underpinnings of the world economy now and for the foreseeable future. Hence investments in human capital to enhance scientific and technological developments are essential for the economic and social well being of any nation, more specifically our nation if we want continue our technological leadership of the world. Creating high wage–high value jobs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a workforce that is globally competitive and technically competent. Eighty percent of such jobs need the knowledge and skills taught in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) & Innovation (I) disciplines. No nation can effectively compete in the global market place if it does not harness, utilize, and take full advantage of the richness, intelligence, and ability of all of its citizens and especially women. In the case of our country for example, developing and growing the scientific and technology workforce in a highly competitive and technologically centric global arena requires norms and values that recognize cultural, ethnic and gender diversity as both enriching and ennobling and thus it is imperative that we sustain the process of reinvigorating the training of our workforce in Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Innovation disciplines and place renewed emphases on Entrepreneurship at the very early stages of the educational spectrum.

As Vice-Chancellor one of my passions was to find ways to engage the STEM &I community in a national dialogue that would look at resuscitating and strengthening STEM, Innovation and Entrepreneurship disciplines so that Nigeria could key into the global trends and opportunities in STEM &I. For Nigeria, and to a much lesser extent the US, there is an urgent need to develop the Engineering and Technology infrastructure that would help sustain the development in this important area. **As a background, while at the University of South Florida, I worked with the US National Science Foundation (NSF) to shape the nation's thinking on how to address the problem of the lack of participation in STEM disciplines at the K-5 levels. I have also received two separate NSF innovative grants on infusing STEM into K-5 classrooms with a focus on preparing teachers and graduate students for the collaborative and transformative work that is required to get this initiative operational.** Our work resulted in an award of Excellence from the Hillsborough County School District.

As part of my sabbatical leave from the Vice-Chancellor position, I worked on developing the framework and the templates for such a program for national implementation through targeted pilot projects. This work was endorsed by the Federal Minister of Science and Technology as well as the National Universities Commission and the National Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities. This was to be accomplished via a transformational nationwide program **ASET** (Alliance for Science, Engineering and Technology). **ASET** is an innovative construct that brings together critical stakeholders (Relevant Federal Government Agencies, Universities, the State Governments, and the Primary and Secondary schools) in a collaborative partnership aimed at reinvigorating science, engineering and technology education at the primary and secondary levels by having selected Graduate Students (ASET Fellows) work in close collaboration with school teachers (mentor teachers) from partner schools in developing a symbiotic relationship, which allows ASET Fellows to receive pedagogical training while the teachers receive science content support. For the past 15 years, I have been a leader in engaging different stakeholders around the important issue of the lack of interest and participation of a good majority of our

children in the STEM (Science Technology Engineering & Math) areas and have been concerned about what such portends not only for our nation's scientific workforce but also for the pipeline that ultimately determines how we grow our professoriate. In Nigeria as an example, over 80 percent of those seeking admission to the Federal Universities want to go into the humanities especially business management and political science. This is representative of a global trend that cannot be sustained in the long haul. Thankfully, the US for example has taken steps through the efforts of the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Research Council to reverse the trend lines.

### **Leading Change**

Change is an important and inevitable dynamic of every organization and brings with it both intended and unintended consequences. Most successful organizations are adept at managing and adapting to the anticipated outcomes of change. The challenge however is how to manage and navigate through the unintended consequences of such change. The efficiency and more importantly the longevity of most organizations depend, to a large degree, on how those organizations react to the unintended outcomes of change. Managing change requires a fundamental understanding of the ramification of the change constructs and engaging all stakeholders in identifying, clarifying, and defining the range of options and response spectrum that ultimately minimize the unintended outcomes. To lead change requires the vision to grow and nurture learning in agile organizations which are typically better suited to adapt and manage change. The Office of President is the heart and epicenter of the University and so as President I will be committed to and I must champion positive change to inspire the University Community and by so doing ensure the vitality of our academic enterprise in alignment with the University Strategic Plan.

For the past five years, I served at the highest level of an evolving and changing University landscape and profile. Managing this change required effective leadership so as not to breed chaos and disenchantment. For example, because of limited resources it was difficult to build facilities fast enough to accommodate new intakes. Changing demographics presents another aspect of change dynamic that offers opportunities to attract new or unrepresented members of certain groups. In one of my previous assignments, our office was responsible for actualizing the University's outreach efforts to the Hispanic Community, the African American Community and the larger World African Community. This involved moving beyond the usual cultural and social issues that typify this type of organization to issues of diversity and plurality in a much broader global context. It required engaging all the stakeholders (the university community and other communities) in conversations about the importance of technology empowerment and full participation of ethnic minorities in STEM disciplines and required selling this idea to sponsor organizations.

### **Leading People**

A public institution will not be successful without the broad support of the community and industry and the participation of stakeholders and committed individuals from diverse background and experiences. As President an important my job will not only be to provide leadership across all the spectrum of the organic institution but also to inspire all stakeholders towards excellence both academically and professionally. As Vice-Chancellor I had monthly town hall meetings for staff and students which provided a forum to discuss broad or specific issues dealing with the state of the University before those issues came to the for. This requires carefully anticipating issues and being proactive. A leader must be in front of issues by consulting widely and by hiring competent support staff and colleagues who are held accountable.

### **Diversity**

As one time Director of the Institute on Black Life & the Center for Africa and the Diaspora, I spent a good deal my time building partnerships and interacting with individuals from all levels including University Presidents, CEOs of Major Corporations, Members of Congress and State Legislatures, County and City government leaders, Community Advocates, Faculty, Students, and Staff. As a result of the

cordial relationship and trust we were able to generate the resources needed for scholarships and our many projects and initiatives.

I have had extensive experience working with, and responding to the needs of diverse groups, including traditionally underrepresented groups especially Hispanics, African Americans, and Native Americans. I helped re-energize the Black Faculty and Staff Association and led it for one year until elections were held. I served as the Vice President of Administration for that organization during the 2005/2006 academic year. In a similar fashion, I was cognizant of the voices of the Hispanic/Latino community since I actively participated in the activities of the Latino Faculty and Staff Association. While I was serving as a faculty intern and Interim Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University of South Florida, I organized and led the Latino Graduate Fellowship Committee. The work of that committee was the building block for what later became the Latino Graduate Fellowship with funding of over \$200K from the Provost's Office.

### **Building Partnerships and Coalitions**

As a public institution, established by the state and funded primarily with state funds, a major part of the moral and political mission of the university is to address the social and economic challenges of the community and the state. Partnerships and coalitions are vital if the university is to create the type of physical and social environment the university campus and allied facilities must have in order to attract and retain students and faculty, and to engage the host community and other stakeholders in a meaningful, collaborative, and mutually supportive way. Additionally, and perhaps equally important for any university and more so a public university, is the fact that partnerships are critical to maintaining political support for the university's operations. Certain partnerships are so focal to the educational mission of an institution that it (the institution) simply cannot accomplish essential functions without those partnerships. For example partnerships with hospitals, health care providers, the hospitality industry, or schools (K-12) are essential to providing mandatory experiential learning and practical training for those in the health care, hospitality, and education (teacher education in particular) professions. Forming coalitions with other groups of similar values, interests, and goals allows members to combine resources and become more powerful than when they each acted alone.

One of the Presidents major responsibilities is to build such coalitions and partnerships with the university community, the host communities, and indeed across the state and the nation so as to deliver transformational value to the stakeholders that far exceeds the original destination for the partnership. And as part of the community, it is also important to expand to new areas as new possibilities and ambitions emerge from the established partnerships. For the immediate campus community this could be actualized through the formation of a campus wide Research Committee consisting of faculty and staff from the Health Sciences, the Hospitality Programs, Engineering, Business, Visual and Performing Arts, Architecture, and Arts and Sciences. An annual or bi-annual conference that is self funding and held in the community could be a culminating activity each year or bi-annum to showcase the coalition progress and achievements.

### **Summary**

Beyond all these, I am first and foremost a teacher and an educator. I have established and maintained a solid research and scholarship record in my discipline and have secured funding from agencies such as NSF, NASA, NIOSH/CDC, as well as private entities. My work and service activities extend beyond the University and my immediate community. I have a national and international presence as reflected by my membership and participation on various national and international boards, societies and panels.

- **Dr. Okogbaa is a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Engineering and an elected Fellow of the Institute of Industrial & Systems Engineers, a member of the Society of Reliability Engineers, as well as a member of other professional bodies and learned societies.**

- Dr. Okogbaa is a member of the Board of Directors of RAMS (Reliability & Maintainability Symposium)—The premier IEEE affiliate organization responsible for Reliability Education both nationally and internationally. Each year this International Symposium brings together Reliability Experts in Engineering, Science, and Technology to examine the vexing issues that affect product and process integrity.
- He served as Associate Editor of IEEE Transactions on Reliability and on the Editorial Board of four other archival journals in my profession. I also served as an Associate Editor for the IISE Transactions and as the Book Review Editor..
- Dr. Okogbaa has received funding exceeding \$8.1 million in grants and contracts from the US National Science Foundation, NASA, NIOSH, DOE, and other public and private companies in the US.
- As an inventor, he was issued a US patent No. 5971248 entitled: “Adaptive Gripper for a Robotic Manipulator” in February 1999. As a result of our invention, he was elected and have been a Charter Member of the USF Chapter of the National Academy of Inventors since 2010.
- Professor Okogbaa has developed new Reliability Analysis and Maintenance planning tools to evaluate the Reliability of Complex Systems under Transient State. Okogbaa co-developed the MORINHO/HO (Modeling the Reliability of Integrated Network/Hou and Okogbaa) -- an efficient method for comprehensively analyzing integrated network with unreliable nodes with software failures.
- Dr. Okogbaa has served as major Professor (10), co-Major Professor (2), or committee member (25) to over 40 doctoral students. He has served as Thesis supervisor, co-director, and committee member for over 50 masters’ students..

In summary, my experiences and preparations are aligned and well suited to the requirements of the position of President of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU). I appreciate the opportunity to share my experiences and interests with you and how those qualify me for this important position.

Respectfully submitted,



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