

January 16, 2017

Robert Luke
Witt/Kieffer

Dear Robert:

Thank you for the conversations about the opportunity to serve as President of Florida Gulf Coast University. Please accept my application. Given the priorities outlined for the next President I believe I would bring the background and experience to build on the energy and success of this comparatively young university as it matures into a major contributor to its region and the Florida system.

I know the University is committed to expanding its funding base. Throughout my career I have been successful in securing funding from federal, state, and philanthropic sources to support the institutions and strategic initiatives I have led. I secured millions of dollars while chief academic officer in Kentucky to help that state lead the nation in increases in college attainment. As head of grant making for the Lumina Foundation, the largest U.S. foundation focused solely on higher education, I developed the understanding and relationships in the philanthropic community to continue generating that support for our work in Illinois. Early in my career I led an academic program in development of a Ph.D. program and in becoming one of the most highly funded research programs in its discipline and university. This was largely through competitive federal grants from NIH in the public health arena.

I am very aware of how to promote institutional support and success within the context of a state system through collaboration and advocacy. There is an inherent tension in the institution/system relationship, but if properly navigated it can support both institutional advancement and meet statewide priorities. I have been at the center of that process in Kentucky and Illinois and worked with institution and system leaders in states across the country while at the Lumina Foundation to support successful partnerships.

At Lumina, I initiated and helped lead the national performance based funding conversation. I worked with multiple states in the implementation of programs. I understand what it takes to succeed within such a funding system. Since coming to Illinois, I have led refinement of our performance based funding model and worked with regional and research universities in developing strategies to adapt. I am familiar with the Florida model and could ensure the university benefits from its funding formula.

I also have reviewed the metrics embodied in the Florida system for becoming an emerging preeminent university and the current status of the University. The University clearly has significant improvements to make if it is reach the student success and research goals embodied in that program. It is an exciting challenge for which my work in supporting dramatic improvements in both areas has prepared me. The true test of success will be in making these improvements while preserving the important mission of the University to serve its region and the people of Florida.

I managed a half billion-dollar program to attract top researchers and their teams to Kentucky leading to dramatic increases in the system's extramural funding. I also led a successful multi-million-dollar program designed to promote entrepreneurial faculty research that led to patents, licenses, and

business creation. I would be excited to elevate the work of programs like this focused on environmental sustainability and other areas at Florida Gulf Coast. This research embodies the ideas forwarded by Donald Stokes in his groundbreaking book Pasteur's Quadrant. He articulates the many models for research that both generate knowledge and solve problems. The explicit connection of research to student learning and career success obvious at Florida Gulf Coast is another component of a 21st century university's research vision.

In Illinois I lead development of a \$2 billion capital and operations budget for Illinois higher education and establish priorities that focus on enhancing higher education's contributions to raising college attainment, improving equity and affordability. I also lead efforts to drive workforce and economic development through research, student success, and regional engagement. For the past two years I have been focused on getting an enacted budget. No state has ever gone this long with no budget. The increasing political gridlock here is, in part, what has led me to explore other opportunities where I can make a real difference. I also want to return to a campus where I can use my experience and talents to more directly impact positive outcomes for students, dedicated faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.

Across my career I have been acknowledged for my passionate commitment to improving higher education and my ability to effectively advocate for its future to a diverse set of stakeholders in public and private settings. At the Lumina Foundation I served as a key advocate with policy makers, faculty, higher education leaders, and the public across the United States and internationally. In Illinois, I have become an effective, recognized public advocate of the system. A sampling of my public advocacy is available online and cited in my resume. I would look forward to using these skills to fund and friend-raise for the university as part of implementing a communication/advocacy plan that would make it a recognized leader in student success and a first choice university for students in and outside of Florida.

That advocacy effort would dovetail with an aggressive enrollment management plan that would reverse the declines noted in your profile. I know how to do that. In Kentucky we dramatically increased enrollment across our colleges and led the nation in increases in the percentage of the state's population with a quality college credential. At Lumina I had the privilege to design (and fund) some of the most successful programs in the country to dramatically increase college enrollment and graduation.

The University rightly embraces its role as a catalyst for regional development. Creating and supporting such regional collaborations has been a focus of my work in Kentucky, at Lumina, and in Illinois. In Kentucky we launched the first of its kind publically funded multi-sector regional initiative throughout the state with universities at its center. At Lumina I designed and launched a regional "collaboration for collective impact" initiative that now supports partnerships like the one Florida Gulf Coast has developed in more than 75 metropolitan regions. In Illinois, I have secured grants to support multi-sector regional networks engaging higher education, P-12, business, political and nonprofit leaders in elevating education, economic, and quality of life indicators. In short, I completely understand how to create and sustain regional public/private partnerships and the key role universities must play in them.

The University is committed to providing a 21st century education to its on-campus students and, through continuing education, to students across the region and state. At the Lumina Foundation I had the privilege of designing work that connected some of the greatest innovators in higher education with

institutions interested in using technology, new learning delivery models, and game changing student success strategies to provide high quality learning to students from all backgrounds. I helped launch one of the first state virtual universities. I have won awards from the National Continuing Education Association for my implementation and expansion of CE programs. I continue to use this expertise and these relationships to support innovation that provides affordable quality learning to an increasingly diverse student body. Engaging these resources at Florida Gulf Coast would be an exciting opportunity for institutional advancement.

Finally, my approach to leadership is rather direct and simple, with trust at its core. I deeply believe that we only proceed at the speed of trust. My communication background tells me how to build that trust. This commitment has defined my work as an academic department chair (reappointed four times by my faculty), university senate chair, chief academic officer, philanthropic leader, and higher education executive officer in the fifth most populous state. My strategy is to hire or develop high quality people and give them the freedom to succeed, set aggressive goals with clear metrics for success, encourage risk taking-understanding failure is a part of learning, and ensure the structures are in place for honest communication, active listening, and continuous improvement. These principles have guided my work to streamline processes, realign talent, set goals and measure progress in every leadership position I have held: transforming an academic program, refocusing a foundation on strategic philanthropy, and enabling state systems to meet more aggressive strategic goals focused on the public good.

I am seeking the opportunity to return to the campus level and bring my experience to bear on work that more directly impacts students, institutions, and regions. I know my career trajectory has not been the traditional dean, provost, president track. I am hoping the breadth and depth of my experience at every level of higher education policy and practices, nationally and internationally, is seen as a campus leadership resource. Florida Gulf Coast is a dynamic young university ready for its next stage of development. It has a strong regional commitment and a desire to further elevate itself through innovation and strategic change. It would be a perfect setting to lead great work and make a difference.

Sincerely,

Dr. James L. Applegate