

To the members of the FGCU Presidential Search Advisory Committee:

I well remember the date and the time: Friday, March 28, 2008, at about 4:30PM. That was the moment that I received the call from President Bradshaw, offering me the position of Provost/VPAA at FGCU. Next to the most joyous events associated with being a husband, father and grandfather, it was the best phone call that I had ever received. My hopes and aspirations to be associated with this new, vibrant, and exciting university, located on such a special parcel of land, had come true. At this same time, I was also a finalist for two presidential positions at other public universities. So confident was I that the opportunity to serve FGCU would be tremendously rewarding, I immediately withdrew from both of those other searches. Now, almost exactly nine years later, I present myself as a candidate for the presidency of the university that I always respected and have come to love.

As a young university coming of age, FGCU needs to focus on select themes that: reflect its core values; serve as differentiators in the marketplace; are responsive to and excite the larger community; and support the Strategic Plan. I believe that there are three themes that stand tall on existing strengths and provide great potential to grow and develop into the future. The first is **experiential learning**, the type of learning that supports students' abilities to gain and apply knowledge in the context of real world scenarios. FGCU has well-established strengths in service learning, internships, and clinical placements. These three areas are supported by our emphasis on undergraduate research as one of the central hallmarks of our current Quality Improvement Plan (QEP), our new Co-Op 6 program, the intensive utilization of our campus and local environs as a living-learning laboratory, efforts to expand study abroad, the recent transition of our Honors Program to an Honors College, and growing capacity to provide a ubiquitous entrepreneurship environment with our Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Emergent Technologies Institute. We should work to increase the availability of these opportunities and heighten the promotion and marketing of FGCU's rigorous and authentic experiential learning experiences, for every one of our students, as a best practice in pursuit of academic excellence.

Second, FGCU has a proud record, near the top of the SUS, in terms of its graduates successfully entering the workforce, at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels, especially within the State of Florida. Our emphasis on **workforce development** must be continued and expanded by careful consideration of the appropriate mix of degree programs and the talent development of our students. With the resurgence of the national, state and SWFL economies, FGCU must be seen as providing the best prepared, most highly skilled and immediately employable workforce, which meets the needs of our region and beyond.

Third, but certainly not last in terms of importance, as the environmental university for the State of Florida, and in important ways, for the nation, a resolute and comprehensive effort to promote the simple, essential substance, **water**, should hold a special place within FGCU's triad of institutional differentiators. It is very simple; water is life. The comprehensive and increasing cross-disciplinarity of FGCU provides the solid foundation upon which to identify comprehensive and sustainable solutions to one of the most crucial of all human needs. Water drives our very existence. It plays a central role in community health, human vitality, economic viability and prosperity, aesthetic appreciation, ecological sustainability, and global atmospheric and oceanographic patterns. Around the theme of water, FGCU can unite our institutional skills, talents, intellectual energy, and capacity for research related to public policy and planning, environment, economics, public health, artistic expression, recreation, and global awareness. Our collective efforts to study, celebrate, sustain, educate, conserve, replenish, and protect water and water resources, can lead FGCU to national and international prominence.

Four years ago, the funding paradigm for the FL SUS changed in a profound manner. Performance, rather than growth, became the arbiter of future increases to base funding. This period of transition coincided with the start of my four, one-year terms as the elected chair of the Council of Academic Vice Presidents (CAVP, aka the Provosts) for the SUS. During and since its implementation, I have worked closely with the Board of Governors' (BOG) leadership and staff to support the process. In my role of CAVP Chair, as well as Provost at FGCU, I dedicated myself to achieving a broad and robust understanding of the Performance Based Funding (PBF) matrix. My foundational understanding of the underlying methodologies associated with the 10 PBF metrics has well served this institution and the SUS as a whole. BOG members and staff have regularly asked me to serve as a consultant to them; providing feedback, interpreting outcomes, and identifying potential unintended outcomes related to PBF. For example, nearly four years ago, I correctly predicted the 'boomerang effect,' now evidenced in the cyclic, up and down movement of scoring placements exhibited by several SUS institutions.

While we have achieved the level of excellence in several metrics, there remain others that require considerable additional attention and where improved results must be demonstrated. This is most true of 4 (and 6-year) graduation rates. In this regard, a great deal of attention has been placed on our professional advising staff, in essence, our end-user interface regarding progression to a timely graduation. But as with any goal, especially those related to highly complex operations, success can be limited without the implementation of a full systems approach. I believe that a broad-based, integrated systems approach, focused on five key components: **People, Policies, Practices, Positioning and Proportionality**, is necessary.

I have never had the privilege of working with finer **People**, our faculty and staff, than those here at FGCU. But great people require the other four "Ps" to be truly successful. With regard to graduation rates, we have implemented several new **Policies** and **Practices** to assist our students achieve more timely graduation. These include, but are not limited to, reducing students' ability to have multiple majors and minors, better utilizing information technology, insuring that all courses are offered on a regular and predicable rotation, and providing advisors with greater authority to manage student schedules and problem solve when an issue arises. These efforts appear to be bearing fruit. For example, the proportion of freshman signing up for a minimum of 15 credit hours of study, successfully completing 15 credit hours in their first semester, and declaring a major sooner, are showing an upward trend. Yet the other two system elements, **Positioning** (the proper alignment of people and units to achieve maximum functionality and productivity) and **Proportionality** (the capacity required to successfully achieve a complex goal within a specific and reasonable timeframe), need immediate further review and support. The process of birthing a new university, growing it in such a short period of time from a few thousand to many thousands of students, hiring the faculty and staff, and building the buildings and infrastructure, was an enormously complex and time consuming task. But now we need to seriously consider whether the modalities that worked to get us where we are today, remain the best modalities to get us to where we strive to be; a university of unparalleled excellence in educational outcomes, economic impact, pursuit of new knowledge, and artistic creativity.

At present, FGCU is facing the prospect of a severe funding cut in the form of a reduction of \$8 million to our base budget and the loss of our pro-rata share of any new funds that may become available associated with Performance Based Funding (PBF). While we have labored hard and well to be situated firmly in the money for all four years of PBF, this year, for the first time, FGCU could be among the bottom three institutions in the SUS. If this does indeed occur, it

will take decisive actions to pull us back into the funding. However, whether this worst-case scenario materializes or not, the same decisive actions must absolutely take place.

I believe the following five strategies represent the critical action steps that, individually and collectively, will have significant positive impacts on multiple PBF metrics, including but not limited to 4- and 6-year graduation rates and academic progress rate.

First. Administrative structure must be reviewed with special emphasis on the student experience and the productivity, efficiency and accountability of all University operations. This review must include the potential movement of some units across current divisional lines. For example, as currently configured, Undergraduate Admissions, the Office of the Registrar and Freshman Advising each report to a different Vice President. Information Technology is similarly dispersed across three divisions. This observation is not at all intended to suggest that any of these units or the unit personnel is underperforming. I do believe that we have not adequately harnessed the collective institutional knowledge and intellectual capital found in these units because of their disparate alignments. Managing rapid growth for many years was not an easy task. But now, in our current slow growth mode, FGCU must take the time for a circumspective and introspective operational review to ensure that our people are **Positioned** to achieve their best. By example, as Provost, I lead the Division of Academic Affairs through the process of Positioning and Alignment. In one academic year, working together within the context of shared governance, we elevated one academic unit to the college level, and sunsetted another college unit with thoughtful redistribution of its components parts, among other changes. I considered this process as absolutely necessary in order to prepare the academic enterprise, the core of our institution, to be a university of over 20,000 students. Now, I believe that a parallel process should be thoughtfully applied to the administrative layers that support our academic core.

Second. FGCU must engage in a thorough, zero-sum analysis of current divisional budgets to ensure that they are right-sized and **Proportional** for current needs and future success. We must take a rigorous look inward to ensure that all resources are strategically positioned and, that during times of shortfalls or comparative abundance, we know, with absolute assurance, that dollars are going in the best direction to support our institutional mission and vision.

Third. FGCU must immediately add to our senior staff, at the Vice Presidential level, an experienced, visionary and tested Enrollment Manager. The addition of this position, with fulltime responsibility for the cross walking of all parameters by which we manage the flow of applicants through their matriculation, successful first-year transition, selection of a major, completion of coursework without excessive hours, and timely graduation, is absolutely essential to our success.

Fourth. FGCU must immediately engage in a thorough review of its information technology capabilities related to data entry, management, storage, security, mining, and reporting. Again, I want to be clear; the units and the **People** who are currently charged with these responsibilities are the very best with whom I have had the pleasure of working, across the five institutions that I have served. But potential changes, which could reasonably be expected to yield improved operational efficiency as well as superlative predictive analytics, will only occur if our people work with the best technology available, in sufficient supply, and our IT staff is adequate in size to get the job done, done well, and done expeditiously.

Fifth. To capitalize on its stature as the public university serving SWFL, it is essential that FGCU be seen, more than ever before, as a significant and key economic player in the region. In this regard FGCU should be widely and unambiguously recognized as serving the business interests of SWFL as an integrator, innovator, facilitator, provider, catalyst, trusted neutral third-

party partner, workforce developer, and differentiator for corporate site selection and relocation. Simply stated, the entire region should come to view FGCU as the place you go to do business. I believe one simple and immediate step would be to rebrand the Eagle Conference Room as the Eagle Corporate Boardroom and for the next President to lead high-level business meetings on a monthly basis. Each meeting should be based on a focused agenda, include key regional business leaders and elected officials, and serve to seek input, set priorities, establish actionable goals, and fulfill multilevel regional aspirations ranging from health care to technology transfer to environmental sustainability. My efforts to help galvanize SWFL as a regional economic entity, including service as a founding member of the Board of Directors of the SWFL Economic Development Alliance, and working with international business delegations, has prepared me well to serve FGCU in this way.

These are five large steps. But the future success of FGCU requires bold action: thoughtful yet decisive; measured yet expansive; and expeditious yet well conceived.

Securing FGCU’s fiscal future must be a top priority for the new President. I welcome the opportunity to serve FGCU as Chief Executive Fundraiser. In support of these efforts is the large number of fantastic stories and worthy ideas to present to potential donors as excellent gift opportunities, worthy of their serious consideration. I learned early in my career, and know well, that institutional advancement is a process of relationship building, led by multidimensional leaders who embrace and reflect an authentic passion for the mission of their institutions, communicate clearly and sincerely, and are authoritative regarding their request for support. Throughout my career, I have been highly successful in identifying and securing financial support, and my innovative pursuit of new funding and revenue sources has routinely resulted in a series of funding firsts. Over 20 years ago, while still a departmental chair, I secured a \$3 million gift to endowment in support of undergraduate research and equipment acquisition. With my extensive experience, I am equally comfortable in the boardroom, at the black tie gala and in the informal meeting. To date, my success in the areas of grant procurement, public-private partnerships, and private philanthropy have yielded well over \$45,000,000. I welcome the opportunity and challenge to actively pursue all forms of philanthropy in support of current needs and to build a fiscally secure future for FGCU by growing its endowment.

The need for the next President to build upon and expand legislative and gubernatorial support for FGCU cannot be over emphasized. In my current role as Provost, I have been actively engaged in lobbying efforts in support of public funding for FGCU, with up to four trips to Tallahassee each year to meet with elected officials regarding funding requests, e. g. new academic programs and capital construction, and policy development. As a result, I have developed strong and enduring relationships with the members of our SWFL legislative delegation. With the frequency of my visits to Tallahassee, I have also developed relationships with legislators from across the State. While it is absolutely essential to have an excellent working relationship with our SWFL delegation, trust-built relationships with elected officials from across Florida are vital to securing the geographic breadth of political support required to achieve legislative success.

I am a successful innovator and proud of the creative initiatives that I have implemented at this and prior institutions that I served. Further, many of these initiatives have been recognized as best practices within the national higher education space. These include revenue generating

business partnerships, support of faculty development, expanding diversity, transparency in engaging constituent groups within the construct of shared governance, and improving student success. With regard to revenue generation, at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), as Special Assistant to the President for Technology and Corporate Relations, I led the establishment of first Third Party Neutral Hosting (TPNH) cellular telephony system on any university campus in the US (recognized as national best practice in mobility computing by Campus Technology Magazine), the revenue from which funded the student laptop pilot program and led to building of the first digitally supported outdoor classroom in the US (recognized as a innovation leader by University Business Magazine). These sound and progressive business initiatives led to UCA's national recognition as a "Reading Edge" University and a champion of "innovation and forward thinking" by Wireless Fidelity Magazine. At FGCU, I worked to establish a business partnership with the Clinical and Translational Genome Research Institute (CTGRI) to begin the development of a first-of-its-kind certificate program related to human genomics. This program, which will be run through Continuing Education, is designed to generate revenue from training laboratory technologists to operate highly complex, genomic, analytical equipment to provide patients with their complete DNA 'fingerprint' as a means of specializing treatments at the level of the individual, so-called personalized medicine.

With regard to improving systems and functions, at FGCU I developed the international business relationships that directly led to FGCU being the first institution in the US to make its website maximally accessible, and more fully ADA compliant, to people with a broad range of physical and neurological disabilities. In addition, as a direct result of my efforts, FGCU shortly will become the first institution in the US to provide a fully customized, proprietary, career building set of software tools for all of its students and alumni. Further, I led multiple efforts related to maximizing the utilization rates of our academic space. As a direct result, FGCU is recognized, in the category of academic space utilization, as the most efficient institution in the FL SUS and in the top 5% of all American universities. Finally, when rapid enrollment growth was no longer sustainable, I helped to engineer the 'soft landing' transition to our current slow enrollment growth environment.

To enhance student success and reduce their costs, my office team and I developed the original blue print for what is now known as "Soar in Four" (which earned a special innovation award from Governor Scott) as well as the plan for "Soar Higher", the graduate student companion program to "Soar in Four". Based on its design, "Soar Higher" will also incentivize our undergraduates to graduate in four years, or less, as a requirement to receive reduced tuition for their FGCU master's degree. Also, my office led the highly successful SACS, 10-year regional accreditation reaffirmation process, which resulted in an unprecedented outcome; FGCU had zero recommendations at the time of exit interview of the site visit team, a perfect score.

Faculty development and mentoring always have been a particular passion of mine. I began the now nationally renown FGCU Lucas Center for Faculty Development, established the Office of Undergraduate Studies, combined the Office of Graduate studies with the Office of Research and Sponsored programs to optimize for natural synergies, and established the Cortese-St. Angelo Veterans' Room in the library to assist our student, staff, and faculty veterans make the often difficult transition back to civilian life. Further I established the FGCU Chairs' Council to give voice and support to our mid-level academic leadership, and provided systemic training support for faculty preparing for promotion to enhance their success. Additionally, based on mutual trust and respect, I worked with the leadership of our faculty union (UFF-FGCU) to implement the use of structured mediation to resolve conflicts and achieve important shared goals. The benefits of this approach have been remarkable, reducing time-consuming and

morale damaging grievances from an average of one per month to less than one per year.

Diversity and cultural pluralism must be seen as an essential institutional strength and the development and maintenance of an inclusive campus learning community must be a top priority. We should do this not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is the smart thing to do. Only those students, citizens, employees, and future leaders who have learned to appreciate divergent perspectives can effectively tap into the wealth of human resources that exists in our expanding global society. My record includes substantial success in recruiting underrepresented minorities and women. As Dean at UCA, in a period of five years, my leadership efforts resulted in doubling the number of minority math/science faculty (from 6% to 13%) and increasing by half the number of female math/science faculty (20% to 31%). At FGCU, I led the revision of our faculty search guidelines to ensure qualified applicants from underrepresented groups are included in our pools. The results have been dramatic and rewarding. From 2008-09 to 2015-16, the number of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian faculty increased 31%, 56%, and 55%, respectively. Among our students, ethnic minorities now make up over 30% of our students, up from 18%, just 7 years ago). There is no doubt that our university is richer, stronger, more resilient, and more successful as a result of these efforts.

As the Provost, I regularly have needed to make tough decisions. That is the nature of the job. The next President of FGCU will need to make crucial and exacting decisions while taking ownership of them, communicating them clearly and effectively, and being open to criticism resulting from them. I have routinely demonstrated those traits during my near decade of service to FGCU and stand ready to engage the decision making process, aided by the analysis of relevant data, the input of a broad range of constituents, and utilization of my best judgment formed and tested during nearly 25 years in higher education administration.

The hiring of a university President is often viewed as the hiring of a team; the spouse of the President often serves as a goodwill ambassador for the institution, accompanies the President to important functions relating to branding, fundraising, and lobbying, and reaches out as a special envoy of the University to the community-at-large. While I certainly have my personal bias, my wife of over 35 years, Kathy, would be an excellent partner on this team. She is a well-respected professional woman in the community, serves on the boards of 501(c)(3) organizations, and donates hundreds of hours of her time to important issues about which she is passionate. These include the Pace Center for Girls (academic and social services support for high risk adolescent girls) and Go Red for Women (women's cardiac health issues). I believe that FGCU could find no more loyal supporter and cheerleader in the role of a presidential spouse.

My nine years at FGCU have been the most rewarding time period of my career. I have had the opportunity to serve a great and growing university by contributing to multiple areas of its core strengths and needs, hiring excellent professionals who have enriched our institution in highly demonstrable ways, and creating mutually beneficial and sustainable bridges to the SWFL community and beyond. It would be the highest honor and the most welcomed challenge of my professional life to lead FGCU as its next President.

Respectfully submitted,

Ron Toll, Ph. D.