

RONALD L. ELSENBAUMER

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Ms. Lucy Leske, Mr. Robert Luke, and Ms. Veena Abraham
Witt/Kieffer
2015 Spring Road, Suite 510
Oak Brook, IL 60523.

Re: Presidential Search Florida Gulf Coast University

Dear Ms. Leske, Mr. Luke, Ms. Abraham and Search Committee Members:

Since it opened its doors in August 1997, Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) has experienced unprecedented growth and emerged as a significant and impactful institution serving Southwest Florida. It is clear that the next 10 years will continue to be a time of exceptional development and growth, both in size and national stature. In particular, FGCU promises to provide exemplary transformational and accessible education to an expanding constituency representing the key attributes of a model regional comprehensive academic university within the Florida State University System.

Today, FGCU is a vibrant institution with strong core values focused on affordable access, personalized teaching and learning, student success, academic programming that ensures highly diverse graduates achieve career goals and improve quality of life, promote economic development, and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility. I strongly share these values with FGCU, and have upheld them throughout my academic leadership career. FGCU is located in an ideal environment where my experience has, and can make a difference in closing the opportunity gap – meeting the advanced educational needs for Southwest Florida and beyond. What further excites me about FGCU is the opportunity to accelerate its momentum for providing a rigorous, engaging education that enables students to achieve beyond their expectations, and truly promotes the culture “that inspires those who inspire others.”

With that in mind, please accept this letter as my application for the position of President at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), a position I have aspired to as the capstone of my academic career.

To be successful, the institution needs as its next leader a person who will bring creative and extensive leadership experience to meet the challenges and opportunities facing FGCU; one who demonstrates a deep understanding of these issues in the context of a rapidly changing higher education landscape. In this regard, I would bring to FGCU an inspiring vision, and a broad range of demonstrated leadership skills as evidenced through many accomplishments in spite of numerous challenges. By building strong and collaborative team efforts, I have had the good fortune of assuming progressively advancing leadership positions in both the academic and private sectors.

The early phase of my progression included 14 years in corporate research and management at Allied-Signal Corporation in Morristown, NJ. Having made breakthrough discoveries and developing them into a commercial product, I had the privilege of being promoted from a scientist to a group leader, and then program manager. Through participation in multiple professional corporate leadership training programs, I proved to be a very effective liaison between my development group, senior management in the operating divisions, union/collective bargaining representatives in our production plants, and our commercial marketing groups—effectively bridging these teams (in different geographic locations) for a successful new product development and launch.

The next phase of my career allowed me to successfully translate these collaborative skills to the academic environment and continually advance to higher levels of responsibility. This includes holding department chair positions in two different departments and colleges, director of a major research facility, vice president for research and federal relations, provost, and senior advisor to the president for entrepreneurship and economic development. I have held cabinet level positions (vice president level) under three presidents. Additionally, I’ve had extensive external interactions with local, regional,

RONALD ELSENBAUMER

state, and federal representatives working on wide-ranging legislative issues. By working in concert with other senior leaders on campus, we secured \$170 million in bonds, several legislative exceptional budget line-items and congressionally directed funds to support new facilities and academic programs. I have testified before various legislative committees on higher education. I am also comfortable with the media and understand the value of properly presenting our message (institutional priorities); skills that I believe will serve FGCU well on many fronts.

As an institution to which the community looks for inspiration and expertise, and as a catalyst for the region's economy as well as the cultural heart of the community, I would be a leader who promotes a regional and national reputation for academic excellence, innovation, and affordability. Like FGCU, UT Arlington is a rapidly growing institution making a difference for a majority-minority student population with significant regional economic impact. With 183 degree programs, a record Fall 2016 enrollment of 39,984 degree seeking students, and another 31,438 new revenue generating professional and continuing education students (FY15-16), UT Arlington is the second largest academic institution in the University of Texas System (and projected to be the largest by the end of 2017).

My experience as provost and VP for academic affairs would also bring considerable experience to FGCU for ensuring academic excellence and student success. My responsibilities encompassed an annual budget of \$273 million (comparable to FGCU's operating budget) with oversight of 10 colleges and schools, student affairs, information technology, information security, institutional research and planning, global academic initiatives, student success initiatives at all levels, multiple libraries across campus, enrollment management services, digital teaching and learning (on-line) operations, all academic programming, faculty development, research administration, technology transfer, and a research campus in Fort Worth (UTARI). In building a leadership team, I hired 3 vice provosts, 6 deans, 9 department chairs, 2 vice presidents, and the founding UTARI director, as direct reports.

As a key member of the president's executive council, I helped shape our institution's short and long range development plans. These addressed budgeting, enrollment growth, infrastructure expansion (campus master plan), faculty expansion, setting legislative priorities, expanding alumni relations, planning for a comprehensive development campaign, institutional branding (marketing), as well as developing and implementing multiple institutional strategic plans. I have actively engaged in institutional accreditations, including preparing for our next 10-year reaffirmation in 2017 from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). I have formed the leadership teams, engaged the campus community and established budgets to drive this to completion.

Being a university focused on academic excellence, innovative, student-centered teaching and learning, student access and success, UT Arlington, like FGCU, is committed to serving and providing a higher level of education to a larger percentage of the state population. We are doing so by building strong community partnerships with regional community colleges and area independent school districts. I see that similar partnerships could significantly benefit FGCU. Essential to this commitment is a deep appreciation for shared governance focused on expanding accessibility (locally and at a distance), affordability, improving diversity and inclusion, enhancing global reach, enriching the quality of campus life for both residential and part-time students, and driving economic prosperity by promoting an entrepreneurial spirit throughout the campus community and the region.

Improving recruiting, retention and graduation rates are core missions at FGCU. Facing the challenge of declining graduation rates, it is imperative to initiate multiple curricular and co-curricular student success initiatives. In this regard, at UTA we are beginning to see significant improvements in student success metrics through the creation of our University College; a one-stop shop for student support services. Specifically, through enhanced advising, tutoring services, expanded supplemental instruction, improved course scheduling, and offering First Year Experiences for all freshman, our first year retention rates have gone up 10 percentage points in less than four years. Implementing data driven decision making and predictive analytics for student success metrics, both four-year (+1%) and six-year (+4%) graduation rates are now on the rise as well. By boldly enhancing student success initiatives, and providing aggressive incentives like the Soar in 4 at FGCU could significantly enhance retention and subsequently both 4-year and 6-year graduation rates beyond the current 22% and 45%, respectively. Improvements in such metrics are immensely important given the State University

RONALD ELSENBAUMER

System of Florida performance based funding model.

Trying to meet the educational needs of the region and enrolling many non-traditional students, UTA faced many challenges over the years, much like those facing FGCU and other academic institutions in the USA (primarily with cyclic enrollments driven by a roller-coaster economy). By diversifying degree offerings and course delivery modes we were able to reach more students, stabilize, and over the years, significantly enhance enrollments. In addition, by striving for innovation in teaching and learning, we focused on developing new personalized teaching programs and experiential learning opportunities that promised to deliver impactful experiences, career readiness, and academic leadership for our students. Continuing to offer new degree programs at FGCU that address the new and upcoming career opportunities for students will help keep the curriculum current and highly attractive for the next generations of students to come.

One avenue for meeting the educational needs of the extended community, students who would not or could not come to campus, is through on-line offerings as well as offering extension services at off-campus (expanded campus) locations. Both approaches have been successful at UTA. While on-line educational experiences are not for everyone (students and faculty alike), by understanding areas of critical need (market demand) and strategically offering on-line degree programs in these areas have had a significant impact on enrollment growth and revenue generation (32% enrollment growth and a 70% increase in the number of degrees awarded since 2008). Offering flexible delivery modes (multiple starts), revamping financial aid, and developing equitable (entrepreneurial) revenue sharing models have provided attractive incentives to our students, faculty, departments, colleges, and central administration to expand offerings. Finding the right balance at FGCU could have similar impacts with the appropriate incentives, and add to already robust and growing programs.

In addition to supporting its blend of residential and non-traditional students, FGCU values its commitment to access and inclusion. These attributes would continue to be strongly supported under my presidency. By working with dedicated teams of individuals in recruiting, student affairs, and University College for student success, I have demonstrated skills and accomplishments that foster a diverse and inclusive campus community that truly reflects the population of our region. Building strong partnerships with area community colleges and regional high schools lead to agreements to provide early access (admission) and an expanded pipeline of diverse students to the university.

Altogether, these efforts at UTA have resulted in a highly inclusive (ethnically and socioeconomic) campus community. UT Arlington for the last four years in a row was recognized (USNWR) as having the fifth most diverse UG population at a public institution, comprising 28% Hispanic, 16% African American, 12% Asian, 4% international, and less than 39% Caucasian students. With more than 3,000 military veterans enrolled and a robust support structure for them, UT Arlington is also widely recognized as a veteran friendly institution. Now, 60% of our undergraduate students are transfer students and 50% represent the first in their families to attend college. In 2015, UTA was recognized by the US Department of Education as a Hispanic Serving Institution and received its first Title V award for \$2.62 million to improve student success.

For FGCU to ensure creating a welcoming and supportive campus environment, it will be necessary to continue to expanded diversity among faculty. Along these lines, we have demonstrated success with target-of-opportunity-hire programs and dual-career (spousal) hiring packages. I also created the position of assistant vice provost for diverse faculty recruitment, and established a diversity faculty fellows program to support 2-3 faculty post-doctoral associates seeking the professorate to improve the pipeline. With the engagement of our Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, we established a new undergraduate cross-disciplinary diversity curriculum and certificate program, attractive to both students and faculty. In 2011, I secured funds to establish the Center for African American Studies, and hired a founding director and staff. Indeed, we have received much praise from our community and legislature for this accomplishment (the only one in North Texas).

RONALD ELSENBAUMER

Today more than ever, development activities and philanthropic giving are critical to the continued growth of academic institutions. To continue to foster growth and excellence at FGCU, it is essential to find multiple sources of income to supplement state support and maintain affordable tuition rates. Even though FGCU has a young alumni base with limited ability to donate, developing a culture of giving, even modestly, early on provides significant opportunities for further engagement and philanthropic growth. As such, I see multiple opportunities for expanding efforts such as "Give Day" and effectively doubling annual giving and the endowment over the next several years. Collectively, over the years I helped secure about \$33 million in direct donations and gifts to establish endowed faculty positions in multiple departments, as well as secure key federal and corporate programmatic funds to establish institutes, centers and new academic programs. In many cases, gifts and donations were leveraged with other external sources to significantly enhance their impact. For example, I recently helped the institution obtain a \$7.5 million cash gift from Shimadzu Corporation, and I was able to further leverage this (2x) with an additional \$15 million from external sources. All together, the institutional endowment at UTA increased 85% since 2010 through many collaborative efforts.

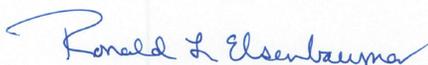
As president at FGCU, a high priority for me would be building the teams necessary for launching a comprehensive development campaign. To be successful, it is essential to reach out to all stakeholders and readily create relationships, build bridges and create partnerships. One of my top priorities will be to tell the "FGCU Story" in clear and compelling ways to all its stakeholders – students, faculty, staff, alumni, state legislators, federal representatives, the Board of Regents, and members of the larger community. Significant resources will be needed to fully implement the Four Pillars of the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan and address critical institutional needs.

Working in partnership with community and corporate leaders, I have led UTA's Federal Relations (with our congressional delegation and federal agencies), and I have served on many community boards and foundations. Service on boards accomplishes two important goals; it keeps community leaders informed of the important advances being made at the University and helps secure political and financial support to advance the mission of the University. In my role as Senior Advisor to the President, I am also working closely with city officials, the chamber of commerce, and local business leaders to drive regional entrepreneurship and economic development through partnerships with the university and alumni. Engaging in similar activities at FGCU would be exciting, help build strong regional relationships and further enhance the local economy (and increase FGCU's economic impact).

As FGCU is seeking as its next president an individual with significant academic qualifications and professional achievement, it is important to note that my academic credentials include a B.S. degree from Purdue University, and a Ph.D. degree from Stanford University. I hold a faculty appointment as a tenured full professor in the department of chemistry and biochemistry in the college of science, and an appointment as professor of materials science and engineering in the college of engineering. Throughout my academic career, I maintained a productive research program securing more than \$10 million in funding, graduated masters and doctoral students, mentored undergraduate and high school students, and published extensively in peer-reviewed journals. In addition, I lectured at numerous conferences and universities around the world. I am a member of Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Beta Kappa, and was inducted into the National Academy of Inventors in 2013.

After reviewing my accomplishments in more detail on my CV, I am sure you will conclude that I possess the broad, innovative, and visionary leadership skills required to successfully advance the mission of FGCU as a student-centered university, while building on existing traditions to ensure continued growth and success as a nationally recognized model comprehensive regional institution in Southwest Florida and beyond. I am eager to pursue this opportunity further with you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully submitted,



Ronald L. Elsenbaumer