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Dr. Robert Luke  
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Dear Dr. Luke:

I would be honored to be considered for the presidency of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU). Having spent 36 years in both public and private education, coupled with 14 years in the greater CUNY system, I strongly believe that I am well prepared for this challenge, from a number of different perspectives, administrative experience, fund raising potential, academic program development, scholarship promotion/support, financial acumen, engaging with elected officials and community awareness/involvement. My family began migrating to southern Florida beginning in 1971 and I have spent considerable time there, in both Southwest and Southeast Florida and have witnessed first-hand the major transformations that have occurred from education to infrastructure. I am excited by the possibility of being part of this continued transformation, especially in higher education where in such a relatively short time, FGCU has steadily climbed the ranks of American higher education.

My academic life began in the Bronx, NY with a baccalaureate in biology from Manhattan College in 1976, and after receiving my doctorate from New York University in 1981, I returned to Manhattan College as a faculty member for 22 years, 14 of those years as Chair of the joined Department of Biology (with the College of Mount St. Vincent), rising to the rank of full professor in 1991. In 2003, I left Manhattan College for The City University of New York, first for Lehman College where I served as the Dean of Natural and Social Sciences and as Acting Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (2006-2007), and then to Brooklyn College, where I have served for the past nine years as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. Serving as a Dean and then as Provost and Chief Academic Officer of two CUNY institutions with broad academic perspectives has prepared me for the challenge of the FGCU presidency. Remaining static in the highly evolving world of baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate education is more than ever not an option for success, and what attracts me so strongly to the opportunity at FGCU is the College's vibrancy and mission. My commitment to higher education, coupled with a breadth of experience, makes me a strong candidate for this position. FGCU holds a special place as one of the unique resources and treasures of Southwest Florida and it plays a major role in enhancing the quality of life of our citizens.

The heart and soul of all American higher education lies in its dual mission of teaching and scholarship. During our strategic planning process in 2011, the challenges facing Brooklyn College were summed up in the following phrase, "We are an Arts and Sciences institution, with many accredited professional programs, embedded in a comprehensive research university." This statement can be applied to FGCU with its strong Arts & Sciences programs coupled with recognized

professional programs that have gained national accreditation. Remaining true to its mission, vision and values is essential for any university. I strongly embrace the mission of FGCU and believe that FGCU can continue to expand its reputation as an academic institution that fosters and embraces quality teaching and learning, while also providing the infrastructure and opportunity for its faculty to grow as scholars, researchers, and creative artists. A major role for the President is to provide the structure and climate in which the faculty and students thrive. Having in place a realistic university Strategic Plan certainly facilitates these endeavors. Brooklyn College is once again deeply immersed in the Strategic Planning process and as Provost I am leading efforts on Academic Excellence and Innovation. FGCU has positioned itself superbly with its current school structure, which can focus on current issues from resiliency/sustainability to health care.

At CUNY, I was directly involved in the hiring of over 200 tenure-track faculty and senior administrative positions. I stressed the need for faculty to be excellent teachers and scholars of the highest quality and attracted superb teachers, willing to implement new pedagogies and technologies. That is the faculty that we need and the students deserve. It is of paramount importance for FGCU to continue to recruit faculty members, dedicated to teaching at different levels, dedicated to the success of their students, dedicated to the pursuit of scholarship and artistic creativity, dedicated to the mission of the institution, who work in an atmosphere of shared and collegial governance.

Attracting and maintaining a diverse, academically gifted, student body with a wide breadth of interests has been a challenge for many colleges and universities. To achieve these goals, the message and brand of FGCU should reach a wider audience including the rest of Florida, out of state and international markets. Comprehensive efforts must be directed to achieve this goal. I have been part of marketing and branding campaigns and while FGCU is becoming known in many markets, the University should cast a wider net to attract more students. While attracting the quality student body to FGCU is the first step, we must step up our efforts with regard to retention and ultimately graduation. Because of the multi-nature of the student body (first time/full time, transfer students, part time students) diverse efforts are needed to positively affect each group. Are we consistently utilizing known high impact learning practices? Are we dedicating enough resources to advising? Do our schedules fit the needs of our students? All would agree that retention and graduation rates always need to be strengthened and I would make this a strategic theme. Of course, better retention has a beneficial effect on the budget.

Presidents must advocate and champion the College to all audiences, prospective students, alumni, politicians, and potential donors. Presidents of American colleges and universities today are spending an ever increasing percentage of their time seeking outside support and it is understood that the next FGCU president must have fundraising, public and private, as a high priority. I have especially enjoyed my opportunities to work and develop relationships with members of the Brooklyn College Foundation. These dedicated alumni/ae have made it possible for Brooklyn College to develop many initiatives including the Koppelman School of Business, the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema and the Magner Career Center. During my time at Manhattan College, I also worked closely with members of the Board of Trustees on issues ranging from Division I Athletics to creating new academic programs. Establishing a strong proactive relationship with members of the Board is a top priority.

Presidents play a highly visible and supportive role in the numerous accreditations that colleges now face. My involvement with Middle States goes back to 1991, when I chaired the Committee on student resources for Manhattan's Self Study. In 2001, my responsibilities switched to faculty resources, and I again served as Committee Chair. My greatest direct involvement with Middle States was at CUNY. Both as Acting Provost at Lehman and as Provost at Brooklyn, responsibility for the final construction

of the Self Study document fell to my office. Both Brooklyn and Lehman were successfully reaccredited in spring 2009. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 Brooklyn submitted its 5 year PRR which was constructed in my office. Brooklyn's next site visit will be in 2019, and during the 2016-17 academic year, initial preparations have begun. I have experience with other accrediting agencies including: Public Health (CEPH), Social Work (CSWE), Nursing (NLN), Nutrition (ACEND), Engineering (ABET), Business (AACSB) and Education (CAEP).

Without question, the budgeting process at CUNY continues to be "unique", because priorities shift, and the individual colleges must respond to the Central Office and the state government. Successful budgeting relies upon the close working relationship across different campus constituencies. Currently, I manage a \$90 million Academic Affairs budget at Brooklyn College. The 5 year tuition policy for CUNY approved in Fall 2011 by the governor, legislature and the CUNY Board of Trustees provided stability and allowed for appropriate planning. An additional five year rational tuition policy has been proposed by the Governor and will be considered during the FY' 18 budget deliberations. After 7 years, CUNY finally settled a contract with its major union, the Professional Staff Congress, and right now the University is in a "holding pattern" regarding its resources as deliberations with the Governor and Legislature continue. Again, during a period of limited additional financial resources, increasing the number of retained students can greatly mitigate lower state allocations.

I also play a major role in the oversight of grant and contract dollars which by law funnel to CUNY through the Research Foundation (RF). I am proud of the record I compiled during my years of administrative service at CUNY in the procurement and allocation of resources. During the past semester, I was selected by the CUNY Central Administration to serve on two university-wide committees as the Provostial representative that both directly and indirectly had a major impact on university-wide and individual student finances. CUNY has decided to implement a "virtual" bookstore policy across all its campuses and the group on which I served was charged with selecting the vendor. A significant portion of my time was also spent as part of the Stakeholders Advisory Committee, a group working with McKinsey Consulting, charged with reducing \$75 million in costs in CUNY's \$1.2 billion operational (non-instructional) annual budget. A report will be presented to the CUNY Board of Trustees soon.

I arrived at CUNY at a time when former Chancellor Matthew Goldstein proclaimed 2005-2015 the "Decade of Science." Resources were made available for the recruitment and retention of faculty, and the longer term issue of facilities construction and renovation. Both Lehman and Brooklyn Colleges were selected for the construction of new Science buildings and this was a major focus. Working closely with CUNY Central Design and Construction, I served on the Selection, Executive and Working Committees which have overseen all aspects of these projects from architect selection, program planning to design. At Lehman, I was the bridge between the architects of Perkins & Will and the faculty, making sure that both the research and instructional needs were met. Now, the Lehman community is reaping the bounty of the new facility. Brooklyn College selected the architects Mitchell, Giurgola and is now hoping to begin the construction document phase of its Science Commons, while a new Performing Arts Center at Brooklyn College will open in Fall 2017 with Pfeiffer and Associates as the lead architects. Guiding these initiatives at Brooklyn is a Facilities Master Plan. Procuring the resources for major capital projects involved dealing with the state and specific legislators, but also with private donors. Continued success with facilities upgrades depends on the ability to develop partnerships as was accomplished at the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema at Brooklyn College located in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Of all the CUNY initiatives that I have been privileged to take part in, the formation of the Science & Resilience Center at Jamaica Bay (SRI@JB) has been my favorite. Working with the Vice Chancellor of Research at CUNY, SRI@JB is a consortium of institutions and agencies including the National Parks Service, the City of New York, Columbia, Cornell, Rutgers, Stony Brook, Stevens Institute of Technology and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Located on the Brooklyn College campus, this Institute has in just a few years, become a key player in urban coastal resilience both on the pure research and community engagement sides. President Gould of Brooklyn College allowed me the time and resources to put this vision into effect. A new 62 foot research vessel for the Institute is even forthcoming, along with a facility located directly on Jamaica Bay with resources provided by New York State's CUNY 2020 initiative. Superstorm Sandy left an indelible mark on the coastal communities of the New York metropolitan region and being able to take part in some way in the rebuilding has been deeply rewarding. FGCU's commitment to ecosystem diversity, the integrity of the Everglades and to resilience/sustainability is indeed attractive to me.

Despite the fact that nearly 17,000 students attend Brooklyn College, when I arrived its academic administrative structure resembled a small liberal arts college with all 30 chairs, programs directors, and administrative staff reporting directly to the Provost. While this odd reporting structure might have given the perception of greater accessibility to the senior administration, it was not serving the College well and I began championing a more typical, responsive leadership structure. Meetings and conversations followed for two years, and Brooklyn now has a 5 school structure with exceptional Deans who began in August 2011. I cannot underestimate this challenge because Brooklyn operated as a very chair centric institution for decades. With great support from President Karen Gould, a new path has been set and I will always consider the establishment of the Schools at Brooklyn as a defining achievement. Our new structure has enabled the School of Business to reach the final stages of AACSB accreditation, and it has now been endowed through the generosity of Brooklyn College alumnus Murray Koppelman. Just to show the interconnectedness of American Colleges and Universities, FGCU was cited by AACSB as a peer institution to which Brooklyn College's new School of Business should aspire to. AACSB cited our similarities in size, mission, structure, diversity of student body, etc. as reason for comparison. With the help of several national search firms, I have brought together a 10 member Academic Affairs Leadership team (Deans and Associate Provosts), to whom I am indebted for their dedication and support.

While updating my CV, I paused to review the list of Committees, Task Forces, Focus Groups, etc. I have had the pleasure to serve on. This record shows my depth and breadth in higher education. During my fourteen years as Chair of the joined Department of Biology at Manhattan College/College of Mount Saint Vincent, I cite four specific areas. Seven times I was elected Chair of the College-wide Promotion and Tenure Committee, which included Arts, Sciences, Engineering, Business and Education. I took great pride guiding this seventeen member body to make fair, deliberate decisions. For twelve years I chaired the Health Professions Advisory Committee which guided hundreds of students to careers in medicine and other health professions. Quality advisement at all levels is more essential than ever for student success. I authored and served as the Program Director for two major grants (nine years funding) from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to foster research, new teaching pedagogies and outreach programs and have just submitted a pre-proposal from Brooklyn College to HHMI aimed at achieving higher retention/graduation rates for under-represented transfer students in STEM disciplines. Serving as Chair of the Athletics Committee at a Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) institution for over ten years in a Division I Athletics Program, confirmed that the breadth of a collegiate experience goes far beyond the traditional classroom and that the co-curricular activities of Student Life must augment traditional academics.

Without question the near future will be a transformative, exciting and somewhat threatening period for higher education in the United States, both at public and private universities. The debate about the costs of higher education continues to escalate as does the evolution of different platforms to deliver instruction. There have been lively discussions to determine whether an institution is “teaching centered” or “research centered.” FGCU’s fit into the intricate jigsaw puzzle of American higher education will most certainly continue to evolve.

In conclusion, I would be both humbled and honored to serve FGCU as its President. When Manhattan College informed me in 2002 that I was selected as a Distinguished LaSallian Educator, I was struck by the wording of the letter which said that I enabled the students to “develop their full potential”. Those words have resonated and stayed with me especially in the diverse world of CUNY where size (over 270,000 degree seeking students, plus an additional 250,000 Continuing Education students) and complexity make it hard at times to see each student, faculty and staff member, as an individual. If given the opportunity to serve FGCU, I will continue to follow the creed that every member of our community reaches his/her potential. The President is indeed the leader of the community, but parallel with the responsibilities of leadership, come the responsibilities of service. I have and will always conduct my professional life in the service of students, faculty and staff.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my application.

Yours most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William A. Tramontano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

William A. Tramontano, Ph.D.  
Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Brooklyn College of The City University of New York  
Professor of Biology

Encl: Current CV

