

MICHELLE REHWINKEL VASILINDA, J.D.

Tallahassee, Florida 850.445.5110 RehwinkelVasilinda@gmail.com

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%Witt/Kieffer Consultants Lucy Leske and Robert Luke 2015 Spring Road, Suite
510 Oak Brook, IL 60523

FGCUPres@wittkieffer.com

Dear Florida Gulf Coast University Presidential Search Advisory Committee,

Florida Gulf Coast University's Presidential Profile is a search for a unique leader for an emerging university at a unique time in its history. The search for an inspirational leader with focus on political acumen, an entrepreneurial spirit, a dedication to environmental stewardship, and ability to work in a highly demanding and complex organization, to work with diverse community, political, and business stakeholders, to understand and navigate the ever-changing landscape of the policy, funding, and marketplace of higher education, with a proven ability to fundraise, a willingness and the energy to be "out and about in the community", to innovate, and have the courage of conviction while being diplomatic and inclusive, and all this to be done and employed without the security of a multi-year contract, is a tall order and one a traditional academic may be hard pressed to fill.

In many ways the profile seems to perfectly describe a good and ethical Florida political leader, especially one who had to run every two years to keep their position; one who employed all those skills and abilities to prove worth every day in order to earn re-election.

A Florida elected official without educational experience, however, would have a hard time meeting the critically important and more traditional criteria of a deep knowledge and experience of teaching, recruiting and retaining students, shared governance, and an understanding and ability to enhance and leverage the community's economy and culture with the university's mission of teaching, research, and preparing students to be contributing citizens and alumni.

Eight years as a Florida legislator with a record of ethical and transparent leadership, over 30 years of full-time work in higher education, a lifetime of fundraising, experience in community development, public relations, media and business, and a juris doctorate degree, sets me apart from other applicants and allows me to meet or exceed all of your aspirations and hopes for your next president.

During this time of immense change and reform in higher education policy and funding, the FGCU Board was wise to put a focus on political acumen and the ability to earn the respect of the Legislature, Governor, and Board of Governors. I have

already earned this respect you seek for your next president and have good working relationships with former colleagues and friends in the Legislature, and with the Governor and his office, that someone new to Florida will take precious time to replicate. I am known and respected by members of the Board of Governors. I have the respect and associations with members in and near the federal government and abroad. I have the political acumen, the ability to earn the respect of fellow leaders, and to work with diverse stakeholders in government, business, and non-profit organizations that will be required to lead FGCU to the next level of excellence.

FGCU is also looking for a president that has a “Thorough understanding of current trends in the evolving higher education marketplace accompanied by a vision for how FGCU can successfully adapt to that marketplace.” As the ranking member on the Florida House Higher Education Committee I gained the understanding and insight to lead FGCU to adapt and thrive in this challenging and ever-changing political landscape and the competition of the higher education marketplace.

FGCU’s distinctive place and focus on environmental stewardship is a critical asset to its brand. Your next leader must practice and promote environmental sustainability, and be able to genuinely and authentically engage in conversations with the community on the role of FGCU in environmental stewardship. My interest in the environment goes back a long way. Most recently during my eight years in the Florida House, I fought for and passed renewable energy and recycling legislation that also had a direct connection to increasing jobs, economic development, and in one instance, lowering taxes. In the legislature I was a strong “go-to” voice on environmental issues. I don’t just talk the talk, I walk the walk: we have had solar panels on our home for years and employ many personal measures to help conserve and protect the environment.

I have been a tireless spokesperson for issues important to my constituents as evidenced each day of the past decade in campaigns and legislative service. As an energetic campaigner I have the fundraising ability, the willingness to be “out and about” in the community and the proven ability to work with diverse constituencies. To campaign and win my very first election for public office to the Florida House and subsequently win every two years was done by being “out and about” at many diverse events to make friends, gather supporters, be visible, and carefully listen to constituents. I will use my skills, energy, and personality to unify diverse constituencies behind the University's mission and strategic plan.

I have been a productive and a creative problem solver, and an initiator of change by promoting my legislative proposals, passing bills, and amendments, gathering coalitions with demonstrated grace under pressure, and rolling up my sleeves to make things happen. My work to gather support for issues new to the legislative agenda by informing my legislative colleagues on cyber security, the film industry, clean energy, tax reform, hemp and cannabis research, the FSU Veterans Center, criminal justice reform, and bullying resulted in legislation and funding.

Every university president must fundraise and I have a proven track record here as well. I have been a fundraiser over my lifetime; beginning as a teenager raising money for the American Cancer Society, continuing to fundraise for community organizations throughout my educational career, and most recently, fundraising for winning political campaigns. I truly enjoy the challenge and the social interaction of fundraising and would look forward to employing my skills and energy on behalf of FGCU.

I have the courage of my convictions and have demonstrated that courage each day of my legislative service. I have tackled difficult issues with diplomacy and inclusion. For many years now, each step of a Florida legislator's political career has been video taped by the Florida Channel, every committee meeting and House session, press reports on television, radio, and print are available for all to see. I have always conducted myself in an ethical and professional manner using logic, persuasion, and a cool passion to promote issues important to my constituents and have done all without personal attack. I am proud of my record as an ethical and transparent leader.

My interest in workplace ethics is not only personal but professional. At Tallahassee Community College I created and have taught a course on Applied Ethics for almost 20 years. In the legislature, I proposed and passed an amendment that mandates character development instruction, workplace ethics, conflict resolution, and job interview education in Florida's K-12 schools.

FGCU requires a president that has worked in complex organizations and is able to make decisions quickly and able to justify especially difficult decisions to diverse stakeholders. You would be hard pressed to find a more complex, demanding, and fast paced environment than the Florida Capitol. I have demonstrated the ability to be productive and succeed in this complex, highly demanding environment; that is what good legislators must do to serve their constituents and state well and to earn re-election. I have been re-elected four times. Each time I prevailed against opposition because I was willing and able to explain difficult decisions and with each election I earned more and more support.

What truly sets me apart from other applicants is that my legislative service is combined with a deep and extensive knowledge of teaching, students, working with faculty, shared governance, job placement, internships, program development, and all the other hands-on, "in the trenches" work, that I have done for almost 30 years at a Florida public institution of higher education. I have been an innovator at my college, implementing its first internship program. I have been innovator in education as a pioneer in online instruction and created one of the earliest and successful programs of online instruction in Florida.

In my careful review of your well considered, extensive, and particular presidential profile, I have come to the conclusion once again, and with more conviction, that I

am an excellent fit to lead Florida Gulf Coast University on the next leg of its path of excellence.

Dr. T.K. Wetherell, who was Speaker of the Florida House when Florida Gulf Coast University was brought into existence, has nominated me to the search committee. I am honored and humbled have the confidence of this great Floridian and former Speaker of the Florida House, President of Florida State University, and Tallahassee Community College. While I have this connection to Florida Gulf Coast University's past, I offer an even stronger connection to its future.

In addition the qualifications I have outlined in this letter and in my resume, I have recently been accepted to a part-time but highly selective MBA program in Global Business at the Oxford Said School of Business. If selected to be FGCU's president, I would like to discuss with the Board whether to begin that program in January of 2018 as I have planned. My efforts at the Oxford's Said School of Business could be beneficial to FGCU in service to its goal to reach outside of Florida to the wider world to business and industry and offer opportunity for international education and research.

I look forward to an interview to discuss my qualifications and my vision to implement FGCU's Strategic Plan.

I have included my curriculum vitae for your review and respectfully request your recommendation for an interview.

Sincerely,

Michelle

Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda