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Via Email to: [rluke@wittkieffer.com](mailto:rluke@wittkieffer.com) ; [FGCUPres@wittkieffer.com](mailto:FGCUPres@wittkieffer.com)

Dear. Mr. Luke,

Please accept this letter and the attached materials as my formal application for the position of president of Florida Gulf Coast University. Five years ago, I joined the USU family as the Vice President for Research and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. Across my professional career from Cornell University to Texas A&M University and the University of Florida, I have had the opportunity to work with and lead world-class faculty, students, and staff. Now at USU, I have the opportunity to focus on our great faculty across all our colleges and disciplines.

**My Vision for FGCU** — As a rapidly growing educational institution of the State of Florida, FGCU must remain committed to leading a student training program that prepares them for the future – technically trained and as well-rounded as citizens of Florida. FGCU must promote both access and excellence while stepping up to ensure student success. Across teaching, discovery and service, we need to recommit to excellence in all activities by setting appropriate goals and measures that reflect a world-class student centered environment focused on success. The diversity of FGCU programs must embrace the values of a broad educational experience, including the arts and humanities, as we seek to train graduates prepared for global enterprises and a world economy.

**In my position at Utah State**, I have had the opportunity to closely associate with — and put my mark on — many programs that have set USU apart from others. The research mission of Utah State, for which I am responsible, spans the range of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff, and it strongly impacts the educational and outreach missions. I manage personally a \$12M F&A budget and \$3M state salary (75 employees) and operations (direct hands on authority) budget. Additionally, I hold the institution's formal Signature Authority over \$100M in grants/contracts (FY2016), and am responsible for the negotiation and compliance of all grants and contracts of the institution. I also sit as a Board Director with oversight and fiduciary responsibility for our 501c3 Research Foundation covering classified and export control contracts of approximately \$100M in additional funding(FY2016). Finally, I sit as a permanent member of USU Tenure & Promotion review, engaged in most hires and all tenure progress of some 800 faculty.

Among numerous of my accomplishments was the creation of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies (RGS) – a new integrated team dedicated to growing both research and graduate studies at USU.

Our leadership team has reinvigorated the trajectory of the undergraduate research program, applying resources and innovative thinking to produce a competitive advantage for Utah State undergraduates. We have assisted USU as it successfully maintained its accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. We've overhauled the fellowship program for graduate students and created powerful new professional training programs that help our faculty attract top-flight applicants, and have championed the growth of sponsored research awards for our faculty — now well over \$200 million annually in new projects – by investing in innovative support and training programs. USU has now set a third consecutive year of record high sponsored awards funding.

**My previous positions** have provided me perspectives on all levels of leadership at a university. I spent 18 years at Cornell University, where I served as faculty member and department chair — a role I still believe is the most important administrative role on campus, and one that is difficult to appreciate without having experienced it first-hand. I then led the Institute of Food Science and Engineering, a major research institute of Texas A&M University, for six years. During this time, I was called upon personally by the U.S. Secret Service to help solve the problem of potential anthrax poisoning associated with U.S. mail delivery to government offices. Next, I spent six years as a dean at the University of Florida, where I led the dramatic doubling of our research funding portfolio to a high of \$115 million for the College of Agriculture and its associated programs. In this effort, I developed and implemented a plan for research excellence and return on investment that still, almost a decade later, helping to define much of their current directions.

**Five years ago** President Albrecht flew to Gainesville, Fla. to talk with me about creating the new Office of Research and Graduate Studies at USU. It was a great decision to come here. The position has been challenging and exciting. The new integrated office we started is running very well.

**As a food scientist** by training and a member of USU's Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Food Science, I have been active and accomplished in my discipline for well over 30 years. I have an exceptional record in areas of faculty productivity over the years, including publishing, teaching, consulting and mentoring. I have been selected as a fellow by the leading scientific society for my discipline, a rare recognition of performance reserved for no more than the top two percent of my peers. Most recently, I was appointed by the commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to the FDA Science Board, tackling such challenging issues as the national opioid epidemic and the dangers of toddler anesthesia. And in 2016, I was selected as the inaugural chair of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's new Science Advisory Council.

Beyond my scientific expertise, I have worked to bring my efforts and the efforts of our **USU faculty to the national stage**. I am active with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and have served as co-chair of the Task Force on Laboratory Safety, which launched a major report last year and helped position Utah State University nationally as a leader in campus safety culture. I now serve on a joint AAU/APLU task force on public access.

**Diversity is critical** in ensuring that an institution is preparing their students for a state-wide, national or even international employment. — As vice president and dean, I have been most sensitive to this concern and have created a number of initiatives to help address diversity. Convinced that USU needed an injection of leading edge thinking that might make all attending to pause in thought. I initiated the **TEDxUSU** program ([tedx.usu.edu](http://tedx.usu.edu)). I was personally committed to this effort to stretch the leading edge of our comfort zone – exploring such issues as LGBT concerns, work-life balance, rethinking education norms,

exploring the universe and knowing cancer up close and personal. **TEDxUSU** gives our faculty, students and invited speakers a venue to explore their own breakthroughs and discoveries. At 500,000 downloads – it has become a major venue of outreach on issues that push us to think differently. A second program where I focused on diversity was knowing that my leadership team was leaning to an all-white male thinking. A year and a half ago we conceived of a new position called the **RGS Faculty Fellow**. Designed as a customized selection to help balance our RGS leadership decision making team, the fellow has become an integral part of our weekly decision process and a balance in gender and discipline to a highly traditional science-male oriented group. Without a doubt this has been an extraordinarily successful launch. Our first fellow was a female art historian. Our second fellow, now in place, is a female business marketing specialist. In both cases, the RGS leadership team has appreciated the diversified thinking that the fellow has brought to the office.

Throughout my career, I've engaged in efforts to expand funding sources through **fundraising, portfolio diversification, and aggressive proposal development**. These efforts included successfully securing the donated resources to build a \$10 million Texas A&M Electron Beam Food Research Facility. I implemented in Texas, Florida and now Utah, an intensive approach to research proposal training, helping to expand and boost USU's research funding to record levels for three years in a row. Upon hire, discovering a major deficit in the graduate tuition fund, I balanced that budget and brought it out of the red. And, recognizing that a new infusion of resources was needed, under the authority of President Albrecht, I worked directly with individual legislators and committees of the Utah legislature to help secure new one-time and recurring funding to support graduate programs.

I have had the unique opportunity to **work directly with state legislatures** in three states: Texas, Florida, and Utah. Each has been very different, yet in some ways quite the same. Many legislators have regional interests and differences; however, I have found that all want to know of the university's care and value placed on every dime invested by the state in their programs. Every legislature wants to know they are investing in a "winning" program that is special, innovative and will deliver ROI. And every legislator conversation and legislative committee interaction is that much better when I am committed to a relationship that is open, honest and energized with those legislators. I would embrace this same philosophy of building relationships as President.

I am committed to using **new technologies to advance program success** and create efficiency and effectiveness. My RGS leadership team uses strategic planning to achieve year after year growth and improvements. It is the way we advance through the year, not a dusty document on a shelf. We use technology to manage all projects. RGS is in the process of a multi-year transformation of grant award record keeping to a new system called Kualii™ hosted in the cloud. Our information filing and flow has all moved to virtually 100% electronic as we have been early adopters of Basecamp™, Box.com™ and DocuSign™. Using advanced technologies is a way of doing business for me.

Throughout these efforts, I maintained a focus on the core purpose of a university as a place of **hands-on-learning for our students**, where they are afforded not just a good education but a world-class education. In the past five years at USU, I have worked to create opportunities, most especially for graduate students and undergraduate researchers. I have overseen surveys of students and hosted faculty forums to better understand the needs of our students, and I acted accordingly to provide expanded funding, new training programs and opportunities for students to showcase their creative innovations. And, in a commitment to transparency, I established a new annual report to the Faculty Senate that describes our activities, budgeting, and planning at a level of detail seldom done previously.

I have evolved a **management style** that values diverse input, transparency, open discussion that respects opinions and leads to a choice of pathways and decisions that reflect an integrated thinking. I like to surround myself with diverse thinkers and find my best decisions happen when I listen carefully and weigh as best possible the guidance I receive. This does not mean that I won't make hard decisions – I do, nor decisions that stand on my own beliefs – I do, but I will always try to do this in the framework of a diverse discussion. A president must offer great respect if he or she expects respect. And above all else, we all need to believe in the integrity of who we work with. If asked “What is the prime role of the president?”, in my opinion the answer is simple, it is student success. Above all – looking at what we do across, teaching, discovery and service – all must tie to the success of our students. If we agree that the President's primary role is student success, then it would be easy to arrive a primary goal of president - that being, excellence in all that we do!

Based upon my experience at other institutions and my past five years of successful leadership at USU, I have compiled a few thoughts regarding opportunities and challenges that exist for FGCU:

Opportunities and Challenges:

- a. **Attaining a Top-Tier Student Success Status**— It is critical to create a set of basic metrics and achieve the goals of building a well-rounded education environment that positions FGCU graduates as not just employable but rather highly desirable contributors to the workplace and welcomed contributors to the state as young citizens. FGCU must become the [1] envy of those that wish they could attend, [2] the pride of those that do attend and [3] the joy of those fortunate enough to hire our graduates. Programs like Soar in Four are great but additional new ideas need to be explored. FGCU needs to not only engage the student in forming a pathway to success but also the student's family in making a commitment for success that matches the university's passion to achieve success.
- b. **Reinvigorating Undergraduate Education while expanding the high-tech workforce training of a graduate education** — An exceptional learning experience is a practical hands-on experience. This is why we need to remain supportive of the undergraduate experiential learning as a core path. One that ensures that the classroom experience is translated to an in-depth experiential training that comes from in-laboratory or in industry hands-on insight. I would like to see an expansion of the internship concept as a capstone experience that clears a pathway to better education and closer ties to industry partners with possible inclusion of programs like the NSF I-Corps program to support entrepreneurial skills development. Across Health Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering and the Arts — FGCU has an opportunity, through strong partnerships and innovation, to grow its programs, faculty stature and most importantly student success.
- c. **Ensuring student training is transformative** — FGCU needs to step up to the grand challenges of our community, state and country and fuel the fire and energy of its students to believe in their ability to change the world for a better place. We need to inspire and develop pathways of learning that create leaders in the foot-steps of our Apollo moon missions, creating the vision for a next iPhone or even a Florida HyperLoop!

The educational experience must transform the student into a leader who becomes a life-long learner.

- d. **Committing to Community Relationships** — FGCU must remain a primary partner to cities, county and state development – across the economy, education and general community. A committed institutional leader will ensure that open and transparent communication will underpin a strong town-gown partnership and effective collaboration.
- e. **Reinvigorating Passion about Advancement** — Philanthropic gifts are a critical lifeblood of educational institutions because it empowers the institution to create the unexpected and truly inspirational experience for the student. I expect this will remain a major goal of the next administration to continue that effort by reaching to alumni, corporations, and foundations.

There is a lot of vision, experience and ideas in this letter. However, a president needs to be able to listen to and rally many differing opinions and concepts in order to arrive at a best solution. I work tirelessly to find solutions, and I do this by connecting with people, building consensus, insisting on transparency and valuing ideas different than mine. A leader must not only carry a strong vision, but he must be willing to let that vision be shaped by innovative thinkers around him or her.

I realize this letter is an introductory level of discussion; however, I hope it creates an interest in my candidacy and a real sense of vision for the future of Florida Gulf Coast University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark R. McLellan", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Mark R. McLellan  
Vice President for Research and  
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies