

April 9, 2022

Re: Application for Regional Chancellor, University of South Florida, St. Petersburg campus

Dear Search Committee Members,

It is an honor to submit my application for the Regional Chancellor position at the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg campus (USF St. Petersburg). The learner is the center of what we do – students, students, students – and the university's focus on student-centered education aligns with my values. USF's focus on the confluence of excellence in faculty research and student success is exciting. I am drawn to institutions where the collision of theory, practice, research, and application stimulate discovery, creativity, and innovation - resulting in transformative educational programming and scholarship that produces direct economic benefits to the community while enhancing professional advancement and social mobility for the student. USF has a compelling journey ahead, highlighted by its impressive growth, importance to the region, and the palpable demonstration of lived values across the campuses. I eagerly submit this application, and hope that this letter demonstrates how my 25 years of experiences in higher education, 15+ of which serving as dean, program director (reporting to the provost), associate dean for strategic initiatives, and assistant president/chief of staff to the university president, align in serving USF St. Petersburg into its next chapter of success.

USF's overarching mission and 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, as well as strategies and metrics outlined demonstrate a fast-paced, dynamic academic setting with exciting opportunities ahead. The consolidation of the campuses affords faculty new opportunities for interdisciplinary research collaborations and greater access to community partnerships, while also providing students access to more academic programs and student support services. The USF St. Petersburg campus offers the advantages of a large public university campus while focusing on innovative curriculum and small classes, producing high quality research, experiential learning, and community engagement, in a close-knit learning environment. I am energized by the focus on increasing accessibility to education; prioritizing and catalyzing academic relevancy and career readiness; enhancing research and graduate education; ensuring structures that advance the hiring, promotion, and retention of exceptionally qualified and diverse faculty/staff; and strategically strengthening community and industry partnerships while furthering student preparation for the global environment.

Demonstrating a commitment to its mission as a public research university, USF St. Petersburg has developed programs and initiatives that have propelled it to higher levels of research, teaching, and student success. USF St. Petersburg's intentionality to ensure student engagement and integration in the community as a component of the rigorous research and academic design are demonstrable through the STEM INQ Lab, the Family Study Center, the Innovation Scholars program, the Initiative on Coastal Adaptation and Resilience, and the Merrill Lynch Wealth Management Center. The Trafficking in Persons Risk to Resilience Lab aligns with my interests in bridging information gaps and championing anti-human trafficking. At MSU Denver, I partnered with the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking to customize an Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness certificate that is embedded into the curriculum core for all hospitality majors, and which was recently the basis for students to compete at an international competition. USF St. Petersburg's U-Matter Program also aligns with my interests. At Kennesaw State University (KSU), I worked with the Academy for Inclusive Education and Social Growth to incorporate students with differing abilities into relevant hospitality courses for socialization and to develop skills for independent living. Similarly aligned, I oversaw sustainable food programs at KSU, which included a 26-acre farm with greenhouses,

hydroponic growing, and a biodigester similar to the ORCA system funded by USF St. Petersburg's Student Green Energy Fund. Having been involved in a dozen facility construction projects valued at over \$250 million, I am eager to discuss design aspects of the new facility that will support the Center for Excellence in Environmental & Oceanographic Sciences and the interdisciplinary work in addressing climate change, rising sea levels, and flood disasters.

I am excited by offerings blending engineering, marine science, entrepreneurship, and hi-tech sectors connecting to the region's employers, as well as programs supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Archives, AT&T, Gilead Sciences, and the Florida Department of Education, among others. These efforts demonstrate how curricula can drive economic development and innovation. From collaborations with the city's Innovation District to the inspiring work of the SPHERE consortium, I am eager to learn more about the initiatives and successes of these programs. USF St. Petersburg's robust catalog of graduate programs blending relevancy to the region and global impact provide new grant opportunities and programmatic growth. Coming from a military family, I am impressed at the efforts to support veterans' transition to academic and civilian life.

My interest in the position is further compelled by the USF St. Petersburg's commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which are deeply and intrinsically rooted as central tenants of my leadership and my identity. Diversity in all its forms – phenotype, lived experiences, social and socioeconomic backgrounds, disciplines and interests, ability, and/or identity – is a foundational strength and central to the mission of higher education. Growing up poor on a farm in rural Georgia, the daughter of a first-generation college student and veteran, I bristle at the construct that higher education is a privilege for the wealthy and well-connected. University campuses often served as my babysitter. My own academic journey was rife with challenges enhanced by struggles with dyslexia – I attended college full- and part-time at both public and private institutions, was a student athlete; later, a transfer student struggling to get credits to “count”; was on Pell Grants and a hodgepodge of scholarships from generous people I could not identify; worked two and three jobs, often simultaneously; was food insecure and, for a time, homeless. The student journey is very personal to me, it motivates me to work to eliminate systemic inequities or disparities for others.

Professionally, I chose to work at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), KSU, and MSU Denver because of the focus on social mobility for first generation, vulnerable and marginalized populations. Research documents that students who feel they ‘don't belong’ expend cognitive energy that interferes with their academics, and that diverse faculty positively contribute to students' sense of belonging, perception of campus climate, and play a critical role in support of the recruitment, retention, and graduation of *all* students. In my leadership, I actively recruit and retain talent with diverse backgrounds; of 71 faculty/staff hires, 55 positions have been filled with individuals identifying as female, African-American, immigrant, international, Latino/a/x, LGBTQ+, different physical abilities, and/or intersectional applicants.

The Profile outlines exciting opportunities for the Regional Chancellor, including accelerating the One USF Initiative and USF's 2022-2027 strategic plan, *In Pursuit of Excellence*, while being a passionate champion in promoting USF St. Petersburg's unique identity, commitment to community engagement, expanding partnerships, and ensuring the welcoming and inclusive campus atmosphere. Traditional administrative roles have reshaped over the past decade, and I strategically chose positions for the varied administrative acumen that each provided. I have demonstrated successes within institutions embracing transformational change – moving up within the Carnegie

classifications (UNLV to R1 and KSU to R2), system-consolidation of institutions and programs (UNLV and KSU), creating new and innovative degree programs (UNLV, KSU and MSU Denver), and creating and expanding entrepreneurial private/public partnerships (UNLV, KSU, and MSU Denver). Two institutions (UNLV and KSU) were part of sizeable university systems (Nevada System of Higher Education and the University System of Georgia). I enjoy working within large, complex institutions and systems, particularly those who further quality research and leverage community engagement as a competitive advantage. At UNLV, I designed an incentive program to increase research and grant writing, resulting in +68% output over two years. At KSU, I incorporated 200 hours of community volunteerism into a degree program, highlighted as an exceptional initiative when KSU earned the Carnegie Community Engagement designation (2015). The expanding blend of healthcare and hospitality – evidenced through the global medical tourism market, expected to reach \$273+ billion by 2027 – inspired the creation of interdisciplinary academic offerings to support collaborations with Chemistry, Biology, Exercise Science, Nutrition, Nursing, with placement of hospitality interns in hospitals and assisted care facilities. At MSU Denver, I created the university's first differential workload policy to increase scholarship and attract faculty. I also co-chair the Faculty Diversity Task Force that is creating a new First Year Faculty program for tenure track faculty to increase retention and a sense of belonging.

USF St. Petersburg has a wonderful story to tell, and I am excited by the brand identity established to capture its uniqueness. Location and the influx of international companies positions it as a major producer of talent and innovation. Unique collaborations and industry engagement result in a programmatic competitive advantage. Aligning with the experiences sought, I have led the creation of degree programs that address high-demand areas; incentivized development of open educational resources; participated in and led accreditation reporting and visits under the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and AACSB; promoted transdisciplinary collaborations through program design, research and grant writing with Nursing, Nutrition, and Health Professions; created cash-funded programs and certificates (for credit and not-for credit); expanded the digital footprint; created and led P3 partnerships to generate revenue; led the largest dual enrollment program at two institutions; developed a system-wide articulation agreement with the Technical College System of Georgia; and promoted multiple DEI initiatives, resulting in a +8.3% increase in student BIPOC representation. My experiences within institutions pursuing dynamic growth has prepared me with the skills to advance innovative research, re-envision pedagogical approaches in furtherance of the academic excellence, expand entrepreneurial initiatives to increase revenue in support of strategic goals, and foster interinstitutional collaborations.

Increasing challenges in higher education highlights the need for the successful candidate to be fiscally resourceful, strategic in resource allocation, and to have experience creating an entrepreneurial ecology where the university's research and creative activities flourish. Key to the execution of strategic vision and external activities are the support and resources to effectuate such action. In various roles, I have been deeply involved in fundraising and friend-raising, personally secured funding commitments exceeding \$13,775,000 in the past 7 years. I am experienced with varying budget models (incremental, performance based, and RCM), as well as varying state funding and spending requirements (Nevada, Georgia, Colorado). I have expanded public/private partnerships (P3), as well as developed multiple fee-for-service endeavors to generate revenue. I have taken calculated financial risks to stimulate growth, using funds to upgrade technology infrastructure,

incentivize research, expand laboratory spaces, fund graduate and undergraduate students, and promote a culture of wellness. Using historical information and data intelligence to improve predictive modeling, I also correlate non-financial data and metrics as part of an ROI analysis, and continue to be data-informed, transparent, and inclusive in resource allocation and decision making.

My legal background affords a lens of equity, governance, and procedure that enhances the value of my work as an administrator. Fiscal acumen and capable data mining, while useful, are limited skills without engaged shared governance. Campus-wide academic discussion, planning, deliberations, and successful implementation require collaborative governance. Having served as a senator on Faculty Senate, as well as a multitude of committees, I appreciate that shared governance is rooted in respect, trust, communication, and relationships. My 25 years of working with Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, the Faculty Union, and our other shared governance bodies demonstrate successes in consensus building and collaboration. Leaders are only as good as the people that surround them, and I have been able to accomplish things because of the collaborative efforts of colleagues internal and external to the institution. Twenty years practicing and teaching employment law have also been critical to ensuring fairness, transparency, and process in my administrative leadership. Having served as a professional mediator, I have honed my skills as an effective communicator. I possess a strong moral compass along with personal and professional integrity beyond reproach, reflected in accountability and transparency. I view my role as being in service to the constituents of the institution and the communities in which we live.

In addition to demonstrated successes internal to institutions, I genuinely relish the role as an external champion. Whether raising the profile of programs, connecting with industry, or securing funding and support, my strengths lie in communicating a sense of unity, connectedness, and common purpose, particularly with external constituents. I am prepared to build upon the campus' exceptional foundation, strengthening and creating new relationships, upholding the unparalleled commitment to community engagement, and advocating for the needs of the students, faculty, staff, and community.

USF St. Petersburg is a distinctive and dynamic campus that serves as an economic engine driving the economy and communities of the region, the state, and beyond. I believe my experience aligns quite well, and I would be honored to help guide this campus in the very promising times to come. I am thankful to your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Christian E. Hardigree