

## MELISSA L. GRUYS, Ph.D., SPHR, SHRM-SCP

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April 18, 2022

Members of the Regional Chancellor of the St. Petersburg Campus Search Committee – University of South Florida

c/o: SP&A Executive Search: Alberto Pimentel, Managing Partner and Robin Reyes, Senior Associate

Dear Members of the Regional Chancellor of the St. Petersburg Campus Search Committee:

It is with sincere interest that I submit my application for the position of Regional Chancellor of the St. Petersburg campus of University of South Florida. I see a strong fit between the position and my qualifications and between the goals and activities of your university and my professional and personal values. My educational background and my demonstrated leadership as an academic administrator position me to make a positive impact in this role. As a first-generation college student, my life was transformed by education, and I have committed my career to transforming students' lives. While I am thriving in my current role as Dean of the Doermer School of Business at Purdue University Fort Wayne, I am looking to further my service to academe. I will be a bold chancellor who is highly engaged in all things related to the university and the community. I have a strong interest in the position and my experience prepares me to address the priorities outlined in the position profile.

I completed my undergraduate work at the University of Minnesota-Morris, and I earned my Ph.D. in Human Resources (HR) and Industrial Relations at the University of Minnesota, one of the top programs in the nation. I have an entrepreneurial spirit, have been very innovative in running the Doermer School of Business, and have expertise and experience in facilitating academic programs of excellence. I will be a bold provost who is highly engaged in all things related to the university and the community. I have over 22 years of faculty and administrative experience at three public institutions – Washington State University-Vancouver, Wright State University, and Purdue University Fort Wayne. I have been involved in progressively responsible academic leadership roles for over fifteen years, including serving as Department Chair at Wright State University, and culminating in my current position as Dean of the Doermer School of Business at Purdue Fort Wayne. I supervise over 100 colleagues. I also play a key role in the university Top Leadership Team, working on everything from strategic planning, recent planning for COVID, and other important university decisions. I have worked within university systems (e.g., Washington State University and Purdue systems) state-wide, so I will be comfortable working within the broader USF System and advocating for the St. Petersburg campus.

I support the mission of University of South Florida and the St. Petersburg campus. I have strong expertise in facilitating strategic planning and in leading operational action at all levels of the university. I capably utilize the existing vision, culture, and strengths of a unit, set goals collaboratively, and then create, innovate, and lead change. My training and expertise in HR and strategic management, paired with my strategic planning experience, will allow me to facilitate the implementation of the university's strategic direction for academic affairs and the colleges/departments. I will provide leadership and vision for academic affairs and work closely with the Deans to implement mission driven strategic planning with all of the units I supervise.

I have earned teaching, research and service awards. I have 20 peer-reviewed articles in high quality journals, including four top tier publications in my discipline, in *Journal of Management* and *Journal of Applied Psychology*. I have earned the rank of full professor with tenure at Wright State University and at Purdue University Fort Wayne. I am a student-centered award-winning teacher who has always

promoted an experiential learn-by-doing approach. As an administrator, I facilitate a great learning environment for our students by hiring high quality faculty and by supporting professional development funding and opportunities in teaching and learning best practices. I am also engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning in my own research. I have a strong orientation toward mentoring students, having co-authored 10 presentations and publications with students. I regularly attend events sponsored by our student organizations, and I created a Start Smart pay negotiation seminar for our students to address the gender pay gap.

At all three institutions in which I have worked, we have served a large population of particularly first-generation, low-income, non-traditional students across diverse backgrounds and identities. For example, in each of the three universities, approximately half of our student population are first generation college students. Here at Purdue Fort Wayne, 75% of our students are eligible for financial assistance. We serve all students by providing maximum flexibility and accessibility through offering evening and weekend classes, alternate scheduling for classes to meet one day per week, hybrid and online classes and programs, and three-year pathways through our undergraduate majors.

The Doermer School of Business has achieved outstanding student outcomes, including growing undergraduate and graduate enrollment growth by 35% and 106%, respectively, in the last five years (at a time when our overall university enrollment has declined by over 12%). We have maintained high quality programs. Our School is included as one of the Best Business Schools in the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, our first-time Certified Public Accountancy (CPA) pass rates for our students ranks in the top 6% across all universities in the nation, and our online undergraduate program is currently ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as 27<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

As a result of our efforts to increase student retention, our retention rate for first time full-time freshmen in the Business School improved 16% since last year, to a rate of just under 93%. Recent data also shows that enrolling in our School of Business first year freshmen success course doubles the odds that students will be retained in spring semester of their first year, compared to students not enrolled in the course.

We have made impactful innovation and growth by introducing creative new curriculum in response to regional needs and trends. At Purdue Fort Wayne, I have led our School to introduce new programs (one major, one minor, four graduate concentrations) and to offer more accelerated, online, and hybrid programs and courses (e.g., three-year undergraduate degree plans and a one-year online/hybrid MBA program). We also implemented two fully online programs in Management and Marketing.

We have also developed interdisciplinary programs. In collaboration with the PFW School of Music, we designed a unique new Music Industry major in conjunction with Sweetwater Sound, worldwide leader in music equipment sales and service, which incorporates the business minor into the requirements for the major. We have enrolled over 100 students in the major in less than two years and we also just introduced a 4+1 program between Music Industry and the MBA, and are developing interdisciplinary programs with the Engineering and Technology College.

I pride myself on making data driven decisions and I consider the context and other factors related to the decision holistically. I always pursue a shared governance approach, seeking the participation, feedback, and support from faculty and staff. It is the right thing to do, both ethically and in the spirit of collaboration. I always want to involve team members in important decision making, to utilize the expertise and creativity of my talented faculty and staff colleagues, and to seek their support in all of our efforts. We benefit from the diversity of our backgrounds, views, and opinions. My leadership style has effectively allowed units I have led to improve on existing programs and offerings as well as help us move forward with innovative new activities.

I have been deeply involved in community engagement and I take great pride in the huge positive impact we have achieved by engaging our students. For example, as Director and instructor for the Human Resource Senior Seminar Capstone Course (a two-semester extended serving learning course) at Wright State University for four years, I led all human resources (HR) majors in HR service learning projects. Serving over 25 community small businesses and non-profit organizations, I logged 2,000 consulting hours - and our students donated an additional 4,000 consulting hours. I created a Start Smart/Work Smart program that serves the entire campus at Purdue Fort Wayne, as well as the Northeast Indiana community. I earned a grant from American Association of University Women to start this pay negotiation program aimed at addressing the gender pay gap for women, then developed and launched the program. I have donated over 100 hours, facilitating over 20 seminars, serving 165 total students and community members, and recruiting and mentoring over 30 volunteers who will facilitate seminars in our program and at another area university.

I have extensive budget management experience. I currently have budget oversight of a \$5.3M budget, the School's academic departments, the graduate program, the Student Success Center, and the Community Research Institute. In my administrative experience, I have invested resources in strategic initiatives and trimmed budgets substantially when needed. I will work well with all constituents to efficiently manage financial resources and run the budget effectively to support the strategic direction of the university.

Fundraising, grant funding, and creating innovative revenue generating programs can all positively impact the budget. I have extensive experience in all three of these areas. With Purdue Fort Wayne's Office of Development, we have generated gifts to the Doermer School of Business of over \$3.7M in the last five years. We secured \$2.8M in gifts, allowing the university to purchase an existing building to become our School's new home, and then facilitated an additional \$1.75M building renovation project. I manage the school's \$7.8M endowment and endowed scholarships, which have awarded over \$1.25M in student scholarships in the last five years. With support from generous donors, we created five new endowed scholarships last year. To put my fundraising efforts at Purdue Fort Wayne into context, virtually no funds were being raised for the Doermer School of Business when I arrived – and in five years, we have increased the annual number of gifts to the School of Business by 373% and the average annual dollar amount of donations by 678%.

I have also been successful in gaining grant funding. At Purdue Fort Wayne, the business school has a Special Studies in International Business program in which students take a university course that contains a study abroad component in a subject country. Students participate in this special program at no cost to themselves. The trips are truly life changing for the students, many of whom are traveling out of the country (or even the state) for the first time. Since becoming Dean, I have successfully fully funded through grants and fundraising all student travel abroad for this program. We have earned \$125,000 in grant funding for this program within the past five years.

We have created innovative revenue generating programs that contribute greatly to the budget. At Wright State University, we created a revenue-generating non-degree Human Resources certificate program. In the first year alone, we enrolled over 50 participants in the program – generating 900 additional FTE credit hours and \$375,000+ in tuition.

I have played key leadership roles for Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and AACSB business school accreditation for the last 15 years in two universities. I have deep knowledge of and experience at all levels of the university in assessment, program review, general education review, and major and program level assessment across three institutions. I also serve as an AACSB Peer Reviewer for business school accreditation, reviewing three universities this past year.

I strongly support professional development opportunities and funding for all administration, faculty and staff. Despite little or no funding for faculty professional development and no funding for staff development from the university, I carve out funding from the Dean's Office budget to provide professional development funding for everyone in the Doermer School of Business. As a faculty colleague, Department Chair, and Dean, I support and mentor faculty and staff in various ways: co-authoring with faculty members and students, and providing informal and formal feedback on task performance and faculty progress toward tenure and promotion. We also provide an extensive professional and career development program for all business students (including funding to attend student competitions and academic conferences).

In units I have led, we have built wonderfully diverse, highly effective, collaborative teams where everyone's strengths better the organization. My human resource training and expertise facilitates best practices in recruiting, hiring, developing, reviewing, and retaining stellar, diverse faculty and staff. This, in turn, contributes directly to positive recruiting, retention, and success outcomes for students. Under my leadership, our department at Wright State improved faculty gender and racial diversity, hiring 10 new faculty members, four of whom were female and four from diverse racial backgrounds.

The Purdue Fort Wayne Doermer School of Business has increased our faculty racial diversity by 44% in the past five years, having now almost half of our faculty hailing from eleven countries around the world. In the same time period, we increased staff racial diversity by 43%. We have not only attracted a more diverse faculty and staff, but we have created a work environment with high employee retention. Our five-year average annual turnover rates for faculty and staff (not including retirements) are just over 1%. We have diversified our student body as well, increasing racial diversity of our undergraduate program by 44% and our graduate program by 36%.

I understand the current landscape and challenges of higher education and I am aware of what students and their families expect from their higher education experience. Both academic and co-curricular aspects of college are very important and the two areas need to work together to facilitate high satisfaction and retention of students.

In everything I do, I foster respect for diversity and I am committed to a diverse and inclusive learning community. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is about welcoming a broad range of people and ideas and having everyone feel included and comfortable on campus. I have a strong track record of diversity work at the department, college, university, and community levels. I have led the Purdue Fort Wayne university level diversity efforts as Chair of the campus-wide DEI committee and played a key role in hiring our first Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), as the Executive Champion from the Top Strategic Planning Leadership Team. At Wright State University, I Co-Chaired a university-wide Task Force on Gender-Based Violence and worked with the Office of Equity and Inclusion to develop a Search Committee Training to promote equitable practices in hiring. The Search Committee Training was seen as so valuable, that at the urging of the faculty union, American Association of University Professors (AAUP), it became mandatory for Chairs of Search Committees and highly recommended for all Search Committee Members. I have also spearheaded new international agreements in several countries, including a partnership in Morocco with a federation of thousands of private schools to recruit high school students for all Purdue Fort Wayne programs. We have gained 24 scholarships for these students, which will generate \$400,000+ after all expenses when convened (on hold now due to COVID).

I excel as a communicator, and interact regularly and effectively with students, alumni, faculty, staff, administrator colleagues, community members, legislators, and friends of the university. As the Dean of the School of Business, I facilitate the Business Leadership Advisory Council and many corporate partnerships in the community. The relationships with these companies allows our students to be

involved in class projects with the companies and for students to be hired for internships and full-time employment. I collaborated with K-12 systems to provide summer camps, a year-long high school leadership program, and dual enrollment classes for students to earn dual high school and college credit. At all three institutions, I have partnered with community colleges to facilitate crossover class scheduling, transfer programs, and articulation agreements. I am a strong advocate and spokesperson for the university. I encourage strong communication and develop trust with my team. I am also a good listener and I have an open-door policy that allows for broad accessibility. I work hard to inspire others and have had success doing so.

I am a lifelong learner who is constantly curious and questioning, and learning and growing each and every day. This approach to life helps me navigate the ambiguity and changing nature of higher education, as I am very good at problem solving and creating innovative solutions. I am a strong advocate for others and always treat everyone as well as I would like to be treated, so I always know I am not only doing my best, but I am doing so in a way that is kind and honest as well. I am a person of integrity. I thoroughly enjoy developing relationships, and I live each day to serve others, particularly students.

I am an entrepreneur and an innovator in everything I do. I see the incredible power that education has for individuals, universities, communities, and society, and it is truly my privilege to serve in higher education to bring that positive impact to fruition. I would want no other career.

I look forward to learning more about all the exciting work you are doing at University of South Florida and the St. Petersburg campus - and to exploring further the ways in which I might contribute. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa L. Gruys". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Melissa L. Gruys