

Vivek Bhargava
16036 Thorn Wood Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33908

September 9, 2019

Search Committee
Dean, Lutgert College of Business
Florida Gulf Coast University
10501 FGCU Blvd, South
Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565

Dear Search Committee Members:

Please accept this letter of application and Curriculum Vitae as my formal application for the position of Dean, Lutgert College of Business (LCOB), Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU). As the current Associate Dean and for College of Business at FGCU, and a former Dean for the School of Business at Alcorn State University, I possess knowledge of the needs and demands of the position and have demonstrated ability to perform the task with highly effective outcomes, as evidenced during the previous Dean's extended absence for health reasons. Conversations with colleagues and interaction with family and friends have encouraged me to apply for the position. I am honored to be nominated for this position. I submit my qualifications for your consideration.

Administrative Qualifications

As the director of the MBA program, Associate Dean, Acting/Interim Dean, and Dean at two different institutions, I have provided the vision and leadership and to advance the college towards achieving the goals established by faculty and administration. During my tenure in administrative positions, I have improved quality in each endeavor and venture entrusted to me. For example, at Alcorn State, I led the effort to get the School of Business accredited and followed best practices to ensure quality of all programs. Enrollment increased at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

I believe a College of Business is an integral part of any University. Its mission should support the University's mission and long-range strategic plan. The college's primary focus should be on students, with quality faculty providing outstanding academic programs to meet the student needs. Being in tune with the needs of the regional business community is a critical component of the Dean's role, in order to prepare students to easily flow into the job market upon graduation. At LCOB, I have been an enthusiastic proponent of the proposed Center for Workforce Development that will teach our students the necessary skills, including soft skills, to be successful in securing high paying employment opportunities, including rapid career advancement. Alcorn State University has an unusually high number of first generation students. I created an environment that was conducive to the needs and requirements of such students. As one of the original faculty members hired to the new MBA program in 1997, my efforts were focused on growing a new

program for non-traditional students.

Visioning and Strategic Planning

I am a strong supporter of Dr. Michael Martin's vision of student success and enrollment management and his zeal in making sure that the students graduate in a timely manner. This is evidenced by his statement, "*We are committed to our mission of giving every student, regardless of background or personal funding, the opportunity for a better life through higher education*". Dr. Martin has very aptly stated what I have been practicing in my administrative career, "*We're always seeking to give our students a holistic experience, both in the classroom and beyond. We're looking to connect students to the local economy and to the social and cultural life of the community.*"

I bring to the position of dean considerable visioning and strategic planning experience. My approach to creating and successfully implementing an academic strategic plan involves weaving the best thoughts and ideas from all members of the university community to craft a collective and living document that answers the questions "where do we want to go?" and "what do we want to achieve?". Based on this philosophy, I led the effort at FGCU and at Alcorn State to develop five-year strategic plans.

I am well versed with the Florida Board of Governors' (BOG) Performance Based Funding Model and the performance metrics that impact performance funding. I have worked tirelessly to ensure that we continuously improve in the areas for employment upon graduation, median wages, four and six-year graduation rates, degree without excess credit, and recruitment and graduation of minorities. I have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience to make a positive impact on these metrics and influence future funding.

The dean should be a team player, and be able to work with university administrators, especially with the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. While serving in various administrative positions, I have always been considered a team player and have established positive working relationships with upper administration while being a strong advocate for Business faculty, students, and programs. I have successfully worked across the FGCU university community to translate our shared institutional vision into high-impact organizational results.

In leading the multi-year LCOB Strategic Planning Effort, I collaborated with the college's Strategic Planning Task Force to complete a multi-phase initiative with the single goal of creating an aspirational – yet achievable – organizational plan that would ensure the LCOB remains one of the premier global business schools. The Strategic Planning Task Force was comprised of faculty and staff members from throughout the college. I collaborated with the Strategic Planning Committee and other college stakeholders to update the college's vision statement, mission statement, values, learning goals, and learning objectives. These new foundational, organizational documents received approval from all core college constituents. I then met with the University Strategic Plan Committee, the College Strategic Planning Task Force, college Department Chairs and other college stakeholder groups to identify the actual efforts that would comprise the LCOB Strategic Plan. I crafted an integrated document that included the initiatives and priorities identified by both the college and the university. The LCOB Strategic Plan includes a five-year

plan, which includes actions, resources, possible impediments, and a completion timeline. At Alcorn State University's School of Business, I led the development of a first comprehensive strategic plan.

Student Success

Student success (recruitment, support, retention, and graduation) will continue to be a top strategic priority for colleges and universities for years to come. Projected prolonged decreases in the number of students attending college (2.4 million fewer than in 2011), continuing increases in student recruitment costs (an estimated \$1,500 per student), and a marked increase in the number of students that leave college annually (30% to 48%) have made the development of a student success strategy essential at every institution of higher learning. I collaborated with my colleagues from across the university to develop baseline metrics that measure core elements within the student success process from recruitment to graduation. We identified high impact deficiencies in our current support model using both institutional data and survey results. We then launched a series of initiatives targeted at addressing our deficiencies. These included: targeted recruitment, an increase in student tutoring and educational support; initiation of a prototype mentoring program; an increase in student engagement (professional clubs and research with faculty), expansion of professional development and paid internship opportunities; and intrusive advising ("encouraging" more frequent meetings with advisors). Next, we completed a preliminary analysis to determine whether the initiatives had addressed the deficiencies and the results have been encouraging. We are now exploring a new holistic student success strategy based on our results because student success can never be considered a final destination – it is a continuous journey towards becoming a more student-centered institution.

Fiscal Planning and Management

I have served in leadership roles and been entrusted to be a strategic steward of the organization's financial resources. I have skillfully created, carefully administered, and prudently implemented financial strategies designed to successfully manage multi-million-dollar budgets in support of the institution's strategic plan. My extensive experience in resource generation, funding allocation and prioritization will ensure the creation of a viable and sustainable financial model. I rely on data modeling, performance metrics, budget planning, and financial analysis to ensure the institution receives the maximum value from all university expenditures. I have led many initiatives focused on both streamlining and innovating existing outdated legacy processes and practices. At LCOB, the prior dean and the budget manager have consistently relied on my fiscal planning expertise to follow best practices. I have also been responsible for the expenditure of Graduate Excellence Funds and one-time talent gap funds amounting to almost three million dollars.

Interdisciplinary Academic Innovation

Close professional relationships with government officials, community leaders, professional organizations, and economic development officers have enabled me to keep abreast of current and projected employment trends in the region and across the state. These partnerships have allowed me to proactively identify unfilled educational needs that support workforce growth. I have led the college efforts to plan, design, and implement multiple educational programs within

the college. I have recently collaborated with the College of Health and Human Services and the College of Engineering to seek support for three new undergraduate degree programs that would directly support high growth sectors across the region. We were able to convince state legislators to fund \$2.55 million to support the development of bachelor's degrees in informatics, construction management, and supply chain and logistics. These three degrees began accepting students in fall 2019. Our efforts with the College of Arts and Sciences enabled us to launch an undergraduate minor in Professional selling. My leadership help to create of a new minor in Agribusiness, and the creation of two new centers in LCOB--Center for Agribusiness and Center for Supply Chain Excellence.

Having always supported internationalization and globalization efforts, I firmly believe that students have to be competitive in a global setting. We want our graduates, who may find employment in Southwest Florida, to understand and appreciate that businesses hire people who can work with people of other countries and culture and be able to travel and communicate effectively to promote their businesses. I recently found funding to take a group of MBA students to a study abroad trip to Universidad Pivada Boliviana at no cost to the students.

Accreditation

Accreditation is essential to survival of any University. I have significant experience in leading and/or supporting regional and specific accreditation efforts. I have played an integral role in various accreditations including the SACS, AACSB, ACPHA and ACBSP accreditations. At LCOB, I played a significant role in the reaffirmation of AACSB accreditation.

At Alcorn State University, I was a member of the leadership team that led the successful accreditation by SACS in 2010. I was also on the QEP leadership committee, which developed and implemented the QEP plan for Alcorn State University. In my leadership role at Alcorn School of Business, I have championed our efforts for accreditation. The School of Business was not accredited when I took over as the interim dean in January 2010. I immediately put processes in place to get the school accredited and prepared the preliminary application for AACSB accreditation. When the new president came in January of 2011, I sought permission to pursue accreditation. I was given the permission to pursue ACBSP accreditation first. The School of Business became a member of ACBSP in February of 2012, and achieved accreditation in 2013. Accreditation this quickly was possible because during my tenure, we continued working on the accreditation processes for both AACSB and ACBSP, anticipating that we would receive permission to seek one of the accreditations. The university administration was so pleased with the effort that it gave me permission to seek AACSB accreditation. This leadership role in the accreditation efforts further underscored for me the importance of continuous strategic planning and improvement.

Research Support

The quality of academic programs depends on the quality and qualifications of the faculty. One assessment of quality faculty is research productivity and currency in their respective fields. I have always encouraged the faculty to conduct significant research and have made the atmosphere conducive to research by helping find funds to support research related endeavors. In

each of my administrative role, I have supervised and evaluated faculty and staff for their performance and worked with them on setting their future goals. Mentoring faculty and providing direction to improve their performance are important components of my role that I find very rewarding. I have also led by example respect to research and have published 35 research papers in quality peer reviewed academic journals. I have also made over 50 presentations in national and international conferences. I have served as a reviewer for many journals and have been on program committee of several conferences. This leadership resulted in a collaborative and productive environment for research at Alcorn State where, in 2012, just before the accreditation year, every member of the faculty published at least one journal article.

At LCOB, I have managed to secure funding to provide the necessary software, hardware, databases, and other library resources to encourage meaningful research. These include: WRDS (with subscription CRSP, Compustat, BoardEx, IBES, etc.), Barclays hedge funds, Data Robot for three years, Qualtrics for three years, Mondeza, MPlus, upgrade from Business Source Premier to Business Source Ultimate (an increase from 660 to 2,112 Peer Reviewed Journals) for five years, Cabell's blacklist of predatory journals for five years, a five year subscription for all LCOB student and faculty to Financial Times, among other resources. I also found funding to pay for the twelve Bloomberg terminals for two years, until the time we can find external endowment funding.

As a faculty member and an administrator, I have served in a number of committees, both at the university and school/department level. I have chaired a number of such committees. I have been a part of a number of leadership committees including the Labor-Management Committee, Professional Development Leave Committee, Professional Development Enhancement Awards Committee, accreditation leadership team, QEP leadership committee, Budgetary Advisory Council, Deans council to name a few. At Alcorn State, I have chaired university wide ad-hoc committees including, mentoring tenure track faculty, post-tenure review committee, adjunct-overload pay committee, and merit pay committee. In summation, I have been actively involved in formulation of a large number of the university's academic policies.

Graduate and Online Education

I have taken a leadership role in the implementation and delivery of our new online MBA program in collaboration with an external firm, Academic Partnerships. In addition, I have played a significant role in the development of the new and improved MBA program.

At Alcorn State University, I spearheaded the efforts to start a new online Executive MBA with specialty in Hospitality in Gaming. The new program was launched in May of 2014 and had eight week consecutive terms. This is a totally online program. I also introduced a synchronous online component in courses at the undergraduate and the graduate level. A number of Alcorn's classes are taught in a manner where the instructor teaches from the classroom and students can either come to the class and take the class face-to-face or log on and take the class synchronously as distant learners. This initiative is used to increase enrollment and gives the students the flexibility to either attend classes in person or be present online. In order to prepare faculty for the launch of this program, in Fall of 2013 all School of Business instructors were externally certified to teach online courses. With the Board of Governors emphasis to increase online offerings with in the State University System, I believe I have the requisite expertise to accomplish this task.

Diversity and Inclusion

I am a staunch advocate for the creation of a shared institutional vision that is dedicated to successfully weaving the many facets of diversity into the cultural fabric of the university. My unwavering support for the creation of a holistic university-wide diversity effort stems from my experience working with students, staff, faculty, and administrators at a variety of colleges and universities. I have seen first-hand the positive transformative impact that shared ideals like cultural competence, equity, and inclusion can have on the educational and social climate of a university. I collaborated with my colleagues and peers to establish an organizational tradition that welcomes and celebrates people from different backgrounds and points of view. This effort led to the development and implementation of initiatives targeted at infusing diverse ideals and practices into the educational experience of all university students from recruitment to degree attainment. I have always embraced diversity and recruited a diverse group of faculty members in School of Business at Alcorn State University. While Alcorn is an HBCU, almost half of the students in the MBA program were from other races. At that time, Alcorn State University was the most diverse HBCU of the three in Mississippi and that was primarily due to the School of Business. I am committed to diversity, and will provide leadership and mechanisms in recruiting diverse faculty, staff, and students.

Since arriving at FGCU, I have become involved in the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship program which is a program sponsored by the Florida Education Fund with the aim of producing more doctoral degrees among underrepresented populations in crucial disciplines. My involvement has included, mentoring Ph.D candidates, reviewing their research and dissertations and providing feedback. Additionally, I have participated in mock interviews as a way of preparing the respective students for the job market.

Teaching and Educational Partnerships

I take teaching very seriously. I view every class that I teach as an opportunity to impart knowledge, information and skills that I know will be beneficial to the students. I hold my students to very high standards and my classes are very rigorous. The students appreciate my teaching philosophy as evidenced by the comments and excellent students' evaluations that I have received over the years. I have not taught at FGCU because of my administrative responsibilities, but if I become the Dean, I plan on teaching at least one class every year. I enjoy working with the students, and while being the dean at Alcorn State, I voluntarily taught classes. In 2012, I took over the process of developing a business plan competition team as the primary advisor and competed in OFC venture challenge for HBCUs and our team was a finalist that year. If selected to be the next dean of Lutgert College of Business, I would strive to maintain a very close relationship with students. I believe this connection with students and their educational process will be a huge asset as I work to strengthen the ties between the College and its external stakeholders. Lutgert College of Business has a strong relationship with the Naples CFA society. As a CFA Charter holder, I find the prospect of working with faculty and students to continue to build the relationship with this important stakeholder group very exciting.

I have fostered partnerships with other institutions. I was involved with articulation

agreements with two-year community colleges for seamless transfer of students to Alcorn State University. I also signed an agreement to transfer relevant courses from the technical marketing program and was successful in creating a unique partnership for technical degree recipients at community colleges. I also partnered with University of Memphis' Center of International Business to provide our faculty resources and training to internationalize business programs. I have also collaborated with other schools at Alcorn State University including education and agriculture, to streamline offerings.

Fund Raising and Community Relationships

I have been honored throughout my career to build relationships with alumni, donors, organizations, and community members and discuss how their talents and treasure can have a profound impact on the success and growth of the institution. At FGCU, I have collaborated with University Development to fortify gifts, donations and grants for the college as well as individual departments. I firmly believe that I have the right aptitude to raise funds for the college and foster relationships with business leaders. As the Dean at Alcorn State University, I was located in a rural environment where there were a limited number of businesses and the University coordinated fund raising through the foundation where deans did not contact corporations directly. However, 2011, I instituted Business Advisory Board for School of Business at our university for the first time and was able to attract corporate leaders not only from Mississippi but from other parts of the country. Within this board, I created three subcommittees including a fund raising committee, which started working with the Vice President for Advancement to raise funds specifically for School of Business. This initiative provided a strong linkage to the regional business community that paid dividends to the college in many ways.

At FGCU, I was responsible for "An Evening with Kathryn Marinello" CEO of The Hertz Corporation and interacted with many Hertz senior leadership members to plan this event. I have also interacted with senior management of firms like Gartner, Inc., Chico's, Arthrex and NeoGenomics. I also played a significant role in getting Steve Forbes as a speaker for Tommy Howard Lecture Series. If given the opportunity I believe that I will be able to develop meaningful relationships and engage in significant fundraising.

I also believe that any university has the responsibility towards the region's economic development. I am a past director of Natchez chamber of commerce, and have been involved with the economic development authority as well as Mississippi economic council. I have served on the board of United Way and have been involved in several community activities. In 2008, when Rentech Inc. decided to build a five billion dollar plant in Natchez, MS, for alternate fuel, I got involved and received a \$59,000 grant from the firm to conduct an economic impact study. I completed the study using the IMPLAN model, and this study was used by the firm to solicit federal and state government support.

Administrative Philosophy

My administrative philosophy is that an academic administrator should empower faculty to do their work and foster an environment that contribute to student success. This requires a dean to be a facilitator and an advocate for faculty and students. I am committed to shared governance

and believe that a successful academic unit needs collaborative efforts of administrators, faculty and students. In my various appointments as an administrator, I have strove to create a collaborative atmosphere for openness and consensus building, across stakeholder groups both internal and external.

While shared governance is important in the academic arena, leadership is essential. In carrying out my responsibilities, I prefer to surround myself with competent people in whom I place great trust. I do not believe in micro-management, but rather tend to focus on the big picture and delegate as much as possible to others to get full value of their talents and strengths.

Exceptional Opportunity

FGCU's and LCOB's vision is student-centric and focuses on preparing students for the workforce, professional schools, or graduate studies. I believe that I am the best person for the position of Dean at LCOB. My philosophy, personality, knowledge, and skills, make me an excellent candidate for the position. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the position with you and I look forward to your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Vivek Bhargava

Vivek Bhargava, Ph.D., CFA
Associate Dean,
Lutgert College of Business