

August 25, 2019

Search Committee
Dean, Lutgert College of Business
Florida Gulf Coast University

Dear Search Committee:

I have been passionate about learning my entire life. I firmly believe that academic institutions play a crucial role in helping young people figure out how to connect their passions with their skills, to help them make career decisions, and to assist them in understanding the importance of continuous learning. That is why I chose to pursue a career in academia, why I accepted my current roles as Department Chair and Program Director and why I am now seeking the position of Dean of the Lutgert College of Business at Florida Gulf Coast University.

I believe that by challenging yourself, you learn what you are capable of accomplishing, so when I started my academic career, I set out to become a leading researcher in my field. In 2013, while an associate professor, I was recognized as the second most published author in risk management and insurance journals over the past 10 years. As Faculty Coordinator for the Risk Management and Insurance (RMI) Undergraduate Program, I developed and managed several new programs for students including a Mentor Program, a program designed to recognize student achievements outside of the classroom, and an Internship-for-Credit Program. I have advised a number of undergraduate students on research projects and served on ten dissertation committees, including two outside of the College of Business.

In 2015, I was given an opportunity to take on several administrative responsibilities. I became Chair of the Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate, and Legal Studies Department, Director of the Master of Science in Risk Management and Insurance (MS-RMI), and Faculty Coordinator for the Risk Management and Insurance Executive Council. These positions require me to constantly interact with students, faculty, administration, and industry to accomplish a variety of diverse goals with limited resources. I believe my prior experiences and the knowledge and skills I have obtained over the past four years have prepared me to take on a larger leadership role, and I am confident that I have the ability to effectively manage the Lutgert College of Business.

As Department Chair, I manage 17 faculty members within three different disciplines. This includes a mix of tenure-track and specialized faculty. Having faculty in different functional areas, I have had to learn more about disciplines outside of my own in order to make appropriate staffing, curriculum, and budgetary decisions. I have also had to ensure fairness and equity among the areas and work to create opportunities for collaboration in teaching and research to create a cohesive unit. As Director of the MS-RMI Program, I am involved in all decisions regarding the program including marketing, admissions, and curriculum. As such, I feel confident that I have an understanding of a number of different functions within the College including staffing, faculty evaluations, curriculum management, scheduling, budgeting, and accreditation reporting.

To be a successful business school and create opportunities for faculty and students, ongoing and continuous funding is necessary. In my experience, obtaining major gifts requires cultivating relationships over time. As Department Chair, I am actively involved in building relationships with prospective donors for the RMI Program. My approach is simple – find out what the prospective donor is passionate about and show him/her how the donation can be used for that purpose. When the RMI Program started an Insurance Sales Challenge to provide students with a real-world sales experience, I went to prospective donors that wanted to increase interest in careers in sales and was able to secure funding for this event. I have worked with donors to create scholarships for students and travel grants to enhance students' professional development. My goal has been to increase the number of multi-year gift commitments so that the RMI Program can consistently make a variety of opportunities available to students, and I have succeeded in doing so.

The RMI and Real Estate Programs are consistently ranked in the top ten by *U.S. News and World Report*. In addition, our department houses the only named program in the College of Business, The William T. Hold / The National Alliance Program in Risk Management and Insurance, and this Program was ranked as one of the top four performers by *Best's Review* in 2018. With highly-ranked programs comes the pressure for continuous improvement. I have learned a great deal about the rankings process and the importance of ensuring others are aware of what makes your program successful. Recently, I assisted with the rebranding of the RMI Program. Working with a marketing firm and a variety of program stakeholders, we identified what we do well, what sets us apart from other programs, and why graduates of the program are willing to stay connected and continue to give back. The results of this rebranding campaign are now used in all program marketing. Managing a department with two ranked programs, having a named program with a living donor, and participating in a re-branding campaign have made me keenly aware of the importance of making sure other universities and the industry are fully aware of our successes.

Another part of building a strong business school is making sure students have access to companies and are able secure internships during their college careers and permanent employment upon graduation. Because Tallahassee is a small community, I have had to build and maintain relationships with companies all across the United States to create learning and employment opportunities. Keeping companies engaged, providing access and interaction to students, and producing quality graduates has created long-term program supporters of small and large agencies, brokerages, insurance companies, and consulting firms. I have also been invited to speak at a variety of industry events over the years and I use these opportunities to share information about our programs. This has also helped to broadened program awareness across the industry.

Academia is constantly changing and schools have to adapt to the changing needs of its stakeholders, including students, faculty and employers. As a professor at Florida State University, my initial focus was teaching, research, and student mentoring. I have taught classes at the undergraduate and graduate level – in the traditional classroom and online – at our main campus and at our Panama City campus. As such, I understand how the needs of students and faculty differ at the various program levels, for students with varying backgrounds, and in different teaching

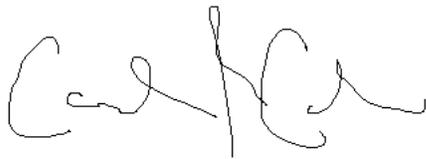
formats. I also understand the important role that faculty play in not just educating students, but preparing them for the workforce. I strive daily to ensure that faculty have the resources they need to be successful in research and teaching and that creativity and accomplishments are recognized and awarded. Strong support cannot only be useful in keeping talented faculty and can also serve to attract new faculty, which I feel is crucial to establishing and maintaining a highly-ranked and well-recognized institution.

Though Florida Gulf Coast University has only been open to students for a little more than 20 years, it has produced a growing number of successful and loyal alumni. It is impressive that in this short timeframe, the Lutgert College of Business has become AACSB-accredited, a named college, and created programs at all academic levels. This is a testament to the hard work dedication of the administration, faculty, and college supporters.

I have spent my entire academic career at a large, research 1 institution with one of the premier business schools in the state, and I feel that I have made a tremendous difference here. I have contributed to my discipline in terms of research and service, I have helped students establish and achieve their goals, and I have supported young faculty as they progress towards tenure through mentoring. My experiences and accomplishments at Florida State University have prepared me to take on a larger leadership role. I value the opportunity to join the Florida Gulf Coast University family as Dean of the Lutgert College of Business and use my skills and expertise to help the College further its vision of being “known for excellence in applied business education.”

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you regarding next steps.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Cole', with a vertical line through the middle of the signature.

Cassandra Cole
Chair, Risk Management/Insurance, Real Estate, and Legal Studies Department
William T. Hold Professor in Risk Management and Insurance
Director of the Master of Science in Risk Management and Insurance Program