



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

May 30, 2019

Chairman Ned C. Lautenbach
Florida Board of Governors
State University System of Florida
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Dear Chair Lautenbach:

At its September 22, 2017 meeting, the Florida State University (FSU) Board of Trustees unanimously voted to extend President John Thrasher's contractual term for an additional one-year period, commencing on or about November 10, 2019, and continuing through November 10, 2020. In support of the Board of Governors' consideration of the Board of Trustees' decision, I am pleased to provide the following summary of President Thrasher's accomplishments since taking office in November 2014. I respectfully urge that the Board of Governors consider President Thrasher's exemplary record of leadership and vote to confirm the FSU Board of Trustees decision.

Since the beginning of his tenure, President Thrasher has consistently provided superior leadership to Florida State University. The Board is exceptionally pleased with the significant advancements FSU has realized, including its unprecedented improvement in the U.S. News and World Report rankings of public universities. Moving from 43 to 26 in just four years makes a clear statement about the success of FSU's students and faculty, and we are confident that President Thrasher has placed FSU on a trajectory to achieve a Top 25 ranking in the very near future. Florida State has been recognized as a preeminent state university for seven years in a row, meeting all 12 preeminence metrics for the past several years and is a top tier achiever in key performance funding metrics established by the Board of Governors.

Upon his appointment, the Board of Trustees set ambitious expectations before President Thrasher – to lead the university to the highest levels of excellence. Through a bold and strategic approach, he has spent the past four and a half years elevating FSU's reputation at the state, national, and international levels. To garner such recognition, President Thrasher has embraced the university's strengths in the arts and the sciences while simultaneously being steadfast in his resolve to boost student success and career readiness. He has been a staunch supporter of faculty achievements in the areas of teaching, research and service.

President Thrasher's leadership has resulted in FSU's ability, today, to attract the best and brightest students, faculty and researchers in its history. A record-breaking 60,000 students applied for admission this past year, vying for less than 6,500 freshman slots. Florida State is also a top producer of Fulbright scholars, with 10 students receiving awards in 2018-2019. On the faculty side, FSU researchers were awarded \$226 million from federal, state, and private sources. In 2018, we were thrilled when the National Science Foundation

awarded a five-year renewal of the \$184 million grant supporting the operation of the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory. The MagLab, as it is known, attracts the highest level scientists worldwide to conduct groundbreaking scientific research in Tallahassee. The MagLab puts FSU and Tallahassee on an international stage and at the forefront of scientific discovery.

President Thrasher's emphasis on increasing academic excellence and improving university proficiencies has resulted in multiple tiers of progress. Listed below are some of Florida State University's most recent accomplishments:

Performance Metrics 2017-2018

- National and state leader in student retention (93%) and four-year graduation rate (68.4%)
- Increase in the number of graduates employed or continuing their education
- Increase in the median wages of FSU graduates
- Greater number of bachelor's degrees being awarded in the areas of strategic emphasis
- Increase in the University access rate (percent of undergraduates with a Pell grant)
- Increase in the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded without students taking excess hours

Preeminence Metrics 2017-2018

- Increase in expenditures in science and engineering research
- Increase in number of patents awarded
- Greater number of doctoral degrees conferred
- Growth in total endowment funding

Efficiencies

- Ranking in the top two by U.S. News and World Report as one of the most efficient universities in the United States.
- The cost per degree at Florida State University has decreased from \$15,040 in 2015 to \$8,680, representing a 42% drop in the past three years.
- For each of the last two years, Florida State University has identified more than \$40 million in new annual cost savings and avoidance. When recurring savings are included, FSU has saved over \$235 million in the last five years.
- According to a recent study released by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Florida State has the lowest administrative cost in the State University System and ranks amongst the lowest nationally.

Student Engagement and Success Initiatives

- Community engagement of 7,251 students who completed 391,940.5 hours of public service through the ServScript Program. That represents a 3% increase in student participation and 6% increase in service hours from the previous year.
- Additional financial aid to assist low-income and minority students with non-loan funding to cover educational costs. The funding was also used to hire a counseling specialist who is solely responsible for assisting low-income and minority students navigate the financial aid process.
- The Unconquered Scholars Program continued to serve students previously classified as members of foster care, relative care, wards of the State, or homeless, to increase peer support and engagement activities for this highly at-risk population at Florida State. Efforts to support these students resulted in a 100% first-year retention rate of first-time-in-college Unconquered Scholars. In addition, the average cumulative GPA for all students ever enrolled in Unconquered Scholars since 2012 was 3.01 at the end of fall 2017. Unconquered Scholars also earned an 85% 6-year graduation rate.
- Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE): Guided students through the College Life Coaching Program, a requirement for all sophomore participants in CARE and a program highly effective in sustaining student engagement and success.
- CARE enrolled 415 students in the 2017 Summer Bridge Program, the largest class in history.
- CARE's Student Support Services (SSS) and Student Support Services-STEM (SSS-STEM) continued their tradition of success. Student Support Services-SCOPE (SSS-SCOPE) students earned an average 3.14 GPA and boasted a 98% retention rate. SSS-STEM averaged a 3.04 GPA, with 85.4% of their participants remaining enrolled and in a STEM degree program, as well as having 99% of all participants remaining in good academic standing by the end of the year.
- Increased graduate student employment opportunities through on-campus recruiting by 12% from the previous year.
- Launched InternFSU, a new initiative that provides on-campus internships to students in their area of professional interest.
- Launched the Student Resilience Project, designed to teach healthy coping skills. The program has been so well-received that there are plans to expand it on a national scale.
- Expanded the University Counseling Center staff by six professionals to address the mental health needs of more students.
- Introduced WellTrack, an online, interactive treatment option for students with mild anxiety or depression.

Fundraising

President Thrasher has also proven exceptional at philanthropic fundraising, recognizing his role in helping the university remain competitive and sustain innovative efforts. He propelled donations to our Raise the Torch philanthropic campaign, exceeding the \$1 billion fundraising goal ahead of schedule. Other fundraising achievements include:

- More than \$124.8 million in gift commitments received between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018 - the third largest annual philanthropic total in Florida State University's history.
- Overall, gifts and pledges received during President Thrasher's time in office exceed \$521 million, an average of more than \$12 million of private donations per month.
- Recent launch of the \$100 million Unconquered Campaign to raise funds for men's and women's sports.

Campus and External Engagement

One of President Thrasher's most admirable qualities is his ability to bring people together in dynamic discussions, which add to the intellectual engagement and development on the FSU campus. His outgoing nature and welcoming personality have allowed him to build strong internal and external partnerships and relationships. He meets tirelessly with students, faculty, alumni and donors, and still finds the time to engage regularly with his ACC peers, state and local business leaders, the Board of Governors, and Florida's policymakers.

On campus, President Thrasher has worked to create a culture that promotes dialogue and respect and supports projects focused on diversity and inclusion such as:

- The 2018 opening of the new Black Student Union (BSU). President Thrasher championed the construction of the new BSU House and, in partnership with students and alumni, was integral in securing the funding.
- The President's Diversity and Inclusion Mini-Grant Program, launched in fall 2017, to support initiatives that enhance the quality of teaching about diversity, create a welcoming and inclusive work and learning environment where differences are respected and valued, and improve the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students from historically underrepresented groups.
- Recognition, for the third year in a row, as a "Diversity Champion" by INSIGHT Into Diversity Magazine. FSU is one of 13 universities across the nation to be given the title.

During times of university triumph, John Thrasher is quick to give others credit. He is FSU's greatest advocate and biggest fan, and is often seen cheering on the Seminole soccer and softball national champion teams. And, when faced with great challenges or senseless tragedy, including a category five hurricane or the loss of life, President Thrasher has been a champion - comforting the FSU family with swift leadership and genuine compassion.

If approved for extension by the Board of Governors, President Thrasher's employment contract would be extended by amendment as follows:

- Amend the existing contract term of November 2014 through November 2019 to the Extended Term commencing on November 10, 2019 and continuing through November 10, 2020.
- The existing annual evaluation process in the employment agreement would continue to provide for an annual review and approval of the President's goals and objectives by the FSU Board of Trustees in a public meeting. Any changes in compensation or performance compensation are considered by the Board of Trustees at that time.
- Consistent with Florida Statutes, the maximum amount of the President's compensation that may be provided from state funds is capped at \$200,000.00. Compensation beyond the statutory cap is provided by non-state funds.
- Other substantive terms of the employment agreement remain unchanged.

Accordingly, on behalf of the Florida State University Board of Trustees, I respectfully request that the Board of Governors confirm President Thrasher's reappointment for a 12-month period, commencing November 10, 2019, through and including November 10, 2020.

I am available should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Burr', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Edward E. Burr
Chairman