

Presidential Search

Candidate's Letter of Application

JOHN E. THRASHER

110 Aegean Vista Way • St. Augustine, Florida 32080

May 29, 2014

R. William Funk
R. William Funk & Associates
100 Highland Park Village, Suite 200
Dallas, Texas 75205

Dear Mr. Funk and Members of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee:

It is with enthusiasm that I submit my letter of interest and attached resume for the position of President at Florida State University.

My history of long-term, sustained support for Florida State University speaks to my many years of commitment to the advancement and success of this great institution. Beginning with my time as a student at Florida State, during which I earned business and law degrees, I have developed a passion for and understanding of our outstanding school and a drive to see it continue to develop and meet its great potential. My desire to put my name forward as a candidate is driven by a deep-seated confidence that I can lead Florida State University through the next critical steps on its way to national prominence.

Florida State University is at the threshold of a new era, with multifaceted challenges and incredible opportunities. By building on the success and momentum of the past four years, while creating new initiatives, I believe that I offer the leadership experience, skills and abilities needed at this critical juncture to ensure Florida State University's progression to inclusion in the nation's top 25 universities.

Throughout my career in public service I have been recognized for my effective advocacy on behalf of my constituents. I have taken the initiative to ascertain their needs and concerns and have dedicated my efforts and voice to achieve positive results. I would strive to take what I have learned during my decades of public service and use those skills and abilities to advance the concerns of my "new constituents," the students, staff, faculty and various other stakeholders in the success of our university.

It was my honor to be elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1992 and serve through the 2000 Session. I was selected by my peers to serve as Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives from 1998 to 2000. As House Speaker I was

responsible for leading and working with competing members to inspire them to work together on a common agenda. I developed and practiced an inclusive, results-oriented management style, bringing constituencies together for a common purpose and built lifelong relationships with members of both sides of the aisle during the process.

My service in the Florida Senate began in 2009. As a member in the Florida Legislature, I have led and contributed to the success of Florida State University through the passage of legislation as well as obtaining funding for educational programs including the College of Medicine, the Pathways to Excellence initiative, National High Magnetic Field Laboratory, the "preeminence initiative," while also adding money for new facility construction and renovation. In the interim period, when I was not a legislator, I successfully represented clients in higher education and advocated for Florida State University's priorities.

Taking the university to the next level nationally requires the ability to work effectively with external and internal constituent groups. As an attorney, a Representative in the Legislature, then Speaker of the House of Representatives, a business leader, and now as a Senator, I have successfully worked in partnership with public and private sector leaders. I have built collaborative networks among business and local, state, and federal delegations for more than three decades. These relationships will contribute to the effective development of additional resources for the university.

While I am not a traditional academic, I have spent my time in the business world and the legislature working on higher education policy and have gained diverse experiences that have prepared me for this challenge. As past chair of the Florida State University Board of Trustees, I successfully worked with internal stakeholders and groups such as students, staff, faculty, trustees, donors, and other benefactors. As chair, we developed plans to hire additional faculty members in interdisciplinary academic clusters, added new doctoral programs, initiated student success initiatives, and increased the number of national merit scholars at Florida State University. I learned to listen to the concerns of faculty, staff, and students and to understand their perspective. I will be committed to academic freedom, faculty governance, and shared governance responsibility as provided in the University Constitution just as I was committed to the specific rules of governance in every public position I have ever held.

The State University System faces unrelenting challenges in getting the funds that are needed each year from the state legislature. It is imperative to persuade the state to commit more funding to higher education. A case must be made to the Governor and state legislators by the state universities' presidents. During my years on our Board of Trustees and during my public service, I have had the privilege of developing friendships with many of our state university presidents which should prove helpful in the shared interest of our System. Working with other state universities and the Board of Governors, I believe that I can assist in making a strong

business and economic development case for increased funding in conjunction with our academic achievements.

However, we cannot depend exclusively on state funds, but we must also energetically raise funds from private sources and continue to secure federal contracts and grants. I know and have served with many members of our Congressional delegation and I have developed friendships with members of Congress from various other states. I have been a successful fundraiser and I believe that I have the experience, the relationships, and important associations to be an effective fundraiser for Florida State University. I eagerly look forward to completing the ambitious \$1 billion "Raise the Torch" Capital Campaign. I am enthusiastic about the prospect of generating financial support from a broad base of individuals, businesses, governmental units, and foundations that I have known and worked with for many years.

Beyond my demonstrated abilities at ensuring Florida State University receives appropriate levels of governmental and philanthropic support, the next president can be expected to further develop the broader role of our university in our state. Expanding the research and commercialization capacities of our great university will be one of the many imperatives of Florida State University's next president, for which I am prepared. I believe I can lead Florida State University to its rightful place as a problem-solver and economic engine of the state's economy, broadly serving the citizens of Florida.

In the past, parallel to my public service, I was as an attorney with the prestigious law firm, Smith Hulse & Busey. I also believe that my experience as a business partner and attorney would contribute to my ability to serve as president. I worked with individuals and businesses of all sizes on a range of issues by assisting with their problems and providing strategic planning and sound advice.

My experience in strategic planning, organizational expansion, and leadership was enhanced by my work after my public service in the House of Representatives, when I became a partner in Southern Strategy Group, LLC. I encouraged and facilitated strategic business planning and the growth of the organization from a Tallahassee-focused governmental consulting organization to one with several offices throughout the southeast. The firm's client list included some of Florida's largest and most successful corporations as well as public entities in education, technology, criminal justice, healthcare and the environment.

While legislative effectiveness, fundraising, strategic planning, and organizational growth are important for the university's advancement, I believe it is essential to focus on the institution's core academic mission in undergraduate and graduate education and research. I am dedicated to improving the university experience for students, faculty and staff and engaging them in collaborative university governance. I also pledge to support programs and offices that promote diversity and to recruit and retain women and minority students, faculty, and staff,

all the while placing an emphasis on having a student body, staff, and faculty that represent Florida.

Florida State University is well positioned to continue its progress toward preeminence and obtaining an invitation to the Association of American Universities. If selected as the next President, I would continue and expand the preeminence and "Big Ideas" initiatives. My goals would also include, but not be limited to, encouraging diversity, supporting faculty scholarship, fostering the growth of the research enterprise, supporting successful student career placements, expanding services to student veterans, increasing financial resources, addressing faculty compensation fairness and keeping university costs affordable for students. At the same time, I would energetically work to secure opportunities for research and partnerships with businesses, governmental agencies, and other entities to enhance faculty scholarship and student career placements. I would also work diligently to strengthen the relationships with Florida A&M and Tallahassee Community College, as well as with the local community.

Finally, I would add that through the totality of my past experience, I am prepared to bring a different perspective about higher education, its roles in society, and how to foster access, affordability, and excellence in education through online learning and other methods. Along with my enthusiasm about the opportunities and challenges facing Florida State University, I would dedicate the next years of my life to its success. Collaboration with the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and our many supporters and stakeholders will chart an effective course for leading the university on an upward trajectory toward continued success.

Thank you for your consideration of my candidacy for President of Florida State University.

Sincerely Yours,

Sent electronically: May 29, 2014

/ John E. Thrasher /