



October 18, 2021

Sydney Kitson, Chair
Florida Board of Governors
State University System of Florida
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Dear Chair Kitson,

At its meeting on September 16, 2021, the University of West Florida Board of Trustees unanimously approved the attached "President's Employment Agreement," which extends Dr. Martha D. Saunders' contractual term for a one-year period commencing on January 1, 2022, through and including December 31, 2022, on the terms and conditions described therein. In support of this decision, I am very pleased to provide the following summary of accomplishments by Dr. Saunders, who has served as President of the University of West Florida since January 1, 2017.

As president, Dr. Saunders has organized her activities around an approved University strategic plan in alignment with the Board of Governors' strategic priorities, with an extensive track record of success. Her relentless focus on excellence resulted in the University leading the state in percentage of bachelor's graduates employed in this year's Florida Board of Governors performance metrics. The University increased the percentage of employed and/or furthering education graduates by nearly six percentage points from last year. UWF also excelled in Metric 2, median wages of bachelor's graduates employed full-time one year after graduation, with a median salary of \$45,200, an increase of more than \$4,000 from last year's metrics. The median salary of UWF graduates is higher than almost all metric-participating SUS institutions, trailing only the University of Florida and Florida Polytechnic University. This past year, the University had record enrollment and recognition through rankings, grants and awards. The University has received the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT into Diversity magazine four out of the last five years and was named a "Great College to Work For" in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

She continues to recognize and act on the best opportunities for UWF, increasing its visibility through innovative programs. Under Dr. Saunders' leadership, the institution has ascended as a national leader in cybersecurity. The National Security Agency and U.S. Department of Homeland Security designated UWF as the Southeast Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Regional Hub in 2017 and re-designated the institution in 2020 to lead efforts in the South Region. In 2020, NSA selected UWF to lead a coalition of 10 of the nation's best cybersecurity institutions in establishing the National Center of Academic Excellence-Cybersecurity Workforce Development Program, which is designed to shore up a cybersecurity workforce shortage with over 500,000 openings in the U.S. In Fall 2020, UWF was awarded a two-year, \$6 million grant to lead a national cybersecurity workforce development program. UWF has partnered with Miami Dade College to expand cybersecurity workforce development in Florida.

Under extremely difficult circumstances, Dr. Saunders has effectively led the University through the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Dr. Saunders successfully executed the majority of her goals, while responding to the pandemic.

Below are some of her most significant accomplishments, among many:

Teaching and Learning

- The College of Education and Professional Studies successfully launched an online Ed.D in Instructional Design and Technology.
- When the Top 15 list of Online Applied Behavior Analysis Degrees and Programs was released, the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health's program was ranked No. 2.
- Students from the Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering showcased their Artificial Intelligence skills on a national stage. UWF teams each placed in the top 5 of the prestigious AI Tracks at Sea Challenge. Students in the AI and Data Analytics (AIDA) Research Group placed third, winning \$35,000 for the Department of Computer Science, while the second UWF team, ArgoTracks, finished fifth and secured \$20,000 for the Department of Intelligent Systems and Robotics.
- Even while working remotely, the College of Business' Department of Accounting and Finance guided the Master of Accountancy program through unprecedented growth as enrollment grew 68%.
- Under the leadership of Dr. Kuiyuan Li, graduate enrollment grew 16%.

Scholarship, Research and Innovation

- The University of West Florida Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program recently achieved accreditation from the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET, the global accreditor of college and university programs in applied and natural science, computing,

engineering and engineering technology. The accreditation is retroactive from Oct. 1, 2019 through September 2025, aligning it with the University's computer science accreditation.

- The Makerspace project led to UWF's listing as one of the "Best Makers Schools" by Newsweek.
- The UWF Chemistry Scholars Program was awarded the 2021 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. The recognition honors institutions that encourage and assist students from underrepresented groups to enter the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, known as STEM.

Community and Business Engagement

- The University of West Florida distributed \$10 million from the Industry Resilience and Diversification Fund, a regional economic development program seeking to create jobs in Northwest Florida.
- The Haas Center at the University of West Florida has developed an online market indicators dashboard that provides easy, quick and simple navigation for a look at county-by-county statistics. The dashboard includes tabs for tourism rates, real estate transactions, employment/unemployment rates and sales and tax collections in Northwest Florida and South Alabama counties.
- The University of West Florida hosted multiple "Argo Nation Vaccination Day(s)" on and off campus.
- The University of West Florida Historic Trust is hosting the exhibit "9/11 Remembered" on the second floor of the Pensacola Museum of History. The exhibit will run through January 2022.

Additionally, Dr. Saunders was the recipient of multiple honors, including being named one of Miami Herald's 50 Influential Floridians in 2019 and 2020, and one of Florida's 500 Most Influential Leaders by Florida Trend in 2020 and 2021. She continues to be an active member of the Northwest Florida community, serving on various community boards and organizations, and is sought out for interviews and presentations as a thought leader in higher education. Throughout her presidency, she has demonstrated a continued commitment to the classroom, teaching an undergraduate class in Leadership Communication for the Department of Communication. She and her husband are founding benefactors of Argos Suit Up, an initiative that allows students and alumni to purchase professional attire for that all-important first job.

As we look forward to next year, Dr. Saunders has many plans ahead of her. The University of West Florida will undergo the development of its Strategic Plan, Master Plan, Diversity Plan and Enrollment Plan. In her upcoming goals, Dr. Saunders will continue to develop and deliver high

impact programs throughout the University and Northwest Florida communities, create a culture that is learner centered and enhance University infrastructure.

Florida law, namely Section 1001.706(6)(a), Florida Statutes, entrusts to the Board of Governors confirmation of the reappointment of a university president by the university's board of trustees. Accordingly, on behalf of the UWF Board of Trustees, I respectfully request that the Board of Governors confirm Dr. Saunders' reappointment for a one-year period commencing January 1, 2022, through and including December 31, 2022, on the terms and conditions described in the approved employment agreement.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Suzanne Lewis
Chair
University of West Florida Board of Trustees

Cc: Dr. Martha D. Saunders