

Thursday, October 5, 2023

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

Dear Chair Lamb,

At its meeting on September 14, 2023, 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, 2024, through and including December 31, 2024, on the terms and conditions described therein, contingent upon the Florida Board of Governors approval. In support of this decision, I am very pleased to provide the following summary of accomplishments by Dr. Saunders.

Since assuming the role of president in January 2017, Dr. Saunders has organized her leadership activities around an approved University strategic plan that is aligned with the Florida Board of Governors strategic priorities. Her commitment to providing an education that is learner-centered and focused is unwavering. The University surpassed its Performance-Based Funding Metric 10A goal of 50% with 58.6% of baccalaureate graduates completing two or more high-impact practices during the 2022-2023 academic year. These co-curricular activities distinguish our students to prospective employers, contributing to UWF's high ranking for graduates who are employed. This is the result of Dr. Saunders' long-term, strategic and evidence-based focus on providing our students with rich and meaningful educational experiences that prepare them to be knowledgeable citizens, successful in their careers and lives.

This past year, the University had record admission applications and enrollment, and received national recognition through rankings, grants and awards. Under Dr. Saunders' leadership, UWF earned rankings from U.S. News & World Report in the following categories: Regional Universities South; Top Public School; Best Colleges for Veterans; Best Undergraduate Nursing. The University was named a 2023-2024 Gold-level Military Friendly School Military Friendly® School in the large public category, a "Great College to Work For" for the fifth consecutive year and received the 2023 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT into Diversity magazine.

The following 2022-2023 highlights are the results of Dr. Saunders' vision in action.

LEARNER CENTERED AND FOCUSED

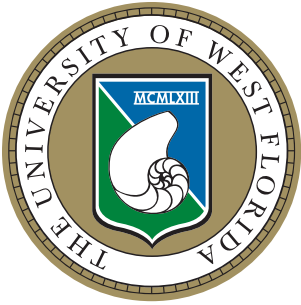
- The University's focus on improving academic success outcomes by enhancing and promoting evidence-based student support strategies has resulted in enhanced student retention and persistence through graduation.
- UWF created a stand-alone School of Education to strengthen teacher education for the state and region.
- Several new articulation agreements between UWF and Pensacola State College were launched to smooth student transition between the two institutions.
- UWF recruited its 14th National Merit Finalist in seven years.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING, SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

- UWF launched a high demand degree in Human Resources Management in the fall.
- Continued emphasis on and robust opportunities for undergraduate research assists our students in developing professional portfolios, leading to greater opportunities for employment after graduation. Last year, 523 student researchers participated in 372 projects.

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Academic Programming, Scholarship and Research Continued

- UWF's Florida Public Archaeology Network teamed with East Carolina University to continue to search for and recover missing aircraft and personnel lost off the coast of Saipan during a WWII battle in 1944.
- A UWF research team identified and analyzed areas in the contiguous United States where suicide and opioid death rates are high and where the deaths overlap, contributing to the body of knowledge among National health agencies.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT

- University supporters invested in scholarships, sustained growth and advanced academic excellence with record-breaking giving. UWF garnered the most alumni donors in a single year, the most donors to athletics in one year, the highest number of major gifts, the most faculty and staff donors, and the most dollars and donors ever for our fifth annual Day of Giving event.
- UWF received the National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Community Outreach first place award for its outstanding community outreach activities that promote cybersecurity awareness, education and research.
- UWF football on the Pensacola campus exceeded attendance goals for the year.
- The University enjoyed a significant increase of earned media stories this year with an advertising equivalency of \$11.4 million.

PERSONNEL INVESTMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

- A comprehensive employee retention plan has been developed and approved, and work on recommended items has begun.
- National searches yielded two top leaders: Dr. Gary Liguori, Provost, and Dr. David Bellar, Dean of the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health.
- Tim Kinsella, former commanding officer at NAS Pensacola, was named Director of the Center for Leadership in the UWF College of Business.

Dr. Saunders has been the recipient of multiple honors, including being named one of Florida's 500 Most Influential Leaders by Florida Trend for the fourth consecutive year and InWeekly Magazine's 2023 Power List. She continues to be an active member of the Northwest Florida community, serving on community boards and organizations. As a visionary thought leader in higher education, she is sought out for interviews and presentations by local, state, national and international groups. Dr. Saunders is active on social media, and publishes blogs and viewpoints in multiple media outlets on a variety of topics that impact the community and the region.

Dr. Saunders possesses an authenticity of character that has garnered the respect and trust of UWF students, faculty and staff, members of the Northwest Florida community, legislators and leaders. Her genuine investment in the welfare of our students drives the commitment to excellence that persists throughout the University community and is palpable on our campus.

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, 2024, through and including December 31, 2024, 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,

Suzanne Lewis
Chair
University of West Florida Board of Trustees

Cc: Dr. Martha D. Saunders