



Board of Trustees

11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514-5750

July 31, 2019

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

Dear Chair Lautenbach:

At its meeting on June 19, 2019, 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, 2020, through and including December 31, 2020, on the terms and conditions described therein. In support of this decision, I am very pleased to provide this summary of accomplishments for Dr. Saunders, who has served as the President of the University of West Florida since January 1, 2017.

Dr. Saunders' tenure as president has been marked by accomplishments in a variety of areas. Leading the accomplishments is our ranking alongside top-performing public universities for three consecutive years in the performance-based funding metrics established by the Board of Governors. The Board recognizes Dr. Saunders' unique ability to elevate UWF's reputation by blending the University's strategic plan with the Board of Governors strategic priorities. UWF is consistently named a "Best for Vets College" by Military Times and has received the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine three times.

Dr. Saunders has keenly recognized the best opportunities for UWF and increased the visibility of the University through innovative programs. She has tactfully capitalized on UWF's assets and thoughtfully determined new areas of growth. The state's first doctoral program in intelligent systems in robotics will launch in Fall 2019, a prime example of Dr. Saunders working toward the continued goal of growing UWF beyond humble beginnings.

Her accomplishments have positioned UWF as a highly desirable institution and Dr. Saunders continues finding new ways of increasing higher education accessibility for all prospective

Phone **850.474.2200** Fax **850.474.3131**

Web uwf.edu/trustees

An Equal Opportunity/Equal Access Institution

students. As a change maker, she has driven the action behind the solutions and propelled higher education into the future.

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

Teaching & Learning

- In partnership with the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, UWF is launching a doctoral program in intelligent systems and robotics, the first of its kind in Florida and one of only a few in the nation.
- The Usha Kundu, MD College of Health undergraduate nursing program ranked second in the state of Florida for percentage of students passing the NCLEX exam, with nearly 99% of UWF students passing the first time.
- The UWF [Robotics team placed in the top two in the IEEE SoutheastCon competition](#) for two consecutive years.
- The Usha Kundu, MD College of Health launched a Physician Assistant Pipeline Program with FSU to recruit and train qualified Florida panhandle students to become physician assistants who will care for elderly, rural, minority and underserved populations in Florida.
- UWF's four-year graduation rate is up 45% over four years. The continued enhancement of student support services, including first-year advising, tutoring and student accessibility resources has aided in the increasing rate.
- A greater number of degrees were awarded in programs of strategic emphasis.
- The cost per degree at UWF has decreased from \$12,850 in the 2016-17 academic year to \$9,920 in the 2017-18 academic year.

Scholarship, Research and Innovation

- The University was selected to host the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) 2022 which will bring 5,000 talented university students and their advisors to our campus and community.
- The UWF Center for Cybersecurity was designated as the National Center of Academic Excellence Cybersecurity Regional Resource Center for the Southeastern region by the National Security Agency and U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- The University was selected to host the 2019 Cybersecurity Centers of Academic Excellence Executive Leadership Forum, in partnership with the National Security Agency and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- UWF partnered with our regional economic development body, Florida West, to launch the Cybersecurity Strategic Plan .
- The Sea3D Additive Manufacturing Lab was launched, offering additive manufacturing

capabilities through 3D printing. Funding by the Florida legislature made the purchase of the equipment possible.

- UWF strengthened the quality of scholarship and innovation through the work of UWF's Innovation Institute, the University's world-class faculty and talented students.
 - The Innovation Institute responded to the Florida Board of Governors' 2025 Strategic Plan for Online Education and launched Complete Florida. This program includes success coaches, who proactively explore options with students for prior learning assessment during initial advising and program determination, with close coordination with partner institutions.
 - A 5-year, \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education will bring new technology, equipment and additional staff to campus for STEM education.
 - A \$1.3 million grant to support students pursuing teaching careers in STEM fields.
 - The National Institutes of Health renewed funding for UWF's Maximizing Access to Research Careers Scholars Program with an anticipated five-year budget of \$1.44 million, allowing the program to fund eight scholars per year.
 - Former Florida Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Department of Health awarded UWF more than \$94,000 in grant funds for adaptive dance Alzheimer's research.
 - UWF student Megan Morton was one of three students recognized worldwide by cybersecurity company Morphisec in its 2018 Women in Cybersecurity Scholarship competition.
 - Dr. Alexis Janosik is working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to take an inventory of reef fish communities in the Gulf of Mexico.
 - Dr. Peter Cavnar, Dr. Hui-Min Chung and Dr. Claudia Stanny were awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation to provide research experiences for transfer students.

Community and Business Engagement

- UWF strengthened its presence in downtown Pensacola through partnerships, new locations and an institutional campaign.
- A new Office of Military Engagement was formed to enhance our partnerships with area military bases and defense industries, and appointed retired U.S. Navy Capt. Chris Middleton as military liaison.

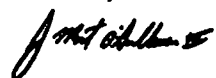
- iHire, an initiative that connects uniquely qualified and talented graduates with employers in Northwest Florida and beyond, was launched.
- Partnerships with Florida Agency for State Technology and the Florida Department of State were established to enhance Florida's cybersecurity resiliency.
- Nine new degree programs were approved to address workforce shortages.
- The UWF Office of Economic Development and Haas Center developed a high impact program for UWF students connected to the national Hacking for Defense (H4D) collaborative. UWF undergraduate students worked with Air Force Special Operations Command, Y-12 National Security Complex and 7th Special Forces Group to build solutions solving critical national security problems.
- UWF completed a \$64.7 million capital campaign that included \$18 million in scholarship endowment funding.

In addition, Dr. Saunders has made numerous presentations to local, state, national and international groups. She received the 2019 National Association of Colleges and Employers Career Services Champion Award, a testament to her forward thinking and support of career services. This year, Dr. Saunders was named as one of the Miami Herald's 50 Influential Floridians. She maintains a high social media profile and is frequently sought as a thought leader on higher education issues. In addition, she is teaching an undergraduate class in the Department of Communication.

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, 2020, through and including December 31, 2020, 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,



Mort O'Sullivan, Chair
University of West Florida Board of Trustees

cc: Dr. Martha D. Saunders