

June 20, 2013

Presidential Search Screening Committee

Alfred State College

Dear Committee Members,

Please accept this letter as my interest in the President position at Alfred State College. I will outline the requisite skills and experiences that I feel qualify me to be considered.

Let me also clarify that I am not a career educator. My first 20 years of full-time employment was in business and industry—17 years in management. The lessons learned and the applications to the way business works, provide a little different perspective of education and has created in me a passion to be a part of education that understands the relevance to the workforce while respecting the educational goals of students. The work ethic required to become a good employee and a good student appear to be on the decline. Likewise, project based learning has become a thing of the past. What an opportunity for a college with the two year mission as well as the expanded mission of offering select baccalaureate degrees to be part of that transformation that appropriately prepares graduates to be successful! They need to be able to “hit the ground running”. The global competitiveness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce demands it.

I have worked in a community college system, a four year college with a community and technical college component, and a technical college system. Additionally, I have worked at the four year college level, and more specifically at a private not for profit upper division college that responded to the needs of students who attended community college, that needed to take the next step. As one of the first three employees of this venture by a foundation and the community college, and as chief academic officer, we began offering baccalaureate degrees in elementary education, business administration, and Nursing. Providing students opportunity through a seamless transition to continue their education or facilitating the acquisition of skills that lead to a productive career are components of what the college must do. Emphasis on curriculum development and articulation for students wishing to transfer is critical. Identifying and certifying the skills required by employers, existing and perspective, are also paramount to becoming a dynamic and relevant college. The step that Alfred State College has taken in expanding the baccalaureate option implies the nature of listening to the stakeholders and using data to drive those efforts. Whether it is cultural in nature, continuing education, or otherwise, the college must be responsive to its customers.

**Minimum Qualification**—I have an earned doctorate from The University of Georgia, I began my career in education as a faculty member and have now served as the

President of West Georgia Technical College for seven years, I taught full time for five years and was selected in my third year as teacher of the year. I have worked in the two year and four year arena, developing that student centered approach that engages students and that I believe is critical for persistence to graduation.

**Community**-A College and its most visible ambassador, the President, must understand the community. I currently serve a seven county area with a population of approximately 500,000 people. I am a member of all seven chambers of commerce and serve on the board of directors of two of those chambers, Douglas County and Carroll County. Additionally, I attend community meetings, regularly speaking at many of the over 100 service organizations in our area. I attend city council meetings and county commission meetings to stay current with what is happening in the community. I regularly appear on educational TV, announce high school sports on the radio, and participate in numerous community wide events including fundraisers, parades, and the arts. I am a member of numerous other boards including American Red Cross (DAT), Communities in SchoolsBoard, and regional strategic planning boards.

**K-12**-I serve on the West Georgia RESA Board of Advisors. This board is a collaborative of seven K-12 school superintendents and the local college presidents that provide specialized services to students and staff from a large portion of the service area. West Georgia Technical College serves nine school systems (2-city, 7-county). I know each superintendent personally and meet with them monthly. West Georgia Technical College serves the largest number of dual enrolled students in the state. Additionally, we co-host on or near our campuses, three charter career academies. These career academies boast a 95% high school graduation rate for those who attend and dually enroll.

**Articulation**-West Georgia Technical College has excellent articulation opportunities for our students with agreements in place with LaGrange College, Mercer University, Strayer University, DeVry University, Brewton Parker, Southern Polytech University, University of West Georgia, Columbus State University, and discussions are underway with others. Numerous courses are articulated to all state colleges and universities through the combined work of the Technical College System of Georgia and the Board of Regents. We sincerely want to provide as many opportunities as possible for our students. Program articulations are developed individually with each college or university.

**Student Centeredness**-One of the core values that our College community identified was that we must be student centered. This led to decentralization of services at West Georgia Technical College. One-stop shops for student affairs, bookstores and libraries on each campus, growing the number of student organizations, and tracking of every single student complaint through a Customer Care Center was important for this shift in

focus.. We use that data to determine themes and address those areas of concern. Also, two hours are blocked every month on all five campuses to spend in student centers so students have access to the President. This has proven to be invaluable in the big picture of being engaged in the lives of our students. I love the classroom and occasionally teach a section of psychology.

**Athletics**-After numerous requests and surveying the needs of students, West Georgia Tech co-founded the Technical College System of Georgia Athletic Association. I was the founding commissioner of this league until such time as all the members moved to the NJCAA. I firmly support athletics, Title 9 requirements, and the value that it brings to a college campus. We charge a minimal athletic fee that supports all expenses. Additionally, we financially reward the sport with the highest team GPA. I am a member of the executive committee of the Georgia Community College Athletic Association (part of the NJCAA).

**Economic/Workforce Development**-Economic development is part of the mission of the College. I attend development authority meetings in all seven counties, sit at the table with prospective companies, co-host Quickstart Projects, partner with companies for specialized programs, and house new companies on our campuses. We have an alliance with Southwire Corporation that sponsors the "Southwire Center for Manufacturing Excellence" on our Carroll Campus. KIA Manufacturing Corporate Office operated out of our LaGrange Campus for 18 months until their facility was built. They now employ almost 4000. Additionally, all KIA employees were trained through the Quickstart facility in our service area. The College does customized training in 50-60 companies annually and West Georgia Tech is considered the training and development expert in our communities. One of the unique aspects of our technical programs is our advisory boards. Every occupational program has an advisory board that consists of business and industry experts that provides necessary feedback to make certain we are graduating qualified employees. Our system has a guarantee that if a graduate from a technical college does not have mastery of the competencies from the program, they will be retrained or reeducated free of charge. West Georgia Technical College employs a Vice President of Economic Development that is our business and industry liaison, clearly demonstrating the importance of that role.

**Sustainability**—Although our agency does not focus on sustainability, West Georgia Tech has embarked on numerous initiatives that may be considered "green" in nature. Our new campus opening in fall of 2013 have the first two LEED buildings in our system. Recycling projects and rain collection help us to teach and demonstrate our concern for the environment and our responsibility as stewards.

**Civic Engagement**—Occupational programs lend itself to opportunities. Our students and staff are encouraged through formal and informal ways to get involved. For

instance, in the summers, our cosmetology programs offer pre-teen girls two day camps to help them learn skills that will make the transition to high school. Athletic teams hold mini-camps for the Boys and Girls Clubs. My desire is that it becomes part of our culture for students and staff.

**Academics**-Quality and excellence is our goal. The College promotes staff development through numerous venues, including but not limited to regular conferences, certifications, tuition reimbursement for approved educational pursuits, as well as face to face training with on-line options. We attempt to make available to faculty as many tools as possible to enhance and facilitate learning, such as, on-line platforms, Smartboards, illuminate sessions, Tanberg systems, cutting edge software, virtualization of computer labs, remote access to their computer, and webinars. Faculty members are encouraged to engage students outside of the classroom and we provide stipends for those who work with student organizations. We value the experience outside of the classroom and encourage those learning opportunities. West Georgia Technical College expects every program and or school to be nationally accredited or recognized. Recently our School of Business received a 10 year accreditation with ACBSP. Student Learning Outcomes are clearly identified for all programs of studies and our students are assessed to verify that outcomes are met. The College invested in on-line instruction by staffing a new college campus with responsibility for distance learning across the College. This investment not only provides options for attracting out-of- state and international students, but fits well into a business continuity plan in the event of catastrophe.

**Complexity**-The College serves seven counties. Five campuses with a new on-line campus opening this fall are full service with all student amenities. Two additional sites are smaller facilities that have limited programming. One of the parts of the mission of the College is Adult Education, so, in addition to credit students every campus has full GED and ESL programming. With new buildings under construction, a successful site visit from SACS in October 2012, an excellent QEP implementation, new programs being beginning almost every semester, a drastically declining budget, and the limitations of being a state agency all add to the complexity of our operation. Merging two colleges has been a very complex undertaking. If you have never been involved in one you can only imagine the administration, facility, political, faculty, academic, curriculum and accreditation challenges that exist. We changed our brand and changed the name of the College as well.

**Leadership Style**-While I consider my leadership style collaborative, my direct reports would be the appropriate ones to ask. I meet every Monday with senior leadership (all the Vice Presidents) and every other Monday with all College Directors and Coordinators. These are agenda driven meetings and I feel folks need to be part of and share in the decision making and informed on what is happening at the College.

We host a new employee orientation quarterly so employees know me and can have opportunity to hear my vision. I will assert that I am a servant of the state and am held accountable to the taxpayers of Georgia. I am passionate, visible, accessible and often use humor as a tool to engage employees. I want every employee to know as much about our College as possible—it makes them a better employee in my opinion. I spend time on every campus every week, and understand the role of the President in our system to be a 24/7 position. Every employee is given my personal phone number and my email is provided on line.

**Fundraising**-The role of the President in our system has changed and continues to change. Resource development requires at least 60% of my time. West Georgia has changed the foundation from nominally supporting the College to a fundamentally necessary organization. A foundation that once contributed \$5000.00 annually to the College is now a dynamic entity that robustly supports the mission of the College. The College Foundation closed the first ever Major Gifts Campaign in 2011. With an \$8,000,000 goal during a poor economy, the Foundation was able to raise almost \$12,000,000 in two years. The first ever \$1,000,000 cash gift was part of that campaign. In my position as President, I am the chief fundraiser. Personal relationships and institution relationships need to be nurtured and matured to create a sense of enthusiasm for College Fundraising.

In conclusion, I would not suggest that I am your most articulate or most qualified candidate you will review. I would challenge that you may not find a more student-centered and passionate advocate for students. I have an excellent work ethic. I work well with diverse populations, and have been a minority scholar at one institution. I am a family man, married for 35 years with three children, five grandchildren and am in good health. I would be honored to be considered for the President position at Alfred State College.

Respectfully submitted,

Skip Sullivan