

## **Robert A. Gervasi, PhD**

July 4, 2023

Dr. Matthew Spalding, Chair  
Presidential Search Committee  
New College of Florida  
c/o PresidentialSearch@ncf.edu

Dear Dr. Spalding and Colleagues,

I am pleased to apply for the position of President of New College of Florida. With a Classics PhD and a Wharton MBA, I bring more than thirty years of executive leadership experience in business and higher education, including 14 years as president of small liberal arts institutions. A passionate and lifelong advocate of the liberal arts as the basis for personal happiness and professional success, I am confident I would bring the combination of skills, experience, and enthusiasm that New College of Florida seeks in its next president at this critical juncture in its history.

I served from 2008-2017 as president of Quincy University and, more recently, as president of Ohio Dominican University. My charges at Ohio Dominican when I arrived in 2017 were to: articulate a strategic vision and secure institutional reaccreditation, engaging all constituencies in the planning process; restructure the institution's finances with more favorable loan covenants; stabilize declining enrollment—with special focus on expansion of the Honors Program—and restore employee morale; increase fundraising for student scholarships and the restoration of the University's historic theater; and dramatically expand external networking and industry partnerships, for example, in financial services and health care. I also focused on student engagement, through classroom visits, support of campus activities and athletic events, partnership with community organizations (e.g. free student attendance at concerts of the Columbus Symphony), and active participation on the Presidents Council of the Great Midwest Athletic Conference, of which Ohio Dominican is an institutional member (as, coincidentally, is Hillsdale College).

All these initiatives supported the University's core mission to offer a quality liberal arts education to all qualified students, including underserved students. I am very gratified that, with the commitment and creativity of highly dedicated staff and faculty, we were able to achieve these ambitious goals and more--and within a shorter time than initially anticipated. Most importantly, we were able to promote a positive organizational culture of trust that will enable similar successes in the future.

Leading New College of Florida as the state's public honors college that prizes liberal arts and classical education would be a very personal mission for me. I myself am a first-generation graduate of an undergraduate liberal arts Honors Program in Classics, at Xavier University in Ohio. (I should also mention that my wife and I are Florida residents and homeowners who care very much about the state.) New College's status as non-sectarian within Florida's state system, embracing the values of academic excellence and engaged community available to all who qualify, deeply accords with my own interests and values. Of additional appeal is New College's ongoing integration of liberal learning and career preparation, as evidenced, for example, by the recent introduction of graduate education in data science.

In addition, New College of Florida's support of international education mirrors my own commitment to preparing students for global challenges and opportunities. I myself studied abroad in Italy, Greece, and England. I also have lectured in Classics and Philosophy as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar at the University of Zimbabwe, and I currently serve on the Board of Directors of the Fulbright Association. Before my appointment as President of Quincy University I served as CEO of the Institute for Study Abroad, based in Indianapolis, overseeing staff in 12 countries around the world. I have visited 25 countries, and I speak or read six languages beyond English, with intermediate fluency in Italian and Spanish.

I also bring successful experience in financial management and external relations, not only as a college president but also as an academic dean and, early in my career, as a marketing executive in consumer products for firms such as Bristol-Myers and Procter & Gamble. I also have taught many courses in the humanities and business at numerous institutions, beyond my Fulbright experience. In short, I enjoy a breadth and depth of academic and business experience, so that I am prepared to dedicate myself passionately to the growth and success of New College of Florida.

I welcome New College's priorities in increasing enrollment, expanding fundraising, and general promotion to garner for the institution the recognition and support it deserves, both public and private. I also look forward to working with colleagues at other institutions and Florida's Board of Governors to ensure New College's success. I thoroughly enjoy interacting with faculty, students, staff, trustees, alumni, and the broader community, and I appreciate opportunities to strengthen the sense of a caring community for all. My most recent assignment—as Interim President of the University of Mount Union in Ohio during academic year 2022-23—is a testament to my ability to make a significant positive turn-around in a relatively short time. The attached letter from a Mount Union faculty colleague attests to my success.

I would be glad to provide the contact information of additional colleagues on request. Most importantly, I would welcome an opportunity to explore with the Search Committee how I can help advance the mission of New College of Florida as President. Thank you for your consideration.

Cordially,

Robert A. Gervasi

## ROBERT A. GERVASI

### Education

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio	Certificate in Fundraising Management
The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania	PhD in Classics
Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge	MBA in Marketing
American School of Classical Studies, Athens, Greece	Research Fellow in Classics
The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio	Hill Scholar in Archaeology
Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio	MA in Classics
Universita del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy	Honors AB in Classics ( <i>summa cum laude</i> )
	Summer Course in Italian Language and Culture

### Executive Experience

**University of Mount Union, Alliance, Ohio** 2022-2023

#### ***Interim President***

Led campus-wide positive culture change bringing stability, momentum, and renewal of faculty and staff following an era of turbulence.

Ensured institutional financial sustainability with a commitment to shared governance.

Launched strategic initiative to increase international student enrollment.

Strengthened the University's relationship with alumni, donors, and neighboring community.

**Ohio Dominican University, Columbus, Ohio** 2017-2021

#### ***President***

Doubled enrollment of international students and Honors Program students.

Negotiated debt refinancing through the university's first-ever public bond offering.

Renovated university's historic theatre through fundraising (\$1.3 million), and doubled unrestricted annual giving.

Strengthened institutional commitments to underserved students, especially through partnerships with Columbus City Schools and the Diocese of Columbus.

Expanded institutional partnerships with graduate schools, businesses, and community organizations. Increased graduates' placement rate from 75% to 92%.

Launched Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship; opened Care Forward community health clinic with Central Ohio Primary Care.

Founded Central Ohio Chapter of the Fulbright Association.

Secured ten-year institutional reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

**Quincy University**, Quincy, Illinois

2008-2017

***President***

Developed senior leadership team, focused on academic excellence and experiential learning.

Upgraded enrollment management, yielding the largest incoming class in 28 years.

Achieved five-fold increase in enrollment of Honors Program students.

Initiated academic program collaborations with St. Louis University and Yale University.

Strengthened university relationships with alumni and community leaders.

Cultivated and secured university's first-ever seven-figure gifts for music and science.

Planned and launched \$18 million capital campaign.

Secured ten-year institutional reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

**Institute for Study Abroad**, Indianapolis, IN

2005-2007

***President and Chief Executive Officer***

Responsible for a staff of 160 in twelve countries, serving 3100 U.S. students annually at eighty universities worldwide. Reported to Board of Directors.

Developed strategic marketing plan; improved fiscal planning, increasing surplus by 25%.

Strengthened institutional relationships in the U.S. and abroad.

**McKendree University**, Louisville, Kentucky (main campus in Lebanon, Illinois) 1996-2005

***Dean of External Programs*** 2003-2005

***Dean of Kentucky Campuses*** 1996-2005

Served as chief executive officer of liberal arts college in Kentucky offering accelerated learning for working adults.

Supervised faculty and staff hiring and development; student affairs; curriculum planning; budgets and administration; marketing and recruitment; information technology; community and alumni relations.

**Chatfield College**, St. Martin, Ohio

1993-1996

***Dean of Academic and Student Affairs***

Responsible for faculty hiring and development, academic budgeting, instructional programs and academic support for liberal arts institution serving primarily rural students.

Launched comprehensive curriculum review, with participation by faculty, alumni, outside professionals, and other colleges.

**Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities**

1991-1993

***Executive Director***

Reported to Board of Presidents of thirteen institutions in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

Worked with Board and chief officers in academic affairs, student affairs, and development to organize and promote collaborative projects, e.g. cross-registration of students, faculty development workshops, and planned-giving seminars.

**Epworth House**, Cincinnati, Ohio 1987-1993  
**President**

Started independent firm offering strategic marketing and communication services. Advised Board and staff of Cincinnati Technical College on mission expansion and name change to Cincinnati State Technical and Community College.

**F & W Publications, Inc.**, Cincinnati, Ohio 1986-1987  
**Publisher, Writer's Digest Magazine**

Directed marketing, advertising sales (\$4 million), and editorial for leading national writers' magazine (225,000 circulation).

**Northlich Advertising & Public Relations**, Cincinnati, Ohio 1984-1986  
**Account Supervisor, Procter & Gamble and New Business**

Supervised Procter & Gamble advertising and public relations, and solicited new accounts.

**Kenner Company, and Drackett Company (Bristol-Myers)**, Cincinnati, Ohio 1978-1983  
**Product Manager, Consumer Products**

Directed national consumer-products businesses, with general management responsibility for long- and short-range marketing plans, budgets, sales, and profitability. Major client at Kenner was Lucasfilm Ltd. for development of Star Wars toys.

### **Teaching Experience**

**Ohio Dominican University**, Columbus, Ohio Since 2017

Delivered invited public lectures on topics in philosophy, business, and education, e.g. "Educating for Peace," "Truth in the Marketplace," "A New Lesson Plan for Education." Conducted guest classes in the humanities by invitation from Ohio Dominican faculty.

**Quincy University**, Quincy, Illinois 2008-2017  
**President**

Taught online MBA course entitled Issues in Business, Government, and Society (2013)  
 Presented guest classes and public lectures in business, leadership, and classics.

**University of Louisville**, Louisville, Kentucky 2002-2005  
**Adjunct Professor of Humanities**

Taught courses in Greek and Roman civilization, religion, and historiography.

**McKendree University**, Louisville, Kentucky 1996-2005  
**Dean of Kentucky Campuses**

Taught courses in: Introduction to Philosophy; Ethics; Business and Professional Presentations; Small Business Management; and Principles of Marketing.

**Chatfield College**, St. Martin, Ohio 1993-1996  
**Dean of Academic & Student Affairs**

Taught courses in: Origins of Democracy; Contemporary Moral Issues; English Composition.

**University of Zimbabwe**, Harare, Zimbabwe 1995  
**Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Associate Professor of Classics**

Taught Greek Civilization; Roman Civilization; and Ancient Philosophy.

**Miami University**, Oxford, Ohio 1989-1991  
**Visiting Assistant Professor in Classics**

Taught courses in: Ancient Epic; Classical Mythology; Introduction to Latin Literature; Introduction to Greek Literature; and Greek and Roman Religion.

Prior to 1990:

**Xavier University**, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Lecturer:** Principles of Marketing (MBA program); Elementary Latin; Thucydides' *History*; Plato's *Republic*; and guest lectures in theology, economics and international affairs.

**Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Teaching Fellow:** Graduate seminars in Effective Business Writing.

**The Ohio State University**, Columbus, Ohio

**University Teaching Fellow:** Intermediate Latin; Elementary Greek; Advanced Greek; Intensive Greek; Greek Civilization; Classical Mythology; and Greek Political Theory.

### **Selected Public Presentations**

“Love and Justice in Aquinas and Our Lives,” Ohio Dominican University, 2021

“A New Lesson Plan for Education,” Columbus Metropolitan Club, 2020

“Truth in the Marketplace,” Ohio Dominican University, 2019

“Educating for Peace,” Honors Colloquium, Ohio Dominican University, 2018

“Homer’s *Iliad*, Then and Now,” Quincy University, 2015

“The Constitution and the Classics,” Quincy University, 2014

“Values, Virtues and Vigorous Religion,” Quincy Unitarian Church, 2012

“Peace Through Service,” Rotary District Conference, Quincy, IL, 2012

“St. Francis Preaching to the Birds: Different Versions, Different Visions,” Quincy Univ., 2010

“Ancient Greek Epics and Modern Culture Wars,” Quincy University, 2009

“Reason and Reverence,” Quincy Unitarian Church, 2009

“Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Faculty Convocation, John Wood Community College, 2009

“Leadership Lessons from Ancient Rome,” Quincy University, 2008

“Global Security and Study Abroad,” Rotary Club of Louisville, 2005.

“Honor in the Greek Experience,” Robert J. Murray Lecture, Xavier University, 2000.

"Ancient Greek Religion in a Modern African Context," Classical Association of Central and Southern Africa, University of Zimbabwe, 1995.

"For Love or Money: Managing the Tension between Liberal Learning and Career Education," 1993 Regional Conference of Academic Affairs Administrators, Indianapolis.

"Solon's Reforms and the Limits of Capital," Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, 1991.

"Vegetarianism in Plato's *Republic*," Ohio Classical Conference, 1990.

### **Selected Publications and Theses**

"Studies in Solitude," *Catholic Times*, May, 2020.

"Living Servant Leadership," *Catholic Times*, May, 2019.

Op-ed on liberal arts education, *Springfield State Journal-Register*, April, 2015.

"St. Bonaventure's Account of St. Francis Preaching to the Birds," *AFCU Journal: Franciscan Perspectives in Higher Education*, January, 2011.

"Stirring Up Study Abroad," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, January, 2006.

"Three Essays on Greek Religion," *Epistula Zimbabweana*, University of Zimbabwe, 1996.

"Toward a New Economic Ideology," *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, June, 1995.

Theses:

"The Concept of Hope in Thucydides," Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University

"Written Communication Skills: Perception and Reality," M.B.A. Thesis, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

"Healing As a Dramatic Motif in the *Iliad*," M.A. Thesis, The Ohio State University

### **Selected Professional and Community Engagement**

Member, Board of Directors, Fulbright Association, since 2020.

Chair, Selection Committee for annual Fulbright Prize for International Understanding.

Member, Board of Directors, Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), 2014-2018.

Peer Reviewer, Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, since 2010.

Board Member, Great River Economic Development Foundation, 2014-2017.

Board Member, Associated Colleges of Illinois, 2008-2017. President 2013-15.

Rotary Club of Quincy, 2008-2017

### **Languages and Interests:**

Read or speak Spanish, Italian, Greek (ancient and modern), Latin, French, and German.

Enjoy travel, cinema, music, and theater. Performed *An Iliad*, a modern adaptation for a sole actor, based on Homer's epic: Quincy University, 2015; CIC Presidents' Institute (excerpt), 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LdCwrazYqE>

Avid swimmer and runner; completed fourteen marathons.



June 8, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to offer my highest recommendation of Dr. Robert Gervasi for appointment to leadership positions in higher education. Dr. Gervasi served as Interim President of the University of Mount Union in 2022-23, while I was serving as Faculty Senate Chair. I can attest to his exceptional leadership abilities and unwavering commitment to creating a culture of support and collegiality on our campus.

One of the most striking qualities that distinguishes Dr. Gervasi as a leader is his dedication to fostering an environment where individuals, particularly faculty, feel valued, supported, and encouraged to thrive. We were in desperate need of that at the time that Dr. Gervasi arrived and for that I will forever be grateful. He consistently demonstrated a genuine concern for the well-being and professional development of faculty, staff, and students alike. Through his open-door policy and approachable demeanor, he began to reestablish a culture of inclusivity, trust, and respect that had deteriorated over the recent past.

The range of initiatives and decision-making authority for interim presidents are wide and varied depending on many circumstances. As Faculty Senate Chair, I had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Gervasi during his time at Mount Union. I distinctly remember our first meetings and conversations. I felt that he was genuinely interested in getting to know me, the situation that had recently unfolded at the institution, and what it was that faculty were looking for as we moved forward. This was to be expected as this was his job, but something just felt different, and better.

I am unaware of all the decisions made and areas that Dr. Gervasi contributed to during his time at Mount Union, but I am certain of his efforts aimed at nurturing a supportive and collegial atmosphere within our university community. His efforts created a sense of camaraderie and a renewed shared purpose among faculty members. During his brief time as Interim President, there was an immediate and notable increase in faculty engagement and overall satisfaction. This may seem trivial and not very concrete, but the previous three years of faculty – administration strife culminated in severe faculty distrust and disengagement due to leadership issues. Dr. Gervasi came to campus making an immediate impact in ways that I would not have imagined.

In his short leadership tenure at Mount Union, I have witnessed a remarkable beginning of transformation necessary to set the university on a positive trajectory in faculty – faculty relations and faculty – administration relations leading to a stronger sense of community on our campus. Dr. Gervasi fostered an atmosphere of collaboration, where all voices are heard and respected. I believe he was able to provide this because of his intelligence, experience within higher education, experience in the business



world, and leadership qualities including empathy, listening skills, communication skills combined with a pragmatic approach to the business of higher education.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly recommend Dr. Robert Gervasi for leadership positions in higher education, based on my experience of his leadership at the University of Mount Union. He came to Mount during a very difficult period in which administrative leadership was lacking at the institution and quickly created a culture of support and collegiality that had a positive impact on our campus. Through his leadership, I believe we have begun to reestablish Mount Union as a place where faculty and administration are empowered to excel, collaborate, and make meaningful contributions to the institution on behalf of the students. I firmly believe that Dr. Gervasi will serve any college or university well with his leadership, passion for student and faculty success, and ability to foster a culture of support and collegiality.

Thank you for your careful consideration of my recommendation. Should you require additional information or further discussion, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Mendel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "M".

Ron Mendel, PhD  
Chair, Faculty Senate  
Professor of Exercise Science  
Chair, Department of Exercise, Sport, and Nutrition Sciences  
University of Mount Union