UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

August 27, 2026

Dean Search Committee
Sanders College of Business and Technology
University of North Alabama
Florence, AL 35632

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am excited to apply for the position of Dean of the Sanders College of Business and Technology at the University of North Alabama. The Sanders COBT Strategic Plan particularly resonates with me because its priorities of academic innovation, student success, technology agility, experiential learning, and regional engagement, closely mirror the work I have led throughout my career. As Associate Dean and Interim Chair of Management & Entrepreneurship at the University of South Alabama's AACSB-accredited Mitchell College of Business, I have spent my career building strong academic programs, supporting faculty and students, cultivating external partnerships, and connecting higher education to the needs of the communities and organizations we serve. My 12 years as a United States Air Force officer and instructor pilot further shaped a leadership approach grounded in preparation, accountability, adaptability, and collaborative execution.

In my current role as Associate Dean, I provide college-level leadership in strategic and operational planning, AACSB accreditation, assessment, curriculum, student services, advising, scheduling, scholarships, faculty development, and student success. I serve as the primary architect and author of our annual AACSB reports and recently submitted our Continuous Improvement Review. I lead our Assurance of Learning committee across undergraduate, MBA, and doctoral programs. I have helped lead the development of four new majors, six minors, four MBA concentrations, and two Ph.D. concentrations while redesigning our doctoral business curriculum. These experiences have reinforced my belief that academic programs must continually evolve in response to student needs, emerging technologies, and changing workforce expectations.

That philosophy aligns closely with Sanders' emphasis on technology agility and innovative, high-quality academic programs. As business and technology continue to converge, I see an opportunity for Sanders to distinguish itself by preparing students not only to use emerging technologies but to understand their strategic, organizational, ethical, and economic implications. I would work collaboratively with faculty across business and technology disciplines to integrate AI literacy, appropriate technology tools, and ethical frameworks throughout the curriculum while maintaining the critical thinking, communication, creativity, and professional judgment that employers will continue to value. I would also build on faculty expertise and shared governance to ensure that program development remains responsive to industry trends and student demand.

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Student success has been another important focus of my administrative work. I have served on the University Student Success Team, working with colleagues across campus to use data analytics to identify high-risk courses, address DFW rates, and expand tutoring support. I have also championed flexible, high-value degree pathways designed to serve diverse and nontraditional students. In addition, I have been directly involved in student recruitment through football recruiting and high school outreach, contributing to a more than 10 percent year-over-year increase in first-time freshman enrollment this past year. My current college serves 1,223 students and has experienced an overall 8 percent increase in enrollment over the previous year. I believe these experiences provide a strong foundation for advancing Sanders' goals for retention, career readiness, experiential learning, and responsible enrollment growth.

I also bring a strong record of connecting academic expertise with business and community needs. Through the Mitchell College of Business, I have developed relationships with organizations including AIRBUS, SSAB, regional healthcare networks, the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, and LaunchPad Alabama. I have designed and delivered leadership development programs for engineers and other professionals transitioning into supervisory roles, providing direct experience aligning educational delivery with workforce needs. Within the College, I have helped develop and promote student-managed investment funds, a maker-space supporting student innovation, and a Real Estate Center of Excellence that helps students prepare for professional licensure and develop expertise in commercial property valuation. These experiences have strengthened my conviction that colleges of business and technology can serve as important engines of regional economic development.

My external engagement has also included significant fundraising for student success. Through advisory board and donor relationships, I have helped raise more than $250,000 in student scholarship and endowed support, including significant endowed scholarship commitments. As chair of the College's undergraduate scholarship committee, I also oversee more than 130 annual undergraduate scholarship awards totaling more than $250,000. I would bring this same relationship-centered approach to Sanders, working with alumni, employers, donors, community leaders, and university partners to expand opportunities for students and strengthen the College's regional impact.

Finally, my leadership philosophy has been shaped by experiences well beyond higher education. As an Air Force officer, instructor pilot, aircraft commander, and evaluator pilot, I learned that successful organizations depend on clear expectations, disciplined execution, trust, and the ability to adapt when circumstances change. Over more than two decades in higher education, I have applied those principles while leading faculty, developing academic programs, navigating accreditation, supporting students, and building partnerships. I believe effective academic leadership requires both a clear vision for where an institution needs to go and the humility to build that vision collaboratively with the people who will make it successful.



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I see an exciting opportunity at Sanders to bring together business, technology, student success, experiential learning, and regional workforce development in ways that strengthen both the College and the communities it serves. My experience as a professor, department chair, associate dean, and industry and community partner has prepared me to lead that work collaboratively and strategically. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience and leadership approach can contribute to the continued growth and success of the Sanders College of Business and Technology and the University of North Alabama.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William E. (Bill) Gillis, Ph.D.
Associate Dean and Interim Department Chair, Management & Entrepreneurship
Mitchell College of Business
University of South Alabama

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