

February , 2020

DEAR SEARCH COMMITTEE:

I write to offer my wholehearted recommendation in support of Gretchen Cannon for employment with your organization. I was a member of the search committee who recommended her for hire at Georgia State University 15 years ago and the years since have proven that we could not have made a better choice. In 2012 I was hired as an Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and it was my pleasure to be her supervisor until my retirement three years later.

During Gretchen's career at Georgia State University, she directed all of the web, print and public relations efforts for the Division of Student Affairs, which grew to include over 20 departments and programs employing over 1,000 staff and students. The University's enrollment also increased from under 30,000 to over 50,000 due to a merger with Perimeter College.

Over time the complexity of her responsibilities grew as well, with the rapid development of the web, content management systems, mobile devices, and graphics software. With her previous corporate experience in management and training she handled all of these demands with amazing skill and aplomb. And just as impressive was the fact that she handled the additional workload leading a small group of students majoring in graphic design. This meant that not only was Gretchen directing all of the web and print design needs for the Division, she was constantly managing, motivating and training a group of students to meet her high standards.

While my Assistant Vice President's duties primarily involved budgetary and HR issues, several members of my family held art degrees and I learned to appreciate the many contributions of artistic talent to our world. It was in that light that I truly enjoyed working with Gretchen, watching her train and inspire her student staff and produce an enormous quantity of websites, flyers, brochures, displays, and other works. She and her staff routinely produced hundreds of pieces of work per month – with no departmental templates or shortcuts used.

I was most impressed with Gretchen's work on the University's transition to WordPress as its content management system, which began when I became her supervisor. The short timeline for the transition was ambitious even for small departments but was extremely difficult for our Division as many of our sites were much more complex. Not only did Gretchen pull off the impossible with no additional staff, she made the most beautiful and compelling sites on campus. Her sites were routinely used as examples of taking WordPress to its aesthetic and functional limits.

In my 30 years of employment with Georgia State University, there was no one I was more proud of working with than Gretchen Cannon. She is a very talented artist, a great visual communicator and an undaunted manager. To find all of these qualities in one individual is rare indeed.

If I may provide further information, feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Jeff Walker

Former Assistant Vice President

Division of Student Affairs

Georgia State University

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