

GCU

Declarations of Candidacy



**Candidates for 2024 GCU
Board of Directors Election**



Investing in the Goodness
of Community



2024 Election Nominating Committee

May 1, 2024

Dear GCU Member,

The Nominating Committee for our 2024 Election of the Board of Directors met on Monday, April 29, 2024.

The committee reviewed all the Declaration of Candidacy forms submitted for the election of board members for the 2024 GCU election.

All of the candidates who were approved are: Citizens of the USA; of Slav origin; a Byzantine Catholic for five (5) or more years; a member of the GCU for a minimum of five (5) years; of good moral character, reputation and good American spirit; have attained the age of 30 and will not be older than age 77 on October 1, 2024 as required by Par. 62 of the Bylaws and have met the qualifications set forth by the GCU Board in Par. 62 (f) of the Bylaws.

The enclosed booklet contains a photo and the Declaration of Candidacy for each nominee. A copy of the Declaration of Candidacy booklet and each candidate's resume is posted on the GCU website – www.GCUusa.com – and on the Broadridge Financial Services website – www.proxyvote.com – .

This information is being provided to assist you in making your choice for Board of Director members.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: jurban.gcu@GCUusa.com.

Fraternally yours,

John J. Urban, Esq. – GCU Director
Nominating Committee Chairman

Melanie Basl – GCU Director
Michael Karaffa – GCU Director
George Kofel – GCU Director
David Oleksa – GCU Director



CANDIDATES FOR MEMBER OF GCU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(GCU Membership to Elect 10)

Name: Melanie Basl

Residence: South Park, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

Bachelor of Science-California University of Pennsylvania—(2010)

Master of Science-California University of Pennsylvania—(2012)

Executive Board Member Sigma Kappa Sorority—(2006-2010)

Scholarship Chair, Executive Vice President, President Advisory Board Chairman—(2010-2012)

GCU Lodge Membership and Experience—Communications Director of Central Pittsburgh Regional Lodge, (2011- 2022)

GCU National Officer Roles—Chairperson of the Supreme Tribunal—(2012 - 2016); National Director—(2016 - Present)

Board Committee Experience—Scholarship, Lodge/District Restructuring, Audit, Fraternal Symposium, Strategic Vision, Governance, Fraternal Communications- Chairperson (2022 - Present)

Seven Oaks Country Club, Board Member (2019 - Present)

Parish and Volunteerism—Member of St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Pittsburgh, PA. 25+ years volunteering with various parish, lodge and community based fraternal activities and fundraising efforts

Parish Council Member—(2019 - 2022)

Chairperson—Social Media and Communication

Work Experience:

Pharmacy Technician Giant Eagle—(2006-2012)

Certified/Licensed Speech-Language Pathologist—Transitions Healthcare—(June 2012-Present)

Interim Director of Rehab—(October 2018-January 2019)

Direct Sales - Beachbody LLC—(2012-Present) and Senegence—(2017-Present)

Why you should be (re)elected?:

My name is Melanie Basl and I currently serve as a Director of the GCU Board. I was elected at the National Convention in 2016 and re-elected by the membership in 2020. I have prior GCU experience serving as the Chairperson of the Supreme Tribunal. I am a lifelong active lodge member and was the Communications Director of the Central Pittsburgh Regional Lodge since 2011 and through the end of the previous lodge system in 2022. I am an active member of John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Pittsburgh, PA. I have over 25 years of organizing, implementing and leading fraternal activities and fundraising efforts.

I serve on various committees, share my fraternal experience and passion to ensure the fraternal future of the GCU, and utilize my social media experience and energetic insight to promote and strengthen the GCU. I have been the Chairperson of the Fraternal Communications Committee since 2022. I take pride in being a leader. I am also a Board member of Seven Oaks Country Club in Beaver, PA.

Outside of the GCU and parish, I have 12 years of experience as a certified Speech Language Pathologist in a skilled nursing facility. I have been married to my husband, Matt, for 9 years and have two boys, John David age 6 and Matthew Robert, 9 months. In my free time I enjoy Crossfit and have 10 years experience as a fitness instructor as well as direct sales. Returning to work part-time after having my children has given me the flexibility to dedicate myself to being a GCU Director in addition to many other roles including work as an SLP, fitness instructor, small business in direct sales, volunteerism and of course, being a mother.

Being elected as a Director of a nearly 3 billion dollar Fraternal Benefit Society requires passion, experience, professionalism, dedication and the flexibility to adapt to the ever changing world. I believe I possess these qualities and strive to further my experience and influence as a Director of the GCU. I appreciate your support in being re-elected to the GCU Board of Directors.



Name: George W. Batyko

Residence: Crescent, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

Lifelong GCU member with 100% GCU family

My wife Mary and I have two sons.

Bachelor of Arts and Science John Carroll University,
University Heights, Ohio



Work Experience:

Managing Director of Investments-Wells Fargo Security, Pittsburgh, PA—
(2000-present)

Vice President-Prudential Securities, Pittsburgh, PA—(1990-2000)

Vice President-Kidder Peabody, Pittsburgh, PA—(1980-1990)

Manager of Hernon Jewelers—(1972-1980)

Research and analyze daily, weekly and monthly market trends

Contacting clients and explaining investment strategies

Buying and selling stocks, bonds, and other investment products in a timely manner

Supervising and leading my sales team

Serving on financial boards and scholarship committees of several fraternal insurance companies

Vice President, Greek Catholic Union of the USA

Why you should be (re)elected?:

I am Byzantine Catholic and of Slovak heritage. My entire family and I are members of the GCU. Being a lifelong member of this society, I have a desire and concern for both its financial stability and perpetuation of its membership. I am familiar with investment strategies of fraternal insurance companies, like the GCU, thereby contributing to the financial, organizational and strategic planning of the organization. Having been a producer and its financial advisor, I have a vested interest in the financial stability and membership growth of the GCU.

It has been an honor to serve on the GCU Board of Directors. My father, a past President of the GCU, instilled the importance of serving others while maintaining the integrity of our heritage. I would like the opportunity to continue the progress we've accomplished in the various committees that I have served on and to continue to represent the GCU members to the best of my ability.

Name: S. Ronald Bednar

Residence: Plain City, Ohio

Personal/Educational Information:

Lifelong GCU member with 100% GCU family

Along with my wife Patty we have three children: Amy, Andy and Brian

BS/BA Degree in Accounting from Youngstown State University

MBA Degree in Finance from The Ohio State University

Certified Public Accountant Retired



Work Experience:

I have been a member of the financial leadership team for profit and non-profit organizations. I am experienced in all aspects of accounting, including budgeting, forecasting, and internal controls. I was responsible for the risk management function during my career and have set-up 401(k) and pension plans and had fiduciary responsibility for them. I also worked with the finance committee on investments at The Ohio Historical Society. Early in my career, while living in Pennsylvania, I sold GCU Life Insurance and Annuity products. My most recent employers and positions were:

Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, OH—(2016-2019) - Lead Corporate Accountant

Cardington Yutaka Technologies, Inc., Cardington, OH—(2015-2016) - North American Accounting Manager

ASK Chemicals L.P., Dublin, OH—(2008-2014) - Senior Manager Americas Controlling & Risk Management

The Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH—(2004-2008) - Chief Financial Officer

Midwest Express, Inc., East Liberty, OH—(1991-2004) - Controller

Why you should be (re)elected?:

As a lifelong member I have participated in many GCU activities and would be proud to continue my family's legacy with the GCU. My father, Steve, was very active as a lodge officer, President of District 3, GCU National Auditor from 1988-2004 and an Honorary National Officer until his passing in 2015. Based on my background and the fact that I am now retired, I feel the time is right to follow in his footsteps and be a part of something that was very special to our family and to him. My CPA background, together with my accounting and risk management skills would prove valuable in this position. I have witnessed the tremendous growth of the GCU through the years and its strong financial stability. I can use my knowledge and leadership skills to ensure that this strong foundation continues to grow. My family and I have enjoyed taking part in GCU activities for many years. As a Board Member I will work to sustain the heritage and traditions, as well as helping to shape the new fraternal metamorphosis program.

Name: Lisa Gulibon

Residence: Souderton, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

Lifelong GCU member & Byzantine Catholic—100% GCU family

Member of St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, Mont Clare, PA

Married with two sons, Aaron & David

Masters Degree in Business Administration-Marketing-Temple University

Bachelor of Science Degree-Chemistry/Mathematics-Seton Hill University



Work Experience:

GCU National Director—(Since 2000)

Heubach Colorants USA, LLC: Global Technical Marketing Manager-Seed Coatings & Agriculture/Market Segment Manager-Special Applications-NORAM—(2023-present)

Clariant Corporation: Technical Sales Manager— (2014-2023)

Azelis/DeWolf Companies: Market Development Manager-Cosmetics—(2011-2014)

Vantage Specialty Chemicals/Lambent Technologies: Market Manager-Personal Care, Food, Pharmaceutical—(2006-2011)

Cognis Corporation: Market Manager-Skin Care—(2004-2006); Regional Account Manager—(2002-2004);

Product Manager— (1998-2004); Sales Support Administrator— (1997-1998); Formula Administration Specialist—(1991-1997)

Timken-Latrobe Steel Company: Senior Chemist—1984-1991)

Why you should be (re)elected?:

Serving on the GCU board since 2000, I understand the challenges we, as a fraternal, face in maintaining the viability of this organization. My corporate experience in the private sector has provided a real world view on many issues the GCU has faced over my tenure. I firmly believe in the mission of the GCU and its importance as we all see our entire world changing. I want to continue to contribute so that we secure a successful GCU for our membership... never forgetting our heritage, traditions, communities and churches. Although difficult at times, we must adapt to our ever-changing society and I truly believe we need to address this in order to survive. I believe that I bring a wealth of experience to this endeavor coupled with the passion to see our mission prevail.

Name: Michael W. Karaffa

Residence: Strongsville, Ohio

Personal/Educational Information:

Married to wife Jean with 3 adult children and 1 grandchild

Lifelong member St. Joseph Byzantine Catholic Church

Lifelong member of the GCU

Byzantine Catholic High School Parma, Ohio

Cleveland State University—Bachelor of Arts Degree/Political Science & Communications



Work Experience:

40 years—Account Executive-The Sheakley Group-Third Party Administrator - Cincinnati, OH

24 years—GCU National Director

10 years—Local, County, State & Federal Administration

4 years—Congressional Aide to United States Congressman

4 years —Life Insurance Agent-New York Life

Why you should be (re)elected?:

Over the last 24 years I have served the GCU as National Director with one goal in mind, to make sure we first and foremost protect our legacy as a Fraternal organization and secondly to continue to improve and protect the lives of our members while promoting Faith, Fraternalism and Strengthening our Communities. Over the years, I have served on numerous committees and I currently serve as Chairman of the Budget, Compensation and Human Resources Committee.

With my years of experience as National Director and my lifelong commitment to GCU, I look forward to utilizing my proven leadership skills to continue to help GCU grow financially for many years to come while protecting our legacy as a Fraternal organization.

Name: George Kofel

Residence: Dunmore, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

A lifelong GCU member and 100% GCU Family with wife Sharon, children Michael & Michelle, their spouses and our four grandchildren

A lifelong parishioner of St. Michael the Archangel Byzantine Catholic Church, Dunmore, PA

Attended Penn State University with studies in the Pre-Medical Sciences field. Graduated cum laude from Temple University School of Pharmacy with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Pharmacy



Work Experience:

Practiced the profession of Pharmacy in Pennsylvania and New York.

Had a 37-year career with CVS Pharmacy as a pharmacist and member of the management team. Was awarded the National CVS Paragon Award of Excellence for corporate managerial performance.

Served for 12 years as an elected public official and Board Member/Treasurer of the Dunmore School Board overseeing an annual budget of 19 million dollars.

Held board positions at St. Francis of Assisi Soup Kitchen, Scranton, PA, and for the Lackawanna County Pharmacy Association.

Held the offices of GCU District 5 President, Athletic Director, and Publicity Director along with serving as Secretary/Treasurer of GCU Lodge 945, Dunmore, PA for 15 years. Also held several offices in various local community organizations.

In addition to being a current member of the GCU Board of Directors, for the past 12 years I have held the offices of Vice-Chairman and Secretary to the GCU Board.

Why you should be (re)elected?:

Experienced leadership is imperative to effectively govern, especially during times of economic uncertainties. Throughout my tenure, I have upheld my dedication to GCU, utilizing my leadership skills and expertise gained from serving as your Director and Vice-Chairman of the Board. My primary focus has always been on prioritizing GCU's best interests.

I have diligently executed my responsibilities to foster financial growth and stability, nurture fraternal well-being, provide assistance to our churches and communities, and to preserve our heritage and traditions. I derive satisfaction mentoring new board members and creating a collaborative team culture aimed at driving the success of GCU.

It will be both a privilege and honor to continue representing and contributing to the advancement of both you and GCU. I am committed to actively work towards the continued growth and prosperity of GCU in the years ahead.

Name: David A. Oleksa

Residence: Aliquippa, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

I am a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh with a BSE degree in Chemical Engineering and a minor in Environmental Engineering.

I am a member of the Johnstown Constellation (former Lodge 625 in Conemaugh, PA., & former District 4).

I am a member of St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Johnstown, PA. and also attend St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church in Ambridge, PA.



Work Experience:

GCU Director—(2000 to present)

I retired in 2022 from the Dept. of Defense at the 911th Airlift Wing Air Force Reserve Base at the Pittsburgh International Airport as an Environmental Engineer for over 20 years. My duties included Program Manager for the Base's Waste Programs & the Qualified Recycling and Air Emissions Programs. Also acted as Program Director for the Environmental Department's Budget overseeing Compliance, Pollution Prevention & Contractor Services.

AFRC Environmental Training Symposium Team—(2005 thru 2012)

Why you should be (re)elected?:

As the GCU continues on its steady and consistent growth path, both Enterprise and Operational Risk Management, (ERM/ORM), play a vary significant role in day-to-day operations. As Risk Committee Chairperson, there are more rules and regulations to follow as we grow in both assets and membership. We will have a lot more work to do when it comes to protecting our fraternal benefit society from these risks, such as; cybersecurity, financial, artificial intelligence (AI), and day-to-day operational risks.

Name: Maria Silvestri

Residence: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

I've been a GCU member since childhood, and I'm an active member of St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Pittsburgh.

My entire formal education has taken place at Catholic institutions, from elementary school in Monroeville, PA to high school in Rome, Italy and Pittsburgh, and my bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ, where I also completed graduate coursework.

I have continued my education with certificates from the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Presov, and Cornell University.



Work Experience:

President and Director, John & Helen Timo Foundation—(2013 - Present)

- Under my stewardship, the Foundation's endowment has grown significantly, and during that same time, I have personally overseen disbursements over \$2 million dollars, including institutions that GCU also supports, like the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Province, the Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, parishes in the Metropolia of Pittsburgh and associated charities, and also grants to Carpatho-Rusyn community organizations in North America and Europe.

Freelance Translator—(October 2009 - Present)

Paralegal—(September 2022 - Present)

Why you should be (re)elected?:

My day-to-day work in philanthropy is legacy management: honoring the past, not with obsequious nostalgia, but by looking forward to the future to find opportunities for growth. I bring a unique mix of non-profit, community, and financial management experience to the GCU Board of Directors. I understand that relationship management and organizational work is necessary to make progress and turn strategy into reality at the intersection of finance, operations, and policy. I've been involved with the traditional communities GCU serves and supports my whole life, which is why I appreciate the need for purposeful and meaningful evolution, positively and successfully exemplified by GCU's Fraternal Metamorphosis. Since my appointment to the GCU Board of Directors in May 2023, I've dedicated myself to gaining a deeper understanding of GCU's sophisticated operations while having the privilege of serving alongside dedicated individuals committed to GCU's enduring legacy and future growth.

Name: John J. Urban

Residence: Rocky River, Ohio

Personal/Educational Information:

100% GCU family

Member of St. Mary Magdalene Byzantine Church in Fairview Park, Ohio

Married to Mary Rita with two sons Michael and Ryan

Proud grandparent of seven grandchildren

Juris Doctorate from Cleveland Marshall Law School in 1975

BA degree in English from John Carroll University in 1971



Work Experience:

A sole practitioner in my own law firm John J. Urban Attorney at Law, LTD

- Areas of concentration include but not limited to Wills, Trusts, Probate and Real Estate A former partner in a previous law firm

A former partner with another law firm.

A former Court Magistrate.

Former member of the Rocky River Board of Education.

Former Board member of the Cuyahoga County Mental Health Board

Former Board member of Mental Health Services servicing the homeless and mental health clients

Former member and chairperson of the City of Rocky River Charter Review Commission Current member of the City of Rocky River Board of Tax Review

Why you should be (re)elected?:

The GCU has been part of my life since my birth. I want to continue leading and nurturing the GCU to make it better than it is today and to continue the GCU's growth and heritage. My years as a National Director is an asset to the GCU; and, it brings perspective, consistency and expertise to the Board. My leadership roles on the Board are vital to the success of the GCU to meet the current and future challenges of the GCU while preserving our heritage, culture, history and traditions. All of this and more are the reasons I want to continue as part of this invaluable team as a National Director. My passion and desire to make the GCU better than it is today drives me to work harder.

Over the years I have been on the Finance Committee, Chairperson of the Governance/Ethics Committee and a member and or Chairperson of many other committees. In other words, I am very active in the operation of the Board in achieving the success the GCU has achieved.

My 24+ years as a National Director has given me the experience to lead the GCU into the future facing all of the challenges all companies are facing today. My re-election helps the GCU to meet these challenges because of my experience and consistency as a National Director.

Name: Gregory N. Vladika

Residence: Mayfield, Pennsylvania

Personal/Educational Information:

Attended Lackawanna College and the University of Scranton majoring in Accounting

Received the designation of Fraternal Insurance Consultant

Licensed Pennsylvania Property, Casualty, Insurance Agent and Broker

Member of the National Society of Tax Practitioners

Past President of NEPA Independent Insurance Agents

Lifetime member of the Eynon Sturges Fire Department

Member of the Eynon/Archbald Lions Club

Married to Crystal Vladika with one daughter Adrianna Rigdon and spouse Josh and new grandson Noah James Rigdon



Work Experience:

President of Vladika Insurance Agency an Independent Property Casualty, Life and Annuity Business—(Since 1994)

Tax Professional—(Since 1994)

Currently serve on the GCU Board of Directors as Chairman of the Board

Member of the Board of Directors for Seven Oaks Country Club and GCU Real Estate Company

Why you should be (re)elected?:

I have 34 years experience in the insurance industry, along with my experience on the GCU Board of Directors. I am committed to the GCU Mission Statement: "Protecting Families, Promoting Faith and Fraternalism, Strengthening Communities." I would like to continue to help develop strategies to overcome the challenges the GCU will face in the future. I believe I have the experience and the knowledge to meet future challenges.

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As a  **GCU Member**

You Have a

VOTE  ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Please Open and Make
it Count Before July 1ST!**