



**The Mercer Group, Inc.**

---

## **GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DIRECTOR**

June 9, 2015

**Summary**

**Michelle A. Smith**

- **Juris Doctorate; Master in Exercise & Sports Science;  
Bachelor – Sociocultural Anthropology**
- **Law Office of Michelle A. Smith and Independent Contractor with City  
of Gainesville Office of Equal Opportunity**
- **Salary: \$120,000**
- **Internet Research**
- **Lifestyle Strategist – Owner –**
  - <http://balancedlifeforyou.com/#home>
- **Sep 20, 2014 - Florida Physique Winner**
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8riqVSQT5uEtember>
- **Various news articles - neutral**

**THE MERCER GROUP, INC.**

W. D. Higginbotham, Jr.

Senior Vice President

Seminole, Florida 33777-1150

727-214-8673

[WDHiggin@mercergroupinc.com](mailto:WDHiggin@mercergroupinc.com)

[www.mercergroupincflorida.com](http://www.mercergroupincflorida.com)



**The Mercer Group, Inc.**

---

**LETTER OF INTEREST  
&  
RESUME**

**THE MERCER GROUP, INC.**  
W. D. Higginbotham, Jr. Senior Vice President  
Seminole, Florida 33777-1150  
727-214-8673  
[WDHiggin@mercergroupinc.com](mailto:WDHiggin@mercergroupinc.com)  
[www.mercergroupincflorida.com](http://www.mercergroupincflorida.com)

To: W.D. Higginbotham, Jr.,  
Senior Vice President  
The Mercer Group  
[WDHiggin@mercergroupinc.com](mailto:WDHiggin@mercergroupinc.com)

From: Michelle A. Smith, Esquire  
P.O. Box 141212  
Gainesville, Florida 32601  
352-284-7360  
[michelle@balancedlifeforyou.com](mailto:michelle@balancedlifeforyou.com)

RE: Equal Opportunity Director – City of Gainesville

Dear Mr. Higginbotham,

Please receive this correspondence as an introduction and letter of interest in the Equal Opportunity Director position with the City of Gainesville. I am currently the City's contracted trainer for diversity and inclusion, as well as the prevention of discrimination, harassment and retaliation. I am very interested in continuing my service to the City as the Director of the Equal Opportunity Office.

I first brought my skills to the EO Office as an Investigator for complaints of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Though I was originally hired to conduct diversity and inclusion trainings, there was a greater need at the time to resolve open discrimination cases. So, I utilized my legal skills to assist Cecil Howard, then Director, in successfully resolving both internal and external complaints. I also conducted trainings on the rights and responsibilities of new City hires, regarding discrimination and harassment. It was during that time that I began paying very close attention to the faces, dynamics, and issues of our City's workforce, as well as the private citizens calling upon the EO Office's resources. I found myself completely invested in serving the community I have called home for 25 years through the Office of Equal Opportunity.

I participated in the EO Office's community outreach efforts while I worked as an employee, informing our citizens of our availability to investigate discrimination complaints, and assist minority and small businesses in obtaining contract work with the City. I also educated myself on the EO Director's role in implementing and monitoring the City's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action efforts. My education came through observation, many in-depth discussions with Mr. Howard, and direct participation in providing training as an independent contractor for our 2,000 + workforce on diversity, inclusion, and the prevention of discrimination and harassment.

The most valuable experience I would bring to the EO Director position is having had meaningful interactions with almost every, single City employee; as the workshops and trainings I conduct are mandatory and attended by employees, Charter Officers, and Commissioners. My interactions and discussions with the City's employees have been candid and sincere, demonstrating a level of trust and confidence in the role I have played thus far with the EO Office. The feedback that continues to be received, regarding the information I provide as well as the manner in which I address concerns and issues, continues to be very positive. This experience has provided me with a great deal of insight to our organization's strengths, as well as areas in which we can grow and improve.

---

The two most valuable skills I would bring to the position are the ability to recognize group dynamics, and engage in collaborative communication to reach goals and resolve issues. My abilities in these areas have been honed through the breadth of my professional roles. I have over 10 years of litigation experience, wherein I zealously represented my clients in an adversarial system, while also extending respect to all parties involved. I have served in supervisory and management positions that required assessing my group's strengths and weaknesses, making decisions based on such assessments, and successfully collaborating with other agencies who often had competing interests. And, I have most certainly developed these skills as an entrepreneur, a Wellness Consultant/Strategist who specializes in issue identification, analysis, goal setting, and problem solving.

I have a vision for the direction and growth of the City of Gainesville's Office of Equal Opportunity. I would greatly appreciate the chance to capitalize on my knowledge of our City's community and workforce, and bring all of my experience and skills to bear as Equal Opportunity Director.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my interest. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information. And, I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,  
Michelle A. Smith

---

**Michelle A. Smith, Esq.**

P.O. Box 141212

Gainesville, Florida 32614

352.284.7360

[michelle@balancedlifeforyou.com](mailto:michelle@balancedlifeforyou.com)**Specialized Skills**

Motivational public speaking

Problem solving workshop facilitation

Cultural analysis of workplace environment

Team building

Stress management

Time management and organization

Issue identification, goal setting, implementation-personal/professional

Goal specific fitness training

**Education**

Juris Doctorate-2001; University of Florida; Levin College of Law

Master's in Exercise and Sport Sciences -1998; University of Florida; College of Health and Human Performance

Bachelor of Arts in Sociocultural Anthropology-1995; University of Florida; College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Professional Career – Legal and Law Related**

The Law Office of Michelle A. Smith - 2003-present

Criminal Defense, Guardianship, Dependency - Parent's defense, Probate, Small Estate Planning

City of Gainesville Office of Equal Opportunity – 2014-present

Independent Contractor

Diversity and Inclusion Trainer

Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment Trainer

City Of Gainesville Office of Equal Opportunity - 2012-2014

Investigation Specialist - Investigation of discrimination complaints

Guardian ad Litem Program - 2007-2011

Supervising Attorney for the 8th Judicial Circuit - 2009- 2011; Senior Program Attorney – 2007-2011

Office of the State Attorney, Florida's 8th Judicial Circuit, Assistant State Attorney - 2002-2003

Criminal Prosecution-Juvenile and Misdemeanor

Office of the Public Defender, Florida's 8th Judicial Circuit, Certified Legal Intern - 2001-2002

Criminal Defense - Misdemeanor

**Professional Career - Wellness**

Wellness Consultant and Lifestyle Strategist – 2011-present

Owner/Founder of Balanced Life Wellness Consulting

Personal Fitness Trainer - 1999-present

Independent

Master Level Personal Trainer 2006; 2009  
Alter Ego Fitness, Gainesville, Florida

Master Level Personal Trainer - 2003-2004  
Gainesville Health and Fitness Center

Spin/Cycle Instructor - 1998-2010  
Gainesville Health and Fitness Center, Gainesville, Florida; Orion Fitness, Gainesville, Florida

Director of Exercise Science - 1997-1998  
Orion Fitness, Gainesville, Florida

Advanced Level Trainer and Group Fitness Instructor - 1996-1998  
University of Florida Student Recreation and Fitness Centers

### **Presentations/Workshops/Trainings**

"Creating and Maintaining an Inclusive Work Environment" – 2015  
Customized training for Gainesville Regional Utility Energy Supply Department developed to address department specific issues, and initiate a culture shift to one of greater inclusion.

"Preventing Discrimination and Harassment" – 2015  
City of Gainesville and Gainesville Regional Utilities workforce training on the Office of Equal Opportunity's policies and procedure regarding the prevention of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation; addressing and tying in relevant issues raised during the "Diversity and Inclusion" workshops from the previous year.

"Diversity and Inclusion: It Begins With You" - 2013-2014  
Customized training for the City of Gainesville and Gainesville Regional Utilities workforce, introducing a broader and deeper understanding of diversity, providing strategies for inclusion utilizing awareness and mindfulness exercises, emphasizing personal responsibility and transformation to effect large scale organizational change.

"Discrimination and Harassment" - 2012-2013  
City of Gainesville and Gainesville Regional Utilities training for new employees; educating new employees about their rights and responsibilities as City employees.

"Stress Management in Child Protection: What's really going on in your circuit?"  
December 7, 2012  
Florida United for Families  
Circuit and culture specific stress management workshop for child protection professionals.

"Realizing Change From Within: Stress Management in the World of Child Protection"  
September 6, 2012  
2012 Florida DCF Child Protection Summit - annual statewide child protection convention

"Balancing the Scales: Stress Management Training"  
April 26, 2012  
Florida Guardian ad Litem Statewide Attorney training (telephonic)

"Balancing the Scales: Strategies for Healthy Practices" - 2011-present  
Stress Management and Lifestyle Assessment workshop for Lawyers, Judges, Legal Support Staff; CLE accredited for 2011-2012

"Making the Most of Your Time" - Time Management Training -2010-2011

Guardian ad Litem Program; In-house training for staff and management to identify challenges to managing time, re-prioritization, and workable time management system to reduce stress, improve morale and work productivity.

"Stay in Your Lane/Learn to Merge"- Role Identification Training - 2009-2011

Guardian ad Litem Program; In-house training for staff and management on identifying interplay and dynamics of the Attorney-Staff-Volunteer relationship.

"The Basics" and "Back to the Basics" - Legal Training for Volunteers - 2007-2011

Guardian ad Litem Program; Ongoing training for lay volunteers on the legal issues in Dependency Law, education on the role of the lawyer, volunteer and staff person.

Adolescent Fitness Education and Training - 2010

Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Task Force - Presentation and workout for P.K. Young Middle School students addressing the importance of proper nutrition and exercise, starting at an early age.

"Outdoor Challenge" - Personal training - 2004-present

Goal specific, small group, outdoor fitness training addressing challenges to goals, personal motivating factors, education on exercise form, technique and nutrition, accountability sessions, regular re-assessments, plans for continued success.

#### **Organizations / Affiliations**

Florida Bar Association

Unlicensed Practice of Law Committee Chair (2009-2011), Attorney Member (2006-2009) Florida Bar Association, 8th Judicial Circuit

Eighth Judicial Circuit Bar Association

Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers - 8th Judicial Circuit

Josiah T. Walls Bar Association, 8th Judicial Circuit

National Strength and Conditioning Association

Alachua County Child Abuse Prevention Task Force