Quaintance resigns as chamber president

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After serving as its president and leader for nearly 18 years, Mike Quaintance is resigning from the Cape Coral Chamber of Commerce to accept a teaching position at Keiser University.

On April 15, he will relinquish his long-held position with the local organization to teach business courses at the private university. Quaintance will start his new job in the beginning of May.

"I got an opportunity to be a full-time professor at Keiser University, which is something I've been working toward for the past couple of years," he said.

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In 2004, Quaintance began working on his associate's degree and graduated from the former Edison State College, now Florida SouthWestern State College. He graduated from Barry University in 2008 with a bachelor's degree, then he received a Master of Business Administration from Keiser in 2011.

Quaintance began teaching as an adjunct professor at Florida SouthWestern the following year.

"I decided teaching post-secondary education was something I wanted to do," he said.

In September, Quaintance began working toward his doctorate's degree.

"Teaching is something that kind of put a fire in my belly," he said.

"It's really fun to see the students have these aha moments about things they learn in class - things that will hopefully make their lives easier and more successful," Quaintance said.

Hired on as chamber president in May 1997, his previous work experience included an advertising company and managing a set of businesses, among other things. Quaintance also was a volunteer for the chamber.

"It's all been small business oriented," he said.

Under Quaintance's direction, the chamber further developed the Leadership Cape Coral program by expanding it. In 2001, it added the Jr. Leadership Cape Coral program for juniors in area high schools.

"We have about 30 kids go through that every year," he said.

More recently, the chamber created the Advanced Leadership Cape Coral program. Working in partnership with Keiser, the series focuses on instructional management leadership.
"We created a European Business Council, which was kind of unique," Quaintance said, adding that there were a handful of trade missions to Germany. "It was a first ever for the chamber."

In 1999, the chamber initiated Cape Coral Days in Tallahassee, which sent a local delegation to the state’s capital to talk to legislators. The trip later evolved into Lee County Days in Tallahassee.

"It still exists today," he said. "We just don't organize it anymore."

Asked what he will miss most about his current job, Quaintance pointed to the people.

"It's a really great group of people who I work with, both volunteers and staff," he said. "Building teams and creating strategic partnerships - that I will probably miss a fair amount, too."

Quaintance cited the stress as the No. 1 thing that will not be missed.

"It's a lot of work. It's not just managing the chamber, it's being involved in the community," he said.

Asked about the biggest obstacle during his tenure, Quaintance named the economy.

"I think most people would have to say that," he said, referring to the economic downfall that followed the national housing bust. "That's probably the toughest time, of any time, I've had in business."

Quaintance expressed gratitude for what the chamber has provided to his family over the years. He attributed his children's chosen paths to his and their community involvement because of the chamber.

"They all stayed local, and they're involved in doing things in the community and serving the community," Quaintance said.

As for filling his well-established shoes, the chamber will hold a national search, with a search committee to help in the selection process. The chamber is also considering an in-house candidate.

"I'm anxious to kind of hand it off and see it grow and see somebody take it to the next level," Quaintance said. "I'm really looking forward to seeing how the chamber moves forward."

Quaintance, 57, has been a Cape resident since 1993. He has been married for 38 years to Bonnie, a nurse for LMHS. Their children include: MacKenzie, who works for the Key West Express; Aaron, a teacher at Ida S. Baker High School; and John, who is employed by the Lee County Sheriff's Office.