

FALL FACULTY ASSEMBLY – AUGUST 22, 2008

Thank you, President Branch, for the warm introduction. I am very much looking forward to working with you and the Faculty Senate this year as together we seek solutions to the many challenges on the horizon – solutions that will demand strong partnership to continue USF's impressive growth. To begin however, I would like to recognize your predecessor, Dr. Michael Barber and, on behalf of the faculty, extend my sincere appreciation for his service as president of the faculty senate and university trustee over the past two years. His leadership and commitment was invaluable as we navigated our way through some trying times while staying the course in pursuit of our bold strategic vision. Thank you, Dr. Barber.

And to all of you, welcome to what I hope will become an annual tradition at the University of South Florida – the Fall Faculty Assembly. This is a time for us to come together at the beginning of a new academic year, to review our accomplishments of the recent past and, most importantly, to sharpen our collective focus on shared priorities for the coming year. I am thrilled that so many of you took time out from your busy schedules to attend this event.

At this time, it is appropriate for us to take a moment to remember those members of the USF community who are no longer with us. Please join me in a moment of silence as we pay our respects to faculty, staff, and student members who have passed away in the last year.

As we begin the new academic year, I would like to extend a warm welcome to those new faculty members who have recently arrived on campus. While this year's class of new faculty may not be as large as in years past, they bring with them impressive credentials and high expectations for even greater accomplishments. Will the new faculty members in attendance please stand so we may show our appreciation?

In addition to our new faculty, we have recently announced some exciting academic leadership appointments. Earlier this Summer, the College of Medicine welcomed Dr. Alicia Monroe as Vice Dean for Educational Affairs where she will oversee medical education at USF. Dr. Monroe came to us from Brown University where she served as Associate Dean for diversity. There are also some familiar faces in new leadership roles. Dr. Linda Whiteford as Associate Vice President for Global Strategies and International Affairs, Dr. Karen Liller who has recently accepted the position of Interim Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Vice President for Research and Innovation, and Dr. Eric Eisenberg who has hit the ground running as Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Each year a few select members of the faculty are recommended by their peers to be honored as Distinguished University Professors. Their scholarly, research and creative achievements along with their leadership in the classroom are integral not only to the growth of their disciplines but also to the continued success of this University. I am pleased to recognize the recipients of the 2008 USF Distinguished University Professor award – Professor of Communication (from the College of Arts and Sciences), Dr. Arthur Bochner, and Professor of Gerontology (from the College of Public Health), Dr. Larry Branch. Dr. Bochner is unable to join us today, as he is in New Zealand completing his sabbatical. The achievements and contributions of Drs. Bochner and Branch are to be commended, and I trust they will continue serving as both mentor and inspiration to their colleagues and students.

I would also like to recognize another group of faculty whose achievements are integral to the success of our university. Recently, the Board of Trustees approved tenure recommendations for 40 faculty members. Would those colleagues please stand?

I am both proud and humbled to serve the faculty of this, the ninth largest university in the nation. It is, after all, the faculty that represents the very intellectual foundation of this institution. It is the talent and innovative ideas that you bring to USF that has assured our reputation as one of the nation's most rapidly growing research universities – jettisoning us to number two in Florida. It is of course my responsibility as Provost to do all I can to support each member of our faculty in reaching their fullest potential – including our tenured and tenure-earning faculty, full-time and adjunct instructors, as well as graduate teaching assistants.

To this point in time, 2008 has been a challenging year for all of us in Florida's public universities. Given the serious economic downturn statewide and nationally, and guided by the faculty's wishes, we at USF adopted a strategic approach to managing the unprecedented magnitude of budget cuts handed down to us from Tallahassee. Prompting extensive consultation, healthy discourse, and open debate, we were quickly challenged to identify the best solutions to balancing a budget that is certain to shrink further in the short term. We didn't always agree but, thankfully, that is the very nature of academe. Maintaining open dialogue and embracing the freedom to express dissenting viewpoints remains a priority for me. But we must not allow ourselves to succumb to institutional paralysis – rather, we owe it to ourselves, our students, our community and the academy – to seek a constructive path to progress and to find new streams of revenue to offset the recent loss in state funding. I am confident that, together, we will work through these challenges. President Genshaft and I held true to our early commitment to preserve all tenured and tenure-earning faculty positions, academic departments and degree programs. Yes, we are structurally different today than we were a year ago, and we know that, with \$50 million less in state funds this year, we will have to behave quite differently than in the past.

As many of you know we do have limited cash reserves that have, over time, been set aside in part for rainy days. Well, it doesn't take a Provost to tell you that today it's raining! Now is the time for us to begin to judiciously draw from these reserves to ensure continuity of support for institutional strategic priorities. Yet we must do so cautiously or we could seriously jeopardize our financial wellbeing for many years to come. It will demand a careful balance. USF's current bond rating, which is akin to our University's credit score, is very high and stable. Our pool of unrestricted funds is a strong reason why we have such a high rating. If we are overzealous in drawing down these funds, we can expose ourselves to prohibitively high interest rates on future and much needed construction projects. Accordingly, we have begun to tap into a portion of these cash reserves, and will need to do so over multiple years and until such time that the state economy is revitalized.

For the next two years, we expect to draw upon these reserves to continue institutional growth and progress – we just cannot afford to stand still and await an economic recovery! In the short-term we will look to meet increasing student academic needs through hiring non-permanent instructors and to help supplement costs associated with summer school. We will make good on our prior commitments to faculty start-up needs. One-time funds will be used to further enhance instructional technology and to upgrade our learning environment, as well as to support faculty development, specifically by supplementing professional travel expenses. And, we have set aside funds to reward our valued staff members, across all levels, in these trying economic times.

The state of Florida has provided funding for just two pay raises in the past five years. This hardly keeps up with the skyrocketing rate of inflation and has fallen short of rewarding deserving faculty members across Florida's public universities. It is no wonder that institutions in other states have been able to lure our faculty away. Earlier this month, I was invited to address the Florida Board of Governors' Budget Workshop on the looming brain drain. As you know, funding and support for education in Florida today leaves plenty of room for improvement. The budget cutbacks do more than damage the financial health of our state's universities – they can also have a serious effect on the morale of our faculty, staff, and students. Cutting our budgets and continually asking us to do more with less makes us feel devalued. It is human nature to go where you feel most wanted and supported. The message I shared with the Board of Governors is that the brain drain is not just leaving us with empty faculty offices – it also leaves Florida with larger class sizes, diminished course offerings, stalled research and economic development, and unreasonable demands and pressures on the faculty that choose to stay. In summary, I made it quite clear that diminished investment in higher education is short-sighted and will have long-term and deleterious effects on the state's future.

I commend those colleagues who have chosen to join and to stay at the University of South Florida and I want you to feel, with the utmost certainty, that you are indeed deeply valued. You have shown a commitment to USF, to your students, and to our community. Today, there is no doubt that USF has become an indispensable asset to the communities we serve. It is your work that has transformed USF from a fledgling regional college into one of the nation's fastest growing and most esteemed public research universities. The state's best and brightest students now come to USF because the best and brightest faculty members have chosen USF as their home for research, learning, and innovation. Today, I want to share with you that the university's leadership is eager to work with the faculty union to find a way to reward our faculty – and as soon as possible! In spite of the financial difficulties we face, we have already presented, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, a two-year salary proposal – one that includes annual cost-of-living increases along with retention and market equity components. Experts seem to agree that the state and national economies are not going to make a rapid turnaround, so a two-year commitment is intended to help our faculty better plan for their personal and professional future in the absence of state-funded pay raises.

Yet stemming the faculty brain drain is not enough. We must also stimulate the faculty brain gain. I stressed to the Board of Governors that investing in faculty is the key to securing the future of the state's educational system and strengthening Florida's economy. Without addressing both the faculty *brain drain* and the *brain gain* today, we will doubtless witness a student brain drain, diminishing educational access and quality, declining retention and degree completion rates, along with an outflow of federal and private investment resulting in an even more weakened state economy.

Because of the thoughtful efforts of our Budget Planning Workgroup, comprised of faculty members, chairs, and deans, we will soon embark upon a national and international search campaign to begin to replenish and grow the ranks of tenured and tenure-earning faculty at USF. We must continue to grow our faculty talent pool as we seek to reduce a growing dependency on contingent faculty across the state university system and, most importantly, it's what our students deserve. In short, we are determined to do our part in recruiting, rewarding and retaining faculty talent which represents the very intellectual capital of this institution and the competitive advantage for our state university system. Once again, we cannot afford to allow ourselves to be distracted from our bold vision.

We will continue to focus on our five strategic priorities of community engagement; global literacy and impact; integrated, interdisciplinary inquiry; research and innovation; and student success, as we continue to show both individual and institutional discipline by investing in those initiatives that count the most.

Something you will likely hear from me throughout the coming year is the importance of “collaboration for competition”. Our University is strengthened when we engage in interdisciplinary partnerships with colleagues across campus, in the local community, and around the world. “Collaboration for competition” leads to innovation, the creation of new knowledge and exciting solutions to old and emerging problems. From cross-disciplinary curricula to shared core research facilities, enhanced collaboration will allow us to optimize our fullest potential and better leverage our precious investments. “Collaboration for competition” is even extending into how we serve our students. The Tampa Campus Library is now home to a Student Learning Commons. Opening this fall, we have consolidated our broad array of academic support services that include tutoring, writing support, research and computer assistance to help more and more of our students reach their fullest academic potential. I ask that you continue to embrace our key relationship with Student Affairs and, in particular, direct those students who are facing the greatest economic hardships to our new and special initiative – Don’t Stop, Don’t Drop – in the Office of the Student Ombudsman.

Grounded in my belief that a great faculty is at the foundation of a great university, I challenge you to carefully examine how you can best contribute to the future of USF. As researchers, we have learned to critically evaluate evidence presented to us. Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise you that, as a research university, it is imperative that our strategic plan be grounded in data and measurable performance outcomes. Our bold ambitions will be rendered meaningless unless we are able to demonstrate progress in both a qualitative and quantitative sense. The priorities set forth in the strategic plan are grounded in data that are continually and transparently tracked through our Planning, Performance and Accountability matrix – these are both our guideposts and milestones. The measures include critical performance indicators such as federal research and development expenditures, doctoral degrees awarded, postdoctoral fellows, freshmen SAT scores, student retention and graduation rates, and national faculty awards. In this way, we regularly gauge our progress against our national peers, AAU institutions, and other top-tier Carnegie universities.

While President Genshaft will provide us all with a detailed performance update during her annual State of the University Address on September 10, I’d like to share with you some general observations that suggest reason for much optimism at USF. Today, faculty research, scholarly and creative productivity is higher than ever and we anticipate a 20% increase in total research awards from a year ago. Over the Summer, many of our faculty colleagues leapt onto the national stage – from receiving a \$128 million grant, from the National Institutes of Health, to better understand the causes and to seek potential cures for Type I, juvenile diabetes; to biologists who received major grants from the NIH and National Cancer Institute to fight the ravages of that disease; to chemists who are developing “smart” metal organic materials, or MOMS, through a grant from the Department of Defense; our participation, led by faculty in the College of Engineering, in Florida’s Renewable Energy Research Consortium; and one of our own history professors who, along with his students, uncovered George Washington’s childhood home in Virginia. More and more of our faculty are receiving national awards and recognitions; the academic credentials of our incoming freshmen are the strongest in the history of the university; we expect student enrollment, this Fall, to be at an all-time high as we’ve redistributed more of our undergraduates to our regional campuses; student retention and graduation rates are better than ever before; annual private giving to the

University has exceeded our record for the second consecutive year; and exciting capital investments in facilities are physical signs that the USF System is growing.

Perhaps one of the more impressive examples of our continued growth is the very building we are in today. The university community has waited many, many years for a new student center and, as I am sure you'll agree, this building's state-of-the-art features were well worth the wait. Our students now have an attractive, comfortable, and functional "Living Room", as Vice President Meningall so aptly describes it, in which to socialize, study, and develop their leadership skills. And we finally have much needed conference and meeting space of which we can all be proud, space in which I hope we will be hosting more and more scholars from around the world. If you haven't done so already, please take a few moments at the end of this assembly to walk the hallways of the New Marshall Center.

And it doesn't end here. USF Health recently opened the Frank and Carol Morsani Center for Advanced Healthcare, a \$67 million, six-story building with nearly 195,000 square feet of space for the innovative delivery of clinical services and medical education. In the coming year, we will break ground on three new buildings: a \$47 million Visual and Performing Arts Teaching Facility, an \$18 million home for the Dr. Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions, and an \$82 million cutting-edge Interdisciplinary Science Teaching and Research Facility. Meanwhile, construction is well underway on the new \$68 million, 1,000-bed Magnolia residence hall that is slated to open next summer. That's \$282 million in new construction on this campus alone! All this while USF St. Petersburg is building a science and technology building, and the new USF Polytechnic campus will soon begin to sprout from the ground, providing our colleagues in Lakeland with a permanent home of their own. In short, there is so very much to be proud of and excited about as we begin the new academic year.

I invite you to step forward and participate in a number of important faculty-driven initiatives that we have planned – from USF's World initiative, to task forces on faculty roles, responsibilities and rewards, sustainability, and integrated, interdisciplinary inquiry. Another important focus for the coming year is preparing an interim five-year report for our regional accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. We already know that SACS is going to take a critical look at our continuing assessment activities. Although it may seem like an administrative function, the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning; therefore, faculty leadership will be essential to its success. Improving student success across the curriculum – both at the undergraduate and graduate levels – is something we value as an institution. On a related note, the University is preparing its electronic presentation to external audiences called the Voluntary System of Accountability, or VSA for short. Elements of the VSA methodology are, at best, questionable; however, it appears to be an emerging national standard and expectation. We have already, and will continue to consult with the faculty as our VSA site evolves.

My mother frequently encouraged me to "dream no small dreams," so today I'd like to challenge you to do the same. As we pursue our vision of joining the ranks of the highest echelon of this nation's research universities, we must remain focused on the path, rather than the destination. If we remain committed to our values and goals, and hold true to our course, together we will achieve great things.

Above all, please let me know how I can help you to be more successful. I look forward to meeting you on campus, reading your emails, or just chatting at one of the regular coffee or tea events I host in my office for the faculty each semester. I will continue to regularly communicate with you – though in abbreviated fashion compared to my recent dispatches!

We have a bold agenda ahead of us for the new academic year, and much rests on the shoulders of the faculty, as you are the very heart and soul of the university. I ask only that you focus on what counts and maintain discipline in all your scholarly endeavors. Nothing will be more important than holding true to our core values – shared governance; academic freedom; promoting diversity and inclusion; integrity and responsibility; collegiality and civility; along with strengthening our vision for one university through collaboration.

Indeed, much has been said today about the need for enhanced collaboration, and that also extends to greater partnership within the academic leadership of our university. You have met our vice presidents and deans, so now I'd like to recognize a few members of my leadership team that will be reaching out to support you in the coming year – Dr. Dwayne Smith, Senior Vice Provost, Dr. Kofi Glover, Associate Provost, Dr. Tapas Das, Associate Provost, and Dr. Graham Tobin, Associate Vice President.

Once again, I thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to join us today. I know that you will enjoy reconnecting with your colleagues and taking in the sights of this new facility, and I hope that you will join us for the reception that follows, sponsored by Aramark, in the section behind you.

Thank you.