Thank you, Dr. Permuth, for your kind introduction. As you rightly point out, this has been a most productive year as USF’s academic leadership and the Faculty Senate have, I believe, built a stronger sense of understanding, trust and partnership. I remain convinced that a robust Faculty Senate, one that is focused on strengthening the University’s academic policies, practices, programs and personnel, is absolutely essential to our continued progress. I look forward to working with the Senate and other faculty groups as we seek solutions to the many challenges facing institutions of higher education today.

And thank you, President Genshaft, for your warm welcome to a new academic year and for your continued leadership. At this time, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge members of USF’s leadership who are with us today.

And to all of you, welcome to the 2009 Fall Faculty Assembly. This is only the second occasion upon which we have met in this forum. It presents a unique opportunity for us to come together at the beginning of a new academic year, to review our accomplishments of the recent past, to take stock of the challenges before us and, most importantly, to sharpen our collective focus on shared priorities for the coming year. I am delighted that so many of you have taken time from your busy schedules to join us.

At this time, I ask that we take a moment to remember those colleagues in 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 students who have passed away in the last year.

The beginning of a new academic year is always exciting, a time when we can start afresh, with a spirit of renewed optimism and hope. On Monday, the classrooms and parking lots will be filled with what we anticipate will be nearly 40,000 students on this campus alone, including the eager yet nervous freshmen of the class of 2013. We’ll also be joined by more than 100 new faculty members bringing with them an impressive array of credentials from some of the most esteemed universities in the world. Will any new faculty colleagues in attendance please stand so we can welcome you to USF?

Each year members of the faculty are selected 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 recipient of the 2009 USF Distinguished University Professor award – [3: ROGERS] Professor of English, Pat Rogers. A
world-renowned scholar of 18th-century British literature, just last year, he was elected Fellow of the British Academy. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Rogers on this rare accomplishment.

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 the awarding of tenure to 52 faculty members across the USF System. Would any of those colleagues who are here please stand and be recognized?

I remain both proud and humbled to serve the faculty of this wonderful university. It is, after all, the faculty that represents the very intellectual foundation of this institution. It is the knowledge and skills that you bring to the instructional and learning process that furnish our students with a competitive advantage upon graduation. And it is the intellectual 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 – launching 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 her or his fullest potential – including our tenured and tenure-earning faculty, full-time and adjunct instructors, as well as postdoctoral fellows, and graduate assistants. To assist you in better understanding this large and complex university I am pleased to announce that, due in large part to the extraordinary efforts of Drs. Dwayne Smith, Larry Branch, Steve Permut and others, we have recently posted a wholly revamped electronic version of the USF Faculty Handbook to the Provost’s website.

In spite of the economic challenges facing higher education throughout the World today, USF continues to make remarkable institutional progress. At least to this moment in time, we have bucked the national trend that is characterized by retrenchment, a freeze on faculty hiring, employee furloughs and layoffs, along with widespread enrollment cuts and program closures. Because it is my belief, and one widely shared by the University’s leadership, that universities must be an important part of the solution to our economic ills, we have instead strengthened our focus on USF’s strategic path to the future, redoubled the institution’s commitment to our core principles and, through careful budget planning, we’ve managed to preserve all tenured and tenure-earning faculty positions and academic programs.

Progress is all around us at USF. Under the leadership of Dr. Karen Holbrook, our research portfolio continues to grow. While a more detailed report will be provided by President Genshaft in her State of the University Address on Wednesday, September 9, and the following day at the Board of Trustees’ quarterly meeting, you can see from this slide that our trend, this decade, has us on track to reach our ambitious goal. Earlier this year, the Office of Research and Innovation established the USF Academy of Inventors to recognize the contributions of scientist-inventors across all disciplines.

While research expenditure counts are important measures of progress, and indicators of economic impact, they barely begin to tell the full story of scholarly impact. Like the world’s great universities, we must be careful to balance our support for the arts, humanities and social sciences which, though not lending themselves to securing large, federally funded grants or, perhaps, even leading to direct economic impact, are absolutely essential to shaping a global civil society and providing meaningful solutions to many of the
pervasive problems facing our World today – from poverty, to illiteracy, disease, global security, energy, water and climate change-related issues. Accordingly, we will continue to value and gauge the quality of contributions made by our faculty through national awards, and citations of their scholarly work. At the same time, I have invited Interim Dean Eric Eisenberg, to lead an initiative aimed at returning the “public intellectual” to the heart of USF and the Tampa Bay communities. Ever cognizant of the essential interdependency of town and gown, we have much to give in return for the valuable asset that our broader metropolitan community presents to our faculty and students.

We have witnessed similar, and dramatic, improvements in our student academic profile, [8: GPA] fully recognizing that USF students’ likelihood of success in the rigorous and challenging undergraduate program that one expects of a top-tier research university will, in large part, be dependent upon their demonstrated scholarly aptitude and academic preparation. We expect the scholarly profile of our incoming freshmen to rise to the highest in USF history. Next week, we will enroll more than 500 students in our Honors College – bright young men and women who, with impressive credentials that would assure them admission to any number of highly selective public and private universities and colleges, have chosen USF for its skyrocketing reputation, its small classes, innovative and rigorous curriculum and the opportunity to immediately engage in undergraduate research. While we are beginning to reap the rewards of significant focus and investment, through improved freshman retention rates and transfer graduation rates of late, [9: STUDENT SUCCESS] regrettably we have yet to realize any such marked improvement in freshman graduation rates. While year-to-year retention rates suggest significant gains in the not too distant future, I believe it is time for us to place a renewed emphasis on undergraduate student success.

At the graduate level, impressive trends can be seen with regard to the [10: PhD] number of doctoral degrees awarded, at USF, over the years, a measure of our growing commitment to graduate education and the creation of new knowledge through research, scholarship and creative activity. It is critically important that we refuel the pipeline, and continue this trend in preparing the nation’s next generation of leaders, thinkers and scientists by doing our part to replenish the ranks of the professoriate for American higher education.

While intellectual capital represents our singularly most important asset, our faculty and students need the appropriate infrastructure essential to realizing their fullest potential. To this end, we have recently broken ground on three new buildings: [11: ARTS] a $47 million Visual and Performing Arts Teaching Facility, [12: PATEL] a $23 million home for the Dr. Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions, and [13: SCIENCE] a $91 million cutting-edge Interdisciplinary Science Teaching and Research Facility. Earlier this year we were successful in securing state funds to support the purchase of the *Weatherbird II*, a research vessel providing marine scientists and students at USF and across the State of Florida, with a much needed platform from which to conduct their research on coastal oceanography.

[14: BLANK] Moreover, from the Board of Governors’ approval of three new PhD programs in government, history and sociology, along with the Doctor of Pharmacy degree; to the implementation of a new, nationally competitive postdoctoral fellows program in the humanities and social sciences; and important agreements with the United Faculty of Florida on a formal
parental leave policy, as well as continuing efforts to implement domestic partner benefits and a promotional track for instructors – USF’s determination to remain “on track” with its bold strategic plan cannot be underestimated.

Yet this picture of dogged determination and institutional growth is not to suggest that life has been or will, in the foreseeable future, be easy at USF. The challenges facing us call for strong, collaborative and visionary leadership along with difficult decisions that will, in large part, redefine higher education in the years to come. In a recent UNESCO report entitled *Trends in Global Higher Education: Tracking an Academic Revolution* (2009), the authors laid out a litany of themes that have, in recent years, become all too familiar to us in Florida: the impact of globalization; massification (or widening access to higher education); inequality in access; increasing student mobility; quality assurance and accountability; financing higher education and the public good versus private gain debate; the proliferation of private (and for profit) universities; growth in information and communications technology; together with demographics and the impact of the global economic crisis.

Throughout the past year we have worked together to preserve and strengthen faculty positions and academic programs at USF. In particular, I want to thank the deans of our colleges of the Arts, Arts & Sciences, Behavioral and Community Sciences, and Business, who have helped navigate varying levels of transformation over the past year. At the same time, we have been remarkably successful in our faculty retention efforts – working with the UFF to distribute a 2.4% pool of funds to in-unit faculty, the majority of which was across-the-board, along with approximately 1% in discretionary adjustments. Similar salary increases were awarded to out-of-unit faculty. These increases rose to last year’s national average of 3.4%, a significant achievement in a state facing such difficult economic hardship. In addition, and to the surprise and envy of many of our peers, careful budget planning over the past two years allowed us to hire more than 50 permanent faculty members in Academic Affairs, the overall quality of which is particularly impressive.

Of course, like most universities across the nation, we are facing even greater budget challenges this academic year, reductions that surpass the near-crippling cuts handed down last year. [15: BUDGET] Since July 1, 2007, USF has endured a loss of $96 Million (or 29%) in general revenue and lottery funds from our base budget. As you can see, with the State’s investment shrinking, the obligation to fund a higher education across the State University System of Florida is rapidly shifting to the students and their families. While tuition revenues are expected to increase in the coming years, it will be a long time before we can hope to backfill the significant loss in state funding. In the short-term – and assuming no change in the level of state funding, stable enrollment patterns, annual base and differential tuition fee increases of 15%, and a 2% annual increase in recurring expenditures, the gap between recurring revenues and budgeted expenditures will be “plugged” with a combination of one-time, federal budget stabilization funds and unrestricted, cash reserves. As I have suggested before, we must be judicious in our draw down of reserves since we have continuing financial obligations to meet, and a high quality bond rating to maintain. Of course, the use of one-time funds does not represent a responsible long-term solution, for as the federal and institutional “savings” are spent down over the next couple of years we will be further challenged to balance our recurring budget.
As you can see, without an infusion of state monies, the availability of new recurring funds will be limited in the years to come – leading to some challenging strategic decisions surrounding competing priorities that include faculty and staff retention, the hiring of new faculty, academic advisors and staff (to reduce our dependence on contingent employees), increasing the competitive value of graduate assistant stipends, funding new graduate assistant stipends, and establishing recurring operating budgets. These big challenges will be tackled in the coming months by the USF System Budget Planning Advisory Committee, and the university’s leadership in consultation with deans, chairs, faculty and other stakeholder groups.

While we have made remarkable progress in the past year, we cannot afford to slow the pace. First and foremost, I stand firm in my primary commitment to faculty and staff retention. Moreover, in the coming year we must continue to strengthen our community of scholars through the worldwide recruitment of students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and staff. While I cannot make a firm commitment on the magnitude of new faculty hiring until such time that I have confidence in this year’s enrollment, we are poised, with college priorities in hand, to make timely decisions as we did last year. Meanwhile, we are working diligently to develop a multiyear plan to ensure our competitiveness in attracting the best and brightest graduate and undergraduate students, from around the state, the nation and the world. To this end, and because USF significantly trails its statewide and national peers, we are exploring innovative strategies to achieve our goal to significantly increase the number of out-of-state and international degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students enrolled by 2012. We fully recognize that such a strategy is consistent with our institutional commitment to valuing diversity and inclusion, as well as enhancing global literacy and impact. By bringing broader global perspectives and experiences into the classroom, we will necessarily improve the quality, relevance and value of a USF education.

At this point, I want to acknowledge the good work of the University-wide task forces on Faculty Roles, Responsibilities and Rewards; Integrated, Interdisciplinary Inquiry; and USF World – each paving the way for continuing dialogue, planning, policy development and program implementation in the coming months. As planned, the work of these task forces will continue in more integrated fashion even as early recommendations for structural change have been accepted. We are excited at the leadership brought by Dean Donna Petersen, as Interim Executive Director of USF World and the Patel Center for Global Solutions. With a mind to strengthening our strategic commitment to enhancing global literacy and impact at USF, I will soon be announcing an internal, competitive grant program to support faculty members who wish to explore research collaborations and/or co-curriculum development and delivery, with colleagues at one or more of our global partner universities – at Nankai in China, Ghana and Cape Coast in West Africa, and Exeter in the United Kingdom. Recognizing USF’s longtime engagement in the Caribbean basin and Latin America, we expect to extend like opportunities to this region of special importance to Florida and Tampa Bay. Our intent here is to develop deep, strategic and sustainable institutional partnerships that will yield mutual benefit over the years.

Also, this year, we welcome Drs. Susan Greenbaum and Christian Wells to important leadership positions, as they are expected to bring both vision and a renewed sense of institutional focus to the newly-established USF Offices of Community Engagement, and Sustainability.
As is our wont, we will move forward with some carefully shaped priorities in the coming year. Building upon the recommendation of a faculty committee, and aligned with the new Office of Sustainability, Drs. Linda Whiteford and Karen Liller will facilitate planning of a new School of Global Sustainability at USF. While similar ventures are successfully underway elsewhere, at Arizona State and the University of Washington for instance, we envision something quite different at USF – a school without walls, drawing upon the collective strength of our existing faculty across all colleges, capitalizing on partnerships with public and private sector agencies as well as universities overseas, and leveraging the power of technology. If we are to put USF “on the map”, it means that the timeline will necessarily be short – we must have all approvals in place, by January 2010, to take advantage of this narrow window of opportunity. We will work with the Faculty Senate to seek expedited approval of the new School and associated academic programs – most likely, in the first instance, an interdisciplinary Master’s degree that builds upon our existing academic and research strengths in sustainable, healthy communities – grounded in the study of built coastal communities, climate change and extreme weather events, water, hydrology and karst topography, waterborne pathogens and public health, along with clean and sustainable energy.

[19: BLANK] The Florida Center of Excellence for Biomolecular Identification and Targeted Therapeutics, along with the USF branch of the Florida Energy Systems Consortium, have already put our interdisciplinary research on the map. Meanwhile, USF’s other two signature research programs continue to flourish – diabetes and autoimmune disorders, led by Dr. Jeffrey Krischer, and Integrated Neurosciences, co-chaired by Drs. David Diamond, in Psychology, and Cliff Gooch, in Neurology.

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Of course, nothing will be more important than holding true to our core institutional values in these challenging times – shared governance; transparency and accountability; academic freedom; promoting diversity and inclusion; integrity and responsibility; collegiality and civility; embracing innovation and entrepreneurism; along with strengthening our vision for one university through collaboration.

The coming year will bring continuing maturation of the USF System [20: SYSTEM] – with further development of an interdependent network of separately-accredited institutions promoting differential yet complementary missions, along the lines of the Universities of Michigan, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Washington, and Rutgers. This Fall, for the first time in the history of USF, we expect to report institutional profile and performance data separately, by campus, through IPEDS to the US Department of Education. As we move forward, the efforts of USF Sarasota-Manatee, and eventually USF Polytechnic, following in the footsteps of USF St. Petersburg’s successful pathway to separate accreditation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, will need to be carefully balanced with USF’s preparation of a strong mid-term report to assure continuing accreditation. To guide this important effort, we are fortunate to have recruited Dr. Stephen RiCharde as our first Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness. In addition, we will continue to invest in and strengthen our core programs in the liberal arts, in anticipation of our Phi Beta Kappans’ application to shelter a PBK Chapter at USF, and we are carefully tracking gains made toward membership in the Association of Research Libraries.
Furthermore, and ever cognizant of the changing financial landscape in public higher education, we will be exploring novel revenue generating opportunities presented to us through E-Campus. As we look to our peers across the state and nation, it is clear that we cannot wait for the state legislature to fund our growing needs, and increased tuition revenues will be insufficient in the short-term. Thus, with a mind to allowing our colleges to focus their efforts on the core mission of the University we will, under the leadership of Dr. Kathleen Moore, explore the feasibility of migrating some existing programs out of the colleges to E-Campus. These could include, but are not limited to, non-credit offerings, test preparation, consulting, conferences, lifelong learning, and pre-college programs. The point here is that our core academic mission is clear and our goals ambitious. Our colleges cannot continue to be “everything to everyone”. Moreover, E-Campus is best positioned to leverage its strengths toward generating revenues that will, in time, be reinvested in Academic Affairs. Finally, we will soon be giving very careful thought to instituting direct lending to students, perhaps as early as next year. While we await clear directives from the federal government, we are striving hard to ensure that those students with demonstrable financial need are provided the support necessary to realize academic success.

As we continue our focus on the five strategic priorities of community engagement; global literacy and impact; integrated, interdisciplinary inquiry; research and innovation; and student success, I challenge each one of you to carefully reflect on how you can best spend your expertise, time and energy, in ways that will advance your own professional development while contributing to USF’s strategic pathway forward – in short, there is no better time than today, to ask what counts most?

Having earlier made mention of student retention and graduation rates, I want to refocus our attention on student success. Students are our raison d’etre. I believe sincerely that the academic quality of an institution’s graduates, is the best measure of a university’s quality. Accordingly, today I am calling upon you to place a renewed emphasis on instruction and student learning – at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. World class undergraduate and graduate programs are at the heart of any great university – promoting learning communities where faculty and students readily engage in rigorous discourse and discovery. From fundamental knowledge, to essential skills and competencies such as critical thinking, effective communication, and synthesis of knowledge, we must focus on nurturing our students along a timely path of intellectual and personal growth. While we, the faculty, are essential to student success, we cannot do it alone. Our partners in student affairs will play an essential role as must all members of the USF community – and so I challenge you, whether professor, financial aid advisor, office manager, librarian, or parking attendant – to take it personally, and ask yourself how you can do your part to improve student academic success at USF. Does it ever occur to you that while we speak of four-year degrees, few, painfully few, undergraduate students actually graduate on that timeline – frequently clogging the undergraduate pipeline – further limiting student access and adding to the cost of a degree. Together, we must identify and seek solutions to those barriers to student success.

In the coming days, I will announce the establishment of a university-wide task force on Enhancing Student Success. Reporting jointly to myself and Dr. Meningall, Vice President for Student Affairs, its charge will be to review current policies,
practices, programs and performance related to undergraduate and graduate student success (including, but not limited to, admissions, advising, career and graduate school placement, counseling, curriculum, financial aid, Learning Commons, residence life, systems, and tracking), to identify best practices, and recommend an actionable plan to enhance student success at USF.

[25: BLANK] Of course, our lot appears never to be easy in this day and age. Plagued (please forgive the pun) by the impending threat of an H1N1 pandemic, you have already been asked to prepare for academic continuity in the case of a campus closure. We will do our part to provide you with the professional and infrastructure support to mitigate loss of instructional time – I only ask that you take this opportunity to plan ahead, and communicate your expectations to your students next week. Meanwhile, please encourage your colleagues and students to follow the health department’s recommendations – relating to education and prevention – to avoid the spread of swine flu.

[26: TECHNOLOGY] And finally, driven by a need expressed by our students, we will spend the coming year exploring ways in which we can better integrate emerging technologies into the academic life of the university – from communications and marketing, to student recruitment, advising, curriculum delivery and learning enrichment, to research, and career placement – we’ll consider how content development, various devices and platforms, together with social networking might be used to enhance the college experience at USF. Meanwhile we can already anticipate campus and university-wide improvements through the use of technology fee revenues earmarked for projects ranging from enhancements to MyUSF, expansion of wireless access, creation of a Virtual Learning Commons, classroom capture, and video library-on-demand.

[27: BLANK] Grounded in my belief that a great faculty is at the foundation of a great university, I ask you to carefully examine how you can best contribute to the future of USF. As scholars, 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.

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. 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. 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. Linda Whiteford, Associate Vice President.

In closing, I extend my warm wishes for a pleasant and productive 2009/2010 academic year and
I thank you in anticipation of your contributions to continuing USF’s march forward.