

From: Wilcox, Ralph
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2008 10:43 PM
To: Academic Affairs-College Faculty; Academic Affairs-Unit Faculty
Cc: Genshaft, President Judy; Visot, Cynthia; Goodman, Marshall (USF Lakeland); White, Karen A.; Guilford, Arthur (USF Sarasota-Manatee); Acad-COD
Subject: Letter to the Faculty



May 22, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

As we close in on the second week of the Summer semester, I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on a number of important matters. First, as many of you know, just yesterday President Genshaft presented USF's proposed budget reduction plan to faculty, student, and staff leadership groups in advance of approval by the Board of Trustees. You can read the text of [President Genshaft's address](#) to the Faculty Senate, and [further details](#) are available online.

In the first instance, USF will be absorbing a \$35.6 million (or 10.6%) reduction in recurring funds (from July 1, 2007 to July 1, 2008), with the expectation of more reductions to come. While we have been able to preserve all tenured and tenure-earning faculty positions, along with all undergraduate and graduate degree programs, there is no doubt that our commitment to fulfilling our mission and moving along our strategic path will present us with many challenges in the coming months. Among the changes you will experience are:

- Larger enrollments in classes,
- Changes in the structure and alignment of colleges and academic support units,
- Fewer choices in the array of classes delivered,
- An immediate freeze on the purchase of office supplies as we draw down the inventory on campus in anticipation of implementing a university-wide consolidated purchasing contract,
- Centralized purchasing of computer hardware and software,
- Reduced access to buildings on certain days and at certain times,
- Reduced maintenance support and services (grounds, custodial, and maintenance),
- Delays in financial and human resources processing times,
- Reduced support for intra-campus relocations, and
- Adjustments in building temperatures.

In essence, we will both look different and will need to behave differently in the months and years to come, and I ask for your understanding as we navigate these difficult times. Throughout, I will remain committed to

continuing support for your scholarly and research agendas, and to find innovative ways to reward and retain our faculty.

With our budget reduction plan approved, the pace of our efforts to rebuild budgets in advance of the new fiscal year (which begins July 1, 2008) will accelerate. We will be guided in this important task by the recommendations of the *Budget Planning Workgroup* which, comprised of faculty, chairs, and deans, has been working diligently to meet its charge since early in the Spring semester. I plan to post detailed budgets for FY 2007/08 and FY 2008/09 once the work has been completed.

While some organizational changes have been announced, and some conversations continue, other deliberations will likely spill over into the 2008/09 academic year. Meanwhile, I will continue my meetings with deans, chairs, and Faculty Senate leadership throughout the Summer months as we seek to restructure USF to preserve quality and strengthen our position for the future. My most sincere gratitude goes out to each and every one of you who has unselfishly contributed mightily to the huge tasks of budget reduction and strategic realignment planning over the past nine months.

Legislative update

As you know, like many other states, Florida's economy has realized a significant and continuing downturn over the past year. The cut in state funding faced by USF and all other public universities is the direct outcome of a sharp decline in tax revenues. I am sorry to say that there were no legislatively approved pay increases for faculty or staff this year, which will make retention a top priority for us in the coming year. We do, of course, plan to award the customary salary increases for those faculty colleagues who will receive news of promotion this year.

Our students will be faced by increases in tuition and fees which, while providing a much needed source of revenue to hire new faculty and advisors, may also create some financial challenges for some. I ask that you please direct any of your students who express such concerns to our Office of Financial Aid so that we can work directly with them to seek solutions while keeping them on the path to graduation.

Although good news was hard to find in this year's legislative session, USF expects to receive nearly \$50 million in funds for construction that will soon see us breaking ground on the long-awaited music building and beginning work on the new master planned campus for USF Polytechnic (formerly USF Lakeland). The University also received a release of student trust fees that will be used to build a wellness and nutrition center at USF, and support student-orientated, campus upgrades on our regional campuses. Allocations of \$1.7 million of recurring funds for the medical school and \$200,000 non-recurring funds for the joint military leadership program rounded out USF's state appropriation activity this year. We hope that next year will bring completion of funding for the much needed interdisciplinary science teaching and research building.

The recently concluded legislative session also saw the creation of a new state college system, the preservation of the Florida Board of Governors, and immensely disappointing political intrusion into this year's Florida Center of Excellence competition which means that two of USF's proposals that were recommended for funding, following very positive external peer review, will not likely see the funds they so richly deserve.

Early this month, many of you showed your commitment to our students by participating in one or more of the eight commencement activities at USF. This Spring, USF awarded approximately 5,000 degrees. I hope that we can continue to build on a renewed sense of faculty engagement when our August 2008 class of graduates receives their diplomas.

With Summer 2008 underway, our enrollment remains strong in spite of the fiscal challenges we face. You can always follow our enrollment patterns through our [E-profile](#) reports. Following the first week of classes, our total enrollment remains about the same as in Summer 2007. However, a near 5% drop in student credit hours on the Tampa campus is balanced by large gains on each of our regional campuses. The product of a significant cut in funding for the Summer semester, USF Tampa will need to find ways to rebound in Fall 2008 as we seek to replenish our ranks of non-tenure earning faculty.

Last month, several of us had the pleasure of hearing Dr. Bob Weisberg, from our College of Marine Science, deliver his 2008 Distinguished University Professor Lecture. More recently, I was delighted to announce that Dr. Arthur Bochner, of the Department of Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences, and Dr. Laurence Branch, Department of Health Policy and Management in the College of Public Health, have been named as the 2008 Distinguished University Professors. Please join me in congratulating them. They will have their title formally bestowed at the Fall 2008 Faculty Honors and Awards Ceremony.

While many believe that the halls of academe are quiet during the Summer months, I want to assure you that things are humming in the Provost's Office. As you know, we are currently seeking to fill the position of *Interim Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Vice President for Research and Innovation*. To this end, we welcome written expressions of interest and/or nominations from across the USF community. More information can be found [online](#).

Furthermore, the work of the *Faculty Roles, Responsibilities and Rewards Steering Committee* is underway, led by Dr. Dwayne Smith, Senior Vice Provost, while Dr. Linda Whiteford, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Strategic Initiatives is heading up a USF-wide *Steering Committee on Global Engagement*. I fully anticipate that each of these groups will generate ample opportunity for a breadth of faculty involvement as the Fall semester begins. You can learn more about Dr. Whiteford's leadership in defining USF's new *Center for Community Engaged Scholarship and Research*, and what President Genshaft's recent signing of the *American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment* will mean for USF on the [Academic Affairs website](#).

As we reflect on the past year, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Barber for his valued leadership of the Faculty Senate and welcome Drs. Larry Branch and Steve Permuth as the recently elected President and Vice President for the coming term. I look forward to working with them to strengthen the academic foundation at USF.

Finally, and most important, I want to extend my most sincere gratitude on behalf of our students and University leadership for the deeply valued contributions that you continue to make. You, our faculty, are the heart of the University and I recognize that USF's national and global reputation will be built on the good work that you do in the classroom, through your creative, scholarly and research endeavors, and through your engagement with the community.

While I know that you will remain busy this Summer, I do hope that you find the time to rest and regenerate your energies. I look forward to welcoming to this year's *Faculty Forum* scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on Friday August 22, 2008 (the venue will be announced at a later date).

Meanwhile, I want you to know that despite the fiscal challenges faced by universities across Florida (and in many other states), I remain committed to keeping USF focused and disciplined as we continue our journey along the path laid out by our [Strategic Plan, 2007-2012](#).

Best regards,

Ralph

Ralph C. Wilcox
Provost and Senior Vice President