



July 1, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

I trust that this finds you well, perhaps delivering Summer School classes or working in your laboratory or in a variety of locations around the World expanding our students' global understanding or conducting your research, or simply taking some much needed personal time to relax and regenerate your energies in anticipation of a new Fall semester? There is much that I want to update you on, and information that I'd like to share as we prepare for what I expect to be another challenging yet productive year ahead.

During the 2007/08 academic year, USF closed in on awarding nearly 10,000 degrees for the first time in its history. It was particularly gratifying to see so many baccalaureate degree recipients cross the stage, proof positive of the effective strategies that we have been putting in place to enhance our graduation rate. Furthermore, we awarded 227 doctoral degrees, the most in USF history. Thank you again for the selfless efforts and countless hours that you invest in educating and mentoring our students and guiding them toward graduation. We will begin the 2008/09 commencement season in the Sun Dome on Saturday August 9, 2008, at 9:00 am for the College of Arts and Sciences (doctoral, masters and bachelors), and at 1:30 pm for the School of Architecture, Colleges of Business, Education, Engineering, Marine Science, Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and Visual and Performing Arts, along with Undergraduate Studies and the Graduate School (doctoral, masters and bachelors). In appreciation of your continuing service to the University we will provide light refreshments in the Green and Gold Room of the Sun Dome, beginning one hour in advance of each Commencement. Please sign up no later than Friday July 18, 2008, at www.usf.edu/commencement.

I am particularly proud of the fact that USF was recently cited by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* for being the nation's leading producer of African American baccalaureates in English Language and Literature/Letters, and in the top ten nationally for African American baccalaureates in Biological and Biomedical Sciences, and Social Science and History; Hispanic baccalaureates in Biological and Biomedical Sciences; and Native American baccalaureates in English Language and Literature/Letters. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion remains a strong hallmark of USF.

[USF System enrollment](#) is stronger than ever this Summer with nearly 28,000 students enrolled. While the Tampa campus saw a drop of nearly five percent in student credit hours, growth at USF St. Petersburg (+9%), USF Sarasota-Manatee (+14%), and USF Polytechnic (+44%) accounted for the USF System's overall growth. This is a pattern that we are planning for in the future as USF (Tampa) stabilizes its undergraduate enrollment and seeks to grow graduate enrollment, while the regional campuses provide increased access for undergraduates and for students in selected professional masters programs. Early signs are that enrollment will continue to be strong in the coming Fall semester.

Recently, we were notified that the College of Business received continuing accreditation from the *Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International* (AACSB) for its business and accounting programs. This is strong affirmation of the quality of the programs, faculty, students and alumni in our College of Business and maintains our comprehensive record of accreditation by national accrediting agencies for our professional Schools and Colleges.

Since his arrival at USF earlier this year, Dean Bill Garrison has been actively exploring exciting, new directions for our libraries. I am delighted to share with you that the USF Libraries are now a collective member of the [Digital Library of the Caribbean](#) and, in the coming weeks, faculty and students will have access to the Shoah Foundation's collection of nearly 52,000 videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and witnesses. Consistent with faculty and student demands placed on a research university, plans are also underway to extend library hours to 24/5 access (on the Tampa campus) in partnership with student government. Also beginning in the Fall semester, we will be consolidating a broad array of academic support services into a *Student Learning Commons* located in the Tampa Library. Designed to strengthen our students' learning effectiveness, it will include tutoring in mathematics and other subjects, writing support, as well as a number of courses and workshops on learning strategies, test-taking, study and research skills. The *Student Learning Commons* initiative integrates services to improve access and allows learning support, technology support, and library staff to work collaboratively to better meet the diversity of student learning needs.

Even in these challenging times, we remain deeply committed to better serving the academic needs of students enrolled at USF, as well as strengthening the professional development and research support for our faculty and staff. In prior messages, I have detailed the many national and international achievements of our faculty from Guggenheim, to Getty, and Fulbright recipients. At this time, I urge you to take a careful look at the various [Faculty Awards and Fellowships](#) in the Arts, Humanities, Science, Engineering, and Health and consider applying and/or nominating your colleagues. These are just one measure of USF's progress along its strategic path. The deadline for the 2009/10 [Fulbright Scholar Applications](#) for lecturing and/or research in over 130 countries is August 1, 2008.

I know that many of you have been anxiously awaiting a status report on improvements in instructional and learning technology at USF. By the beginning of Fall, it is my expectation that most, if not all, classrooms on the Tampa campus will have received significant upgrades. I am told that data and electrical upgrades are underway and that the "base standard" will include PC, LCD panel, laptop connection, DVD/VCR player, wide-format projection system etc., technology stations with a chair (some with wheelchair access), and a media control system. In addition, some rooms will receive a document camera and/or new whiteboards. This has been a top priority for me since last Fall and is expected to contribute to enhancing the instructional and learning environment for faculty and students alike.

Finally, you may have read recently that USF St. Petersburg has been placed on probation by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The Commission determined that USFSP could not sufficiently measure and document compliance with two of 89 SACS standards that focused on college-level competencies and student achievement. We stand ready to support our colleagues and we are confident that they will address these shortcomings and remove their probationary status next year. It is important to point out that this action does not affect the continuing accreditation, in good standing, of USF, USF Sarasota-Manatee and USF Polytechnic.

Confronting the Challenge Through Changing Realities

By now you are all aware of the unprecedented economic challenges facing the nation and the State of Florida. To this point in time, and like other public universities in Florida, USF has seen its state budget reduced by 10.6 percent (or \$35.6 million). Recently, we learned that, beginning July 1, 2008, even more resources will be held back, effectively reducing our budget by another 4 percent. Accordingly, we will be expected to balance our budget with nearly 15 percent (or \$50 million) less funding (across the SUS System) than we had a year ago. Because of President Genshaft's foresight in asking us to plan for a 15 percent base budget reduction, it means that we're okay for now; but the challenge is not over. Just last week, Florida's tax revenue collections for May 2008 were released and they were \$123 million below the March revised estimates. Accordingly, it appears that more difficult decisions may be on the horizon. As we seek to further cut spending and generate new revenues in the coming months we will focus on the future, guided by our [strategic priorities](#) and the principles of quality (excellence + impact), centrality, demand and future viability.

Of course Florida's public universities are not alone in facing this economic downturn, although we do know that institutions in energy rich states are faring much better. Complicating this situation is a widening tendency toward reducing public investment in universities (including less general revenue and capital funds in Florida) and growing private investment (through increases in tuition and fees, private giving, federal and private research funding, licensing revenues, and auxiliaries). At the same time, the accompanying expansion of public regulation and a shift from state universities' apparent focus on the public good to private gain continues to trouble many of us.

Chancellor Mark Rosenberg and the Florida Board of Governors continue to work toward an "Accord" with the Legislature and Governor, assuring Florida's public universities with an appropriate and predictable source of funding. The BOG, in turn, will negotiate "Compacts" with each university, focusing upon an institution's distinctive mission. What is most apparent in these difficult economic times is a shifting focus from student access and growth funding to student success and performance funding. That means a greater emphasis (and increased public scrutiny) will be placed on student retention and graduation rates along with the nature and number of degrees awarded in the future. Once again, this appears altogether consistent with national trends.

As you might imagine, it has been quite a challenge to balance our budget, effective July 1, 2008. I would like to thank members of the *Budget Priorities Advisory Task Force* (under the Co-Chairmanship of Drs. Dale Johnson and John Ward) for their good work. For some months the *Budget Planning Workgroup*, also chaired by Dr. Johnson (CAS), and joined by Professors John Ward (FMHI), David Williams (CVPA), Daphne Thomas (COE), Hunt Hawkins (CAS), Bob Weisberg (CMS), Bob Forsythe (COB), John Skvoretz (CAS), and John Wiencek (COENG), have been working diligently to re-set budgets and to establish budget rules for the coming years. Thanks also for the extraordinary efforts of Dr. Michael Moore, Kevin Toso and the college budget officers who have labored to establish base budgets for the coming fiscal year.

The budget re-setting process began with the necessary reduction of recurring resources (largely through unfilled positions) and a reduction in administrative and operating support leading to the sharing of resources across twelve smaller units, all consistent with a ratio applied equitably across Academic Affairs. With the most significant budget cuts coming in the form of recurring funds, the process of "backfilling" the losses with one-time cash for the 2008/09 academic year has begun through the allocation of resources to support non-tenure earning instructional needs in the colleges. We are hopeful of restoring essential operational needs to the extent that available non-recurring funds will allow. Moreover, because we anticipate some new tuition revenues, I do expect that in the coming weeks we will be inviting deans to submit their prioritized requests for new tenure-earning faculty positions (to begin the 2009/10 academic year). Yet, with no reduction in the number of students enrolled at USF (or across the State University System, even as the Legislature calls for greater access or widening of participation), we have to be cautious about a growing reliance on contingent faculty (adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants) to deliver the curriculum. Not surprisingly, we are faced with a major dilemma as students understandably demand coursework in order to graduate on time, and state universities are faced by a significant decline in recurring funds to support tenure earning faculty positions.

As President Genshaft announced [USF's budget cuts](#) on May 21st, 2008, we were pleased to share that we had preserved all departments, undergraduate and graduate degree programs, along with all tenured and tenure-earning faculty positions. Deeper cuts were avoided by significant changes in USF-wide business practices including, but not limited to, a contract for office supplies and office furniture with Office Depot effective July 1, 2008, along with a transition to consolidated services, support and purchasing in Information Technology. Moreover, we can expect to see a university closure over the Winter break.

About three weeks ago I [announced](#) some [realignments](#) in Academic Affairs. These changes in academic and budget placement were the outcome of extensive, open discussions and careful deliberation across the Tampa campus in what was a time limited period. From weekly consultation with deans, to extended "campus conversations," and smaller meetings with departmental faculty and representative groups, the dialogue has

been both broad and constructive. Implementation with the onset of a new fiscal year is important to assure immediate savings to our recurring budget and to establish a full year's budget history. Included in the changes is a reconfiguration of the College of Arts and Sciences around three schools of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Humanities, and Sciences, with the addition of the Department of Economics, the Institute on Black Life, and the Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean. Each School is perhaps best viewed as an interdisciplinary community of scholars. A new college structured around the Schools of Aging Studies and Social Work, the Departments of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Criminology, and Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling, and the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute promises significant growth and balance in scholarly and research productivity, while the College of Visual and Performing Arts becomes the academic home for the School of Architecture and Community Design.

These structural realignments represent an administrative and budget shift intended to preserve academic quality, establish a critical mass of faculty, and strengthen interdisciplinary synergies that will make USF more competitive in the future. Cost savings are realized through a sharing of administrative and operational resources, improved efficiencies and joint use of facilities and equipment, along with a reduction in curriculum duplication. Moreover, I anticipate that this arrangement will provide greater opportunity for a wider range of faculty to participate in the classroom. While I recognize that these organizational changes may create some challenges and issues for faculty members and students alike, I can assure you that university and college leaders remain committed to ensuring that this transition proceeds in a constructive manner. We will do all that we can to limit the impact on faculty, staff and students. I anticipate that there will be little visible change in the short-term as matters of unit governance, promotion and tenure, and curriculum development will need to be thought through by faculty with the utmost care. Indeed I have every confidence that, with careful deliberation, reasonable people will develop reasonable solutions to the challenges we face. At the same time, I recognize that the emerging academic arrangement may continue to change. As I've suggested from the outset, some conversations will continue and additional structural refinements may follow.

While I will be among the first of those acknowledging that, because of the declining economic climate, the past six months have been anything but satisfying, I remain confident that we can and must continue on the journey defined by our strategic plan. Guided by institutional discipline and focus we will be positioned stronger, albeit poorer in the short-term. Furthermore, while reaching our destination may take longer, it is the direction of our journey that will prove to be most important.

Maintaining Our Focus and Shaping Our Future.

Despite the potential for institutional paralysis, we have not allowed the unprecedented budget challenges to distract us from the essential need for planning and future action. Once again, I would like to extend my appreciation for the valued contributions of Deans John Skvoretz (College of Arts and Sciences), Delcie Durham (and Assistant Dean Brent Weisman) of the Graduate School, and Charlie Hight (School of Architecture and Community Design). I fully anticipate that we will launch national searches to fill these important leadership positions during the Fall semester. Meanwhile, I am pleased to announce that Dr. Eric Eisenberg will serve as Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and I expect to announce an appointment to the position of Interim Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Vice President for Research and Innovation in the near future. Presently, a search for the Senior Vice President for Business and Finance is underway, chaired by Dr. Karen Holbrook, Vice President for Research and Innovation.

Meanwhile, the *Inter-Campus Academic Relations* (ICAR) document, first approved in 2005, is undergoing review by an Ad Hoc Committee comprised of representatives from the Faculty Senate along with campus and college administrators, under the leadership of Dr. Kathleen Moore. Moreover, the future work of three USF-wide Task Forces is being shaped through the efforts of steering committees. It is important to point out that these steering committees are not the task forces. Rather their role is to clarify the charge, scope, membership, process, timelines and products (e.g. recommended changes to policies, practices, and budget priorities) that

will guide the work of each task force in the coming year. Shaped by USF's strategic plan, the three task forces will focus on:

- (1) *Faculty Roles, Responsibilities and Rewards*. Facilitated by Dr. Dwayne Smith, it will examine how USF can best recruit, support, retain and reward an AAU-like faculty,
- (2) *Global and Community Engagement*. Facilitated by Dr. Linda Whiteford, it will focus on enhancing performance in support of USF's strategic priorities of global literacy and impact, community engagement, and sustainability, and
- (3) *Integrated, Interdisciplinary Inquiry*. Facilitated by Drs. Tapas Das and Linda Whiteford, it will seek to identify and mitigate the impediments to interdisciplinary learning and research at USF.

I anticipate that the work of these broadly representative task forces will begin, in earnest, in the Fall 2008 semester.

Also, beginning in Fall 2008, we will launch a highly inclusive and transparent *Compact Planning* process that will seek to bring closer alignment between USF's strategic and budget planning, beginning at the programmatic and department level. At the same time, and in addition to global literacy, integrated interdisciplinary inquiry, community engagement and student success, we, like many public universities, have broader issues to address on a daily basis. These require that we pay increased attention to matters of campus safety and security; mental and public health of faculty, staff and students; student and faculty recruitment and retention; access, affordability and the "sticker price" of college attendance; private giving; continuing accreditation; aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance; global competition; and restoring the public trust, especially through demonstrable learning outcomes and institutional integrity in the Post Sarbanes-Oxley era. Suffice it to say, we have a growing agenda as we enter the new academic year. To learn more, I invite you to attend our opening Faculty Assembly, on August 22nd, 2008 at 2:00 pm in the Royal Palm Ball Room of the new Marshall Center. This will provide an opportunity to update the USF community on budget, performance and plans for the future. This event will be followed by a reception.

For now, and despite the challenges faced by Florida's universities, I remain committed to meeting the needs of students currently enrolled at USF and supporting the research and scholarly agendas of our faculty. To do this, we must remain steadfast in pursuit of our strategic plan with a focus on expanding USF's creative, scholarly and research profile (with a growing emphasis on competitive, federal research funding); enhancing the quality, diversity and scholarly productivity of USF's faculty; increasing the number of doctoral degrees awarded; improving the national standing of USF's academic programs; and strengthening the undergraduate and graduate student profile and success rate through enhanced retention, graduation and placement rates.

As the Summer months heat up I wish you well in your scholarly endeavors and trust that you will find some well-deserved time for rest and relaxation. I look forward to welcoming you back to the beginning of a new semester in August.

Best regards,

Ralph

Ralph C. Wilcox
Provost and Senior Vice President