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**Subject:** Message to the Faculty



July 29, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

Even as we've become enveloped by the heat and humidity of a Florida summer, much is happening during what, for many, has been the busiest summer in recent years at USF. Accordingly, I'd like to take this opportunity to bring you up to date since I last wrote.

First, let me thank those faculty colleagues who, with students, staff and visitors to campus, responded so well to the call to stay inside during [last Friday's emergency](#). While I am relieved to report that the threat passed without anyone being harmed, it is important that, as a university community, we remain vigilant to such threats. Accordingly, and even in the wake of "false alarms," it is essential that we all pay careful attention to the safety precautions that have been implemented at USF. Nothing is more important to us than the physical wellbeing of the members of our campus community; for without securing that basic principle, a university's fundamental mission of education and inquiry will be disrupted.

### **Budget and Legislative Matters**

As you might imagine, much of our energy this summer has been focused on the university's budget and ensuring adequate funding to support our core mission. Earlier this month, I distributed college budgets for the 2009/2010 academic year that provided deans with a blend of base-budgeted recurring funds and non-recurring resources to continue academic operations at the same level as in the 2008/2009 academic year. Along with those budgets, I furnished a revised set of guiding principles for spending (developed by the Budget Planning Workgroup comprised of faculty, chairs and deans), while lifting the freeze on permanent hiring. As you know, USF, like all other public universities across Florida and most throughout the nation, has recently been faced with a significant shortfall of state investment. In addition to a significant loss of funds over the past two years, this year's legislative session heralded another reduction in state general revenue, in the amount of \$44 million, for the USF system. However, a \$23 million infusion of federal budget stabilization funds, coupled with increased revenues we anticipate generating from a 15% increase in undergraduate tuition and a 10% increase in graduate tuition, together with a plan to continue to draw upon cash reserves, means we are able to continue our core mission of teaching excellence and learning effectiveness; research, scholarship and creative inquiry; and community engagement, at least in the short-term. While there are signs of a slow economic recovery in Florida, we must continue to "tighten our belts" and focus our investments carefully, guided by our institutional strategic priorities.

For Academic Affairs, the good news is that unlike other universities you may have read about in Florida and across the nation, we anticipate no layoffs based on shrinking budgets, at least not in the immediate future. Indeed, as was the case last year, and because of careful academic and fiscal planning, I fully expect that we will be hiring more full-time faculty and staff (including academic advisors) in the coming months. As I have shared with you before, I believe now is not the time for us to retreat and succumb to institutional paralysis. Rather, with thoughtful and shared decision-making, I know we will continue the remarkable progress we have made toward reaching our bold vision.

In addition to the challenge of balancing our budget, the legislature significantly changed [residency requirements](#) in Florida. Because we recognize that USF's success and Florida's future will, in large part, depend upon our ability to recruit and graduate the best and brightest students from around the state, the nation, and the world, we are working hard to [mitigate the impact](#) of this legislation on continuing and incoming non-resident students. After all, an ability to attract intellectual talent is the hallmark of any great university.

Moreover, and as you may recall, the 2008 Legislature approved implementation of a technology fee across the State University System. For the past few months, Michael Pearce, Vice President for Information Technology, has been working with faculty, staff and students to determine the best allocation of funds for the coming year. Information Technology has thoroughly documented the progress of these efforts on their [website](#).

While the top legislative priorities in the coming year for USF and the State University System have yet to be finalized, it's safe to say that restoring and building Florida's public universities' base budgets will command significant attention. Beyond that, we will focus on securing the necessary funds to complete much needed [capital projects](#) (especially the Interdisciplinary Science Teaching and Research Facility), and securing the necessary legislative approval for implementation of the [Doctor of Pharmacy degree](#). Meanwhile, we plan to work with the Florida Board of Governors to ensure that, for the first time, we will report separately by [USF institutions and campuses](#) to the U.S. Department of Education, using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System or [IPEDS](#). At the same time, we will be seeking renewed approval for USF to serve as host institution for the [Florida Institute of Oceanography](#) (one of Florida's Academic Infrastructure and Support Organizations), and will pursue the long-awaited disaggregation of Ph.D. programs in the [College of Education](#) (Curriculum and Instruction) and the [College of Business](#) (Economics).

## **A Healthy Enrollment Profile**

Meanwhile, I am pleased to report that we're off to a good start with regard to meeting our funded enrollment expectations for the 2009/2010 academic year. Indeed, for the first time in USF history, [summer enrollment](#) has exceeded 30,000 students (a 5.1% growth over last year). Overall SCH (student credit hours) are higher on all campuses, with a 6.1% system-wide increase over last summer. We have enrolled 1,233 new First-Time-In-College (FTIC) freshmen students (another all-time record), 1,085 new transfer students, and 492 new graduate students. Furthermore, we have witnessed a significant increase in diversity within our new Summer freshmen class, which is 19.1% African American (a 13.5% increase over last year), 19.1% Hispanic (up 84.4%), and 6% Asian (up 94.7%). The gender balance for both new and overall student populations remains approximately 60% women and 40% men, with a considerably higher proportion of women (66%) found among graduate students.

At [USF Tampa](#) (with more than 25,000 students), we've witnessed enrollment growth across-the-board, with Total SCH (+6.0%), Lower Level UG (+9.4%), Upper Level UG (+3.5%), Master's Level (+6.5%), and Doctoral Level (+9.2%) enrollment all showing increases. At [USF St. Petersburg](#), total enrollment increased (+6.0%), with a gain at the Lower Level UG (+49.4%). [USF Sarasota-Manatee](#) witnessed overall enrollment growth (+8.7%), with a gain at the Upper Level UG (+8.5%); while [USF Polytechnic](#) registered an overall enrollment growth (+3.8%), with the most significant gain occurring at the Upper Level UG (+11.4%).

Because many of you may recall that I often speak about "shaping" rather than "growing" enrollment on USF's main campus in Tampa, I want to briefly address the "growth" profile that we are currently showing. Because we witnessed a 4.5% drop in Summer 2008 enrollment over the prior year, it was important to me that we got off to a good start this year. Last year's shortfall meant that colleges had to "chase" enrollment last Fall and Spring just to reach our funded "corridor" and avoid a further base budget reduction which would have been devastating. It is my hope that, this year, our colleges will be able to focus their efforts on "shaping" enrollment and ensuring higher levels of student success (i.e., enhanced retention and graduation rates). That having been said, we must not let our guard down, because USF has become an even more attractive destination for prospective students. Managing enrollment within a range of  $\pm 2-3\%$ , especially in a metropolitan research

university, is a pretty remarkable accomplishment at the best of times without the novel challenges that the current economic climate has brought us.

Meanwhile, and recognizing that it's still early in the enrollment process, both student headcount and credit hours for Fall 2009 are presently running 3% ahead of this time last year. Given the immensely challenging economic times we face, I want to thank you – our faculty and staff – for the fine job that you are doing to provide increased access to a high quality education for students at USF.

In spite of the skyrocketing demand for a USF education, I remain deeply concerned that the current economic climate is creating an even greater strain on the ability of so many of our students to continue their education and graduate. For this reason, you may recall that President Genshaft initiated a program last year called [Don't Stop, Don't Drop](#). More recently, we have reconfigured and enhanced services in the [Office of University Scholarships and Financial Aid Services](#) with a new, consolidated [scholarship search engine](#). I ask that you please take the time to reach out to those students who demonstrate or express the need for financial assistance in these difficult times and guide them to these offices.

### **Strengthening Our Infrastructure**

I have long recognized that available state-of-the-art instructional and research space represents a major constraint to progress at USF. However, if you've been on campus this summer you will have noticed that, in addition to improvements to infrastructure, walkways and bikeways, we continue to witness expansion of our built university community, even in these difficult fiscal times. Next month, students will move in to the brand new 1,000-bed Juniper and Poplar residence halls – home to an exciting array of living and learning communities, classrooms and a wonderfully fresh dining facility that will be open to students, staff and faculty. Construction of the \$47 million [Visual and Performing Arts Teaching Facility](#) is underway, as is the \$23 million [Patel Center for Global Solutions](#). Next month, we plan to break ground on the long-awaited \$91 million Interdisciplinary Science Teaching and Research Facility. The progress of these and other construction projects are [updated regularly](#) on the Facilities Planning and Construction website. Meanwhile, our colleagues at [USF St. Petersburg](#) are preparing to occupy a new \$11 million [Science and Technology Building](#), while plans are moving forward on the first phase of the [USF Polytechnic campus](#), to be designed by the world-renowned architect [Santiago Calatrava](#).

### **Welcoming New Leadership**

USF's recent successes would not have been possible without the vision and energy of a strong leadership team in Academic Affairs. I am delighted to share with you the recent appointment of [Dr. Karen Liller as Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Vice President for Research and Innovation](#), following a national search. World class graduate education and research programs represent the foundation of USF's vision for the future and I know that you will join me in congratulating and supporting Karen as she continues our collective effort to transform graduate education and postdoctoral affairs, while building even stronger interdisciplinary bridges across campus in partnership with research and innovation.

At the same time, I am pleased to announce that [Dr. Susan Greenbaum](#) has been appointed the university's first Director of the USF Office of Community Engagement, and [Dr. Christian Wells](#), founding Director of the USF Office of Sustainability. To be co-located in the Library, these are strategically significant offices that I expect to touch every corner of the USF academic community and are the outgrowth of recommendations from faculty task forces who underscored the essential need for such focus and investment in the contemporary, metropolitan-based, public research university.

### **Planning for the Coming Academic Year**

The community engagement and sustainability initiatives are just two examples of faculty leadership in shaping the future of USF. The important and exciting work of the [faculty task forces](#) (*Faculty Roles, Responsibilities and Rewards; Integrated, Interdisciplinary Inquiry; and USF World*) continues, with further dialogue and policy

development planned for the coming year. At the same time, I expect the level of partnership with the Faculty Senate to grow in the coming year, as together we wrestle with balancing the budget while continuing forward along our strategic path. Of course, that strategic path includes as a base, yet critical, assumption the continuing accreditation by the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools ([SACS](#)), and progress toward membership in the Association of Research Libraries ([ARL](#)) and sheltering a Phi Beta Kappa ([PBK](#)) chapter at USF.

Finally, it behooves us all to place a renewed focus on student success at USF. As a top university priority, each one of us must acknowledge a core commitment to ensuring that every student at USF (both undergraduate and graduate) is progressing toward timely graduation with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to assure their success in an ever more competitive global marketplace. To this end, we continue to invest in the [Tutoring and Learning Services office](#) (located in LIB 206) where we provide support for your students with tutoring, workshops on learning skills, test-taking, and reading, along with a writing center and math lab. Please remind your students that we are here, first and foremost, to ensure their academic success.

As you prepare for your instructional assignments in the coming year, I ask that you pay particular attention to planning for “educational continuity” in the case of a possible campus closure. That is, please consider how you will be able to assure your students of continuing instruction and learning even if USF is forced to implement an [emergency](#) closure? While I, like you, certainly hope that we can avoid such an event, the worsening worldwide H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic is rather troubling and, as residents of Florida, we must always remain cognizant of the extreme weather events that the Atlantic hurricane season can sometimes usher our way.

### **And as the Dog Days of Summer Continue...**

...Our faculty and students have a wonderful opportunity to consider application and/or nomination for any number of national honors and awards in the coming year. From Fulbright, Ford Foundation, Getty, Guggenheim awards, to MacArthur Foundation, Packard, Rockefeller, Sloan and Woodrow Wilson fellowships, now is the time to focus your attention on applying or nominating your colleagues for [faculty awards](#) in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Equally important will be taking the time to identify, nominate, mentor and encourage your students to give serious consideration to the Fulbright, Goldwater, Marshall, Mitchell, Rhodes, and Truman [scholarship programs](#) for which they may qualify. In both cases, we have worked hard to enhance institutional support in easing the processes of application and nomination.

Finally, with August soon to be upon us, it means that the end of summer school is near along with [summer commencement](#). I sincerely hope that you will join us at the Sun Dome on Saturday, August 8, at 9 a.m. to honor all graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences, and at 1:30 p.m. to recognize graduating students from the Colleges of Behavioral and Community Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Graduate Studies, Marine Science, Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Undergraduate Studies and The Arts.

The following week (beginning August 10), we will conduct our New Faculty Orientation, as we welcome approximately 100 new faculty colleagues to USF in advance of the first day of the Fall semester on Monday, August 24.

Finally, I invite you to join me for the *2<sup>nd</sup> Annual USF Faculty Forum*, beginning at **3:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 20**, in the Oval Theater of the Marshall Center. This event will highlight some of USF’s major accomplishments of the past year, offer options to some of the current and future challenges we may anticipate and, most importantly, will present the agenda for the 2009/2010 academic year. This event will be followed by a “Welcome Back” reception for all faculty and staff.

Meanwhile, I wish you well for the remainder of this summer, and I look forward to welcoming you back to what promises to be an exciting new Fall semester beginning next month.

*Ralph*

Ralph C. Wilcox  
Provost and Senior Vice President