March 29, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

I trust that our recent Spring break afforded you a restful opportunity to restore your energy for the remainder of this semester as we look to closing out another successful academic year. While we all recognize these are challenging times for higher education, the University of South Florida continues to buck the national trend in so many ways. It is through your efforts that we continue to witness progress toward our ambitious strategic goals framed around student success, research and innovation, global literacy and impact, community engagement, and integrated, interdisciplinary inquiry. Through careful planning we have been able to avoid programmatic closures, faculty layoffs, furloughs, and other actions that have, regrettably, become an all too common sight within the institutional fabric at so many universities across Florida and the nation.

Making 2010 the Year of Student Success at USF

We began the Spring 2010 semester with the launch of the Student Success Task Force, a broad-based group of faculty, administrators, and students that is striving to better understand the meaning of student success for the USF community, identify the barriers to student academic progress, and shape recommendations to improve our institutional performance. I continue to believe that the academic success of our undergraduate and graduate students is, perhaps, the best indicator of USF’s progress. Ultimately, we recognize that our institutional gains will, in large part, be determined by our effectiveness in helping each and every member of the USF community recognize that they are the key to ensuring higher levels of student success whether academic advisor, parking attendant, cashier, librarian, professor, or provost. You can learn more about the task force’s work online, and you are encouraged to forward your thoughts and suggestions to Dr. Paul Dosal, professor in the Department of History and Executive Director of ENLACE Florida, who is leading this effort.

If you have not been able to attend earlier sessions, I encourage you to participate in the last of four campus forums on student success scheduled for Thursday April 1, at 12 noon in the Health Science Center Auditorium. These forums have been designed to share the work of the Student Success Task Force and to solicit valuable input from faculty, staff, and students across campus. I will be present along with Jennifer Meningall, Vice President for Student Affairs, to address your questions, comments, and concerns.

As educators, we understand our students’ learning experiences must reach beyond our classrooms and laboratories. Across the university community, we provide academic enhancement services and assistance to ensure our students have access to the resources to help them meet their fullest scholarly potential. Please encourage your students to avail themselves of the following services:

- Learning Commons – Located on the second floor of the USF Tampa Library, the Learning Commons is a one-stop shop for several learning support programs, including the Writing Center, Mathematics Tutoring, Mathematics Laboratory, Student Learning Services, Project Thrust Tutorial Center,
Chemistry Center, Mathematics Center, and STEM Mart (supporting integrated tutoring for science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

- **Online Tutoring** – While the Learning Commons provides a wealth of resources, students can access an array of tools online thanks to a partnership between the USF Tampa Library and Tutoring and Learning Services. Services include online tutorials and real-time online tutoring.

- **Extended Library Hours** – I commend Dean Bill Garrison and his team for working so closely with Student Government leaders to secure the necessary funding to extend the opening of the USF Tampa Library to 24 hours a day Monday through Thursday. The library opens at noon on Sunday, closes at 6 p.m. on Friday, and is open Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The library website also features a fresh look to help students quickly and easily access research resources.

- **Alumni CareerQuest** – The USF Career Center is reaching out to USF graduates in these difficult economic times through its Alumni CareerQuest, providing job search assistance to USF alumni. Please be sure to refer your former students to this special service.

**Events and Progress Abound at USF**

To date, Spring 2010 has been a busy and productive semester at USF. From unveiling a new and innovative school, to launching an important community lecture series, appointing a dean and reaching out to prospective international students, many innovative projects are transforming USF and advancing our mission as a leading research institution. Here are a few recent newsworthy items (and you can read about more initiatives on the [Provost’s webpage](#)):

- **Graduate School Anniversary** – The USF Graduate School is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2010. The school will host several events to commemorate its anniversary, the first of which will be March 29, at 2 p.m., in the Marshall Student Center amphitheater.

- **Arts & Sciences Dean** – Earlier this month, it was my sincere pleasure to appoint Dr. Eric Eisenberg as dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. Dr. Eisenberg has demonstrated remarkable leadership over the past 18 months, readily embraced the university’s strategic priorities, and has emerged as a strong and passionate advocate for the college.

- **INTO University of South Florida** – USF has entered into a joint partnership with [INTO University Partnerships](#) to significantly increase international student enrollment at USF. INTO counselors across the globe are busy recruiting students to enroll in USF’s undergraduate and graduate pathways, as well as English language programs, beginning in Fall 2010.

- **Campus Construction Boom** – Bulldozers and cranes have become a regular feature on campus with three major academic construction projects currently underway. With the Dr. Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions set to open later this year and the Music Building and the Interdisciplinary Science Teaching and Research Facility to follow in 2011, we can look forward to a long anticipated expansion of state of the art space to support instruction and student learning, as well as scholarly, research, and creative work by our faculty and students.

- **Wireless Network Upgrades** – While new buildings are sprouting across campus, Information Technology is upgrading and expanding wireless network coverage in several existing buildings. Thanks
to the Student Technology Fee, faculty and students now have more than 400 new access points in Cooper Hall, SOC, BSN, and MHC with work near completion in ENG, LIF, and PHY.

- **School of Global Sustainability** – Last month we launched the new School of Global Sustainability, an innovative effort aimed at preparing students for a new generation of “green collar” careers and finding interdisciplinary solutions in a world challenged by the need to protect its fragile environment and limited resources. The school’s formal launch began with a two-day conference featuring some of the nation’s leading thinkers on climate change, global health, and sustainability. With an international search underway for the school’s founding director, we are busily recruiting students for the inaugural class to commence study for a master of arts degree in global sustainability beginning this fall.

- **Phi Beta Kappa Faculty Lecture Series** – Thanks to the leadership of Dean Eisenberg, USF has partnered with the City of Tampa to launch an impressive lecture series that will bring some of America’s most engaging and influential thinkers to Tampa Bay as we seek to re-energize USF’s intellectual connections with our community. The third in a series of seven lectures will be delivered on April 15 at 6:30 p.m. in Traditions Hall, as Dr. George Ritzer, Distinguished Professor at the University of Maryland and author of *The McDonaldization of Society* joins us to speak on the topic “Consuming America: What Have We Done to Ourselves; What Did They Do to Us?”

- **International Symposium on Afghanistan and Pakistan** – Just last week USF played host to an international Symposium on Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Challenges and Opportunities for Governance and the Role of Regional Actors. Drs. Mohsen Milani, chair of the Department of Government and International Affairs, and Tom Mason, professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, assembled an impressive array of keynote speakers and panelists to address one of the most pressing global security issues of our time.

- **Tenure and Promotion Ad Hoc Committee** – Chaired by Bill Haley, professor in the School of Aging Studies, the committee is comprised of faculty members from each academic college on the Tampa campus and is charged with making specific recommendations to accommodate community engaged scholarship, global initiatives and interdisciplinary inquiry into the promotion and tenure guidelines of the university and to ensure alignment with those at top-tier American public research universities.

- **2010 Undergraduate Research Symposium** – Finally, I want to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in this year’s Undergraduate Research Symposium on Thursday, April 1, from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., in the Marshall Student Center Ballroom. Organized by Dean Stuart Silverman and Naomi Yavneh, Director of Undergraduate Research and Associate Dean in the Honors College, it’s an opportunity for USF to highlight the range of high quality research and creative activity conducted by our undergraduate students.

**Faculty and Student Achievements**

The greatest asset we have at USF is the combined talent of our faculty, students, and staff. While the remarkable and continuing achievements of our faculty colleagues are too many to mention in this update, and it’s always risky to highlight the few, I do want to take this opportunity to recognize some particularly noteworthy accomplishments.
• **Dean Gonzales Appointed to National Advisory Council** – Dr. Junius Gonzales, dean of the College of Behavioral & Community Sciences, has accepted a three-year appointment by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to serve on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s National Advisory Council, which is the health services research arm of HHS.

• **Jay Hopler Wins Rome Fellowship** – We recently learned that Jay Hopler, assistant professor in the Department of English, has been awarded a prestigious Rome Fellowship in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He is one of only two writers named this year to receive the award that provides a one-year residency at the American Academy in Rome to support advanced research and independent study in the humanities and fine arts. This recognition follows his receipt of the Whiting Writers' Award just last October.

• **Global Warming in Antarctica** – Joseph Torres, professor of biological oceanography, is leading a team of graduate students and recent graduates from USF’s College of Marine Science on an expedition to Antarctica, funded by the National Science Foundation, to chart the effects of global warming. You can follow the six-week expedition in the comfort of your Florida home thanks to an interactive media and blog project featured in the *St. Petersburg Times*.

• **Global Ventures Challenge 2010** – An interdisciplinary team of USF researchers recently placed fourth in the finals of the *Advanced Materials for a Sustainable Energy Future* section of the prestigious 2010 Global Ventures Challenge competition. Held last week at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, it was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and leading technology and venture capital organizations and included teams from McGill, Purdue, Kansas, Penn and the University of North Carolina. The USF team, led by John Wolan, associate professor in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, developed a process to convert common organic materials, like sawdust and manure, into jet fuel.

• **Gilman Scholars** – Two undergraduate students received Gilman Scholarship Awards in support of their international studies. Shalonda Isom, an international business major, is in Japan while Danya Loutfi, also majoring in international business, is studying in Sweden. If you know of undergraduate or graduate students who show promise of earning a nationally-competitive award like the Gilman, please contact Linda Lucas, our national scholarship advisor, to help our students get on the right track.

• **School of Architecture and Community Design** – The school’s community design program was recently recognized by *Architect* magazine for excellence in architecture education. The program also made the shortlist for a *World Architecture* design award, chosen from among hundreds of projects worldwide.

**A Budget and Legislative Update**

As you know, since July 2007, like all public universities throughout Florida and many across the nation, we have witnessed a significant loss in state appropriations (nearly $100 million, or 30% across the USF System alone). While state tax revenue collections are finally meeting revised projections, it is clear that the economy has not yet regained its strength. Coupled with statutory obligations, Florida is facing a budget deficit as high as $3 billion in the coming year. Anticipated budget cuts in FY 2011 mean that our fiscal challenges will likely continue and we’ll need to further “tighten our belts.” However, at least for now, I do not anticipate the need to layoff any full-time faculty as has happened at all other public research universities in Florida over the past year. Indeed, on the contrary, I remain guided by our strategic priorities, and my commitment rests with serving
the needs, and ensuring the success, of those students currently enrolled at USF, and preserving the quality of our academic programs, along with protecting, as a high priority, the faculty’s research and innovation activities. I recognize that you are the key to USF’s continuing and future success!

Although it is too early to speculate on the outcome of this year’s legislative session, the Florida House State Universities and Private Colleges Appropriations Committee and the Florida Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee recently released their proposed budgets for the 2011 fiscal year. While the House Committee proposed a 4.6% base budget reduction, the Senate’s larger proposed cut of 6% is, in part, offset by a reallocation of funds to support State Priority Areas such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) together with the replacement of some non-recurring funds in our budget including federal stimulus funds. Both chambers call for an 8% across-the-board undergraduate tuition increase and their proposed budgets assume a 7% increase in differential tuition fees. We are also carefully tracking legislative proposals related to state employee compensation and benefits to determine any impact they may have on the State University System. The Senate proposal includes $10 million for infrastructure at USF Polytechnic to support the campus’ path to separate regional accreditation. At this point in time we, along with the University of Florida, await support for increased base funding for our medical school that we’ve requested to put it on a par with others across the state, and we remain hopeful that the legislature will allocate funds to match those eligible gifts that have already been generously made to USF.

For now, we will continue to judiciously spend down our cash reserves to cover our obligations, even as we must maintain enrollment to retain the current, albeit significantly diminished, level of state funding. At the same time, we are carefully watching proposed changes to Florida’s Bright Futures program along with state and federal need-based financial aid. While we will continue our strategic commitment to re-shaping the enrollment profile at USF Tampa (i.e. maintaining our already impressive gains in the academic profile of undergraduate students, encouraging more full-time enrollment and progress toward graduation, as well as enhancing the proportion of graduate students), we must plan carefully and responsibly to balance our budget. As you know, next year we expect to lose federal support through economic stimulus funds and, while the Florida economy is expected to grow slightly, it’s altogether likely that the gap between revenues and obligated expenditures will widen further (with projected increases in Medicaid caseload, the prison population, unemployment compensation, employee health benefits and Kidcare enrollment). Accordingly, our vice presidents, deans and directors are carefully planning now with a mind to multi-year budget shifts as we seek to preserve, support, and promote our core mission at USF.

The primary lesson learned from our budget experience of the past couple of years is that public higher education in Florida has witnessed a dramatic shift from a low tuition and relatively high state appropriation model to a diminishing state funded model with ever greater emphasis placed on tuition support. It has also become clear that a once generous enrollment growth funding model that rewarded universities on the basis of the number of students enrolled has shifted its focus to performance-based funding with student retention, graduation, licensure and placement rates and prioritized majors (particularly in the STEM field) becoming the primary consideration for any future state funding. In essence, the “rules of the game” have transformed funding for higher education in Florida and we must adapt quickly. You can follow legislative and budget developments on the Academic Affairs website.

In closing, I continue to be immensely impressed by the remarkable accomplishments of our faculty, staff, and students. I trust that you share my pride in USF’s continued growth as, in spite of the unprecedented challenges presented by a constrained budget, you and your students continue to achieve ever greater heights. Thank you for your commitment to our students and our university community. I will continue to advocate tirelessly on your behalf, and, together with President Genshaft, we will do our utmost to protect all faculty positions and degree programs in these challenging times.

Finally, and with the end of the academic year soon to be upon us, it means we are nearing another season of commencement exercises. I sincerely hope that you will be able to join us at the Sun Dome on May 7 and/or 8
to honor our graduates. Please take note of my earlier invitation to participate in graduation celebrations since the deadline for registration is April 9.

Best regards,

Ralph

Ralph C. Wilcox
Provost and Executive Vice President