Dear Colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back to the excitement of a new semester and extend my best wishes for a happy, healthy, and productive 2011. We are following a very busy Fall semester, one that witnessed an extraordinary range of impressive faculty and student accomplishments, including working with the United Faculty of Florida to reach a three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement; hosting the nationally-televised senatorial and gubernatorial debates on campus; and the awarding of more than 4,000 degrees in December, including 154 doctoral degrees. It seems the high energy, innovation, and academic excellence that characterizes life at USF is unlikely to abate in Spring 2011. You and your students are to be applauded for the remarkable achievements USF has registered in the classroom, the laboratory, and across the broader community during the first half of this academic year.

First day student registration numbers support our intentional and carefully managed enrollment for Spring 2011 as the USF System is running 2.0% ahead of this time last year. I am, however, concerned at what appears to be a decline in Master’s level enrollment across all campuses. This is but one of the challenges we must address as we continue to confront political and economic uncertainties and learn more about the state legislature’s intended strategies to balancing next year’s budget. While Florida’s budget deficit, projected in the range of $3.0 to 3.5 billion, is considerably less than that of some other states, it remains a matter of great concern. In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to work closely with deans, chairs, and the Faculty Senate as we prepare for a fiscally responsible future while staying true to our strategic path.

Just last week President Genshaft and I were pleased to welcome Board of Governors’ Chair Ava Parker and Chancellor Frank Brogan to USF. Proudly showcasing many of the university’s academic and research programs, faculty and students were provided an opportunity to share their accomplishments with our guests. It is clear that the continuing close alignment of USF’s programs with New Florida will be essential to our future. It is imperative that we achieve improved graduation and retention rates; award more degrees, particularly in the STEM fields; increase the number of faculty generating research and development expenditures; contribute to enhancements to healthcare and the quality of life; and secure more patents, licensing revenue, and business startups. Together, these will provide a strong knowledge- and innovation-based foundation to diversify our state’s future economy, a vision shared by both Governor Scott and the Florida Board of Governors.
We must, of course, continue to reinforce USF’s relevance to the state by ensuring our strategic priorities and programs align closely with *New Florida* while preserving our commitment to the mission, vision, values, and goals laid out in *Transforming Higher Education for Global Innovation, USF’s Strategic Plan, 2007-2012*. As you know, we have made some bold moves in recent years amidst some of the most challenging economic conditions the state of Florida has ever faced. From academic restructuring, to an early retirement incentive program and continuing [re]investment in our faculty as well as postdoctoral and graduate programs, we have had to balance a loss of more than $100 million in state funding since 2007; yet, USF remains the sole public research university in the State University System to avoid layoff of tenured and/or tenure earning faculty. We recognize that intellectual capital and a world-class faculty represent the foundation of any great university, and we are committed to doing all that we can to recruit and retain the strongest faculty cohort at USF.

As in years past, the new semester will usher in inevitable changes across Academic Affairs. The following title changes in the Provost’s office will, I trust, bring greater clarity and coherence to the important roles that each one of these talented leaders fulfill in serving the needs of our faculty, staff, and students:

- Dr. Dwayne Smith, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
- Dr. Paul Dosal, Vice Provost for Student Success
- Dr. Kofi Glover, Vice Provost for Human Resource Management and Space Planning
- Dr. Graham Tobin, Vice Provost for Strategic and Budget Planning
- Dr. Linda Whiteford, Vice Provost for Academic Program Development and Review

Moreover, we welcome Dean Jackie Dixon to the helm of the College of Marine Science, as Dr. Bill Hogarth assumes the position of Interim Director of the Florida Institute of Oceanography, co-located in St. Petersburg. We will miss the leadership of Dean Junius Gonzales in the College of Behavioral & Community Sciences and we wish him well as he accepts a new set of challenges as provost at the University of Texas at El Paso. However, we are fortunate to welcome Dr. Catherine Batsche as Interim Dean of BCS. At the same time, Dr. Kathleen Moore’s appointment as Associate Vice President for USF System Initiatives means she will report to President Genshaft. Given this change, we will conduct a national search for Dean of University College, formerly E-Campus which, by statute, becomes “home” for future market-based tuition and self-funded programs, along with Continuing Education, Graduate Certificates, Distance Learning, Metro Initiatives, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Meanwhile, Dr. Sandy Cooper will serve in the position of Interim Executive Director of UC. Finally, I plan to soon announce a successor for Dr. Susan Greenbaum, founding director of the Office of Community Engagement, who retired in December but not before ensuring that USF was classified as a comprehensively Engaged University by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Walking around campus, one cannot help but be struck by the new construction, both newly occupied and near completion, at USF. The Dr. Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions opened earlier this month and serves as the new home for USF World and affiliated programs under the leadership of Dr. Karen Holbrook, Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Global Affairs. The transitional location of the offices of the President, Provost, and Chief Operating Officer are to be found on the fourth floor of the Patel Center as we make room for the Honors College and the Graduate School, each scheduled to move into the Administration Building later this year. Moreover, we expect to celebrate the
opening of the Music Teaching & Performance Building later this semester, with occupancy of the long-awaited Interdisciplinary Science Teaching and Research Facility set for Fall 2011. Meanwhile, completion of the Advanced Materials Research Facility (in the Interdisciplinary Research Building), renovations to College of Medicine buildings, the Campus Recreation Center Expansion and Southeast Student Dining Facilities, along with extensive enhancements to Athletic facilities, most notably the Sun Dome, round out capital improvement projects on campus.

While we will actively contribute to building and strengthening the multi-campus USF System (including USF, USF St. Petersburg, USF Sarasota-Manatee, and USF Polytechnic) during Spring 2011, our efforts at USF must continue to be disciplined and focused on our top five priorities:

1. **Balancing our budget** by strengthening and stabilizing our financial base while maintaining and enhancing academic quality and research productivity;
2. **Accomplishing our enrollment goals** by yielding more full-time students and growing enrollment at the graduate level;
3. **Achieving and exceeding our strategic performance benchmarks**, such as increased research productivity and securing national faculty and student awards;
4. **Enhancing our student-to-faculty ratio, recruiting and retaining intellectual talent, and building a robust infrastructure** to support our students, faculty and staff. To this end, you’ll likely be asked to “step up” in the coming weeks to participate in actively recruiting the best and brightest undergraduate and graduate students from within Florida and beyond; and
5. **Improving our 6-year FTIC graduation rate** and other performance measures associated with fostering Student Success.

Of course, we recognize that all this must be accomplished while carefully navigating budget uncertainties and the rapidly changing landscape of higher education in Florida.

Again, I wish you well for a scholarly productive and intellectually enriching 2011. I look forward to meeting you during visits to your college or at one or more of the informal coffee and tea events that I will host for faculty this semester. Meanwhile, please do not hesitate to email me if you have questions or if I can support you in anyway.

Best regards,

*Ralph*

Ralph C. Wilcox
Provost & Executive Vice President