

# President's Report

TO: ALL ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA  
FROM: JUDY GENSHAFT, PRESIDENT



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IT'S ALREADY TIME FOR COMMENCEMENT, and while we wait for the Legislature to finish its work on the budget, I'd like to focus on student success.

This academic year has gone by so fast, and I am so grateful that in the rhythm of life on campus we take time to celebrate why we are here. Not a day goes by at the University of South Florida when my hope for the future isn't bolstered in some small way by the sheer talent and drive of our students, their work ethic and their myriad of accomplishments.

This time of year, the real joy for me is sending our students out into the world to do great things. And let me tell you, this year they are exceptional.

They are students like pianist Dharshini Tambiah, who last week took the stage at Carnegie Hall for her second - yes, I said second - solo performance of her young career. Dharshini will be earning this week her second - and yes, I said second again - master's degree from USF's School of Music.

Simon Shewmaker, just 20-years-old, is being granted his master's of science in the College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship just a few weeks after returning from Houston where he and fellow student William Ash III competed in the prestigious Rice Business Plan Competition. Simon was the youngest student ever to compete in that high-level contest; incredibly he graduated from high school just three years ago.

Our students stand with the best worldwide. Earlier this month, Aki Nakanishi, a master's student in anthropology, garnered the top prize for a research project at the Education Without Borders 2009 conference in Dubai - a showing that literally put USF on a global stage.

And of course, I have so much admiration for the strength and composure of our women's basketball team in their amazing Women's National Invitation Tournament championship win, giving USF its first postseason championship of any kind.

Often what makes our students so remarkable is how they have charted their own course to success.

The Spring 2009 Outstanding Graduate at USF St. Petersburg is Scott B. Stephenson, who is graduating with a degree in accounting. Scott spent his first five years after high school on marine vessels, working his way from deck hand to first captain, and wasted no time demonstrating his leadership skills on campus. Scott was instrumental in the founding of a chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, an accounting honor society, which last year was one of only two worldwide recognized with a distinguished chapter award.

At USF Polytechnic, Diane Boczkowski of Lake Wales is the recipient of the spring 2009 Outstanding Senior Award for her leadership, academics and community spirit. Diane graduated from high school 30 years ago and was once told she wasn't college material - but she held fast to her dream of a college degree, taking classes while working full-time and continuing to be involved in her community.

And at USF Sarasota-Manatee campus, Valerie Connors juggles being a mother to a 4-year-old girl, her studies and reviving Circle K service club on campus. Valerie and the club, the collegiate division of Kiwanis, were recently recognized as Circle K Club of the Year for its outreach efforts in children's health and literacy programs and its contributions to local food banks and a support organization for new mothers.

Our students don't just touch lives locally, they act globally too.

Recently, a group of USF medical students working through Project World Health spent a week in rural communities of the Dominican Republic with a team of physicians and nurses seeing patients from dawn to dusk. Another group of students through International Health Service Collaborative traveled in April on a mission to promote sustainable health projects in rural Panama. This summer, the first of our graduate students in the Master's International Program in Civil and Environmental Engineering will begin their two-year stint in the Peace Corps building water and sanitation systems in Africa and Latin America.

In the coming days, USF will award more than 5,200 degrees to graduates representing 93 nations and 42 states - which speaks to the growing reach and reputation of the university's programs. Of our newly-minted graduates, 124 of them will graduate Summa Cum Laude and 309 will graduate Magna Cum Laude. It should not go without noting that USF is awarding 20 percent more of those top academic distinctions this year over last year.

We all know the value of a good education. But what sets USF students apart is the way in which they share their talents with the world, how they fearlessly tackle problems like poverty and disease and how they take on any challenge we throw their way.

They have come to represent what this university is all about - global-reach, community engagement, real-world research and sustainability. And they have done so in a way that sets a new gold standard for success at USF.