Thank you President Teague. I deeply appreciate all the good work that you, Vice President Levy, and our colleagues on the Faculty Senate do to advance this great university.

And thank you President Genshaft for your vision, tireless energy, leadership and, in particular, your advocacy on behalf of USF — our faculty, staff, students, and alumni — in Washington, Tallahassee, and across the broader Tampa Bay Region.

Good afternoon, and welcome back to what promises to be another exciting yet doubtless challenging year for USF and universities across the landscape of American higher education. Described by many in the academy as an uncertain, turbulent, and even tumultuous time, the continuing local and global economic malaise has ushered in a new chapter of critique for the higher education sector — characterized by some as archaic, wasteful, irrelevant, misguided, and resistant to change.

At the same time we are all too well aware of those who subscribe to the belief that we should “never waste a good crisis.” While some may be misguided opportunists, I do believe that important and valuable questions have been raised that must be, and are being, addressed in the face of rapidly changing political and economic conditions. After all, why would we, or should we, expect universities to remain static? For state universities in particular, the rapid decline in public funding has prompted us to search for a new paradigm that will ensure appropriate and predictable support to fulfill the mission of postsecondary education — knowledge creation and knowledge transfer for a better world, and the preparation of a highly skilled, talented, and globally competitive workforce to drive a more robust and sustainable economy for the 21st century. All this, I hope, while preserving the essential balance between access and opportunity, affordability, together with accountability and quality.

Meanwhile, huge investments in post-secondary education and university-based research in countries once largely dependent upon North America, Europe, and Australia for degree attainment, research, and innovation; the rapid emergence of MOOCs or massive open online courses, which are delivered free to the public via the Web, and have been embraced most recently by the likes of Duke, Princeton, Michigan, and Stanford; and a growing movement toward STEM-centricity — all
promise to transform or even disrupt higher education as we have come to know it.

Yet, with a stagnant economy as the backdrop, at least in the western world, we at USF can be proud of all that we have accomplished over the past year:

- Celebrating our ascent into the ranks of America’s top 50 research universities. We have risen from 64\textsuperscript{th} to 50\textsuperscript{th}, over the past five years, among public and private universities on the basis of total research expenditures, and from 66\textsuperscript{th} to 50\textsuperscript{th} for federal research expenditures,

- Enrolling the most academically talented freshman class in the history of USF (as measured by SAT/ACT scores, high school grade point average, and ASFs or Academic Success Factors), and recording an unprecedented number of nationally-competitive student awards, from Marshall to Goldwater, Fulbright to Gilman and Udall scholarships,

- Conferring 10,465 degrees, on this campus alone last year, up 48\% from 7,068 just 7 years ago, and

- Witnessing a steady stream of capital enhancements, including campus beautification (the importance of which must not be underestimated), the opening of the Center for Advanced Medical Learning and Simulation (CAMLs) in the heart of Downtown Tampa, and extensive renovation of the Sun Dome. Although I am quite sure that it is the continuing improvements to student learning and research space on campus that will capture the attention of our professors and students next week — from the Advanced Visualization Center, to the SMART Lab and expanded Learning Commons, and Job Shop, to name but a few.

Throughout these quite remarkable gains, our academic community has sought to maintain a laser-like and disciplined strategic focus on our core mission, our vision, and goals. Those being:

- **Student access and success** in an engaged and interdisciplinary, learner-centered environment — as we prepare our graduates to compete successfully in the global marketplace of ideas. For as President Genshaft is oft wont to say, “The university of the 21st century must be a global university.”
• **Research, scientific discovery, and creative activity**, including the generation, transfer, and application of new knowledge across disciplines — to strengthen the economy; to promote civic culture and the arts; and to design and build safe and sustainable, healthy communities. And

• **Embracing innovation** and supporting scholarly and artistic engagement to build a community of learners together with mutually beneficial university-community partnerships, throughout Tampa Bay, across Florida, the nation, and the globe.

As we close out our most recent Strategic Plan for 2007-2012, *Transforming Higher Education for Global Innovation*, and look forward to the next five years, it is time to contemplate what, for USF, has been a pretty remarkable journey — one that will undoubtedly continue with excitement as we scale new heights, albeit at a time characterized by very different conditions than those we faced in early 2007. You have a major stake in this university and your voice will be essential to mapping our future. I urge you to engage in the campus-wide strategic “conversations” that are already being facilitated by Vice Provost Graham Tobin and his team, and which will continue in the coming weeks. Equally important will be the role that faculty, staff, and students play in helping to shape a new budget model in response to changing economic conditions — a collaborative process that will be guided by myself, along with Dr. Steve Klasko, Senior Vice President for USF Health, and John Long, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

It continues to be a great privilege for me to serve and represent USF’s faculty, including those who have recently joined us from the former USF Polytechnic, and I am deeply appreciative of the support provided by my colleagues, members of the institution’s leadership team. Many are with us this afternoon, including some who are new, or relatively new, to the university, among them Dr. Dee Siscoe, interim vice president for Student Affairs; Dr. Judy Ashcroft, dean of University College; Dr. Moez Limayem, dean of the College of Business; Dr. James Moy, dean of the College of The Arts; and Dr. Julie Serovich, dean of the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences.

In addition, and for the benefit of those who may be new to USF, I would like to acknowledge other members of USF’s leadership team who are with us today:

- Mr. John Long, senior vice president and chief operating officer
- Ms. Sandy Lovins, vice president for administrative services
- Mr. Michael Pearce, vice president for information technology
Dr. Dwayne Smith, senior vice provost for faculty affairs
Dr. Kofi Glover, vice provost for human resources management and space planning
Dr. Paul Dosal, vice provost for student success
Dr. Jackie Dixon, dean of the College of Marine Science
Dr. Eric Eisenberg, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
Mr. Bill Garrison, dean of USF Libraries
Dr. Harold Keller, interim dean of the College of Education
Dr. Karen Liller, dean of the Graduate School and associate vice president for research and innovation
Dr. Stuart Silverman, dean of the Honors College
Dr. Bob Sullins, dean of undergraduate studies
Dr. John Wieneck, dean of the College of Engineering.

While I am thrilled to be collaborating with such a talented team as, together, we pursue our strategic goals, I am equally committed to working closely with our statewide Board of Governors, the USF Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate, and Student Government to accelerate our core mission. To that end, I also want to acknowledge Brian Goff, student body president and trustee, who is a key partner in advancing USF.

Throughout the recent years of fiscal uncertainty and higher education’s continuing metamorphosis, one thing remains clear, we must not lose sight of our primary raison d’etre. That is, ensuring our students’ success. While this must be a goal that is responsibly embraced by our students, parents, and community, including our elected officials, above all it falls squarely on the shoulders of each and every member of the USF community, including our professors, our academic advisors, and university leadership. President Genshaft has reaffirmed her core commitment, and that of the Board of Trustees, to accelerating USF’s student success agenda, a “movement” spearheaded by Dr. Paul Dosal, vice provost for student success, and members of the USF Student Success Council.

As many of you have heard me say before, while national rankings, state-of-the-art buildings, and athletic victories are to be celebrated, and certainly not minimized, I truly believe it is the quality and achievements of our faculty and graduates which represent the best measure of our stature and success as a university — for it is they who, over time, are responsible for building and growing our institutional reputation throughout the world of higher education.

Indeed, we cannot forget that intellectual talent is our university’s primary asset,
and we must continue our focus and commitment to recruiting, supporting, rewarding, and retaining the best, brightest, and most creative minds. To that end, we will soon be launching a new round of faculty searches for the 2013-14 academic year, and introducing exciting new initiatives to draw more and more exceptional students from around the world to USF. Simply stated, there is no substitute for world-class intellectual talent as we continue our exciting journey. I urge you to engage every step of the way.

I want to take time this afternoon to share some thoughts on that which is at the heart of all we do: student success. Once a relatively simple concept, it has, over the past few years, become ever more complex. Today, gauging and improving the retention and graduation rates of undergraduate students, though still important, is simply not enough. From ensuring college readiness; to enhancing academic support and student learning; strengthening academic advising and counseling; measuring attainment, learning outcomes, and student satisfaction; reducing excess hours and student debt; and tracking progress to graduate school as well as career placement and earnings, our span of responsibility has dramatically expanded for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Of course, our focus on improving retention and graduation rates is nothing new. We have, for some years now, been designing, investing in, and implementing a wide array of carefully considered, and coordinated, strategic initiatives intended to improve the success of USF students. Increasing admission standards with a mind to college readiness; requiring freshman residency; expanding living and learning communities; effecting academic policy changes; hiring additional academic advisors (and, this year, our first Academic Success Advocates) with a mind to more intrusive and timely interventions when needed; replacing adjuncts with full-time instructors; improving wellness and counseling programs; reframing 4-year degree plans and installing Degree Works — an interactive, electronic degree audit platform that will eventually support proactive enrollment tracking and enrollment planning and management; embracing classroom capture and learning technologies; WDF analyses and course redesign (especially for gateway courses); expanding access to the much improved Tutoring and Learning Center and Learning Commons in the Library, 24-5; mentoring and peer-to-peer learning; USF’s widely lauded veterans’ success initiative; the Take 15 campaign; the Provost’s Scholars Program with an expectation of graduation in 3 years; as well as Don’t Stop-Don’t Drop, financial aid leveraging programs, and increasing on-campus employment, have all led to improvements in both freshman retention and graduation rates. Yet, despite our best efforts and focused investments, there remains much room for improvement.
As you can see, our performance falls short of other top-tier research universities in Florida, and represents a marked weakness in our institutional profile when juxtaposed against many of our national peers. Yes, we can proudly point to significant gains in freshman retention rates, and our students’ socio-economic profile might partially explain our comparatively low graduation rates. But there can be no excuse and we must do better.

We expect to welcome 40,000 students to campus on Monday, with more selecting USF in Lakeland as their academic home. This year’s class includes approximately 4,000 new freshmen whose collective GPA of 3.93 and SAT score of 1209 are the highest in the history of USF. Together, we must set an expectation that they graduate no later than 2016.

While I have already suggested that contributing to improved student success is everyone’s responsibility, and that the Academic Affairs-Student Affairs partnership will be critical to this end, there is no doubt in my mind that we, as faculty members, must redouble our efforts inside and outside of the classroom. We can probably agree that today, a higher education is not merely about disseminating knowledge, for content can be gleaned from more and more open sources. But rather, it is about effective student learning and demonstrable attainment — a space where the liberal arts, in particular, can help shape those critical thinking, creative problem-solving, communication, collaboration, analytical, synthesis, and global literacy skills that will be so essential to our students, their future employers, and society in the 21st century.

Because continuously improving our record of student success is a non-negotiable priority, in the coming year I expect to see a strengthening of our undergraduate student “pipeline” through partnerships with local school districts and an expansion of pre-collegiate programs, as well as streamlined transfer and articulation agreements with Florida’s state colleges. At the same time, we need to work on building a healthy and sustainable “supply chain” of talented and globally competitive graduate students.

Valuing inclusion and diversity remains one of the hallmarks of a USF education — a quality that we will preserve even as we strive to broaden the geographic diversity of our student body by leveraging the strength of INTO USF and recruiting more out-of-state and international students, who bring valuable experiences and perspectives to bear on our academic community.
Most important, and as we underscore the importance of placing our faculty and student learning at the heart of USF’s student success agenda, we must continue our efforts to improve instructional and learning effectiveness through integrating inquiry, interdisciplinary collaboration, and emerging technologies into active and engaged learning — a base expectation of today’s students. I am particularly interested in exploring the place of “personalized learning” at USF, an education that promises closer alignment between students’ goals, educational experience, and the expectations of employers, as well as expanded collaboration with the community to promote relevant and rigorous, real world experiences through service learning and co-operative arrangements with business and industry.

We will broaden our utilization of Explorance Blue, an online assessment of instructional and learning effectiveness to improve the academic experience of students at USF, and, under the leadership of newly hired Director Dr. Kevin Yee, we are expanding our support for faculty professional development through recasting the Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence.

As you can see, we have come a long way. Yet, there is more that we can and must do.

As faculty members, you can encourage our students to select their major early and, for freshmen, shape and adhere to a 4-year path to graduation. You can remind them of the stark financial realities associated with changing their field of study too often or too late, of excess hours, taking out excessive loans, and delaying their graduation through “stopping out” unnecessarily or reducing their commitment from full-time to part-time status. By enrolling in 15 hours each fall and spring semester, and utilizing the summer term “to get back on track” and/or to engage in “value-added” learning and HIPs (High Impact Practices) such as education abroad, undergraduate research, and internships — or even to work in a related field — they will graduate on an accelerated path, avoiding the mounting costs of additional years at USF and realizing the benefits of graduate school or earlier employment.

Above all, I ask that you continue to refine and deliver a high quality, rigorous and relevant academic program for our students, one consistent with a top-tier research university.

Many of you know that during their last session in Tallahassee, our statewide elected officials passed legislation that ushers in performance-based funding (initially in Information Technology) and also reduces the general education
requirement from 36 to 30 hours beginning in 2014. In the coming weeks and months, Deans Sullins, Eisenberg, Moy, and others, along with department chairs and interested USF faculty members, will be working with colleagues from across the State University System and the Florida College System to develop a general education curriculum that will, I trust, best meet the needs of our students.

At the same time, we will be provided the opportunity to design a complementary Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in support of our next regional accreditation cycle by the Commission on Colleges of SACS (the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools), perhaps even building upon the early yet exciting successes of the “global citizenship” pilot cohorts sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

As you continue to challenge our students in the classroom, please remind them that our dedicated professional staff in academic advising, the Counseling Center, financial counseling, the Tutoring and Learning Center, and the Career Center, are here to serve their needs and ensure their success.

We will continue to work very closely, too, with the Office of Student Affairs and Student Government to continue our essential support for Student Health Services, the Campus Recreation Center, the Center for Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention, the Counseling Center, and the Students of Concern Assistance Team (SOCAT), to offer constructive intervention and guidance for students who may be confronting personal challenges outside the classroom or whose behavior is of concern to others. Providing students and faculty with a safe and secure learning environment is of paramount importance to us.

We will also strive to identify and mitigate students’ competing priorities, in particular, through offering more employment opportunities for students on campus. Most of all, you can be part of building a caring, dynamic, and fully-engaged academic community, as you help communicate a new expectation for USF — that whether you are a freshman, transfer, or graduate student, pursuing a clear, unwavering, and timely path to graduation, with a USF degree and minimal indebtedness, is in your best interest.

The 2011-2012 annual report on student success tells an impressive story of commitment, investment, transformative behavior, and enhanced performance, but barely reaches beyond the early chapters of what we must do to accomplish the bold goals we have set for ourselves.
So, why all this talk about student success at a top-tier research university? Of course, as I mentioned earlier, we have much to celebrate on the research front, from national rankings, to unprecedented levels of competitive R&D funding, a faculty that outperforms colleagues at all other universities in Florida (public or private) in research funding per FTE (at $340 K/FTE), to impressive performance in patents and licensing.

The fact of the matter is that research, innovation, student learning, and student success are inextricably entwined. There’s a good reason why all AAU member institutions are lauded for the quality of their undergraduate and graduate programs as well as the success and accomplishments of their students who graduate with a unique and valuable skill set that represents a powerful competitive advantage.

Like so many of our aspirational peer institutions, USF’s future is bright, and I hope that you will continue to be a part of it. As the new semester gets underway, why not:

- Visit the Tutoring and Learning Center, the Learning Commons, and the SMART Lab — in the Library, 24/5. If you haven’t lately, you will be pleasantly surprised
- Get to know the work of FCAN (the Florida College Access Network), housed here at USF
- Participate in the planning for a new budget model to ensure appropriate and predictable support for our future strategic priorities
- Reflect on how USF’s textbook affordability project might help your students
- Explore the benefits of emerging technologies to enhance student access and success, including online and blended learning, and classroom capture
- Encourage your students to “connect” with the world through the wide array of education abroad or global research and engagement opportunities sponsored by USF World
- Consider employing students on-campus or point them to the Career Center or the brand new Job Shop in the Library
- Reflect on ways that you might more fully utilize the community, particularly business and industry, to engage your students in collaborative learning and innovation, and expose them to “real world” experiences
- Connect with the Office of Undergraduate Studies, the Graduate School, and the Office Undergraduate Research, or
- Attend the next meeting of the USF Faculty Senate and experience “shared
governance in action”

Yes, it’s hard work but what could be more satisfying?

Finally, while we, like other universities across the nation, have grown accustomed to an abundance of challenges throughout the past few years, next week promises to be particularly interesting with the arrival of a new semester, Tampa’s hosting of the Republican National Convention, and now a possible visit from Tropical Storm Isaac. The coming days will certainly challenge us all to be adaptable. Please keep a watchful eye on the USF front page for weather updates and I ask that you be sensitive to our many students who see next week’s political convention as a singular opportunity to advance their educational and career goals.

Thank you.