2015 Fall Faculty Address

Ralph C. Wilcox, Provost and Executive Vice President

Thank you Dr. Levy for that kind introduction and for your deeply valued leadership as President of the USF Faculty Senate. We can all agree that a fully engaged faculty senate is essential to the health and wellbeing of our university and I strongly encourage you all to step-up in helping to shape and advance USF’s vision for the future.

Over the next hour we will reflect on our quite remarkable achievements of the past, and consider challenges facing the higher education sector as I frame our collective priorities for the coming year.

Before beginning my remarks, please allow me to introduce key members of the USF leadership team that have joined us this afternoon. I ask that they stand to be recognized as they are introduced, and that you please hold your applause until the end:

- Charley Lockwood, Senior Vice President, USF Health and Dean, USF Morsani College of Medicine
- Paul Sanberg, Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation and Economic Development
- John Long, Senior Vice President and COO
- Joel Momberg, Senior Vice President for Advancement and CEO of the USF Foundation
- Ed Funai, Vice President and COO for USF Health, and USF System Vice President for Strategic Development
- Nick Trivunovich, Vice President and CFO
- Tom Miller, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Sidney Fernandes, Vice President for Information Technology and CIO
- Calvin Williams, Vice President for Administrative Services
• Tom Hoof, Vice President for Marketing and Communication and CMO
• Steve Prevaux, General Counsel
• Jose Hernandez, Chief Diversity Officer
• Mark Walsh, Associate Vice President for Government Relations
• Mark Harlan, Director of Intercollegiate Athletics
• Dwayne Smith, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies
• Kofi Glover, Vice Provost for Human Resources and Facilities
• Paul Dosal, Vice Provost for Student Success
• Terry Chisolm, Vice Provost for Strategic Planning, Performance and Accountability
• Roger Brindley, Vice Provost and System Associate Vice President for USF World
• Cindy DeLuca, Assistant Vice Provost for Innovative Education
• Charles Adams, Dean of The Honors College
• Richard Berman, Interim Director of the Patel College of Global Sustainability
• Bob Bishop, Dean of Engineering
• Todd Chavez, Interim Dean of the Libraries
• Jackie Dixon, Dean of Marine Science
• Eric Eisenberg, Dean of Arts & Sciences
• Moez Limayem, Dean of the Muma College of Business
• Dianne Morrison-Beedy, Dean of Nursing
• James Moy, Dean of the Arts
• Donna Petersen, Dean of Public Health
• Julie Serovich, Dean of Behavioral and Community Sciences
• Kevin Sneed, Dean of Pharmacy
• Bob Sullins, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
• Vasti Torres, Dean of Education
• Karen Holbrook, Senior Advisor to the President
• Sri Sriharan, Managing Director and COO, Florida Center for Cybersecurity
• Cindy Visot, Chief of Staff to the President
• Kim Wilmath, Executive Director for USF System Initiatives
• Andy Rodriguez, Student Body President
• Michael Malanga, Student Body Vice President [and a Provost’s Scholar, who graduated earlier this month with a baccalaureate degree in Accounting and will begin his master’s in Accounting this Fall]
• Greg Teague, President of the USF System Faculty Council and Trustee,

And, most importantly, we welcome the chief architect of USF’s rapid emergence as she begins her 16th year, President Judy Genshaft.

It is my sincere privilege to work with this talented team of colleagues as together we serve the needs of our students, staff, and faculty while continuing to advance USF’s profile and influence throughout the world of higher education.

Last year at this time, I highlighted impressive gains that had further advanced our vision of becoming a global research university dedicated to student success and positioned for membership in the [prestigious] Association of American Universities. I am pleased to report that the 2014-15 academic year was also a game-changer. While AAU membership and “Florida preeminence” remain high strategic priorities for us, we are entering a unique moment where our institutional potential and reality collide. Our youth is no longer a liability – rather it is among our greatest assets. It keeps us agile, energized, responsive, optimistic and ready to meet the needs of the 21st century. Throughout the past year we have realized remarkable success, framed around our four strategic pillars: research and innovation, student success, partnerships, and a sound financial footing.
At the outset I want to take this opportunity to, once again, thank you – our faculty, staff, and students – for your tireless efforts in securing reaffirmation of our regional accreditation. One of those “non-negotiable” priorities in higher education, USF distinguished itself through meeting or exceeding all requirements resulting in no recommendations, a feat almost unheard of given our size and complexity. Yet our work is not done. We will continue to hold ourselves to the highest standards of quality assurance and we must now strive to embody the ideals outlined in our quality enhancement plan: the Global Citizens Project.

In a rapidly changed funding climate for higher education in Florida, we must also maintain our focus, discipline and momentum on those performance metrics that promise a sustained source of investment in support of student, faculty and institutional progress. We are proud that the USF System finished second (within the 12 member State University System) in the most recent round of performance-based funding. This marks the third consecutive year that USF’s performance has ranked first or second in the state. Yet it doesn’t get any easier from this point forward as our position will be judged increasingly on the basis of excellence rather than improvement.

At the same time, we continue to climb the rungs of broad-based national and global “league tables”. Ranked 88th among publics, in US News and World Report’s ranking of National Universities, we carefully gauge our progress in other rankings, essential for meeting pre-eminence benchmarks established by the Florida State Legislature and Board of Governors and key to strengthening our brand reputation in North America and beyond.

As you can see, balancing our priorities in a time of significant change for higher education can sometimes be challenging. Yet, I am immensely proud of the strategic planning, focus and discipline that have guided USF’s unprecedented growth. We are indeed fortunate to
have had stable institutional leadership for the past 15 years. During Dr. Genshaft’s presidency USF has witnessed a remarkable leap onto the national and global stages. With our attention most often focused on annual performance, we sometimes lose sight of wider gains so I wanted to take a few moments to share with you a broader based story of our university’s growth and progress. To do so, I have selected several common held data points to compare USF’s performance over time.

As you can see, at USF (and this data is for the Tampa campus only, including USF Health and the College of Marine Science in St. Petersburg) we have held true to a strategic enrollment plan that focuses on managed growth and attracting a talented and diverse student body.

Most apparent is the reality that while total headcount has increased 35% over the past 15 years, student credit hours has grown 47%, indicative of our commitment to recruit and support a more fully engaged student body at USF.

At the same time, so many of you have shared with me your satisfaction in the growing number of talented students that are selecting USF as their academic home. As you can see, the scholarly profile of freshmen enrolled at USF, as measured by high school grade point average and SAT/ACT score, has transformed your classrooms, research laboratories, and our academic community in so very many ways. And all this as our student body has become even more diverse on the basis of socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, and national origin.

The pride that our community takes in valuing diversity and inclusion makes our gains in Freshman Retention Rate (from 81% in 2004 to 89% in 2013)...

...along with the climbing 6-year Graduation rates (from 47% in 2004 to 67% in 2014) all the more satisfying, for many told us that we couldn’t
maintain (let alone increase) our diversity while realizing such marked improvements in Student Success. Today, I am proud to report that USF has eliminated the gap in freshman graduation rates on the basis of socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity. Our continuing challenge is to find a solution to the gender achievement gap (a complexity that continues to plague much of American higher education).

At a time when the nation, state and employers are all calling for growth in the proportion of working adults with a postsecondary credential, to strengthen America’s competitive position in the global marketplace, USF can be proud of its record in preparing more and more talented graduates at all levels.

Even as our total headcount has grown 35% over the past 15 years, the number of undergraduate degrees awarded has more than doubled...

...while the number of master’s and doctoral degrees awarded annually has increased by 98%.

Just as impressive has been the intentional growth in degrees earned in the high demand areas of strategic emphasis, an outcome that has positioned USF well, both on the state and national stage. During the 2014-15 academic year, USF (again, the Tampa campus only) awarded 11,847 degrees (and 13,051 across the USF System) to students entering the workforce or advancing to some of the most selective graduate and first professional programs (medical and law schools) around the world.

While many universities in Florida and beyond have registered impressive gains over time, few have managed to balance strategic progress in student success and research on a par with USF.

From a growing investment in postdoctoral appointments, oft considered a measure of a university’s research intensity by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Association of American Universities, the National Science Foundation and others...
...to total and federal research expenditures, an indication of an institution’s competitive research output, USF’s emergence as a research heavyweight over the past 15 years has been nothing short of remarkable.

Collectively, these longitudinal chapters together comprise an incredible story and reveal a dramatic trajectory of which we can all be proud. President Genshaft, thank you for setting the direction, for keeping us on course, and for encouraging us never to be satisfied.

Research, scholarship and creative activity are the real differentiators for USF. As you can see, our research position continues on an upward trajectory and we presently rank 27th in total research expenditures among public universities, and 43rd among all U.S. universities public or private, by the National Science Foundation, squarely placing us as the number two academic research engine in Florida.

USF’s impressive record in registering patents is a clear indication of the value we place on discovery and innovation with a particular emphasis on technology transfer.

Currently, USF is ranked 12th in the world for U.S. utility patents, and 10th nationally (and 13th among universities worldwide) for U.S. patents registered in 2014. Incidentally, USF has ranked among the top 15 universities worldwide for the past five years in patenting new inventions.

These are wonderful achievements and I am pleased that USF’s revised Guidelines for Tenure and Promotion acknowledge and reward faculty for their contributions to commercialization in research.

Our recent designation as one of just 48 Innovation & Economic Prosperity Universities by APLU, is further testimony to USF’s strong commitment to partnership, translational research, and economic development. Yet, if our vision of AAU membership is to become a reality, we must reach even further and pursue licensing of USF
technologies and nurture new enterprise along a path to further economic growth and new job creation across Tampa Bay and Florida.

To be clear, USF is a comprehensive research university wherein students, scholars and scientists – from the arts to medicine, from engineering to the humanities, along with the social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics are all expected to contribute to new knowledge and human betterment. Moreover, the opportunity for integrated, interdisciplinary collaboration presents USF with a real competitive advantage. In a continuing climate of uncertainty in federal funding, we will need to find new strategies for expanding our research portfolio. We must continue to strategically target future faculty who will bring funded research programs to USF, embrace proven approaches to increasing citation impact (including international collaborations which have been shown to significantly increase citation impact), and we must thoughtfully “grow the pie” of research awards and expenditures with a mind to increasing the effective F&A rate essential to continuing investments in USF’s research enterprise.

Many of these challenges will be taken up by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) in the coming weeks, just one of the recommendations of the Huron Report on USF’s Research Operational Structure which highlighted the need for a research strategic plan, and recommended a more streamlined and focused core research infrastructure. I strongly encourage you to constructively engage, through faculty representatives, in this important USF System-wide conversation.

From our faculty to staff and students, intellectual talent is the currency of the 21st century economy and remains our most precious asset at the University of South Florida. We continue to strive to fully optimize the potential of each and every one of our students.
Recently quoted in the Princeton Review’s 2016 edition of *The Best 380 Colleges*, one of our students suggested, “USF may be huge, but this does not affect the level of personal attention that students receive.” Another added, “USF is doing everything within its capacity to provide the best education it can to every student, regardless of major, background, or ethnicity.”

Our commitment to Student Success has been both intentional and sustained. We can be proud, although I hope not satisfied, with the results we have seen. From college readiness, to student engagement and progression, completion, debt reduction, as well as placement in the workforce and the most prestigious graduate or first professional programs, our approach to addressing the needs of our students has been comprehensive.

Last fall, in a national report entitled *How Public Universities Can Promote Access and Success for All Students*, published by the Center for American Progress, USF was profiled as a national leader and I am pleased to share with you that as a result of your commitment and hard work, we were recently named a finalist for APLU’s *Project Degree Completion Award* in 2015, presented to universities across the nation which have demonstrated excellence in student success.

Next week, we expect to enroll the most talented freshman class, and the largest cohort of Honors College students, in the history of USF.

Perhaps you have also seen that the 2015 entering class of MD students to the Morsani College of Medicine was drawn from a record pool of applicants (up 24% from the prior year), bringing with them the
strongest MCAT profile (with a mean score of 32.73 at the 90th percentile) of any program across the State University System.

Recognizing the importance of our Florida State Colleges as pipelines to our future, we will soon launch a new partnership with Hillsborough Community College and others. Rather than duplicating efforts, USF and HCC have combined resources to meet our students’ needs.

Known as FUSE, this new bridge program sets clear performance benchmarks that will provide an HCC student with a seamless pathway to USF, making the road to timely graduation much more certain.

Recruiting and enrolling high ability students is just the first step on our Road to Student Success. I ask that, from day one, you challenge our students to engage in high impact practices: undergraduate research, education abroad, service learning, internships, and other experiential and active-learning opportunities. This year we must accelerate our efforts to enhance graduate student success through a focus on profile, progress, and placement, while finding solutions to reducing graduate student debt.

Together, our undergraduate and graduate students continue to excel, with support from you and our Office of National Scholarships, in successfully competing for the most prestigious awards, with Frost, Fulbright, Gates, Gilman, Goldwater, Udal, NSF Graduate Research, and Critical Language scholars and fellows among this year’s impressive crop of more than 50 winners. Incidentally, our faculty colleagues have registered like success as USF is now home to more AAAS Fellows, NSF Career Award winners, Fulbright recipients, ACLS Fellows and national academy members. Congratulations.

Again, permit me to remind you of the metrics against which our performance is annually evaluated and funded by the Florida Board of Governors and the State Legislature.
As you can see, and in spite of our recent success, across the USF System we have considerable work to do particularly in achieving sustained levels of excellence in the following areas: (1) reducing the number of students graduating with excess hours (i.e. with more than 110% of required credits), while continuing our recent improvements in (2) academic progress rate, and (3) 6-year graduation rate. To that end, we will continue our strategic investment plan as together we must change institutional behaviors to improve student retention, completion, and eliminate excess hours. I have already notified deans that, effective this semester, colleges and departments will be financially penalized in cases where midterm grades are not submitted in timely fashion, consistent with USF policy. I hope you will understand how important it is for us to identify, as early as possible, those students in need of additional academic support?

At the same time, it is incumbent on us to ensure our students’ academic experience remains rigorous, relevant, competitive and consistent with our universities strategic priorities. We must continue to critically evaluate low productivity degree programs and explore the need for new and innovative curricula to meet the needs of our students and employers. In the coming year we will take a fresh look at our general education program, guided by the principles of academic quality assurance, relevance, and providing our graduates with a competitive advantage as they seek employment or progression to graduate school.

We will work with the General Education Council to conduct an intellectually honest assessment of whether all USF students are demonstrating our stated learning outcomes at an optimal level, and whether we are striking the right balance between our Foundations of Knowledge, “capstone” experiences, and the 14 “dimensions” identified at the undergraduate level.
Concurrently, we must consider structural constraints to progress and the exciting potential for project-based curricular, an expansion of experiential learning, along with greater horizontal integration rather than course-based delivery.

We must “push the envelope” in supporting expanded access and accelerated progress through Summer at USF, Wintersession, Maymester, Pre-college, continuing education, and non-E&G funded programs.

Meanwhile, Innovative Education will continue to support colleges in the design and delivery of high quality, online and hybrid coursework, addressing a growing demand on the part of students for convenience of access and the desire for technology-enhanced learning platforms, along with providing us online faculty development and a new online proctoring solution.

This time last year, I announced a new opportunity for faculty support in authoring open source e-textbooks.

Beginning this fall, students enrolled in Dr. Jenifer Schneider’s course, Literature in Childhood Education, will be introduced to digital collections and children’s literature museums using electronic formats that are easily and quickly updated. This e-book is designed to facilitate an interactive space for learning that is affordable and easily accessible, and meets the needs of the 21st century learner.

Please watch carefully for the launch of a new open access e-book development opportunity this year, a partnership between the USF Library and Innovative Education with priority placed on high enrollment, undergraduate, general education courses that presently require students to purchase high priced textbooks.

It is these kind of partnerships within the university that have come to characterize so much of what we can accomplish at USF. Whether it’s the collaboration between Student Affairs, USF Health and Academic
Affairs in support of broad-based enhancements to Student Success, envisioning new programs in bioengineering “sitting between” the Morsani College of Medicine and the College of Engineering, the consolidation of expertise in USF International Admissions and INTO USF as we seek further global diversity of our student body...

...or exciting new directions in greater strategic alignment across the USF System. Working with colleagues at USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota-Manatee, and guided by our shared principles, we will find ways to lift the USF System and the Tampa Bay Region to even greater heights.

As an example, the USF System STEM Collaborative, launched in 2014, is tasked with assessing the current state of STEM initiatives across our three campuses and the Greater Tampa Bay region, and to consider the need and potential for enhanced STEM education, research, innovation, collaboration and economic expansion, in framing a USF System STEM roadmap for the future. You will be hearing more about this exciting work in the coming weeks.

Recognizing the undeniable importance of Miami, Orlando and Tampa Bay to the state’s economic future, we are proud that the Florida Consortium of Metropolitan Universities – a partnership between USF, UCF and FIU – has finally become a reality! Working together, the Consortium will increase the number of underrepresented and limited-income students graduating with high-demand skill sets, and emphasize career readiness and success for our graduates – elevating their competitive position in the workforce and in advancing to graduate or first professional programs.

Similarly, it is abundantly apparent that USF’s future fortune will, in large part, be dependent on our success in brokering mutually beneficial partnerships outside of our university community.
Locally, we will continue our contributions to the Tampa Innovation Alliance, boldly envisioned to connect Busch Gardens, Florida Hospital, Moffitt Cancer Center, the University Mall and other neighbors in redeveloping the USF area.

Our global partnerships are also incredibly exciting as we thoughtfully explore opportunities to strategically advance our educational and research missions in a sustainable and mutually beneficial fashion. Earlier this year, the Muma College of Business graduated its first class at Universidad San Ignacio De Loyola in Lima, Peru, and plans are already underway to expand USF degree completion programs in Peru and also in Italy.

These, along with a growing array of education abroad programs, USF’s commitment to IIE’s *Generation Study Abroad* initiative, are of course essential to implementing our quality enhancement plan: the *Global Citizens Project*.

Most recently, the university has taken one of its more robust inter-institutional partnerships to a new, and perhaps even unprecedented, level for an American university. Led by President Genshaft and Vice Chancellor Sir Steve Smith, teams from USF and the University Exeter, a top 10 British university with whom many USF faculty and students have already developed strong relationships, came together to frame a plan for a new and exciting trans-Atlantic collaboration that promises mutual benefit. With more systematic planning and implementation processes underway, in the coming year the USF – Exeter relationship will be further strengthened through expanded student scholarships and UK-US Fulbright opportunities, new strategically-focused seed funding opportunities to stimulate joint research with the expectation of increases in external funding and impact, and we will work with appropriate parties to award sabbaticals (with travel supplements) to USF faculty interested in spending a semester or full academic year
working on research projects in selected fields with colleagues at the University of Exeter.

While addressing USF’s global connections I want to comment briefly on the status of USF faculty, staff and student engagement with Cuba, a nation that I know many of you have a deep interest in. With the restoration of diplomatic relations last month, there is no longer a specific legal restriction barring state funded travel to Cuba. However, all future travel remains subject to licenses and export control, and you must adhere to federal requirements established by the US Department of Treasury. I ask that you consult with USF World should you have interest in conducting educational and/or research initiatives in Cuba.

Since the beginning of the Great Recession I have, on prior occasions, spent much time examining the turbulence, uncertainty, and seemingly eternal threats experienced across the higher education sector. While I sincerely believe that USF has “weathered this storm” better than most, strengthening its foundation, and even prospering in this rapidly changing environment, the emerging character of “a new normal” for universities continues to evolve.

Questions associated with affordable access, performance accountability, the relevance and impact of research, and the fundamental value of a university credential will continue to find their place in public discourse. Already, presidential candidates, at both ends of the political spectrum, are presenting high level proposals for low cost or “no cost” college education and, in Florida, our leadership has made it clear that any increase in tuition and fees will not be received warmly. While I have never subscribed to the need for annual tuition increases as a matter of course, I remain passionate when it comes to ensuring appropriate levels of investment that will support delivery of world class education and research programs at USF – for I believe our students, faculty, and the communities we serve deserve no less.
For us, these realities mean we must continue to earn that investment, in large part, through performance-based funding, increases in competitive (and particularly federally) funded research, and through private giving.

Today we can celebrate and express our collective appreciation for the deep generosity of alumni in naming the Muma College of Business, the Lynn Pippenger School of Accountancy, and the Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications, over the past year, each a significant step toward achieving our Unstoppable fundraising goal of $1.0 billion.

Meantime, we continue our plans to distribute greater decision-making and budget authority and responsibility to revenue generating units. A complex transition requiring careful analysis and forethought to avoid unintended consequences, implementation will be guided by seven groups that will likely work hand-in-hand with the newly constituted Research Advisory Committee. The university is committed to keeping you informed of progress throughout the coming year. With a plan for full implementation on July 1, 2016, evidence of this changing model can be seen in the distribution of nearly $6.0 M in earned performance-based funding and additional net new tuition revenues to colleges across USF (Tampa) this year alone. I encourage you to engage with your deans and department chairs to better understand what these changes will mean for you.

As we contemplate the arrival of approximately 42,000 student on Monday, and continue the drive toward our bold vision, we must hold true to our core values, and we must remain thoughtful yet innovative, methodical yet entrepreneurial, strategic yet imaginative. Every day I am struck by the incredible achievements of our dedicated and talented students, faculty and staff. Ours is a truly remarkable university and I am so grateful that you have chosen to make USF your academic home.
And so, by way of conclusion, I hope that our agenda for the coming year has become clearer to you this afternoon? Our strategic planning, investments, focus and discipline have brought us to this impressive point in our history. Yet there remains much to be done as, together, we strive to grow our research enterprise, improve our students’ success, further leverage partnerships, and solidify our financial footing.

In closing, I ask that you please add to your calendar, President Genshaft’s Annual Address to the USF System Community, scheduled for 2:00 pm on Wednesday September 9th, 2015 in the Oval Theatre.

I wish you all much success in the year ahead. Thank you.