



Office of the President

President's 2001 Fall Address -

(September 2001)

President Judy Genshaft:

We begin our 41st academic year in a difficult time, a time of deep and perplexing national tragedy.

This is a somber time for the nation and our university. But it is as a strong and resolute institution that we go forward. We have our strongest faculty ever, a record enrollment, and a dedicated new Board of Trustees.

Today, I will discuss enrollment and retention, our new governing board, strategic planning, the budget and other indicators of our status. But before I go into specific issues, I want to thank you for all that you have done to advance this institution. Through our collective efforts, our university is literally changing before our eyes, and changing for the better. Those of us here at this particular time have an opportunity to complete the template of a great research university.

We have a record 37,307 students enrolled on four USF campuses. This 6.3 percent increase is a powerful indicator of the growing prestige of USF and our faculty. In an increasingly competitive higher education marketplace, more students are choosing USF. Our university is known for excellent teaching, and our enrollment shows it.

I do understand that in the College of Arts and Sciences, for example, we've had to expand some classes and add some sections, and that this growth has created stresses on our admissions offices, our registration system, and our advisors. And it has certainly raised the level of discussion about parking.

I want to thank the faculty and staff who are working so hard to make sure our students are taught well in a time of restricted resources. I do believe these stresses are a one-year hardship. Our Number 1 priority in the upcoming legislative session is obtaining adequate funding to support our enrollment. While this enrollment surge has brought challenges, on balance it is good news for USF.

Our freshmen enrollment increased by 18.5 percent. In part, this growth reflects stronger recruitment efforts by Vice President Harold Nixon, Associate Vice President Doug Hartnagel and our admissions staff. But we also saw a jump in the freshman "yield rate". In recent years, about 44 percent of the students that USF accepted as freshmen actually enrolled. This year, it's 49 percent -- a phenomenal increase. Our honors program grew from about 1,200 to more than 1,300 students this year, and new honors' students' average SAT is in the 1,300 range. We raised the minimum grade-point required for admission this year, and this surge tells us we need to look at raising admission standards again.

Transfer enrollment rose by more than 2 percent. This week, U.S. News and World Report again ranked USF as No. 1 in the nation for transfer students.

Graduate enrollment increased 6 percent - significantly faster than the rise in graduate enrollment nationwide. This occurred in spite of a severe shortage of graduate tuition waivers that all of Florida's public universities are experiencing. Our student body is the most diverse it has ever been.

Among fall entering freshmen, the number of white non-Hispanics grew 14.4

percent; African-Americans, 39 percent; Hispanics, 36 percent. Overall, 71.1 percent of our students are white, non-Hispanic; 10.7 percent are African American; 9.4 percent are Hispanic; 5.1 percent are Asian; 3.2 percent are international.

These statistics are evidence of USF's strong and unwavering commitment to diversity. As you know, our commitment has been questioned over the past year. So I want to briefly outline what we have done to demonstrate and strengthen this commitment.

1. Our student diversity statistics speak for themselves.
2. We have more excellent minority administrators than ever before.
3. We are establishing a Target of Opportunity program which will enhance our recruitment of minority faculty.
4. We have more scholarship money than ever in our history to help us recruit outstanding minority undergraduate, graduate and medical students.
5. Whenever we receive any indication of a breach in this university's commitment to diversity, we investigate and move quickly to correct any problems.

For example, one month after I became president, I learned that there had been racial issues in the women's basketball program. I responded with strong personnel actions and changes, and we also reinstated the player to the team, with no loss of her scholarship.

We continue to read about these allegations because there is federal litigation trying to establish facts that remain very much in dispute. But I also commissioned an external review that determined that our Universitywide policies and procedures for handling discrimination complaints were not consistent or strong enough. We have implemented all the recommendations. We have reorganized the University administration to create a more effective system to advocate diversity and ensure equal opportunity.

Are we done yet? No. This is something we must work at continually.

We are reaching out as never before to diverse groups, both on campus and in the community. And there are many other efforts to enhance diversity throughout the University, and I thank all of you who are involved in these efforts.

As many of you recall, the single greatest issue we faced last year was an effort by some legislative leaders to strip USF of our regional campuses. Our success at keeping USF together is a major victory in our efforts to serve students, the taxpayers and our region. Enrollment is up significantly on all campuses: Tampa, almost 6 percent; USF St. Petersburg, 15 percent; USF Sarasota/Manatee, 11 percent ; USF Lakeland, 7 percent. These numbers are proof that with unity of purpose, all of USF rises together.

Obviously, we're getting better at recruiting students. But recruitment is only part of the enrollment equation. Retention and graduation rates are equally important. As we compare ourselves with other Florida metropolitan universities, our retention and graduation rates are not where they should be. The Provost and I are focusing on improving our performance in this area.

To assist in this, our Office of Institutional Research has just added an important retention tracking system to InfoMart, and deans, chairs, professors and advisers can access these data at any time.

Universities are accustomed to being judged on the basis of enrollment, retention and graduation rates. Now, a new set of standards is being added: learning outcomes. We are preparing for a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools 10-year re-accreditation review sometime around 2004. Last week, a SACS consultant told us that our campuses must develop a tracking system to demonstrate that our students learn what they need to know to be effective after they graduate. We must provide solid data for a two-year period. This is a major undertaking for all our

academic areas, and it's obviously a matter of some urgency. The Provost's Office will be working with colleges and departments on this project during this academic year.

And it's not just accreditors who are looking for learning outcomes data. The state is moving toward a performance-based budgeting system. In the future, a portion of our funding will be determined by our enrollment, retention, graduation and learning outcomes data. But there is an even more important reason to focus on retention and outcomes - it is what's right for our students.

Improving student performance is easier when you are able to improve the instructional program. So I'm pleased to report that we also had a record year in faculty hiring. We welcomed 208 new faculty at last month's orientation session. We are looking forward to the results of this extraordinary investment in our capacity for excellent teaching, research and service. And this year, 74 faculty have been tenured and promoted.

We initiated five new degree programs this semester: bachelor's programs in information technology and international business, and doctoral programs in school psychology, cancer biology and communication science and disorders. USF now offers 31 doctoral degrees plus the doctor of medicine, 63 master's degrees, 80 bachelor's degrees and two specialist degrees.

As we continue to grow and develop our academic program, it might be time to think about reviewing our general education curriculum. I know there is some discussion in the faculty senate of this topic. General education revision is never an easy task. But since the last revision, we have developed into a major research university. Our student profile has changed. And there has been an economic and technological revolution in the larger world. So it's a topic we need to discuss this year.

We are also pursuing a number of other academic initiatives. As I have indicated, our Honors Program, which is under the direction of Professor Stuart Silverman, is very successful. It is large enough and mature enough for us to consider developing it into an Honors College, and we are looking at that issue. For several years, there have been discussions about the size of the College of Arts and Sciences and whether some of its professional departments should become a separate college. As a result of these discussions and consultations, Provost Stamps has recommended the development of a College of Professional Studies. We will begin searching for a dean for this new college this year. This change will enable us to focus more clearly on the needs and opportunities for development of these important professional programs. And it will allow the College of Arts and Sciences to strengthen its focus on traditional liberal arts, sciences and social sciences, while maintaining these disciplines' commitment to community engagement.

We will also soon initiate three other searches for deans. Our former dean of Arts and Sciences is now our esteemed Provost, so we will be searching for a new dean for our largest college. I am grateful to Dr. Renu Khator for her continuing service as interim dean. Dr. Jane Applegate stepped down as dean of the College of Education during the summer, and Dr. Ed Steiner is serving admirably as interim dean. Dr. Charles Mahan has announced that he will step down as dean of the College of Public Health when a new dean is selected. I would like to thank Dr. Applegate and Dr. Mahan for their years of dedicated leadership.

And I would like to welcome our new Dean of Engineering, Dr. Luis Martin-Vega. Dr. Martin-Vega has been a professor at the University of Florida and Lehigh University and was the chief engineer at the National Science Foundation before joining us this month. We are very pleased to have him here. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Peter Betzer upon his selection as the first dean of the College of Marine Science following a national search. Dr. Betzer was chair of the Department of Marine Science, and served ably as interim dean after the department became a college in 2000. And I am pleased to introduce Dr. Ralph Wilcox. Dr. Wilcox is an American Council on Education Fellow from the University of Memphis. For his fellowship, he chose to come to USF to work in the President's Office this year. We are very pleased to have him.

Our search for a vice president for research is continuing. Dr. Bruce Lindsey continues to do an excellent job as interim vice president -- as evidenced by our external funding figures. Last year, we attracted \$186.2 million in contracts and grants for research and training. This is an 8.7 percent increase over last year - and an amazing 700 percent increase over 15 years.

Last month, we inaugurated USF's first Board of Trustees. We have an excellent board. It includes towering figures in the worlds of commerce, the law, medicine, public policy and education. Six are alumni of USF. All our trustees have a strong commitment to the advancement of this university.

At the board's September 21st meeting, we expect trustees to complete the appointments of the campus boards for USF St. Petersburg, USF Sarasota/Manatee and USF Lakeland. These campus boards will focus on fiscal issues to assist us in the development of the regional campuses.

A Board of Trustees committee is making rapid progress on developing procedures for board operations. Another committee is proceeding with deliberate speed to help the University refine our values, vision, mission and goals, and then to work with the university community as we continue to develop a strategic plan to guide the long-term development of USF. Our trustees are proceeding with the greatest respect for the traditions of the academy, and for the perspectives of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni. This vision committee has asked me to appoint a planning group of people who are representative of the broader University community to work with trustees on this project. I will do so in the coming weeks. This effort at the board level will complement the strategic planning activities I initiated last fall and that many of you have been involved in.

In my address to the University a year ago, I outlined four overarching goals that continue to guide us. I believe we must continue to develop USF into:

- * A premier national research university.
- * One with high-quality undergraduate and graduate instruction that promotes learning and personal growth through a diverse, student-focused environment.
- * One that strengthens the economic and social development of Florida and the Tampa Bay region.
- * One that undergirds the economic development of Florida through research that drives job creation and teaching that prepares a work force for those jobs.

We continue to make progress in all four areas.

A year ago, I reviewed USF's rankings in nine critical measures of quality for research universities.

These measures, which were developed by a University of Florida center led by Dr. John Lombardi, are widely regarded as the best set of indicators of research university strength.

Last year's rankings were based on 1998-99 data.

The latest edition of these rankings (drawn from 1999-2000 data) has just been published.

In most categories, USF is continuing to rise as a major research university. We clearly rose in the rankings in most categories.

I will not go through them all, since the full list is included in Attachment 1. But to illustrate the value of this data, I want to discuss two of the categories.

In federal sponsored research, we rose from 53rd to 51st.. In total sponsored research, we rose from 71st to 67th . These two measures reflect USF's continuing growth in sponsored research. But they tell us something else that's very important.

First, we continued to improve funding in both categories. Second, our ranking for federal funding is 16 places lower than our total sponsored research ranking. This gap is larger than at most research universities, and we need to continue to become more competitive for federal grants.

First of all, we need the national validation of our faculty's work that comes through the rigorous peer review process for competitive grants. Second, federal grants bring significantly higher overhead payments than state contracts. This overhead differential means more resources for research -- including stipends and tuition support for graduate assistants.

The more we pay attention to national standards, the better we will get.

Now I would like to comment briefly on the budget.

As I have already noted, the Legislature simply did not provide funding for all the students who have enrolled at the Tampa campus this year. This is a major factor in our budget stresses this year. But the Legislature required us to make significant reallocations, particularly within the Tampa campus operating budget. This has compounded the difficulties of accommodating our surge in enrollment. Unfortunately, there continues to be uncertainty about state funding for the current year. Due to the national economic downturn, the state is collecting less tax revenue than anticipated. There is a real possibility of mid-year budget cuts, and we are monitoring this closely and will keep the University informed.

Now, let me talk for a moment about our legislative agenda.

Our No. 1 issue is equitable funding for USF enrollment. Over many years, the State of Florida has severely underestimated the University of South Florida -- our quality, our growth, our future and the contributions this university makes to the state.

This is clear in the chart in Attachment 2. The Chronicle of Higher Education made these calculations of state appropriations per undergraduate student. We are at the low end. As all of you know, we face a constant struggle for resources for such basic needs as competitive salaries for faculty and staff, labs, libraries and technology. What you see on the chart is a major reason we have such deficiencies. We can find no coherent policy basis for this disparity. We are not being funded at a level appropriate to a major research university.

Equitable enrollment funding is key to achieving many of our goals -- expanding the instructional program, much-needed salary increases, improving infrastructure and increasing awards for graduate assistantships and postdoctoral fellows. This administration is committed to obtaining a fair level of funding for our students. And our Board of Trustees is prepared to be vocal and strong advocates on this issue. I often say that the formula for a great university is simple: excellent faculty, excellent students, excellent infrastructure. Well, as you can see from the construction around campus, we're moving as fast as we can in improving our infrastructure. We're recruiting excellent students. And we're building an excellent faculty.

As you would expect, as our research and scholarship increases, our faculty receive more national and international attention than ever. In the past year, publications and broadcast networks around the world have reported on USF research into such mysteries as Alzheimers' disease, viruses in water systems, emotion-sensing robots and Florida politics. And increasingly, USF is being recognized as a leader in engaged research that applies our vast expertise to real issues in the communities we serve.

But this attention has not even scratched the surface of the world of discovery at USF, and a priority this year is to improve our capacity to promote this university and the work of this faculty. I want to thank you again for allowing me to discuss our university's challenges and opportunities.

When I was inaugurated as USF president in February, I noted that every university goes through cycles of budget cuts, political challenge, governance upheaval, and social turbulence.

But what sets the few undeniably great universities apart from the rest is a self-regenerating commitment to quality and integrity - the discipline to make choices that preserve and enhance quality in the face of whatever obstacles may be at hand. In my first year at USF, I learned that we do have the character to stand firm for excellence. I know we will go forward with vigor and renewed resolve to build a great research university for our state and nation.

Thank you.

Corresponding charts: | [Quality Measures](#) | [Funding](#) |

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