University of South Florida
Office of the President

August 31, 2006

Amy Driscoll
Associate Senior Scholar
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
51 Vista Lane
Stanford, CA 94305-8703

Dear Ms. Driscoll:

I am pleased to submit both electronic and hard copies of the University of South Florida’s self study for consideration as part of the Carnegie Foundation’s elective community engagement classification. This is the outcome of an extensive university-wide exercise that involved all stakeholders – faculty, students, staff, and community partners.

As you know, the University of South Florida is a multi-campus, public research university, the 9th largest, four year university in the nation, serving nearly 45,000 students across 13 colleges and schools. Located in the rapidly growing Tampa Bay region of west central Florida, USF has a national reputation and a growing global reach. The University is just 50 years old, and has risen rapidly in the ranks of America’s top research institutions, recently announcing $310 million in research awards for the past year. Notable is the fact that a large proportion of these awards are to fund a broad array of research projects in the community – a major priority for our faculty, students and community partners. With a commitment to teaching and learning; along with discovery, innovation and the creation of new knowledge; community engagement has represented an important and integral part of life at USF since our founding.

Guided by our institutional advantages – our metropolitan location; our focus on interdisciplinary partnerships and organizational agility; our support for applied and translational scholarship, as well as basic research; and our global reach – USF is well positioned to achieve its ambitious goals. Further expanding and strengthening our partnerships with the community will be an essential pathway in the strategic roadmap for our future.

We have found the task of completing Carnegie’s documentation framework demanding yet rewarding. Demanding, because of the decentralized tradition at USF (across campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Lakeland, and the Health Sciences Center), coupled with the challenging timeline (May-August) that embraced a period when so many of our faculty were away from campus, deeply immersed in their research agendas.
Rewarding, inasmuch as the process has prompted us to reflect on the scope, depth, assessment, quality and sustainability of our University’s record of engagement with community. At the same time, we have been greatly challenged to select the most impressive contributions from among a thoroughly impressive range of activities that clearly demonstrate a sense of institutionalized community engagement at USF. In short, from our Board of Trustees, to our academic leaders, faculty, students, fundraisers, coaches, alumni and donors – the highly valued expectation of USF’s partnership with community is well understood, realized, assessed, celebrated and documented.

As you will see, USF has invested extensively in our community engagement programs over the years and is proud of our national and international reputation – whether in expanding opportunities for service learning; study abroad; student and faculty research partnerships with the community; or the creation of coordinating mechanisms such as the Stampede of Service (organized by USF’s student government through our Center for Civic Engagement and Volunteerism); the USF Collaborative for Children, Families and Communities; the Florida Center for Community Design and Research; Engaging Latino Communities for Education (ENLACE); the Jim Walter Partnership Center; and the Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions.

In your letter of August 10, 2006, you invited recommendations for future versions of the classification. Over the past few months, the most common and constructive responses that I have heard from members of the USF community suggest the following:

- The provision of a glossary or set of standard definitions of terms would be helpful given the range of possible interpretations of key concepts,
- An e-portfolio or similar format might allow for a more complete representation of the scope, quality and impact of community engagement initiatives, particularly at large, comprehensive institutions,
- Preparation periods, and deadlines, that better align with the traditional academic year (Fall and Spring) would be helpful,
- The framework might more adequately address an institution’s level of global engagement and impact, and
- For research universities (in particular), ample provision ought to be made for consideration and valuing of conceptual and theoretically-based scholarship derived from community engagement.

By way of conclusion, I would like you to know how deeply proud we are of our tradition in community engagement at USF. We sincerely believe that the communities we serve are better for what we have contributed to such collaborations while we know that our University is all the stronger for the lessons and opportunities that our community partners have taught us. It is our expectation that, through this self study, members of the National Advisory Panel will readily acknowledge the invaluable, mutual benefit that both university and community enjoy from their broad, deep, mature and trusted engagement. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Judy Genshaft
President

cc. Rhea Law, Chair, USF Board of Trustees
    Renu Khator, Provost and Senior Vice President
    Susan Greenbaum, Past President, USF Faculty Senate
    Kathleen Moore, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs