

**Groundbreaking Ceremony for the USF Sarasota-Manatee
campus's New Student Center and Residence Hall**

Remarks Delivered by USF President Rhea Law

March 1, 2023

Thank you, Chancellor Holbrook, for that kind introduction. And of course, thank you for your tremendous leadership and dedication to strengthening the Sarasota-Manatee campus. I greatly appreciate all you have done — and continue to do — to uplift our campus community.

I am *so excited* to be here as we celebrate this historic milestone for the University of South Florida's Sarasota-Manatee campus.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank the Legislative Delegation, the Board of County Commissioners, and our Congressional Representatives for their important and ongoing support. It is key to our university's continued growth and rise in stature.

And of course, I would like to thank the members of our USF Board of Trustees members and our Sarasota-Manatee campus board who have joined us today. Thank you for all that you do to advance our university and support significant projects like this one.

Being here to break ground on the new housing and student center complex is especially meaningful for me. I was on the USF Board of Trustees when Sarasota-Manatee welcomed its first class of

students in 2006 — and I remember attending the groundbreaking ceremony for this beautiful bay-front campus.

Today, the campus is home to more than 2,000 enrolled students and over 300 employees, and I am proud to be here with you as we move forward into a new era of growth and opportunity.

This project represents a significant milestone in the University of South Florida's history and signals our commitment to the expansion of the Sarasota-Manatee campus.

We have made it a priority to increase student housing at USF because we know that living on campus can raise academic performance, support student retention, and create a stronger sense of community. This new facility will transform the student experience by providing more opportunities to get involved, connect with peers, and build long-lasting relationships.

When I meet with people in the community and share about everything going on at this campus, they are surprised to learn that up until now, it's only had a single campus building to support its students, faculty, and staff.

And now, it's time to grow.

The new student center and residential housing complex will be a transformational addition to USF's Sarasota-Manatee campus.

It will support the campus's bold vision for the future as we strengthen the student experience, boost student recruitment efforts, and expand the campus's academic program offerings in high-demand fields.

When this new facility opens in the fall of next year (2024), as many as 200 students will be able to live on the Sarasota-Manatee campus for the first time. This will create an enhanced sense of community on campus, and it will also attract new students to the area and help them build a deeper connection to the university.

And the construction of this facility is happening at the same time as another exciting project — the planning and design of a 75,000-square-foot Nursing and STEM building — which will allow the campus to offer new majors; help meet the need for more teaching spaces, clinical labs, and research facilities; and double the size of its nursing program. We have a nursing shortage in our state — and USF is going to help fix it.

Together, these projects illustrate our commitment to the Sarasota-Manatee community and to providing a high-quality educational experience that strengthens our local talent pipeline.

At USF, we have tremendous energy, momentum, and spirit. As I often say, when we link arms and move forward together, there is nothing we can't accomplish. It is certainly an exciting time of opportunity on this campus, and it is another reason to be excited

about our path forward as One USF.

Thank you all for joining us today to show your passion and support for USF's Sarasota-Manatee campus. Enjoy the rest of the program, and as always – Go Bulls!

Now, please join me in welcoming USF Trustee and Sarasota-Manatee Campus Board Chair Rick Piccolo to say a few words.