

USF

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA
MAGAZINE

The OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the
USF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
FALL 2020



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FEATURES

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COVID-19 Update

Two College of Public Health students offer an inside look into labs processing thousands of COVID-19 tests; USF Health continues critical research into treatments, cures.

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An Equitable Future

USF faculty and staff are deeply engaged in important work regarding diversity and inclusivity, including efforts to enhance supplier diversity, improve health outcomes in communities of color, create greater opportunities for underrepresented students to earn doctoral degrees in STEM fields, and improve police-community relations.



Illustration: at left and cover: firmages | iStock



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From the President

Dear alumni, friends and supporters of USF:

I hope you and your families are well.

The cover package of this issue of USF Magazine reflects the critical conversations we are having – and must continue to engage in – as a university, a region and a nation regarding systemic racism and social injustice. At the University of South Florida, we have a deep commitment to diversity and inclusion. We have no tolerance for racism or discrimination on our campuses and we value the respectful treatment of all members of our community.

We are dedicated to being a force for positive change, and I want to share with you some of the actions we are taking.

I have appointed Dr. Haywood Brown, USF's vice president of institutional equity, as a member of the Executive Leadership Council, the university's top leadership team. Dr. Brown will be involved in all major decisions made at USF. In addition, Dr. Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, associate professor of sociology, is now serving as Senior Advisor to the President and Provost on Diversity and Inclusion. In this newly created role, she will advise and support university leadership in our efforts to foster anti-racism, access, equity, cultural inclusivity and cultural intelligence.

The Office of the Provost and USF Research & Innovation have committed \$500,000 for the first round of interdisciplinary research projects exploring the perpetuation of systemic racism in society. The initiative is guided by a newly formed task force of USF faculty and staff from our three campuses, known as the USF Research Task Force on Understanding and Addressing Blackness and Anti-Black Racism in our Local, National and International Communities.

Also, we are taking steps to further support the participation of Black-owned businesses as vendors to the university. A code of conduct for employees encourages more supplier contracts for Black businesses and other diverse supplier categories, and a senior member of the USF Office of Supplier Diversity will hold a voting role on the decision-making team for supplier opportunities of \$75,000 and above. The success of diverse businesses is critical to economic growth in our region, and you can learn more about our supplier diversity efforts on page 33.

This fall, the offices of Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity and Multicultural Affairs will sponsor a program that offers individuals an opportunity to candidly discuss and address matters of race and racism, including structural and systemic racism. Participants in these "Dismantling Racism Study Circles" will prioritize new ideas, which may lead to proposals for university leadership to consider.

Also, the offices of Student Success and Admissions have been developing plans to attract more Black students to all three USF campuses. Many of those initiatives have been introduced during the recruitment process for this fall's class. For example, we have expanded our marketing efforts to prospective high school students in the seven-county Tampa Bay



Photo: RYAN NOONE | USF News

service area and are working to develop closer ties to selected high schools to strengthen the pipeline from local schools into USF. We also are working with the Black Leadership Network to raise scholarship funds and recruit more students.

Our efforts are ongoing, because the need to address racism in all of its forms is ongoing, and I will continue to keep the USF community updated.

Also in this issue are wonderful stories about contributions of College of Public Health students in response to COVID-19 as well as updates on USF Health's clinical research. I want to acknowledge the staff and faculty members who spent the summer preparing for the fall semester, which began August 24th. In addition to getting our buildings and classrooms ready for a safe return to our campuses, this effort included the complex process of developing a full schedule of courses, with a mix of face-to-face, hybrid and high-quality online instruction.

Throughout our phased approach – and guided by our world-class experts in the fields of epidemiology, medicine and public health – we have pledged to make well-informed, evidence-based decisions with public health as our highest priority. We have invested significant time, energy and financial resources to offer flexible solutions that allow students to pursue their academic goals and stay on track for timely graduation, faculty to teach and continue their research and staff to work in a healthy environment.

Due to the evolving nature of COVID-19, and our growing knowledge about the virus, our approach has been adapted based on updated data. My leadership team and I, along with the USF COVID-19 Task Force led by College of Public Health Dean Donna Petersen and our leading experts from USF Health, will continue to closely monitor the latest COVID-19 data, governmental orders and other public health recommendations.

Thank you for your support of our students, faculty and staff. I wish you and your families continued good health.

Steven C. Currall
President and Professor

Consolidation creates new opportunities

USF BEGAN OPERATING UNDER a single accreditation for the Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee campuses on July 1.

Consolidating from three separately accredited institutions is a requirement of a Florida law passed in 2018 and amended in 2019. USF's plan to consolidate received approval in June from the executive council of the regional accrediting agency that oversees higher education in the southern United States, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Consolidation provides a wide range of new opportunities for students and faculty and ensures that every student has an opportunity to earn their degree from a Preeminent State Research University.

"We have an extraordinary opportunity to strengthen our position as one of the nation's premier research universities and a leader in student success," USF President Steven Currall says. "I am excited about our future as we work together to become a top-25 public university and position ourselves for future eligibility in the prestigious Association of American Universities."

USF now can offer additional majors, scholarships, support services and study abroad opportunities to students on any campus, as well as expanded access to student organizations and intramural or club sports teams. Faculty on each

campus will experience new opportunities for interdisciplinary research collaborations and access to more community partnerships.

"Consolidation opens up many opportunities for USF students. Now they will have access to academic programs and student support services across all three campuses," USF St. Petersburg Campus Regional Chancellor Martin Tadlock says. "We'll also be working together across USF to create geographically distributed centers of research excellence in important areas such as oceanographic and environmental sciences and STEM education."

USF Sarasota-Manatee Campus Regional Chancellor Karen Holbrook says tangible benefits from consolidation can already be seen with the expedited launch of a nursing program earlier this year to help meet an urgent workforce need in the local community. She says discussions with college deans and her campus leadership team are ongoing regarding new programs for students in Sarasota-Manatee in the arts, allied health, public administration and engineering.

"Consolidation will strengthen USF's impact, not only for our students, but also for communities and businesses in the Sarasota-Manatee region. We see a very bright future together as one USF," Holbrook says.

USF's final consolidation plan is the result of significant contributions from students, faculty, staff, community members, legislators and other stakeholder groups, as well as input gathered through town hall forums, public meetings and other opportunities.

- Adam Freeman | USF News

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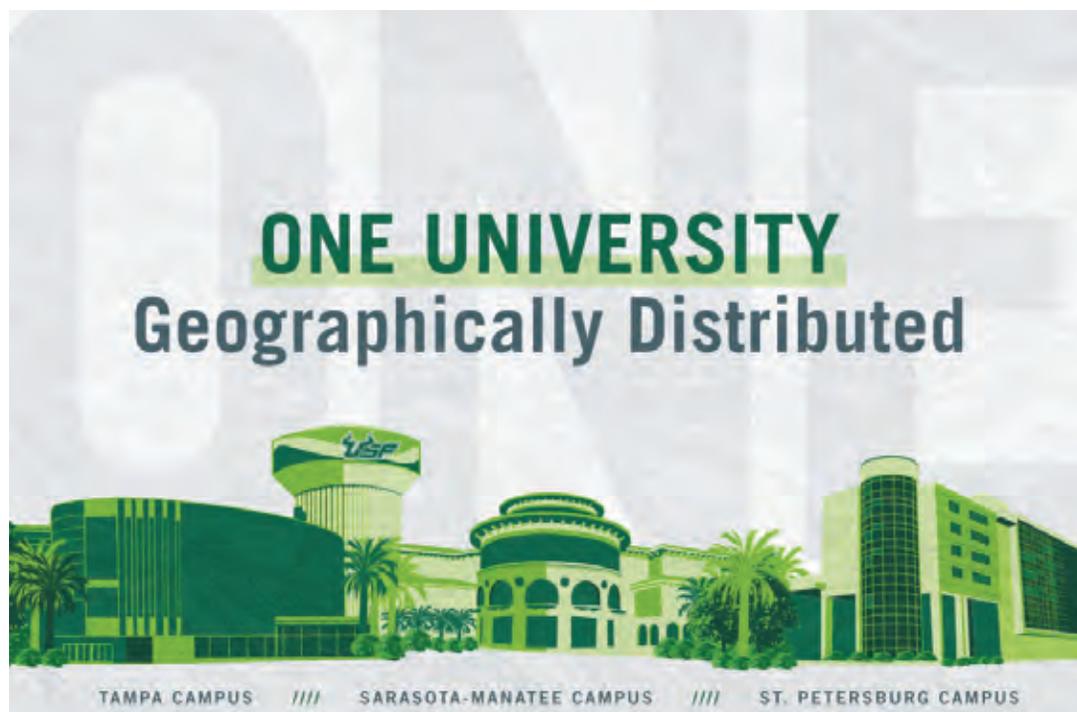
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PARTNERSHIP helps thousands

DOZENS OF DEDICATED USF students, staff and faculty volunteered during weekly Feeding Tampa Bay USF Drive-Thru Mega Pantry events held this summer in the Yuengling Center parking lot. The effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the community were apparent, as the number of families and individuals served grew each week. The events provided much-needed assistance to more than 4,600 adults and families – many never imagining themselves in a food line – and a total of nearly 220,000 meals were distributed. Here, (from left) Michael Coccagna, assistant director of marketing and membership at Campus Recreation, College of Public Health student Simonet Van Vuuren and Erin Brickfield, a member of the Feeding Tampa Bay Task Force, prepare boxes of food for families.

First Look



The house that **BULLS** **BUILT**

A SINGLE MOM WORKING for the Florida Department of Health, Nilda Sanchez, '14, doesn't qualify for government assistance – or a traditional mortgage. A renter in a market with soaring rents, she and her now 13-year-old son, Rodney, squeezed into a one-bedroom apartment in a neighborhood that didn't feel safe.

Last year, Sanchez applied to Habitat for Humanity's homebuyer program and soon found herself in the embrace of some big-hearted fellow Bulls.

"They put up funding for materials, provided some of the labor ... They even took Nilda and Rodney to a USF basketball game," says Mike Sutton, '03, Life Member, president and CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas and West Pasco Counties.

In August, Sanchez got the keys to her house, cheered on by some of her new USF friends. She's holding the balloons in the photo at right and joined by, from left, Brandy Fishman, '96, Life Member; Todd St. John-Fulton, '19, Life Member; Jeff Fishman, '92, Life Member; Sutton; and Blake Guthrie, '04.

Habitat Pinellas' first home built by Bulls for a Bull got its start when Sutton noticed Habitat's newest candidate was a fellow USF grad. He mentioned it to his friend, Jeff Fishman, a longtime Habitat supporter and USF donor.

"I asked him, 'How can we rally Bulls to help?' " Sutton recalls, explaining the nonprofit tries to raise part of each home's cost through donations. "He's friends with the Mumas, so he got them involved."

Then the Bulls network lit up. Contributors included Les Muma, '66, Life Member, and Pam Muma, Life Member; David Goldstein, Life Member, and Joanne Nelson; Stephen Lytle, '04, Life Member; Fred Meyer, Life Member, and Kay Meyer; Terry and Carol Mullane; Jordan Myers, '05; Linda Simmons, '75, Life Member, and Randy Simmons, Life Member; and Kate Tiedemann, Life Member, and Ellen Cotton, Life Member.

Sanchez herself put in 350 hours of "sweat equity." Her 30-year, interest-free mortgage payments will help build future homes for others through the Habitat program. She expected all the hard work, she says, but not the outpouring of love.

"It really made me feel supported by USF," she says. "It showed me the unity of the whole Bulls network after graduation."

– PENNY CARNATHAN, '82, Life Member; USF Alumni Association



First Look



Photo: PENNY CANTHAN '22 | USFAA

HONORS AND AWARDS

USF makes jump in Golden Age rankings

FOR THE FIRST TIME, USF HAS CLIMBED into the top five nationally among all private and public Golden Age Universities, according to new rankings compiled by the U.K.-based Times Higher Education (THE). USF is now No. 4, up from No. 7 last year, in the rankings that compare the performance of institutions founded between 1945 and 1966. Relative to all institutions around the world, USF climbed 11 places to No. 27, the most improved of any university in the United States.

“We are proud to be recognized as a national leader among Golden Age Universities particularly since it reflects the work of our world-class faculty and our shared commitment to high-impact research and student success,” USF Provost and Executive Vice President Ralph Wilcox says. “Our community of talented, dedicated scholars embodies both the innovative, global-minded spirit and drive necessary for younger institutions to create and apply knowledge that shapes the future.”

As a global research university dedicated to student success, USF’s ranking further underscores its unprecedented upward trajectory toward eligibility for membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU). USF ranks



the highest among non-AAU institutions and higher than AAU member Stony Brook University. USF also ranks first among institutions in the state of Florida.

USF has distinguished itself through critical metrics that determine global university influence in the THE rankings. USF ranks second in the nation for Industry Outcome, measuring the real-world transfer and impact of university research and scholarship, and fourth in the nation for Citation Score, which determines the global influence, relevance and application of USF-based research. The university also performs competitively in Teaching, Research, and International Outlook, which gauge university attraction, research partnerships and publications with international colleagues.

THE considers younger universities such as USF to represent “new frontiers for university expansion and increased research investment.” Golden Age Universities are ranked according to the same standards THE uses to rank World Universities, including those much older than USF.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Jenkins named 2020 Tillman Scholar



USF NURSE ANESTHESIA graduate student and Marine Corps veteran Matthew Jenkins has been selected as a 2020 Tillman Scholar through the Pat Tillman Foundation. He is the only student from a Florida university in this year’s class. Jenkins joins an elite group of 60 U.S. service members, veterans and military spouses receiving the honor.

Jenkins enlisted in the Marines shortly after high school, following the events of 9/11. He served in an infantry

battalion on three combat tours – once in Afghanistan and twice in Iraq – between 2003 and 2007.

Jenkins earned his undergraduate degree in nursing from USF in 2012 and has worked as a nurse specializing in emergency and critical care at James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa for the past eight years. He decided to pursue a career in health care after seeing firsthand medical emergencies in the field, including the evacuation of civilian blast victims and first aid provided to fellow Marines.

“I’m grateful for the military experiences that set me on the

path to helping others and making a difference in the lives of veterans and for the opportunity to honor Pat’s legacy through service to others,” he says.

After graduation, Jenkins hopes to continue working with the V.A. and lobbying for veteran-friendly legislation to help improve veterans’ care.

Founded in 2008, the Pat Tillman Foundation has invested more than \$20 million in scholarships and named nearly 700 Tillman Scholars, who are selected based on their service, leadership and potential.

“It’s our honor to support these emerging leaders as they work to make a difference in fields as diverse as education, STEM, public policy and health care, particularly as we navigate uncertain times,” Marie Tillman, board chair and co-founder of the Pat Tillman Foundation, said in a news release announcing this year’s recipients.

Since the first class of Tillman Scholars in 2009, 19 USF students have received the award.

“We are really excited to have Matt as our newest Tillman Scholar. He is an amazing veteran and student who will make USF and the Office of Veteran Success very proud,” says Larry Braue, director of the USF Office of Veteran Success.

USF has 2,400 student veterans and is consistently recognized as one of the most veteran-friendly schools in the United States. Military Times magazine ranks USF No. 4 in its annual “Best for Vets” ranking – the eighth year in a row it’s been in the top five.

HONORS AND AWARDS

USF leads the state in student success metrics

USF LED ALL STATE UNIVERSITIES in performance-based funding scores for 2020, according to data compiled by the Florida Board of Governors (BOG).

USF placed first in the state compared to other universities in a series of 10 student success-based metrics established by the BOG that focus on affordable access, graduating students at a high rate, with minimal debt, and preparing them for high-skilled, high-paying jobs in high-demand fields.

“The University of South Florida community should be immensely proud of our success in the state’s performance-based funding model. Our achievements are truly a reflection of the dedicated work of our students, faculty and staff,” USF President Steven Currall says. “Our performance on benchmarks such as graduation rates, student access and the number of students employed after earning a degree underscores my belief that USF is where academic excellence converges with opportunity for our students. Our performance-based funding milestones advance our goal of becoming a top 25 public university.”

USF earned the highest score in the state in the following categories, according to the BOG’s formula (includes ties):

- Four-year graduation rate
- Bachelor’s degrees awarded in areas of strategic emphasis
- Graduate degrees awarded in areas of strategic emphasis
- Percent of bachelor’s degrees without excess hours
- Net tuition and fees per 120 credit hours

“Congratulations to the University of South Florida on achieving its highest performance-based funding score to date and top score for the State University System,” says Brian Lamb, ’98 and MBA’17, Life Member, vice chair of the Board of Governors and chair of its Budget and Finance Committee. “Thank you to the governor and the legislature for their unwavering support of the State University System. USF’s upward trajectory has been outstanding. This is a testament to the dedication of excellence from the students, faculty and leadership of the institution. I look forward to their continued success.”

USF has been a consistent leader in the state’s performance-based funding model, which takes into account the metrics of all three USF campuses, since the system was implemented in 2014.

“Leading all state universities in this year’s performance metrics is another example of how the University of South Florida’s focus on strategic goals can produce record-breaking results,” says USF Board of Trustees Chair Jordan Zimmerman ’80, Life Member.

UNIVERSITY NEWS

New clinical affiliation will benefit patients across Tampa Bay region

TAMPA GENERAL HOSPITAL AND USF have formed a new clinical affiliation, a significant milestone that will further solidify one of the largest academic medical centers in Florida and build upon their longstanding relationship and commitment to improving health care in Tampa Bay.

The enhanced affiliation enables the two organizations to align administrative and clinical practice areas into a new organization, an effort mirrored across the country as most top-ranked medical schools and hospitals move toward integrated models that bolster academics, research and clinical care. TGH’s Board of Directors and the USF Board of Trustees previously approved the new organization.

The new USF and TGH focus means Tampa Bay’s best health care providers are well-positioned to deliver the cutting-edge care and innovative treatments that are a hallmark of academic medicine.

The new affiliation will benefit patients across Tampa Bay by enabling the region’s only academic medical center to provide seamless, comprehensive care for patients, according to John Couris, TGH president and CEO, and USF President Steven Currall.

“TGH, USF and our private practice physicians have always had the most success when working together to improve health in Tampa Bay,” Couris says. “Now that we are more strategically aligned, we can create a powerhouse that delivers world-class health care on the west coast of Florida.”

TGH and USF have worked closely together for nearly 50 years, since the opening of the medical school in the early 1970s.

“Strengthening and expanding upon the affiliation between the University of South Florida and Tampa General Hospital presents extraordinary benefits and new opportunities for education, health care and research in the Tampa Bay region and beyond,” Currall says. “Our joint vision is to become one of the nation’s most outstanding academic medical centers.”



From left, USF President Steve Currall, TGH President John Couris, and Dr. Charles Lockwood, dean, USF Morsani College of Medicine and senior vice president of USF Health.

University

Ryan Moore | USF News



Above: Civil and Environmental Engineering Professor Daniel Yeh demonstrates the Organic Processor Assembly, a system that extracts nutrients from human waste.

NASA | ESC



Left: The first Artemis rocket stage is guided toward NASA's Pegasus barge Jan. 8 ahead of its forthcoming journey to NASA's Stennis Space Center near Bay St. Louis, Miss.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

USF technology being tested for possible use on moon mission

A TECHNOLOGY CREATED AT USF is now at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, where its effectiveness under simulated space mission conditions is being tested.

Civil and Environmental Engineering Professor Daniel Yeh has been collaborating with NASA to develop a system that converts human waste into fertilizer and water, which would allow astronauts to grow fresh vegetables in space in a more sustainable way. It could help enable the establishment of a permanent presence on the moon.

Yeh's invention, the Organic Processor Assembly, is a closed system the size of a miniature fridge and automatically extracts nutrients directly from the toilet. It uses some of the same principles of his NEWGenerator resource recovery machine, which converts human waste into clean water, energy and fertilizer, and is currently being used in India and South Africa.

"Over the years, our team has gotten pretty good at coming up with technologies that work well on Earth," Yeh says. "Developing resource recovery solutions for space was something new. It presented a whole new series of design challenges to overcome, such as those related to mass, volume, modularity and reduced gravity."

NASA's lunar exploration program, Artemis, is working to return humans to the moon in 2024. NASA landed the first man on the moon with Apollo 11 in 1969, and Artemis is the first time a woman is set to land on the moon. It puts the agency one step closer to sending astronauts to Mars.

Over the last decade, there have been nearly 40 expeditions to the International Space Station, which is in orbit more than 250 miles above Earth, traveling faster than 17,000 mph. Comparatively, the moon is 238,900 miles away, making it far more difficult to restock supplies and nearly impossible to dump waste. Mars, which takes six to eight months to get to, will be even more challenging for resupply.

Building on previous experiments, astronauts aboard the International Space Station have grown small amounts of produce, such as lettuce, cabbage and kale, since 2014

through the Vegetable Production System, known as VEG-GIE. The Organic Processor Assembly aims to eliminate the need to transport fertilizer, as it is created on-site. It facilitates growing fresh produce to supplement the astronauts' diet on long duration missions, which is also great for psychological reasons, especially since living things can serve as a reminder of home.

"NASA can only resupply a limited mass and volume to the moon and Mars habitats. This limitation forces research advancements to provide a reliable, closed-loop system between food consumption and production," says Luke Roberson, NASA's principal investigator. "With the OPA technology, we're investigating if we can sustainably begin recycling human wastewater resources into potable water and fertilizer nutrients. There is a big difference between a fresh and canned strawberry in both nutrient content and interaction with your senses."

Earlier this year, Yeh, Roberson, USF graduate student Talon Bullard '18 and former USF postdoc Melanie Pickett MEVE '15, PhD '18, -won the Kennedy Space Center's 2020 Sustainable Environmental Awareness Award. A patent has also been issued and other patents are pending. So far, Yeh has received more than \$340,000 in grant funding from NASA. This includes a seed grant awarded in 2018 that allowed Bullard to start developing a prototype for the Organic Processor Assembly.

NASA is expected to decide if the technology will be sent to the moon over the next two to three years. A second unit of the Organic Processor Assembly will remain at USF for further testing.

— ALTHEA PAUL | USF News

UNIVERSITY NEWS

M3 Center serves as a global resource

TAMPA BUSINESSMAN JOHN MCKIBBON made one key request in 2013 when he endowed the M3 Center for Hospitality Technology and Innovation at USF's Sarasota-Manatee campus.

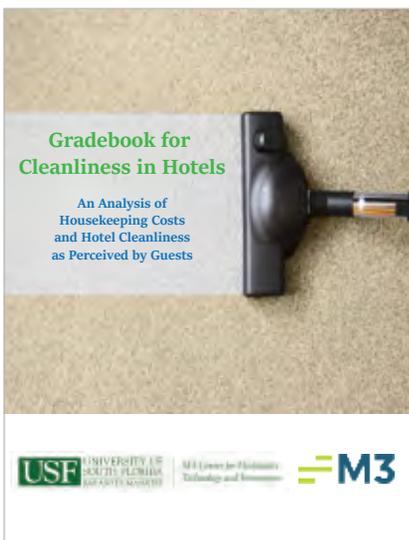
He asked that it make an impact. Since then, the center has been doing just that, delivering cutting-edge research, hosting academic conferences and workshops globally, and disseminating the latest in hospitality-related advances through traditional and "open-access" journals and other publications.

"Mr. McKibbon is a visionary and he understands the importance of research and technology to the hospitality industry, which is why he wanted to establish the M3 Center as a global resource," says Professor Cihan Cobanoglu, the center's director and McKibbon Endowed Chair. "He said he wanted the M3 Center to impact as many people as possible."

The center, named for the hospitality accounting- and analytics-software company founded by McKibbon, reaches close to 100,000 people annually through research papers, articles, journals, books, conferences, online presentations and hospitality software that is made available to more than 1,500 hospitality students worldwide each year.

"People in more than 180 countries are touched by the M3 Center's products and services," says Cobanoglu, who has served as the center's director since its creation. "It's remarkable when you look at the numbers and consider how many people around the world are affected by the center."

Its Global Conference on Business and Economics last fall in Istanbul, Turkey, attracted researchers from more than 20 countries. Likewise, the center's Global Conference on Education and Research last summer in Sarasota drew a sizeable international crowd. Thousands more tune in to its website and YouTube channel for workshops and seminars.



The center's articles and papers explore the latest industry trends.



"I have been very impressed with the impact the M3 Center has had on the hospitality and tourism industry," says Moez Limayem, dean of USF's Muma College of Business. "The relevance, timeliness, depth and breadth of programs and materials produced by M3 are simply second to none. We are very excited to have this great center as part of the Muma College of Business and will do everything we can to support Dr. Cobanoglu in his effort to take M3 to new heights."

Professor Cihan Cobanoglu, McKibbon Endowed Chair and director of the M3 Center

The center's articles and papers explore the latest hospitality advances and industry trends, including the long-term effects of COVID-19 on tourism, how online reviews affect customer hotel choices and the impact of robotics on hospitality venues.

One article, about COVID-19's effects on the tourism industry, was recently featured by *The Conversation*, a popular online magazine of research articles, and subsequently picked up by *Forbes*, *The Chicago Tribune* and other media outlets.

"It doesn't stop there," Cobanoglu says. "We also publish two open-access journals – *The Journal of Global Business Insights* and *The Journal of Global Education and Research* – that are free to anyone so that all stakeholders can read them and not just those who pay the subscription fee.

"To me, this is one of the biggest impacts of the M3 Center, that we disseminate knowledge worldwide to anyone and everyone," he says.

Thanks to the open-access format, the journals' articles have been downloaded more than 50,000 times by researchers worldwide, and that trend will likely accelerate with a third open-access journal, *The Journal of Global Hospitality and Tourism*, which debuted in July.

While its focus rests primarily with research, the center maintains an educational responsibility and frequently welcomes undergraduate and graduate students to conduct research. In addition, universities worldwide access its educational programming online. These and other outreach efforts foster a sense of community and lead to vibrant and dynamic research, Cobanoglu says.

- RICH SHOPES | Sarasota-Manatee campus

UNIVERSITY NEWS

St. Petersburg campus sets research funding record

THE USF ST. PETERSBURG CAMPUS had a record year for research funding in 2019-20, receiving more than \$20 million in grants and awards. The previous funding record was approximately \$7 million during the 2018-19 academic year.

Funding came from a variety of national institutions, corporations and state organizations such as the National Science Foundation, the National Archives, AT&T, Gilead Sciences and the Florida Department of Education. Grants and awards are going toward the establishment of mental health awareness training in K-12 schools, community programs to diminish the stigma around HIV, research that seeks to uncover the true economic losses caused by red tide and cutting-edge exploration into early Florida history.

"This is a remarkable accomplishment for a campus of our size," says Martin Tadlock, USF St. Petersburg campus regional chancellor. "The continued increase in research awards received by our incredible faculty is critical to all of us who live in St. Petersburg and the Tampa Bay region. The research directly addresses major societal issues impacting people's lives, while the funding received goes directly into the local economy."

Some of the major research grants received by the USF St. Petersburg campus over the past academic year include:

- \$10 million toward leading a major state initiative to empower K-12 school personnel to recognize and respond to symptoms of emotional and mental distress among students. The funding will support districts in setting up training around such key issues as sex trafficking,

substance use and abuse, suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

- \$1.3 million is helping to create an alliance to increase minority women faculty in STEM tenure-track positions and those earning doctorates across the higher education ecosystem. The Florida AGEP Pathways Alliance will work with 300 doctoral, post-doctoral and early career minority women faculty to advance their careers in STEM.

- \$277,000 is going to research that seeks to uncover the true economic losses caused by red tide. The study is designed to analyze impacts from harmful algal bloom to numerous sectors of the economy – from tourism and seafood to industries where impacts are less visible, such as health care and construction.

- \$250,000 was awarded to La Florida: The Interactive Digital Archives of the Americas. The grant will go toward a new initiative titled "Europeans, Indians, and Africans: Lost Voices from America's Oldest Parish Archive, 1594-1821," which is designed to make St. Augustine's diocesan archives accessible to a global audience.

- \$70,000 will help target the multiple stigmas surrounding HIV in Tampa Bay, with the goal of increasing health screenings and diminishing the spread of the disease. A community program will be implemented that works with individuals and communities most affected by the epidemic.

- \$50,000 will leverage citizen engagement and crowd-sourced data to identify climate vulnerabilities in local communities. The Community Resiliency Information System is designed to "make smart cities smarter" by allowing residents from diverse communities to collect data and communicate directly with elected officials through their smartphones.

— MATT CIMITILE | St. Petersburg campus



A \$10 million grant has been awarded to USF's St. Petersburg campus to lead a major state initiative to support mental health training among K-12 personnel.

Athletics



The book of Eriksen

KEN ERIKSEN IS GOING TO BE an incredibly busy Bull in 2021.

USF's all-time winningest head coach in any sport will resume the pursuit of 1,000 victories after reassuming his role as leader of the Bulls' softball program over the summer.

When he's not wearing Green and Gold, Eriksen will be putting on his Red, White and Blue to continue serving as head coach of USA Softball. Eriksen, Life Member, went on leave for the 2020 USF season to guide Team USA through the Stand Beside Her Tour in preparation for the 2020 Summer Olympics, which were postponed in March because of the pandemic.

Fortunately, the Tokyo Games are back on in July 2021 and Eriksen is ready to tirelessly guide two prestigious programs. He's also grateful to USF, especially Vice President of Athletics Michael Kelly, and USA Softball Executive Director Craig Cress for making it all possible through teamwork.

"I am looking forward to balancing my full-time commitment with USF and our training with USA Softball in pursuit of the top step at the Olympic Games," Eriksen says.

Getting back in his USF groove certainly won't be a problem for a person who has been part of the university for 41 of his 59 years. Eriksen first came to USF as a freshman from Stony Brook, N.Y., in 1979 and hasn't left since then.

When he wasn't hitting the books, the political science major was playing six positions as a USF baseball player (1981-84) who capped off his collegiate career with a .315 batting average and a 2.48 ERA. Eriksen credits the late Bulls skipper Robin Roberts, a Baseball Hall of Famer, for showing him not only how to lead, but also how to become an outstanding teacher of the game.

Sure enough, the class of 1984 member stayed at USF for graduate studies and got into softball as a hitting instructor for the Bulls in 1985. Eriksen also played Men's Major Fastpitch softball, including with the historic Clearwater Bombers, for years. Eriksen was on the 1991 U.S. Pan American squad that won a silver medal in Santiago de Cuba. In 1988, he was part of a U.S. Select Team that was the first American squad in any sport since 1958 to visit Russian-occupied Cuba.

An 11-year run as a USF softball assistant prepared Eriksen well for his promotion to head coach following the 1996 season.

"The more time you can spend around good people, good administrators, coaches and teachers in your profession, I think it lends itself to long-term success," he says.

Constantly picking up gems of knowledge during his "apprenticeship" has led to eye-catching results.

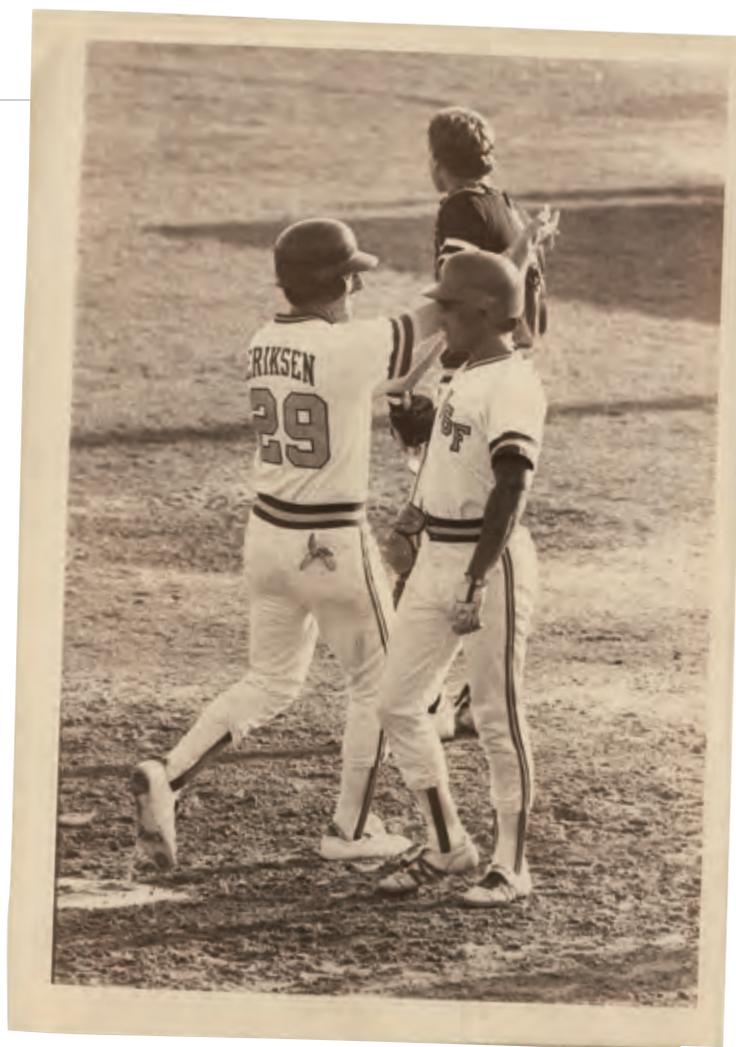
In 23 seasons, Eriksen has guided the Bulls to 14 NCAA tournament appearances, two trips to Super Regionals, four Sweet 16 appearances, and the program's first-ever Women's College World Series campaign in 2012. With Ken calling the shots, USF has captured seven conference titles in three different leagues.

Sporting a 975-502-1 overall record, Eriksen is on the

Above: Eriksen shares a special moment with his USF players on Feb. 4, when Team USA kicked off its Stand Beside Her Tour with an exhibition game against the Bulls at USF Softball Stadium.

Opposite page, left: USF softball teams from 1998, top, and 1996.

Opposite page, top right: Eriksen first came to USF in 1979. He played six positions as a USF baseball player from 1981-84.



Photos: Courtesy of USF Athletics

verge of becoming the 16th active NCAA Division I softball coach to complete the 1,000-win feat, and just the 25th all-time. To get Eriksen to this point, USF has totaled 16 seasons of more than 40 wins, including six with 50-plus victories and a 60-win campaign in 2004, all while consistently facing the nation's best of the best.

"It goes without saying that the thanks for all of the milestones and accolades goes to the players who believed in our program," Eriksen says. "We just happened to accumulate a lot of those W's in a short period of time against a tremendous schedule that we play. I think that's one of the important parts to remember."

Even a team-first kind of guy can still take pride in some groundbreaking accomplishments as an individual.

He probably won't tell you, but Eriksen is the first person in USF history to participate as a player and serve as an assistant, then as a head coach, in the NCAA tournament. He is also the first Bull to win a conference title as a player (1982) and as a head coach (1997). Since putting on a USF uniform, he's been a part of 1,437 victories.

"It's really an amazing story," he says.

The book of Eriksen also is filled with several chapters on the world stage.

Eriksen started coaching for the USA Softball Women's National Team in 2002 and won Olympic gold as a Team USA assistant in 2004. By 2011, he took the helm of the USA Softball WNT and was named head coach of the U.S. Olympic Softball Team in May 2019.

He gets to chase gold again now that the sport of softball is back in the Olympics for the first time since 2008. Eriksen will head to Tokyo ranking second all-time among USA

Ken Eriksen, USF's all-time winningest head coach in any sport, will resume his role as leader of the Bulls' softball program for the 2021 season.

Softball WNT head coaches with 59 career wins in major international competitions – Olympic Games, World Championships and Pan American Games. In total, he has been part of 23 gold medal wins as a USA coach.

"I think one day when I look back on it, it will be like, 'Wow, that was pretty cool,'" Eriksen says. "But right now, it's like, 'OK, what do we do to get ahead of the next team tomorrow? What do we do tomorrow to get ahead of the next team the next day? You're in such a bubble of continuous 'try to get better tomorrow type of mentality.'"

Staying laser-focused is the norm for not only a dedicated coach who has been living the "bat-and-ball" dream for more than five decades but also a dedicated family man who met his wife at USF, where they both graduated from. The key to making it all happen – trusting and empowering staff members, like Eriksen's mentors once did.

"I don't have to stress out about things not going well at USF. I don't have to stress out about things not going well with Team USA when I'm not with either one of those teams when I'm away," he says. "I'm lucky. I'm fortunate to be surrounded by a really, really good group of people."

– TOM ZEBOLD | USF Athletics



Left: Chase Koepka helped USF men's golf capture three conference tournament titles during his time with the program.

Opposite page: Koepka competes for the Bulls at the 2016 NCAA Division I Men's Golf Championships in Eugene, Ore.

GOLF

Chase Koepka, '16, sets a standard of excellence

CHASE KOEPKA HELPED USF MEN'S GOLF set a standard of excellence during his storied career as a Bull from 2012 to 2016.

Fast-forward to today and the three-time All-American is still making the highly successful program proud on the pro golf stage.

Bulls Nation was buzzing about Koepka on social media back on July 26 after he fired a bogey-free 63 in the final round of the PGA TOUR's 3M Open. Collecting eight birdies on the final day, Koepka skyrocketed up the leaderboard to a tie for 26th place at 11-under.

"It's just awesome to be able to represent USF and show everybody what being a Bull is all about," Koepka says.



It's just awesome to be able to represent USF and show everybody what being a Bull is all about."

— Chase Koepka

Koepka built more momentum in Omaha, Neb., at the Korn Ferry Tour's Pinnacle Bank Championship. Powered by two rounds of 2-under 69, Koepka finished the event at 3-under overall on Aug. 2.

Back-to-back weekends of solid play showed Koepka has a bright future in a sport that presented him with an opportunity to break notable records during his Bulls career.

"It couldn't have worked out any better for me, honestly. Coming in, I got to play right away," he says. "It really helped me get the confidence that I could compete at a high level in the collegiate ranks once I got here."

Koepka became an instant hit in the process, earning both Big East Freshman and Player of the Year honors in the spring of 2013. More importantly to Koepka, he was a key contributor for USF's conference tournament title team that spring.

"That week kind of stuck out the most to me over my career on how much of a change that the program was seeing," he says "... I think that's right when the whole program kind of switched over when we won that first championship."

Once head coach Steve Bradley took the helm of the program, Koepka helped the Bulls capture two more league titles in his final two collegiate seasons at The American Men's Golf Championship (2015-16).

"Winning those conferences really helped solidify us," says Koepka, who enjoyed watching USF complete its AAC four-peat the following two seasons.

Sustained success continued for the Bulls after they reached a new program milestone by making the match play quarterfinals at the 2015 NCAA Championship and USF competed for it all again at the end of Koepka's senior season. Once his final round as a Bull was in the books, Koepka held school records that still stand with four tournament victories and a career scoring average of 71.53.

"He was a great player for us here," Bradley says. "He continues to be a good ambassador for us."

Koepka has really represented USF well since returning to the United States after spending much of the past three years overseas on the Challenge and European Tours.

During, and especially after his European experience,

Koepka has continued to make a name for himself at pro golf tournaments in his home country. That's an impressive feat in itself, considering his older brother, Brooks, is a four-time major champion who is one of the top-ranked PGA TOUR players in the world.

"I think he's doing a good job of trying to forge his own path," says Bradley of Koepka, who had a 5-for-7 success rate making cuts at PGA TOUR events by the end of July.

Koepka shined on the PGA TOUR platform while collecting eight birdies and carding an 8-under 63 in the final round of the 3M Open. Tying for 26th place at 11-under in a super-talented field, Koepka also tied for 14th on the stat sheet with 21 total birdies.

In an effort to earn a full-time spot in the PGA TOUR, Koepka is embracing each opportunity he gets on the developmental Korn Ferry Tour this year. His 3-under overall effort placed him just two shots away from a tie for 23rd at the Pinnacle Bank Championship in the beginning of August.

"If you're playing well, golf really does reward you. I like the way the Korn Ferry Tour has kind of set a standard," Koepka says. "If you have a couple good weeks, you can turn it into a full card and potentially a PGA TOUR card. Being back in the United States is where I want to be, and competing out on the PGA TOUR."

Time will tell what the future holds for one of the most accomplished players in USF men's golf history. One thing that's certain for Koepka is Bradley and the Bulls will be following every step of his pro golf journey.

"It's almost like when I get done and I have a good round, I know there's a text coming from Steve within a few hours. Steve does a really good job following along with the careers of all the past players he's been able to coach," Koepka says. "I think that's just awesome. I think that just shows the family unit that we have at USF, and especially for our golf team - how tight-knit of a family and community that we are."



LEADERSHIP

Michael Kelly moving USF Athletics forward

AFTER CELEBRATING TWO YEARS LEADING the USF Athletics program in August, Vice President of Athletics Michael Kelly will bring new and important leadership roles into his third season at the helm.

Kelly was named chair of the American Athletic Conference Athletic Directors Executive Committee in June and also became a key member of The American's Racial Equality Action Group. Both appointments put Kelly in a unique position to help direct conference policy and direction as The American continues to rise and stake its claim as a Power 6 conference, including a new 12-year media rights agreement with ESPN that begins in 2020-21. Under Kelly's direction, USF Athletics is completing construction of a new \$2 million broadcast facility in the Muma Center that will be the hub of USF's live-streaming of sports events through that partnership.

In his first two years at USF, Kelly has used his extensive connections to hire head football coach Jeff Scott to lead the Bulls program after a highly successful run as co-offensive coordinator at perennial CFP championship contender Clemson. He also hired volleyball head coach Jolene Shepardson '02, returning her to the Bay area and her alma mater, and Florida native Erik Jenkins, who had strong national success at Western Kentucky, to lead the track and field and cross country program.

Among other highlights from Kelly's first two years on the job are the launch, and then expansion, of just the second digital radio network in college sports, as USF partnered with local sports giant WDAE and iHeart Radio to create Bulls Unlimited and Bulls Unlimited 2 stations carrying USF Athletics 24 hours a day and for WDAE to serve as the flagship station of USF Football. Kelly initiated USF's membership in the Green Sports Alliance and the implementation of green initiatives throughout the department and its athletic facilities and saw to the return of the USF Athletic Hall of Fame and, in 2019, the first new inductions since 2013, while also reigniting the Bulls Fest annual donor auction. Connecting with the community, USF started an annual Football Kickoff Luncheon in downtown Tampa and began a series of weekly pep rallies that traveled around the Bay area. Kelly became an active and engaged voice on podcasts, launching both Bull Speed Ahead, a regular athletics update, and Kelly's Conversations, which catches up with USF Athletics greats of the past.

Kelly oversaw a restructuring of the Bulls Club that added additional staff and broadened engagement, which has resulted in several seven-figure gifts to the USF Football Center. Overall, in the first two years of Kelly's administration, USF Athletics has raised nearly \$25 million in gifts and commitments—a record amount for the program within that timeframe.

— Stories by TOM ZEBOLD | USF Athletics

For LOVE of the PROFESSION

By KILEY MALLARD
USF Foundation

MANJIT KUNDLAS CALLS IT her “second inning” (as in cricket, not baseball). With her two children grown and both now enrolled at the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine, Manjit felt it was time to pursue something she wanted to do all along.

So in January, she temporarily relocated to the Caribbean to begin medical school herself at the American University of Antigua.

“The kids were equally motivated. They said, ‘Okay, Mom, now why don’t you pursue what you want to do in your life?’” Manjit says. She wrapped up her first semester in early July, virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her next semester is also online.

“God has been very kind to me. It’s a very humbling experience,” she says. “I could not believe that I’m getting this wonderful opportunity, but the reality is settling in now. I’m very happy, because that’s what my dad wanted me to be. I wish he was alive today. He would have been very proud of me.”

A passion for medicine clearly runs in the family. Kulmeet Kundlas, the patriarch of the clan, is a physician with a thriving internal medicine practice in Winter Haven, Fla. Educated in India, he completed his residency at a New York City hospital. The family settled in Winter Haven, drawn by the weather, which is similar to their native Punjab, India, and proximity to Orlando.

As their children entered college, and the couple entered a new stage of life, Kulmeet sold his more traditional practice in 2014 in order to set up a new practice, which he describes as moving away from an episodic and split care system to a whole care model.

“God has granted us this opportunity that we could do things on our terms, the way we want to do them,” Kulmeet says.

Manjit, meanwhile, was busy raising the couple’s two children, Anmol and Ajay, as well as providing support for Kulmeet’s medical practice. While Manjit earned a master’s degree in bioscience and even took the MCAT, she said the time wasn’t right for her to pursue her career.

“I devoted most of my time to the kids’ education and their upbringing, and I took care of the practice all this time as well,” she says.

Saving for their children’s education was always of primary importance to the Kundlases, especially as it became clear they both wanted to pursue a career in medicine.

“We came to this country with education in our hand. Once a person is educated, there are no limitations,” Manjit says. “We started out with \$80, but also our de-

grees. We were educated. And that’s why we feel everybody should be educated.”

When Anmol and Ajay decided to attend USF, attracted by the Judy Genshaft Honors College and with an eye on the Morsani College of Medicine, much of their tuition and fees were covered by scholarships and awards.

With their educational nest egg virtually untouched, the Kundlases started thinking of what they should do with the funds.

“Actually it was Manjit’s idea. She was like, ‘We have saved the money. It was earmarked for education. The kids are fortunately doing very well.’ So we had a conversation about creating the endowment so that somebody else can benefit from it,” Kulmeet says.

Their first gift was to the Judy Genshaft Honors College, a \$100,000 endowment for student scholarships. Then in 2019, they set up a similar \$100,000 endowment for students in the Morsani College of Medicine.

“We could feel the need, and we appreciate when somebody is doing something to improve this field. If we can be a part of that, directly or indirectly, it’s worth it.” — Manjit Kundlas

“There was no timeline,” Kulmeet says. “It was just a natural progression from Honors College to medical school.”

Manjit says their gifts to the Morsani College of Medicine are also spurred by wanting to support the medical field.

“We have love for this profession,” she says. “Especially in the U.S., we are in need of doctors. Being in the profession, we know how difficult it is to fill positions, particularly in rural areas. We could feel the need, and we appreciate when somebody is doing something to improve this field. To us, if we can be a part of that, directly or indirectly, it’s worth it.”

As for the student recipients of their scholarships, Kulmeet says he hopes they’ll “just be good students.”

Manjit is glad to be able to take away a bit of the financial burden.

“If we can alleviate and help them have one less problem in their life, that’s the difference we are making,” she says.

For Jeffrey Liu, the first recipient of the Kundlas Family Endowed Scholarship, the support is so much more than financial.

“Knowing that I am worthy of support from people I



Photo: MATT MAY

had never met before in my pursuit of my dream of being a physician is definitely something that motivates me to do the best that I can," says Liu, who completed his undergraduate degree at Penn State and was drawn to the Morsani College of Medicine because of the SELECT program, which trains physician leaders.

"Sometimes I lose track of my ultimate goal when I am studying seemingly obscure facts about certain topics," says Liu, whose interest is emergency medicine. "But knowing there are people who believe in me makes me all the more dedicated to doing well for both my own sake and my future patients."

Impressed by the new Morsani College of Medicine facility downtown, the Kundlases have also generously made a \$100,000 gift to name one of the building's Collegia rooms, gathering places for each of the nine Collegia that medical students are placed into during their first year.

"I think they have created a beautiful environment, very integrated with technology and research," Kulmeet

says. "They have done a beautiful job."

Kulmeet explained they didn't make the gift for the name recognition, but later on Manjit thought seeing their name might inspire people.

"We didn't think that it would have any meaning," she says. "But then to me it was like, it will motivate my kids. It will motivate my relatives. It will motivate others to do something more."

Manjit says her daughter couldn't wait for the new facility to be completed. Incidentally, Anmol and Jeffrey Liu are classmates. And the Kundlases' son, Ajay, began classes at the college this fall.

"They're the lucky ones to be the first ones there and do most of their schooling from there," Manjit says, adding that touring the building made her want to be a student studying there.

"I can come back and do some rotations there, or maybe do some research to be part of this university institute," she says. "There is still time." ■

From left, Ajay, Anmol, Manjit and Kulmeet Kundlas.

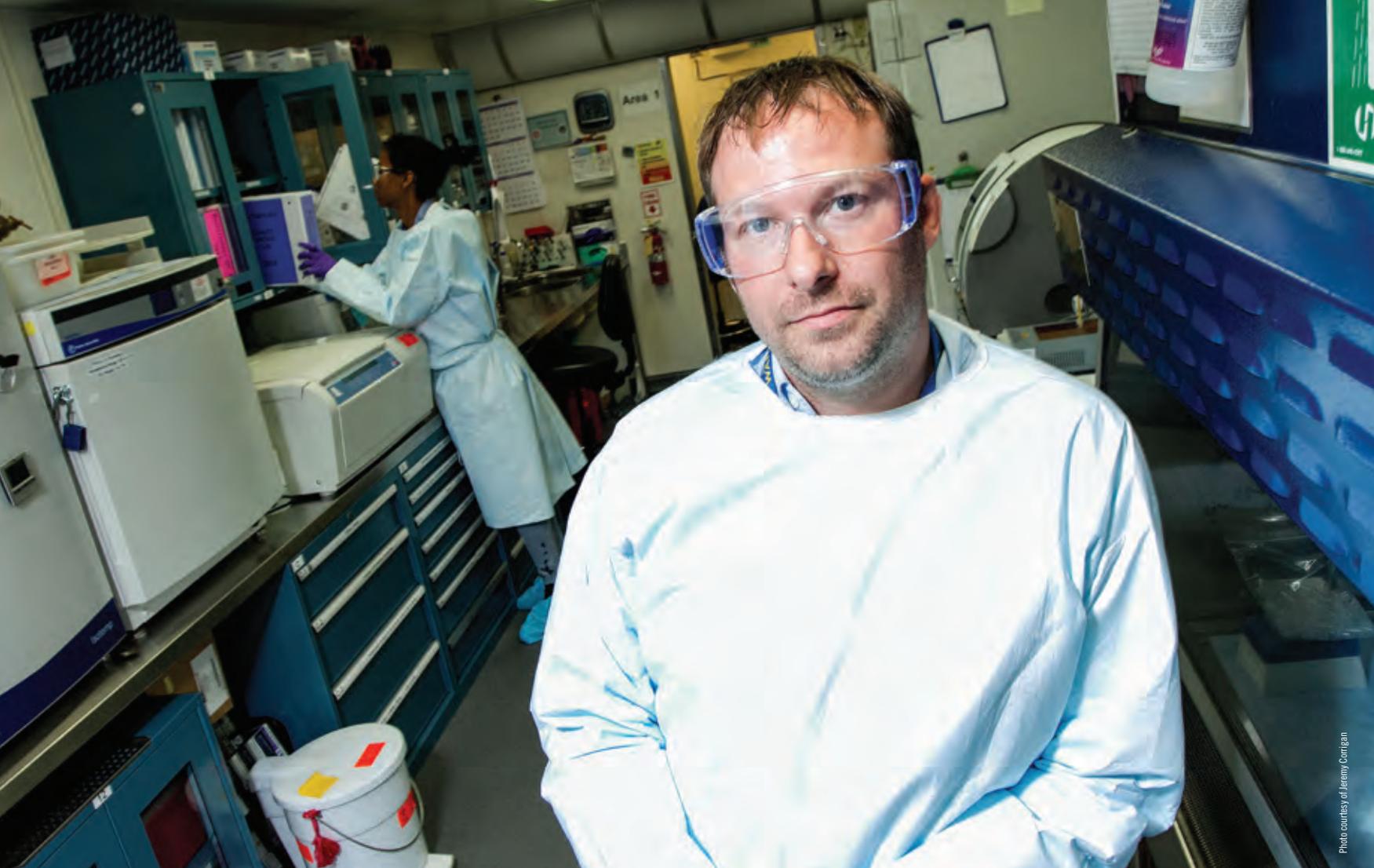


Photo courtesy of Jeremy Corrigan

‘We’re getting INVADED,’

What’s it like working at a testing lab during a pandemic?

USF College of Public Health doctoral candidate Jeremy Corrigan works inside the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory in Eureka, Calif.

JEREMY CORRIGAN, A MOLECULAR BIOLOGIST, has managed the public health laboratory in northern California’s rural Humboldt County since 2010.

Pre COVID-19, Corrigan – a USF College of Public Health doctoral candidate in the online public health and clinical laboratory science and practice program – and his small staff did your run-of-the-mill testing and tracking. They typed influenza strains and looked for outbreaks of measles, mumps, chicken pox and other communicable diseases. They processed rabies tests, tested drinking water and tracked the quality of the shellfish in the nearby waters. Corrigan also oversees the lab’s bioterrorism division. He thought he had his 15 minutes of fame last year when his lab got a positive hit on a ricin sample, a poisonous agent sometimes used in bio warfare.

But that was then, and this is now. Ricin was tame by comparison.

“I’ll give you some perspective on how crazy it’s been,” Corrigan says when asked what life is like for him, with California spiking in COVID-19 cases. “We usually do 200-300 assays (a lab test) in a year. In the last four months, we’ve done 5,000. That’s insane for our tiny lab. We’re getting invaded by this coronavirus. We’re strictly doing COVID all day, every day. We were operating seven days a week, 12 hours a day. But my staff just couldn’t sustain that kind of intensity. We scaled back to six days a week and we’re now actively recruiting additional lab staff.”

Things are just as frenetic at Michael Perry’s lab in Albany, N.Y.

Perry, also a doctoral candidate in the college’s public health and clinical laboratory science and practice concentration, is the associate director of the Biodefense Laboratory at the Wadsworth Center, a New York State Department of Health lab. He and his biodefense co-workers help out in the center’s Virology Laboratory, processing COVID tests. When their shifts are over, they return to their biode-



fense work, testing specimens that come in for biothreat pathogens such as anthrax, ebola and plague.

“For the last four months, we’ve been testing for COVID almost nonstop,” says Perry, who’s been at Wadsworth 11 years. “At the beginning of the pandemic, we were working seven days and 80 hours a week, testing about 2,700 specimens daily. Now we’re down to about 60 or 70 hours per week and 1,500 tests daily. I fully expect it to pick up again in the fall, as more and more businesses open up.”

Lack of tests, slow results. What went wrong?

There’s been a national outcry at the lack of available testing in this country and the sometimes agonizing wait to get the results. Where do these lab scientists think things went awry?

Overwhelming demand and staffing issues have played a part, no doubt. But sourcing – or, more precisely, the lack of it – has been the biggest issue.

“It’s like baking,” Corrigan explains. “To make a batch of cookies, you need flour, sugar and eggs. Mix them all up, put them in the oven, and you come out with cookies. But imagine that this week you’re out of sugar, so you can’t make the cookies. And the next week, you have sugar but now you’re out of eggs. What I’ve done is try to increase my options so there are multiple different tests available.

“Luckily, my lab is part of the CDC, so we get federally provided reagents (a substance used to detect a pathogen or virus in a specimen). Our turnaround time is crushing the commercial labs. We get test results out the same day or within 24 hours. We’re fast because we need to be. We need to get patients identified and contacts traced.

“I think we’re doing pretty well with this, but instrumentation is a challenge. I have the funding, I have the purchase orders for the equipment, and I’m ready to roll, but now the instruments are on back order for months. I can’t increase my capacity, and that’s a huge frustration. These companies are doing their best, but demand is outpacing production. I don’t think the world or the U.S. was ready to ramp up this kind of testing.”

Perry has had his share of problems as well.

“Obtaining reagents in the beginning of the pandemic was tough,” Perry says. “All of the laboratories were competing for the same types of reagents and instruments. And there were only a few assays that had FDA approval, which limited stocks.”

Perry’s work-around was to have his lab validate their own assay, which allowed them to get test results in a very respectable 12-13 hours. And the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services was essential in helping procure needed supplies.

COVID-19: ‘A perfect storm’

Dengue. Zika. Ebola. H1N1. Public health professionals are accustomed to dealing with vicious viruses. “Every pathogen we deal with is important,” Perry says, “because



Photo courtesy of Michael Perry



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Corrigan

no matter what it is, correctly identifying it will make a difference in someone’s life.”

But COVID-19 really has no equal, the lab scientists say.

“I’ve worked with H1N1, ricin, anthrax and all these crazy dangerous toxins and diseases,” Corrigan says. “But the thing I’ve always been most afraid of is novel flu. It can go across the globe very quickly and have a huge effect on our population. COVID-19 is even worse. With a novel flu, you can adapt a vaccine and use antivirals that will have at least a partial effect. But with COVID-19, we have no drugs or vaccine. Speaking from a public health and molecular biologist standpoint, it’s really the perfect storm.”

– Donna Campisano | College of Public Health

Top: Doctoral candidate Michael Perry working with a specimen at the Wadsworth Center in Albany, N.Y.

Bottom: Jeremy Corrigan (third from left) with his lab staff. “I don’t think the world or the US was ready to ramp up this kind of testing,” Corrigan says.

USF Health focused on finding **TREATMENTS, CURES**

THE DRIVE TO FIND treatments and cures for COVID-19 continues at USF Health, as researchers lead clinical trials looking at nearly every aspect of the virus.

Some clinical trials are contributing much-needed data to larger national studies and others are based at USF Health and Tampa General Hospital, led by faculty in the USF

Health Morsani College of Medicine. The studies are being conducted by scientists across disciplines, including biochemistry, infectious diseases and international medicine, medical engineering, nursing, pharmacy, public health, structural biology and virology.

There are about 25 clinical trials taking place at USF Health and Tampa General Hospital, with studies examining a range of medications and treatment protocols to find ways to prevent, treat and cure patients with COVID-19. As of press time, some of the highlights of the clinical research include:

- Clinical trials for all populations impacted by COVID-19, including health-care workers, household contacts, all degrees of COVID illness.
- A study on anti-spike antibody. This antibody is directed at a protein on the surface of the coronavirus that is responsible for attaching to human cells. The sponsor is Regeneron pharmaceuticals and the Morsani College of Medicine has three trials directed at patients with severe COVID-19 who have respiratory distress requiring oxygen or mechanical ventilation, outpatient COVID-19 positive patients who are recovering at home, and for household contacts who can be either COVID-19 positive and asymptomatic or COVID-19 negative.
- The Morsani College of Medicine is conducting a sample collection study to investigate a new device that can detect COVID-19 in saliva samples. The RBA-2 uses Raman Spectroscopy to detect the coronavirus. Once the sample is scanned successfully, the spectra contains the response of the component present in human saliva and provides results in a matter of minutes, rather than hours or days. As part of the validation process, researchers have collected 431 saliva samples (250 COVID-19 positive, 154 COVID-19 negative, and 27 pending results).
- The Morsani College of Medicine has an open label trial to investigate the safety and tolerability of Remdesivir in the pediatric COVID-19

population. Remdesivir is the anti-viral drug approved by the FDA for emergency use in adults.

Other efforts include the inclusion of data related to COVID-19 as part of a national registry tracking many aspects of the virus and those infected with it, such as pregnant women and their babies. USF Health and Tampa General Hospital providers are submitting information to this registry.

Additional clinical trials are looking at treatment options such as Remdesivir and Brequinar, antiviral drugs that may help kill the virus; general and specific anti-inflammatory agents such as dexamethasone, ruxolitinib and sarilumab in critically ill patients to test the impact of the medications in easing or stopping the associated cytokine storm, when the patient's immune system becomes overwhelmed and attacks healthy cells.

Other efforts focus on preventing or treating the blood clots that form in the small blood vessels or the lung, kidney and other organs, by using various blood thinners.

Teams are also studying convalescent sera/plasma from people who have recovered from COVID-19 and in those who currently have the disease.

In addition, key translational research projects underway, or being scaled up, are examining antibody tests and immunity; susceptibility in different ethnic backgrounds; protective antibodies and vaccines; rapid portable biomedical testing systems; and targeting viral replication and drug design.

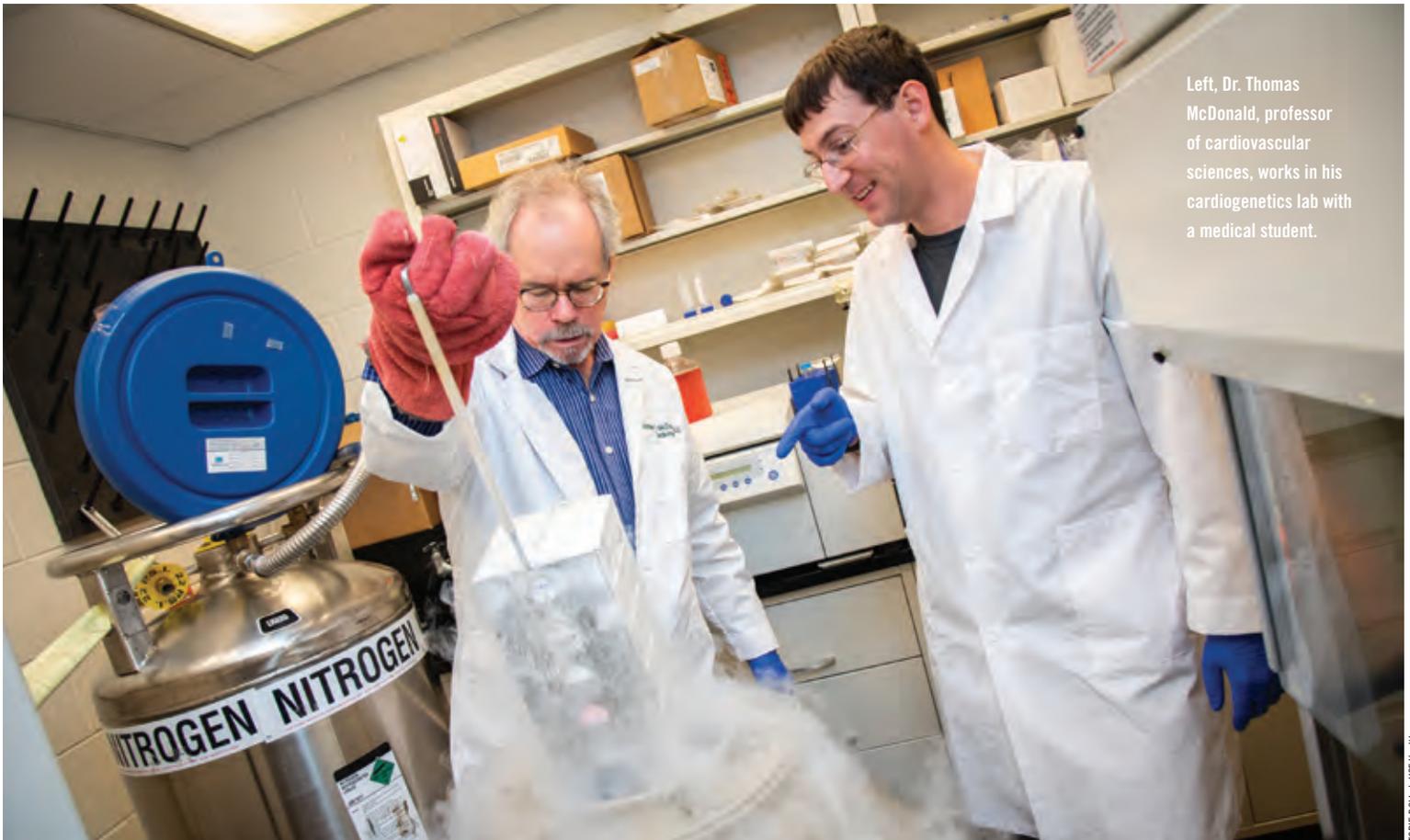


ALLISON LONG | USF Health

3D-printed nasal swab continues to make a difference for millions of patients worldwide

SINCE THE START OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC, USF Health has been at the forefront of research and collaboration to help curb the pandemic. One of the best examples is when the USF Health radiology department developed a 3D-printed nasopharyngeal swab that greatly relieved swab shortages and improved the ability to test patients for COVID-19.

Since making national headlines in late March, the USF-designed nasal swab has been produced millions of times and is being used the world over, including within all branches of the U.S. military, as well as several hundred hospitals and academic medical centers around the country, many state governments, including



Left, Dr. Thomas McDonald, professor of cardiovascular sciences, works in his cardiogenetics lab with a medical student.

TORRE DOLL | USF Health

Ohio, Massachusetts and Virginia, and international agencies and health-care facilities. And as of late July, USF Health has produced approximately 100,000 swabs for its patients and affiliates.

While gaining international attention, the team is also garnering awards. For making a difference in the lives of their community and the country, the USF Health 3D swab team earned the COVID-19 Heroes of Tampa Bay Award from Tampa Mayor Jane Castor.

“We are very humbled by this recognition of our efforts and grateful for this incredible opportunity that we’ve had to help the medical school, hospitals, university and rest of the country,” says Summer Decker, MA '07, MS '08, PhD '10, associate professor in the Department of Radiology and director of 3D Clinical Applications at USF Health.

The nasal swab design came about when, after identifying in March that nasal swabs for testing COVID-19 were in high demand and extremely limited in supply, a team from the USF Health’s 3D Clinical Applications Division created an initial design, working with Northwell Health and collaborating with Formlabs to develop prototypes and secure materials for a 3D-printed alternative.

Over the span of one week, the teams worked together to develop a nasal swab prototype and test it in the USF Health and Northwell Health labs. In two days, USF Health and Northwell Health, using Formlabs’ 3D printers and biocompatible, autoclavable resins, developed prototypes.

And now they are being used around the world.

“The goal was to help as many people as possible as fast as possible,” Decker says. “We made our files public so that anyone that was a hospital or a clinic could print them for their own facilities and get them to the front-line for COVID-19 testing in patients.”

Project examines factors causing COVID-19 racial, ethnic disparities

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC PEOPLE get sicker and die more often from COVID-19 than whites and Asians.

USF Health research is investigating whether genetic, physiological or medication-interaction factors may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection rates and cardiovascular complications.

Led by Dr. Thomas McDonald '77, professor of cardiovascular sciences in the USF Health Morsani College of Medicine and its Heart Institute, this research effort is examining the susceptibility in different ethnic backgrounds, including African Americans and Hispanics, who have double the infection rates and deaths from COVID-19, and in some disease hot spots they are among those disproportionately affected by pre-existing cardiovascular conditions, such as hypertension and heart failure.

This project, funded through the COVID-19 Rapid Response Research Grants as part of the Pandemic Response Research Network recently launched at USF, seeks to answer key questions about COVID-19 related racial/ethnic disparities, including whether socioeconomic differences alone account for differences in infection rates and cardiovascular complications, if cellular-level or other genetic or physiological factors contribute to worse disease outcomes, or if medication-interaction factors contribute to disproportionate infection rates and cardiovascular complications.

— Stories by SARAH WORTH '86 | USF Health



Left: USF Department of Electrical Engineering Associate Professor Sylvia Thomas

Photos: Courtesy USF College of Engineering

Engineering professors collaborate against COVID-19

WORKING TOGETHER on two research projects centered around the novel coronavirus outbreak, USF electrical engineering Associate Professor Sylvia Thomas and USF computer science and engineering Assistant Professor Tempestt Neal are creating innovations to address the pandemic and deal with future outbreaks.

This summer, Thomas and Neal were awarded grants from USF and the National Science Foundation (NSF). These were part of initiatives created to fund research projects that address the many facets of the COVID-19 pandemic, including consolidating data to assist in finding treatments and stopping the spread of the coronavirus, and tackling its mental and emotional repercussions.

One project funded by NSF's Rapid Response Research program involved Thomas, Neal and data processing and visualization company GraphAware, Inc. With Thomas as its principal investigator, the project aims to collect, analyze and visually display data to identify common trends that will give governments, health-care professionals and other researchers unique insight into COVID-19 and future pandemics.

"As academic researchers are writing journal articles around the world, and hospitals are reporting cases and data related to the pandemic, we will be able to gather all of those data streams and find connections among them," Thomas says. "That insight is incredibly valuable in helping advance our understanding of the pandemic and could lead to improved treatment, tracking and prevention measures."

"Knowing that this project has the ability to affect the entire world is really incredible," Neal says. "We're really looking forward to making a difference and applying what we know about data science to this problem. And I'm thrilled to have the chance to partner with Dr. Thomas, as well as our industry partners, to tackle the problems we're facing right now."

The second project funded by USF's COVID-19 Rapid Response Grants program is an interdisciplinary collaboration between USF's departments of Computer Science and Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Mental Health Law & Policy. Featuring Thomas, Neal – the project's principal investigator – and Department of Mental Health Law & Policy Professor Kristin Kosyluk, the project will collect data from news articles, social media and other sources to evaluate health disparities and treatment options for COVID-19 patients, especially in minoritized communities. Recent reports by both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Johns Hopkins Medicine have shown that minoritized groups have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.



Department of Electrical Engineering Associate Professor Sylvia Thomas

THOMAS IS ALSO PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR of another research project funded by the USF COVID-19 Rapid Response Grants program. It aims to develop new antiviral films and nanomembrane coatings for personal protective equipment to help stop the spread of the virus.

As lead professor of the Advanced Materials Bio and Integration Research laboratory at USF and fellow of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering, Thomas' work includes biomedical applications at the nano and micro scales. A notable past project involved combining the mucilage of prickly pear cactuses with polymers to produce bio-membranes capable of purifying drinking water and potentially healing wounds.

A recipient of the Educational Leadership Award at the 2019 Black Engineer of the Year Conference co-hosted by U.S. Black Engineer & Information Technology magazine, Thomas described herself as a "small-town Mississippi girl dreaming of big-time engineering." She was inspired by her mother, a 30-year educator, and her father, a computer science professor, who was killed during her sophomore year of college.

"I stand before you having survived a tragedy; doubts as a female engineer, and second-guesses as a corporate engineer," Thomas said during her acceptance speech. "More importantly as a motivator of young STEM believers, who I encourage daily to think outside of the box. Leadership, at any level, is not about what you can take; it's about what you can give!"

Thomas is an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation program mentor and has been involved in student recruitment and retention at USF for more than a decade. This includes students involved in the NSF Florida-Georgia Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Bridge to the Doctorate, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation University Center of Exemplary Mentoring, and Florida Education Fund's McKnight Doctoral Fellowship programs, the Society of Women Engineers, the National Society of Black Engineers and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers.



Department of Computer Science and Engineering Assistant Professor Tempestt Neal

IN ADDITION TO HER INVOLVEMENT in NSF's and USF's COVID-19 response initiatives, Neal has continued her lab's research and mentoring students during the summer.

Neal leads the USF Cyber Identity and Behavior Research Lab's (CIBeR) work in creating applications that use biometrics — human characteristics that allow a person to be digitally identified — and stylometry, analyzing data to determine

the author of a piece of writing.

In her current research, this refers to determining the true owner of a device at all times by leveraging the various omnipresent sensors found in smartphones and other Internet-connected devices. Everything from cameras and microphones to GPSs and gyroscopes could help a device potentially "know" the identity of its true user, eliminating the need for a password or fingerprint ID.

This can be built upon by including a person's interactions with a device, creating a "smart environment" with additional applications for security, mental health and other intersections of technology and human behavior. Neal is also collaborating on a project that could provide smartphone users with tailored mental health interventions that would appear in situations where the user is stressed or in an uncomfortable social setting.

"My dissertation work was largely based on biometrics for smartphone users," Neal says. "As an expansion of that, I'm applying what I've learned as a PhD student to this larger realm of devices ... We can use these data for making sure people are feeling OK or responding appropriately in certain environments like a classroom."

Neal plans to turn the CIBeR lab into a test space to study the collection of data in a "smart environment," where her research students will collect data from USF student participants. The lab features computer science and engineering student researchers of all degree levels.

Neal earned her doctorate in August 2018 from the University of Florida and began teaching at USF the same week. She first enrolled as an undergraduate music major at South Carolina State University but soon found that the rigid curriculum stifled her creativity. She said she later discovered the field of computer science through an interest in graphic design, fell in love with it and didn't look back.

"With computer science, I still get to be creative," Neal says. "Especially now in academia, I get to think of tough problems and how I can apply technology to solve them. To me, I get the best of both worlds."

Her interest in the field took her to Clemson University where she completed her master's and was introduced to biometrics. While she initially wanted to work in government research as a grad student, Neal stayed in academia to have a larger impact on future women and African American computer scientists and to be a role model in computer science education.

"Especially when you're coming from somewhere where many people don't have PhDs, it was important to be an example for my community back home," she said during a Department of Computer Science and Engineering panel. "My advisers knew that I could (achieve a PhD), and that was enough for me to know I could do it."

— RUSSELL NAY '18 | College of Engineering

Public Health student brings hope to those who ‘really, really need it’

W

HEN COVID-19 STRUCK, Heather Lawson, a doctoral student in USF’s College of Public Health, figured her volunteer organization, Petal Share, would have to go on hiatus.

Lawson – a busy civil rights attorney with the Department of Health and Human Services in

Washington, D.C. – and her crew of volunteers (whom she lovingly calls “pollinators”) solicit flower donations from wedding venues, event planners, corporations and hotels to rearrange into bouquets and hand out at hospitals, nursing homes and shelters. It’s a group she started in 2013 after watching a weddings-of-the-rich-and-famous reality show.

“This one show featured a couple who had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars importing tulips from Holland,” says Lawson, who’s concentrating in advanced practice leadership in public health. “While I was watching it, I had a sudden thought: What happens to all these hundreds of thousands of dollars of flowers after the event is over? Could I get them into the hands of people who could really use them – people who are sick or isolated or in need of cheering up?”

The answer was yes.

“

Flowers have an immediate and long-term effect on people. They’re natural mood boosters. They can decrease depression and promote social interaction.”

– Heather Lawson

After blindly tracking down flower sources via email, social media and friends of friends, Petal Share was born. But with large-scale events now postponed or canceled thanks to COVID-19, Lawson’s flower donations have shriveled up.

“Everything was shut down,” she says, “and I kind of accepted that as a reality. I went about my days like



everyone else, looking for toilet paper and paper towels and taking care of me and mine. But as we got more and more into the pandemic, I kept coming back to the reason why I started Petal Share in the first place. I never wanted people to feel isolated. I never wanted people to feel like they were forgotten. I started shaking some trees, sending messages to florists and partners we had in the past, asking if they had anything, any flowers at all.”

Lawson got a bite from a flower wholesaler who had to shut down temporarily. After a local florist hand-tied the flowers into individual bouquets (Lawson, admittedly not an expert flower arranger, says she’s grateful for any professional help she gets) and the Petal Share crew disinfected them, they had to find a facility that would accept the flowers amidst the lockdown. “I’m a public health professional,” Lawson says. “I absolutely wanted to minimize risk.”

Masked, gloved and with boxes sanitized with disinfectant, Lawson – who has had five family members suffer with (and recover from) COVID – found a shelter for domestic violence victims willing to take the group’s bouquets. “I rang the doorbell and a worker came outside and took the box,” she says. “We followed all the CDC safety protocols and stopped to take one socially distanced picture.”

Since then, Lawson has received more donations, including flowers from couples who had to cancel their weddings due to the pandemic. “They wanted to share the joy of their wedding, even though they couldn’t really celebrate,” Lawson says.



Opposite page: Petal Share founder Heather Lawson

Left: A flower-sharing event at George Washington University Hospital.



She and her pollinators – again, masked, gloved and appropriately social distancing – recently set up shop outside George Washington University Hospital, where they shared flowers with health-care workers and hospital staff. “You know, my feeling is that these people are our heroes and heroines,” she says. “They take care of us when we are at our worst. And even though they’ve been celebrated before, I just don’t think you can celebrate them too much.”

As COVID rages on, it doesn’t look like things will be coming up roses for Petal Share anytime soon. With big events on hold indefinitely, donated flowers will continue to be in short supply. But that won’t deter Lawson and her volunteers. After all, if ever there’s a time when people need a bright spot in their day, it’s during a pandemic.

“Flowers have an immediate and long-term positive effect on people,” Lawson says. “They’re natural mood boosters. They can decrease depression and promote social interaction. Sharing flowers, particularly with people who are elderly, sick or incapacitated in some way, is one of the best preventive health measures you can take, and creating ideas and innovations to prevent getting sick is what public health is all about.

“I’ve seen the way women in battered women’s shelters respond when we deliver flowers to them on Valentine’s Day. They’re asking themselves, ‘Do I matter? Am I forgotten? Who loves me?’ Petal Share has been there to say, ‘We remember you. We love you. Yes, you matter.’ It may



Photos: Courtesy of Heather Lawson

sound like hyperbole, but I’ve actually heard people say these flowers have saved their lives. Petal Share is about bringing a little hope, a little joy to those who really, really need it.”

To learn more about Petal Share, follow the group on Instagram (www.instagram.com/petalshare/) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/petalshare).

– Donna Campisano | College of Public Health

Addressing DISPARITIES

Physical, behavioral health issues experienced by people of color ‘aren’t just about health’

WHEN KYAIEN CONNER TALKS about health disparities experienced by people of color, she draws not only from extensive training and her background as a mental health practitioner, educator and researcher, but also from painful personal experience.

Prior to joining USF's faculty in 2013, Conner lived in Pittsburgh. She vividly recalls driving home from an event with her family and being stopped four separate times by police – who offered no reasons for pulling them over.

“We were questioned as to why we were in that area, if the car was ours,” she says. “During the fourth stop, my husband was asked to get out of the car so the police could do a search. My two young sons were in the back seat.”

The incident illustrates the importance of recognizing that physical and mental health disparities experienced by people of color “aren’t just about health.”

“They are about disparities in all aspects of society that lead people to feel that they are being marginalized, mistreated and discriminated against,” she says. “Those are among the factors that enhance stress and fear, which are directly connected to health. You can’t separate those

and say this is only about treatment or access to a doctor. Those are important. But all of those other societal elements have a daily impact on people of color. Every time you walk out of the house, you know that being Black will impact all of the interactions that you have. That stress impacts your body, it impacts how you move through the world, it has a direct impact on health.”

An associate professor of mental health law and policy, Conner is helping prepare USF students for careers as behavioral health or health care providers. A course that she developed, Cultural Diversity, Health and Behavioral Health, is designed specifically to help undergraduates “understand the historical implications of health disparities that are significant realities in communities they go into.”

One of those realities is the widespread reluctance in communities of color to seek professional mental health services.

“My passion for being a mental health service provider and working specifically with the Black community stemmed from my early recognition that seeking those services just wasn’t discussed or was seen as a last resort, if it was even considered an option,” Conner says, adding that she has encountered such reluctance in various communities of color.

“There is a cultural idea that talking to outsiders about things of a sensitive nature, such as mental health, is just taboo,” she says. “It’s something you keep in your family or that you pray about, but you don’t seek outside professional help. People don’t want to associate with terms like depression. In my research, people would often say ‘I just have the blues’ or ‘I’m not depressed,’ but when you ask questions on a scale that identifies depression, they would score off the charts.”

That reluctance stems, at least in part, from the historical issue of mistrust of the health-care system that extends to mental health care providers. Conner calls that mistrust “pervasive,” noting that African Americans are half as likely to seek mental health services as whites.

“It stems from real histories of abuse and mistreatment between the Black community and the medical/health field, as well as academics who have used communities of color to build research careers, publish papers and then leave them with nothing to show for it,” she says. “Community-based participatory research is vital – research projects that go into communities and partner with them to determine what their needs are, develop strategies for addressing those collaboratively, and engage community at each level of the research process.”

In her own research, Conner focuses on mental health disparities facing ethnic minorities in engagement, retention and psychosocial outcomes. She recently received a three-year, \$1.7 million grant from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute for community-engaged work with local Area Agencies on Aging. She will assist in identifying some of the issues related to behavioral health in older African American and Hispanic populations, specifi-



Kyaien Conner



cally the factors that lead to hospital re-admissions.

She also has received a \$100,000 Florida Department of Health grant for a pilot study of a cultural drumming intervention to improve psychosocial outcomes among African Americans with early stage Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. Conner, who has been a professional West African dancer since she was 14, is the artistic director for Tampa's Kuumba Dancers and Drummers.

"I can integrate my passion for the arts with cultural intervention strategies that we know from our observations are effective," she says.

Though disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, the program involves drummers performing in adult day-care centers around Tampa.

"They lead beautiful drum circles where older adults with Alzheimer's, many of whom can't talk, are able to hit a drum, make a rhythm, and you see them light up," Conner says. "We've been able to see preliminarily some improvements in agitation reduction and to their moods. These programs connect people with each other and have an impact on their well-being."

Also essential are more providers of color in health care and behavioral health – providers who are culturally competent, Conner emphasizes. Much of her research suggests that "the inclusion of culturally meaningful values, language and strategies that are targeted for the Black

community lead to enhanced rapport, a greater feeling of collaboration and inclusion on the part of the client, and ultimately better clinical outcomes."

Even if mental health resources are available in Black communities – which Conner says is not the norm – people are not aware of them.

"As such, Black people are significantly less likely to utilize professional mental health services and their first experience with mental health treatment is in the criminal justice system or in the emergency room when they are in crisis," she says.

Eliminating disparities requires complex solutions to a variety of social determinants of health, including education, housing and income.

"It's so much bigger than health," Conner says. "It's hard because in the U.S., talking about race is uncomfortable. But you can't change what you don't acknowledge.

"The average wealth of a white family in the U.S. is seven times more than a Black family, and that gap is larger in 2020 than when we started keeping track of this in 1983," she says. "This is critically correlated because wealth is a predictor of positive health outcomes. We need research to better understand some of these specific disparities and develop strategies to address them."

– TOM WOOLF | USF News



Taneja College of Pharmacy Dean Kevin Sneed, center, speaks at Interprofessional Education Day 2018.

FREDRICK J. COLEMAN | USF Health

USF HEALTH IS PLAYING AN instrumental role in increasing enrollment of underserved populations in research through a program that connects community groups with USF researchers.

Called WE-CARE (Workgroup Enhancing Community Advocacy and Research Engagement), the initiative aims to improve health outcomes among underrepresented populations by increasing their enrollment and participation in research. WE-CARE was started several years ago by the USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy, and was the continuation of a National Institutes of Health Center grant project. WE-CARE partners with REACHUP, Inc., a local community-based advocacy group that coordinates resources to help communities achieve equality in health care and positive health for families.

One of the main opportunities for connecting is WE-CARE's frequent community advocacy workshops, where community groups and researchers and clinicians come together to share valuable ideas for recruiting more minorities for clinical trials.

"We are going to cast a broad net to all groups to make sure we are making every attempt we can to capture people and introduce them to research," says Kevin Sneed, dean of the USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy, senior associate vice president of USF Health, and executive director of WE-CARE.

"We have to build trust and co-create solutions. And we need the researchers and the community to shorten the bridge that will get us together and make sure we're communicating."

Clinical trials have historically lacked participation by people from minority populations, skewing research results

to reflect presumed outcomes for predominately white and male populations. While African Americans, Latinos, Asians and mixed sub-groups make up almost 40 percent of the U.S. population, current clinical trial demographics do not reflect that same diversity – non-whites account for less than 5 percent.

This narrow pool of DNA variants equates to limited samples for researchers to study as they develop new treatments, and thus limit information on the true effectiveness and on the risks of these treatments in underserved populations.

Through its WE-CARE program, the pharmacy school partners with key stakeholders to increase participation of minority and medically underserved populations in clinical trials. The program seeks to ensure that all communities have access to genomic clinical research as technology advances.

Part of the WE-CARE mission is to act as a resource for reviewing research studies and guiding researchers in potential ways of adjusting their effort to incorporate more minorities in their studies. Researchers can submit an abstract to WE-CARE, which goes to the group's review board and, if approved, WE-CARE will help connect with Tampa Bay area community groups to help with recruitment.

"We can help researchers find people from underserved, underrepresented groups here in the Tampa Bay area," Sneed says.

And for the researchers, Sneed says, they are urged to remain cognizant of the patient's perspective and to always consider them as individuals.

"The number one thing you can do," he says, "is to buy into their humanity first."

– SARAH WORTH '86 | USF Health

WE-CARE

Initiative aims to increase minority participation in research trials

USF moving needle forward on **SUPPLIER DIVERSITY**

TO TERRIE DANIEL, NO PURCHASE is too small when it comes to enhancing supplier diversity at USF.

“We tell everyone who has purchasing authority on behalf of the university that whether they are making a \$1 purchase or \$100 million, it matters because it all helps move the needle forward,” says USF’s assistant vice president of supplier diversity. “A lot of the people making purchases feel like ‘I’m only buying \$50 worth of office supplies,’ but if you’ve got 200 individuals spending \$50 on a monthly basis, that adds up pretty quickly.”

Daniel joined USF in 2017 after leading supplier diversity efforts for the state of Indiana and the city of Indianapolis. Together with her three-member team, she focuses on ensuring that minority-, women- and veteran-owned businesses can benefit from opportunities available at the university through outreach across USF’s three campuses and throughout the Tampa Bay region.

Specifically, the Office of Supplier Diversity works with all USF purchasing agents, departmental buyers and facilities to monitor, implement, track progress and make adjustments to the university’s diverse business utilization strategic plan.

“We pull together listings of capable suppliers we can use across the university, such as for janitorial supplies, landscaping, construction, USF Health initiatives and research initiatives,” Daniel says. “There are suppliers in a wide variety of areas that can support the business functions of the university.”

A primary emphasis of Daniel’s office is helping suppliers understand the way USF does business.

“We’ve created a lot of educational tools and content to communicate USF’s requirements to suppliers,” she says.

As one example, she cited a Business Empowerment Series her office launched last year that helps diverse suppliers learn about bidding, bonding and insurance, marketing strategies, health and wellness, finances and taxes, and human resources.

“It’s really important that we educate our suppliers so they have success bidding our jobs,” Daniel said. “We are trying to identify barriers that we can break down as an organization to help businesses have a lot more access to what we are doing from a contractual perspective.”

She noted that in the past two years, USF has awarded more than \$115 million in contracts to businesses that are partnered with Black-owned firms. Those contracts include the new residence hall that opened recently on the St. Petersburg campus, Osprey Suites, and the Judy Genshaft Honors College building planned for the Tampa campus.

Another challenge is helping diverse suppliers learn of business opportunities not only at USF, but throughout the region.

“We send weekly e-blasts to our vendor database because

In the past two years, USF has awarded more than \$115 million in contracts to businesses that are partnered with Black-owned firms. Those contracts include the new residence hall that opened recently on the St. Petersburg campus, Osprey Suites, and the Judy Genshaft Honors College building planned for the Tampa campus.

we want them to know what the current opportunities are,” Daniel says. “We also partner with a lot of other organizations across Tampa Bay so they know about other opportunities as well. For example, Moffitt Cancer Center is building new facilities and we wanted to make sure our suppliers knew about that, so we help them by advertising those opportunities as well.”

In a letter to Daniel last month, USF President Steven Currall noted the “outstanding work” by her and her team.

“The University of South Florida is one of the largest economic drivers in the Tampa Bay region and we have a responsibility to support the diverse business community,” Currall wrote. “We have aimed to lead, and we now seek to also further elevate supplier diversity.”

He listed a series of near-, medium- and longer-term policy changes and initiatives designed to enhance supplier diversity. They include a code of conduct for all employees with purchasing authority that will establish “vision and a clear understanding of expectations for faculty, staff and administration surrounding supplier diversity.”

In an effort “to achieve significant diverse business utilization in second-tier contracting during both design and construction phases,” project contractors will have to submit a Diverse Business Utilization Plan outlining their commitment to utilizing diverse suppliers on major construction projects (those in excess of \$4 million).

Among other actions outlined in his letter, Currall said that USF vice presidents and college deans will be held accountable “for additional progress on supplier diversity.”

“Diversity is one of this university’s greatest strengths, and diverse business ownership is essential to further our community’s economic growth and success,” Currall wrote.

More information about the Office of Supplier Diversity is available at www.usf.edu/osd; via email, osd@usf.edu; or by phone, 813-974-5052.

— TOM WOOLF | USF News

A perfect storm for DACA recipients and their **FAMILIES**

UNDOCUMENTED YOUNG ADULTS IN Florida wake up each day faced with myriad uncertainties, and two social scientists at USF are exploring how immigrants ages 18-30 navigate their many challenges.

And just as policy changes and court decisions have impacted the lives of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, so have they impacted the researchers' work.

Elizabeth Aranda, professor of sociology and associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, and Heide Castañeda, professor of anthropology, began their National Science Foundation-funded Immigrant Youth Project in 2017, working with Elizabeth Vaquera, professor of sociology and public policy and public administration at George Washington University, and Girsea Martinez Rosas, a doctoral student/research assistant at USF.

Their original plan was to interview 120 young adults, and two Tampa Bay immigrant organizations were helping the researchers find participants.

But in September 2017, President Donald Trump rescinded DACA.



Juanminino / iStock

immigrant profile is significantly different than two other states most often cited in the research, California and Texas.

“Both of us are interested in the experience of being undocumented, the experiences of the youths and the emotional transitions they go through as they navigate life with uncertain legal status,” Castañeda says.

The transition to adulthood, Aranda adds, is a critical period.

“We’re looking at how this uncertainty, in terms of their status, changes their trajectory into adulthood as far as choices they have to make,” she says, referring to entering the work force, going to college and starting a family. “We’re also looking at how they deal emotionally and socially with various policy shocks. From one interview to the next, there could have been news about some sort of legal decision related to DACA, who challenged it, what court is it going to next. People really feel like their lives are being jerked around.”

The policy shocks add up to a pattern of experiences over time “that brings to light the precarity, the uncertainty, the anxiety that these young adults live with on a daily basis,” Castañeda says.

“Many of them are very skeptical,” she says. “They know that this summer’s Supreme Court decision upholding DACA isn’t the end of this. Even though there may have been a momentary celebration, the overall mood is uncertainty and skepticism.”

Yet, the researchers have found the study participants to be very resilient.

“With each policy shock, there’s a period of mourning but people also would bounce back and talk about their future, about what would happen if DACA expired,” Aranda



When we talk about policy implications, we consider what the data indicate are the best possible solutions to these issues.”

— Heide Castañeda

“Prior to this study, both Heide and I had worked with immigrant youth and it wasn’t a challenge to recruit people to interview,” Aranda says. “After that decision, it seemed people were afraid their DACA status would be revoked and they just stopped talking to us.”

At that point, Aranda and Castañeda had interviewed about 50 people and decided to conduct further interviews with that smaller group because “it was a great opportunity to follow their experiences in real time as policies changed,” Castañeda explains. That process has been ongoing, and the researchers also added an online component to include about 50 more participants.

They believe that Florida has been largely neglected in undocumented immigrant research, noting that the state’s

says. “They think about what they can get done before it expires – ‘if I can get my degree and in a worst-case scenario, if I get deported, then maybe I can get a job in my home country.’ Along with all the uncertainty, they deal with anti-immigrant rhetoric. One young adult told us, ‘I feel like I’m in a country that hates me and people like me.’”

They also have to take on additional responsibilities that may be substantially greater than other people their age.

“One of our participants is a USF student and his parents are undocumented, so they don’t have driver’s licenses,” Castañeda says. “Since he’s DACA, he was able to get a license. His parents clean offices and stores in the evening, and this student drives them to all of these places so they can earn an income. He sleeps two hours a night, gets up, and goes to his classes. So, they are dealing with fear and with additional responsibilities.”

The coronavirus pandemic has added significant stress in the lives of DACA recipients.

“Many undocumented youths and their families are front-line workers, in agriculture, in restaurant and hotel settings, and many of those jobs have been cut,” Castañeda says. “Many of the young adults talk about suffering financially. People who are undocumented were not eligible for stimulus checks through the federal CARES Act, and on top of everything else, they often don’t have adequate health-care access.

“It’s a perfect storm of terrible pre-existing conditions

for these youths and families, combined with the pandemic,” she adds.

Aranda and Castañeda plan to continue their research through the fall, after which they will assess the data they have collected and generate policy papers. While there are benefits to DACA, they don’t believe it is the best solution because of its temporary nature. Undocumented immigrants previously had to re-apply for DACA status every two years; in July, the Trump administration announced it would require recipients to re-apply annually.

“When we talk about policy implications, we consider what the data indicate are the best possible solutions to these issues,” Aranda says. “We don’t agree that DACA is the best solution; rather, it should be something more permanent that reduces the vulnerability of these young adults.”

The researchers’ goal, Aranda says, “is to drive home more of a recognition of what this group goes through so the broader population not only understands those challenges but also why we need solutions that better the community. A lot of these young adults are contributing to front-line efforts now as teachers, in health care, working in grocery stores. What is the loss if we deport this whole segment of the population? What kind of human capital loss do we as a society experience? What are the best solutions not just for this group, but for society in general?”

– TOM WOOLF | USF News

Field workers harvest vegetables in the Homestead fields in Florida.



THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD at the hands of police in Minneapolis has shined a theoretical multi-angular mirror on society and how it interacts with law enforcement, especially in Black communities. Concerns with police militarization that have grown over decades are even more pronounced today as that trend has become increasingly apparent nationwide during protests against police brutality.

USF Associate Criminology Professor Bryanna Fox has spent much of her career studying policing and crime prevention. She's found that military-style uniforms and equipment, such as M4 assault rifles, flashbang grenades and armored vehicles, can undermine civilian trust in police. In a recent study published in the *Journal of Research and Crime and Delinquency*, Fox and her USF colleagues Richard K. Moule, Jr., and Chae Jaynes found the more people trusted the police, the more likely they were to empower police, and be supportive of them using military weapons and tactics.

"Our findings underscore the need for police to cultivate trust in the community," Fox says, "particularly as increases in trust were associated with increases in support for police, across people of all races and ethnicities."

Faculty members explore strategies to improve **POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Fox has also played a pivotal role in the Tampa Police Department's efforts to improve community relations. She was selected to make recommendations based on feedback from members of the newly formed Mayor's Community Task Force on Policing, which represents a variety of key stakeholders, including Black Lives Matter, the NAACP, business owners, neighborhood associations and churches.

She and 12 USF graduate students met several times with the 40-member task force to help better understand public perceptions of the Tampa Police Department. They asked questions that pertain to how much task force members trust the police, if they fear police and if they feel officers need more or fewer resources to effectively do their jobs. They also gathered feedback on policing tools, such as the use of body cameras, facial recognition software and other tactics used to monitor areas with high crime rates. Additionally, the team spoke with law enforcement officers on their interactions with the community, perceived tensions and how they're individually impacted by department policies and resources.

Criminology Professor Lorie Fridell is a top expert in the nation on biased policing. She has created the Fair and Impartial Policing training program that educates law en-



MARTHA SENCIO-BRINE | Tampa Bay Times

forcement on implicit biases and provides them with skills for producing impartial policing. Fridell recently expanded the program to address the issue of police being called to a scene by a community member who is frightened or uncomfortable because a person of color is wearing a protective COVID-19 mask. She analyzes the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis through the lens of what social psychologists label "outgroup bias."

"The ultimate outgroup bias is dehumanization," reports Fridell. "The policing profession, unlike others, can lead officers to see members of certain groups as something other than 'humans like them.'"

James Unnever, professor of criminology at the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus, has written several books and published dozens of academic articles on how racism increases the likelihood that African Americans will engage in problematic behaviors, including crime.

"The relationship between racial discrimination and crime occurs even if African Americans vicariously perceive racial discrimination such as witnessing the murder of George Floyd and others," Unnever says. "Racism is related to crime because it undermines the ability of African Americans to bond with conventional institutions, diminishes their self-control, and enhances their likelihood of experiencing crime-producing emotions such as anger and hostility. My research also suggests that criminal justice injustices are an especially crime-causing form of racism."

Psychology Professor Edelyn Verona has published several studies on violence and its relation to experiences of threat. She's found exposure to stress leads to aggression, especially in men, and the experience of stress can degrade self-control or promote impulse responses, such as the looting and de-



Photo: Protestors took to the streets of Tampa and St. Petersburg in June in this photo originally published in the Tampa Bay Times. Martha Acensio-Rhine, Mass Comm USFSP '19, has covered sporting events, political rallies and music festivals for the Tampa Bay Times over the last two years, but has never seen intensity, sadness and even danger like she experienced since the protests began.

“Black mothers’ fears lead them to limit their children’s behaviors and movements as an attempt to protect them from racial profiling,” says Hordge-Freeman, who recently was named senior advisor to the president and provost on diversity and inclusion. “Unable to change society’s anti-Blackness, some may also try to modify their children’s racial appearance in ways that may, unfortunately, reinforce racial stigma and lead to painful experiences.”

USF recently announced it will embark on a year-long series of research projects exploring the perpetuation of systemic racism in society that has resulted in economic inequities, social injustices, police violence and other issues. The \$500,000 fund jointly established by the Office of the Provost and USF Research & Innovation will support the first round of projects designed to create deeper understanding of these complex problems while forging solutions and productive community partnerships.

The effort is guided by a newly formed task force of USF faculty and staff from campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, known as the USF Research Task Force on Understanding and Addressing Blackness and Anti-Black Racism in our Local, National and International Communities. The task force will aim to support research proposals that include community-based projects and programs, and projects that are positioned for sustained, external grant funding from local or federal agencies, corporate partners or other private sector foundations. It was prompted by several factors, including the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the nation’s Black communities and long-standing issues of racism and institutional violence brought to the forefront by the recent deaths of Black men, women and children due to excessive force from law enforcement.

Various groups throughout Tampa Bay and nationwide are calling for less use of force and more community-oriented policing. Many have stated they’d like to see funding shift to social service agencies equipped to respond to nonviolent police calls related to mental health and substance abuse. The Pasco County Sheriff’s Office addressed similar concerns last fall when it launched the Behavioral Health Intervention Team. Fox has been actively involved in developing programs that offer treatment and prevention services to justice-involved citizens, and is in the midst of a long-term research effort to reduce jail populations.

“The benefits of implementing evidence-based interview and prevention programs are enormous,” Fox says. “Not only do they help to reduce crime and burden on police, they also help to improve relations with the community, reduce victimization, save taxpayers money and potentially break the cycle of crime that many get wrapped up in.”

Fox hopes to utilize her experience in Pasco County and from other collaborations with law enforcement agencies nationwide to assist Tampa Police in developing solutions that address community concerns with the current policing method.

- TINA MEKETA | USF News

struction that occurred in May following a series of peaceful protests throughout Tampa Bay.

“The combination of recent stressors related to COVID-19 and a history of trauma that many in the Black community have experienced, especially in regard to law enforcement, are making people more hypervigilant and on edge,” Verona says. “In that state, the threatening view of police in riot gear would trigger a defensive response and possible desire to retaliate.”

“Historically, we repeatedly bear witness to Black people’s outrage against police violence as a catalyst for public protest. However, these protests have never been about police brutality alone,” says David Ponton III, assistant professor and historian of Africana studies. “Whether during the race riots of the World War I era, on college campuses in 1967 and 1968, after Rodney King’s torture in 1999, following Mike Brown’s death in 2014, or today in 2020, Black Americans have expressed their grievances regarding the unequal distribution of economic and political resources and the ways policing works, institutionally, to sustain that unequal order.”

Additionally, Ponton emphasizes research that has found Black Americans who are exposed to news about police killing an unarmed Black person report high rates of poor mental health in the weeks and months following the news. He says this contributes to chronic stress, making them more susceptible to hypertension and its comorbidities, ultimately reducing the length of Black lives.

The book “The Color of Love” by Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, associate professor of sociology, exposes how one of the most pernicious consequences of racism and white supremacy is how Black families feel compelled to prepare their children for racism.

Women of color face unique challenges in ACADEMIA

BLACK WOMEN MAKE UP approximately 3 percent of all faculty members at higher education institutions in the U.S. — a representation that Deirdre Cobb-Roberts says is far too low.

“When I read that Black women are at 3 percent (of the total professoriate), I’m thinking ‘this is definitely an area of concern, and we need to engage in critical work to address this disparity,’” Cobb-Roberts says.

Cobb-Roberts, an associate professor of social foundations of education in USF’s College of Education, focuses her research on historical and contemporary challenges of representation, equity and treatment in American higher education with an emphasis on cross-cultural mentoring, teacher preparation and racial justice in education.



Her most recent research has focused on women of color in higher education and specifically the experiences of Black women administrators. In her co-edited book, “Mentoring as Critically Engaged Praxis: Storying the Lives and Contributions Of Black Women Administrators,” Cobb-Roberts and other scholars explore different mentorship models often used to help faculty members understand and navigate challenging higher education contexts as they pursue leadership positions.

Cobb-Roberts found that using alternative forms of mentoring that tend to be more collaborative, synergistic and negotiated may help to retain and promote underrepresented women of color in academia.

“When we look at traditional (mentoring) models, oftentimes those don’t account for some of the cultural nuances and critical interrogations of experiences that capture the complexity of mentoring practices that specifically address the professional needs and situations of women of color,” Cobb-Roberts says. “Alternative models, such as co-mentoring, peer mentoring and feminist mentoring can engender trust and honesty and provide a more holistic approach to mentoring, which eventually leads to professional success.”

Cobb-Roberts has heard stories from many women faculty of color about their experiences, which led her and Talia Esnard to co-author the book “Black Women, Academe, and the Tenure Process in the United States and the Caribbean,” which explores the meanings, experiences and challenges faced by Black women who are either on the tenure track or have earned tenure at higher education institutions across the United States and the Caribbean.

There’s an “invisibility” that comes along with being a Black faculty member in academia, Cobb-Roberts says, which often creates an experience of isolation and can lead to fewer opportunities to

collaborate on research and grants.

“If you’re operating in isolation and doing everything alone, you don’t benefit, as do many of your white colleagues, from some of the networks and connections embedded within academe,” she says.

Women of color in academia may also experience unique challenges in advancing their careers. Cobb-Roberts says that often the complexity of a woman of color’s research interests, especially when those interests challenge the status quo, combined with lower-than-average scores on teaching evaluations — a trend that research says is partially due to students’ perceptions and implicit biases — can create obstacles when women faculty of color apply for tenure and promotion.

“Oftentimes, if women of color engage in research that is specific to their identity or the identity of other historically marginalized groups, their work is invalidated and challenged by colleagues as being narrow, not rigorous or too controversial,” Cobb-Roberts says.

To combat this, Cobb-Roberts recommends higher education institutions take a closer look at their tenure and promotion guidelines and update them to be clearer about expectations and to better support the professional needs and experiences of minoritized populations.

After taking a broader look at the experiences of women of color in higher education, Cobb-Roberts plans to focus her future research more closely on women of color in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

When explaining her interest in this group, she says there is a small number of women of color entering and persisting in faculty positions in higher education, but there’s an even smaller group pursuing faculty positions within STEM, a high-demand field that has traditionally been closed to many women of color.

“I think there’s a real need to not only increase the pathway (of women of color in STEM-related disciplines), but to ensure that they move forward into faculty positions so they provide expertise, support and mentorship for all students, but in particular students of color, because there is going to be some shared understanding around access, identities and experiences. It is important for these students to know they are not invisible nor alone,” Cobb-Roberts says.

Cobb-Roberts is also using her expertise to create change at USF by serving as a member of the newly created USF Research Task Force on Understanding and Addressing Blackness and Anti-Black Racism in our Local, National and International Communities. The task force will support a series of research projects submitted by USF faculty to explore systemic racism, an initiative supported through a \$500,000 fund established by the Office of the Provost and USF Research & Innovation.

Overall, Cobb-Roberts says she hopes her work offers strategies that Black women faculty, administrators and students can use to successfully navigate and shift higher education’s culture and to help reduce educational inequalities.

Professor uses 'Theatre of the Oppressed' to help address racism

STARTING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE and racism can be a taxing experience for those who are new at initiating these dialogues. Educators especially play an important role in fostering communication to help students understand how racism and related injustices are structured throughout education and society — and how they can intervene.

Vonzell Agosto helps people approach and provoke these critical conversations.

Agosto is an associate professor of educational leadership and policy studies in the USF College of Education. Her research explores curriculum leadership, often through disability studies and cultural studies. She also focuses on mentoring students and faculty in higher education.

In her work, Agosto uses theater-based activities, games and strategies from Theatre of the Oppressed, a method that uses performance as preparation for promoting change. Created by theater practitioner and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Augusto Boal, the theatrical form is used globally to educate communities on critical social issues by having participants act out scenarios they have experienced that broadly affect oppressed populations.

"It's rehearsal for what we would do outside that space," Agosto says. "I use (the term) 'performance' loosely. It's not necessarily a scripted performance, there's some ad lib in it. You're trying to problem-solve ... as if the incident was happening again."

While the technique can help participants build empathy for individuals who, like them, experience the harm of oppression, Agosto says it's also a "rehearsal" for resisting oppressive forces in the future.

"The response that I've seen over and over again is that people actually feel like they're living the experience when they're in that role," Agosto says. "They're having emotions, they're having reactions, they're having things that they want to say that they think are good things to say. They're reacting to what other people are saying or repeating the words someone else wants them to say, or they're rejecting words and actions."

Agosto has co-facilitated these workshops for future teachers, youth groups, labor workers and even a university's football team. As part of the experience, she mixes in trust-building activities, games and movement exercises to help the participants test their limits and become more open to having meaningful conversations about what are often polarizing subjects.

"Racism — it's an emotionally heavy topic," Agosto says. "It's not something to be celebrated. It's something to work against ... but it doesn't mean there is no enjoyment in that work — of resisting oppression. If I'm (someone who is) working against oppression and I feel like things are making a difference, or I'm being better prepared and well informed, then I think there's joy in that."

To dive deeper into this work, Agosto is completing a

one-year residency with the David C. Anchin Center for the Advancement of Teaching, a research center housed in USF's College of Education, as part of the center's Scholar-in-Residence program. The program allows college faculty to explore critical and timely issues in education by conducting research and giving presentations about their work to the education community.

During her residency year, Agosto will research how teachers engage in "the race talk" with their students as a way of bridging the gap between schools and a student's home or community to increase racial equity, race-consciousness and race-conscious relationships.

She will also draw on her work of using Theatre of the Oppressed to facilitate professional development trainings for teachers and school administrators across the Tampa Bay area.

For people who are interested in facilitating workshops like this themselves, Agosto suggests getting comfortable with instigating these types of conversations. While being able to "read the room" is important, Agosto says it's also key for the facilitator to continue provoking the conversation and to keep a dialogue going as participants are working out how to be involved.

"Talk more. I am anticipating a response to my recommendation that will go something like this — 'Do we have to talk about racism, again?'" Agosto says. "I say this to those who not only want to avoid the discomfort that comes when talking about race, racism and anti-racism, and doing something to promote racial equity, but (to those) who also expect to get past the discomfort of the conversation. Stay the course."

—Stories by ELIZABETH ENGASSER '15 | College of Education





Courtesy USF College of Engineering

Mentoring diverse leaders for STEM

SINCE 2005, THE SLOAN MINORITY PHD Initiative has provided \$4 million to maintain USF's national leadership in fostering greater diversity in STEM doctoral programs and to support 149 underrepresented students from the colleges of Engineering, Arts and Sciences, and Marine Science.

Along with eight NSF Florida-Georgia Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Bridge to the Doctorate Activity grants in the same period, USF has received \$12 million to reimagine the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) doctoral workforce.

The latest research grant, \$630,000, continues the Sloan University Center of Exemplary Mentoring's (UCEM) support of domestic African American/Black, and Hispanic/Latino doctoral students. USF is among an elite group of eight universities (MIT, Cornell, Georgia Tech, Duke, Penn State, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and UC San Diego) and the only non-member of the Association of American Universities to receive funding for a UCEM.

"We envision the center will help institutionalize new faculty mentoring and graduate student success initiatives for the entire university," says Jose Zayas-Castro, principal investigator and UCEM director, and professor and executive associate dean of the College of Engineering.

The goal of the Sloan UCEM is to institutionalize best practices in minority graduate student success while also expanding diversity in academia, industry, government and all other sectors of the nation's STEM workforce. With 89 graduates, 32 students are in the program and at least 32 additional doctoral students will be recruited in engineering, chemistry, physics and the geosciences by fall 2023.

At its core, the "heart and soul" of this graduate inclusive excellence initiative has been the success in recognizing and nurturing "unrealized potential" in students and changing the trajectory of their lives.

Uprooted but undefeated by Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans native Deidra Hodges, PhD '09, and her two children relocated to Florida and began rebuilding their lives. Unable to find employment, Hodges embraced the opportunity to pursue her doctorate. Working with Chris Ferekides '87, MSEE '90 and PhD '91, professor and chair in the Department of Electrical Engineering, she focused her research in the area of solar energy, a subject that had fascinated her since high school.

A recently funded seed grant from the Sloan Scholars Mentoring Network and Sloan Foundation "will enable me to apply for and receive larger grants (NSF, DOE) to support research innovation and career advancement endeavors," says Hodges, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Texas at El Paso.

The recruitment of underrepresented minority students in STEM doctoral programs and preparing them for faculty and other leadership positions aligns with USF's Principles of Community as well as the strategic goals of teaching, research, diversity and inclusion.

"Now more than ever we need to prepare STEM students from diverse backgrounds as the next generation of problem-solvers, thought-leaders, research innovators and faculty role models to help improve societal well-being as a whole, especially among the most vulnerable and underserved," Robert Bishop, College of Engineering dean, says.

Above: Current participants in the Sloan Minority PHD Initiative

Entrepreneur, educator, engineer and empowerment speaker Quenton Bonds MSEE '06 and PhD '10, completed his doctorate in electrical engineering in 2010. Currently deputy engineering lead and SBIR/STTR Center co-lead at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, his work has focused on the design and development of remote sensors for geoscience and various other space and aircraft applications.

Bonds believes the USF minority graduate fellowship program clearly distinguishes itself by creating a family environment that breeds success, both personally and professionally.

"They foster a strong family type environment within our cohort that was passed down and emulated by succeeding Bridge to the Doctorate cohorts," he says. "I still apply those 'lessons learned' in my current position at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center."

Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, environmental engineering doctoral candidate Kiesha Pierre followed in her sister's footsteps and immigrated to the United States to pursue an undergraduate education. After earning a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Florida Memorial University, she went on to complete her master's in mathematics from the University of Miami. Pierre taught at Bethune-Cookman University (BCU) in Daytona Beach. Some of her former BCU students, including Anthony Windmon, are now enrolled in doctoral programs at USF.

Working with Andres Tejada-Martinez, professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Pierre's research involves using computational fluid dynamics to study an oxidation ditch, a biological unit treatment process that uses microorganisms to remove organic matter and nitrogen from wastewater.

Pierre is finishing her dissertation and plans to graduate in December. She believes mentoring and community are critical to student success.

"The Sloan program hosted myriad workshops that provided professional and personal development," Pierre says. "The end-of-semester socials provided me a sense of community. I am grateful to the Sloan UCEM for helping me to successfully navigate this doctoral journey."

Current Sloan scholar Erica Dasi is an environmental engineering doctoral student. For her dissertation, she is researching the application of biological nutrient removal for drinking water and wastewater treatment in small communities. Dasi is advised by Sarina Ergas, professor and graduate program director in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

"I appreciate the diversity that exists in the environmental engineering doctoral program," Dasi says. "Our department has many examples of women who are leading impactful research teams and who have successfully earned the full professor title."

Anthony Windmon, Sloan scholar and doctoral candidate in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), is doing his research in the area of smart health within the Social Computing Research Lab at USF.

Working with Sriram Chellappan, associate professor in CSE, and Ponrathi Athilingam, associate professor in the College of Nursing, Windmon uses machine and deep learning algorithms to create systems capable of detecting chronic illnesses such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and congestive heart failure based on the sound and intensity of

their cough symptoms. Both are illnesses that commonly exhibit symptoms of chronic cough as a sign of infection. Plans are underway to apply this research to manage treatment of COVID-19.

Windmon successfully defended his dissertation in June and is a senior model analyst/validator and assistant vice president with Citibank, N.A., in Tampa.

"My goal is to continue smart health-care research for the development of novel machine and deep learning techniques that will be used for years to come," Windmon says. "Long term, I plan to start my own company, which would allow me to make an impact on underserved communities as an innovator and entrepreneur in the smart health-care field."

The goal of the Sloan University Center of Exemplary Mentoring is to institutionalize best practices in minority graduate student success while expanding diversity in academia, industry, government and all sectors of the nation's STEM workforce.

Sloan alumni carry the center's spirit of inclusive excellence to positions in academia and government, as well as industry.

Ransford Hyman's interest in MS-DOS computer games led him down the path of computer engineering. In order to play more graphically advanced games, he had to learn each game's hardware requirements, which taught him about computer processes and microprocessors when he was still in elementary school.

Hyman, PhD '11, carried this interest in computer hardware through middle and high school, as well as through an undergraduate degree in mathematics at Bethune-Cookman University. While he pursued his bachelor's degree, Hyman participated in a summer Research Experiences for Undergraduates program at USF, and he decided to return to USF for his doctoral program in 2006. For his dissertation research, he focused on the reliability and optimization of microprocessors under the late Distinguished University Professor Nagarajan Ranganathan.

For more than seven years at Intel, Hyman worked as a senior software technical lead and deep learning software engineering manager. He now works with Sensei On-Device Machine Learning at Adobe, but also continues to mentor minority students on the West Coast, as well as at BCU and USF.

"It's important as far as inspiring the younger generation to pursue a career in engineering and computer science. If they see role models who they can identify with pursuing those careers and making change, it gives them the inspiration to also aim higher."

As a high priority of President Steven Currall, USF Advancement has launched a new private campaign to provide an endowment that will generate \$500,000 per year to institutionalize the program. For additional information, contact Tim Murphy, senior director, College of Engineering Development. Go to www.usf.edu/engineering/sloan.aspx to read more about the students in this program.

There's room for all under a very **BIG TENT** 5 years in, alumni diversity initiative is making an impact

WHEN BILL MCCAUSLAND joined the USF Alumni Association as its executive director eight years ago, he was pleased to see the organization's demographics. Across the board — whether it was African-American, Hispanic, Asian or any ethnicity — all groups seemed appropriately represented.

"Our membership looked like USF's alumni," he says. But his delight soon became bafflement.

When McCausland attended alumni association events and programs, he often saw the same faces — and most looked a lot like his: white.

"Where is everyone?" he wondered. "At our events, our membership did not reflect what USF looks like."

That has changed.

Five years ago, the association formed a diversity committee to strengthen minority involvement with USF and, especially, the association. Five years later, there are tangible results.



Bill McCausland holds the trophy he was awarded as the USF Office of Multicultural Affairs 2018 Partner of the Year, which recognizes excellence in inclusivity.

- A robust Black Alumni Society has emerged, pulling together members and resources from three separate groups that now work as one unit. The Latino Alumni Society and LGBTQ+ Alumni Society have also become vibrant and active organizations.

- Each group works closely with students — future alumni — to ensure that the best and brightest are recruited, welcomed, mentored and encouraged to keep connecting with USF after graduation.

- In the spring, as COVID-19 gripped the nation, the Black and Latino alumni societies combined to produce an interactive "Our Health" webinar

series. They lined up experts to cover topics related to the pandemic's disproportional impacts on Blacks and Hispanics, including nutrition, social isolation, mental health and physical health. The sessions filled to capacity.

"We always have the question, 'How do we have good discussions that lead to change?'," says Luz Randolph, '06 and MEd '08, Life Member, co-chair of the Latino Alumni Society. "The alumni association gave us the leeway for the 'Our Health' series. We wanted to explore how the black and brown communities were really suffering because of

COVID-19. The response was, 'What do you need?' It wasn't, 'Hey, let's be gentle with the conversation.' We were very honest, very raw, very real. And the alumni association was very supportive of that."

Though he's not a member of those communities, McCausland participated and "soaked up" all the useful information.

"There was such passion and expertise, you couldn't help but get charged up as you listened," says McCausland, MBA '96, Life Member, a past recipient of the Partner of the Year award from USF's Office of Multicultural Affairs. "It was extremely well done. I could not have been prouder. This is what we want — to engage, to make a difference, to rally around what makes our university great."

USF embraced diversity from the start, becoming the first state university with an integrated undergraduate program in 1961, less than a year after opening. For diversity committee member Raymond Gross, '69, Life Member, 2002 USF Distinguished Alumnus, USF marked his first experience in an integrated classroom. The alumni association board member and retired Pinellas County senior circuit court judge grew up attending Orlando's segregated public schools.

"I was honored to be asked to serve on the diversity committee, but I was certainly conscious that I was sitting in the chair of the 'old white guy,'" Gross says. "More than anything, I thought my role was to listen."

What did he hear?

"I learned that while all people are created equal, not everybody feels equal," Gross says. "It's up to us to make everyone feel welcomed and included. You can have great programs, but if everyone doesn't know about them, feel invited or feel like they address relevant needs, that's no good."

"If you go to the Marshall Center or any place on the USF campus, you will see a student body that looks like the population of the United States. That's a very big asset and we need to utilize that. So, for the alumni association, the charge is to reach out, let everyone know we have a very big tent and there's room for everyone underneath it."

A few decades ago, when Gross was also a USF adjunct professor, Monique Hayes enrolled in his class, Law and Legal Careers. She's now an attorney in Miami and a driving force behind the diversity committee and formation of the current Black Alumni Society. As chair elect of the alumni association board, she's also set to



Above: Miami attorney Monique Hayes greets guests at a past alumni association event. Hayes, who will become the association's first black female chair next year, is the driving force behind the diversity initiative.

Right: Participation in alumni association events better reflects the organization's membership since the board launched its diversity initiative.



become its first black female chair next year.

"Monique is the face of what USF aspires to be," Gross says.

Hayes, '01, Life Member, says she was thrilled that the association had an all-in approach to the committee and its objectives.

"Generally, you see instances where increasing diversity and inclusion unfairly places the burden on women and minorities, who are expected to do the work alone," says Hayes, the 2014 USF Outstanding Young Alumna. "It becomes preaching to the choir or having circular conversations.

"It wasn't like that here. We had the right people involved in these conversations, the people who needed to be there, learning and growing. It had teeth and real impact."

Hayes' pending ascension to association chair has real impact, too.

"I am the first black woman, but it's only remarkable to me in the sense that it allows opportunity for someone else to come behind me," she says. "It's about the opportunities I leave for the next black woman."

Hayes, who has served as an officer on the board since 2017, says she never particularly aspired to become chair.

"But I also didn't think it was unattainable. It just hadn't happened yet and now the time has come. Moving forward ... you can't have an effective long-term diversity and inclusion program without the input and engagement of older white males. Those are the people of power in many institutions. You need them at the table to recognize the need for change and you need them alongside other diverse groups that are equal to them."

Achieving that can be as simple as sincerely seeking out the viewpoints of every group during decision-making processes, she says. It can be as visual as last year's Homecoming celebration on the Alumni Center's front lawn. The festival atmosphere included tents set up by various groups, including alumni societies, to promote



their organizations and educate everyone on their benefits. It can be as unifying as knowing that USF always has something to offer all of its alumni.

"As a diversity committee, we understand that there's an entire alumni association that represents a diverse university, but we want to make sure there's always inclusiveness," says Lisa Mifflin, '91 and MPA '08, Life Member, member of the Black Alumni Society. "Students want to be included. Alumni want to be included. Sometimes, we need to be reminded of that.

"If USF is your school, whatever your background or identity, you always need to know there's a place and a connection for you. There are lots of different interests even within our own diversity committee. The key is making sure those interests are recognized, understood and considered. I think that's what we're all about."

— JOEY JOHNSTON, '81

Above: Luz Randolph, second from right, poses at the Latino Alumni Society tent during the 2019 alumni association Homecoming Welcome Home Party.

5 minutes with Randy



PENNY CARMATHON | USFAA

Hello fellow Bulls!

IT'S A FALL LIKE NO OTHER BEFORE, but thanks to the careful planning of President Steven Currall and our world-class faculty, particularly Dr. Charles Lockwood, senior vice president for USF Health, and Donna Petersen, dean of the College of Public Health, classes have resumed with an abundance of safety precautions. They've done a remarkable job protecting not only the USF community, but the world at large, and they make me even prouder to say, "I'm a Bull!"

Our USF Alumni Association has also been finding new ways to keep us connected while we remain apart. The virtual USF Fast 56 Awards does just that. I hope this magazine lands in your hands ahead of the premiere at 6 p.m. Sept. 11 on the alumni association's Facebook page and YouTube channel. Plan to tune in because, I promise, it's one of the most exciting award events ever!

The Fast 56 recognizes our 56 fastest-growing Bull-led businesses, and I'll bet you know some of the winners. That brings even more suspense to the countdown to the No. 1 fastest-growing Bull-led business in the world. A big Horns Up to Katie Flaherty, alumni programs associate director, for re-creating the event she inaugurated in 2013. (If you missed all the hoopla and you're reading this post-premiere, catch the rerun on Facebook or YouTube.)

I can't think of anything more valuable than recognizing alumni whose success inspires Bull grads and students alike. We'll do it again on Nov. 19 when we celebrate our six Outstanding Young Alumni – amazingly accomplished grads aged 35 and younger. Our virtual event will include a live panel discussion facilitated by the always entertaining Eric Eisenberg, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Got kids? Make it a family watch party! I guarantee they'll learn some secrets for success.

One very important group of alumni we'll wait to celebrate are our 2020 USF Alumni Award recipients. This award is USF's highest honor for alumni – and one USF non-alum. Traditionally, we recognize these extraordinary individuals at an awards dinner during Homecoming Week. Since that's not possible this year, we'll shower them with accolades when they can be surrounded by loved ones at the October 2021 Alumni Awards.

In the meantime, feel free to give our 2020 Alumni Award recipients a shout-out. They are:

Distinguished Alumni

- Arnie Bellini, MBA '82 – His pioneering work revolutionized IT support and managed services
- Tina P. Johnson, Accounting '80 – Former senior vice president of the largest employee-owned company in the nation, Publix
- Richard King, Art '80 – Holds the record for Academy Awards for sound editing

Donald A. Gifford Service Award

- Mike Griffin, Marketing '03 – Dedicated USF leader for nearly 20 years, from student body president to USF trustee

Class of '56 Award

- Steven Greenbaum – Beloved USF representative as "first spouse" for 19 years, generous USF benefactor, and creator of our award-winning contemporary Rocky mascot

Finally, I want to thank you for continuing to support our USF Alumni Association through membership, gifts, and volunteerism. These are trying times, but supporting USF through the alumni association continues our investment in the future.

Together, we've got this, Bulls!

Randy Norris '79

Chair, USF Alumni Association Board

Life Member No. 786



Meet your 2020-21 Alumni Association Board

THE USF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION'S BOARD of directors includes Bulls who've demonstrated a firm commitment to USF's success and are association Life Members and Circle of Excellence donors. It also includes a USF presidential designee; a USF Board of Trustees representative; and two students – the student government vice president and the USF Ambassadors president. Non-voting, ex-officio directors are the senior vice president for USF Advancement, and the association executive director.

The board sets policy and guides the direction of the association as it builds mutually beneficial relationships between USF and USF alumni.

Directors by row, left to right, from top row

Officers

Chair: **Randy Norris**, '79
Chair elect: **Monique Hayes**, '01
Past chair: **Merritt Martin**, '04 and MPA '06
Treasurer: **Bill Mariotti**, USFSM '15
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Andrew Jones, '11
Andrew Ketchel, '10 and MPA '12
Maja Lacevic, '09
Ruben Matos, MPH '92

Andy Mayts, '93
Chris Reyes, '93
Dr. Valerie Riddle, '84 and MD '89
Lauren Shumate, '10 and MA '14
Juan Soltero, '10
Gustavo Spangher
Christine Turner, '97
Bruce Van Fleet, '73
Tonjua Williams, MA '96
Liz Wooten-Reschke, '01 and MPA '06

Ex-officio directors:

Jay Stroman, senior vice president for USF Advancement and Alumni Affairs; CEO USF Foundation
Bill McCausland, MBA '96, vice president and USF Alumni Association executive director

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Alumni and friends checklist:

- Watch** for news about the USF Alumni Association's 2020 Homecoming Photo contest via email, on social media and on your USF Alumni App*
- Bookmark usfalumni.org/homecoming and usf.edu/homecoming for the latest on event dates and times
- Follow** your USF Alumni Association on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates
- Share** events with fellow Bulls, family and friends – they'll thank you later
- Create** free Microsoft Teams and Zoom (zoom.us) accounts, if you haven't already
- Put on** your favorite USF garb, whip up some Green and Gold snacks, and take some photos to share.
- Be sure to tag us!** @USFalumni on Facebook; @USFalumniAssn on Twitter; and usf__alumni on Instagram.

**Share the spirit of USF for chances to win great prizes in the 2020 Homecoming Photo contest. When the contest starts, upload photos that reflect your USF pride, whether from this year's Homecoming activities or celebrations past. Follow the alumni association on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram or download the USF Alumni App for links, dates and rules.*



USF Alumni Association

Nikole Collins-Puri addresses students participating in Techbridge Girls, a national nonprofit that creates STEM opportunities for girls.



Track star redefines PERSONAL BEST

The path was never a straight line for the 2020 Nonprofit Pro of the Year

By KIM FRANKE-FOLSTAD

THE HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD STAR came to USF with three goals: excel athletically; earn a degree in political science; and then go to law school. Nikole Collins-Puri, '01, Life Member, was a three-time All-Conference USA athlete. She was named 2001 Outstanding Senior, and she graduated with honors. And law school? She changed her mind. "I had a vision that I'd work around civil rights law, and really be a part of what I now understand as social justice equity," she says. But, as so often happens in college, new paths emerged.

She began to see the influence corporations could have in effecting social change and decided to learn how they could help the marginalized communities she cared about. After a decade in a variety of roles at AT&T, she packed up those corporate skills and took them to the nonprofit world.

This summer, Collins-Puri was recognized as the 2020 Nonprofit Professional of the Year by NonProfitPRO magazine for her leadership of Techbridge Girls, which champions STEM education for girls, especially those in underserved communities. In just four years, she's turned around the organization's operating budget; built a board of directors that includes executives from Adobe, Chevron and Underwriters Laboratories; and quadrupled the number of girls served across the country.

Collins-Puri says she didn't realize she had a yen for leadership until she got to USF, where she found her voice as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. Members twice elected her president, and she was twice elected president of the Student Government Senate.

And then there was the White House internship in 2000, which gave her an unexpected confidence boost.

"I was one of a handful in the internship class who didn't come from an Ivy League school, and I was outperforming, outsmarting and out-opportuning most of them," she says. "It gave me an appreciation that you do what

you do with the education you're given; that just because I didn't come from an Ivy League school, it didn't mean I wasn't as smart and ready as they were."

After graduating, she spent nearly a decade in leadership roles with AT&T, where she'd worked as a college intern. In 2009, she applied for National Urban Fellows, a program for mid-career professionals committed to equity and public service. That resulted in a position with the Economic Development Office for the City of Carson, Calif. And though it was her first exposure to the public sector, she charmed everyone she met, says then-general manager Clifford Graves.

"It's impossible not to get caught up in the energy field she projects," he says. "She makes the person talking to her feel like the most important person in the room."

The following year, after earning a master's degree in public administration, she moved on to leadership roles at the College Board in New York City and the Women's Foundation of California.

Her "whirlwind of experiences" helped her land the job that pulled it all together: In 2016, Collins-Puri was named the first CEO of 20-year-old Techbridge Girls, an Oakland, Calif.-based national nonprofit in financial straits.

Chanel Hall, then a Techbridge Girls program coordina-

“It's impossible not to get caught up in the energy field she projects. She makes the person talking to her feel like the most important person in the room.”

— Clifford Graves



Above: Collins-Puri, a 2012 USF Outstanding Young Alumna, with husband Ashwin Puri and son Xavier.

Right: Under Collins-Puri, Techbridge Girls has quadrupled the number of students it serves.

tor, met the new boss at a retreat that year. “I remember her wanting to hear from us – just us – not with upper management, and unfiltered,” says Hall, who still considers Collins-Puri a mentor.

Getting the Techbridge Girls position was “serendipitous,” says Collins-Puri – the right job at just the right time. And that word might be used to describe other momentous events in her life – if you didn’t know about her work ethic and charisma.

Like the night she saw on her Twitter feed that TEDxOakland was taking applications. So what if the deadline was the next morning? Giving a TED Talk was a bucket list item, and “I thought it was a great opportunity to voice

the experiences of our girls with STEM right here in the backyard of Silicon Valley.” She took a shot. The next day, she learned she’d been accepted.

Then there was the time a friend asked her to go along to a taping of *The Price is Right*. Collins-Puri not only made it on stage, she won a Jeep!

Or the time in high school, when she met a boy named Ashwin Puri, whom she didn’t care for much at first but ended up dating. They’ve stayed together ever since, through college and career moves (his and hers), and now have a 5-year-old son, Xavier.

Of course, Collins-Puri knows her good fortune wasn’t left to chance. Her mom set an example of what hard work

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USF Alumni Association

and caring could do. “And there are certain people, I don’t know if they even realized they were a mentor, but they were,” she says. “I’ve had the blessing of having so many people pour into my development, pour into my ability to build a strong network, and give me space to learn and fail along the way.”



Know what makes you passionate and excited. Then follow the opportunities that allow you to get pieces and parts of that along the way.”

— Nikole Collins-Puri

Being named USF’s Outstanding Young Alumna in 2012 was a pivotal moment in that awareness, she says. “It makes you step back and realize the impact you’ve had, and that the hard work has paid off.”

That’s what she hopes to provide for the girls she works with now.

You can’t be afraid of failure, she tells them. Have an endgame in mind and build a toolkit that will help you get there.

“Know what makes you passionate and excited,” Collins-Puri says. “Then follow the opportunities that allow you to get pieces and parts of that along the way.” ■



Good chemistry!

Days before COVID-19 made celebrations like this impossible, McKenzie Watson, '17, and Chris Nelson, '17, both chemical engineering alumni, got married in Pennsylvania. A few of their Bull friends attended, including a bridesmaid who’d been McKenzie’s randomly assigned freshman year roommate in Beta residence hall.



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WHERE'S Rocky?

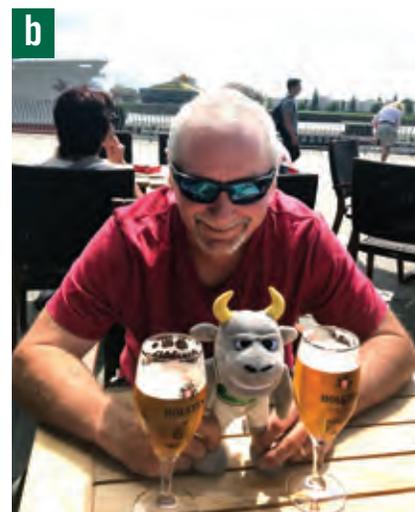


Like many of his fellow Bulls, Rocky kept a low profile this summer thanks to the coronavirus pandemic. He corralled his wanderlust by revisiting pre-COVID-19 travel memories – and found a few you haven't seen before.

If Rocky staycated with you, or jumped in your suitcase for a road trip, email your high-resolution pictures (300 ppi) and details to Penny Carnathan at pcarnathan@usf.edu, or mail to her at USF Alumni Association, 4202 E. Fowler Ave. ALC100, Tampa, FL 33620-5455.

a Aline Mierzejewski, MS '92, and Ed Mierzejewski, PhD '96, introduce Rocky to the legendary 18th century bullring, Plaza de Toros, in Ronda, Spain, last winter.

b Rocky enjoys a taste of the good life last year in Hamburg, Germany, with Brad Kelly, '79, Life Member and former USF Alumni Association board president.





c While on safari last year in Namibia with **Bruce McArthur**, '83, Rocky "meets" Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi, a national hero who led the 19th-century revolution against German colonizers.

d After so much time hanging around by himself, Rocky gets fired up for a July Fourth cookout with **Jacki Jackson**, MPA '80, Life Member, at Jacki's home in Stone Mountain, Georgia. No CDC guidelines were trampled in this celebration!

e On a January Caribbean cruise, **Connie Johnson-Gearhart**, '00 and MCE '12, Life Member, and her husband, **Kenneth Gearhart**, take Rocky for a swim with the sea turtles at Cayman Turtle Centre Island Wildlife Encounter on Grand Cayman.

f **Stan Kinmonth**, '78, and **Lily Kinmonth**, '78, say they were working hard to spend their kids' inheritance before COVID-19 struck. They took Rocky to see the Cathedrale Notre Dame de Strasbourg, France, where Lily spent a summer studying French as a teenager.

Alumni Roundup

NEWS FROM USF'S VOLUNTEER-LED ALUMNI GROUPS

Popular webinar series delivers powerful life lessons

TALK OF FALL TAILGATES QUICKLY TURNED to coronavirus and its impact on Black and brown communities during an April planning conversation among leaders of USF's Black and Latino alumni societies.

African-Americans and Latinos were falling ill from COVID-19 at much higher rates than other ethnic groups, and African-Americans were far more likely to die from it. The four Bulls realized they could make a difference, and they needed to act fast.

By June, Erica Daley, '96, Life Member; Melizza Etienne, '08, Life Member; Luz Randolph, '06 and 'Med '08, Life Member; and Tina James, '00, Life Member launched "Our Health," a wildly popular webinar series offering tips and resources to address participants' physical, financial, mental and spiritual health needs amidst the pandemic. Before the series had even ended, the organizers were seeing dramatic results.

"We had people who started losing weight, and were paying off cars and other debt," says Daley, chair of the

Black Alumni Society. "One gentleman who was pre-diabetic stopped drinking soda and by the end of the series, he'd lost weight and dropped his A1C [average blood sugar] level to the normal range."

The four Zoom sessions featured experts who donated their time, offered free tools and took questions. They included certified health coach Beverly Grandison on nutrition; mental health therapists Justin McClain and Reuben Faloughi, staff clinician at the USF Counseling Center; health-care attorney Rafael Gonzalez and financial advisor Jorge Soriano, '11; and theology professor and minister Chonta Haynes.

Capped at 100 participants, all of the sessions filled up, with people tuning in from as far away as England. (Watch the sessions on Facebook at USF Black Alumni Society; click Videos.)

"People were so excited, they started pitching more topics, so now we have a whole lot more to talk about," Daley says.

Next up, from 12:30-1:30 p.m. EST, Sept. 21-25, the Black Alumni Society will team with Moffitt Cancer Center for "MY Health," a series addressing the impacts of cancer and other health topics. Register at www.usfalumni.org/MYHealth.

— PENNY CARNATHAN, '82 | USF Alumni Association



Six leading experts in their fields donated their time to appear on the "Our Health" webinar series.



Sarah Simpson, '17

Face mask fundraiser becomes surprise sellout

AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE BULL-U FACE MASKS for alumni in Broward County morphed into a fundraiser that's helping feed financially strapped USF students.

After making a Bull-U mask for himself, Alan Steinberg, '78, Life Member, figured other chapter members might like one, too. He took the idea to his Broward Alumni Chapter co-chair, Ruth Rogge, '74, Life Member, who thought it would make a good fundraiser.

"We were trying to figure out if we wanted to raise money for the chapter or something else," says Steinberg. When they learned the USF student food pantry, Feed-a-Bull, was having trouble meeting demand, they had their answer.

After four weeks of gathering fabric and materials, Steinberg turned to Diane Simpson, the mother of two USF alumni, to sew the masks.

"I met Diane and her husband at one of our football watch parties," he says. I heard she was making masks,



In less than 48 hours, we were completely sold out ..."

— Alan Steinberg, '78

so I asked for her help."

The chapter asked Simpson to make 160 masks and expected them to take a few weeks to sell. But when Steinberg announced the sale on social media, the response came fast and furious.

"In less than 48 hours, we were completely sold out and raised \$1,280 to donate."

Alumni groups from California to Georgia and Michigan to Maryland had picked up on the promotion and placed orders.

"It says a lot about the reach of USF alumni," Steinberg says. "It shows how they want to represent and help their university any way they can."

— ERIN RYAN, Class of '21 USF Alumni Association

SPOTLIGHT



Alumni group volunteer

Todd St. John-Fulton, '19, Life Member

USF LGBTQ+ Alumni Society

Career: Human Resources director

Hometown: Tampa born and raised!

Favorite USF event: Naming of the Judy Genshaft Honors College

Favorite musician: Garth Brooks

Hobby: Bowling

Spirit animal: Dolphin

Alumni Association volunteer because:

Giving your time and energy is rewarding

Alumni Group Excellence Awards

THE ANNUAL USF ALUMNI GROUP EXCELLENCE Awards recognize the hard work, creativity and initiative of USF's alumni groups, which support the university and its students by connecting alumni; boosting USF's stature; aiding students; making an impact in their communities; and rallying Bulls to advocate for USF. Awards include a financial contribution to each group.

The 2020 awards were presented at a virtual event in August. The recipients are:



Volunteer of the Year

Robert Andrew, '89 and '92, Life Member, Engineering Alumni Society

Nominator: "We are living through very trying times, times when volunteer organizations are no longer a priority in many people's lives. Robert has proven otherwise."

Outstanding Program/Event

Co-recipients: Black Alumni Society and Latino Alumni Society

The two societies partnered in "Our Health," a webinar focused on COVID-19's impact on the black and brown communities. The series was so popular, they held a fifth event, the Wrap-Up.

Excellence in Community Service

Pinellas County Alumni Chapter

The chapter hosted four service events in 2019-20, with volunteers contributing nearly 200 hours to International Coastal Cleanup Day; Lighthouse of Pinellas; Habitat for Humanity; and the Kind Mouse Food Pantry.

Outstanding Student Programming

Geology Alumni Society

In January, the society hosted more than 75 students, alumni and faculty at its semi-annual Rockbreaker social, a fun event that helps students find internship opportunities.

Excellence in Fundraising

Broward County Alumni Chapter

Alumni raised more than \$3,200, including money for scholarships and the Feed-a-Bull food pantry for students. The sponsorship program they developed has become a model for other groups. This year they had four sponsors.

Honorable mention: Rugby Alumni Society

The society established a new, endowed scholarship fund!

Most Improved Group

Undergraduate Psychology Alumni Society

The society ramped up its social media presence with, among other initiatives, a hashtag contest (#GetPsyched! won). It partnered in the very successful USF Psychology Expo, participated in USF's Stampede of Service, and in just one year, more than doubled the previous five years' contributions to its scholarship fund.

Honorable mention

College of Public Health Alumni Society

After 16 dormant years, the COPH Alumni Society is back in full swing, hosting student and alumni networking events, launching a quarterly newsletter, and participating in Stampede of Service, among other activities.



Left: Pinellas alumni volunteer with Habitat for Humanity during the 2020 Stampede of Service.



Christian Perkins

Greater Tampa alumni award 1st scholarship

THE GREATER TAMPA ALUMNI CHAPTER awarded the first scholarship from its newly endowed fund to health sciences student Christian Perkins. Last year, the group became the first USF alumni chapter to endow a scholarship fund.

“This scholarship will be a huge help to me,” says Perkins, who plans to graduate in 2022. “The Tampa alumni chapter’s focus on students amazes me and just shows how many wonderful people have graduated from USF.”

The chapter started the fund in 2015, raising money through events such as the Bulls Block Party and watch party deals with restaurants. Numerous small gifts from individuals helped it grow quickly, say Chloe Lipking, MEd '16, and Marcus Watlington, '12, two of the group’s volunteer leaders.

“We wanted to create a scholarship to give back to a university that has given so much to us,” adds co-leader Audrey Miller, MEd '16.

While other USF alumni groups have endowed scholarship funds, Greater Tampa is the first chapter – or geographically based group – to achieve that \$25,000 benchmark. Endowed scholarships are “forever funds” because awards are paid through interest generated.

Kristen Rzonca, '12 and MEd '15, invites anyone interested in supporting USF, not just alumni, to get involved with the chapter. To learn about events, follow USF Greater Tampa Alumni Chapter on Facebook, or subscribe to the mailing list by emailing usftampalumni@gmail.com. To contribute to the scholarship fund, visit giving.usf.edu and select the Greater Tampa Alumni Chapter Scholarship Endowment (Fund #906032).

Applications for the 2021-22 scholarship will be open in November. For details and to apply, visit www.usfalumni.org/scholarships.

– ERIN RYAN, Class of '21 USF Alumni Association

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Alumni Roundup

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The USF Alumni Association's chapters and societies connect Bulls with one another – across the country and around the world. Through social events, professional networking, fundraising and community service, among other activities, alumni groups help USF grads and friends support one another, our university, and current students. They play an important part in the Alumni Association's mission to provide meaningful ways for Bulls to make an impact; protect USF through advocacy; share pride in our great university; and stick together.

It's easy to get involved! Just email the contact person of the group you'd like to visit.

Interest-Based Groups

Black Alumni

Erica Daley
usfblackalumnisociety@gmail.com

College of Business Alumni

Samantha Fitzmaurice
sfitzmaurice@usf.edu

Engineering Alumni

Robert Andrew
randrew@tampabay.rr.com

Entrepreneurship Alumni

Samantha Cleveland
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Geology Alumni

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Kosove Scholarship Alumni

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Luz Randolph

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Lockheed Martin – Oldsmar

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Patel College of Global Sustainability

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Geographical Groups

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Atlanta

Lara Martin
usfalumniatlanta@gmail.com

Join us on TEAMS!



Check for get-togethers at usfalumni.org

Since March, USF chapters and societies have hosted virtual happy hours, Bulls football meet-ups with Coach Jeff Scott, speaker series and other events. Alumni group leaders, some of whom are pictured here sharing ideas in a planning meeting, have found creative ways to stay together at home.

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Class Notes

1970s



BRENNA DURDEN, Special Education, '74, has been named a Florida Trend magazine 2020 Florida Legal Elite in the area of Environmental and Land Use Law. Durden practices with Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A.

DAVID GRACHEK, Mass Communications '78, retired after 23 years with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Hillsborough County, working primarily in the family court and child support areas. He previously worked in radio.



THOMAS R. OLDT, Political Science '72, is the new president of The Florida Bar Foundation, a statewide charitable organization whose mission is to provide greater access to justice for all. Oldt is a Winter Haven, Fla., investment adviser and former journalist.



RON SANDERS, Business '73, Life Member, has joined USF's Florida Center for Cybersecurity as staff director. Previously director of USF's School of Public Affairs, he will continue

to serve as chair of the U.S. Federal Salary Council and as an advisor to the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.

1980s



STEPHANIE GOFORTH, Management '82, was selected by the USF Board of Trustees to serve as vice chair. She also serves as chair of the St. Petersburg Campus Advisory Board. She is president of the West Florida Region for Northern Trust.

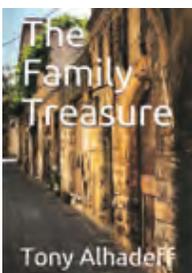
KEVIN J. MARTINEZ, Political Science '81, Life Member, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction for his book, "Sight, Sound, and Sunshine: Tampa, Hell Harbor, and the Making of Modern Cinema." The book recounts the 1929 production of "Hell Harbor" in Tampa.



DR. CHRIS PITTMAN, MD '88, filmed a TV show pilot, "Vein911," to educate people on vein disease. He is the medical director and founder of Vein911 Vein Treatment Centers in the Tampa Bay area.

WILLIAM VOLMUTH, Electrical Engineering '86 and MSEE '89, was promoted to CEO of PowerChord, a St. Petersburg-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) company. He previously served as company president.

1990s



TONY ALHADEFF, Finance '93, published his first book, "The Family Treasure," about his grandmother, a Holocaust survivor. He is COO of Louis Poulsen Lighting in Weston, Fla.

JENNIFER O'FLANNERY ANDERSON, MA Mass Communications '96, Life Member, has joined the Community Foundation of Broward (Fla.) board as president and CEO. The organization provides community leadership, fosters philanthropy and builds resources to tackle the county's challenges. Anderson was previously vice president of Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

RONALD A. CHRISTALDI, New College '93, has been appointed to Leadership Florida's West Central Region Council. He is a board-certified health lawyer and president and CEO of Shumaker Advisors Florida.



NICOLE GOETZ, English '93, has joined the Naples, Fla., office of Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A., family law department. She previously was managing partner of two boutique family law firms, including her own.

SANDRA MISCIASCI, '99, received the Congressional Teacher Award. She's one of eight teachers in the 16th Congressional District recognized for their outstanding achievements. Misciasci teaches ninth-grade reading at Newsome High School in Hillsborough County.

JASON MORRIS, MBA '93, Life Member, was promoted to North American president, consumer tools, for Techtronic Industries, a power tools and accessories company. He was previously a senior vice president at Techtronic.

COL. GINETTE RUTH, Social Work '98, was promoted to colonel in the U.S. Army, where she's deputy of the Military Personnel Officer Division in Washington, D.C. She has served as a medical service corps officer for 22 years.

JACQUELINE STEELE, English Education '91, Life Member, was appointed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis as a Manatee County Court judge. She previously served as an assistant public defender in the 13th Judicial Circuit.

SHANNELL THOMAS, Psychology '95 and MEd '02, received the inaugural \$10,000 Winslow Sargeant Doctoral Award from the Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center in recognition of her doctoral research. Thomas is a sociology and crim-



Send us your class notes!

Send Class Notes submissions and high-resolution (at least 300 ppi) photos to pcarnathan@usf.edu or mail to Penny Carnathan, USF Alumni Association, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., ALC100, Tampa, FL 33620-5455

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inology PhD student at Howard University. Her dissertation focuses on the disenfranchisement of African-Americans.



DR. AJAY K. VERMA, MD '92, has joined Watson Clinic's Sleep Disorders Center in Lakeland, Fla., as a radiologist.

TONJUA WILLIAMS, MA Guidance and Counselor Education '96, Life Member, was appointed to the board of Seedfunders Opportunity Fund, a new fund with a focus on diversity. Williams is president of St. Petersburg College and a USF Alumni Association board member.

2000s

NIKOLE COLLINS-PURI, Political Science '01, Life Member, is the 2020 Nonprofit Professional of the Year. Collins-Puri is the CEO of Techbridge Girls in Oakland, Calif. The organization provides STEM education access and opportunities to girls. She is a 2012 USF Outstanding Young Alumna award recipient.

BROOKE EISENBACH, English Education '04, MA '06 and PhD '15, received the 2021 Divergent Book Award for Excellence in 21st Century Literacies Research for her co-authored book titled, "Developing Adolescent Literacy for the Online Classroom." She is an associate professor of Middle and Secondary Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass.

JULIE MARCUS, Political Science '00, was appointed as the Pinellas County supervisor of elections by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Marcus has been with the Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections office since 2002. She has administered 300 municipal elections.

JOHN NODAR, Communication '06, published a memoir, "Serving God & Country," about his experiences in the U.S. Navy. He is an inspirational and motivational writer and speaker, and president and CEO of John Nodar Enterprises in the Tampa Bay area.

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Class Notes

GREGORY SAMUELS, MEd '08 and PhD '14, was appointed to the University of Montevallo's committee tasked with reviewing for possible removal the names of buildings that honor people who promoted racism. The public university is in Montevallo, Ala.

PAULA TAYLOR-GREATHOUSE, MA Reading Education '08 and PhD '13, received the 2021 Divergent Book Award for Excellence in 21st Century Literacies Research for her co-authored book titled, "Developing Adolescent Literacy for the Online Classroom." She is an associate professor of Secondary English Education at Tennessee Technical University.

CHRISTY TEFFENHART, Accounting '01, has joined Sunset Realty in Sarasota. Her career includes experience in accounting, real estate and homebuilding.

TOMMY ELIASON, Mass Communications '17, was promoted to designer at Tampa Bay's ChappellRoberts advertising agency. He was previously a junior art director at the agency.

JESSICA GARBER, Biomedical Sciences '17, has joined Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland, Fla., as a physician assistant in orthopedics and sports medicine. She was previously a graduate student at South University.



KATYA GUILLAUME, Mass Communications '14, has joined Spectrum Bay News 9 as a bureau reporter for Hernando and Citrus counties. She previously covered sports for WTEN-TV

in Albany, N.Y.

KRISTY HERRINGTON, MS '19, has been promoted to assistant director for USF Advancement's Annual Giving. She was previously a communications and marketing officer for Annual Giving.

BRETT JENKINS, Nursing '14 and MS '19, has joined Lakeland Regional Health Physician

Group in Lakeland, Fla., as a family nurse practitioner. He previously worked at Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center as a registered nurse.

DR. LEAH KRULL, MD '12, has joined Barton Health in South Lake Tahoe, Calif. Dr. Krull is a certified rheumatologist who treats autoimmune and joint diseases. She also practices at Carson Valley Medical Center in Nevada.



TARA MCCARTY, Mass Communications '12, has joined The Washington Post as a page designer. She previously worked as the print design director at the Tampa Bay Times in St.

Petersburg and was on the staff of The Crow's Nest student newspaper at USF's St. Petersburg campus.

SAMANTHA OLAH, General Business Administration '10, has joined Oklahoma City Community College as bursar. She previously worked as an accountant with the Oklahoma Student Loan Authority.

2010s

NICHOLAS CATROPPO, Political Science '18, has been named vice president of political operations for the Florida Chamber of Commerce. He was previously chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs.

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Class Notes



Monday, Nov. 9, 2020

**3rd Annual USFAA Birdies for Bulls
Golf Tournament**

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Breakfast and Lunch Included**

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www.USFAlumni.org/birdies2020**

Southern Hills
PLANTATION

 **USF Alumni Association**

AMANDA PORUPSKI, Accounting '10 and MAcc '12, has been appointed Hillsborough County Bar Association board treasurer for 2020-2021. Porupski is a manager in the forensic and financial services department of CBIZ, Inc. financial services company.

EVAN TRIGG, Management Information Systems '16, announced his engagement to Emily Clark. The wedding will be held in Charleston, S.C., in November. Trigg is a CPA with E*Trade Financial Corp. in Arlington, Va.

KATHLEEN UPDIKE, Nursing '18 and MS '20, received a Daisy Award in recognition of the extraordinary care she provides at Winter Haven Hospital in Winter Haven, Fla. She works in the medical intensive care unit.



TIMOTHY WALSH, MA History '16, published a young adult fantasy novel, "The Legend Of The Crystals: Crystal Journey," about a young man's quest to destroy an evil sorcerer.

2020s



KAMILA KHASANOVA, MBA '20, has joined Playbook Public Relations in Tampa as an account executive. She was previously a graduate assistant in the USF Muma College of Business honors program.

LIBBI PONCE, '20, has been chosen as a Fulbright Creative Research Scholar. She'll travel to Guayaquil, Ecuador to 3D-scan artifacts at the Museo Antropologico y de Arte Contemporaneo for an exhibition.

SNAP SHOTS



The little team that could

IN 1970, WITH FEW SPORTS TO CHOOSE FROM at USF, Randy Schulkers, '71, and fellow student Richard Lutz formed the USF Archery Club. Three months later, they became the USF archery team, and the next month, September, were invited to compete in the Oct. 16, 1970 Florida State Collegiate Archery Tournament. Trouble was, they had to have at least two men and two women, and Schulkers and Lutz were still it for USF Archery.

"We searched high and low for women archers," Schulkers recalls. Finally, two women volunteered. But they weren't archers.

Two weeks of intense training ensued.

"At the state tournament, we were received with sidelong glances from the other teams – no one knew us," Schulkers says. "We just hummed the USF song softly to ourselves. We were proud and determined."

When the arrows stopped flying that day, Schulkers (left, at the tournament) had set two records and Hilda Hatzell, '73, had set five.

"We were quite proud to deliver the second place Florida State Archery Team Championship trophy to the USF trophy case, where we left it for all you USF students and faculty 50 years ago."

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Class Notes

In Memoriam

STEPHEN WALTER AMBERG II, Business '83, March 11, 2020
HOMER BERTON BALLEW, Business '65, May 21, 2020
MARNA S. BARRETT, Clinical Chemistry '78 and Social Sciences Interdisciplinary '79, May 14, 2020
JOHNNIE VIRGINIA BOGHICH, MEd '80, June 18, 2020
THOMAS KEVIN BUNEVICH, MAT '07, June 8, 2020
MAJ. ROBERT D. "BOB" BYRNE, Elementary Education '76, June 26, 2020
FONDA K. CARBONELL, Criminology '94, March 19, 2020
ALEJANDRO "ALEX" CHAVEZ, History '04, May 13, 2020
DANIEL E. COLEMAN, III, Civil Engineering '89, May 16, 2020
DOLI ANN DAVY, Accounting '01, May 31, 2020
SUSAN (ROBBINS) DENNIS, Communication '05, May 5, 2020
JOSEPH MANUEL FERNANDEZ, Elementary Education '74, July 10, 2020
JANE ELIZABETH (SIMMONS) FLYNN, English Education '78, Life Member, June 23, 2020
ALENA EFTIHIA FREY, Public Health '19, June 19, 2020
PAUL WALTER GRISCTI, Mass Communications '72, July 25, 2020
JUANITA GULLETTE, Accounting '83, June 29, 2020
OLIVE P. GUNSAULLUS, Elementary Education '71 and MA '74, June 3, 2020
COL. GEORGE E. HAMMOND, General Business Administration '63, May 3, 2020
ROBERT W. HEINRICH, Economics '90, May 18, 2020
ADA L. (VATHY) HORAN, MA Library and Information Sciences '92, June 6, 2020
ESTELLE V. JIMENEZ, Accounting '64 and MA '70, June 6, 2020
TERRY HENRY JONES, Mass Communications and History '77, July 27, 2020
WILLIAM GARRETT "COACH" JUSTICE, MEd '79, June 24, 2020
RAYMOND H. LANNEN, III, Criminology '75, April 22, 2020
BETTY JAMESON LAW, Early Childhood Education '70, July 16, 2020
ROBBIE A. LEA, Criminology '78, May 1, 2020
RAYMOND G. LUKE, Jr., Marketing '74, May 16, 2020
JIMMIE FAYE WARD PAGES, Elementary Education '63 and MA '74, July 29, 2020
GEOFFREY E. PARMER, Criminology '89, April 28, 2020

HERBERT "HERB" PERKINS, Criminology '99, Life Member, July 29, 2020
REBECCA HOPE RODRIGUEZ PLOEHN, MA Elementary Education '99, July 23, 2020
SARAH A. POHLER, MA Library and Information Sciences '97, April 30, 2020
DR. MICHAEL SCOTT PROCTOR, MA Zoology '72, July 6, 2020
DARYN CROWDER RAMOS, Sociology '83, July 24, 2020
SHIRLEY ANN NOGUEZ RAMOS, Early Childhood Education '07, July 19, 2020
JAMES E. SMARGON, Criminology '78, June 6, 2020
FRANK DAVID STAHL, Accounting '72, July 28, 2020
BETTY FAYE STIDHAM, MA Library and Information Sciences '79, July 7, 2020
BOBBYE SUE THREADGILL, Elementary Education '75, July 12, 2020
KAMEAL F. WALKER, Public Health '14, May 20, 2020
CHRIS A. WILKERSON, Psychology '08, May 20, 2020

Faculty/Staff

NANCY BARLAR, Music Education '96, Adjunct Professor, May 23, 2020
JOSEPH "JOE" EAGAN, Assistant Vice President of Facilities, Design and Construction, June 1, 2020
WILLIAM "BILL" FUDGE, Professor, May 25, 2020
CHARLES GUIGNON, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, May 23, 2020
ROCKFORD "ROCKY" JALIL, USF Public Health, May 20, 2020
WILLIAM ENLOE "BILL" KILGORE, Adjunct Professor, May 31, 2020
MARIA (TELLIS) PAUL, USF College of Education, June 25, 2020
MARTIN SCHOENFELD, College of Arts & Sciences, June 21, 2020
THOMAS T. SESSUMS, Instructor in the Judy Genshaft Honors College and Foundation Board Member, June 6, 2020
PHILIP L. SMITH, Retired Associate Professor and Former Associate Provost, May 14, 2020
AUGUST VAN EEOPEL, Adjunct Tax Professor, May 16, 2020
MELVIN G. VILLEMA, Professor and Director of Education Department, May 20, 2020

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ARNOLD D. LEVINE, USF Graphicstudio Supporter, May 30, 2020





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