Thank you for your kind introduction Dr. Boaz, and for your valued leadership as President of the USF Tampa Faculty Senate. To my faculty colleagues across USF – on all campuses (including the 152 new members at Tampa) – welcome to a new Fall semester. In so many ways, you are the key to our university’s future.

Faculty governance has been an essential ingredient in USF’s ascent to becoming a global research university and I will be the first to point out that it has been the Senate’s vision and thoughtful deliberation, as well as university leadership’s constructive partnership with our faculty that has proven so vital in advancing USF’s mission. I thank those of you who serve on our faculty senates and the USF System Faculty Council – and I encourage others to actively engage with, and participate in, university governance.

Before I begin my remarks, and as has become customary, I want to take a moment to introduce members of the USF leadership team who are in attendance this afternoon. I ask that each of you please stand to be recognized and that the audience holds its applause until all have been introduced:
➢ Dean Charles Adams, Genshaft Honors College
➢ Dean Paul Atchley, Undergraduate Studies
➢ Dean Bob Bishop, College of Engineering
➢ Dean Todd Chavez, USF Libraries
➢ Dean Jackie Dixon, College of Marine Science
➢ Dean Eric Eisenberg, College of Arts & Sciences
➢ Dean Rob Knoeppel, College of Education
➢ Dean Moez Limayem, Muma College of Business
➢ Dean Charly Lockwood, Morsani College of Medicine & Senior Vice President for USF Health
➢ Dean James Moy, College of the Arts
➢ Dean Govind Parayil, Patel College of Global Sustainability
➢ Dean Donna Petersen, College of Public Health
➢ Dean Victoria Rich, College of Nursing
➢ Dean Julie Serovich, College of Behavioral & Community Sciences
➢ Dean Dwayne Smith, Office of Graduate Studies and Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
➢ Dean Kevin Sneed, Taneja College of Pharmacy
➢ Terry Chisolm, Vice Provost for Planning, Performance & Accountability
➢ Jim Garey, Vice Provost for Human Resources & Space Planning
- Pritish Mukherjee, Vice Provost for Strategic Talent Recruitment, University Reputation & Impact
- Brett Kemker, Regional Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Sarasota-Manatee Campus
- Cindy Deluca, Associate Vice President for Innovative Education
- Valeria Garcia, Associate Vice President of the USF System Office of Decision Support
- Peter Stiling, Assistant Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives
- Joe Hice, Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer
- Gerard Solis, General Counsel
- Mark Walsh, Assistant Vice President for Government Relations
- Nick Setteducato, Associate Vice President for Resource Management and Analysis
- Karen Holbrook, Regional Chancellor, Sarasota-Manatee Campus
- Roger Brindley, Vice President for USF World
- Haywood Brown, Vice President for Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity
- Paul Dosal, Vice President for Student Success
- Sidney Fernandes, Vice President for Information Technology
- Michael Kelly, Vice President of Athletics
➢ Martin Tadlock, Regional Chancellor, St. Petersburg Campus

➢ Nick Trivunovich, Vice President for Business & Finance & Chief Financial Officer

➢ Calvin Williams, Vice President for Administrative Services

➢ David Lechner, Senior Vice President for Business & Financial Strategy

➢ Joel Momberg, Senior Vice President for Advancement

➢ Paul Sanberg, Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation & Knowledge Enterprise

➢ Britney Deas, Trustee and Student Body President, Tampa Campus, and

➢ Deanna Michael, Trustee and President of the USF System Faculty Council.

Collectively, this team represents an amazingly talented group of colleagues that I work with and learn from daily.

And then there is my boss. Dr. Steve Currall comes to us from Southern Methodist University where he served as Provost, following stops at Rice University, the University of California, Davis, and University College London. He earned degrees from Baylor University, the London School of Economics, and a PhD in Organizational Behavior from Cornell. He is an accomplished and widely published scholar. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to the 7th President of the University of South Florida – Dr. Steve Currall.
Thank you President Currall and might I take a moment to remind everyone that we will celebrate your official inauguration on Thursday November 14th? To the faculty, I ask that you please consider building in some flexibility to your class schedules and syllabi for that afternoon, to allow fullest participation by the USF community.

In last year’s address, I spoke of the dawning of a new era at USF, in anticipation of a new president, our journey beyond preeminence, and consolidation of our three separately accredited institutions into One University Geographically Distributed. I want to commend the broader USF community for not losing discipline and focus – which would have been oh so easy.

Because it’s a Friday afternoon, some of you may be hoping that my list of accomplishments this year might be shorter than in the past – yet, this is USF so it’s not so! In fact, 2018-19 was arguably the best year in the history of USF so please get comfortable.

First, we strengthened our position as a Preeminent State Research University with year-over-year improvements in 9 of 12 metrics, maintaining our performance in 2 others, and slipping in just one as we witnessed a decline in doctoral degrees awarded from 721 to 702 even though we have since rebounded.
The really exciting news is that we have now exceeded the benchmark for the final metric of Endowment, at $514 M, and so we fully expect to have met all 12 measures of preeminence in the current year.

And you can be proud of the fact that, once again, USF landed among the top three Florida universities in Performance Based Funding. The consistency that you have shown means that we are one of just two universities to score on the Excellence scale for all 10 metrics.

While we scored a maximum 10 points for Excellence in 6 of the PBF metrics, 9 points in 1 (that is, the percentage of Pell grant recipients), 8 pts in 2 (jobs and salaries), and 7 pts in 1 (Academic Progress Rate), there remains room for improvement and we must double down on (a) jobs and earnings, and (b) retaining more freshmen in good academic standing. More about that soon.

Even though we are understandably disappointed that the legislature elected not to fund Preeminence or PBF this year, we should be reminded that the state has invested $265 M in new funding for PBF, since 2014, of which $36.5 M (or 14%) has been earned by the USF System. Interestingly, over the past 4 years we’ve averaged 88.5 points out of 100 annually, 2nd in the state and well ahead of the average of 77.5 points across the 11 institutions. We will be working with you in
the coming months to ensure that we continue to show improvement even as the state is contemplating future changes for PBF.

Because it’s always affirming to reflect on how we’ve arrived at this point, I’d like to take some time to share with you something of our collective performance trajectory in PBF, Preeminence, US News & World Report, together with progress toward AAU membership eligibility – the relationship of which we have represented through a performance “crosswalk”.

First, Student Access includes the quality and diversity of our undergraduate and graduate students measured, in part, through the average GPA and SAT scores of our incoming Fall Freshman class. We expect to see this profile increase across all campuses, starting next week, and we know that USF’s Genshaft Honors College is readying for its largest intake ever including 33 new national merit scholars, 60 high school valedictorians, and 45 salutatorians enrolling at USF for the first time this Summer and Fall.

Of course, we also strive to attract the best and brightest graduate and professional students to USF. Here, the Morsani College of Medicine is leading the way with the highest ever average MCAT score recorded in 2019 while emphasizing both demographic and geographical diversity as new students come to USF to pursue their MD degree from a veritable “who’s who” of institutions including Brown,
Cornell, Georgia Tech, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UCLA, UC San Diego, Michigan, UNC Chapel Hill, and Washington University in St. Louis.

USF is proud of being the most diverse of Florida’s Preeminent Research institutions as defined by race and ethnicity, national origin, and socioeconomic status. Our students continue to tell us that USF’s authentic commitment to diversity remains a major attraction to studying here and a significant attribute in their future success. However, given the sizeable population of students who are first in their family to attend college and come to us from limited economic backgrounds, it means that we must keep a watchful eye on providing an affordable pathway to graduation. And you haven’t disappointed, as we have halved the average net cost for a baccalaureate degree over the past four years.

As you might imagine, much of those cost savings result from the remarkable story of undergraduate student success and the quality of the undergraduate student experience at USF. Our freshman retention and academic progress rates continue to climb, as do our 4-year and 6-year FTIC graduation rates. It was most pleasing to see, based upon a study conducted at the University of Utah, that USF leads the nation’s research universities in gains in 6-year graduation rates over the past decade.
And we must not lose sight of our transfer students where similar upward trends are seen for our 2-year and 4-year graduation rates, all as the percentage of baccalaureate students graduating without excess hours continues to climb.

USF leads the state in the percentage of Bachelor’s degrees awarded in high demand “areas of strategic emphasis” and is “runner up” for the percentage of Bachelor’s Graduates who are Employed and/or Continuing their Education One Year After Graduation.

The success of Graduate and Professional Students is equally important to us as, once again, we lead the state in the percentage of graduate degrees earned in “areas of strategic emphasis”; while the number of doctoral degrees conferred is growing; and we demonstrate a general improvement in the First-time Pass Rates for Professional Licensure Examinations. Raising the bar for graduate and professional student success will be important in the years ahead.

Faculty Success, defined by the impact you have on student mentoring and learning, along with research, scholarship and creative activity will, in large part, accelerate USF’s ascent and strengthen our national and global reputation and rankings.

This year, USF was ranked 4th worldwide (behind the University of Michigan, Washington University in St. Louis, and UC Davis) for the number of new Fellows
of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Today we have 66 AAAS Fellows on faculty including our President. While USF faculty, supported by the Office of Research and Innovation, continue to earn “prestigious” national awards we still have much work to do to “land” honors that the AAU deem to be “highly prestigious” such as Guggenheim Fellows, MacArthur Fellows, American Council of Learned Society Fellows, Fields medalists and, yes, Nobel prize winners. Even still, the number of national academy members calling USF home continues to climb.

Recognizing the apparent volatility of Citation Impact, an important measure of the USF faculty’s influence on their field of scholarly and scientific endeavor, we will take this “head-on” during upcoming deliberations of the Faculty Success strategic initiative workgroup.

Meantime, customary measures of productivity in Research and Innovation continue to trend upward including total and federal R&D expenditures where the Colleges of Behavioral and Community Sciences, Business, Education, Engineering, Global Sustainability, Marine Science, Pharmacy, and Medicine, along with USF SP and USF S-M, are to be commended for increasing the amount of their research awards year-over-year.
With regard to technology transfer, the number of utility patents awarded, Licenses/Options executed, and startup companies are all showing pleasing progress. Today, USF ranks first in Florida, 7th in the nation, and 16th worldwide among public universities for US patents granted.

As you heard me announce earlier, our Endowment reached an all-time high as of June 30th of this year – at $513,544,652 – and our alumni giving rate is rebounding.

The story that I’ve been telling has resulted in an elevation of USF’s institutional reputation and ranking – both nationally and globally. Today we are ranked in the Top 50 US public universities in 4 rankings recognized by the Florida Board of Governors, and find ourselves on the cusp of the Top 50 in 4 others.

In summary, we have so very much to be proud of for, as Holden Thorp, the former Chancellor of UNC Chapel Hill and now provost at Washington University in St. Louis, was quoted in the Chronicle of Higher Education earlier this year: “…it’s the University of South Floridas of the world that are the real game-changers for students and their communities…”

While ensuring that USF maintains its high level of performance in statewide Preeminence and PBF metrics we also have a broader vision and responsibility for lifting Florida onto the national and global stages.
It was a thrill to witness USF’s first class of deserving students inducted into Phi Beta Kappa’s Eta Chapter in the Spring. At a time so often characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity, volatility and anti-intellectualism, both at home and abroad, it was important for us to be reminded of the Society’s core values: freedom of thought, of inquiry, and of expression as we continue our search for the truth. Indeed, a liberal education, and I’m not speaking of one colored by any particular political ideology, is and must remain at the very heart of all we value. An education wherein students are liberated and encouraged to challenge long held assumptions and to confront difficult issues. While some question the relevance of the liberal arts today – I encourage you to explore the pages of Sensemaking, The Fuzzy and the Techie, and You Can Do Anything: The Surprising Power of a ‘Useless’ Liberal Arts Education – for it is clear that we have a responsibility to ensure that our students graduate with more than mere technical skills, rather with the broad knowledge and well-honed competencies to adapt to a global future that is rapidly evolving.

USF’s commitment to global engagement is well-recognized so it may come as little surprise that we were named the nation’s “Top Producer of U.S. Fulbright Scholars” for the second time in three years with 12 of our colleagues traveling to such far flung destinations as Austria, Belarus, Ethiopia, India, Japan, Kosovo, Morocco, Panama, Poland, Slovenia, and Taiwan.
At this point I’d like to acknowledge John Bader who is with us on campus today. A former Fulbright Scholar and dean at Johns Hopkins, John now serves as Executive Director of the Fulbright Association, supporting Fulbright alumni across the U.S. Welcome!

Furthermore, earlier this year, USF received the Institute for International Education’s 2019 Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education for Access and Equity in Education Abroad and, once more, ranks among the Top 10 universities in the nation for producing Peace Corps volunteers. Indeed, our students have also carried the USF “flag” around the world including 55 Benjamin Gilman International Scholars – placing us among the nation’s leading institutions – 11 Student Fulbrights (including two highly competitive UK Summer Institute awards); 3 Boren awards; 2 Goldwater Scholars; and 1 Gates Cambridge Scholar. Overall, the USF Office of National Scholarships registered 82 student awards in 2018-19.

Finally, USF capped-off a quite remarkable year by being named recipient of the 2019 American Council on Education/Fidelity Investments Award for Institutional Transformation.

In short, 2018-19 was a banner year for USF – yet we’re not done as we plan to further accelerate our ascent in both national and global contexts.
In the coming weeks and months you’ll be hearing much more about US News and World Report rankings of the nation’s Best Colleges.

As President Currall mentioned in his opening remarks, USF’s trajectory has been unmatched by national universities – public or private – since 2013, having risen from #94 among publics to #58 last year and we expect that to continue. To be clear, we are not chasing rankings for the sake of it. You can see that there is a strong alignment between US News and World Report rankings and membership in the Association of American Universities. 21 of the Top 25 US News and World Report public universities are members of the AAU and so we believe that the pursuit of a Top 25 ranking will both advance and strengthen our passage toward AAU eligibility.

While attention to US News and World Report’s 16 metrics will add another layer of complexity to our Planning and Performance Accountability matrix, it’s notable that we are already competitive with the average public AAU performance on 7 of the measures while there remains considerable room for improvement with the other 9 – some of which we can have little influence over and are directly related to the adequacy of financial resources.

Interestingly, I have long considered USF’s readiness to acknowledge and address its weaknesses as one of its great strengths.
Of course, academic excellence remains at the heart of all we do, and that begins with becoming a destination for the best and brightest minds – curious, hungry and talented students and world class faculty.

In spite of unprecedented gains in Undergraduate Student Success our work is far from complete. Just last year we were reminded by a story in *Washington Monthly* that people are watching and wanting to learn from us.

While our gains have been impressive – and we should most assuredly take time to celebrate our “wins” – we must ask ourselves why one in four freshmen is still not graduating in 6 years, and why men are so significantly lagging the graduation rates of women?

In the coming year we will embark upon a comprehensive audit of our undergraduate curricula – examining the structural complexity of our degree plans to ensure that we provide all undergraduate students with an intellectually rigorous yet simplified, clear and coherent 8-semester pathway to graduation. We will further our efforts to integrate HIPs or high impact practices into our curriculum and to identify and eliminate barriers to progress including better understanding the pressures facing students at USF today.

Recently, we have joined 129 other universities in “Powered by Publics: Scaling Student Success” an initiative sponsored by the Association of Public and Land-
Grant Universities. Structured around 16 “transformation clusters” USF will partner with Buffalo, Stony Brook, Missouri and others in taking on the important challenge of improving male student success.

In recognizing that our location in the Tampa Bay Region provides a distinct competitive advantage for us and that employers are telling us that, today, “It’s less about the major or the brand” with a growing focus on knowledge, experiences, and skills, USF’s Office of Career Services has launched “Infinite Combinations”, a career readiness badging program shaped around the “8 Essential Skills” framed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Not surprisingly, we have seen participation skyrocket from 130 students in our first pilot 18 months ago, to nearly 1,500 last Spring and an anticipated 4,000-5,000 enrollees this Fall.

The most recent Freshman Survey published by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* earlier this week revealed that 85% of students identified “Being able to get a better job” as a leading reason for attending college today. We recognize that placement in high need, high skilled and high paid jobs is a top priority for those graduates who are not immediately moving on to graduate or professional schools.

Today, less than 50% of USF students have logged-in to *Handshake* – which is “our career community” – and only 35% of students have completed a profile, while 8,500 users (including alumni) have uploaded their resumes. As you can see, we can and must do better with *Handshake*. If we’re to achieve our goal of a
100% adoption rate, then we need your help as faculty members and advisors to encourage our students to activate their account in advance of entering the workforce.

While we will maintain our focus on improving the undergraduate student experience at USF, so too will Graduate and Professional Student Success, Faculty Success, and the need to Build a Digital Ecosystem – engage our best strategic thinking.

Finally, we are not done with “Reimagining Summer” at USF. As more and more students seek an accelerated path to graduation we must be prepared to meet their year round educational needs. To that end, we will continue the work already underway and will explore the feasibility of introducing a Freshman Summer Institute, in 2020, providing new students with a launch pad to student success.

Guided by Florida Statutes, SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation and BOT-approved Principles for Consolidation, we are continuing to shape One University Geographically Distributed in advance of July 1, 2020. While challenging on any number of fronts, I am confident that the unification of our three campuses will serve to strengthen USF while providing our students even greater access to a preeminent education, our faculty with new opportunities for collaboration in research, scholarly and creative activities, and our communities with the benefits
our university will bring to economic growth and societal enrichment across the Tampa Bay region.

As our new University takes shape I urge you to remember that words matter – as collegiality and respect for others must guide us in building a unified community. Our job is not easy and while we have checked-off a number of critical tasks, including unified admissions, curriculum alignment, and a single set of tenure and promotion guidelines, some hard decisions lay ahead. I have met with faculty on all campuses and, quite understandably, it has become clear to me that you have much on your minds. I have shared my principled commitment to equity of assignment, equity of support, equity of performance accountability and, over time, equity of reward/compensation – the bases for One Faculty.

Presently, and consistent with university policy, the USF System Faculty Council is reviewing the lengthy consultative process and the resulting proposed Academic and Student Success leadership structure with regard to impact on faculty. As our work toward consolidation of accreditation continues on schedule, you can follow the progress via the Accreditation Steering Committee’s work on the freshly redesigned Provost’s website.
Again, throughout this planning process, for One University Geographically Distributed, I urge you to remain focused on our students’ needs and your scholarly activities – each, essential ingredients in accelerating USF’s ascent.

For many of you, my unceasing focus on sharpening a Culture of Accountability at USF is nothing new – and will continue. Yet I feel deeply that striking the right balance with a Culture of Care will be essential to continuing our upward trajectory.

At a time characterized by rapid and significant change, caring for yourselves and others will, in many ways, help define the new USF. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that a number of AAU institutions – including Indiana, Iowa State, Michigan State, Case Western Reserve, Rice and the University of Florida – have come to recognize the importance of building a Culture of Care on campus. Fostering a university community characterized by respect and responsibility, for self and others, trust and compassion, will be essential to striking a healthy balance between Accountability and Care.

To be clear, it’s not about one or the other for they are not mutually exclusive and this isn’t to suggest we don’t already care. In this regard, we look forward to hearing more from President Currall about his expectations of the task force on the Principles of Community.
As if we don’t already have a full plate, we must remain focused on the broader opportunities and challenges impacting higher education in the world today.

Liz McMillen, Executive Editor of Chronicle Intelligence stated it all too well last month, when she wrote: “The challenges facing higher education – financial, demographic, cultural – have rarely been as daunting or as complex as they are today”.

Like you, I continue to believe that an investment in higher education can yield unparalleled returns – and apparently 90% of families agreed in a recent Sallie Mae survey on “How America Values College”. Whether personal (such as better health outcomes, higher work satisfaction and life expectancy), financial (through lifetime earnings), cultural and/or political (through contributing to an educated citizenry), or economic (by providing a boost to state and local economics and adding to America’s global competitiveness), the high return on a college investment is well-documented.

If you doubt the transformational potential of education and the raw power of human resilience, I urge to settle in to Hillbilly Elegy, Educated or How to Raise Successful People – you will not be disappointed.
Nevertheless, public critique of higher education persists as we witness the continuing erosion of public trust in our universities brought about by skyrocketing costs, student debt, limitations on free speech, and the assertion, by some, that college graduates are ill-prepared for the contemporary global workplace.

But is it all gloom and doom? Even as elected officials trumpet our shortcomings there is no lack of suggestions for adapting the academy to meet the needs of today’s students, parents, and employers.

There is no doubt that climbing tuition sticker prices and student debt – which stands today at an estimated $1.6 Trillion – are the reasons for so much hostility toward higher education.

Yet this is just not the case at USF. Once more, the average net cost of tuition and fees for a USF baccalaureate graduate is $7,130 and that’s over a 4 year period, with average salaries one year after graduation standing at $38,000. To that end we should be proud of the role we are beginning to play in the social mobility of USF alums.

We have accomplished this by holding tuition and fees low – okay, so that isn’t our choice – by graduating students at a faster rate and without excess hours, awarding more financial aid (with the support of the Florida Legislature and the US Congress), and managing textbook costs. Through our incredibly successful and
multi-faceted TAP initiative we’ve reduced the per credit hour textbook cost to $27 (well below the national average of $42), saving our students an estimated $20.3 M since 2010.

Of course, we know that room and board, transportation and other elements must be factored in to the cost of attending college, expenses that continue to present a challenge to many students and their families. Faced with competing priorities, homelessness and food insecurity are growing problems in American higher education today. Research suggests that 10-15% of college students experience homelessness with an additional 20-30% having experienced housing insecurity while attending college. Food and housing insecurity often overlap, with more and more students submitting Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP or “food stamp”) applications today.

It’s a broader humanitarian as well as a student success issue, and it’s a priority for our student leadership at USF with whom I’m committed to working to better understand the scope of the problem and to seek meaningful solutions for our students.

Today 2.4 million Floridians owe $85.5 Billion in student debt and the numbers are growing. Yet there is good news for USF’s graduates. The percentage of USF baccalaureate students graduating with debt has dropped from 62% to 52% over
the past 5 years, with the average student debt falling 11% from an all-time high of more than $24,000 ($24,280) to less than $22,000 ($21,623), well below the national data of 70% and $28,000 ($27,975). At the same time, the default rate of USF graduates repaying federal loans has dropped dramatically from a high of 10% to just 1.2% today, considerably lower than the average rate for 4-yr public universities which stands at about 7%.

Much of the improvement at USF can be attributed to our Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid Services and, specifically, to our Bull-2-Bull peer financial literacy program that was recently ranked #7 among the nation’s Top 50 financial aid counseling programs.

As you may know, enrollment for the coming semester appears to be rather robust, especially on the Tampa campus where we expect as many as 45,000 students to enroll this Fall. This includes rather significant, yet to some extent unanticipated, increases in freshman and graduate students. As many universities across the country struggle to meet their enrollment goals, we cannot take our position for granted. We know, for instance, that Gen-Zers expect something quite different from their university experience than that which so many of us identify with. We must, at one, be responsive to their changing needs while strengthening the intellectual rigor associated with a USF education.
A USF education, of course, means that students, both undergraduate and graduate, readily and regularly engage with their professors in discovery and seeking innovative solutions to complex problems that continue to confound us today. As a comprehensive research university we expect our colleges to promote scholarship, research and creative activity that aligns with the State University System’s Research Plan framed around the themes of *Healthy Florida, Secure Florida* and *Prosperous Florida*. USF is well positioned to contribute to the state’s research goals through multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary collaborations around the ocean, water, resilience, sustainability, energy, public health and the environment including sea level rise, extreme weather events, and red tide; and through heart health; medical engineering; the arts and humanities; data science, analytics, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity; along with the brain and neuroscience.

It is our responsibility, and this will be particularly important with consolidation, to build effective mechanisms to promote even greater convergence in research, allowing constructive “collisions” across disciplines around big issues of global consequence for as Sir D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, a Scottish biologist, mathematician, and classics scholar suggested well over a century ago: “If you dream… of future discoveries and inventions, let me tell you that the fertile field of discovery lies for the most part on those borderlands where one science meets another…”
As I draw to a close, it’s often been suggested that USF’s relative “youth” coupled with our embrace of an entrepreneurial spirit has been the difference maker in our rapid ascent. Certainly our institutional agility and willingness to take calculated risks or the path less traveled, and to learn from our mistakes, has provided us with something of a competitive advantage in the higher education sector. And so it may seem strange, that I recommend, as an easy read, *Permission to Screw Up* written by a former University of Florida student who embodies all the traits of a gritty, courageous and tenacious bull in starting her own company, all while acknowledging the hard lessons she learned in leadership.

While earlier this week, the *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* listed USF Tampa as the 20th largest university in the country – sandwiched between UCLA, Arizona and Indiana, and Wisconsin, Purdue and UC Berkeley – you should know that we remain committed to our strategic path of getting better not bigger – and embrace the challenge of accelerating our trajectory to even higher levels of academic excellence in the years ahead.

It remains my sincere pleasure and privilege, as it has for the past 12 years, to serve our faculty and I would appreciate you letting me know how we can do better since it is your success and, by extension, our student’s success that is the secret to accelerating our ascent.
In closing, it is important for us to remember what President Currall shared with the nearly 3,200 graduands at USF’s Summer Commencement earlier this month: “I came here for many of the same reasons that you did. This is a university in motion. It attracts the courageous, the bold, the dreamers: those who believe that the future holds opportunities yet to be realized”.

Thank you