



# A MESSAGE *from the Provost*

June 24, 2021

Dear faculty colleagues,

As many of you prepare for the start of *Summer B*, on Monday, June 28th (and/or fall semester, beginning August 23rd), we continue to work with the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) and the USF COVID-19 Taskforce to support our campus communities. As we return to more face-to-face classroom delivery and associated activities, please take a moment to review the most recent university updates and reminders that follow:

- For questions about COVID-19 and the university's response, please visit: [www.usf.edu/coronavirus/returning-to-campus/mitigation.aspx](http://www.usf.edu/coronavirus/returning-to-campus/mitigation.aspx). Importantly, face-coverings are recommended for unvaccinated individuals, although not required. Face-coverings are required for all individuals in healthcare settings, including Student Health Services, the Counseling Center, and USF Health clinics.
- USF strongly encourages everyone to be vaccinated. The State of Florida has made COVID-19 vaccines widely available to those who are eligible. You can learn more about USF's [vaccine clinics here](#).
- For faculty teaching in *Summer C*, you will continue to deliver your course(s) utilizing the instructional modality posted in the class schedule. You may see in-person classroom seat capacity increasing as physical distancing requirements across our campuses are removed, and we witness an increase in on-campus activities and return to pre-COVID operations, athletic, and social activities.
- As you may know, a number of bills impacting postsecondary education were approved by the state legislature during the 2021 session. If they become law, some will be implemented at a later date, while others will take effect immediately. Please "stay tuned" as we receive future guidance from the BOG.
- [House Bill 233 Intellectual and Viewpoint Diversity Act](#) was recently signed into law by Governor DeSantis and will take effect on July 1, 2021. Accordingly, and because this law will take effect after the start of the *Summer B* session, USF will immediately implement the following internal protocols to provide students and instructors a consistent understanding of classroom expectations until additional guidance from the state is provided. Upon receipt of that additional guidance, the University will update these protocols as necessary. You may elect to include the following in your course syllabus:
  - » Students with disabilities will continue to have appropriate accommodations for recordings as established by [SAS](#).

- » Students may record class lectures which will be considered instructor-delivered academic content. No recordings of other students, class participation, or discussion will be permitted.
  - » Students do not need advance permission or to provide notice to record. But, students must monitor their recording so that it does not include participation by other students.
  - » Students may not publish (post or share) the recordings except as provided by statute. In the event permission is requested to publish (post or share), the student's request and instructor's consent must be in writing.
  - » Students and instructors are responsible for compliance with the statute and related potential sanctions. Misuse of the recordings may result in referrals as possible violations of the student code of conduct or considered academic disruptions.
  - » Additional links for reference:
    - [House Bill 233 \(2021\): Postsecondary Education](#)
    - [USF Regulation 3.025](#), Disruption of Academic Process
    - [USF Regulation 6.0021](#), Student Code of Conduct
- As part of USF's ongoing strategic commitment to faculty excellence and faculty success, we will soon launch an *Inclusive and Equitable Pedagogy* program designed to provide resources and assist faculty in delivering inclusive and equitable learning experiences. Faculty facilitators are working over the summer to design a module as part of an asynchronous Canvas course for USF faculty. The goal is to make the course available to faculty at the beginning of the 2021 fall semester. The Canvas module and follow-up workshops will include the following:
    - » Inclusive syllabi/diversity statements,
    - » *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL),
    - » Addressing bias,
    - » Engaging with current events related to racism, discrimination, and social justice,
    - » Fostering an inclusive classroom community, and
    - » Effectiveness of inclusive pedagogy.

The project is a collaboration between the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL), Innovative Education, and The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity.

For further information and reminders about faculty support and resources, I invite you to access the *Faculty Toolkit*. While the toolkit continues to provide the most up-to-date information, I am pleased to confirm that a robust Faculty Success website is scheduled to launch prior to the fall semester and will become a valuable tool to aggregate faculty support and resources moving forward.

Before I close, I'd like to take the opportunity to respond to questions that many of you have asked regarding USF's continuing commitment to free speech on campus in light of recent local and national media coverage. As provost, I am deeply proud to re-state USF's deepest commitment to academic freedom and diversity of opinion, core values that are explicitly embedded in USF's [Principles of Community](#). USF leadership has always believed that a free exchange of ideas through vigorous debate, civil discourse and the necessity of challenging opposing viewpoints in a thoughtful, respectful and

tolerant manner, represent the very bedrock of a strong democracy. Indeed, each one of us has a responsibility to present and encourage a balanced diversity of opinions in our classroom and scholarly work, while promoting critical thinking as we prepare our students to succeed as thoughtful, civic-minded leaders.

As you may know, [USF Policy 10-050](#), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility* clearly affirms our collective responsibility to pursue “truth and wisdom in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom.” and “to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression...” Some of you may also recall that, in 2019, all state university presidents in Florida signed a [Statement on Free Expression](#) which reminds us all that, “A fundamental purpose of an institution of higher education is to provide a learning environment where divergent ideas, opinions and philosophies, new and old, can be rigorously debated and critically evaluated...” and that “individuals are free to express any ideas and opinions they wish, even if others may disagree with them or find those ideas and opinions to be offensive or otherwise antithetical to their own world view.” The language in HB 233, now the *Intellectual and Viewpoint Diversity Act*, further underscores the importance of “... the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to, and the encouragement of their exploration of, a variety of ideological and political perspectives.” I hope that we will continue discussion of how we can most effectively promote these important principles and practices at USF in the year ahead.

Finally, and as a return to full campus operations offers much-needed hope and optimism, I ask that you remain flexible and adaptable should circumstances change. The health and wellbeing of USF’s academic community continues to be our top priority, and we will be guided in our future actions by scientific evidence and recommendations from government agencies. Once again, I urge you to get vaccinated if you have not already done so and ask that you please encourage your students and colleagues to do likewise.

I look forward to seeing you on campus in the coming days and weeks. Meanwhile, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your department chair or college dean or contact me directly at [provost@usf.edu](mailto:provost@usf.edu).

Best regards,

**Ralph C. Wilcox**

Provost & Executive Vice President  
University of South Florida