July 1, 2020

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Good morning and welcome to the next chapter in the evolution of the University of South Florida. Consolidation has been a long time coming, and I recognize that it’s taken a lot of hard work on the part of many, especially our dedicated faculty and academic leadership team, over the past two years. Today, we have reached a milestone and have plenty to celebrate. We are all now a part of one Preeminent state research university, ranked number one in Florida for performance-based funding, and included in the Carnegie Classification’s list of R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity institutions.

USF is also proud to be ranked among the nation’s top 50 public universities by the Academic Ranking of World Universities (38); Kiplinger’s Best College Values (34); TARU – Center for Measuring University Performance (26-50); Times Higher Education World Universities (31); U.S. News and World Report – National Universities (44); and Washington Monthly – National Universities (50). Just last week, USF jumped to number four in the U.S., among “Golden Age Universities” ranked by the Times Higher Education, behind three members of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and ahead of one other.

Together, we have much to be satisfied with and will continue to celebrate our distinctive campus identities even as we strengthen our collegiate affiliations which, in many cases, extend across more than one USF campus. Yet, with high ambitions of becoming a Top 25 public university, positioned for membership in the prestigious AAU, we have a lot of work ahead of us. It will take an intensely collaborative and concerted effort to continue our unmatched trajectory.

Along our path to progress, I am deeply committed to meeting the needs of all faculty members across all campuses, and serving our students, staff, and communities throughout the Tampa Region. Together we will build an academic community that is permeable and reaches beyond campus and geographical boundaries. USF students will have access to a broader array of degree programs, and all will graduate with a highly prized degree from a Preeminent university. Faculty will be presented with new opportunities for interdisciplinary research collaboration leading to innovative solutions to problems presented by our local communities. Beginning today, I ask that you please list your university affiliation as the University of South Florida on all publications. This small detail is important and ensures that you and our university receive the earned credit for citations of your scholarly work. For faculty, my pledge to assure equity of assignment, support, performance expectations, and, over time, compensation remains immovable.
Together, we must continue to raise the bar for our students’ success along with the national and global stature and impact of our research, scholarly and creative activities. We cannot do this alone yet, with partnerships across our colleges and campuses, and supported by the communities we serve; I am confident that USF’s future is bright as one of the nation’s leading institutions of higher learning in the 21st century.

Of course, today we are faced with two other significant challenges in these extraordinary times. The first pandemic, a public health crisis, tests us all as we seek to balance the demands on our personal lives and prepare to serve our students’ needs this Fall. The second pandemic is born of systemic racism, injustice, and the excessive use of force by law enforcement in the Black community. Like many, I believe this is a defining moment, and one in which USF faculty must take a leadership role through refining curriculum delivery to promote anti-racism and conducting high impact research to better understand and develop meaningful and sustained solutions to improving the Black experience.

For now, I look forward to the day when, once again, I can visit with my faculty colleagues on all campuses, and across all 13 colleges, face-to-face. Until that time, I thank you for all you contribute day in and day out to serve our students, USF, and the academy. Please stay safe and I wish you, and your loved one’s good health.

Best regards,

Ralph

Ralph C. Wilcox
Provost