

President Genshaft's 2003 Spring Address -



Office of the President

April 21, 2003

Good afternoon! I want to thank each of you for coming to my Spring Address. I know that this is a busy time in the semester, but I am most grateful that you have taken a moment to reflect with me on what has been an extraordinary and challenging academic year.

My comments today will focus on the continuing development of our outstanding institution, and in particular on the progress we have made. My aim today is to celebrate the resilience of the University of South Florida, which due to all of your efforts moves ever closer to becoming the nation's next great metropolitan research university.

Over the years I have stressed the need to focus and build on our strengths. With the help and support of each of you, we have worked together to create our [mission, vision, values and goals](#) and to develop a [strategic plan](#) that focuses our efforts and our resources. It's a plan that ensures we firmly adhere to this vision. Our plan focuses on outcomes and, for the first time, includes accountability measures. This is unique for our institution and clearly delineates how we are moving USF forward.

I cannot emphasize enough how important the strategic plan will be to the future success of the University of South Florida. The position of leadership is the goal for all of our programs.

In our strategic plan, we determined [research](#) and scholarship that informs our teaching are our top priority. This year, we've made tremendous progress.

- We welcomed a top-notch leader for our research programs, Vice-President Ian Phillips
- We've hired 114 new faculty across our four campuses, increased diversity through the faculty enhancement program, and rewarded 160 top professors with faculty excellence awards.
- We increased the number of graduate students by more than 500.
- We made great progress toward more shared governance by working with the Faculty Senate to develop new rules and new procedures.
- We transformed our honors program into a degree-granting Honors College and appointed Stuart Silverman as Dean.
- And we continued our development of a Humanities Institute and a globalization center.

We also made great strides in our strategic priority to build strength in the [health sciences](#).

- We'll break ground this fall on a new building for the College of Nursing, and we are preparing to build a shared education laboratory with the College of Medicine that will change how health care is delivered for future generations.
- We're also planning a new building for our biological defense center, thanks to the federal support from Congressman Bill Young. Researchers from many areas of the university are working together to develop new methods for combating bioterrorism.

Our strategic plan also places a premium on academics and campus environment. Here, too, we had a successful year.

- We continue to enrich student life with construction on Greek Housing and Maple Residence Halls which will open this fall. Combined with other renovation and construction projects, these will bring up the number of beds on our campus to 4400 by fall 2004.
- We broke ground on a [new athletics facility](#), re-signed our football coach Jim Leavitt, and recruited a top-notch basketball coach, Robert McCullum.
- We also broke ground to expand our alumni center – the life-long bond to our university.
- Across the campus, we're implementing recommendations from the Safety Task Force.
- We continue to nurture and support our international students, who have faced increased federal scrutiny and tracking in our post-9/11 world.
- We're updating and refining our general education requirements, actively examining ways to increase retention.
- We're preparing for SACS re-accreditation next year.

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- Our [regional campuses](#) are developing unique strengths in their academic programs –including information technology in USF Lakeland and hotel and restaurant management in USF Sarasota-Manatee.
- In USF St. Petersburg, which will soon be under the new leadership of Karen White, the campus is focusing on four programs of distinction: in journalism and media studies, environmental science and policy, social responsibility and corporate reporting and Florida Studies. I want to thank Interim Vice-President Ralph Wilcox for his outstanding work this year.

We have also done a great deal to advance our strategic priority of becoming more engaged with the communities we serve. I am pleased that we have developed [partnerships](#) this year that help the community while advancing research, teaching and service at USF.

- A new building for our charter school is under construction. The USF / Kiran Patel Charter School will serve the children of Tampa Bay and will include a pediatric care center named for Dr. Pallavi Patel.
- The College of Medicine's Mini-Medical School attracted 500 people from our community who gained practical medical insights while learning about USF research.
- And we brought to campus through the Humanities Institute and the [Center for Globalization Research](#) world-renowned speakers, Thomas Friedman, Salmon Rushdie, and Nobel Prize winning physicist Horst Stormer and again showed the community that USF is a place for free and open intellectual dialogue.

I could go on and on and on.

I hope you see the trend in our successes from this year. In our society, there are tremendous needs – nationally, statewide, and locally. We are meeting those needs. But notice that we are meeting them in the context of the [strategic plan of a research university](#). We aren't just providing a service. We are using empirical data to determine the best practices from around the nation in order to become a model for others to follow.

As I stand before you today, I want to emphasize to each of you that focus, strength, direction and accountability are necessary to move forward.

- Focus – we cannot be everything to everybody.
- Strength – we must build on key areas of excellence.
- Direction – we must map both short-term and long-term steps.
- Accountability – there must supporting data to prove our accomplishments.

One example where this is taking place is the [USF Foundation](#), under the leadership of VP Michael Rierson and Hinks Shimberg. The Foundation has restructured its committees to focus on the strategic priorities of the university. Instead of launching a large capital campaign, it is undertaking a series of mini-campaigns to raise money for priorities like the Health Care and Education building, the athletics complex and the Honors College.

Great programs have a clarity of vision. If you know who you are, where you are going, how you are going to get there and you can produce the data that shows what you've accomplished ... then this administration will do everything we can to support you.

Our aspirations are clear—we want to be a premier research university that serves the Tampa Bay region, Florida and the nation. We pursue this vision through innovative curricula and cutting-edge research designed to make a positive difference in the world.

But as we all know, the road toward our destination has been anything but direct. This past year alone, our university has faced trials that would have shaken the most mature of academic institutions. Fundamental issues regarding academic freedom and faculty governance have been addressed at USF and covered by the national and world press. These issues have challenged me personally to hear all sides of the story and, in the last analysis, to act in ways that are in line with academic values and beliefs and the responsibilities to the safety and security of this university.

I know that all of you have questions about the budget, and I won't try to sugarcoat things. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* recently called this time "the worst for states in recent memory." The current situation is challenging. Between our nation's sluggish economy and Florida's rising financial pressures to fund all the amendments passed last November, particularly the K-12 class size amendment, our legislature is making some very hard choices. I am very impressed with our lobbying efforts and our strong presence in Tallahassee. I appreciate the hard and dedicated work of our [Board of Trustees](#) in telling our story and using their influence on our behalf. "USF Day" at the Capital was extraordinary. We had 10 of our 13 board of trustee members, faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends from all of our campus sharing our accomplishments and vision with key decision-makers. But we know we, too, will have to make very hard choices. I assure you that whatever decisions we make will be guided by our academic values and our strategic plan. Unfortunately, we won't

know the final result from the Legislative process and how it may impact us until after the semester ends. The timing is beyond our control, but we will continue to stay in contact with you via e-mail. It is important for all parties in the university to pull together to build a stronger USF. I have complete confidence that my leadership team, including vice-presidents, deans, chairs, and supervisors, will explore every reasonable response to our financial situation. And whatever happens, I am certain that we will not just survive but progress, and we will be strengthened by the struggle.

But despite all of these challenges, these personal and institutional trials and tribulations, the University of South Florida has proven to be resilient. We have endured. We are in a way stronger than before, having shown ourselves to be up to the challenge and the scrutiny. And we continue to make steady progress toward our strategic vision.

So where do we go from here? We have all had the experience of walking into a library or bookstore and being overwhelmed by the incredible number of ideas worth exploring. I feel that way here sometimes! Consequently, this coming year the provost and I will redouble our efforts to get to know you, your opinions, and your work, which in turn will allow us to make better decisions on your behalf.

This past year I had the good fortune, along with my much-appreciated and valued Provost, David Stamps, to visit with many of your departments on your home turf. These have been great meetings for us, and I hope they have been for you as well. They have made me appreciate even more the creative and often ground-breaking work that is being done at this institution. I have also been impressed by the strong sense of collegiality, hard work, and genuine concern for students that I have seen in the departments.

This past year we visited 37 departments at USF. To date, we have visited with every single department in the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education. Next year we expect to visit faculty in the Colleges of Business, Visual and Performing Arts, Engineering, Architecture, Marine Science, and the Health Sciences. I will continue to look for opportunities to expand communication and consultation with faculty and staff, and to encourage a participatory culture at our university. A recent example of this approach that has already reaped rewards is the collaboration with the [Faculty Senate](#) to develop new personnel rules for faculty governance. The Senate has proposed a new set of rules and I have already approved two policies regarding shared governance and faculty grievances. I fully intend to maintain and expand this kind of partnership and participation in important matters in the future. I want to thank Greg Paveza for his leadership and service and welcome Elizabeth Bird to the presidency of the Senate.

Along these lines, I am also pleased to report that negotiations are under way with the United Faculty of Florida, and I fully expect that we will come to a satisfactory and timely meeting of the minds. As I have said before, we have always had every intention of working with UFF.

We have also begun talking with representatives of the other unions on campus, recognizing the critical importance of staff to this institution. I am personally committed to doing all that I can to improve staff rewards and working conditions. A big part of this will be the undoing of decades of bureaucracy that frustrates us all. I want to thank Renee Seay, president of the USPS Senate, and Sheila Holbrook, president of A&P Council, for their leadership and guidance on these important issues. I promise to take every opportunity to cut through red tape, streamline processes, and improve efficiency.

In the final analysis, all of our efforts are designed to advance education for our students. And we have a great student body, with great student leaders. I want to thank President Mike Griffin and Vice President Dave Minberg. They have done an outstanding job representing students, and I am now looking forward to working with the new president, Omar Khan, and vice president, Ryan Morris. For graduate students, President Kelly Browning has done a tremendous job reinvigorating the [Graduate and Professional Student Organization](#).

In closing, this past year has been an intense and emotional time for every American, and has placed unique pressures on the Academy. Traditionally within society, professors are among the most committed to the values of diversity, openness, and freedom to speak. Recent events have caused a great many of us to think long and hard about how the work of our faculty aligns with societal interests and expectations.

I have thought deeply about these issues myself, and I want to share with you my conclusion. American society needs us now more than ever. Higher education is critical to the preservation of a living democracy. Higher education often serves to focus these issues we all hold dear: inquiry, openness, diversity, freedom and societal responsibility. We are learning once again that these are not easy values to maintain, but must be achieved over and over through a courageous commitment to higher education.

That commitment to the future of higher education, and especially to the future of USF, is one that should challenge us to work toward a unifying goal – to make the University of South Florida the truly great institution we all know it can be. It is not an easy task, but it is also something of a privilege to engage in a noble struggle, to take the hand we are dealt, shape it, and make it to our goal of being one

of America's very best universities.

Judy Genshaft, President

[President's office](#), 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, ADM241, Tampa, FL 33620 -- (813) 974-2791

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