

## President Genshaft's Inaugural Address -

(February 23, 2001)

### President Judy Genshaft:

Chancellor Herbert and Chairman Petway – you recruited me for this presidency. I will always be grateful for your faith in me, so your participation in today's events is doubly special.

Commissioner Crist, presidential colleagues, and representatives of the students, faculty, alumni, and Foundation – thank you for your generous greetings.

Regents, Mrs. Allen, former presidents, and legislators; distinguished delegates, the faculty, and other guests – thank you for joining our celebration.



**Judy Genshaft**

And President Jennings, President Swygert, and President Hitchcock -- each of you has been a mentor to me and helped bring me to this stage today.

Thank you for your friendship and guidance through the years, and for coming here to share in this celebration.

To the people of the University of South Florida who have trusted me to lead this extraordinary institution -- from the moment I became your President, I have been touched by the warmth of the welcome provided to my family and me by this university, the communities we serve, and our colleagues throughout the state. Today, as always, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

This is a very important occasion in my life, of course, but also in the life of the University of South Florida.

Your presence here shows the foundation for USF's success –

the depth of support for our university throughout the state and nation.

In particular, I would like to thank my husband, Steve, and our sons, Joel and Bryan, for their presence every day. My mother, Leona Genshaft, who is here with us today; my father, Arthur Genshaft, who has passed away but is watching this ceremony; and my brother, Neil Genshaft, have provided me with the foundation and the values for all I have achieved and all I shall contribute. Thank you.

James Rouse once wrote, "What ought to be, can be, with the will to make it so."

I thought of that quote this past fall as I attended my first President's Meeting of



### President's Office -

- :: [President's Index](#)
- :: [Addresses & Reports](#)
- :: [President's Biography](#)
- :: [Office Staff Listing](#)

### USF Governance -

- :: [Board of Trustees](#)
- :: [Administration](#)
- :: [Organizational Chart](#)
- :: [USF Mission & Goals](#)
- :: [Strategic Plan](#)

View the [streaming video](#) of President Genshaft's Inaugural speech (archived under

"President" link)

the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

A colleague from a fine institution in California told me,

"Judy, you've got the best presidency of any research university in the country."

I told him I believed that, but why did he?

He explained that the University of South Florida is still in its formative stages. It has done so well that everybody can see the potential. But it's still an up-and-coming university. So those of us at USF now have the chance to complete the template for USF's emergence as one of America's truly great universities. In short, he was saying USF is a university with great achievements and great expectations. Or, "What ought to be, can be, with the will to make it so."

The inauguration of a president is a statement about the university's future. But as we survey this hall today, we see how firmly our university's future is rooted in our history. Behind me is the seal of the university. It bears our founding date and dedicates our institution to two timeless academic ideals: truth and wisdom. On the platform with me is the honorable Sam Gibbons, who led the effort for the creation of the university. But our past extends far beyond 1956.

The distinguished delegates here represent 90 universities from across the United States. Their places in the procession are based on the year of their universities' founding. We also see regalia of some of the ancient universities of Europe.

By this company assembled, all the people of the University of South Florida are reminded that we are part of the grand and noble succession of scholars that stretches back to ancient times. There is a fundamental purpose that draws us here today. It is the same cause that drew our academic ancestors to the University at Bologna in the 11th Century ... and the University of Paris and Oxford University in the 12th Century: The disciplined search for truth through knowledge.

We know that now as then, the true aim of the university is the full engagement of the faculty and students in the process of discovery and learning. And we know that how well we succeed depends on the intellectual integrity and the commitment of all who participate in the process. But we also know there is a great, transforming byproduct of this process -- the economic and social uplift that occurs with the application of the knowledge discovered by students and faculty.

We at USF are also proud of our role in the American tradition of the public university. It is a cornerstone of American democracy. The first state universities were founded to provide sons of the elite with classical education and to prepare them for political leadership. Then came the land-grant university, created in the 1860s to develop agricultural methods to improve the agrarian economy and technology for the industrial revolution. By mid-20th Century, we were an urban society with an industrial economy, a strong scientific base, and a much broader understanding of what democracy means.

With computers humming and issues of urban life growing more complex and important, the era dawned for universities like ours. Just as great land-grant universities like my alma mater, the University of Wisconsin; Texas A&M; Ohio State; and the University of Florida transformed the economic and social base of an agrarian nation, great metropolitan universities like USF are transforming the urban corridors of America. By virtue of our location, we have the opportunity and the obligation to be a relevant university, an engaged university, an involved university.

It's worth noting, in 1956, the University of South Florida became the state's first public university established specifically to serve the people of Florida's rapidly growing urban areas. Our mission, then, is to contribute to the advancement of the people of this metropolitan region. We do this by providing the best practices in education, science, arts and culture, commerce, technology, and health care.

And we are a major research university. There are about 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States. This past summer, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching determined that only 152 institutions are in the top category of research universities, and USF is one of them. Last year, our faculty attracted over \$171 million in research contracts and grants. And that's just one indicator of the level of research, scholarship, and creative work that we do here. And we are continuing to strengthen our research university profile. We are intent on making USF competitive with the very best public universities in America, because we know the power of such a university to enrich lives and transform Florida and the Tampa Bay Region.

What does it mean to be a public, urban research university?

The starting point is traditional standards of academic excellence and integrity. This is why we recruit faculty from leading universities around the world; why we expect our faculty to routinely submit their research and creative work for validation by national and international review boards; why we encourage our students to participate in national and international academic competitions; and why we are constantly assessing how we stack up in numerous measures of quality.

This commitment to excellence is the fountainhead of all we can hope to achieve, so we must always be vigilant for ways to improve.

But as a young research university in a highly diverse, emerging urban setting, the University of South Florida's opportunities for institutional achievement, and for advancing the development of our region, depend on our ability to combine our commitment to excellence with a determination to be innovative.

A research university is about the passion to invent, to try new approaches. We're in the business of formulating bold ideas and fearlessly checking them out to see whether they are valid. We transport our findings into our classrooms to enrich the instruction of our students. And we export them to our academic colleagues around the world, and into the social, commercial, cultural, and educational enterprises of society.

Just this month, USF was pleased to honor one of our own whose discoveries have made a vast difference in the world -- Dr. Robert Good, the medical scientist who performed the first successful bone marrow transplant.

When our students earn doctorates, there is a rite of passage. It's not enough that they demonstrate excellence at research methods and a mastery of the accumulated knowledge of their specialties. To earn the doctorate, their work must result in the contribution of new, original, validated knowledge to their field. The rite of passage for rising universities is much the same. When a young research university successfully competes against more established institutions to win funding for a major research center, the judges quite often will issue this cautionary note: "You have done all the right things. You have brought all the right people together. You have collected the latest data and developed it into a strong case. You have marshaled your institutional resources. But you haven't proved what you've got to prove yet. You're going to have to do something no one else has done before if you're going to be eminent."

The University of South Florida's way to eminence will be through nationally and internationally significant work that engages the minds of our university with the issues of our region's cities and surrounding areas. As one university with diverse geographic sites, we are extraordinarily well equipped for the task. And because USF retains the flexibility of youth, our prospects for achieving eminence are bolstered. We understand the value of traditional discipline-based research and instruction. And we also understand that now and in the years to come, our success at advancing our disciplines will largely depend on our success at interdisciplinary work, collaboration, and focusing on the strengths we have already developed. As a young, growing university, we can allow these concepts to guide us as we develop infrastructure and hire new faculty to meet the demands of growth.

William Butler Yeats observed, "In dreams begins responsibility."

We dream of being one of the preeminent universities. To get there, it is our responsibility to constantly ask two questions of ourselves. First: in each of our programs, are we setting the national standard for others? Second: If not, what will it take for us to do so?

USF's performance to date is the most convincing reason for us to continue our work of erecting pillars of excellence. The University of South Florida is already having an enormous impact on our students, the taxpayers of the state, and a vast region of Florida. Over half of USF's graduates since we opened in 1960 have remained in this region, forming the backbone of

commerce, engineering, applied sciences, education, social welfare services, arts, and culture. Our research enterprise, while still young, is having a similar impact on our region, while advancing the general state of knowledge in our disciplines.

The search for knowledge at USF is contributing to society's efforts to find cures for cancer, brain diseases, and other diseases; protect fresh water resources and delicate marine environments; develop more effective educational and social welfare methods; improve infrastructure systems; unlock secrets of the human mind and behavior; contribute to the national defense; identify meaning and significance in literature and historical events; and achieve human balance through artistic creation and appreciation. And USF has shown a strong capacity to form research-based partnerships with business, government, and other educational institutions to propel sound economic development of this region.

Clearly, USF has the capacity to develop into a university whose name is synonymous with excellence and integrity.

We know very well the characteristics of such great universities: a great faculty -- professors who routinely make internationally recognized contributions to their fields; excellent graduate and undergraduate students; a funding base to support excellence; a mix of state investment, private donations, and research contracts and grants. We will strengthen USF in all of these categories.

But the characteristics of great universities are one thing. More important is the character of great universities.

Great universities develop the character to come through adversity strong, to keep their focus on their core values and mission through political turbulence, economic hardship, and social upheaval. Every university goes through cycles of budget cuts. Every university goes through periods of political challenge. Every university goes through various governance crises.

What sets the few undeniably great universities apart from the rest is a self-

regenerating commitment to quality and integrity -- the discipline to make choices that preserve and enhance quality in the face of whatever adversity may be at hand.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observed, "The ultimate test of a man is not where he stands in time of comfort and convenience ... but where he stands in time of challenge and controversy." The same is true of great universities. The most important lesson I have learned about USF is that we do have the character to stand firm for excellence. USF's route to preeminence will be through discovering ways to apply these standards of excellence to a rapidly changing society.

My four major goals to keep USF on this track are to continue the development of this institution into:

- \* A premier national research university.
- \* One with high-quality undergraduate and graduate instruction, which promotes learning and personal growth through a diverse, student-friendly, student-focused environment.
- \* One that strengthens the social, educational, and cultural development of Florida and the Tampa Bay Region.
- \* One that undergirds the economic development of Florida through research that drives job creation, and through teaching that, with our community college partners, prepares a work force for those jobs.

A moment ago, I listed some of our achievements as a university.

They have all been collective achievements of many people in many roles over the past 45 years.

Every constituency of this university has made vital contributions to our great enterprise. And the best thinking and the best efforts of every constituency will be needed for us to move forward to achieve our goals.

To a large extent, the great accomplishments of this university are those of the faculty. The faculty's work will be the principal basis for our continuing rise.

The academic life is a calling. Fundamentally, we who choose careers as faculty do so out of a deep and abiding belief in the future. The drive to discover, to pursue truth, to generate knowledge, is rooted in a conviction that we have a role to play in humanity's triumph. The same conviction drives us to continually refine the knowledge of the ages and pass it along to future generations.

When we examine the world's undeniably great universities, we find the institutions inside that magic circle are those that have been able to most effectively marshal this drive to discover and to pursue truth. They're the universities that make sure this drive yields scholarship and teaching that meets the very highest standards day after day after day.

Now that USF has crossed the threshold into the ranks of major research universities, we must continue building our intellectual capital. We must find ways to reward excellence in teaching and research at national research university levels. We must increase our numbers of excellent students. We must provide the labs, libraries, and other resources that allow us to make the best use of our professors' and students' talents. We must make the strategic decisions about how to invest to

most effectively to build on USF's existing strengths and encourage excellence throughout.

The challenge for the University of South Florida faculty is the same as for any faculty that aspires to excellence. We must sustain the pressure on ourselves to win contracts and grants from such agencies as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts,

the National Endowment for the Humanities. We must continue to expect ourselves to win Pulitzer Prizes, and Guggenheim, Fulbright, Robert Wood Johnson, and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships. We must strive to achieve induction into the national academies. We must take pride in our time and our place, making sure our colleagues around the world know how our excellent work as an engaged, urban university, contributes to the development of our disciplines.

Our professors must make sure that their own scholarship, research, and creative work continue to inform their classroom instruction.

And we look to the faculty to provide leadership in utilizing technological advances, such as the Internet, computer learning programs, and video, to enrich our classroom-based courses and provide excellent distance learning courses.

For those who study at USF, the challenge is to become truly engaged students. We will continue to improve our educational environment, inside our classrooms and out. And we need for students to recognize that they can learn from all sorts of sources, even bumper stickers. I just saw one that said, "Minds are like parachutes: They don't work if they're not open."

At the University of South Florida, we know the success of the academic enterprise depends on excellent employees who plan and perform the thousands of daily tasks that make our institution work. We are grateful for the work of our dedicated staff. As we continue to develop our student-centered learning environment, I know the staff is up to the challenge of constantly looking for new ways to effectively support the academic goals of our students and faculty.

For alumni, the challenge is to do well what your university has taught you to do, and to be engaged with your university and your community to assist USF in this drive to excellence. This university is part of your history. But we are also part of your present and future through the knowledge that you gained here. As we reach out to you and ask for help, know that we are continuing the partnership that began when you enrolled at USF and that we are offering an opportunity for you and your university to prosper together. As the University of South Florida's prestige and stature grow, your personal lives and careers are enhanced. And as you make your achievements, the University of South Florida is enhanced.

To our legislative delegation, USF is able to make its great contributions because you understand the importance of a major public research university to the lives of the people you serve. Your continuing support is essential for the University of South Florida to continue to have its transforming effect in the lives of our people.

To our other friends and supporters, you give resources, influence, and time to the cause of building a great university here because you care for our institution and you want to make a change in society and your community. You know that to develop excellence, universities must have strong endowments and other private support for operations that no state's funding base is able to provide.

As we look around this hall today, we are reminded that a great university is never the product of one person, or five people, or a thousand people. Our university's

great achievements are the contributions of many thousands of people who have engaged in countless solitary tasks, collaborations, and debates to develop and enhance campuses, programs, and ideas.

So we celebrate our collective endeavor, our collective achievements, our collective hopes, our collective expectations. In a very real sense, we are all being inaugurated for the next stage in the emergence of a great university. Emboldened by our successes, we shall fulfill ever greater expectations.

So with great enthusiasm and seriousness of purpose, I accept the challenge of advocating this university, of leading the evaluation of our opportunities, and of making the right decisions for our future.

I am profoundly grateful for all of you who have built this wonderful institution. And now, I am proud to say that the University of South Florida is my university, the University of South Florida is your university, the University of South Florida is our university. Together, I know we shall achieve and surpass our expectations.

Thank you.

\* \* \*

---

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

Direct questions or comments about the Web site to [www@admin.usf.edu](mailto:www@admin.usf.edu)

Copyright © 2002, University of South Florida