

2023 FACULTY FALL ADDRESS

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President Jasinski (juh-sin-skee) Schneider (sh-ny-der), before I begin, I want to take a moment to personally thank you for your time and dedication in service of our faculty and the university.

Please, can everyone join me in a round of applause for President Jasinski (juh-sin-skee) Schneider (sh-ny-der).

I also want to take a moment to thank the faculty senate leadership and all the members of faculty senate here today for their hard work and commitment to shared governance. If you will please stand.

I would like to ask our deans and members of my leadership team here today to please stand and be recognized. I am grateful for your steadfast leadership and collaborations over these last, well now, almost seven months.

I recognize that we have colleagues from all three campuses here with us today, for those of you who made the drive from Sarasota Manatee or St. Petersburg, I appreciate you taking the time to attend. And anyone who was not able to join us today will have access to a recording of the address.

I truly am delighted to be here today and have this opportunity to share my vision for the future of our academic and research enterprise. Today's speech is a look forward but I also recognize that many of you have lingering questions about a variety of impactful issues, please know I am leaving time at the end for questions.

Since this is my first Fall address, I will start with a brief self-introduction. As many of you know by now, before joining the University of South Florida, I was the Vice Chancellor of Research at UC Davis. I held a variety of leadership roles there, in addition to a faculty role in

the Department of Computer Science. I have always taken pride in being a faculty member for the last 30+ years.

Most of my research has focused on wireless networks, mobile communications, cybersecurity, and Internet protocols, which has been funded through individual and collaborative grants totaling close to \$100 million from the National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and several other companies.

And yes, I am still active in my research and currently working on nuances related to artificial intelligence. I have worked with over 100 graduate students in my career and still have a handful that I am advising through the end of this academic year. In fact, my 45th PhD student graduated last month.

A little about me personally, we are a family of engineers; my wife is a computer science graduate and working on IT issues, my son is a software engineer and currently working in California, and my daughter graduated as a biomedical engineer and is now pursuing a medical degree.

We have made the New Tampa area our home. I have only been here seven months, but so far, I have had the opportunity to experience the heat and humidity of Florida summers, and prepared for my first hurricane, which thankfully wasn't a direct hit for our area.

My wife and I are enjoying getting to know the Tampa Bay area and all that it has to offer, and I cannot say enough about the welcoming campus community and the broader Tampa area communities.

Being new to the area, one of the most frequent questions I get is why I chose to come to USF; there were two factors that influenced my decision, first I was ready for a new challenge. USF really has had an amazing trajectory and meteoric rise, to accomplish so much in such a short history is amazing and a true testament to all of our faculty, staff and students. This is clearly a

university with high expectations and bold goals and who wouldn't want to be a part of that team!

However, the real tipping point for me was having the opportunity to meet and speak with President Law, our trustees, members of the search committee, and of course many of you during our townhalls and campus tours. In each conversation, I could feel that there was something exceptional about this university and the students, faculty, and staff who call our campuses home.

The passion and personal commitment were evident, as was the dedication to student success and transformative research, I have no doubt that it is these traits that have led to our new status as an AAU institution. I think you will find that my leadership style aligns closely with the “can do” spirit of our university. The audacious goals you've set and your willingness to work hard to meet those goals has been front and center at every one of my interactions.

Since I began in March, I have been on a whirlwind; meeting campus leadership, faculty, and students, community members, visiting colleges and our Sarasota Manatee and St. Petersburg campuses, and attending and speaking at numerous events. I will continue this practice as I want to get to know each of you and come to understand your challenges and opportunities and how I and my leadership team can better support your efforts.

I hope that you will also see my focus is on collaboration, inclusion, and transparency. Keep in mind that also means that you may not always like my responses or necessarily agree with the approach I take, but I can promise you that I have and will continue to make myself available to you to engage and leverage the diverse views from all over the campuses.

I share President Law's commitment to the sentiments and articulated goals of our strategic plan, and want to underscore how vital the presence of different backgrounds and perspectives is to the

success of our academic enterprise and most importantly to that of our students. It is precisely our different viewpoints and perspectives that challenge us and help us grow as an institution.

Speaking of growing as an institution, I will delve into what I hope will be a shared vision for growing our academic enterprise and institutional research, but before I do that, I want to spend a few moments reflecting on our current successes, on the heels of our significant invitation to the Association of American Universities.

Some of you mentioned to me that you were even pleasantly surprised that we received our invitation this early. However, let me provide with just a few data points that illustrate the good work that has gotten us to this point:

1. USF is ahead of 6 AAU institutions for Total R&D Expenditures
2. USF is ahead of 7 AAU institutions for Total Publications
3. USF is ahead of 8 AAU institutions for Faculty Awards

Our data has long supported that we are on par with some of our national AAU peers, we are also a leader in the SUS, following only one university for all of these categories. It is also worth noting our performance in the most recent US News and World Report rankings. For the fifth consecutive year, USF has placed among the top 50 public universities in America. Over the past 10 years, USF has risen an impressive 43 spots among public universities from No. 88 to No. 45, and 72 spots among all universities, from No. 161 to No. 89. The publication also ranks USF No. 1 in Florida and No. 16 nationally for social mobility. Each of these milestones reflects your achievements in teaching, research, and scholarship.

Many of you have asked me what this new membership means to the university. Our enhanced status provides an opportunity to extend our research collaboration opportunities and compete for additional federal funding, it can also be an important element in faculty and student recruitment.

Additionally, our membership in this elite group provides USF a seat at the table with key decision makers and influencers shaping higher education policy. As well as the ability to amplify the work of our faculty experts.

The benefits will also extend to our students through our ability to continue to provide the best learning experiences and help to attract the brightest students. While there are advantages to this recognition, many of you have also asked about additional expectations and what resources will follow to support and maintain this status.

Now, here is a bit of reality, and I hope you take my following comments in the proper context and in a positive sense. USF's plan was aligned to achieve the AAU goal in probably 5 years. Delightfully, we leaped forward. So now our challenge is to leap forward by 5 years in all aspects that define top performing universities – culture, excellence, resource investments, infrastructure, faculty research, innovations and above all – impact.

We will accelerate our efforts in quality research, teaching, and facilities that all come together to create an environment that supports these mission driven commitments. Our resource allocation must also align with those commitments, and we are making every effort to manage our resources efficiently and effectively.

This also aligns with what I have been hearing during my college visits, and I wanted to share some of my impressions and emerging themes:

- Each college is unique; there are different circumstances and scales that impact college operations. We cannot implement a 'one-size fits all' strategy to address college concerns, but can work to improve the processes, empower our people, and enhance technology to better meet our varying needs.

- I continue to hear from faculty and staff who are incredibly engaged, committed, and passionate. And while they are keenly aware of the challenges and limited resources it is clear to me that they want to help provide solutions.
- Finally, we share a common vision – we see what USF is and recognize what we can become in service of our students, research, and the broader community.

As we look toward the future, I hope we continue leaping forward, and to do that, **we must create, innovate, and continue to make an impact regionally, nationally, and globally through your pursuit of excellence.** To do this will require continued investment in our intellectual capital, our greatest asset, while maintaining focus on student success, faculty excellence, and the growth of our research enterprise.

USF has a proud history and proven track record of student success and while I will not cite the metrics or list of historic gains in today's address, I do want to assure each of you that the success of our student's remains at the center of our mission and vision. Continued success requires that we focus on sustainable solutions and can only be achieved in partnership with our college and faculty experts from across all three of our campuses and USF Health. In the short term, we must pay particular attention to strategic enrollment, graduation rates, workforce development and career readiness, mental health and wellness, and graduate education.

We continue to work with a consulting firm to develop a multi-year Strategic Enrollment Plan designed to strengthen our enrollment planning and management practices and align institutional resources. This is a process where we will see a lot of opportunities for engagement with our campus partners and our surrounding communities.

Once students arrive on our campuses, we want to ensure they have the support and guidance necessary to navigate their journey including degree planning and academic and career advising to facilitate timely progression and graduation.

With access to excellent faculty who are leaders in their fields, our students will develop the knowledge and skills necessary to excel as lifelong learners and be ready to thrive in a dynamic global market. We know that meaningful engagement with our faculty is paramount to our students' success, which is why the university is making key investments to improve support in instructional spaces.

To complement what they are learning in the classroom, we are developing a new Quality Enhancement Plan or QEP, to provide additional experiential learning opportunities and increase access to workforce development activities throughout the educational experiences.

Of course, none of this is possible if we do not attend to the overall health and wellbeing of our students. This past summer, thanks to a significant investment from our students, we opened a new health and wellness facility, and added additional resources to help support our growing counseling and wellness needs. We are also making new investments to address mental health issues of students.

Although the focus has primarily been on undergraduate education, I also want to underscore my commitment to growing graduate education and take a careful look at the graduate student experience. We do have outstanding graduate programs and we know that much like faculty recruitment and retention the recruitment of high-performing graduate students is critical to our future. Not only will this provide more opportunities for our students, but it also provides more support and opportunities for our faculty.

To move these priorities forward, it will require a sustainable, coordinated, collaborative approach across the university. There is a strong link between faculty activity and student

outcomes. Building on the research and Student Success Council recommendations, my team has proposed a joint group to focus on the intersection of Faculty and Student Success. While we often talk about the links between faculty success and positive student outcomes, this approach ensures a shared vision and coordinated effort to drive policies, programs, and practices.

Many of you have heard me talk about this before: faculty recruitment and retention are among my top priorities. Over the summer, the deans submitted hiring plans, which have been approved, and now we must look to act on those plans. All of you know that we are recruiting in a highly competitive environment. To stay competitive, we must be focused on building relationships with outstanding candidates and leveraging partnerships across our disciplines and professional organizations. To that end, our best recruiters are you, our faculty. I will be offering my help in every possible way in support of your efforts.

Since I joined USF, we have talked a lot about supporting and growing our research enterprise to stay competitive with the top research universities in the country. And as I alluded to earlier, we must commit to our people, our culture, our processes, and improve our infrastructure. I want to be clear that I'm not suggesting that we do more with less or that I do not recognize there are real obstacles that we must navigate.

Rather, I am suggesting that we focus on strategic growth in areas where we have opportunities. My conversations with the deans and faculty have articulated several issues related to funding and facilities. We are working through start-up challenges, evaluating our processes, and investing in quality space.

Recently, the President moved the Office of Research & Innovation to my area with Dr. Sylvia Thomas continuing in her current role, this functional shift will provide greater support and investment in research. Vice President Thomas and I have already started to talk about how our teams can leverage our collective strengths and enhance collaboration, supporting high-impact,

top-level research and scholarship while maximizing efforts across the university. In FY 2022, USF was awarded \$546 million in research contracts and grants, I'm hoping that we can hit a target of \$800M in the next five years.

As we are thinking of maximizing our research impact and investments in intellectual capital, I'd like to share a few initiatives I look forward to launching this fall, emphasizing collaboration and multidisciplinary research. I have proposed the creation of three new organized research centers with a seed funding of \$1M each. The primary eligibility for consideration will be to engage in multidisciplinary work, specifically, the proposals must include PIs from at least three colleges. The scope and other details will be included in the RFP, which I hope to send out soon. These new research centers will provide multidisciplinary research opportunities across the university, leveraging our strengths to generate new knowledge and increase our competitiveness for additional funding. These centers will also provide additional opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to engage in research activities.

While the research centers provide a formal avenue for collaboration, in October, we'll start hosting 'Coffee with the Provost'. I hope these events will provide a more casual opportunity for colleagues to come together to share research and scholarship and collaborate more intentionally. I encourage all attendees to participate and engage in casual discussions on any topic related to USF at these events.

The final initiative I'd like to share today is the launching of *Provost's Distinguished Lecture Series*. This series will feature distinguished scholars who have a proven track record of powerful multidisciplinary research. While I am working on inviting some top-level scholars, thinkers, innovators, and influencers, I will warmly welcome suggestions and connections from all of you. And while I am not ready to formally announce, the Director of the National Science

Foundation has tentatively agreed to visit USF as a part of this initiative during the Spring semester.

In closing, I'd want to state the areas of focus and investment once again for this coming year all with the intention of driving the sustainable success of our university and grow and strengthen our academic and research:

Investments in Student Success; including strategic enrollment, growing academic support, with a special focus on timely graduation, career placement, and the overall well-being of students through mental health and wellness initiatives.

Investments in Faculty Recruitment & Retention, this includes greater infrastructure support, working to support competitive and collaborative recruitment and retention efforts.

Investments in Research, including seed funding, and increased opportunities for collaboration and interdisciplinary research.

Thank you for your attendance today and your warm welcome to USF and our community. I look forward to our continued partnership and all that we can achieve together. I am confident if we can maintain our focus on these areas, and provide the necessary support, to advance the mission and vision of our institution the success we hope to achieve will follow.

THANK YOU (pause)

Before we transition to the reception, as promised, I'd like to open it up for any questions you may have. There are two microphones available, raise your hand and a microphone will be brought over to you.