

# 2024 FACULTY FALL ADDRESS

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## SECTION 1 - WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Thank you, President Simmons. I want to take a moment to personally thank you for your time and dedication to serving our faculty and the university. Please join me in a round of applause for Faculty Senate President David Simmons.

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

And if you will indulge me for just one more minute, I would like to ask our deans, members of my leadership team, regional chancellors, and members of the President's Cabinet here today to please stand and be recognized. I am sincerely grateful for your steadfast leadership and collaboration over the past year. I look forward to seeing all that we can accomplish together in the coming years.

I truly am delighted to be here today and have this opportunity to share my vision for the future and dialogue with you. I hope you find today's conversation meaningful and informative, and I look forward to your questions at the end.

## SECTION 2 – ACHIEVEMENTS & INITIATIVES

Wow, it feels like it was just yesterday that I was here on this stage, giving my first fall address.

At that time, I had only been at USF for about seven months and for those of who are new to USF or recall what the first few days and months are like – although overwhelming, it is the beginning of a new learning experience. Over the past year, I have had the privilege of conducting about 25 college visits across all three of our campuses, witnessing firsthand the incredible energy and dedication of our faculty, staff, and students.

28 As a university, we have incredible forward momentum and lofty *but* achievable goals. You will  
29 hear a lot about looking forward today and what that means to your success, our students, and the  
30 institution. But before we dive into our bold vision for the future, I want to take a quick look  
31 back to reflect on some of our collective accomplishments.

32 Earlier this year, we welcomed a talented group of 290 faculty. The group includes leaders in  
33 Latin American films, classics research, health experts, marine scientists, computer engineers,  
34 and prominent scholars representing the entire breadth of the university. Of that group of new  
35 faculty, 35% are coming from AAU-peer institutions. Each fall, we host a new faculty breakfast  
36 and this year's we had the largest number of attendees so far.

#### 37 *NEW DEANS*

38 Speaking of new, we also welcomed new leadership to the university. In May, we announced the  
39 appointment of David Blackwell as the Lynn Pippenger Dean of the Muma College of Business.  
40 Dean Blackwell is a finance scholar with an entrepreneurial spirit and a commitment to student  
41 success. We also welcomed Elizabeth Spiller as the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.  
42 Dean Spiller is a scholar of English with a deep commitment to the liberal arts and sciences and a  
43 passion for facilitating interdisciplinary research. I also want to recognize Charly Lockwood and  
44 the USF Health team for recruiting Sten Vermund to lead the College of Public Health starting in  
45 January. We are delighted to welcome all the new members of our Bulls community. You have  
46 joined a community of talented, passionate, and dedicated scholars, educators, and researchers.  
47 The amazing team here has been the driving force of our university, and it is thanks to them that  
48 you are now part of one of the fastest-rising universities. The USF community is truly incredible,  
49 and I know together, we can accomplish so much and more.

#### 50 *ONEUSF CONSOLIDATION OF AA*

51 I am also happy to say that over this past year, we have focused on building stronger synergies  
52 with our branch campus partners. I have had the opportunity to engage with many faculty and  
53 staff throughout my campus visits and I plan to continue those critical face-to-face meetings and  
54 events as often as possible. Last February, Campus Dean Thomas Smith took on additional  
55 responsibility and joined my team as Vice Provost for Academic Affairs on the St. Petersburg  
56 campus. Thanks to the collaboration of Chancellors Hardigree and Holbrook and the efforts of  
57 Brett Kemker, Terry Chisolm, and now Thomas Smith. We have built closer connections which I  
58 know will yield greater opportunity to leverage our collective strengths. Related to these  
59 connections across campuses, this year we welcomed another impressive cohort of students to all  
60 three campuses under our strategic enrollment plan. The plan called for a collaborative and  
61 coordinated effort, highlighting unique campus attributes to help students find their campus  
62 home at the university.

### 63 *PREEMINENCE AND PBF HIGHLIGHTS*

64 At the state level, we have maintained our designation as a preeminent university, and again  
65 performed well in relation to the performance-based funding metrics. Since the PBF metrics  
66 were implemented in 2014, USF is the only university to finish in the top 4 every year. This year,  
67 we saw a significant increase in the salary for bachelor's degree recipients and the number of  
68 degrees awarded in the state's areas of strategic emphasis. Together, this shows that we're  
69 leading the way in preparing students for success in high-demand career paths, filling the talent  
70 pipeline for employers in the Tampa Bay region and helping drive the state's economy.

### 71 *CREATE*

72 Last year during the fall address I talked about the importance of growing our research  
73 enterprise and announced a new investment of three million dollars for seeding collaborative  
74 research projects.

75 A core part of our goals as a university is to solve big problems and improve lives through our  
76 creative, bold, and collaborative research culture, and that is where the idea for the “CREATE  
77 Award” came from. At the end of the fall semester, faculty were invited to submit proposals to  
78 be funded for up to \$1M over three years. At least three colleges had to be represented in the  
79 proposal and a plan for engaging students in research to be eligible.

80 We received 72 pre-proposals. More than 450 faculty participated in proposal writing. The  
81 primary mission of the CREATE initiative was achieved right then. After a rigorous review of  
82 the 13 projects that submitted complete proposals, four multidisciplinary research projects were  
83 selected.

84 While we had to limit our selections, I have heard from faculty that this exercise was incredibly  
85 valuable. They connected with colleagues they had never worked with before, and as desired,  
86 many have started applying for grants from federal agencies based on the ideas generated for the  
87 CREATE proposals.

88 In the spirit of that exercise and creating opportunities for our community to come together, we’ll  
89 be hosting a CREATE Networking Symposium on October 10. Invitations will be coming out  
90 soon and I hope that you can join us.

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94 *RESEARCH – BY THE NUMBERS*

95 Speaking of research, we need to take a moment to celebrate that we reached an all-time high of  
96 \$692 million in research funding. This is an increase of nearly 27% from the previous year for  
97 our entire research enterprise.

98 While the numbers are impressive, they don't even begin to scratch the surface illustrating the  
99 impact of your research on our communities. Some examples of this impact are - study of the  
100 causes of Type 1 diabetes and strategies for its prevention, a disaster preparedness app to help  
101 older Floridians and their caregivers; computer engineering and education expertise blending to  
102 leverage AI to support educators enhance student learning; red tide data translated into music  
103 helping others to understand the complex data; and we have faculty working across disciplines  
104 implementing workshops for K-12 educators to encourage deeper engagement in civic life. The  
105 impact of our research on our communities is tremendous, and it also provides a powerful  
106 learning opportunity for our students.

#### 107 *STUDENT SUCCESS*

108 Speaking of our students, I mentioned our strategic enrollment plan and our partnerships across  
109 campuses, but I also want to take a moment to recognize the incredible effort underway to  
110 implement the plan by our student success team and cross campus partners. I know these  
111 ongoing efforts will continue to yield great results and provide a better student experience from  
112 recruitment to graduation and beyond. Speaking of the student experience, we have much to  
113 celebrate there too. This fall our residence halls hit record numbers, and we welcomed residential  
114 students to the Sarasota-Manatee campus with the grand opening of Atala Hall. We also  
115 celebrated the one-year anniversary of our new student Health and Wellness Center. The center  
116 provides a space where students can access resources and support to thrive academically,

117 socially, and personally, and we have seen a tremendous response from students utilizing these  
118 services.

119 We've also thought a lot about student experiences that complement their coursework, starting  
120 with our quality enhancement plan or QEP. Our current QEP is titled, "Excel with Experience" -  
121 the plan focuses on experiential centered learning and high impact practices to facilitate student  
122 success while they are on campus and to prepare them for what comes next. Related to those  
123 high impact practices, I'm pleased to share that undergraduate research is now housed within  
124 USF Research & Innovation, fostering stronger connections between student and faculty  
125 researchers.

126 I have seen how our student success professionals work tirelessly to ensure that our students  
127 have the support and tools they need to achieve their dreams, and we are indeed lucky to have  
128 such dedicated professionals here at USF. Speaking of dedicated professionals, the success of  
129 our students is undeniably a collective effort by every member of our community, and we are  
130 fortunate to have that shared commitment in abundance.

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### 132 **SECTION 3 - VISION FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS**

133 But what lies ahead? At last year's fall address, I talked about a focus on student success, faculty  
134 recruitment, and research. As you can see, we have collectively accomplished a lot towards those  
135 goals over the last year and each of these milestones reflects your achievements.

136 As faculty, your work in teaching, research, and scholarship is an integral part of our shared  
137 success. Your efforts provide opportunities for growth, collaboration, and innovation for our  
138 students, your colleagues, and our community.

139 We have much to be proud of and we should continue to celebrate our success as we also look  
140 toward the future. We know there are more opportunities to push the boundaries of what we can  
141 accomplish, and I'm asking all of us to be even bolder in our aspirations.

142 We know our strategic plan is our guiding framework by which we prioritize all our efforts; and  
143 our PBF and preeminence metrics are how we hold ourselves accountable to our students, the  
144 state of Florida, and our community. We have also talked a lot about our trajectory in key  
145 rankings, I'd like to take a moment to clarify our focus. Our ascent in rankings is a byproduct of  
146 us prioritizing our students, our faculty, and our mission. To help guide that progress, we'll be  
147 focusing on the following key performance indicators:

148 4-yr graduation rate

149 6-yr graduation rate

150 Career-ready graduates

151 Sponsored Research Awards

152 And USF's endowment.

153 Thinking about the list, you'll recognize the primary areas that are covered: student success,  
154 faculty excellence, and a strong financial base that impacts every facet of USF. All of these  
155 should sound familiar as they are aligned with our strategic plan.

#### 156 *STUDENT SUCCESS THE FUTURE*

157 As the driving force behind our mission, our primary focus will be on improving graduation and  
158 retention rates, which are intrinsically linked to the quality of learning experiences we provide.

159 Instructional activities also have significant impacts on four- and six-year graduation rates and  
160 student retention. By enhancing these activities, we can create a more supportive and effective  
161 learning environment for all students.

162 When we think about learning environments and career-ready graduates, experiential education  
163 is a powerful tool to advance student success. We need to ensure that our colleges are equipped  
164 to achieve the goals set forth in our strategic plan related to retention, graduation, and career-  
165 readiness. In the coming year, I will work closely with the deans to focus more aggressively on  
166 these goals as we look for a new model to incentivize and reward the colleges for these efforts.  
167 Achieving these goals will require a collective effort. It will take all of us, working across every  
168 college and unit, to advance these initiatives. When we align our efforts and focus on these key  
169 metrics, other measures of student success will naturally follow.

170 While some of these metrics are specifically tied to undergraduate students, we recognize the  
171 importance of extending our focus to graduate student recruitment and success. By doing so, we  
172 ensure that our commitment to student success encompasses all levels of education, fostering a  
173 thriving academic community.

#### 174 *FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY*

175 A continued focus for us is a strong financial base; as an institution, we must diversify our  
176 financial resources for sustainability and resiliency. A key part of that strategy is growing our  
177 endowment as a long-term commitment to the university's teaching and research mission, and in  
178 turn, to our community.

179 When we talk about a prosperous and sustainable future for the university, we need to consider  
180 our community engagement in that conversation. Regional, national, and global partnerships  
181 solidify our place as a research and innovation powerhouse and an economic catalyst.

#### 182 *USF-TGH Partnership*

183 As an example of the opportunities that follow community engagement and partnerships, we  
184 recently announced an enhanced relationship with Tampa General Hospital. Our proximity and



185 aligned missions have created a unique opportunity to deliver exceptional patient care, advance  
186 medical research, and provide top-tier education to the next generation of healthcare  
187 professionals. I want to thank Charly and his team for their leadership on this and their  
188 partnership as we continue to identify ways to enhance our impact as a university. As evidenced  
189 by the collaborative relationship between USF and TGH, there are opportunities to facilitate  
190 sustainable public-private partnerships that can amplify and accelerate research across our robust  
191 innovation ecosystem.

192 *CAICC*

193 Speaking of innovative opportunities, in April we announced our intentions to stand up a new  
194 college, the College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, and Computing. When we talk  
195 about USF's practice of pushing boundaries and bold thinking, this is another example of how  
196 we do that strategically and collaboratively. Our vision for the college is to solidify USF as a  
197 global leader and position Florida as an economic engine in computing, AI, and cybersecurity  
198 education and research. Key elements of this college will be interdisciplinary innovation, ethical  
199 technology development and use, and strong community, industry, and government partnerships.  
200 Some of you have heard me talk about this before, but for those who haven't, I want to clarify  
201 that this college is broader than STEM. We have over 200 faculty members engaged in  
202 scholarship connected to the new college which will provide a "hub" for broad interdisciplinary  
203 collaboration and resource sharing. In fact, when I look across the university and the strengths of  
204 all of our colleges, I see boundless opportunities for collaboration. As per our policies and best  
205 practice, we are moving the proposal through the consultation process, and I look forward to  
206 sharing an update on our progress soon.

207 While the new college exemplifies our ability to catalyze interdisciplinary work and leverage  
208 faculty expertise, we must embrace additional opportunities to capitalize on our strengths in  
209 strategic areas. With that in mind, we are also exploring how we can leverage our strengths in the  
210 broad areas of earth and environmental sciences and sustainability.

### 211 *BLUEPRINT FOR A BILLION*

212 If you attended or watched the recording of last year's address, I asked us to work toward hitting  
213 \$800M per year in Research Awards by 2028, but remember I asked you to be bolder in our  
214 aspirations! This effort has evolved to a new and overly ambitious goal to reach \$1B per year in  
215 research awards by 2030. This is not an easy goal; to date roughly 22 universities have done it,  
216 but it *is possible* with the right blueprint and investment. As we look to hit this mark, we are  
217 going to have to shift our mindset as a comprehensive university. We must look past our physical  
218 limitations and perceived boundaries. We need to promote an inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary  
219 culture that engages all stakeholders across all three campuses and USF Health, leveraging our  
220 faculty expertise and community assets. We also must embrace an entrepreneurial spirit to drive  
221 economic development, enhancing education at all levels and fully leverage the strength of our  
222 research and scholarship activities, the expertise of our faculty and staff, and the aspirations of  
223 our students both undergraduate and graduate.

224 In the context of the blueprint to hit 1 billion, I want to spend a moment talking about the  
225 scholarly environment that will help us get there. As I mentioned, we must eliminate boundaries  
226 that inhibit our work and operate as a community of scholars. Whether you are in north Tampa,  
227 Sarasota, St. Petersburg, or downtown Tampa, we are all part of this vibrant community and have  
228 access to a wealth of resources in our colleagues. When we move beyond boundaries and  
229 strengthen our collaboration, we can create more opportunities for transdisciplinary work. Based

230 on the response to the CREATE award and conversations that I have had with many of you, there  
231 is an interest in this type of collaborative work. The process that started with CREATE can be  
232 leveraged to pursue additional large-scale opportunities. Opportunities lie at the intersection of  
233 art and medicine, education and technology, ethics and computing, engineering and social  
234 sciences, environment and sustainability, just to name a few examples.

235 Related to the collaboration between colleagues, it is our commitment to add 500 new faculty by  
236 2030. Faculty are critical to the teaching and research mission of the university, increasing our  
237 faculty numbers and retaining our top talent will continue to be a priority that drives both student  
238 success and our research enterprise.

239 *BOB 1 – Core Facilities*

240 You and I know the importance of research facilities. We need to invest in our facilities to  
241 support your work. Research core facilities are a priority, and we have committed \$10 million to  
242 jump start the process this year. Thank you to the help of the Faculty Senate Research Council,  
243 Sylvia and her team, and a newly formed core facilities group, we are working on a plan to  
244 designate and support core research facilities at an institutional level.

245 *BOB 2 - Entrepreneurship*

246 Beyond facilities, we also need to embrace an entrepreneurial mindset related to scholarship. We  
247 can leverage patents and commercialization to drive the societal impact of our research.  
248 Successful commercialization can attract additional resources to enable more research, which  
249 provides more opportunities for our students, faculty, and staff. I have charged a dedicated group  
250 to explore how to build on our strength and successes in this area to expand opportunities for our  
251 faculty.

252 *BOB 2 – Revisit Facilities & Administration (F&A) Rates*

253 We are revisiting USF's Facilities & Administration (F&A) Rates to explore the best ways to  
254 leverage these funds in support of our research infrastructure and enterprise. By strategically  
255 utilizing these resources, we aim to enhance our research capabilities and foster an environment  
256 that promotes innovation and growth.

#### 257 **SECTION 4: CONCLUSION**

258 Our goals are ambitious. Our expectations are high. It will require a true **institution-wide effort**  
259 **and corresponding investments.** Together, we have the power to achieve our aspirations. By  
260 dreaming big, leveraging strategic investments, and fostering collaboration across all disciplines  
261 and campuses, we can implement these initiatives effectively. Let's harness our collective  
262 strengths, support one another, and work as a unified community of scholars. With dedication  
263 and teamwork, there is no boundary to what we can accomplish. Be bold and dream big!

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265 Now I'd like to open it up to questions. Please raise your hand and we'll bring a microphone  
266 over to you so everyone can hear.

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