

President's Report

TO: ALL ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
FROM: JUDY GENSHAFT, PRESIDENT



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THIS YEAR'S LEGISLATIVE SESSION was one of the most difficult in recent memory. Florida's lawmakers were faced with making decisions which can only be described as wrenching, both on a personal and political level. We are thankful for those who went the distance for the University of South Florida, especially the Tampa Bay Area Legislative Delegation. Their advocacy on behalf of USF is a commitment not only to the university, but to the educational and economic future of the Tampa Bay region.

Gov. Charlie Crist had an unenviable task, but his support for Florida's universities has been nothing short of remarkable. Gov. Crist's recognition that Florida's economic fate hinges on the strength of its higher education programs is historic; never before has there been such understanding that a robust public university system is essential to economic success.

That said, there is no way to paint a rosy picture of the past two budget years and how our state finances will continue to impact USF. With the signing of the new budget, USF's base state allocation has been cut by a total of \$88 million over the last two years – from \$350 million to \$289 million. That's a staggering 27 percent reduction.

More and more, the financial support of this institution is being shifted to students and our USF researchers who have done a phenomenal job securing grants. We will continue to make sacrifices and continually tighten our spending.

Legislators made up some of the massive cut in the state's general revenue support with two sources: An increase in tuition; and one-time money from the federal government's stability and recovery program. But it's important to keep in mind the money from Washington which Florida lawmakers used to bolster university budgets this year is merely stabilization money – it does not help us expand or launch new programs. That money will not last forever and there is real concern whether our state finances will be in a position to replace those federal funds when they are gone in two years.

Our Vital Mission

Quite simply, we live in a new economic reality.

Like any family sitting around a kitchen table trying to figure out how to stretch that paycheck to meet our current needs and future aspirations, we have no choice at the end of the day but to make the current situation work for us. Our mission at USF is too important to let languish – and that is true no matter what the final budget figures say. Our students are entitled to a high-quality education, our researchers are still forging ahead in scientific discovery and our entire university is committed to using all its intellectual power to rebuild and reshape our local economy.

The bottom line for USF is that our community is depending on us to lead them to an economy based on innovation, knowledge and creativity. We need to be competitive. We need to be efficient. We need to be the driver of the new economy.

We need to fill the budget gaps with talent, grit and tenacity – which I believe we have in abundance. I know we are already on our way.

If you haven't had a chance to read a recent report from Richard Danielson of the *St. Petersburg Times*, I encourage you to do so. You can [check it out here](#). This is, in essence, the story of how far we have come in transforming this institution into a leading university even in the most turbulent times.

We could have let the recession stagnate our ambitions, make us less competitive or lessen our global reach – but we have not allowed that to happen. We have kept our focus on building a high-quality research and academic institution, and have done so without leaving anyone behind. We are keeping students in need of emergency financial aid in school, and this week we will become the first university in the nation to sign an agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide special services to our returning troops under the new GI bill.

We are continuing our global reach, signing new academic partnerships with universities in Ghana and dispatching our talented faculty and students this summer to points all over the globe to perform vital research and community service. As we speak, our researchers have submitted scores of proposals seeking nearly \$100 million in stimulus money set aside for scientific advancement. I have no doubt that USF will be in the thick of the competition.

Your Support Needed

However, that does not mean that some of our programs are running out of options. The Byrd Alzheimer Center is in dire straits with no additional funding in this year's budget. By this time next year, its savings will be gone and, I fear, with it will go a statewide attack on Alzheimer's disease. Florida's families who struggle with this devastating illness will be the real losers in that equation. Support for this vital Florida resource must be loud and unwavering if it is to survive, so please make sure your local lawmakers know how important this is to you.

We know the next year will be one that will test our skills, our mettle and our resolve. But I also believe that a university which thrives in the face of adversity is the best possible place for our next generation of leaders to learn. These challenges simply mean our success – and I have no doubt that we will succeed in building a great university – will be even sweeter.