

Report to USF Board of Trustees

Delivered by USF President Rhea Law

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, trustees. This has definitely been an exciting morning. I want to again express my deep appreciation to Arnie and Lauren Bellini for their generous and visionary gift – the largest in the history of our great university.

The Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing will provide solutions to complex challenges and help our graduates thrive in high-demand careers.

Speaking of our exciting opportunities, we continue to make progress with our plans for the Fletcher Avenue property.

As you know, we have been going through the process to redevelop that area into a destination that will benefit USF and the surrounding community. Our vision is for a mixed-use district that includes retail, dining, hospitality, academic and research facilities, housing, and green and recreational spaces.

Following a two-stage Invitation to Negotiate process, in February USF issued an intent to award to a team consisting of Capstone Development Partners, Capstone Communities, Aureate Development and Ellison Development.

We now are in the project negotiation phase. In the coming months, the university will work with these partners to finalize plans for the project. The goal is to present them to Trustees and the Florida Board of Governors for approval in the fall. We will continue to provide additional updates to you as the process moves forward.

We were very pleased to receive a five-year, \$4.8 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that will support up to 900 students each year through paid internships.

What makes this award even more noteworthy is that this was the first time the Mellon Foundation, which is the largest supporter of the arts and humanities, had invited USF to apply for a grant – a sign of our growing reputation.

The grant will enhance our ongoing efforts to increase the career readiness of undergraduates. The beneficiaries will be students in the College of Arts and Sciences who are majoring in humanities, including English, history, philosophy, world languages, communication, and religion.

About a third of the college's undergraduates participate in internships annually. Almost all are unpaid, so students working their way through school often can't afford to take advantage of these learning and professional development opportunities.

This grant will increase the number of internships available, helping to strengthen the pipeline of candidates prepared to enter the workforce upon graduation.

There also is lots of great news to share from USF Athletics.

Congratulations to the track and field team, which won its second consecutive American Athletic Conference Indoor Championship. The victory also earned the Bulls' men's coaching staff its second straight Men's Coaching Staff of the Year honor.

Our women's lacrosse team also is off and running in its inaugural season. I was delighted to join Bulls Nation several weeks ago in cheering on the team as they officially launched their first season of competition with a dominant victory over Kennesaw State.

Their first game drew nearly 2,400 fans, which was the largest week one crowd in the nation and largest single-game attendance for women's lacrosse in the history of the state of Florida.

We're also very proud of the USF sailing team, which is based at our St. Petersburg campus. Just a couple of weeks ago, they hosted the first team race regatta of the 2025 season on Bayboro Harbor, drawing seven teams from around the nation. Our Bulls had a great weekend of sailing and finished with a strong third-place finish.

And in the midst of this very busy spring semester, we are proud to serve as the host institution for the NCAA's women's basketball Final four – for the fourth time – at Amalie Arena.

Our USF Athletics staff is providing support in numerous areas as it works closely with the NCAA and the Tampa Bay Sports Commission to host this exciting weekend of events.

Each of the games, set for April 4th and 6th, is sold out, and they will be televised by ESPN. This will be a great opportunity to showcase USF and the Tampa Bay region in front of a national audience.

One more Athletics note to share: The spring football game is on April 26, and we hope to see everyone there to support Coach Golesh and our student-athletes.

I also want to mention a couple of recent events that highlight the importance of our longstanding partnership with Tampa General Hospital.

Along with members of our USF Health team, I was pleased to join TGH and Lifepoint Health for the recent ribbon cutting of the TGH Behavioral Health Hospital, located in the center of the Tampa Medical & Research District.

You may recall that a state law enacted last year designated this transformational facility as one of the first behavioral health hospitals in Florida. We are extremely grateful to our elected officials for their support.

As Florida's first designated behavioral health teaching hospital, it will provide critical services to our community and invaluable hands-on learning opportunities for medical students and residents from USF Health's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences at the Morsani College of Medicine.

We also had an opportunity last month to tell the story of our vital partnership with TGH at the Florida Capitol. I was pleased to join nursing and medical students as well as leaders from USF Health and TGH, to advocate for continued support from our state leaders.

We will be returning to Tallahassee on April 15 for the rescheduled USF Day at the Capitol. Together with board leadership, I look forward to sharing the USF story throughout the legislative session.

That concludes my report, and I am happy to answer any questions.