



To: Brian Lamb, Chair, USF Board of Trustees
Harold Mullis, Chair, USF BOT Consolidation, Accreditation & Preeminence Committee

From: USF Tampa Faculty Senate

Date: February 22, 2019

The USF Consolidation Planning Study and Implementation Task Force has recommended that the St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee campuses be established as "branch campuses" according to the SACSCOC criteria. This means they would have their own faculty and supervisory organization as well as hiring and budgetary authority. The Task Force specifically recommended that the regional chancellors should report directly to the USF president and should "manage, supervise, hire and fire all branch campus employees -- academic and nonacademic."

The USF Tampa Faculty Senate has voted overwhelmingly to oppose this Task Force recommendation. This recommendation clearly fails to adhere to two of the Guiding Principles for USF Consolidation and has negative implications for other guiding principles. Specifically, this recommendation, if implemented, would:

- threaten USF's Preeminence status;
- create a leadership structure that is neither simple and unified nor aligns accountability with authority.

Preeminence

USF Tampa achieved preeminent status in 2018 only after years of concerted, focused, coordinated effort. USF Tampa's achievement was the direct result of strong, unified, and tireless leadership on this campus. Preeminence status will be lost if there is any reduction in the number of preeminence metrics achieved. If the metrics of all three institutions were combined today, preeminence would not be attained. It is highly implausible that USF could attain preeminence operating as three separately managed entities focused primarily on implementing their own individual projects, rather than working together as a unified institution. The costs of losing preeminence status would be enormous in terms of the acclaim this recognition confers on students and their degrees, on faculty and on the institution, in addition to the obvious financial costs.

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Leadership Structure

Academic units within universities operate most efficiently when there are clear lines of authority and accountability. Department faculty are accountable to department chairs; department chairs are accountable to college deans; and college deans are accountable to the head of academic affairs. For academic units that have a presence on more than one campus, there would be no such clear lines under the Task Force's recommendations. If a departmental program is "hosted" rather than "homed" on a branch campus, the faculty there will not be accountable to their department chair, dean and provost. Rather, branch campus faculty will be accountable to the regional chancellor who will decide teaching assignments, make salary adjustments and evaluate their faculty annually and for promotion and tenure. This structure of matrix management would present tremendous challenges to departments striving to achieve their teaching and research goals in support of preeminence. Coordination across campuses of curriculum and class schedules will suffer. Research resources are less likely to be shared throughout the department across campuses. Faculty hiring will also be undermined. The membership of departments on the branch campuses will be determined by processes over which the wider department and college leadership and faculty would have no guarantee of significant input, let alone control. This will not serve the critical goal of student success. SACSCOC has indicated that USF must have singular departments and colleges (i.e., one department of English, one college of business, etc.). It is not clear that the Task Force's proposed organizational structure will be found to be acceptable during the accreditation review.

Other Considerations

- The task force proposal to maintain budgetary autonomy for the three campuses will create budgetary silos that will inhibit sharing of resources across campuses. Each campus will direct their resources to their own individual strategic priorities. The benefits that consolidation potentially affords all students and faculty will be much more difficult to realize.
- The proposed arrangement will result in unnecessary duplication of administrative function and may lead to conflicts between policies and plans proposed at the three campuses. Such conflicts would require adjudication by the university president. This would be an inappropriate and inefficient use of a university president's time, which is better spent engaging with community, political, and business leaders. Prospective candidates for USF president are unlikely to see this as a desirable feature of the position.

- A centralized, unitary USF administration would be one charged with the achievement of educational excellence throughout the entire USF system. Its aim would be that students and faculty located on each campus have the same access to the educational and research resources and opportunities available at any other campus, while at the same time ensuring that the highly valued features of campus identities are maintained. Driven by that vision, a faculty member, student, graduate or staff member at any USF campus would be a USF Bull without a qualifying asterisk. An administration without authority over budgeting, personnel, and admissions at two of its three locations cannot be expected effectively to attain that aim.

Conclusion

The Task Force proposal seeks to preserve regional campus identities and autonomy to the maximum degree possible while still meeting the legislative demand for consolidation of accreditation. But this recommendation is inconsistent with the Guiding Principles for Consolidation. It would threaten USF's preeminence status and it fails to establish a clear, simple and unified leadership structure by aligning accountability with authority. **It should be rejected.**