

# USF

UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH FLORIDA  
MAGAZINE

The OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the  
USF ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
SUMMER 2021

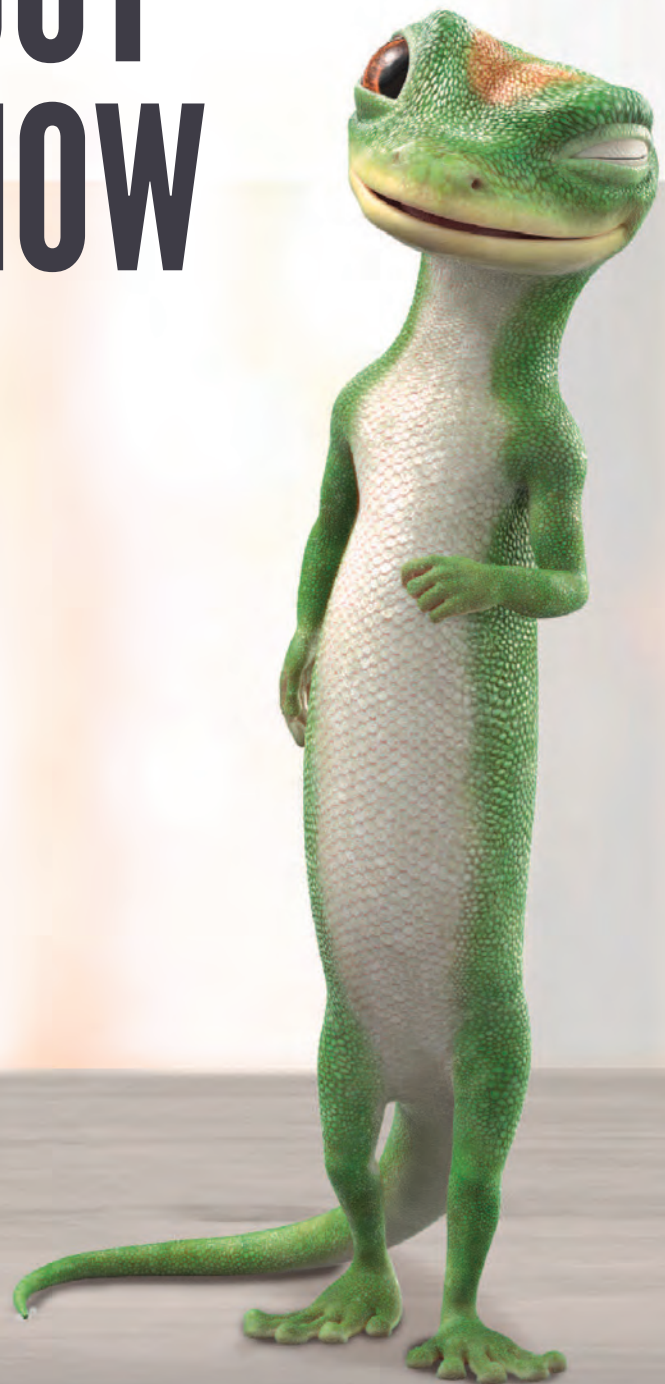
## NATIONAL SECURITY

USF increases focus on  
threats to United States



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# USF

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA MAGAZINE

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# From the President



## Dear alumni, friends and supporters of USF:

I HOPE YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES ARE WELL.

Working in consultation with the Florida Board of Governors, USF has transitioned to pre-COVID operations and pre-COVID classroom capacity as of the June 28 start of our summer session. We also are returning to full in-person participation in athletic and social activities on our campuses, including fan participation in stadiums and arenas.

While we are pleased — and relieved — to be emerging from the pandemic, we also are acutely aware that COVID-19 is still with us. USF has been guided in our mitigation efforts by data and science and by governmental directives. As I have frequently said, we are fortunate that we are able to rely on the expertise of many scholars among our faculty who bring us the latest evidence. We encourage students, faculty and staff to get the vaccine and we will continue to listen closely to our experts as we also carefully monitor guidance from the CDC and the State of Florida to shape our strategies.

The cover package for this issue of USF Magazine focuses on our growing emphasis on national security. Given that our region is home to many prominent cultural institutions, a thriving port and hub for global trade, a vast tourism industry, MacDill Air Force Base, and cutting-edge scientific and medical centers, USF is uniquely positioned to be a global leader in areas of global and national security. Leveraging USF's proximity to MacDill and other regional and statewide assets will aid in building nationally ranked academic programs and centers of unique competitive advantage to address some of the world's most pressing issues. You can read about some of our programs and partnerships beginning on page 27.

Our return to pre-COVID operations comes just in time for the College of Marine Science's Oceanography Camp for Girls. The camp, which marks its 30th anniversary this summer, takes place in person in July. A three-week program, the camp is designed for young women from Pinellas County in their summer between middle school and high school. The National Science Foundation considers the camp as a model for immersive, experiential science, technology, engineering and mathematics learning for women and girls. Studies suggest middle school is the time young women start to lose interest in science, and 30 years of camp survey data suggest that campers leave the experience with a much better appreciation for, and understanding of, what it means to do ocean science. Former campers share their experiences in a story on page 40.

We celebrate another milestone on page 20: Softball coach Ken Eriksen's 1,000th victory. The all-time winningest head coach in any sport at USF, Ken is in select company as just the 28th NCAA Division I coach to record that achievement and he is only the second to do it entirely in the state of Florida. After leading our softball team to its seventh NCAA tournament appearance in the last 10 seasons, Ken will serve as head coach of USA Softball in the Tokyo Olympic Games later in July. Congratulations on your many accomplishments, Ken.

I hope you and your families enjoy a safe, healthy summer. Thank you for all that you do for our students and our university.

**Steven C. Currall**  
President and Professor

# A year in review: Anti-racism and equity at USF

By Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE that we find ourselves finally emerging from a global pandemic and a year after the murder of George Floyd. Many may be eager to return to “business as usual,” but USF leaders recognize that the most successful universities are those that leverage lessons from the past year to refine their institutions. USF’s flexible approach to the future of work is just one way our leaders are thinking creatively about our future and with a focus on equity. Similarly, in order to institutionalize anti-racism and equity, we cannot return to traditional approaches, but rather must consider innovative shifts to our organizational structure.

In a critical organizational change, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, with substantial financial support from USF student government, is hiring more staff to serve as coordinators who are assigned to underrepresented students, including racial and ethnic minorities. This year, USF admitted both its largest class and the largest number of Black and Hispanic students in its history. This proactive organizational change will help maintain our high retention and graduation rate and, as well, ensure that our campus culture promotes inclusive excellence and a sense of belonging.

Similarly, President Currall announced organizational changes to the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity (DIEO) whereby functions related to Title IX, equal opportunity and Disability/ADA compliance have been unified under a separate Office of Compliance. This shift will allow the compliance office to respond more quickly to grievances, and it creates an opportunity for the remaining diversity and inclusion office to focus on more proactive efforts. Insights from recent DIEO virtual town halls have engaged over 250 campus and community leaders and will inform both the new structure of this office and the search for the permanent vice president of institutional equity.

Likewise, the creation of a Department of Diversity Initiatives within the USF Foundation has included the hires of two staff members who will work to enhance fundraising and programming for Black and Hispanic



alumni. The management of the thriving USF Latino Scholarship Program has moved back to the Foundation, where it will be coordinated by Keila López, a 2015 USF graduate and USF Latino Scholarship recipient.

Other organizational developments include the establishment of the USF Faculty Senate’s Council on Racial Justice and new discussions about resource groups for Asian and Hispanic/Latinx faculty and staff. Beyond the campus community, the College of Business has leveraged organizational capacity to launch a record-breaking Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Certificate program, attracting over 120,000 registrants from across the globe!

I am most encouraged by my experience on the President’s Strategic Renewal Task Force, where equity and anti-racism were discussed across all strategic initiatives and included in the task force’s recommendations. When President Currall presents the final Institutional Strategic Plan to the community, I believe the institutional commitments and strategic initiatives will give us the support to empower us to rise to new heights.

*(Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman is interim vice president of institutional equity, senior advisor to the president and provost for diversity and inclusion, and an associate professor of sociology.)*

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# First Look





# Art appreciation, pandemic style

MEMBERS OF USF'S PINELLAS COUNTY ALUMNI CHAPTER pose in front of "Eye of the Storm" by aerosol artist Ricky Watts during their recent Walking Mural Tour in downtown St. Petersburg.

USF's alumni groups have found creative ways to stay connected during the coronavirus pandemic, including in-person gatherings like this limited-capacity outdoor tour.

Art lovers, from left, included Pam Haber, '85 and MAcc '97, Life Member; Bea Rahms, '86; Lucinda Hehemann, '85; guide James Hartzell; Helen Huntley, MA '78; Bruce Ford, MBA '00; Stephen Caldwell, '87; Robin Munroe; Angela Bartolotta, '18; Al Bartolotta, '82 and MPA '90; and – not pictured because she was the photographer – Donna Betz, '86.

Hosted by the St. Petersburg Central Arts District in partnership with Florida CraftArt, the guided tours include more than 30 murals in a four-block area. For more information, visit [floridacraftart.org/product/mural-tours](https://floridacraftart.org/product/mural-tours).

Photo: DONNA BETZ '86



# First Look



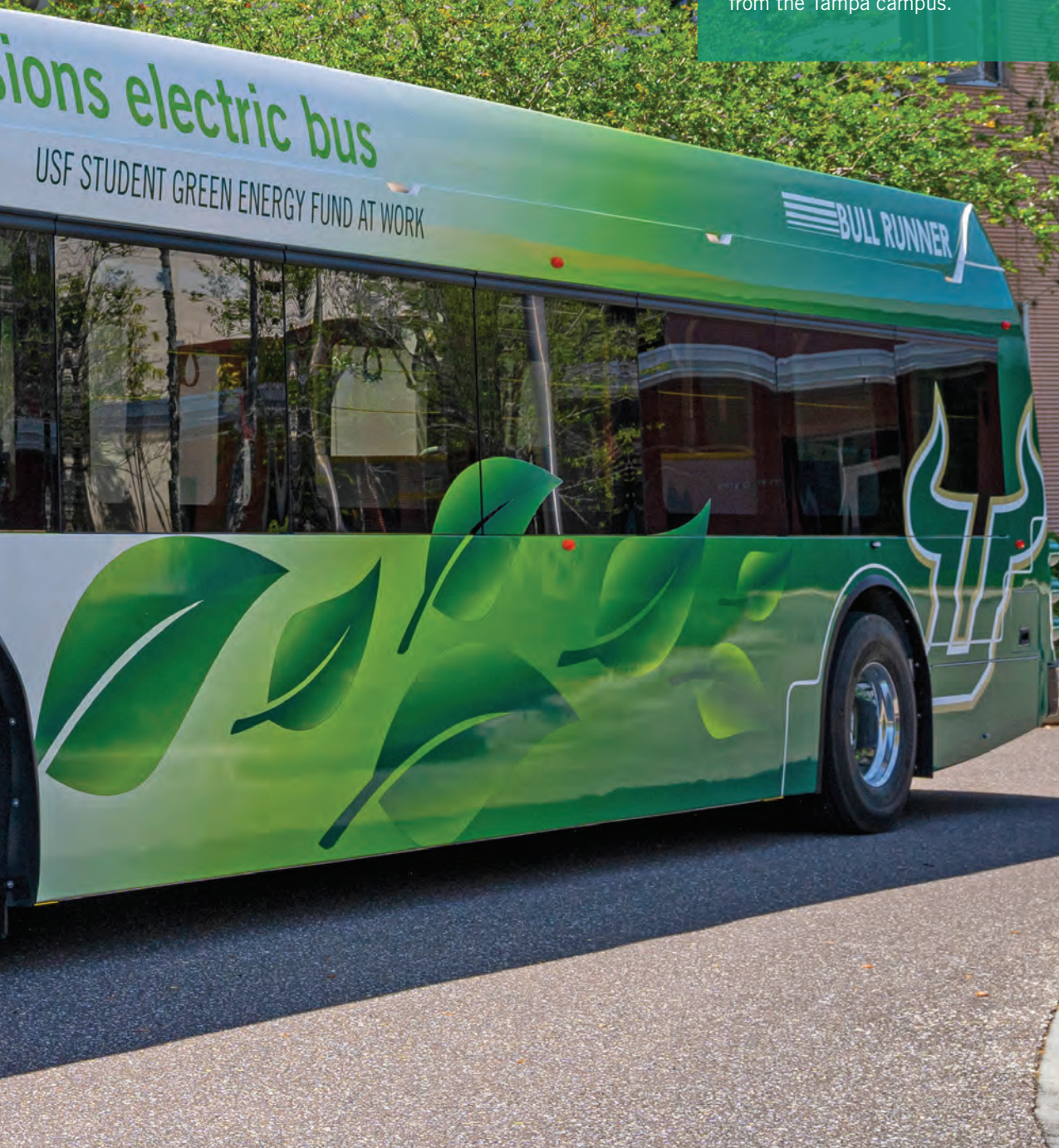


# It's electric

USF IS TAKING STEPS TO SUPPORT a more sustainable environment by debuting its first zero-emission electric bus in the Bull Runner fleet on the Tampa campus. The new Proterra 40-foot Catalyst E2 bus rolled out for the first time on Earth Day.

According to the manufacturer, replacing a diesel bus with an electric bus reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 230,000 pounds annually, which is equivalent to planting 5,000 trees. Electric buses also produce less noise pollution in the community and offer riders a smoother experience.

The new bus was jointly funded by the university's Student Green Energy Fund and USF Parking and Transportation Services. The Student Green Energy Fund was launched in 2011 to support USF's commitment to reduce and eventually eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from the Tampa campus.





Mabel Proenza stands in the Harry S. Truman Federal Building Hall of Flags, located in the U.S. State Department's headquarters.

## SIX AWARDS

### Honors grad takes the prize for most national scholarships

RECENT JUDY GENSHAFT HONORS COLLEGE graduate Mabel Proenza received a 2021 Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Spain, making her the most decorated national scholarship recipient in USF history.

While at USF, Proenza earned six awards: the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study abroad in China, the Freeman-Asia Scholarship to China, the Boren Scholarship to China, a CIEE Grant to China, the U.S. Department of State paid Foreign Service Internship Program, and now a 2021 English Teaching Assistantship from the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

Proenza graduated this spring with dual degrees in International Studies and World Languages and Cultures with double concentrations in Chinese and French. She will teach English in Spain for a year through the Fulbright program, and then plans to apply for graduate school.

"It feels surreal to be USF's most decorated national scholarship recipient," says Proenza. "Receiving these scholarships has changed my life, allowing me to see a world of possibilities for my future. I am excited to teach in the Canary Islands, Spain, and experience a new culture and am confident that my path as a globetrotter has only just begun. It will be an honor to represent the United States and USF during my Fulbright year."

## HIGH HONORS

### Two students earn most prestigious undergraduate science award in the country

TWO STUDENTS IN USF'S Judy Genshaft Honors College, Kelli Ann Lynch and Alexander Mercier, have been named 2021 Goldwater Scholars, chosen out of nearly 1,300 students nationally. The scholarship is the most prestigious undergraduate award in the country for scientific research, and provides each recipient with \$7,500 for educational expenses and research support.

Both students have already completed research in public health.

Lynch, a junior from Melbourne, Florida, majoring in physics, has spent three years researching with professor and computational physicist Inna Ponomareva. "We study the evolving properties of ferroelectrics," materials that exhibit spontaneous polarization, even without an electronic field present, Lynch says. "When these materials are coupled with other mechanisms, such as mechanical stress or electric fields, and align through polarization, it allows us to use them in new ways, like powering a computer, for example."

Lynch was able to take a further step with her research in 2020, when she received an REU (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) award from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to spend the summer conducting computation biophysics research with Lehigh University.

She was awarded a second REU to spend this summer researching at the University of Notre Dame. "We will be studying the bridge between condensed matter and biophysics, and applying quantum physics to evolutionary biology, and vice versa," she says. In addition, Lynch will continue her work with Lehigh; the team is collaborating with researchers at Kyoto University in Japan to further their work.

Also a junior, Mercier, from Irvine, California, is a dual major in microbiology and pure mathematics with a minor in Russian. He finished his high school career by completing an associate degree in mathematics through dual enrollment at St. Petersburg College. At the time, he was debating between enrolling at USF or MIT, but scholarships and a discussion with USF's Office of National Scholarships (ONS) helped him decide. "I met with Dr. (Sayandeb) Basu, director of ONS, before I even started here as a student," Mercier says. "Seeing his and his staff's dedication to student success was the tipping point that helped me decide to enroll here."

As soon as Mercier started on campus, Basu connected him with USF assistant professor and integrative biologist Andrew Kramer. "I've worked on two projects with



USF's 2021 Goldwater Scholars Alexander Mercier during a study abroad experience at Peterhof Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia, and Kelli Ann Lynch on USF's Tampa campus.

Dr. Kramer,” Mercier says. “The first was to create a network model of disease spread in the contiguous United States. The second uses something called network sparsification to quickly identify the most important relationships in a network, using mathematics. The implications of this are vast and can allow us to run more disease simulations in a shorter time, as well as identify important relationships for disease spread, so we can take the best actions to stop it.”

While researching network sparsification, Mercier realized that while other studies had been done on the topic, there was no standard method of evaluation. He was awarded a 2020 Research Experiences for Undergraduates grant to the Santa Fe Institute to try to rectify that by working with well-known network scientist Christopher Moore. “Public health officials could make policy decisions based on network sparsifiers, and it is important to have a set method for testing them,” Mercier says. “Dr. Moore and I created a new network metric to do just that, called epidemic edge importance.” The two have a paper about this work set for publication this summer (along with a colleague), and Mercier is listed as first author.

Both Lynch and Mercier worked with ONS and with Basu on their research goals and Goldwater applications. Lynch had previously worked with ONS on her successful Gilman Scholarship application — a study abroad award for Pell Grant recipients — and she was then encouraged by ONS to apply for the Goldwater award. “Dr. Basu helped me define who I am as a scientist and create a network with other researchers,” Lynch says. “The best part about this process, even better than winning the award, was finding out who I want to be as a physicist.”

Both awardees plan to pursue their doctorates and serve as university professors and researchers. Inspired by the mentorship she received at USF, Lynch plans to pay it forward to help diversify her field. “I want to serve as a mentor and help provide a platform for under-represented groups in STEM to be able to perform research at a university level,” she says.

Mercier, who witnessed a family member's Lyme disease misdiagnosis due to misconceptions about the



disease at the time, hopes that his work can help prevent such misdiagnoses in the future. “That experience spurred me to enter the study of disease-spread. I am particularly focused on better understanding the mathematical tools used to create medical knowledge so that we can use them in a responsible manner,” he says.

The two award recipients bring USF's Goldwater Scholarship tally to 15. Previous scholars have gone on to earn other nationally competitive awards and study at internationally prominent institutions as they work on research projects.

The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Program was established by Congress in 1986 to honor Sen. Barry M. Goldwater, who served for 56 years as a soldier and statesman, including 30 years of service in the U.S. Senate. The purpose of the National Science Foundation is to provide a continuing source of highly qualified scientists, mathematicians and engineers by awarding scholarships to college students who intend to pursue careers in these fields.

- AMY HARROUN '05 | Judy Genshaft Honors College



From left, Angie Sklenka, chief USF Human Resources officer, Tom Woolf, host, and Donna Petersen, COPH dean, record the first episode in WUSF's studio.

## TUNE IN TO USF

### New podcast highlights faculty, staff expertise, university events and initiatives

USF HAS LAUNCHED a new streaming program designed to keep the USF community informed and connect listeners to the people behind some of the university's greatest endeavors. "Inside USF: The Podcast" debuted in May and new episodes are available every other Friday.

"Inside USF: The Podcast" is hosted by Tom Woolf, a member of the University Communications and Marketing team and co-editor of USF Magazine.

Woolf joined USF in 2017 and brings with him 20 years of experience in higher education, most recently serving as associate director of university communications at Southern Illinois University, located in Carbondale, Illinois. He previously worked as a newspaper editor and reporter and earned his journalism degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"I've always believed that internal communication is a vital part of what we do," Woolf says. "Everyone is busy with

their own responsibilities, and faculty and staff may not have the time to learn what a colleague down the hall is working on, much less colleagues across our three campuses. We are providing faculty, staff and alumni with an easy way to get acquainted with some of the thousands of employees who share a focus on our students and the communities we serve."

The podcast will cover a range of subjects, including intimate interviews with the people behind fascinating research projects, upcoming events and institutional news, such as the approaching 25th anniversary of USF football. "Inside USF: The Podcast" is available on MyUSF and platforms such as, iTunes, Spotify, Google Play and Stitcher.

- TINA MEKETA | USF News

## 2021 RANKINGS

### USF recognized by Times Higher Education for global impact

USF HAS BEEN NAMED one of the world's top institutions in addressing society's greatest challenges. Times Higher Education (THE) ranks USF No. 3 in the United States and No. 30 in the world in its 2021 Impact Rankings. The ranking is based on the university's efforts toward meeting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which were established to forge global partnerships between various sectors, pooling resources and sharing expertise, while collectively working toward a more sustainable, peaceful and prosperous future.

USF has excelled in several key areas: developing innovative solutions to ending poverty, providing clean water and sanitation, addressing emerging global health issues, protecting and enhancing marine ecosystems, creating technologies that strengthen the world's infrastructures and industries and establishing new efforts to reduce inequalities.

"The University of South Florida's mission as a global urban research university reflects our deep commitment to addressing the greatest challenges facing communities here in the Tampa Bay region and around the world through impactful research and a dedication to student access for success," USF President Steven Currall says. "We're proud to join the world's top universities in the development and application of innovative and interdisciplinary research focused on sustainable development. Together we can help ensure a better and more sustainable future in our own communities and around the world."

Within Times Higher Education's overall 2021 Impact Rankings, universities are also ranked in each of the United Nations' 17 individual goals. Of the 17, USF ranks in the top 20 in the United States in all of them, including No. 1 in the U.S. and No. 2 in the world for its ongoing efforts to eliminate poverty.

- TINA MEKETA | USF News



## PUBLIC HEALTH

# Buzz kill: Public health professor uses drone technology, spatial mapping to identify mosquito habitats

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY IS PRIME real estate for mosquitoes. It has coastal salt marshes, freshwater floodwaters and urbanized areas full of discarded buckets, bottles and other water-collecting waste items.

These are the places mosquitoes like to breed and lay their eggs.

Overall, the county is home to some 40 different species of mosquitoes, many of which carry serious diseases like yellow fever, Zika virus and dengue. According to Ron Montgomery, director of Hillsborough County Mosquito Services, the county spends about \$5 million a year combating mosquitoes. In 2018, his office conducted mosquito larvae remediation on 21,080 acres and adult mosquito remediation on more than 1 million acres.

That's a lot of ground to cover. So when Montgomery learned of research being conducted by USF College of Public Health Assistant Professor Ben Jacob, using drones and satellite mapping to identify mosquito habitats, he was all ears.

### The technology

Jacob is an expert in spatial modeling, an analytical process that uses geographic information systems (GIS) to simulate real-world, real-time conditions. He partnered with the Hillsborough County mosquito abatement team to identify mosquito habitats in the area's discarded rubber tires, which collect rainwater and become prime breeding sites.

After locating a nearby tire containing mosquito larvae, Jacob flew a drone over it, capturing its spectral signature — the reflective energy and wavelengths that radiate off the tire — on a cell phone. Using that information along with satellite data, he created a spatial map, showing where there are apt to be other mosquito eggs resting in abandoned tires.

"We were able to get out to these exact coordinates mapped out with the drones and GIS," Montgomery says. "And every one of these locations had at least one tire. In many cases, there were several hundred. The accuracy was very impressive."

### A boon to ground troops

"We identified over 2,000 mosquito habitats in these waste tires," adds Jacob, who has used similar technology to combat mosquitoes in Manatee County and disease-causing vectors in Africa. "And I never actually left my office to find them. It was all done with automation. Can you imagine how long it would have taken to find 2,000-plus habitats with ground troops? Weeks."

It's this kind of efficiency that appealed to Mark Latham, former director of Manatee County Mosquito Control, when he teamed up with Jacob last year to help rid Manatee of nuisance mosquitoes.

"We like to think we're pretty good at identifying (larval) sites," Latham says, noting that some of the inspectors have 20-plus years of experience finding mosquito-breeding areas in the county's marshes. "But things change. You get changing water levels, changing sea levels, everything. So you have to look (for these habitats) further afield. And some areas are just too vast ... to get a good idea of what's going

on with just one or two inspectors. So some other system that can do it quicker, if it can be proven, will be a great advantage to us."

### Precision targeting

One of the exciting advantages drone technology provides over truck-mounted or aerial pesticide spraying is its ability to deliver insecticide directly onto habitats. Such precision is important, Jacob says, as overuse of insecticides can cause resistance, and application from high altitudes can be affected by wind and drift.

"We're flying the drone about a foot over the habitat," Jacob says. "It's a bullseye every time. And we can use less insecticide, which is better for the environment and reduces the risk of the mosquitoes building up a tolerance to it."

For right now, however, Hillsborough is sticking with using the drone technology to identify — not necessarily remediate — mosquito habitats.

"If we can fly the drone over 1,000 acres of salt marsh and analyze that and determine that there's really only 40 percent of the area that's likely to produce mosquito larvae, then we can perform a much more efficient and effective application of pesticides," Montgomery explains.

### There's an app for that

What's the next high-tech step in combating nuisance mosquitoes?

For Jacob, it's the development of an app mosquito-control personnel can use to find larval habitats.

"I can synthesize all these algorithms and network systems into the app, so personnel from the abatement teams can use it, no PhD required," Jacob says. "This technology can help us create a real-time larval control system that can be deployed within minutes. This is so much more time- and cost-effective. Using technology to advance epidemiological intelligence — and public health in general — is simply a no-brainer."

- DONNA CAMPISANO | College of Public Health





Photo: DAVID SHEDDEN

The research team met at the Oaklawn Cemetery complex near Tropicana Field to kick off the project in early November.

## HONORING THEIR MEMORY

### Anti-racism initiative seeks to recover history of Black burial grounds

IN TAMPA BAY AND ACROSS THE NATION, a number of African American burial grounds and cemeteries have been lost to history, neglected, abandoned, even paved over and developed. A research project funded by a USF anti-racism initiative is seeking to recover and reimagine the forgotten history of these sacred places.

Consisting of faculty, staff, graduate students and community partners from fields such as anthropology, business, English and the arts, the African American Burial Grounds & Remembering Project seeks to identify and preserve these cemeteries in Tampa Bay. They are doing so by conducting interviews with people associated with such cemeteries through churches, funeral homes and family connections to record oral histories; examining church records and historical archives to identify individuals buried; and starting community conversations on how to best remember this traumatic history today.

“Working with communities and finding out about their heritage, I often find myself in cemeteries,” says Antoinette Jackson, professor and chair of the USF Department of Anthropology and principal investigator of the project. “Churches and where people are buried give you a feel for what that community is about. With this project, we hope to bring in the living community to learn about the people, families and hometown histories associated with these cemeteries and the surrounding community to better understand the heritage of place.”

The project's focus is initially centering on Zion Cemetery, one of the first African American cemeteries in Tampa Bay, located beneath roads, warehouses and a public housing complex just north of downtown Tampa, and St. Petersburg's Oaklawn Cemetery complex, which consists of three cemeteries under parking lots at Tropicana Field. Based on research gathered, the team will produce the first digital story map focused on these local African American cemeteries that combine oral histories, photographs, videos and archival information.

“The Black Lives Matter movement created greater awareness about stories that are usually overlooked that we need to be telling,” says Julie Armstrong, a co-principal investigator on the project and an English professor at USF's St. Petersburg campus. “Black lives matter when they are

alive and also when they are dead, and recalling those who came before is important.”

Phase two of the project will actively engage the community on how these sites should be remembered and what they would like to see in these spaces, from historical markers to local history programs. An aspect of this work includes partnering with performance artists who will help tell the story of these burial grounds and the community of people who inhabited these places through art, poetry and photography to engage the public emotionally.

With additional funding and partnerships, phase three of the project will expand the focus to other lost cemeteries throughout the Tampa Bay region.

“An alliance has already formed of those working on cemetery sites in the region and, sadly, we are finding that there is no shortage of potential lost cemeteries,” Jackson says.

Historically segregated, African American burial grounds from Tampa Bay to New York City to Tulsa were cemented over throughout the 20th century in the name of urban development. Others fell into disrepair as they didn’t receive the same resources as other burial grounds or were forgotten as cities grew around them and local communities were displaced.

“This was a social injustice that took place in our

country,” says Kathy Arthur, a co-principal investigator on the project and an anthropology professor at USF’s St. Petersburg campus. “By listening to those who have been impacted, by creating oral histories, we can bring some healing to this injustice and create spaces that draw people together for remembrance.”

Though some individuals and local organizations across the country have worked to identify lost burial sites, there has been a greater groundswell of support to document and preserve such places in recent years due to the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and introduction of the African-American Burial Grounds Network Act in the U.S. House in 2018.



**Churches and where people are buried give you a feel for what that community is about. With this project, we hope to bring in the living community to learn about the people, families and hometown histories associated with these cemeteries and the surrounding community to better understand the heritage of place.”**

– Antoinette Jackson

Adding to the urgency is that both the historical Zion and Oaklawn cemetery sites, now Robles Park Village in Tampa and Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, could undergo rapid redevelopment, according to city plans. Research team members hope findings from the project will influence city planning activities and development discussions.

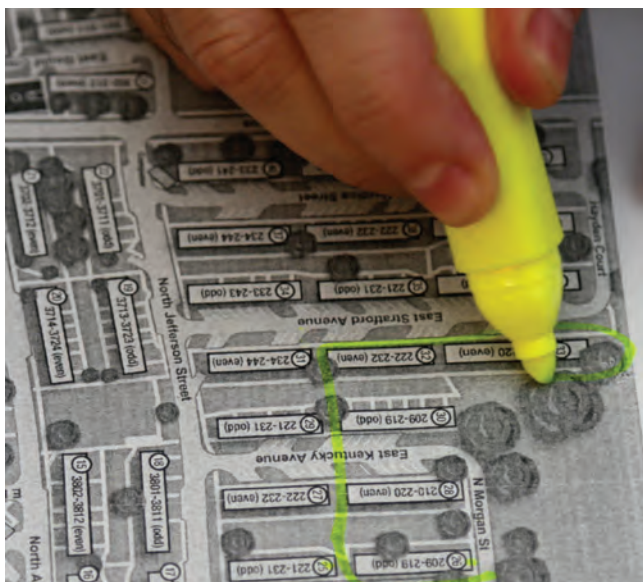
“I want people to know that there was a there there,” Armstrong says. “There were communities of individuals, businesses, churches and a cemetery. There was something here and it is part of our shared history.”

Partners in the project include Robles Park Village and Robles Park Tenant Council Association; Hillsborough County Branch of the NAACP; Carter G. Woodson African American Museum; Florida Public Archaeology Network; Cardno; and Diamond View Studios.

Funding for the project came from the USF Research Task Force on Understanding and Addressing Blackness and Anti-Black Racism in our Local, National and International Communities. The group funded 23 projects that explore a wide range of issues in systemic inequality, economic and health disparities, Black history and contemporary challenges in order to create deeper understanding of complex issues while forging solutions and productive community partnerships.

Learn more about this project and keep up to date on progress and findings by visiting the USF Heritage Research Lab at <https://heritagelab.org>.

– MATTHEW CIMITILE | USF St. Petersburg campus





Dr. Amanda Smith is director of clinical research at the USF Health Byrd Alzheimer's Center.

Right: In this illustration of Alzheimer's disease pathology, accumulated tau protein, in red-orange, leads to damage in a neuron axon carrying nerve impulses.

## USF HEALTH

### Study casts doubt on notion of 'typical' Alzheimer's symptoms

THE USF HEALTH BYRD ALZHEIMER'S CENTER contributed to a new international study in *Nature Medicine* suggesting there is reason to reevaluate the concept of "typical" Alzheimer's disease. The study examined the largest and most diverse population in the world to date using tau-positron emission tomography scans (tau-PET scans), an advanced neuroimaging technique.

Dr. Amanda Smith, professor of psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences and clinical research director at the Byrd Alzheimer's Center, was among the Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI) coauthors for the *Nature Medicine* paper. As one of more than 60 ADNI sites across the U.S. and Canada, the Byrd Alzheimer's Center shares PET and MRI images, cognitive tests, blood biomarkers and other research data used by scientists worldwide to improve the understanding of Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease is characterized by toxic accumulation of the protein tau, as well as abnormal amyloid protein deposits, leading to the death of nerve cells in the brain.

The recent study, led by researchers from McGill University and Lund University, delineates four distinct

patterns of tau pathology in Alzheimer's disease — each distinguished by where in the brain toxic tau deposits originate and spread. The researchers showed that over time each pattern of tau accumulation correlates to different clusters of symptoms with different prognoses for the affected individuals.

For the past 30 years, many researchers have described the development of tau pathology in Alzheimer's using a single model, despite recurring cases that do not fit that model.

The current findings help explain why different patients may develop different symptoms, Smith says.

"In the clinic where we assess hundreds of patients with Alzheimer's disease, we know that not everyone presents with the same symptoms. Many people present with typical short-term memory loss. Some can remember but exhibit very prominent language problems. Others may have visual difficulties that cause them to not see, or to misinterpret, what is front of them," she says. "Although advanced Alzheimer's tends to look the same, individuals don't necessarily fit neatly into one category (of symptoms) earlier in the disease process."

The recent tau-PET scan findings have implications for how disease progression is staged, and ultimately may help with the discovery of individualized treatments.

Byrd neuroscientists are working to develop both anti-amyloid and anti-tau antibodies — drugs to stop or

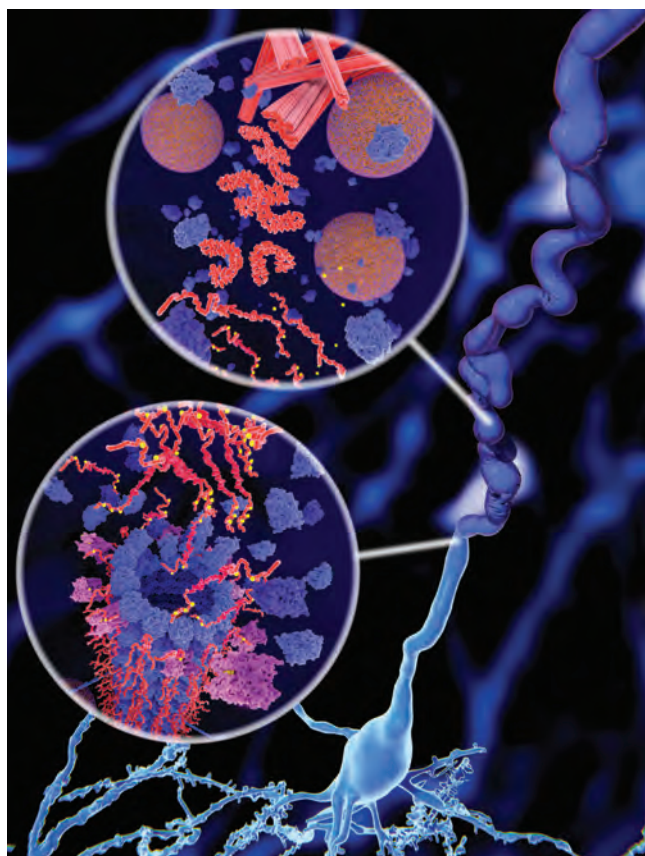


delay Alzheimer's disease, which yet has no disease-modifying therapies. In addition to more precisely detecting the early presence of disease and monitoring its progression, the latest neuroimaging techniques help researchers see whether their investigational drugs can remove the damaging Alzheimer's-associated proteins from the brain.

"The increasing degree of specificity provided by neuroimaging studies may advance our ability to accurately target treatments for individuals with abnormal tau in the brain — and that's not just limited to Alzheimer's disease," Smith says. "While amyloid is unique to Alzheimer's, toxic tau is found in other cognitive disorders, including certain frontotemporal dementias and chronic traumatic encephalopathy," linked to repeated head trauma, including concussions in athletes.

Smith leads clinical trials at the USF Health Byrd Alzheimer's Center that involve brain imaging of a wide range of older adults — from study participants with no symptoms or very minor memory difficulties, to those diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment or various stages of Alzheimer's dementia.

- ANNE DELOTTO BAIER '78 | USF Health



## CYBERSECURITY

# New major provides students with pathway to high-paying careers

USF IS OFFERING A NEW MAJOR that provides students a pathway to high-paying careers in cybersecurity.

The Information Assurance and Cybersecurity Management (IACM) program, which is hosted at the Sarasota-Manatee campus, is a unique major in the Muma College of Business that combines core courses in business with information assurance, cybersecurity management and analytics.

Students in the major obtain valuable in-depth skills to work at an array of companies and large corporations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies and institutions.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, information security analysts earn a median salary of \$99,730 per year, and the number of jobs is expected to grow 31 percent from 2019 to 2029, far outpacing most other professions.

"Many organizations' cybersecurity teams continue to struggle with a cyber communication disconnect between senior management and technical cybersecurity personnel," says Information Technology Professor Giti Javidi, MSCS '96 and PhD '05, who oversees the major. "The IACM degree originated with the notion that organizations need cybersecurity experts who have technical and non-technical skills to bridge this gap in communication. The degree assumes that cybersecurity management is a business function. Therefore, graduates with an IACM degree will gain vast knowledge and skills in both business and cybersecurity to be the front line of support for governments and organizations. They will gain familiarity with the various metrics to convert a threat into an estimated loss and thus speak the senior management language."

The IACM major debuted in the fall. Course topics include cybersecurity analytics, cybersecurity threat intelligence, database management, risk management, cloud solution architectures and cybersecurity governance and policies, among others.

Javidi says that demand is high for cybersecurity practitioners who not only possess technical abilities but also the business expertise to:

- apply security expertise across a wide variety of business enterprises
- operate under pressure with a strong ethical backbone
- understand business processes and the impact of compromised assets
- communicate and implement risk-based approaches to security
- apply analytics to cybersecurity to generate actionable intelligence to improve security and privacy in organizations

Although the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus hosts the IACM major, the program is available to USF students at any campus.

Students enrolled in the program gain skills in the business management of cybersecurity, including risk management; incident business response; the use of analytics to detect, isolate, and prevent cybersecurity attacks; and overall management of cybersecurity functions within companies.

Graduates of the program can pursue opportunities as cybersecurity auditors, information assurance compliance specialists, cybersecurity consultants, cybersecurity incident response analysts, cybersecurity specialists, cyber intelligence analysts, cybersecurity operations analysts, cybersecurity planning SME and other related positions.

- RICH SHOPES | USF Sarasota-Manatee campus

# Athletics



No. 1 seed USF won its fourth straight American Athletic Conference Women's Soccer Championship and second straight conference tournament title, capturing the 2020 AAC Tournament with a 4-0 win over Cincinnati Saturday, April 17, at Corbett Soccer Stadium in Tampa, Fla.

## CHAMPIONS

### Bulls have banner spring, claim four conference titles

USF ATHLETICS INCREASED its conference championship total to 23 in the American Athletic Conference since joining in 2013 and to 127 overall in department history as the women's basketball, women's soccer, men's golf and baseball programs all won conference championships in the spring. The four teams to claim titles equaled the Bulls' best season in the AAC, also winning four in 2016-17.

For head coach Jose Fernandez's women's basketball team, it marked the first conference championship in program history as the Bulls won both the regular season and conference tournament championships, defeating arch rival UCF to clinch both titles, and earned the program's

seventh NCAA Tournament bid under Fernandez.

Fernandez was named the AAC Coach of the Year and a finalist for the WBCA National Coach of the Year award, while five Bulls players earned all-conference honors, including first team selections for forward Bethy Mununga and guard Elena Tsineke. The Bulls posted a 19-4 record on the year and finished ranked No. 19 in the final Associated Press poll after reaching as high as the No. 12 ranking during the year, the highest in program history. Tampa Mayor Jane Castor declared April 8 as USF Women's Basketball Team Day and presented the team with a proclamation in the courtyard outside Old City Hall.

Meanwhile the women's soccer and men's golf programs continued their American Athletic Conference dominance.

Head coach Denise Schilte-Brown led her women's soccer team to both the conference regular season and tournament titles, marking the fourth straight season they



have won a conference title. The Bulls advanced to the second round in their seventh NCAA Tournament appearance and collected numerous post-season awards, including Sydney Martinez being named the AAC Goalie of the Year and Sydney Nasello earning AAC Offensive Player of the Year and both earning All-America honors. Additionally, Chyanne Dennis was named AAC Defensive Player of the Year and the Bulls' coaches earned the AAC Coaching Staff of the Year award.

Steve Bradley's men's golf team continued similar dominance as they won their fifth conference title in the last six seasons after shooting a conference tournament record 18 under par in the opening round at Southern Hills Plantation just north of Tampa. Sophomore Albin Bergstrom carded a final round 66, including holing out a 50-foot putt for birdie on 18, to become the fourth Bull to claim an AAC individual championship. Bradley, who was named AAC Coach of the Year for the fifth time, led the

Bulls to their eighth-straight NCAA Regional appearance.

Billy Mohl's baseball team, picked to finish last in the preseason coaches poll, shocked everyone by advancing to the AAC title game for the first time in program history, where the Bulls defeated arch rival UCF, 8-7, to claim the program's first conference championship since 1995 (Metro). USF knocked off No. 3 seed Wichita State, No. 2 seed Tulane and No. 5 seed UCF to earn its 14th NCAA Regional appearance in program history and the fourth in the last six seasons. Five Bulls were named to the All-Tournament Team, including freshman pitcher Jack Jasiak, who set a tournament record with 12 strikeouts in a 5-0 win over Tulane, and freshman Daniel Cantu, who was named the Tournament Most Outstanding Player. The Bulls took the momentum to the NCAA Gainesville Regional and knocked off No. 1 seed Florida, No. 2 Miami and South Alabama (6-4 in the final game) to advance to the program's first-ever NCAA Super Regional.

**Billy Mohl's baseball team advanced to the AAC title game for the first time in program history and claimed the program's first conference title since 1995. Above, Mohl holds the trophy as the team celebrates after their 8-7 championship game victory over arch rival UCF.**

- by BRIAN SIEGRIST  
USF Athletics

# Athletics



All-American Georgina Corrick and the USF softball team recorded a 5-0, no-hit victory over ECU to earn head coach Ken Eriksen's 1,000th career win April 30 at the USF Softball Stadium.

## SOFTBALL

### Softball coach hits 1,000 wins with no-hitter

JUNIOR PITCHER GEORGINA CORRICK came within a hair of recording just the fourth perfect game in program history as the USF softball team recorded a 5-0, no-hit victory over ECU on April 30 at the USF Softball Stadium to earn head coach Ken Eriksen's 1,000th career win.

"I knew that this was a really important day for him (Coach Eriksen) and a really important moment, and I

think maybe physically I needed to take on a little bit more of that because he means so much to me," Corrick says. "The fact that we were able to align the stars like this is incredible and it means everything to me, and I hope it means everything to him that we were able to have this moment together."

Corrick, an All-American who claimed her third straight AAC Pitcher of the Year honor later in May, allowed just two base runners, via a walk and hit by pitch, in recording her second no-hitter on season.

The dominant pitching display ended in a cooler shower for Eriksen, '84, who became just the 28th NCAA Division-I coach to reach 1,000 wins and just the second to do it entirely in the state of Florida.

"It's been fun to come in here (USF) as a freshman in 1979 and to now see my coaches that were here back then be here to celebrate today," says Eriksen, who starred for the Bulls baseball team as an undergraduate. "You take a look back and sometimes you will reflect on 'Boy, I've come a long way' and 'How did I get here' and there are a lot of people that have that really impactful time and era in my life to make that happen.

"We've graduated every single one of our players, and that is the craziest thing to think about. That's one of those statistics, at an academic school, that people don't realize and then where we have been with grade-point averages, way above the mean and top 10 percent of our sport. Where are kids in the professional field? That's the life that they have gotten and this (the game) is just part of that. Our alumni events are packed, which means it's been a good experience for them. That's what you're trying to do."

To make the milestone weekend even crazier, Corrick returned to the mound the following day and posted her fifth career shutout in a 1-0 victory over the Pirates.

## DATES to KNOW

### July 7

– USF Football Single Game Tickets on Sale

### Aug. 18

– USF Football Luncheon (JW Marriott)

### Sept. 11

– USF Football Home Opener vs. UF

## FOOTBALL

### Scott optimistic about season after strong spring game

ENTERING THEIR SECOND SEASON UNDER head coach Jeff Scott, the Bulls football team had a strong spring that culminated in an exciting Spring Game at Raymond James Stadium, which saw 52 combined points and 858 yards of offense (626 through the air) as the Green Team posted a 31-21 victory over the White.

The fireworks started from the outset as sophomore quarterback Cade Fortin connected with sophomore wide receiver Xavier Weaver for a 50-yard bomb on the opening play and finished off a 75-yard touchdown drive with a strike to Weaver in the back of the end zone.

"We had a great atmosphere today," Scott said following the Spring Game. "I just stood out there during a lot of the game thinking 'Man, this has the potential to be a really special place'."

Having enjoyed their first spring practice session under Scott, who saw last spring's practices cancelled after one day on the field due to COVID-19, the Bulls are excited to return nine starters on offense and 10 on defense for year two under Scott. They've added a strong recruiting class that includes several high Division I transfers who look to have an immediate impact this fall.

"We are in a lot better place right now than we were a year ago because of the way our guys have responded in practice," Scott says. "We have a chance to be a lot stronger."

They are also excited for the return of a full complement of Bulls fans in Raymond James Stadium this fall as USF plans to sell tickets to the 65,857-

## LEADERSHIP

# Kelly to begin four-year term on NCAA Division I Council

VICE PRESIDENT OF ATHLETICS MICHAEL KELLY, who will enter his fourth year leading USF Athletics in the 2021-22 season, will begin a four-year term on the prestigious NCAA Division I Council on July 1.

Kelly will be among 40 members of the council – including a representative from each of the 32 Division I conferences, four commissioners, two student-athletes and two faculty athletics representatives – appointed to serve by the NCAA Division I Board of Directors.

“I am honored to represent USF and The American in serving on the Division I Council and to have the opportunity to help steward the governance of the NCAA and the experience of student-athletes across the nation,” Kelly says. “I look forward to serving with my colleagues and sharing their commitment and dedication to the athletic and academic success of NCAA student-athletes.”

The Division I Council is a high-level group responsible for the day-to-day decision-making for Division I. The representatives serving on the council from the 32 conferences are composed of athletics administrators (such as athletics directors, senior woman administrators, conference administrators, compliance administrators and other senior level administrators) and faculty athletics representatives.

There are eight standing committees that report to the council on major issues concerning NCAA governance, including committees on student-athlete experience, strategic vision and planning, legislation, competition oversight, football, men’s basketball, women’s basketball and the Division I Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAC).



Photo: USF Athletics

Vice President of Athletics Michael Kelly

As part of Kelly’s responsibilities on the NCAA Division I Council, he has been appointed to serve as a member of the NCAA Division I Competition Oversight Committee, which has oversight responsibility of regular season and championships administration in all sports other than football and men’s and women’s basketball, including supervision of qualification and/or selection procedures for Division I and National Collegiate Championships.

The council members meet regularly and issue monthly reports and recommended legislative actions for the NCAA on the major issues of the day, including name, image and likeness legislation, diversity and equity, transfer rules, compliance infractions and enforcement, eligibility, championship qualification and conduct, competition seasons, recruiting and much more.

Kelly was named the chair of the American Athletic Conference’s Athletic Directors Executive Committee in June 2020 and also serves as USF’s representative on the conference’s Racial Equality Action Group. He also serves on the President’s Board of Advisors for St. Thomas University (Miami Gardens, Florida) and the Board of Trustees for St. John’s College High School (Washington, D.C.) — two of Kelly’s alma maters.

- Stories by BRIAN SIEGRIST USF Athletics

seat stadium’s full capacity for six home games, including a much-anticipated home opener vs. the Florida Gators on Sept. 11.

The Gators, who reached the SEC Championship game and finished No. 13 in the final AP Poll in 2020, will be making their first trip to Ray Jay to play the Bulls.

USF will play five Saturday home games and one Friday primetime matchup — vs. defending American Athletic Conference champion Cincinnati — at home in 2021.

USF saw a record 93 percent of season ticket members renew tickets in the spring and new season tickets are available starting at \$150. Single game tickets are on sale starting July 7 and will once again be dynamically priced based on demand. Tickets can be purchased online at USFBullsTix.com or by calling/texting 1-800-GoBulls.

SEASON PRESENTED BY TGH Tampa General Hospital

SOUTH FLORIDA FOOTBALL

# 2021 TICKETS

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# Planned Gifts make an **IMPACT**

By KILEY MALLARD

**T**HEY ARE YOUNG AND OLD. Some are alumni and others are not. They have different backgrounds and have traveled a variety of career paths. But each, for their own reasons, has chosen to make a gift to USF through their estate.

For nonprofits, nearly 10 percent of all philanthropic gifts come from bequests. For donors, creating an estate plan allows you to express how you would like your assets to be distributed to family and friends as well as the charitable organizations you care about, including USF.

The most common type of bequest is making a gift, either a flat amount or a percentage of your estate, in your will or revocable trust. Blended gifts, where donors make part of the gift during their lifetime, allow you to witness firsthand the impact of your philanthropy while ensuring continuity for the future.

Over the years, Brad, '75 and MBA '76, and Terry Holcombe, '74 and MA '76, have given generously to the Judy Genshaft Honors College, establishing the Holcombe Scholars Fund to provide need-based financial and other support to undergraduate students who qualify as first-generation students. The fund has already supported 56 students, and the Holcombes have enjoyed meeting their scholars and watching them succeed.

Wanting the program to continue, the Holcombes have designated USF as beneficiary of an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) that will provide funding for the Holcombe Scholars well into the future. What's more, IRA gifts made to a qualified charity are not subject to federal income tax, therefore more funds are available for the charity to use.

Creating an estate plan takes more than one conversation. USF Foundation team members spend time with potential donors to learn about their passion and the impact they'd like to have on the university. Donors also work with professional advisers, such as a financial planner or attorney when planning their gift.

For Suzanne Ward, '86, Life Member, USF football is "her pride and joy." Ward travels from her home in Portland, Oregon, to cheer on the Bulls at every football game, home and away. Over the years, she has given generously of her financial resources to the College of Arts and Sciences as well as USF Athletics.

Ward has included a generous bequest in her will to USF Athletics in support of the Football Center, Football Scholarship Fund and Touchdown Club, helping to ensure the team will have the best resources long into the future. Her gift will also support the College of Arts and Sciences.

If you've chosen to include the university in your estate plan, be sure you document it with the Foundation. Those who have a documented estate gift with the university become part of the USF President's Council Legacy Society and have the opportunity to attend special events, become more involved with the university and witness firsthand how they are changing student lives at USF.

Not only can the university provide sample bequest language, which documents the gift amount, but Foundation team members can work with you to document the intention for the gift. Should your intentions change, the gift agreement can be updated easily.

The university might also be able to suggest giving vehicles you had not considered. For instance, making the university a beneficiary of your retirement account.

David O. Connelly worked with the USF Foundation to create an estate gift, including an IRA and other saving accounts, to establish the David Connelly and Joe P. Pérez First Generation Scholarship that will offer scholarships to first-generation students at the USF St. Petersburg campus.

The scholarships will be named for Connelly and his late partner of 32 years, Joe P. Pérez, who served as the office manager of the Academic Advising Center for many years and won the Outstanding Staff Award several times during his tenure.

Connelly has been so inspired by the students of USF that he chose to teach as an adjunct professor in humanities at the St. Petersburg campus for the last three years.

Naming the university as primary or secondary beneficiary of a life insurance policy is another way to include the university in your estate plan.

April (Monteith) Grajales, '01 and MBA '03, Life Member, bought a life insurance policy for this very purpose, designating USF as her beneficiary. A former USF student Ambassador, Grajales served on the USF Alumni Association board from 2014 to 2019, including as chair, and is now a member of the USF Foundation board.

"You're alumni for a lot longer period than you're students," she says. "And the Alumni Association plays such a critical role in helping alumni connect with the university."

The gift will establish the April Rose Monteith Endowment and provide support for the USF Alumni Association.

Certain types of gifts can even provide you income during your lifetime, such as the charitable gift annuity (CGA).

Roy Jewell, '77 and MA '80, Life Member, started a CGA for the Emery H. and Barbara B. Jewell Faculty Excellence Award Fund and the Roy Emery Jewell Endow-

# Philanthropy



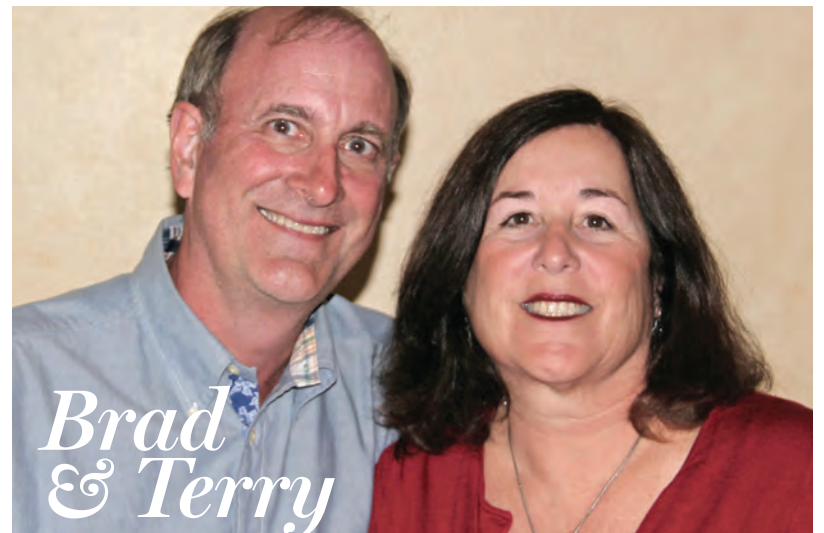
*April*



*Roy*



*Suzanne*



*Brad & Terry*

ment. A CGA is a great way to create an additional stream of income while also fulfilling your philanthropic goals. The principal is invested and you receive regular annuity payments. After your lifetime, the remainder of the gift is used for the purpose you outline in your agreement.

For Jewell, it was important to provide further support for two endowed funds he'd previously set up. The Jewell Faculty Excellence Award recognizes annually those physics faculty members who are truly outstanding in the areas of research and teaching with a summer fellowship award, while the Jewell Endowment supports the USF Alumni Association.

Estate planning is not just for end of life. Perhaps you are selling a business, real estate or stock and want to use some of the proceeds to make a philanthropic gift.

Scott Uhler has focused his education and career on improving the children's residential mental health system.

While he is relatively young, Uhler is in the early stages of estate planning.

Though he had no previous connection to USF, he wanted to support research and operations in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, Department of Child and Family Studies to address and protect children from abuse, neglect and undue iatrogenic harm by residential programs and help ensure families have safe and effective community-based care.

Working with the USF Gift Planning team, Uhler made a gift of appreciated stock to establish the Appropriate Care and Treatment Initiative Fund.

If you have provided for USF in your estate plans, please let us know. Every gift makes an impact. With creativity, anyone can make a planned gift to meet their financial and philanthropic goals.

For more information, visit [usfgiving.org](http://usfgiving.org).

# Grateful giving

**I**N THE MARTIN HOUSEHOLD, GRATITUDE and giving go hand in hand. Steadfast donors to USF, Dean and Barbara Martin instilled these lessons in their children early and practiced them often.

“Each night at dinner, we had our kids stand and share the nicest thing that happened to them that day,” says Dean Martin, Life Member, an emeritus faculty member in the USF chemistry department. “Even if nothing special happened that day, Barbara would remind us there was always something to be thankful for, whether it was your health, your family or your life.”

Married for 64 years before her passing on Feb. 7, Dean and Barbara Martin were devoted life partners in every way.

“I’ll never forget the first time I saw Barbara,” says Dean, who at the time was a second-year trumpet player. “It was September of 1952. She walked into the Grinnell College orchestra holding her violin and wearing her freshman beanie. My life never was the same after that.”

Enamored of the studious beauty, he began courting Barbara and found they had much in common, including a shared major in chemistry. Later, Martin offered her his Langan Hall pin — an older custom, similar to giving a promise ring, that labeled them as “engaged to be engaged.”

After graduation, the couple continued their studies at Pennsylvania State University, where Martin had proposed again, this time with a ring.

“She said ‘yes,’ and we never looked back,” Martin recalls fondly. “Barbara was truly a remarkable woman. My beloved gave me one daughter and five sons, in that order, and we built a wonderful life together.”

In 1964, Martin joined USF as a faculty member and researcher in the chemistry department. A few years later, his wife was granted a courtesy appointment at USF, enabling the couple to work side by side on a “his and hers” laboratory bench as they conducted and published their research for the next 35 years.

Between the two, the Martins penned more than 450 publications, mostly in refereed journals, authored or co-authored six books and served as co-editors of *Florida Scientist* for 26 years. In 1994, Dean and Barbara Martin received the Medalist Award, the Florida Academy of Sciences’ highest honor.

Even as they cultivated gratitude around their dinner table, the Martins forged an impressive legacy through their philanthropy.

The couple’s generosity created new opportunities for students at USF through 10 named endowments and nearly \$650,000 in giving. Although heavily concentrated within the chemistry department, their giving runs the gamut from women’s athletic programs to WUSF Public Media, creating a far-reaching legacy that elevates the entire university.

“We thought the best investment you can make is in students,” Martin says. “They are the joy of our present, the hope of our future, and the heartbeat of the university.”



“Dean and Barbara Martin’s passionate, unwavering support has had a lasting impact on our students, faculty and community,” says Eric Eisenberg, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “They have been generous supporters of the College of Arts and Sciences for more than four decades, with a consistent focus on cutting-edge research and student success. Mrs. Martin is forever in our hearts, and her legacy will continue to shape the future of our great university.”

Looking back at his life with Barbara, Martin feels no regrets — only a deep appreciation for the time shared together and their beautiful family.

On her dresser in the bedroom, his pin lies next to her wedding rings. His ring remains forever on the fourth finger of his left hand, a tangible reminder of their enduring love.

**Barbara and Dean Martin believed the best investment was in students.**

**- Stories by MELISSA WOLFE '13, Life Member | USF Foundation**



**As one of the few women in chemistry, Barbara was a role model we all looked up to. Thanks to the Martins’ generosity, I was able to attend and present my research at my first out-of-state conference. Between presenting my research on a national stage and making professional connections, it was an incredible experience I will never forget.**

**— Elena Bray, doctoral chemistry student  
Martin Travel Award 2019 recipient**



## Giving while living

**A** YEAR AGO, TIM UBBEN had never set foot on a USF campus. The national award-winning volunteer and retired founder of the investment firm Lincoln Capital Management lived seasonally in Naples, Florida, where he was a patient of Yale-trained pulmonologist Dr. Jose D. Herazo-Maya.

Diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis (PF), Ubben wasn't satisfied with the treatments available for patients with his condition. As he began exploring the medical research and clinical trials for PF, he discussed them at length with Herazo-Maya, developing a friendship over their common interest in improving care for patients living with severely scarred lungs.

"Pulmonary fibrosis is not what I would call a chosen disease in the sense it doesn't get popular support or much research funding," Ubben says. "The current therapies are six years old with limited value, and the outcomes of the five stage-three clinical trials are unknown and probably won't produce an FDA-approved product in the near future."

Herazo-Maya enjoyed his conversations with Ubben, who he describes as intellectually curious with an excellent knowledge of medical science. Then, he was approached by USF Health's Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine to serve as its new associate chief of research. The opportunity would allow Herazo-Maya to expand the division's research and for him to start his own studies on idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

Ubben saw Herazo-Maya's move as an opening to make a direct impact on the future of care for PF patients. The philanthropist, who has spent his retirement as a board leader and benefactor of several nonprofit organizations since 1999, said he would help his doctor launch new research on the condition.

Before Herazo-Maya's first day on the job, Ubben had already made a \$1 million gift to USF Health.

"I have been discouraged in the lack of progress in alleviating pulmonary fibrosis in patients — that is why I made the gift," Ubben says. "This funding will support research to better understand and find assistance in the fight against this disease. I probably won't be around to benefit from the results of Dr. Herazo's research, but hopefully other pulmonary fibrosis patients will."

While at Yale, Herazo-Maya served on a team that discovered a gene signature in blood that predicted mortality from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF). Since he joined USF Health in January, he is already putting Ubben's gift to work as he outfits the Ubben Family Pulmonary Research Laboratory in the new USF Health Heart Institute space in downtown Tampa. He is building a research team, including other USF physician scientists, biostatisticians and clinical and basic scientists.

"Certain patients with lung scarring can live well for years while others develop disease exacerbations and die quickly from the disease," Herazo-Maya says. His team is working to develop a blood test based on gene expression that will help identify patients at

risk of severe pulmonary fibrosis before they clinically deteriorate. Since PF is one of the most severe complications of COVID-19, these research outcomes could benefit even more patients.

"We can make a powerful impact when patients and physicians unite to bring big ideas to reality," USF President Steve Currall says. "This generous gift will help the University of South Florida advance innovative testing and treatment of the toughest cases of devastating lung conditions, ultimately saving lives."

USF Health's translational "bench to bedside" approach to medical research should speed the application of discoveries made by physician-scientists, including Herazo-Maya, to help patients.

"We are delighted with this confluence of vision, talent and philanthropy," says Dr. Charles Lockwood, USF Health senior vice president and dean of the Morsani College of Medicine. "The timing of Mr. Ubben's gift is helping us to rapidly launch this important research to fight devastating lung conditions."

For Tim Ubben and his wife, Sharon, the goal is to make their greatest impact on the world while they're here to see it.

"For Sharon and I, we believe in giving while living," Ubben says. "We hope to exhaust our resources for the purpose of bettering mankind in some way by the time we pass away."

Beneath Ubben's serious commitment belies a humble sense of humor. "While it probably won't happen this way, we would love it if the last check we wrote was to an undertaker ... and it bounced."



From left, Sharon and Tim Ubben meet with pulmonologist Dr. Jose D. Herazo-Maya at USF's Tampa campus.





# Focus on NATIONAL SECURITY

Stories by TOM WOOLF | USF News

**T**HE WORLD HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY since the Cold War ended 30 years ago. From the end of World War II until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there was just one primary threat to the United States' national security. As Mohsen Milani, founding executive director of USF's Center for Strategic & Diplomatic Studies and professor of politics, says, "The world was divided into good vs. evil, East vs. West, communism vs. capitalism."

In recent years, multiple nations have developed a variety of capabilities that threaten U.S. national security, including cyberattacks designed to undermine our democracy and cripple infrastructure, the theft of intellectual property and growing nuclear arsenals.

At the same time, USF has been increasing its focus on national security in order to better prepare students for related careers, broaden the community's knowledge and play a role in national policy discussions and debates. Central to the university's efforts has been the formation of partnerships with key organizations and agencies, including the Florida Center for Cyber Security — Cyber Florida — and U.S. Special Operations Command, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa.

# Cyber knows no boundaries

REMEMBER THE MASSIVE DATA BREACH at a major U.S. retailer during the 2013 holiday shopping season? Perhaps you were among the millions whose names, credit and debit card numbers and other sensitive data were compromised.

As far as Mike McConnell is concerned, that was a watershed moment in terms of awareness of cybersecurity.

“That breach compromised the personal data of one-third of the American people,” says McConnell, the executive director of the Florida Center for Cybersecurity — also known as Cyber Florida. “People started to pay attention.”

It is the major incidents — the ones that cause large-scale disruptions — that we hear about. The cyberattack against Colonial Pipeline in May, in which the attackers took control of the company’s computer systems and demanded a multi-million-dollar ransom — which was paid — was just the most recent and high-profile example of the vulnerability of the nation’s infrastructure. In 2020, hackers attacked the SolarWinds Corp., used by many government agencies and large corporations in managing their information technology.

“SolarWinds was significant, but that kind of activity, attacking the supply chain by inserting malware, is a normal technique by nation-states for a variety of purposes,” McConnell says. “More often than not, it’s to get information, but it also gives them the ability to inflict damage through remote control of computer systems.”

Cyber Florida’s staff director, Ron Sanders ’73, Life Member, uses the analogy of the movie “Groundhog Day.”

“That happens every day,” he says. “We only hear about the most dramatic cases. It’s the ones you don’t hear about that are the most worrisome.”

McConnell, Sanders and the Cyber Florida team focus on educating students at all levels and the general public on cyber threats, on helping to create a pipeline for careers in cybersecurity and influencing national policy discussions to help the United States better prepare for, and respond to, cyberattacks.

Created by the Florida Legislature in 2014 to serve the 12 public universities that are part of the State University System of Florida, Cyber Florida is housed at USF. The organization’s efforts continue to evolve in an era of ever-increasing cyber threats.

Both McConnell and Sanders bring extensive experience to their roles with Cyber Florida.

McConnell’s 50-year career has focused on international and foreign intelligence. A retired vice admiral, McConnell served as the director of the National Security Agency under Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton from 1992 to 1996.

In 2007, President George W. Bush appointed McConnell as the second Director of National Intelligence, also serving as a member of the White House National Security Council for two years under Bush and President Barack Obama.

Sanders, who earned a bachelor’s degree in management from USF, has served as deputy director of personnel for the U.S. Air Force, director of civilian personnel for the Defense Department, associate director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and he spent five years as associate director of



national intelligence for the federal government. From 2017 to 2020, he served as director and clinical professor in USF’s School of Public Affairs.

Both men also have held positions with the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton.

A two-day conference in April underscored the seriousness of the cyber threat facing the United States. Meeting virtually, a high-profile group of U.S. military commanders, elected officials and current and former members of the intelligence community offered their insights into the growing threats to U.S. cybersecurity and the need for a multifaceted response.



**We understand what the Russians are doing with elections and breaches such as SolarWinds, and we understand what the Chinese are doing with our intellectual property. And both sides of the political aisle understand that we have to make some important decisions about how to enhance the cyber resilience of our nation.**

— Mike McConnell

“Cybersecurity: The Fifth Domain” was the theme of the Great Powers Competition Conference, hosted jointly by Cyber Florida, USF and the U.S. Department of Defense Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Studies. The conference was the third in the Great Power Competition Conference Series, which was created by USF in partnership with NESA and U.S. Central Command. The semi-annual events provide military and civilian policymakers and thought leaders the opportunity to learn more about various national security challenges posed by rival countries.

“One of the things that we and U.S. Central Command have concluded is that cyber knows no national boundaries, no international boundaries,” Sanders says. “This is everybody’s challenge. It’s important that we are participating in the national cyber debate. The conference was the most visible version of that, but on a daily basis, we are attempting to influence national level policymakers under the auspices of Cyber Florida.”

Adds McConnell: “We understand what the Russians are doing with elections and with breaches such as SolarWinds,

and we understand what the Chinese are doing with our intellectual property. And both sides of the political aisle understand that we have to make some important decisions about how to enhance the cyber resilience of our nation. It is important to make the case that we need to change the rules about how we classify and share information with the public, how we look into the domestic infrastructure for malware. These are hard questions, but this is a debate we have to have.”

McConnell and Sanders emphasize that enhancing cybersecurity awareness needs to start at a young age. Among Cyber Florida’s initiatives is Operation K-12, a joint project with the Florida Center for Instructional Technology at USF to bring cybersecurity education into the state’s K-12 classrooms.

Sanders believes the program has much broader applications.

“What we may build for Florida’s educators and scholars can be repurposed for educators and scholars across the United States and potentially internationally,” he says. “This is a positive sum game. It is estimated that there are half a million cybersecurity job vacancies, but I believe that’s understated. The fun part of being with Cyber Florida is that we can have direct influence on the pipeline, not just graduate and undergraduate degrees, but also in K-12, helping to influence kids as they make college and career choices.”

In addition to the college and career pipeline, Sanders and McConnell also focus on enhancing awareness of cyber threats in our everyday lives. Elections serve as prime examples.

“If you go back to the 2016 presidential election, the 2018 mid-terms, the most recent presidential election, we’ve found that too many of our citizens, particularly younger ones, take the internet for granted and believe everything they read,” Sanders says. “We’ve concluded that kids need to be taught how to be good cyber citizens in 21st century America, that they need to be able to discern what’s misinformation and disinformation. Unless we teach kids to be more discerning, they’ll be too easily influenced, especially by foreign actors.”

The nationwide shortage of people qualified for cybersecurity jobs isn’t just in the private sector. McConnell notes that two of every three such jobs in the federal government go unfilled.

“If we want to address this problem over time, we have to start in the secondary schools,” he says. “Think about your secondary school education — reading, writing, arithmetic. Did anybody teach you about digital vulnerabilities, about digital dependence? This will teach students to be more aware and protect themselves, and we’re hoping that significantly increases pathways for youngsters to flow into cybersecurity education at the university level.”

Part of the problem is that too often, prospective employers apply a narrow definition of what constitutes sufficient preparation for cybersecurity careers.

Noting his background in the intelligence community and at the Department of Defense, Sanders adds, “We always struggled with closing that talent gap. At Cyber Florida, we don’t teach courses, but we can guide the State University System to develop more courses and offer more degrees. We’re doing that at USF. We want to close the talent gap and eventually be able to better compete on the world stage.”

USF, for example, now offers three bachelor’s degrees and five master’s degrees in cybersecurity-related fields.

“Our experiences have shown us that you don’t fill cybersecurity vacancies just with people who have ‘cyber’ on the



MILO ELMHO | iStock photo



**One of the things that we and U.S. Central Command have concluded is that cyber knows no national boundaries, no international boundaries.”**

**— Ron Sanders**

diploma,” Sanders says. “It’s computer science engineering, intelligence studies, digital forensics.”

Their educational efforts extend well beyond the traditional classroom. Working with the Muma College of Business, Cyber Florida has piloted a number of courses designed for C-suite executives and corporate boards of directors.

“This isn’t just a chief information officer problem, it isn’t just about ones and zeroes,” Sanders says. “CEOs and their staffs need to be cyber-aware and we have a series of initiatives to make them sensitive to the fact that they need to protect their networks.”

Sanders, McConnell and their team also reach out to local government officials.

“Last year, we reached almost 400 local government executives to scare them straight about cybersecurity,” Sanders says. “In Florida, ransomware is rampant, particularly at the local government level. Many of the breaches occur because of human error, not because of technical deficiencies. Creating a cybersecurity culture becomes paramount.”

Ongoing educational efforts are key, as is filling the talent gap. The problem, Sanders says, is the expectations of public and private employers.

“Governments and businesses are all looking for cyber-ninjas with five to 10 years of experience,” he says. “They aren’t there. Take the people coming out of the pipeline and teach them, train them, mold them.”



Mohsen Milani (right) participates in a 2016 panel discussion at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C. Pictured to Milani's right is Nabih Fahmi, former Egyptian minister of foreign affairs; seated next to Fahmi is Eliot Cohen, former counselor in the U.S. State Department and current dean of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

## Managing a multi-polar world

AS DANGEROUS AND NERVE-WRACKING as the Cold War could be at times, the world was far easier to navigate for the framers of United States foreign policy.

“Say what you will about the Cold War, there was a logic about the way people were thinking,” says Mohsen Milani, founding executive director of USF’s Center for Strategic & Diplomatic Studies and professor of politics. “The world was divided into good vs. evil, East vs. West, communism vs. capitalism.”

Much has changed in the 30 years since the end of the Cold War.

“The U.S. doesn’t have as much influence in the world economy as it used to, and how the U.S. manages this is very important,” Milani says. “Now we have multi-polarity as opposed to the bipolarity of the Cold War. The U.S. is dominant, but China is rising. Russia is challenging, and if you look at different regions, Brazil has become a formidable power in Latin America and Iran is a major challenge in the Middle East. How the U.S. manages this multi-polar world is a key issue, and the U.S. has not developed a clear answer so far.”

Exploring these and other foreign policy challenges has been the focus of the center since its creation in 2013. It has collaborated on a number of one- and two-day conferences for students and the community with, among others, the National Defense University’s Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C., and the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies. In addition to hosting conversations with current and former key players in the national security arena, Milani is frequently interviewed by major media outlets, including the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, the BBC and NPR.

The center, Milani says, serves as a bridge between the ac-



Where does America want to be, say, in 2070, and how to get there? Policymakers need to establish a bipartisan consensus about long-term goals of American foreign policy.”

— Mohsen Milani

ademic community, the business community and government.

“The rationale behind all of this is that a university is unique,” he says. “It’s much better than a think tank, which usually follows a certain ideological line, and there are limits on what government officials can say. But a university is a free marketplace of ideas, and we felt this center could become a hub for discussing issues related to U.S. national security that can educate the university community and others.”

As far as the chief threats to global security, Milani agrees with the assessment of the National Intelligence Council’s recent “Global Trends” report: China, Russia, Iran and North Korea.

“With China, the threat is very clear — it’s economic,” Milani says. “But, China also is a rising military power. A high-ranking member of the Chinese government recently said, ‘The U.S. can’t look at us from a position of strength anymore.’ In other words, China is beginning to show its muscle. The 21st century will be a struggle between China as a rising global power and the U.S. as an established global power.”

While Russia presents primarily a military challenge, President Vladimir Putin is intent not only on creating polarization in the U.S., but also damaging U.S. relations with other countries.

“America is the top economic and military power in the world, and these are two pillars of U.S. power,” Milani says. “The third pillar is the incredible network of alliances the U.S. established after World War II with the Europeans and others. That’s something Putin is most interested in un-

dermining, as he also seeks to shake our faith in American democracy.”

Unlike China, Milani says, Russia is not “a very advanced economic powerhouse.” But it does have an extensive nuclear arsenal, a formidable military force and a long history of establishing connections to proxies and their friends.

The threat from North Korea is nuclear.

“Can America persuade them to give up on their nuclear program in exchange for a normalization of relations and recognition of their leadership?” Milani says. “That’s closely linked to China because no country exerts as much influence on North Korea as China does.”

When it comes to Iran, the U.S. is confronting multiple issues.

“Can the U.S. revive the nuclear deal so there can be 24/7 inspections of their nuclear installations and facilities?” he notes. “It is in the American national interest to revive the nuclear deal that President Obama signed; it’s always better to know what they’re doing. Did the U.S. get everything it wanted? Did Iran get all it wanted? No, it was a deal based on give and take: The U.S. lifted sanctions and Iran agreed to an intrusive inspection and monitoring of its nuclear activities. It was not a perfect deal, but it was the best deal the two countries could strike at the time.”

Iran also has a significant ballistic missile capability, which Milani describes as “one of the most advanced in the Middle East.” And he is concerned that Iran has become a formidable player in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.

“They have established a network of militias and proxies that are loyal to and supported by Iran,” Milani says. “The potential nuclear deal will address one issue. If the two countries can reach agreement there, then there’s a chance the U.S. and Iran can talk about other outstanding issues, such as Iran’s missile program and its regional activities”

Milani believes the U.S. needs to develop a long-range strategic plan for foreign policy.

“Where does America want to be, say, in 2070, and how to get there?” he says. “Policymakers need to establish a bipartisan consensus about long-term goals of American foreign policy. This would give sense of purpose and cohesion to American foreign policy. This does not mean we can predict what the world looks like in 50 years. It simply means we must develop a broad road map about where we would prefer to be decades from now. As the circumstances change, as they inevitably will, we can and must change our direction. As long as you know the destination, it’s OK to change direction because we know where we ultimately are going. Right now, I don’t think there’s a consensus on where we want to go”

## The dangers of Russian disinformation

GOLFO ALEXOPOULOS MINCES NO WORDS when it comes to the threat that Russian President Vladimir Putin poses to the United States, globally and to his own citizens.

The director of the Institute on Russia at USF and a professor of interdisciplinary global studies, Alexopoulos has been studying the country since her college days. She earned her master’s degree in Russian studies from Yale and a doctorate in Russian history at the University of Chicago, and she visited the then-Soviet Union three times in the late 1980s during the height of the Cold War. Alexopoulos joined USF in 1996.

She believes the U.S. needs to be “very sober” about the Russian threat.

“It’s important for Americans to recognize that Russia emerged following the disintegration of the Soviet Union,



Golfo Alexopoulos, director of the Institute on Russia and professor of interdisciplinary global studies

RYAN HODGIE | USF News



**Putin can be intensely anti-American, as is his entourage. They propagate anti-American messages again and again on state-run media, yet polls of ordinary Russians show their view of the West is positive. They want better relations with the U.S.”**

– Golfo Alexopoulos

which was a brutal totalitarian state,” she says. “When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there wasn’t a reckoning with the Stalinist past or the repressive police state. Many people in the Soviet security services still held certain views about the U.S. as an existential threat and mortal enemy, about Russia being a besieged fortress and the victim of foreign machinations.”

That is the system in which Putin grew up and he maintains that mentality.

“He wants to undermine Western democratic institutions,” Alexopoulos says. “He’s opposed to the Western rules-based order, he wants to advance another concept of global authoritarian power and we need to take that very seriously. His regime is getting even more repressive internally and cracking down hard on the democratic opposition.”

Nor do Putin and his government care what the West thinks.

“I do worry about that,” she says. “Putin’s concern is shoring up domestic support and continuing his aggression abroad. This guy has been in power for over 20 years. He changed Russia’s constitution to stay in power indefinitely even as his approval ratings are declining. I don’t see him losing power right away necessarily, but I do think that as soon as he unleashes violence against his citizens — and I think that’s inevitable given the persistence and bravery of the opposition — that will turn more Russian citizens against him. I worry about Russia’s domestic stability in the short term; the way Putin behaves illustrates his own fears about domestic instability.”

That behavior includes Russia’s well-documented disinformation campaigns. Putin’s earliest online disinformation campaigns were directed at domestic targets, specifically Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Russian disinformation today has numerous targets, domestic and foreign.

Earlier this year, the Institute on Russia partnered with U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to help strengthen understanding of Russian disinformation and its dangerous impact around the world. Alexopoulos is working with the J3-International Division of SOCOM, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, to educate USF students about Russian disinformation and to better position them for careers in related fields.

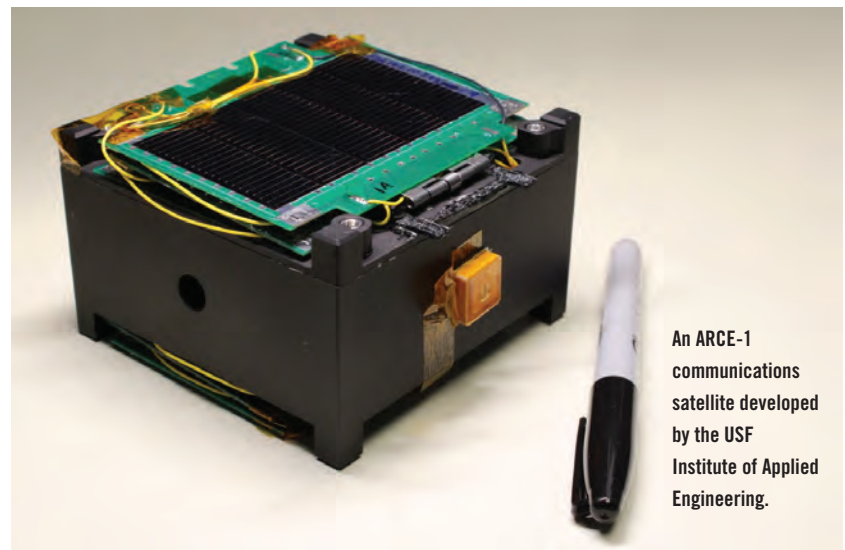
She collaborated with the J3-International Division to secure a grant to support these educational efforts, including a four-part virtual “Forum on Russian, European and U.S. Security” (REUSS). The REUSS Forum, held in February, featured panelists with expertise in cybersecurity, politics and international studies, data science, intelligence and related fields.

Alexopoulos enjoys working with the J-3 International Division at SOCOM. “They represent America’s partners abroad. People from dozens of countries come to SOCOM on short-term assignment to learn about special operations and to build relationships,” she says. “Many of them are from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia who are directly impacted by Russian activities. I have invited some of them to speak to

my classes, too.”

The grant also supports a rekindling of the Sister Cities initiative that dates to the early 1990s between St. Petersburg, Florida, and St. Petersburg, Russia. The program includes collaboration between USF and the Higher School of Economics, a public research university with campuses in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

“Putin can be intensely anti-American, as is his entourage,” Alexopoulos says. “They propagate anti-American messages again and again on state-run media, yet polls of ordinary Russians show their view of the West is positive. They want better relations with the U.S. On a human level, Americans are fascinated by Russians and vice versa. That’s where cooperation and improved understanding will happen, on the student to student, faculty to faculty, citizen to citizen level.”



An ARCE-1 communications satellite developed by the USF Institute of Applied Engineering.

## Institute pursues solutions

ROBERT BISHOP LIKES TO SAY that USF is now “a space-faring university.”

The dean of the College of Engineering also is president and CEO of the USF Institute of Applied Engineering (IAE), which developed three small communications satellites — each the size of a sandwich — that have been orbiting the Earth since January.

“Our goal is to contribute to the well-being of our citizens by developing systems for sea, land, air and space,” Bishop says.

The satellite project is one example of the work of the institute, which was created in 2018.

“We wanted to establish an organization that would take engineering education and research to a new level, where the problems we tackle in our research are real-world with customers and milestones and deadlines and budgets,” Bishop



says. “Our focus is on applied engineering rather than basic research.”

He also notes the distinction between the IAE and engineering research centers at other universities.

“The institute is a one-of-a-kind organization in Florida focused on government and industry contracts,” Bishop says. “Given our proximity to MacDill Air Force Base, it really made sense to create this bridge. We’re better able to fill the talent pipeline for the government and industry. I think everything is encapsulated in our motto, which makes us different: Seeking truth at high velocity. We are searching for solutions, but we are searching for them on a short time scale, which is not common in more traditional engineering research institutions.”

Last year, the institute and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, entered into a five-year, \$85 million contract that paves the way for researchers and students to collaborate with SOCOM to help solve significant challenges facing the nation.

Bishop refers to the agreement as “an indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract.”

**“The institute is a one-of-a-kind organization in Florida focused on government and industry contracts. ... I think everything is encapsulated in our motto: Seeking truth at high velocity.”**

— Robert Bishop

“Over the next five years, we can be tasked to do a variety of projects for SOCOM,” he says. “Our core competencies and our proximity are very appealing to them. We have a number of task orders already with the command.”

SOCOM may look to the institute to address issues in fields such as autonomous systems, human performance, transportation, cybersecurity, data analytics and sensor technologies. Students may have opportunities to gain real-world experience through internships at MacDill Air Force Base.

Starting this summer, the IAE is collaborating with multiple institutions to conduct research into the effects of low-level blast exposure on members of the Special Operations Forces. Partners on the three-year study include SOCOM, Massachusetts General Hospital, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai in New York City, the University of Washington and Harvard University.

The IAE also has created a consortium to facilitate engagement between academic institutions and SOCOM. According to Tim Baxter, the IAE’s executive director of programs and customer engagements, the consortium creates opportunities for SOCOM to share problem areas and for the institutions to respond with relevant research.

There is a workforce development component as well. SOCOM provides challenges that the consortium members can incorporate into projects for graduate and undergraduate students.

The IAE has invited all 12 public universities in the State

University System of Florida to participate, and agreements are in place with more than half of the institutions. Other members of the consortium include Auburn University, Clemson University, Colorado State University, the University of Colorado, East Carolina University, North Carolina State University and the University of South Carolina.

## Teaching security



Karla Mastracchio, political science and communication '03, Life Member, is passionate about teaching in a university classroom. Her students, however, don’t fit a traditional profile.

The South Tampa native works in national security and Special Operations as the professor of information advantage and strategic influence, teaching members of U.S. Special Operations

Forces (SOF) — such as Navy SEALs and Army Rangers — at Joint Special Operations University (JSOU).

JSOU’s main campus is in Florida, but she works out of the Indo-Pacific region supporting special operations efforts in that area of the world. She has been part of the SOF community for about 10 years and has been working with Joint Special Operations University for the past three years.

“One of the SOF Truths is humans are more important than hardware,” Mastracchio says. “You can have the best weapons and software or whatever, but if you don’t have the right people, it won’t work. JSOU offers SOF-specific education that helps SOF professionals solve real-world problems. What is asked of special operations, what kind of problems we are asked to solve, are very challenging and very rewarding.”

Mastracchio’s students include government civilians as well as active-duty military who are part of the SOF enterprise.

After earning her bachelor’s degree from USF, Mastracchio earned master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Iowa. Her time at USF, she says, “shaped my ability to understand complex communication theories and frameworks and to succeed in highly competitive environments.”

She also benefited from her membership in the Alpha Delta Pi sorority, which has had a chapter on the Tampa campus for more than 60 years. She is an international officer with the organization.

“It really has shaped my leadership style and gave me high expectations for mentoring others and giving back,” she says. “Most of the women I went to school with are highly accomplished professionals but also are dedicated to service and I think we owe a lot to Alpha Delta Pi in that regard.” ■

# How safe is our FOOD SUPPLY?

Most often, you are your family's first defense, says FDA leader

By JOEY JOHNSTON, '81

**T**HE LAST PLACE YOU MIGHT EXPECT to face a national security threat is at the dinner table. But that's the first concern for Frank Yiannas, the FDA's deputy commissioner for food policy and response.

Is our food supply safe? What are the greatest risks? How can consumers protect themselves and what precautions should they take?

Yiannas makes sure he knows the answers.

Long before the coronavirus changed American life, Yiannas was intrigued by what he called "an invisible world of things out there that could cause danger and do us harm." It led him to earn a master's in public health at USF in 2003 and fueled his passion for developing food safety strategies and techniques.

"We have an incredibly safe food system," says Yiannas, who held executive food-safety positions at Walt Disney World and Walmart before arriving at the Food and Drug Administration in 2018. "We can go to a grocery store and pick thousands of food products. Most will be safe, affordable and convenient. But the pandemic has re-emphasized that we all have to play our part in protecting each other."



**We have an incredibly safe food system. We can go to a grocery store and pick thousands of food products. Most will be safe, affordable and convenient. But the pandemic has re-emphasized that we all have to play our part in protecting each other."**

— Frank Yiannas

The National Agriculture and Food defense Strategy, part of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011, outlines the strategies for protecting the nation's food supply from the likes of terrorists. It calls for federal regulators from the FDA and other relevant agencies, such as Homeland Security and the Department of Agriculture, to work together. Their objectives include assessing and mitigating vulnerabilities, developing ways to quickly identify food contamination, and creating science-based regulations to guard against food hazards.

Foodborne disease accounts for about 48 million illnesses in the United States — one in six people. Those illnesses result in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths a year. But to date, the biggest culprit is unintentional contamination, not terrorism or criminal intent.

Whether the source is malevolent or accidental, the FDA relies on much the same tools for prevention, detection and recovery, Yiannas says. Those include an all-hands-on-deck approach, from federal agencies, the commercial sector and consumers.

"Toward the end of the last century, people began forgetting about the importance of [preventing] infectious diseases and public health," he says. "The 20th century had great advances in modern medicine, the invention of antibiotics and the treatment of water."

Our ancestors had no such safety net.

"My grandparents and parents were really aware of this," he says. "They passed down from generation to generation the importance of thoroughly cooking food products, or cooling things rapidly. .... The pandemic has proven once again the importance of public health and the personal actions that we all must take."

Those are basic: washing your hands before preparing food, making sure foods are stored at the proper temperatures, avoiding cross-contamination.

Once a contaminant has been introduced, whether intentionally or not, speed is crucial in identifying the source so it can be addressed. Advances in technology have given us a big advantage, Yiannas says.

Blockchain technology — which digitizes a food-supply record from its origins — can quickly isolate food-safety issues and determine where they started. He describes tracing a package of sliced mangos to its source several years ago using conventional methods. From growers and small farmers to shelves at the world's largest retailer, following

# FDA tips for food safety

**F**OODBORNE ILLNESSES RESULT in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths each year in the United States. They're especially dangerous for the very old and very young, pregnant women, and for people with chronic conditions that affect the immune system, such as diabetes. These simple steps can protect you and your family.

**Wash your hands:** Before, during and after handling food, wash your hands! Scrub well for at least 20 seconds and air dry or wipe with a clean paper towel — not the used dish towel.

**Get another cutting board:** Use one for foods that will be cooked, such as meat, poultry, and seafood, and the other for foods like fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw. That way the raw foods won't be contaminated by the juices from the meats. Get one that's dishwasher-safe. The very hot water and strong detergent typically used in dishwashers can eliminate a lot of bacteria.

**Use a meat thermometer:** Whole meats should register 145°F after allowing a 3-minute rest; 160°F for ground meat; 165°F for all poultry and 165°F for casseroles and leftovers.

**And an appliance thermometer:** Most refrigerators have just a “warmer/colder” setting — the only way to know the temperature is to use a thermometer. Your refrigerator should keep foods at or below 40°F; bacteria multiply above that temp. While you're at it, get a thermometer for the freezer, too, to be sure the temperature is 0°F or below.



**Frank Yiannas, the FDA's deputy commissioner for food policy and response.**

the package's trail took six days, 18 hours and 26 minutes. With blockchain, it took 2.2 seconds.

“Of course, that's amazing and people tend to get enamored with the technology,” Yiannas says. But — “It's never about the technology. It's getting greater visibility and transparency in the food system so consumers know more about where foods come from, how they are produced and if they are safe.”

That's Yiannas' fundamental approach to food safety and security — the people, not the process.

“Frank is brilliant on a technical level, but he has also been able to spark passion and resolve in this field through his ability to tie food science and food safety to human behavior and culture,” says Kerry Bridges, now vice president of food safety and quality for Chipotle Mexican Grill, who worked with Yiannas at Walmart.

“He blazed a trail between food science and front-line workers in some of the largest food service, retail and governmental agencies in the world.”

Lee Cockerell, formerly Disney World's vice president of operations, says he noticed Yiannas leaned on teaching in his food safety role at Disney.

“Frank is the best kind of leader because he's a teacher

and has the two most important qualities for a leader in my opinion — empathy and discipline,” Cockerell says.

Yiannas says he learned that approach from Carol Bryant, USF's former Distinguished University Health Professor. She showed him the value of understanding human behavior and organizational culture.

Public service? He got that from his parents, immigrants from Greece and Cuba

“My parents always showed me the example of helping others,” Yiannas said. “Hard sciences are necessary, but I believe anything you do in life reflects on human behavior, the so-called soft sciences. Food safety is really about human behavior. Humans get their values and belief systems early in their formative years. Early on, I knew I wanted to help.” ■

The background of the entire page is filled with stylized, thick-lined hands in various colors including teal, red, yellow, orange, and dark blue. The hands are arranged in a way that suggests they are reaching towards each other, symbolizing community and support.

# Revealing a real **COMMUNITY** need

The 'Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace'  
Certificate draws more than 120,000 participants

By KEITH MORELLI '78 | Muma College of Business

**I**F YOU TOOK ALL THE PEOPLE who registered for the USF Muma College of Business “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace” certificate offering this spring, you could fill Raymond James Stadium. Twice.

More than 135,000 people signed up to take the virtual program, eclipsing by 10-fold any other online certificate program offered by the business college.

Those who successfully completed the program, at press time nearly 63,000 registrants, received a digital certificate as well as a Credly badge they can display on LinkedIn.

The theme of the instruction addressed an issue that cuts across all disciplines and is at the forefront of the culture of American commerce today: How to create and grow a workforce that includes differing races, religions, ages, genders and sexual orientations, and persons with disabilities. Such a culture not only improves broad societal issues, but it can also help companies develop novel business practices, increase revenue and improve performance.

A team of USF faculty from across the university developed the content in the certificate modules and leaders from Jabil and the Tampa Bay Lightning helped recruit guest speakers, which included former Tampa Bay Buccaneer Hall of Famer Derrick Brooks and Lightning CEO Steve Griggs.

University administrators felt the time was right for such a program to lead the way in making corporate landscapes more diversified and inclusive.

“Having a good diversity and inclusion plan is the right thing to do and it makes business sense,” says Moez Limayem, the Lynn Pippenger Dean of the USF Muma College of Business, who led the effort to launch the seven-week certificate program offered free of charge, thanks to the sponsorships of the Lightning and Jabil.

“As a business school, we want to educate future and current employees at all levels on tools and practices that can help companies build and implement sustainable diversity, equity and inclusion programs,” Limayem says. “We, like our partners at Jabil and the Lightning, strongly believe that companies must examine the business case for inclusion and understand how it is relevant to their businesses as it can be a competitive differentiator in many ways when it is part of the corporate culture.”

Within weeks of announcing the program, more than 100,000 corporate executives, small business owners and educational leaders and others signed up to take the intensive course. As the start of the program approached, that number swelled. Enrollees represented 15 countries, including the United States, which led all nations with the most online registrations.

“That is an impressive number, but I don’t think it’s surprising that so many people signed up, given what is

happening in our country and across the world with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion issues,” says Alexis Mootoo, ’10, MA ’12 and PhD ’17, assistant vice president in USF’s Student Success unit. She, along with Limayem and leaders from the partner organizations, helped outline the journey participants would take in shaping each two-hour module.

“It’s very exciting and encouraging that so many people signed up for this program,” she says, “indicating there is strong desire to be part of the solution.”

The instruction ranged from emotional intelligence, to stereotypes and unconscious bias, to recruitment and retention. The final module discussed a sustainable business model that embraces inclusion and diversity.

Mark Mondello, ’87, is CEO of Jabil, a global software corporation with estimated revenue of \$30 billion this year. While he says the company is diverse, there always remains room for improvement.

“We have been on this journey for a long time,” he says. The death of George Floyd, starkly portrayed on video and in a summer of public demonstrations, shook the



**If we have an environment across Jabil where everyone can be himself or herself, we are going to thrive. We are a large, global organization and we have to make sure everybody is comfortable being himself or herself.”**

— Mark Mondello

nation, and Mondello saw the need to focus on diversity at Jabil. “I looked at our organization. We had done a good job with diversity and inclusion, but boy we could do more. We lacked in recognizing unconscious bias and a basic understanding of others.

“We all suffer from some unconscious social bias,” he says. “We have made good progress, but we have so much more to do. We want everybody in the workplace, our workforce, to understand and truly believe their true self. If our employees are working hard and have the company’s success in mind, they can be their true selves.”

Jabil created a task force to look at diversity in its workplace.

“If we have an environment across Jabil where everyone can be himself or herself, we are going to thrive,” he says. “We are a large global organization and we have to make sure everybody is comfortable being himself or herself.”

Derrick Brooks and Mark Mondello discuss Emotional Intelligence in the first module of the series that aired in March.

The full series is available online at [usf.edu/business/certificates/diversity-equity-inclusion/modules.aspx](https://usf.edu/business/certificates/diversity-equity-inclusion/modules.aspx)



**“The challenge to all of us: Starting tomorrow, reach out to a person in your workplace or school or neighborhood who is different from you and promote or hire that person. We are the CEOs of our own companies, our own lives.”**

— Moez Limayem

Derrick Brooks, former Hall of Fame linebacker for the Buccaneers who now is an executive for the Tampa Bay Lightning, said he learned early in his career to empathize with others on the team, to respect each individual's background and story. The result was a team that played as one unit, where members of special teams were just as important to winning as the quarterback and corner back. It was a special attitude, he says, and that team won a Super Bowl title.

“As you enter these modules, you control one thing, your attitude,” Brooks told the attendees during the first session. “If attitudes are contagious, is your attitude worth catching?”

Identifying biases and treating everybody with respect are good first steps, said Valerie Alexander, an author and CEO of The Dragonfly Firm, a private consulting company she founded in 2016. Diversity in the workplace must engage everyone, she said, especially workers packing unconscious biases that need to be recognized.

“When it comes to biased behavior, your intentions don't matter,” she said. “It's time to opt in, lean in. Get your whole body and brain into this. Entire participation is

required to make progress. None of us can opt out.”

The “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace” certificate program was not the first for the Muma College of Business. In 2020, just after COVID-19 swept the nation, Limayem spearheaded a free certificate program on “Post-Crisis Leadership.” The thought was to help everyone who suddenly found themselves working reduced hours, working remotely, laid off, furloughed or just looking for a liferaft. The program, also offered free of charge (certificate programs typically cost attendees up to \$3,000 or more) drew nearly 10,000 registrants and the college repeated it later in the year.

The college's School of Hospitality and Tourism Management offered a similar certificate for those in the hospitality industry, which suffered immensely through the pandemic. The latest step to engage with the college's business partners and continue its mantra of being a resource for the community was a certificate on diversity.

Implementing diversity, equity and inclusion policies into the workplace is just the beginning of building a culture that will benefit business and society, Limayem said.

“This is a journey, it is not a destination,” Limayem told enrollees in his opening remarks. “We do not have all the answers, but we have the energy and willingness to work with you.”

“Our goal is to help you and your organizations move through that journey so you can improve diversity, equity and inclusion in your organizations. We are doing it because it is the right thing to do.”

“The challenge to all of us: Starting tomorrow, reach out to a person in your workplace or school or neighborhood who is different from you and promote or hire that person,” Limayem said. “We are the CEOs of our own companies, our own lives.” ■

# Many helping hands make for success

**T**O DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE “DIVERSITY, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace” certificate program, organizers forged a unique partnership involving university faculty and administrators and executives of the Tampa Bay Lightning and Jabil, which served as sponsors. This collaboration made the program — drawing more than 120,000 registrants — a reality.

While outside business partners were a big part of the machinery, it really took teamwork within the university, as offices and disciplines across USF came together in support.

“This is my first time working collaboratively under One USF and it’s quite amazing to see how this has spiraled into this exciting conversation,” says Allison Crume, associate vice president and dean of Undergraduate Studies, who took part in the project. “Being able to create a safe space where people can come together to address this is also exciting.”

Appointed to the position less than a year ago, Crume pointed out the importance of advocacy in creating the seven-week certificate program.

“Everyone’s role is to be an advocate,” she says. “It’s everyone’s job.”

Alexis Mootoo, the assistant vice president of resource management and development in USF’s Student Success unit, was one of the leading figures in the development of the program. She also served as moderator, leading panel discussions during many of the modules.

“It wasn’t until I spoke with Dean Moez [Limayem, the Lynn Pippenger Dean of the Muma College of Business] that I was able to connect the dots,” Mootoo says.

She says the program illuminated the path for organizations seeking to establish diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. “It is important that we give feedback in order to effectively move forward, even beyond the certificate program.”

Topics in the program ranged from uncovering unconscious biases, to having conversations that may be uncomfortable with employees, to recruitment/retention and community outreach. These topics led to opportunities for speakers and participants to network with those outside their regular social circles, expanding their perspectives through the connections they made.

“After the ‘Post-Crisis Leadership’ certificate (the first certificate offered by the Muma College of Business during the pandemic), it was great to see how the university was able to reach the public like never before,” says Eric Eisenberg, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and a speaker in one of the modules in the diversity certificate. “This is universities doing what they should be doing, bringing expertise to those who need it.

“This is a tremendous learning opportunity,” he says. “How can we learn from these different perspectives? This has also brought people together who have not talked before. This is changing the practice in the workplace.”

To those who enrolled in the program, Eisenberg offers this: “Take what you have learned back to your workplace, like an experiment, and see how things change.”

- BRENDA CAROLINA SANTOS | Muma College of Business intern

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# Camp takes girls on deep dive

For 30 years, the Oceanography Camp for Girls has inspired teens to pursue careers in science

By KRISTEN KUSEK, MA AND MS '98 | College of Marine Science

**T**HE USF COLLEGE OF MARINE SCIENCE launched its first Oceanography Camp for Girls (OCG) in 1991. That also was the year digital cell phone technology was launched, although most people still had phones attached to walls — and the year “the web” became publicly available, although few knew what that really meant.

How the world has changed since 1991. But the OCG has stood the test of time. This year's 30th anniversary camp is scheduled to take place, in person, in July.

This three-week summer program, designed for young women from Pinellas County in their sandwich summer between middle school and high school, has earned billing by the National Science Foundation (NSF) as a model for immersive, experiential STEM learning for women and girls. Activities include a spectrum of hands-on field trips, guided laboratory experiments, interviews with scientists, communications training, and more.

Studies suggest middle school is the time young women start to lose interest in science, and 30 years of OCG survey data suggest that campers leave the experience with a much better appreciation for, and understanding of, what it means to do ocean science.

“They learn, like I did, that being a marine scientist is about a lot more than training dolphins,” says Makenzie Kerr, 26, who attended the camp in 2009.

Kerr is a prime example of the camp working as a feeder into USF and the St. Petersburg-based STEM workforce. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in marine science, both on the USF St. Petersburg campus. Today she works as the lab manager and outreach coordinator in a marine genomics lab at the USF College of Marine Science. Having come full circle, Kerr also works 10 hours a week for the OCG.

She vividly recalls, with an energetic enthusiasm she still carries today, the first time she observed seawater under the microscope as a camper.

“The plankton looked like mini aliens swirling around,” she says.

## The 21-year-old T-shirt: one camper's good luck charm

Jessica Cross, 34, OCG alum from 2000, is a chemical oceanographer who works for the NOAA Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle. She studies climate change in Alaska.

“In rural Alaska especially, many people live off the land and climate change is a lived experience for everyone,” she says. “It's really about life and death decisions here.”

Cross credits her natural tenacity and her camp experience with launching her career in ocean science — so much so that she brings her OCG T-shirt, now 21 years old, with her as a good luck charm on every research expedition. Given that she's spent 413 days at sea so far, the shirt has seen more of the world's oceans than most people ever will.

“The holes give it character,” says Cross, who describes herself as an average student at best—one who certainly had an enthusiasm for science but never a natural aptitude for it.

“OCG humanizes what scientists do,” she says. “I realized I didn't have to be like Jacques Cousteau to work in marine science. There was so much more to it, and this huge spectrum of people contributing. OCG helped me envision that I, too, really could be a scientist.”

## So much more than STEM

While the camp's stated mission is “to inspire and motivate young women entering high school to consider career opportunities in the sciences,” describing the OCG as a STEM program is a bit like describing a Tampa Bay sunset or a Dali painting as “nice.”

It falls epically short.

“Camp literally changed my life,” says Dr. Rachel McCaffrey, 34, who attended camp in 2001. A breast surgeon who helps cancer patients in Michigan, McCaffrey recently accepted a position at Vanderbilt University where she'll work full-time as a surgeon and teach on the side.

“My passion for teaching stems directly from the OCG,” she says. McCaffrey speaks with a kind of surgical



Teresa Greely, '85, MS '94 and PhD '08, far left, has served as the camp's director since 1994.

Angela Lodge, a former social worker and youth development expert who co-directed the camp for more than 20 years, stands at far right.





precision – not effusive, pretty darn to-the-point – except when speaking about camp.

“There’s a magic to camp that I can’t fully understand,” she says. “Yes, it teaches you about what it really means to do science but it also helps girls, at the perfect age where it really matters, to develop self-confidence, to build courage, and to learn that failing is OK – all in this safe and protected environment. It happens over the course of all these micro-moments and opportunities you

get throughout the experience, and the lessons learned can stick with you for life.”

Studies show that self-confidence plays a significant role in a young woman’s career choices — something that can start as early as age 12, says Teresa Greely, who has served as the camp’s director since 1994. She earned her master’s in marine science and doctoral degree in science education, both at USF.

Their perception of failure is devastating, Greely says.

“Realizing that failure is not only OK but often critical to moving science forward is a big deal in camp,” she says.

### The turning point

The OCG was the brainchild of former dean of the USF College of Marine Science Peter Betzer and two Pinellas County high school science teachers, Carmen Kelly and Jeanette Walker.

Key to the camp’s longevity is the endowment Betzer established, valued today at more than \$1 million, which would support it in perpetuity. Additional supporters have included private foundations, families and donors; Duke Energy Foundation; NSF; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Office of Naval Research; and the United States Geological Survey.

“Over my 37-year career in marine science, one of my proudest and most significant legacies is the critical part I played in starting the OCG and then single-handedly building an endowment to support it in perpetuity,” says Betzer. “Through the years countless parents of our OCG alums have shared so many inspiring stories about the transformative experiences their young daughters had — and it’s thrilling to hear them every time.”

The camp is offered at no charge every year to 30 young women inclusive of all backgrounds, literacy and aptitude levels — culturally, socially, economically and otherwise. More than 1,200 girls have participated since the camp’s inception. (If you do the math, 30 a year over 30 years is 900 campers but there were many years during which more than one camp was offered.)



**Through the years countless parents of our OCG alums have shared so many inspiring stories about the transformative experiences their young daughters had — and it’s thrilling to hear them every time.”**

— Peter Betzer

“While our mission has remained consistent, our delivery of that mission has definitely evolved,” says Greely.

In the early “toddler” years, as she calls them, the camp mentors and educators were scientists, mostly marine science grad students and some faculty, doing what they do — distilling marine science concepts the best they could for their teenaged audience.

“We realized pretty quickly that we didn’t have all the tools we needed,” Greely says. Missing, big time, she says, were the cultural and social aspects of teaching that were critical to creating meaningful experiences for teenaged girls.

That’s where Angela Lodge, a former social worker and youth development expert came in, Greely says. She co-directed OCG for more than 20 years and worked with Greely to institute an intensive three-week training experience for all graduate student science mentors — the same amount

**Photos: Campers throughout the years — (counter-clockwise) working in the lab in 2017; Mackenzie Kerr during her 2009 camp experience; studying a seahorse in 2019; and aboard ship in 2016.**





of time as the entire camp experience.

“We essentially doubled the impact of the camp,” Greely says. “It’s not just about teaching the science, and that’s when our program really became a force to be reckoned with.”

Topping the training list: safety, positive asset-building, cultural sensitivity and building productive interactions among diverse groups. In addition, they embedded the camp curriculum with exercises focused on team building, communications skills and building trust and relationships – skills that are essential in science, and also in life.

For example, if you put someone down, you have to give that person two “put ups,” Greely says. That same rule applies to mentors and campers alike.

“When you provide opportunities to stretch boundaries with positive ‘can do’ attitudes and accountability, amazing things can happen,” says Greely. She recalls several instances where they accepted, and continue to accept, girls who are considered at-risk.

“My two passions are for people and for the ocean,” says Greely. “Like the campers, this camp has developed my positive assets, and it’s been one of my life’s privileges to be a part of it.” ■

## A sneak peek at the OCG schedule

Each day begins with a group circle, an “ice-breaker” and a quote of the day, and ends with a reflection.

- **Week 1:** team building, intro to ocean concepts, and three field trips (groups of 10) to Fort de Soto (coastal ecology), kayaking on Shell Key (environmental conservation), and a day aboard the R/V ANGARI operated by the ANGARI Foundation (shipboard research cruise)
- **Week 2:** Lab experiments, Interviews with scientists, coastal geology field trip to Caladesi Island
- **Week 3:** Lab experiments, Fish Banks activity (environmental sustainability and the “tragedy of the commons”), focus on communication skills (prep for a celebratory on-stage presentation to friends, family and donors). The last day of camp is a trip to Sea World!

# 'Coming 2 America'

## Faculty member's passion for West African dance leads to role in comedy sequel

By TOM WOOLF | USF News

**T**HOUGH AN ACCOMPLISHED PROFESSIONAL with more than 25 years of experience, Kyaïen Conner knew she faced long odds – as in 499 other competitors.

Many at USF know her as a dedicated teacher and researcher in her role as an associate professor of mental health law and policy. But Conner also has been a devoted professional West African dancer since she was 14, and serves as the artistic director of Kuumba Dancers and Drummers, a cultural mainstay in Tampa since 1980 and one of the oldest such troupes in the nation.

Conner is among those who have achieved notoriety across the country for community-based work in African dance and knowledge of the culture, which is why she was among 500 people invited to audition for roles as African dancers in the Eddie Murphy comedy, "Coming 2 America," the sequel to 1988's "Coming to America." Fatimah Robinson, choreographer for the sequel, and director Craig Brewer were determined to correct historical inaccuracies in the original film, so they opened the auditions to indus-

try dancers and community-based dancers.

Only 10 women and six men would appear in the film, which was released in March on Amazon's Prime Video.

"I was so excited I was in tears when I learned I was picked to perform at the Tyler Perry Studios in Atlanta in front of Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, Wesley Snipes and Morgan Freeman," Conner says.

What she describes as "life-changing news" didn't sink in right away.

"When I got the contract, I still didn't believe it," she says. "When they booked my flight to Atlanta for filming, I still didn't believe it. I don't think it hit me until I was on set and standing in front of my childhood icons. It was one of the most exciting times of my life."

Filming took place in October 2019 over a two-week period, half of which was spent in rehearsal, the other, on set.

"We would typically arrive on set at about 7 a.m. and would be there until almost midnight each day," she says. "Most of the time on set was spent in hair, make-up and costume and waiting to film. And we interacted with the other performers and filled the cast members with the joy of drumming and dance."

Conner was 8 years old when the original film came out.

"It was incredibly exciting to be able to be in a movie that was a sequel to one that was a huge part of my childhood and young adult years," she says. "If there was any film I was going to be a part of, this would have been my dream."

"Coming to America" was more than just a fun escape for Black movie-goers, Conner says.

"Even though 'Coming to America' was about the fictitious African country of Zamunda, it portrayed Africans in a way we hadn't seen before 1988," Conner says. "Previous



**I hope I can be a role model for students looking to carve their own path in academia that all the things they love to do, they can do."**

– Kyaïen Conner

Kyaien Conner with actor John Amos on the set of "Coming 2 America." In West Africa, drums are not only used for fun but are a way that people manage stress, pain and illness, Conner says. "It has been one of my missions to see traditional cultural healing artforms take their rightful place in the world of treatments and interventions that we recognize."



The dancers' outfits are based upon the cultural dress of multiple African countries, like the complex beading from South Africa, the tall and wrapped headdresses from Ghana, multi-colored necklaces from the Masai people of Kenya and grass skirts worn by the Balanta people of Senegal.



movies depicted them as savages, as unsophisticated or as slaves. This movie highlighted Africans as highly intellectual and extremely sophisticated, it portrayed them as royalty. We were able to see ourselves in a new light.”

The West African dance scene in the original movie, she says, “is one of the most well-known and iconic African dance scenes in the world. In the Black community, there are ‘Coming to America’-themed baby showers, parties, even weddings. I know, because I’ve been asked many times to recreate that scene.”

While it may be iconic, the dance scene is inaccurate.

“One of the challenges of Black cinema has been colorism and whitewashing to make films appeal to the masses,” Conner says. “You can see this in the original dance scene – the dancers were fair-skinned, they had long flowing hair and they wore costumes that didn’t accurately represent any country in Africa.

“The fact that this inaccurate portrayal became the most iconic West African dance scene in the United States is shocking and frustrating,” she adds. “Being able to be part of the sequel, which did everything it could to correct those historical inaccuracies, was such an empowering experience for me as a dancer, a historian, an academic and a Black woman. Never in a million years did I think I would have that opportunity.”

Dancing, obviously, isn’t traditionally associated with the work of many faculty members, Conner notes.

“I hope I can be a role model for students looking to carve their own path in academia that all the things they love to do, they can do,” she says. ■



Conner with Ruth Carter, who created the costumes for the film. Carter has been nominated for three Academy Awards for Best Costume Design, and won — the first African American to win in that category — for her work on the film “Black Panther.” Working with her was “an honor in and of itself,” Conner says.

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# 5 minutes with Bill



Photo: PENNY CARRUTHAN | USFRA

## My fellow Bulls,

This time of year there's usually a distinct downshift in activity across USF's campuses.

This summer is different — in the best of ways.

Things are revving up as we welcome back students, faculty and staff and ease into a careful new normal. Some of us had a tantalizing taste of what's to come back in May when we held our first in-person Commencements since December 2019. Yes, they looked different — everyone in masks and socially distanced, but we were able to recognize and celebrate this tremendous accomplishment.

I hope our newest graduates (more than 5,000) felt our pride, because they certainly deserve it. They've shown remarkable determination in their last year of school and I'm thrilled to see them join our family of alumni — now 370,000 strong. I predict they'll be a force!

Also in May, we had our first in-person Alumni Association event since March 2020. The third Birdies for Bulls Golf Tournament brought together more than 100 Bulls and USF supporters. Again, we were masked and dis-

tanced, but that didn't detract from the fun! Thank you to all the golfers who sat on their tickets for more than a year, and to our amazing host committee, whose work made it such a success. It was great to see all of you!

This month's Green & Gold Gala marks, I hope, the last time we hold an event virtually because we have to. I say that because we've learned a lot during the pandemic about making it easy for Bulls to engage, so virtual events will stay on the menu. We'll continue to host virtual Trivia Nights, educational seminars, even a fall away-football game tailgate.

But, I have to admit, I'm really looking forward to rubbing shoulders again. On Sept. 10, the USF Fast 56 Awards will once again bring us together. During Homecoming Week, Nov. 1-6, we'll celebrate our 2020 and 2021 USF Alumni Award recipients; roll out the red carpet for you at the Welcome Home Party; and get you swagged up for the big game at our Spirit Tent.

We've also got some exciting changes in store. As our great university reaches new highs in achievement and stature, your Association and USF Advancement are evolving to help take it to the next level. That starts with investing in more resources for our tireless volunteer alumni groups, who do an excellent job of uniting Bulls, supporting students, and raising USF awareness around the country.

We're also launching a formalized mentorship program, which will make it much easier for you to share your wisdom with students hungry for guidance. This is a response to your requests for more opportunities to influence student success and a wonderful way to foster engaged, involved future alumni. Great universities, after all, are built by great alumni!

Finally, I'd like to convey my gratitude to our outgoing Alumni Association board officers and directors. Led with poise, perseverance and patience by chair Randy Norris, '79, for an extended term of 18 months, our board has met the past year's many challenges with flexibility and a sincere love of USF. Thank you!

I look forward to seeing you soon ... in person!

### **Bill McCausland, MBA '96**

*Vice President and Executive Director, USF Alumni Association  
Life Member No. 2331*



## Meet your 2021-22 Alumni Association board

Effective July 1, we have a new slate of USF Alumni Association board officers and some new directors. Here is your incoming board, which includes new and returning directors.

The association board includes Bulls who've demonstrated a firm commitment to USF's success, are association Life Members and Circle of Excellence donors. It also includes a USF presidential designee; a USF Board of Trustees representative; and two students — the student government vice president and the USF Ambassadors president. Non-voting, ex-officio directors are the senior vice president for USF Advancement, and the vice president and association executive director.

The board sets policy and guides the direction of the association as it builds mutually beneficial relationships between USF and USF alumni.



### Officers

*Left to right, top row*

**Chair: Monique Hayes**, '01

**Chair elect: Braulio Colon**, '03 and MPA '10

**Past chair: Randy Norris**, '79

*Bottom row*

**Treasurer: Bill Mariotti**, '15

**Secretary: Christine Turner**, '97



### Directors

**Kerine Black**, '00 and '01

**Maya Brown**, '15

**Jennifer Condon**

**Sally Dee**, '94 and MBA '11

**Matt Diaz**, '13

**Troy Dunmire**, '00

**Raymond Gross**, '69

**Dwayne Isaacs**, '05 and MEd '09

**Andrew Jones**, '11

**Andrew Ketchel**, '10 and MPA '12

**Maja Lacevic**, '09

**Andy Mayts**, '93

**Chris Reyes**, '93

**Carla Saavedra**, '87

**Juan Soltero**, '10

**Todd St. John-Fulton**, '19

**Rena Upshaw-Frazier**, '01

**Liz Wooten-Reschke**, '01 and MPA '06

*Student representatives:*

**Mario McPherson**, USF Ambassadors president

**Jillian Wilson**, Student Government vice president

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**Jay Stroman**, senior vice president for USF Advancement and Alumni Affairs; CEO USF Foundation

**Bill McCausland**, MBA '96, vice president and USF Alumni Association executive director



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# He's watching out for you — and your **MONEY**

Financial protection deputy  
shares 5 post-COVID  
consumer tips

By KIM FRANKE-FOLSTAD

**B**EFORE HE WENT TO WORK FOR the federal government in 1987, Calvin Hagins never traveled more than an hour-and-a-half from his home in Summerfield, Florida.

He's come a long way since.

In his 30-plus years in public service, Hagins, Finance '86, Life Member, has crisscrossed the country speaking to groups both large and small — including Congress — about fair lending practices. His mission: To ensure consumers are treated respectfully, equitably and honestly by banks and other financial institutions, and that lenders follow through on what they say they're going to do.

As deputy assistant director for originations in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Office of Supervision Policy, Hagins has been leading the national program for mortgage, automobile and student loans, and credit card origination matters for almost nine years. In December 2020, he received the bureau's highest honor: the Leadership Excellence Director's Mission Achievement Award.

It's rewarding, Hagins says, to serve in a role that touches pretty much everybody's life that you know. And he's proud to have been recognized as a coach and motivator.

Those are traits he's always appreciated in others, he says, including his parents, teachers and others who guided him along the way.

One of those motivators was Maryanne Rouse, MBA '73, a faculty advisor for USF's chapter of Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity. It was Rouse who encouraged Hagins, with his new diploma in hand, to apply to the federal Office of the Comptroller of the Currency in Tampa.

He began his career there as an assistant national bank examiner. Over the next 24 years, he worked his way up to more senior roles — in Tampa, then Atlanta, and finally Washington, D.C. After a short stint in the private sector in 2011, he joined the consumer protection bureau in 2012.

It's been quite a ride for Hagins, who got his first exposure to the business of finance as a 10th-grader when he got a job at the local bank.

"The work was indoors, so there was air-conditioning, and I was going to be around money," he says with a laugh. "I liked that."

He learned a lot from watching how people managed — or failed to manage — their finances and was determined to avoid their mistakes. He started putting away money from every paycheck, first \$10 every two weeks, then \$15. By the time he got to college, between the money he'd saved and the scholarship he earned, he had enough to afford school without the distraction of a part-time job.

All these years later, he's still urging people to be better savers. And whether you're saving, spending or borrowing, he says one of the smartest things you can do as a consumer is to always read the fine print on financial documents. If you're feeling a little lost or unsure, there are plenty of online resources you can use to educate yourself, he says.

His favorite? The consumer protection bureau website, of course, at [www.consumerfinance.org](http://www.consumerfinance.org).

As the world emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, it's evident consumers need to be especially cautious. The pandemic and its fallout, from stimulus checks to shortages of certain goods, have inspired countless new criminal schemes. Hagins shares a few ways people can protect themselves and their finances.

**Be wary of scams.** The pandemic has provided identity thieves and con artists with yet another opportunity to take advantage of unsuspecting consumers. The government has had multiple reports of hoaxes related to COVID cures and COVID charities, as well as scams targeting Social Security and unemployment benefits, federal student loans and more. You can get information on the latest scams at [www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/avoiding-scams/](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/avoiding-scams/). The site also offers guidance on how to avoid scams, and what to do if you think you've been victimized.

**Monitor credit reports.** It's a good idea to check your credit reports regularly to be sure the information is up to date and accurate. Normally, you can use the government-authorized site [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to request one free credit report annually from each of the nationwide credit bureaus. However, because the pandemic has taken a toll on so many Americans' finances, everyone is eligible to get free reports weekly





through April 2022. If you think you've been the victim of fraud or identity theft, you can contact any one of the credit reporting companies to place a fraud alert. And if you spot an error, you should file a dispute both with the business that provided the information and the credit reporting company.

**Bolster emergency savings.** The pandemic put an exclamation point on the wisdom of having a “rainy day” fund to weather financial setbacks. Now, as things get back to normal, it's important to stay focused on building that reserve. Pay yourself first, Hagins says.

**Be an informed homebuyer.** Thinking about buying a home in this hot real estate market? It may be tempting to leap before you look through all the paperwork, but that's a mistake. “When you sign on the dotted line, you're saying ‘I understand what I'm getting,’ ” he warns. Don't sign documents where important details

have been left blank. And if something is unclear, ask questions. The consumer bureau's “Your Home Loan Toolkit” ([https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201503\\_cfpb\\_your-home-loan-toolkit-web.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201503_cfpb_your-home-loan-toolkit-web.pdf)) offers a step-by-step guide to the mortgage process.

**Don't hesitate to ask for help.** If you've fallen behind on your bills because of the pandemic — or for any other reason — don't wait until the situation is dire. A poor payment history can have a negative impact on your credit score. Contact your creditors as soon as you know you're in trouble to discuss payment options and how you can get back on track. And create a budget you can stick to going forward. If you were laid off or had your hours cut during the pandemic and your finances suffered, it may take a while to build back to where you were. You can always change your plan as your circumstances improve. ■

**Calvin Hagins, '86, poses with Kathy Kraninger — then director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau — in 2019. Hagins recently received the bureau's highest award.**

# 'Mighty and courageous'



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## USF celebrates 2021 Outstanding Young Alumni

By PENNY CARNATHAN, '82

**U**SF recognized six of its most accomplished alumni aged 35 and younger during an April virtual awards ceremony that included a real-time q-and-a with the honorees.

The event featured a video of the recipients with music custom-composed and performed by two-time Latin GRAMMY winner Jose Valentino Ruiz-Resto, one of the 2021 recipients. "Mighty and Courageous" is cross-generational, cross-cultural and cross-genre, just like USF, Ruiz-Resto says.

"It's the collective Bulls' charge toward a new horizon of hope and, toward the end, an intercontinental celebration," he says. "Bulls aim to create our own path and we have the capacity to create our own outcomes, so I thought it was fitting to create our own theme song."

Event host Bill McCausland, MBA '96, vice president and executive director of the USF Alumni Association, declared it the official theme song "forevermore" of the USF Outstanding Alumni Awards, a 46-year tradition.

*The 2021 Outstanding Young Alumni Award recipients are:*

**Samuel Barrington**, Interdisciplinary Social Science '12 and MBA '21 – COO of Sky Limit Equipment, LLC, and former NFL linebacker

**USAF Capt. David DeLeon**, Business Marketing '14 – intelligence officer in charge of Targets for Special Operations Command Central at MacDill Air Force Base

**Anthony "Tony" Morrison**, General Business Administration '11 – senior social media producer for ABC's Good Morning America

**Jennie Nwokoye**, Biomedical Science '12 – founder of Clafiya, a platform connecting patients with community health workers in Nigeria

**José Valentino Ruiz-Resto**, Music Studies '09 and PhD Music Education '16 – University of Florida professor and program director of Music Business and Entrepreneurship and recipient of two Latin GRAMMYS

**Danielle Weaver-Rogers**, Political Science '10 – St. Petersburg assistant city attorney for labor and employment; president of the Fred G. Minnis Sr. Bar Association

All six, who earned USF degrees just seven to 12 years ago, have risen to prominence in their chosen fields while also making humanitarianism a life priority.

"Our Outstanding Young Alumni are shining examples of

USF's ability to shape the trajectory of our students' lives so they can inspire and positively impact others," USF President Steven Currall said in congratulatory remarks.

They shared what drives them, their memorable USF moments, and other details of their lives during a panel discussion facilitated by USF's dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Eric Eisenberg.

"I left USF fully equipped to take on everything I had to in life," said Morrison, who informs and entertains an online audience of more than 14 million people every day. "I went to business school and failed finance twice. I can't count, and I discovered that in college. Now I work in television! Failure puts you closer to where you should be in life and in your career."

Barrington recalled some of his favorite USF memories, including beating Florida State University at FSU as a freshman Bulls football player, and winning at Clemson the following year. But even more impactful was the professor who took a moment to speak to him after a sophomore year class — one he wasn't doing well in. As Barrington left the room, the professor followed.

"He tapped me on the back and said, 'Listen young man, you're really talented, but until you find out what you're here for, you're going to be mediocre,'" Barrington recalled. "It was perfect timing. Moving on from then, my grades significantly changed; in my personal life I grew a lot; and I became that much better as a ball player, because I focused on my purpose. ... Until you find out why you're here on this Earth and what your purpose is as an individual, you truly aren't living your life."

For Weaver-Rogers, participating in the USF Ambassadors program proved life-changing. The Ambassadors, one of three Alumni Association-sponsored student organizations, connects students with alumni and fosters leadership skills.

"I was connected with an alumnus who happened to sit on the board of trustees of the law school I would later apply to. I was subsequently awarded a full scholarship!" she said. "The alumni association is always connecting students and alumni. ... It taught me that you always give back."

Nwokoye, a program manager at Amazon, has raised more than \$100,000 for youthful entrepreneurs in her community in addition to running the social enterprise she founded to systematically address health-care issues in Nigeria.

What do you look for when you invest in others? Eisenberg asked.

"I look for people who really have a sense of purpose and want to leverage their skills to give back to the community and build a community," she said. "They see a problem and they want to fix it. I see a problem and I want to not just change a



person's life but create generational change. In Nigeria, what are the barriers to health-care access? How can we not just remove the barriers but fix the systems?"

Looking to the future, specifically, 10 years from now, DeLeon foresaw new battlegrounds — and weapons.

"We'll no longer be looking at boots on the ground. Ten years from now the majority of the conflict will be focused on the cyber domain, and with that comes a focus of artificial intelligence, machine learning ... Ten years from now I won't be focused on our special operators but more on a strategic standpoint of what are we doing in the cyber domain?"

On a more personal level — "I'll be retired! July 6, 2030. Mark your calendar!"

Noting the complexity of the music industry and the many challenges musicians face professionally, Eisenberg asked Ruiz-Resto how they can position themselves for success.

Ruiz-Resto noted the lessons he learned from his dad, Tito Ruiz, also a professional musician, about the skills required to advance in the music business. He learned as a kid that they went far beyond musical training.

"At the University of Florida, I've developed a curriculum that's a mirror of everything my dad taught me — Strategic Music Entrepreneurship Development, Foundations of Music Business, Music Production and Social Media," Ruiz-Resto said. "Universities having viable programs that prepare creative arts entrepreneurs is going to be essential at all levels."

Watch the entire panel discussion, including the video featuring "Mighty and Courageous," at <https://bit.ly/346XiQW>.

To learn more about the Outstanding Young Alumni Awards, including how to submit nominations, visit [www.usfalumni.org/oyaa](http://www.usfalumni.org/oyaa).



**Samuel Barrington** is chief operating officer of Sky Limit Equipment, LLC, an Orlando-based mobile crane company that has done the heavy lifting on numerous Florida landmarks, including the USF Morsani College of Medicine in downtown Tampa. Barrington is also a former NFL linebacker, drafted by the Green Bay Packers after earning a degree — and a place in history as the Bulls' 10th leading tackler — at USF. After an injury ended his nearly five-year NFL career, he pivoted to business, helping to grow Sky Limit, which was founded by his father. He also returned to USF, where he's the Bulls color analyst for Tampa Bay Entertainment Properties. A dedicated philanthropist, Barrington was the Packers' 2015 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year nominee and is a recipient of the Pop Warner Humanitarian, Ed Block Courage, and Presidential Volunteer Service awards.

**USAF Capt. David DeLeon** is the intelligence officer in charge of Targets for Special Operations Command Central at MacDill Air Force Base. Advising commanders with expert analysis, he delivers threat briefings focused on protecting U.S. national interests and maintaining regional stability. After enlisting in the Air Force at 18, he caught the eye of Master Sgt. (retired) Jeffrey Randolph, who suggested he explore ROTC opportunities. DeLeon enrolled at USF, becoming a commissioned officer upon graduation. He continued to distinguish himself, earning the Air Force Achievement Medal with second oak leaf cluster; Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal; and Joint Meritorious Unit Award with oak leaf cluster, among other honors, and has been recognized numerous times for his roles in successful crisis response and contingency operations. Meanwhile, he has given more than 400 hours to charitable organizations, such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, while serving as a bridge between MacDill service members and USF's ROTC students.



**Anthony "Tony" Morrison** is the senior social media producer for Good Morning America and ABC News, subsidiaries of The Walt Disney Company, where he oversees the social and digital strategies for GMA's family of brands. His work helps drive the network's daily news priorities while ensuring the nation's No. 1 morning news show maintains a consistent voice across platforms. As a USF student, he photographed events for the university and as a freelancer at Disney World. After graduation, he worked as a professional photographer, eventually moving to New York City in search of bigger opportunities. Short-term work with LIFE Magazine and ABC led to a job at CNN, which eventually took him back to his Disney roots and ABC. Among other honors, Morrison has won two Emmy Awards, two Edward R. Murrow Awards for journalism and, most recently, a GLAAD Media Award for outstanding representation of the LGBTQ+ community. Recently, he joined D23 Inside Disney, the official Disney podcast, as one of three co-hosts.



# FOREVER BULLS



Photos:

Left, and opposite page: David DeLeon with wife, Maribel, and child. DeLeon in the early years of his Air Force career.

Opposite page: Morrison holds one of his Emmy Awards.

Below: Nwokoye, in green shirt, with her brother and sisters.

**Jennie Nwokoye** is a program manager at Amazon Web Services and co-founder of Clafiya, a social enterprise platform that expands patients' access to affordable, quality primary healthcare in Nigeria. While Clafiya sprang from her own experiences seeking health care in Nigeria, her passion for social impact has multiple outlets. She has also established herself as a reference person for capacity building and youth development in Washington, D.C., where she assists young entrepreneurs addressing some of society's thorniest issues. She is a mentor, resource and fundraiser for these youth, helping them raise more than \$100,000 in two years to execute their visions. Jennie has received numerous honors for her work, including Forbes' "30 Under 30" Fellow and The Legacy Lab's Rising Star Award. She won the Women in Global Health and AI Challenge, was a Georgetown University Bark Tank finalist, and was selected for the Rockefeller Foundation-Acumen Student Social Enterprise Accelerator program.





**José Valentino Ruiz-Resto** is University of Florida's program director and inaugural professor of Music Business and Entrepreneurship. He's also the director of global entrepreneurship and advancement initiatives for Diaz Music Institute 501C3; resident multimedia composer for Hayden 5 video production; CEO of JV Music Enterprises; and global strategist and ambassador for Worldwind Music UK Ltd. Ruiz-Resto — who performs as José Valentino — is a multi-instrumentalist, audio engineer, composer, ensemble leader and executive producer who has been a music producer for American Idol, X-Factor, ESPN, PBS, and NBC Universal. His work has been awarded two Latin GRAMMYS; one Emmy; one AVA Digital Award; and 52 DownBeat Magazine Student Music Awards — a 2016 record; among other honors. The son, brother, and son-in-law of USF grads, Ruiz-Resto maintains close ties with the USF School of Music, where he is a frequent guest speaker.



**Danielle Weaver-Rogers** has been an assistant city attorney for St. Petersburg, Fla., for six years, with a focus on labor and employment. She handles internal investigations; provides advice and counsel to all city departments, the mayor and city council; ensures compliance with state and federal laws; and drafts employee policies and procedures. She has successfully defended Florida's fifth largest municipality in multiple cases, including the city's first severance of a bargaining unit before the Florida Public Relations Commission. She also drafted the city's first policy covering employees' service animals. Weaver-Rogers is president of the Fred G. Minnis Sr. Bar Association ("Minnis"), the only African-American bar association in Pinellas County. Its mission includes contributing to the professional growth of members; ensuring diverse representation within the legal community; educating the community; and mentoring members of the Black Law Students Association. Weaver-Rogers was Minnis Bar Association 2018 Member of the Year and 2017 Rising Star.

**Photos:**

**Above:** Ruiz-Resto celebrates his doctorate.

**Right:** Weaver-Rogers, a leading Pinellas County attorney, then and now.





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# WHERE'S Rocky?

**a** Enjoying a perfect May day at the USF Alumni Association's Birdies for Bulls Golf Tournament, Rocky hangs out at Southern Hills Plantation Golf Resort in Brooksville, Florida, with **Charles Tarlton**, left, and **Sally Dee**, '94 and MBA '11, Life Member. His good luck and golf skills rubbed off! The pair, along with **Rick Lindstrom**, Life Member, and **Kemel Thompson**, '12, Life Member, took first place.

**b** **Ruth Rogge**, '74, Life Member, shows Flat Rocky the snow-capped view in Steamboat Springs, Colo., during a recent trip with her husband, **Jim Rogge**, '74, Life Member.



**C**

## FOREVER BULLS

**C** There's no better destination for three Bulls than Spain! **Donna Betz**, '86, left, Rocky, and **Jennifer Madalena**, MBA '05, enjoy a pre-pandemic trip that included the sights in Barcelona.

**d** Rocky and **Manley Jaquiss**, '86 and MA '15, Life Member, get a surprise Horns Up! from at Gateway National Park ranger in St. Louis, Mo.

**e** Tampa's mayor declared April 8 USF Women's Basketball Team Day and Rocky was there! He joined **Abby Ritter**, '15, Life Member, left, and **Carla Saavedra** '87, Life Member, at City Hall to celebrate the day.

**d****e**

Rocky's been vaccinated! If he's getting out and about with you again, email your high-resolution pictures (300 ppi) and details to Penny Carnathan at [pcarnathan@usf.edu](mailto:pcarnathan@usf.edu), or mail to her at USF Alumni Association, 4202 E. Fowler Ave. ALC100, Tampa, FL 33620-5455

# ALUMNI Roundup

NEWS FROM USF'S  
VOLUNTEER-LED  
ALUMNI GROUPS

## Volunteer spotlight



### USF Broward County Alumni Chapter Alumni volunteer

**Alan Steinberg**, Communication/Public Relations '78, Life Member

**Hometown:** Miami

**Volunteer length of service:** 14 years

**Favorite USF event:** Football watch parties

**Favorite USF memory:** Debate team trips

**Favorite musician:** Jimi Hendrix

**Pet:** Lucy, a Havenese pup

**Photo:** Alan, right, with son Len

## USF Giving Week by the numbers

Volunteers with USF's alumni chapters and societies helped raise more than \$30,000 during Giving Week in April!

**\$30,656**

Money raised for alumni association scholarships and other funds

**31**

New alumni association Life Members\*

**127**

Donors

**80**

Giving Week emails and social media posts

*\*a portion of dues is deposited into an endowment that funds the association in perpetuity*



## #WeSaveLives - Siblings Day photo goes viral

For National Siblings Day April 10, Dr. Chinyere "ChiChi" Okpaleke, '08 and MS '10, Life Member, shared a photo of herself and five of her siblings — all of whom work in health care — on LinkedIn. The photo went viral, prompting stories by ABC's Good Morning America and NBC's Today show.

Dr. Okpaleke, a 2020 USF Outstanding Young Alumna and former Alumni Association board member, wrote in her post, "I know our parents and ancestors are beyond proud! We are exactly what their sacrifices were meant for!"

**Pictured, left to right, back row:** Dr. Okwy Okpaleke, '11; pathologists assistant Chinelo Okpaleke; Dr. Nkiru Osefo, '11; nurse practitioner Ifeoma Okpaleke; nurse practitioner Queenate Okpaleke, '99; Dr. Chinyere Okpaleke. **Not pictured:** Dr. Lillian Okpaleke. **In front, their parents, who immigrated from Nigeria:** Dr. Andrew Okpaleke and physician assistant Celina Okpaleke.



John Cranston, top, and Nathan Miller

## New society salutes Bulls who've served

**U**SF LOVES ITS MILITARY VETERANS, and it shows. For nearly a decade, the university has been among the *Military Times*' top five "best for vets" four-year colleges in the nation, including No. 1 in 2017. But by fall 2020, there was still no USF Veteran Alumni Society.

That surprised John Cranston, who enrolled in 2018 after five years of service in the U.S. Marine Corps. Eager to get involved in campus life, he applied to several groups, including the Alumni Association's Order of the Golden Brahman.

"In the application, they asked what legacy you want to leave at USF," says Cranston, USF's 2020 Student Veteran of the Year. "I thought there had to be a group for veteran alumni to connect through, but I couldn't find anything. Creating the USF Veteran Alumni Society became my mission."

Cranston, who plans to graduate in August, thought an alumni group could help students navigate the difficult transition from military to civilian life. As a new student, that was one of his biggest worries.

"I hadn't been in school for five years, and I wasn't sure if I was going to succeed in college," he says. "I was worried about whether or not I could figure out how to do math at a college level and if I could handle how academically rigorous it would be. I can't imagine how intimidating it is for a veteran who has been away from school even longer."

But the lessons he'd learned as a Marine helped a lot — and that's something alumni can share with new veteran-students.

"The tools the military taught us set me up for success," he says. "I showed up to my classes early, sat in the front row, took notes and respected all of my professors. It's all of those little habits that you pick up from your military experience that pay dividends when you transition to college."

Last fall, Cranston got to work creating his legacy. A fellow Marine in his ROTC program, Nathan Miller, quickly stepped up and the two emailed USF's veteran alumni to find more volunteers. Now they have three leaders and lots of interested alumni. They plan to host in-person socials, volunteer events and USF football tailgates.

Cranston hopes the USF Veterans Alumni Society will become a network that veterans can rely on for support, professional connections, friendship and guidance.

"People who serve in the military share a unique bond," he says. "Even though we served in different branches and at different times, we still speak the same language. The camaraderie isn't just from us serving in the military; it's also from our shared background at USF."

- ERIN RYAN, '20 | USFAA



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## ALUMNI ROUNDUP

# No matter where you live, you'll always be a Bull!

The USF Alumni Association's chapters and societies connect Bulls with one another – across the country and around the world. Through social events, professional networking, fundraising and community service, among other activities, alumni groups help USF grads and friends support one another, our university, and current students. They play an important part in the Alumni Association's mission to provide meaningful ways for Bulls to make an impact; protect USF through advocacy; share pride in our great university; and stick together.

It's easy to get involved! Just email the contact person of the group you'd like to visit.

### Interest-Based Groups

#### Black Alumni

Tina James  
blackalumnisociety@usfalumnigroup.org

#### College of Business Alumni

Samantha Fitzmaurice  
sfitzmaurice@usf.edu

#### DBA Alumni Network

Andy Hafer  
USFDBAAlumni@gmail.com

#### Engineering Alumni

Robert Andrew  
randrew@tampabay.rr.com

#### Geology Alumni

Matt Wissler  
usfgas@gmail.com

#### Kosove Scholarship Alumni

Justin Geisler  
justingeisler@hotmail.com

#### Latino Alumni

Melizza Etienne  
Luz Randolph  
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#### LGBTQ+ Alumni

Todd St. John-Fulton  
Robert Wallace  
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#### Library and Information Science

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# Class Notes

## 1970s

**EDWARD J. PAGE**, Criminal Justice '78, had his 21-year anniversary with the law firm of Carlton Fields in Tampa. He is a former state and federal prosecutor and Federal Aviation Administration certificated flight instructor. He practices criminal, civil, and aviation law in Carlton Fields's Tampa office.



Leslie Reicin Stein PL.

**LESLIE REICIN STEIN**, MA History '73, Life Member, received the Tampa Bay Business Journal's 2021 Top Corporate Counsel Lifetime Achievement Award. Stein is the managing attorney for



they met at a dinner hosted for the club by a professor. Gail went on to earn a doctorate in family and human development and worked as a teacher, behaviorist and human services specialist, while Roger became an institutional locksmith supervisor at Utah State University.

**GAIL BORNSTEIN YOST**, Special Education '72, and **ROGER YOST** of Logan, Utah, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary May 2. The two were officers in USF's chemistry club when

## 1980s



in Tampa, where she also serves on the board of directors. She was previously executive vice president of Communications for the company.

**LAURA LIONETTI BARTON**, Mass Communications '83, has been appointed chief business officer to lead strategic and business operations initiatives at Odyssey Marine Exploration

**DR. JANE BENTON**, MD '87, has joined the board of the nonprofit Space Coast Health Foundation in Rockledge, Fla. Benton is a pediatrician with Brevard Health Alliance in Melbourne, Fla.

**MARCIA CRAWLEY**, Management '89, was appointed director of philanthropy at New College Foundation in Sarasota. Previously, she served as a consulting vice president with Grenzebach, Glier and Associates, a philanthropic consulting firm based in Chicago.

**JUNE DENTON**, Accounting '88, has joined Seaside Bank and Trust in Sarasota as senior vice president and regional treasury solutions officer. She previously served as senior vice president for cash management at ServisFirst Bank in Sarasota.

**RANDY WARNER**, Marketing '86, has joined LG Electronics USA's home appliance business-to-business division as vice president of sales. Most recently, he was the sales vice president at Samsung's Luxury division.

## 1990s

**JENNIFER (GLEASON) ADAMS**, Visual Communications '95, has joined MindEdge Learning as managing director. She previously worked for the University of New Hampshire focusing on project and process management, communications strategy and brand awareness.



**NIKKI ALVAREZ-SOWLES**, Political Science '97, was appointed to the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation Executive Council. She is the Pasco County Fla. clerk and comptroller.

**CHAD CAMPBELL**, Marketing '97, has been named president of Seaside Bank and Trust's Gulf Coast market and middle market banking Florida, based in Sarasota. He previously served as Florida market executive for commercial banking at BMO Harris Bank in Chicago.



**DAVID FILER**, Finance '93 and MBA '98, was appointed chief information officer at ProVest in Tampa. He was an executive consultant at FCM, a private equity consulting firm.

**FRED HEID**, Biology '99 and MEd Educational Leadership '03, was selected as the Polk County (Fla.) Public Schools superintendent effective July 1. He was previously superintendent of Algonquin, Ill., public schools.

**JENNIFER HIGGINS**, Nursing '97, has been named chief nursing officer for Lee Health in Fort Myers, Fla. She has been with the hospital system since 2000, most recently serving as interim chief nursing officer.

**JOHN MCKAY**, Accounting '91, has joined Neal Land & Neighborhoods in Lakewood Ranch, Fla., as financial and community development manager. McKay previously provided asset management services for Rizzetta & Company, Inc.

**DAVID ROOS**, Political Science '91, was invited to present "COVID-19 and Workers' Compensation" at the Insurance Management Consultancy Group's XCelleration seminar in Lakeland, Fla. Roos serves as the chair of the Workers' Compensation division at Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A., a law firm based in Fort Myers, Fla.



through a series of scholarly essays written by librarians in the field.

**TRACI E. TIMMONS**, MA Art History, '96, has published "The New Art Museum Library," (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), which addresses the issues facing today's art museum libraries



Department history.

**REX TROCHE**, Criminology '94, was promoted to deputy chief of the Sarasota Police Department. He made history as the first Hispanic deputy chief in Sarasota Police



**LEONARD WEBB**, Criminology '90, has been named Allegany County's Next Generation Scholars program coordinator for the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education.



### Send us your class notes!

Send Class Notes submissions and high-resolution (at least 300 ppi) photos to [pcarnathan@usf.edu](mailto:pcarnathan@usf.edu) or mail to Penny Carnathan, USF Alumni Association, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., ALC100, Tampa, FL 33620-5455



Previously, Webb served as a speaker for the organization's Maryland Scholars Speakers Bureau and was a substitute teacher in Allegany County Public Schools.

**MEGAN WESSEL**, MPH '95, has been named the 2021 Outstanding Woman in Public Health by the USF College of Public Health. Wessel is vice president of regional cancer control for the American Cancer Society's Southeast Region. She previously managed statewide disease management programs for CIGNA HealthCare of Florida.

## 2000s

**GABE ALVES**, International Studies '04, received a Tampa Bay Business Journal Business of Pride award in recognition of his efforts to advance LGBTQ+ causes in the workplace. He is a real estate specialist at RE/MAX Metro Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg.

**KELLY ATKINSON**, Mass Communications '05, was promoted to vice president for brand management and creative services at AmeriLife Group LLC in Clearwater, Fla. She was previously vice president of marketing and distribution.

**JAMES BAUMGARTNER**, MBA '09, has joined KW Property Management & Consulting as a district manager in the Tampa region. Previously, he worked at FirstService Residential Florida in Hollywood, Fla., for 15 years.

**NATHAN BRUEMMER**, Management and Information Systems '01, received a Tampa Bay Business Journal Business of Pride award in recognition of his efforts to advance LGBTQ+ causes in the workplace. He is president of St. Pete Pride.

**DEANNA BULLARD**, MA Applied Anthropology '01 and PhD '07, received the USF College of Education's Excellence in Undergraduate Education Award. She is the assistant director of academic advising for the College of Education at the USF St. Petersburg campus and teaches University Success.

**STEVEN CHEW**, MHA '09, received the 2021 USF College of Public Health Outstanding Alumni Award. He is the senior administrator of neurosciences, orthopedics and infectious diseases at Tampa General Hospital in Tampa.

**MARIA JOSE HOREN**, MPH '09, has been hired as chief program officer for All Faiths Food Bank in Columbia, Md. She was previously a lead behavior/mental health education specialist for the Maryland State Department of Education.

**DWAYNE ISAACS**, Management '05 and MEd '09, Life Member, Alumni Association board member, received the 2021 Legacy Leader Award from the Association of College Unions International for his work promoting student activities on campus. Isaacs helped open the Marshall Student Center on USF's Tampa campus and the University Student Center on the St. Petersburg campus, where he is director of Student Life & Engagement.



**SHANNON "SHAE" KEEFE**, Criminology '04, Life Member, was promoted to shareholder at Winstead, PC, in Houston. She has been with the firm since 2017

and is a member of the business litigation practice group.

**SALOMON LAGUERRE**, Psychology '08, has received the 2021 Corporate Counsel Rising Star Award, co-sponsored by the Atlanta Business Chronicle and the Association of Corporate Counsel Georgia Chapter. Laguerre is the senior corporate counsel for The Home Depot Inc.



**JENNIFER MCINTOSH**, Special Education '09, was appointed chief talent officer at United Way Suncoast in Sarasota. Previously, she was the vice president

and chief people officer of AACSB International, a nonprofit membership association in the higher education industry.

**DWAYNE POLZER**, Mechanical Engineer '04, MS '07 and MSBE '08, has joined PainTEQ, a Tampa-based medical device development company, to oversee its quality management system. He also serves as the company's liaison with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.



**SCOTT RICHARDS**, Civil Engineering '06, was elected to shareholder at the Carlton Fields Orlando office. He also works as an attorney at the firm.

**AMANDA SHAW**, MPH '08, has joined the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office as a general manager in the grants, research and development department.



**BROOKE SIMPSON**, Accounting '04, has joined BKD CPAs & Advisors as an international tax partner in the firm's Nashville, Tenn., office. She previously worked as an accountant for PricewaterhouseCoopers.



**JASON STRICKLAND**, MPA '03, Life Member, has been appointed chief communications officer in the department of veterans affairs at the Rocky Mountain Network, which

provides health care to 1 million veterans in five states: Colorado, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming.

## 2010s



**BEN AGOSTO III**, Finance '14, has joined Abraham Watkins law firm in Houston as an associate focusing on personal injury cases.

**TANNER BAILEY**, Economics '15, has joined Skyway Capital Markets in Tampa as regional vice president for the Southeast markets. He previously served as regional vice president for Carillon Tower Advisers, a subsidiary of Raymond James Financial.

# Class Notes



**JOEL A. BALABAN**, Industrial Engineering '11 and MSEM '11, and **LAUREN BALABAN**, Chemical Engineering '12 and MBA '18, have announced the expansion of their pop-up gym company, AtmosEffect Fitness, based in Tampa.

**THOMETTA COZART**, MPH '13, Life Member, received the 2021 USF College of Public Health Outstanding Alumni Award. She is an assistant professor of public health and health equity at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla.



**LAUREN DOW**, Mass Communications '12, published "In Body I Trust," a novel about her personal journey with mental illness and recovery. She is the founder of New Luna Press, an independent publishing house in Denver, Colo.

**STEVEN GENDREAU**, Criminology '17, has joined Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, P.A., in Fort Myers, Fla., as an associate in the tort and insurance litigation department. He is a recent graduate of Stetson University College of Law.

**TYLER GILLESPIE**, MA Journalism/Media Studies '18, has published, "The Thing About Florida: Exploring a Misunderstood State" (University Press of Florida; 2021). His first book, "Florida Man: Poems," published in 2018.



**MEG JONES**, MA Reading Education '16, has been awarded a Fulbright Finland Foundation grant to conduct research at the University of Helsinki on LGBTQ+ inclusive practices in the Finnish educational system. Jones is a University of Rhode Island doctoral student.

**JULIA (BARNHILL) LETLOW**, PhD Communication '11, was elected to represent the 5th Congressional District in Louisiana. She is the first Republican woman to be elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives.

**YULONDA LEVERETT**, MS Nursing '12, has joined Watson Clinic in Bartow, Fla., as a family medicine provider. She's also a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

**JAMES MCNULTY**, English '14, was selected as a finalist by Featured Florida Partners to receive financial assistance for professional script coaching services. He was chosen based on his screenplay "Tiger in the Woods."

**MELISSA MERCADO**, PhD Public Health '13, received the 2021 USF College of Public Health Outstanding Alumni Award. She is a behavioral scientist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and a CDC spokesperson.

**ANTHONY "TONY" MORRISON**, General Business Administration '11, 2021 USF Outstanding Young Alumnus, has been awarded a GLAAD Media Award for outstanding representation of the LGBTQ+ community. He is the senior social media producer for Good Morning America and ABC News.

**DEREK OBER**, Business Economics and Finance '16, Life Member, was accepted into the 2021 Gulf Coast Leadership Institute by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation for his commitment to the community. He is the director of Northwestern Mutual's college internship program in the Sarasota-Manatee area.



**JEFFREY ODOM**, Mass Communications '16, was promoted to director of marketing for the National Hockey League's Dallas Stars. Previously, he was the team's digital manager.

**DR. SHELBY REGISTER**, Chemistry '13 and MD '17, will join Compassion Health Care, Inc., in North Carolina as a psychiatrist in July, expanding health-care access in rural communities. She was previously chief resident for general psychiatry at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.



**BENJAMIN RYCHEL**, Accounting '11, has joined USF Advancement as a staff accountant in the Office of Business & Financial Services. Previously, he worked at Coca-Cola as a payroll and tax accountant in Tampa.

**DR. AL SARDARI**, MD '13, has joined Watson Clinic in Lakeland, Fla., as a radiologist. He previously worked as a nuclear radiologist for the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System in Tucson, Ariz.



**LUIS A. SILVA**, Political Science '12, has joined Leech Tishman Fuscaldo & Lampl, LLC., as an associate in the Estates & Trusts and Taxation Practice Groups in Lakewood Ranch, Fla.

**LESHA SPENCER-BROWN**, MPH '14, has joined the Administration for Community Living in San Diego, Calif., as an aging services program specialist/program officer. She previously worked at the National Recreation and Park Association in Ashburn, Va., as a senior program manager.

**HUNTER TAYLOR**, English and Mass Communications '11, has been promoted to senior director of account strategy at ChappellRoberts, a Tampa advertising and branding agency. Taylor was previously senior digital strategist at the firm, which he joined in 2011.

**DARCY VANDEWOESTYNE**, Nursing '11, has joined USF as assistant director of academic advising on the Sarasota-Manatee campus. She previously worked at Queens University of Charlotte in Charlotte, NC, as the director of academic advising.



**NADIA WILLIAMS**, Communication '12, has been named a member of the 2021 class of McKnight's Women of Distinction Rising Stars, recognition for women leaders in the seniors care and living industries. She works as a health-care administrator at Park Springs in Stone Mountain, Ga.

## 2020s

**CHRIS CONN**, MBA '20, was appointed chief financial officer of Memorial Hospital of Tampa, an HCA West Florida facility. He previously served in that role at Poinciana Medical Center in Kissimmee, Fla.

**MADISON MASTERSON**, Marketing '20, has been named one of Tampa's top Instagram influencers by 83 degrees e-zine. Masterson has more than 27,000 followers at @madisonmusic and focuses on lifestyle, creativity, music and social justice.

**JOANNA RAMCHARAN**, Public Health '20, has joined Ultimate Medical Academy in Tampa as an account compliance quality assurance monitor. Previously, she worked as an administrative assistant at NPC International, a restaurant franchise operator.

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## In Memoriam

**ERNEST ABELLA**, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences '98, March 26, 2021  
**KENNETH EUGENE ADUM**, Special Education '69 and MEd '76, April 21, 2021  
**LINDA (WHITSON) ARNOLD**, Interdisciplinary Studies '93, April 1, 2021  
**RITA (ANTUONO) BOTT**, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences '02, Jan. 30, 2021  
**MARTHA "MARTI" LYNNE LEWIS BOUKNECHT**, Nursing '87, April 14, 2021  
**RUNELLE (KARNES) BOWMAN**, General Business Administration '82, March 13, 2021  
**FREDI BROWN**, MEd '81, March 9, 2021  
**ELLEN J. CIRELLO**, MS Physical Therapy '05, Dec. 28, 2020  
**DOUGLAS F. COCKERHAM**, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences '03, March 5, 2021  
**BRIAN COLLETTE**, Business Economics '90, April 14, 2021  
**LARRY E. CROY**, Accounting '67, Nov. 19, 2019  
**DR. MICHAEL STEVEN FERNANDEZ**, Zoology '74 and MD '76, Jan. 28, 2021  
**ROLAND N. GARCIA**, Distributive Marketing Education '74, Feb. 20, 2021  
**PAULA E. GIBSON**, Psychology '70, March 31, 2021  
**LAWRENCE GOODBREAD**, Special Education '67 and MA '69, March 8, 2021  
**PAUL F. GREEN**, MBA '92, Feb. 7, 2021  
**KATHLEEN LYNN GULLEY**, Elementary Education '71, Life Member, April 20, 2021  
**ANTOINETTE M. HARVEY**, MA Reading Education '76, Feb. 20, 2021  
**ROBERT J. JACKETT JR.**, Accounting '91 and Finance '00, Feb. 19, 2021  
**MICHAEL LAWTON**, Industrial Arts Technical Education '77 and MPA '98, March 30, 2021  
**KELLY MAHOWSKI**, English '16, Feb. 1, 2021  
**JAMES WILLIAM "BILLY" MARTIN III**, Marketing '75, Feb. 8, 2021  
**WAYNE D. MCCLAIN**, Mathematics '69 and MA '75, Feb. 28, 2021  
**RUTH CAROLYN (BREYER) MILLER**, Art '66, April 11, 2021  
**ANNABEL EDITH MONTGOMERY**, MS Marine Science '01 and MBA '04, Feb. 10, 2021  
**MARCIA (WELCH) MONTGOMERY**, Psychology and Sociology '65, Feb. 6, 2021  
**ALISON MOYER**, Nursing '78, May 9, 2021  
**DANIELLE N. PERILLA**, Environmental Science Policy '06, April 10, 2021  
**ELIZABETH MYLES RAIKES**, English '90, March 31, 2021  
**RUTH (BRELAND) REYNOLDS**, Elementary Education '63, MA '68 and PhD '93, Jan. 29, 2021  
**CHARLES TIDEWELL**, Accounting '67, Jan. 30, 2021  
**AMOS M. VALENTINE JR.**, Accounting '92, Feb. 18, 2021  
**MARSHA WARNER**, Special Education '75 and MA '80, March 28.  
**DENNIS RICKEY ZABALDO**, Anthropology '85, April 3, 2021  
**BEVERLY "BEIVA" ZINKE-KELLOGG**, Dance '82, March 28, 2021

## Faculty and Staff

**JAMES L. BAKER**, Clinical Professor of Plastic Surgery, Jan. 11, 2021  
**HARRISON WALL COVINGTON**, Fine Arts Dean and Professor Emeritus, Life Member, April 24, 2021  
**DOUGLAS A. ELLER**, Urology Residency, Feb. 21, 2021  
**RANDY FELDMAN**, Associate Professor for Pediatrics and Plastic Surgery, March 3, 2021  
**JULIANNE HARMON**, Chemistry Professor, Jan. 26, 2021  
**DR. WILLIAM LEFOR**, Medical Microbiology, Feb. 3, 2021  
**BARBARA MARTIN**, Chemistry Courtesy Faculty, Feb. 7, 2021  
**JAMES RENICK**, Assistant Dean, Jan. 3, 2021

## Friends of USF

**ANDREW H. HINES JR.**, LDH '89, Benefactor, Life Member Feb. 21, 2021  
**CAROL (ELLIS) MARTIN**, Benefactor, April 7, 2021  
**MAUDE FOWLER PALLARDY**, Founding Member and President of Town and Gown, Feb. 1, 2021  
**ELAINE F. SHIMBERG**, LDH '02, Benefactor, April 15, 2021



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