

LAW:

I have been so fortunate to have both types of people in my corner

moments recognizing just a few of those who have helped me along the way.

Thank you to Clint Brown, who is here with his wife Ciny. Clint was the managing partner for the first firm I worked for after becoming a lawyer. Your guidance and mentorship were incredibly valuable as I got

And thank you to Chancellor Raymond Rodrigues, Chair Brian Lamb, and the entire Florida Board of Governors. I am grateful for your partnership with our university as we continue serving as a resource that fuels the talent pipeline and advances the economic development of our region and our state.

this afternoon. Thank you for your advocacy and your continued support of our great university.

And I am honored that we have presidents and delegates from other colleges and universities joining us today. Thank you for visiting us and -held traditions. Your leadership has inspired me during my time in this role, and I look forward to learning more from you.

USF presidents have joined us on the platform: the Honorable Betty Castor, Dr. Judy Genshaft, and Dr. Steven Currall. Thank you for being here and for your wisdom and encouragement. It has been an honor working with you to take USF to new heights.

When I talk about effective leadership, I make it a point to mention that no one person can accomplish everything by themselves. Every great leader has a talented team around them, and I am greatly appreciative of the members of my leadership team, our deans, and all of our faculty and staff for your dedication and hard work.

And of course, a very big thank you to my team in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The University of South Florida has seen transformative change over the years which is truly uncommon for a university of our size in a relatively short period of time.

As is often said, we stand on the shoulders of those who came before

When I was uncertain about the road ahead, he would often tell me,
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So now I say that to you

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‡ each of us when we are empowered to do our best work in a space of curiosity, courage, and compassion?

We can be anything we want to be.

So, what do we want to be?

When I first enrolled at USF, I wanted to become a doctor. In fact, on display in my office, I still have the microscope my mother gave to me as a child. But when it was time to start thinking about medical school, I was told I would have to stop working full-time to focus on my studies.

@ o @ majors I might be interested in pursuing. After much soul-searching and exploration, I decided a business degree would be a great fit because it blended well with my work here at USF in contract negotiations.

I took a course in business law, and through a project where we had to help a local business something clicked for me. I could become a lawyer. Then I could keep doing good, continue learning, and stay true to myself while giving back to my community.

But first, I *really* It took me almost 10 years to earn it, but I made it happen. After graduating from USF, I cashed out my retirement savings and enrolled in law school at Stetson

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involved in the community, and especially here at USF.

No one expected me to go to college, and certainly not to law school.

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USF has a track record of going beyond the status quo and defying expectations.

And the students who come here reflect that same ambitious mindset.

At USF, you get out of your experience here what you put into it. This is true for our students, our faculty and staff, our researchers, and our community partners.

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Indoor Performance Facility, a centerpiece for our Athletics District, which will only continue to grow in the years to come as we prepare for our new on-campus stadium. This location was chosen as a reminder of how the university continues to push forward by writing its own playbook and partnering with our community.

Everywhere you look on our campuses, you can see similar examples of how our university is evolving in real time.

We will soon begin highly anticipated expansion plans in Sarasota-

As I mentioned, we are fully committed to launching another major project that will provide significant value to all our athletics programs and transform the experience our community has here on campus and that is an on-campus stadium.

Our intercollegiate athletics programs can serve as the front door to the institution, cultivating a stronger community connection to our university and giving our alumni a renewed sense of pride in being a USF Bull. I want all of our alumni to remain deeply connected to their alma mater, just as I have throughout the years.

As we stay on the cutting edge of research and teaching methods and modalities, and as we engage new community partners, we are writing the next pages of our history.

Those close to me know, I like forward motion. And I like to move *fast*.

University of South Florida @

milestones once reserved for universities centuries older than ours because we are not held back by how things have been done in the past.

have accomplished so much.

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institution the highest designation a university can receive for its research productivity with three unique and thriving campuses.

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graduating under-represented minority and limited-income students at rates equal to or higher than white and higher-income students.

As you can see, USF is a university on the rise. Over the past decade, no other public university in the country has risen faster in *U.S. News and World Report* rankings.

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The first is Health Sciences. We are home to the fastest-rising medical school in the country, and our impact is expanding thanks to our strong and growing presence within Downtown Tampa and our invaluable

And while we are making great progress in these three areas, our university is making incredible contributions in so many other

pockets of knowledge can be found everywhere you look, and that is certainly true here at USF. Any activity we choose to pursue, we do so to transform lives and make powerful discoveries.

I also believe our university can strengthen the shared experience and collaboration opportunities we provide through the arts.

Not only does USF have a stellar College of The Arts and arts programming, but our campuses are also home to numerous public artworks that enhance our campuses by serving as informal gathering places and exposing our community to prominent artists and their work. These are spaces that our students, faculty, and staff pass by every day, and they are some of the most recognizable locations on our campuses.

new fund that will support these beautiful works and invite our community to engage with them in a more profound way. These iconic spaces were not created just for our students and employees they were installed to enrich the lives of *everyone* in our communities.

USF is strengthening our relationships within the community in ways

healthcare system, in the U.S. military through the United States Special Operations Command and MacDill Air Force Base, and in our local school districts, just to name a few.

These community partnerships are a two-way street. Our students benefit from the hands-on learning opportunities available through these organizations, and our partners benefit from having access to

actually do it.

After crossing the threshold, I turned around and burst into tears. USF was my home. How could I leave this place that I loved? This place that

if I would be successful in law school or if there would be a job waiting for me on the other side.

In his usual wise way, Bill came over to me, looked me in the eye, and

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Well, Bill, I took that reassurance to heart. Knowing that USF prepared me well for this next chapter and would always be a part of my life gave me the courage to move forward and do the *next right thing*.

And here I am cappe