

Town Hall Meeting

Rev. Stephen A. Privett, S.J., President of the University of San Francisco

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Because what I have to say is mostly “nuts and bolts”, I begin with a caution or a reminder that USF’s mission is not to produce a budget surplus, replace leaky pipes, complete the capital campaign or provide wireless access in every nook and cranny of the campus. We do all of that, but only to advance our mission of *educating leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world for all*. That is the standard against which we measure success; that is how we want to be recognized by our various publics.

That USF is gaining such recognition is evidenced by being numbered among the top 100 in *Washington Monthly’s* ranking of national universities by how much they benefit society, and by USF’s being one of only 60 universities awarded the newly created status of “engaged university” by the Carnegie Foundation.

In late December, *The New York Times* ran a front page article about how universities across the country are aggressively directing their energies and resources toward campus projects that will advance their rankings in *U.S. News and World Report*, oftentimes at the expense of their sense of a larger purpose. It is crucial for us to maintain our sense of the larger purpose as we work to improve every aspect of the University.

USF will not engage in the ever-escalating “arms race” that often characterizes the increasingly competitive landscape of higher education in the United States. USF will increase its efforts to excel at *educating minds and hearts to change the world*. USF will strive to recruit the right faculty and staff to offer a holistic, humanizing education and to enroll students who believe in and will benefit from that education. USF will continue every effort to provide the highest quality academic and technological resources necessary for educating the minds and hearts of its students. In the *Times* article I mentioned earlier, Kati Haycock of the Education Trust asserted that commitment to student learning recedes into the background as universities choose to use their resources to try to bolster their rankings. She said, “It’s all about reputation, selectivity and ranking, instead of about finding and educating future leaders.”

A beautiful campus, financial stability, quality learning environments, enhanced library and technology resources and a rich mix of student activities are all part of the rapidly changing topography here at USF, and all of these improvements are directed toward advancing the University’s commitment to the education and welfare of its students and the society they will serve. The University directs its resources not toward external markers of prestige and influence, but toward supporting a rigorous education that challenges and encourages our students as they develop into intelligent, purposeful, compassionate individuals who are fully prepared to meet their personal, professional and social responsibilities.

The Pakistani economist Mohammad Yunus, in accepting the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, reminded his audience that:

Every human being is born into the world fully equipped not only to take care of him or herself, but also to contribute to enlarging the well being of the world as a whole. Some get the chance to explore their potential... but many others never get any opportunity... to unwrap the wonderful gifts they were born with. They die unexplored and the world remains deprived of their creativity, and their contribution.

Far too many of our brothers and sisters in the global village die as “unwrapped gifts”, and we are poorer for it. You and I are numbered among and we work with those who have been given the opportunity to explore and unleash their gifts in the service of a more humane world for all. It is ultimately our responsibility to do everything that we can to challenge and encourage our students to take full advantage of USF’s Jesuit Catholic education for their sake and the world’s.

With that said, let me move now to the “nuts and bolts” information that I want to share with you in the form of the following PowerPoint presentation:

1. Enrollment trends
2. Planning & Budget related issues
3. Facilities assessment overview
4. Technology infrastructure project progress

Let me follow-up those “nuts and bolts” with perhaps the most current good news about USF: we have reached the \$175 million dollar goal of the capital campaign. For this campaign the trustees set a goal more than twice that of the 1990’s campaign. It is significant that this campaign explicitly focused on educating minds and hearts to change the world. That message and mission resonated with our friends and benefactors as never before in USF’s history, as evidenced by their generous response. The campaign received unprecedented support from trustees, strong leadership and direction from our Advancement staff, great collaboration from the deans and schools and an uncommonly high level of support from faculty, staff and students — for which I am most grateful to all of you.

USF has much to celebrate as this academic year begins to wind down. We have just started tabulating the survey of alumni from the past ten years that was conducted for our WASC accreditation. We now know that over 95 percent of recent alums would recommend USF to others, and that just over 92 percent said their USF education prepared them well for their first job. In terms of job preparation, our graduate students in nursing enjoyed an unprecedented 100 percent pass rate in the NCLEX Registered Nurse exam.

The School of Business and Management’s International Business Plan Competition once again drew strong international participation and reinforced the school’s national recognition for its entrepreneurial education. The College of Professional Studies was awarded a \$1 million scholarship endowment by the Osher Foundation to support its degree completion program. The School of Law is the beneficiary of a gift that establishes an endowed chair in an area yet to be determined. This past year saw USF

featured in more than 500 print media placements across the country. Three of our faculty and one student received Fulbright fellowships. Our Esther Madriz Diversity Scholars program earned an award from the National Association of Student Personnel. USF's Bon Appetit staff won the Oscar, or "best of business" medal, from the National Association of College and University Food Services for the fresh cuisine provided by Outakes. The University's recycling program finished fifth in the entire nation for the percentage of waste we recycle, 57 percent versus 19 percent at a nearby Jesuit university.

Over the past few months, USF faculty garnered national recognition for the best science essay, for the Nisei Voices award from the National Japanese American Historical Society, for the biennial James Phelan Film award, and first place in a worldwide competition sponsored by USAID for the best anti-poverty program impact study. Business Professor Oren Harari's latest book has gone through four re-printings in its first four months of publication. The presidency of the Associated Writing Programs and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists are currently held by USF faculty.

Research projects in environmental science, chemistry, economics, sociology and computer science have all garnered significant external grant support. The TEAMS Program, an AmeriCorps program at USF's School of Education, prepares teachers to work in multicultural contexts. It received \$1.89 million from the Corporation for National and Community Service. A USF sophomore in politics received the highly competitive International Public Policy Fellowship, which carries a \$70,000 stipend for supplemental educational opportunities and postgraduate studies. A USF student had her short story published in *Best American Voices*, which publishes the most promising new voices from the nation's top writing programs.

I hesitate to list accomplishments and achievements in public presentations because I know that I only see the tip of a very large iceberg. I apologize for my limited knowledge to those of you who deserve recognition and express my hope that each unit and division take time to acknowledge individual and team contributions to the University. We will do so officially next week at the Merit Awards Ceremony program and reception on Wednesday. I think it is important for us — we don't do it enough — to stop, step back, acknowledge and celebrate what we are doing so well.

This morning, Dean Larry Brewster of the College of Professional Studies announced to his colleagues that he will step down as dean in June and, after a sabbatical year, return to the USF faculty. Provost Jim Wisner will recognize Larry's many contributions to the College and the University at the conclusion of my remarks. Fr. John Fitzgibbons, S.J., who has served for this past year as an Executive Intern, will assume the responsibilities of Vice President for Administration beginning June 1. In addition to his vice presidential duties, John has agreed to serve as acting dean of CPS.

Let me conclude these remarks by returning to my starting point: the absolute necessity of focusing on USF's larger sense of purpose as we try to meet the multiplicity of claims on our time and energy on and off campus.

In its March 30 issue, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* juxtaposed two articles. One of the authors lamented universities that direct their attention to the larger struggle for justice in the world because its author argued that such a focus ultimately produces standards that amount to political litmus tests. I reject that allegation and argue that situating a university in the context of the larger struggle for justice is simply facing reality. Whether we like it or not, our institutions are located in a world badly scarred by injustice and wanton cruelty. Such needless human suffering makes a claim on us, personally and institutionally. We are not free to ignore those claims — in our Judeo-Christian tradition these are “the cries of the poor” — without sacrificing our own humanity and that of our institutions. To be involved in the larger struggle for justice is not a litmus test of our politics, but of our humanity.

The second article is written by the psychology professor, now emeritus, who 35 years ago ran the famous Stanford Prison Experiment in which some students assumed the role of guards and others of prisoners. The experiment was intended to run for two weeks but was abruptly cancelled after six days because of the severely abusive treatment of the mock prisoners by the mock guards. The experiment was only ended because a young woman professor from Berkeley visited the simulated prison and was appalled at the abuse and degradation that one set of human beings was inflicting on another. She insisted that the whole thing come to an immediate halt. In hindsight, the professor frankly acknowledged that his role as “principal investigator” and/or “prison superintendent” focused so narrowly on maintaining the experiment and the stability of his prison at all costs that it blinded him to the human cost that was being exacted in the name of science. Mind without heart is dangerous, and that is why USF aims to enlarge both.

While the Stanford Prison Experiment revealed the power of situations to overcome the goodness of people, I was struck by the other side of that insight: the power of situations to draw out and reinforce the goodness in people. I want to suggest that therein lies our challenge: building-up a university community — a situation — that feeds the mind’s insatiable appetite for truth with knowledge, satisfies the soul’s yearning for beauty and the heart’s infinite thirst for meaning with purpose and values, so that we and the world may enjoy the fruits of intelligence and goodness — minds and hearts — come together in a full and richly human life for all. That is the larger and lofty purpose that USF makes its own: a full, richly human life for every member of the global village.