

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to provide an update on the progress of two of our key strategic initiatives and invite your participation in the next steps of our strategic plan implementation.

Update on SFAI

The potential integration of SFAI has generated a tremendous amount of engagement on our campus, with over 300 community members participating in our town hall and initial co-design conversations. A joint SFAI-USF steering committee has been formed to oversee institutional considerations regarding the potential academic integration and to coordinate the work of subcommittees that are exploring issues related to curriculum, accreditation, enrollment, budgeting, faculty and staff integration, student engagement, library and digital archives, and student records. The **charges** and **memberships** of these committees have been posted on the provost's website, where we will also post **periodic updates** of the Steering Council meetings during the due diligence period.

USF and SFAI have begun to get to know each other through a series of events that has included a faculty meet-and-greet, student-to-student gatherings and presentations, and tours of SFAI facilities. We are moving forward quickly and methodically to assess how a potential integration with SFAI would serve our mission, strategic vision, and our students, as well as to identify the challenges associated with such an integration. I am grateful to the many faculty and staff who are serving on these subcommittees and to College of Arts and Sciences Interim Dean Eileen Fung and her team for their leadership. I look forward to reviewing the initial reports of the subcommittees later this month, which will play a critical role in our discernment about this significant potential investment.

Update on Property Acquisition at Masonic Avenue and Turk Boulevard

The acquisition of the Blood Centers of the Pacific building at Masonic Avenue and Turk Boulevard would transform USF's footprint and enable the university to create spaces in support of collaborative, innovative, and interdisciplinary learning and research, as called for in the strategic plan. The new property would provide access to much-needed academic spaces for scientific research and specialized laboratories, as well as classrooms and general purpose space. It would also create new opportunities for USF to attract research funding, collaborate with strategic partners, and engage in work that advances health equity and science innovation for the greater good.

The due diligence process is progressing and we will soon be embarking on a campus-wide review of space needs overseen by the University Space Committee, chaired by Fr. Paul. Faculty and staff design and visioning efforts are underway and campus stakeholders will be invited to submit proposals for use of newly available spaces on the Hilltop, including the property at Masonic and Turk. Assuming successful completion of due diligence and financing, full occupancy of the labs and other spaces on the property are slated for fall of 2023, following completion of required permitting and renovations. Interested campus stakeholders should keep an eye out for the call for proposals in April.

Strategic Plan Implementation

Even as we explore these two potentially transformative investments in the arts and sciences, **our strategic plan** calls on us to reinvest in our people (*cura personalis*), our ways of working (*cura apostolica*), and our core academic and scholarly enterprise to educate for justice (*Magis*). I am eager to launch our strategic plan implementation structures and begin that work — the foundation on which our future success will be built.

I am grateful for the efforts of the core strategic planning committee, led by co-chairs Pamela Balls Organista and Golden Venters, and the many community members who developed and delivered an inspired, community-driven strategic plan that was affirmed by our Board of Trustees in December. Our implementation process will honor and extend the participatory, consultative, and transparent spirit that was nurtured in the creation of the plan.

As we embark on this important work, I am mindful of the context in which we are operating: we continue to navigate an evolving pandemic, and its accompanying mental health and fiscal impacts; we are advancing two potentially transformative strategic initiatives that involve tremendous effort from dozens of people across campus; we continue to rebuild trust and heal from challenges of the past few years; and we are working to animate and make actionable our commitment to anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. As we imagine exciting possibilities for growth and innovation and begin to implement the bold direction articulated in the plan, we must also pace ourselves, carve out space for rest and rejuvenation, and work sustainably toward our goals.

Our first step will be the formation of a Strategic Plan Advisory Council, as envisioned in the strategic plan. The council will be a widely representative body that will advise on coordinating the strategic plan implementation process, liaise across academic and administrative units, and review the progress and deliverables of working groups for each of the strategic plan's goals. The Council will include faculty, librarians, staff, and students as well as representatives from units across campus, including representatives from each school, college, and the Gleeson Library to ensure alignment with school/college level strategic plans. I invite you to submit nominations and self-nominations for the Advisory Council.

[Submit an Advisory Council Nomination »](#)

As mentioned above, working groups will be formed for each of the six goals of the strategic plan. We will begin with areas that focus on our people and structures — with one working group to focus on goal #5 (ensuring USF is an equitable and extraordinary place to work) and a second to work on goal #6 (developing inclusive and participatory shared governance structures). These groups will get started this spring and may form subgroups to use the summer to gather information on best practices and map out the work ahead. Please indicate your interest in serving on one of these working groups.

[Serve on a Working Group »](#)

With the Advisory Council's input, we plan to launch the remaining implementation working groups in the fall. I am grateful to those of you who have written to propose additional working group ideas in topics relevant to the strategic planning — from disability justice to global education — and encourage you to continue to send your thoughts to me or **Anastasia Vrachnos**, or visit me during **my office hours**.

This is an exciting time for our community, as we begin work to realize a bold vision of radical inclusiveness and transformative Jesuit education, and, in so doing, embark on the path to greater impact and abundance. I hope that you will take a moment to join me on the **Day of the Dons** on Thursday, April 7, and mark this pivotal year with a gift to one of the initiatives that means the most to you, from the Black Achievement Success and Engagement (BASE) initiative to scholarships for students. However you choose to support the USF community — with your time, talent, or treasure — you are part of an extraordinary endeavor that is transforming lives and making our world more humane, sustainable, and equitable.

Warmly,

Chinyere Oparah
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

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