

Dear Colleagues,

As the days get shorter, and our morning rituals are practiced in chilly darkness, I am reminded of the wisdom shared by Katherine May in her powerful and lyrical book, **Wintering**. May encourages us to greet our winters, both temporal and metaphorical, as times for hibernating, healing, and resetting. This work, she reminds us, is deeply counter-cultural: “Doing these deeply unfashionable things — slowing down, letting your spare time expand, getting enough sleep, resting — is a radical act now, but it is essential.”

May’s invitation makes me wonder what would happen if the USF community leaned into *wintering* in the coming months. What if we took the time and space to go within, encounter our sad and unresolved places, and explore what it would mean to become witnesses for our own and one another’s healing? This week offers several moments for such collective reflection. All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day provide opportunities for us to honor those who have inspired and gone before us in the Catholic tradition. Today, USF also celebrates Día de los Muertos, a rich and complex Latin American/Latinx tradition honoring our loved ones who have crossed over. Día de los Muertos is particularly poignant this year in the light of the ways that death has become a familiar and ever-present visitor. This year, we might all benefit from this wisdom tradition, building *ofrendas* for the loved ones no longer with us, and savoring the sweetness of this precious and fragile life, symbolized in the gift of sugar skulls. I hope that you will find time to participate in the events listed below, hosted by the Center for Latinx Studies in the Americas, University Ministry, the Cultural Centers, L.U.N.A., and Gleeson Library.

As part of this season of reflection and introspection, I invite you to join in a series of conversations that draw on the framework of the Mission Priority Examen (MPE), which calls on us to “imagine justice as a generative network of right relationships.” In my conversations and listening sessions across campus in my first 16 weeks, I have been struck by a deep commitment to *cura personalis* and the relationships we have with one another, alongside a shared desire to heal and rebuild trust. These conversations, coordinated in partnership with the Mission Council, and with the support and insights of faculty and staff leadership, are a response to those collective yearnings. They aim:

- To explore how we can best live our mission in relation to *cura personalis*, radical inclusion, and honoring the intrinsic value of each person in our everyday interactions with one another.
- To name where we have participated in right relationships that have made us feel cared for and valued and where we have fallen short on our ideals.
- To document these strengths and challenges as we discern mission priorities within the context of our Mission Priority Examen.
- To identify opportunities to grow and expand our collective capabilities to build trusting and generative networks of right relationships.

It is my hope that these conversations will be spaces to listen, to contribute as we feel ready, and to discuss how we might co-create a collaborative process that will, over time, lay the foundation for a culture of shared governance and trust.

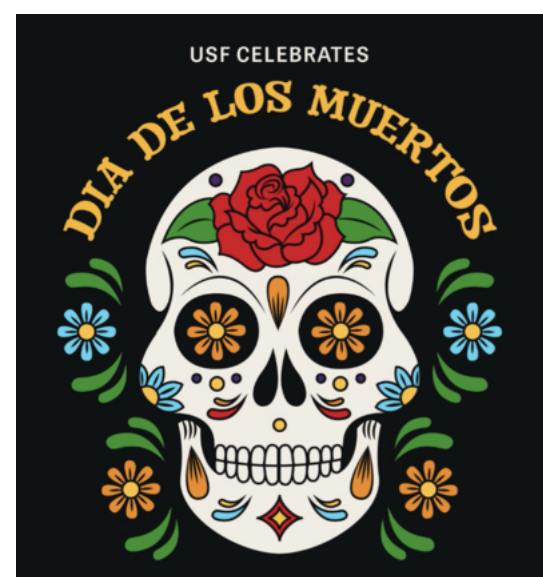
I am working with faculty, librarian, and staff leaders across campus to discuss how to create spaces that will allow members of our community to participate at their own comfort levels. I look forward to hearing thoughts from all our locations about how we might design such spaces for dialogue and what scaffolding and capacity-building we might need. I hope many of you will join one of the initial conversations about how best to do this when they are announced by the Mission Council in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I encourage you to explore what wintering means to you — working within your departments and units to create intentional moments for pausing, reflection, and discernment, as a much-needed balance to the pace and intensity of our daily lives.

Warmly,



Chinyere Oparah
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs



Dia de Los Muertos

Monday, Nov. 1 | 12–1 p.m. | Plaza and Welch Combo

Join USF’s Dia de los Muertos celebration and enjoy a performance by the Teokalli Traditional Aztec-Mexica Dancers, listen to speakers talk about traditions of the celebration, eat pan de muerto, and drink hot chocolate in community. [Read more »](#)

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