

Dear Members of the USF Community,

Today, as I begin my time as your interim provost and vice president of academic affairs, I am grateful, hopeful, and excited for the possibilities before us. And I write to introduce myself to those of you who I haven't had the chance to meet yet, and to provide an update regarding leadership transition in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Twenty-five years ago, when I arrived at USF as an Irvine Ethnic Minority Dissertation Fellow, I benefited from the groundbreaking work by the late scholar and USF Senior Vice Provost Gerardo Marín, who saw the importance of taking action to open opportunities for students, faculty, librarians, and staff from diverse, underserved, and underrepresented communities to study, teach, and work here. I am grateful for how the USF community — then and now — has nurtured my own professional growth and leadership. In this new role, I will continue seeking out a multitude of voices, engaging in difficult dialogues, enacting change when needed, and prioritizing equity and inclusion.

My immediate and greatest hopes include working with you to bring stability to our operations in this post-pandemic time, and to move our university to the strongest position for the future. The landscape for higher education is evolving, but if the pandemic has shown us anything, we have the knowledge, imaginations, and values that can help us lead the way. This is a pivotal moment to explore possible pathways forward, to act collectively and with intention. With you all, I am committed to supporting a Jesuit liberal arts education that is student centered and globally engaged, innovative and relevant, mission driven and humanizing — one that seeks justice on our campus, in our city, and in society.

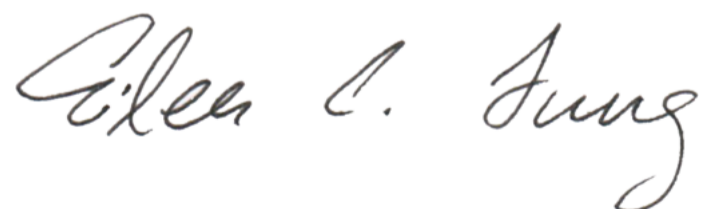
As I told my colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences last week, I did not seek this new role. When Fr. Fitzgerald called on me to serve the university in this new capacity, I was humbled and honored. I accepted his invitation only after careful discernment, wanting to make sure that I can meet USF's current needs and advance our community. I look forward to working with Fr. Fitzgerald, colleagues in cabinet, deans, faculty, librarians, and staff across schools and divisions to support all our students with respect, honesty, collaboration, and transparency.

I am also pleased to announce that Jeff Paris has agreed to serve as acting dean for the College of Arts and Sciences. Jeff has served as an assistant dean and associate dean of arts and humanities since 2018 and as faculty in the Department of Philosophy since 2001. I am confident that the college will be in good hands and look forward to working with him in this role this year. He will follow up with more information about the leadership team in CAS later this summer.

I know many of you have questions about how the university will proceed with recruiting, enrolling, and retaining undergraduate and graduate students; stabilizing finances; and positioning USF for a strong future. I will provide updates as soon as possible. The work on the university's strategic plan will also continue. My gratitude goes to our faculty, librarian, and staff colleagues who have been developing and implementing the critical priorities that we have collectively defined. I look forward to partnering with all of you as we learn, work, and grow together.

Thank you for your support and your patience during this transition. I hope you can enjoy well-deserved breaks and time with loved ones this summer.

Warm regards,



Eileen Chia-Ching Fung
Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Office of the Provost

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