Dear Colleagues,

As we begin a new semester and a new lunar year, we strive to make sense of the tragic events in Monterrey, Texas and and New Orleans. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the victims and to everyone in these grieving communities. We stand in solidarity with all of them and with all affected races and APIX communities. We feel deeply, deeply affected by these events and we must stand together and support one another in these difficult and painful moments. We are asked to hold and silence, and for peace.

And we must continue to educate for understanding, for gender and racial justice, and for peace.

As we continue this critical work in our classrooms, labs, and offices this spring semester, I want to express my gratitude and share some thoughts about the current moment and our work ahead. I am grateful to the faculty and staff who provided transformative experiences for our students during intersession immersions and the conference here in San Francisco with 15 faculty and staff from across our university. It was an energizing event filled with productive strategies and useful insights on topics ranging from data informed readiness for equity to transforming post-secondary with purpose and joy. The theme of this year’s meeting, “Reclaiming Liberal Education,” touched at the core of our higher education is currently facing, focusing on declining public trust, bankrupting programs, stagnating student outcomes, rising operational costs, increasing burnout, and mental health needs. We are feeling some of these at USF and, increasingly, are seeing the impact of these challenges on peer institutions in the Bay Area, most recently Holy Names University (HNU). We are working closely with colleagues at HNU, whoくなった, the institution’s closure in late December, to enable as many of their eligible students as possible to continue their education at USF.

The conference also provided an opportunity for academic leaders to come together and network across what our community desired for our shared and common purpose. What we teach our students to deploy, innovation, interdisciplinary approaches and brave bold ideas is not just about the knowledge and skills they require to thrive in the public and professional world, it is about their impact on society and the world around them. We have also seen creative new approaches to deal with the “exiled” and ostracized to intrinsically provoke us too. “When the winds of change blow,” the saying goes, “some build walls and others build windmills.” How can we harness the energy of that growth that fuels higher education so that we may build windmills and become catalysts for change? To do so requires courage, agility, and an orientation toward a hopeful future. Understand that I see across our campus our faculty and staff working together to inoculate current year’s ideas, explore our campus’ most pressing programs, and leverage our core curriculum and graduate programs.

I am grateful for the extraordinary efforts that this community is making to continue to educate and provide opportunities for our students despite difficult circumstances — to build windmills in stormy times.

We can look to the creative work being done in support of our students and across our campus community. In the upcoming forum on Global Focus and Responsibility, we will hear from leaders in the fields of public health, racial injustice, and migration, as well as from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh and by Pope Francis in a Lunar New Year event on campus, to commemorate Black History March, to join the movement for Nicaragua and Social Justice today, at 11K in 2024 for a community gathering to carry forward the vision of the Beloved Community shared by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh and by Pope Francis in 2018.

My dear Colleagues,

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs