

Dear Colleagues,

It is wonderful to celebrate our students and be in community with all of you at this joyous time of year. Whether cheering on our Asian and Asian American, LGBTQIA+, Latinx, Indigenous, Pacific Islander, and Black students at the affinity graduation celebrations, honoring our faculty, librarians, and staff at recent award ceremonies, toasting five years of Black excellence at the BASE appreciation celebration at the Museum of the African Diaspora, or attending the 164th commencement ceremonies in St. Ignatius Church — sharing these moments with our faculty, librarians, staff, students, and families fuels my belief in a hope-filled future.



Provost Chinyere celebrates with graduating LGBTQIA+ students at the Lavender Commencement Ceremony.

Thank you for all that you have done to build an inclusive, equitable environment where our students can thrive and learn to be people for others. You have done this even as you have responded to the enrollment and retention headwinds we are facing with alacrity, creativity, and dedication. I want to recognize the extraordinary efforts that have been made this academic year to adapt and evolve, to support our students, and to help equip and launch 2,126 new graduates into a world that so sorely needs their skills, their enthusiasm for change rooted in Jesuit values, and their belief in a faith that does justice. I am grateful for:

- The many faculty and staff across departments and programs, the CASA advisers, and the Student Success, Retention, and Equity Task Force, whose outreach efforts have supported our students and strengthened our registration numbers. 81.3 percent of our rising sophomores are currently registered (compared to 80.4 percent last year at this time), and we are working to retain students through the summer.
• The extraordinarily creative efforts of our undergraduate admissions team in SEM, collaborating closely with OMC and ITS, to minimize the negative impact of a very difficult enrollment climate, including development of a "Direct App" that resulted in almost 5,000 additional applications and a new website highlighting the ROI on a USF education.
• The collaborative and innovative approaches of our academic deans and their admission teams, working with SEM, to respond to a changing market at the graduate levels and generate creative marketing and promotional strategies, including the "Double Dons" scholarship for USF alumni interested in a USF graduate program.
• The formation of new partnerships and establishment of new sites in areas of need, such as a collaboration with Kaiser Permanente and the development of an Oakland site to teach out transfer students from Holy Names' teacher education and counseling psychology programs.
• The successful efforts of our Office of Contracts and Grants, College of Arts and Sciences, ADEI Office, Cultural Centers, vice provost of equity, inclusion, and faculty excellence, and dedicated faculty members to gain the designation of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) for USF, which makes us eligible to seek additional federal funding to support our students.

Once the spring semester comes to an end, work will continue in our classrooms, labs, and offices, and in the field for faculty conducting research. I greatly appreciate the efforts of those of you who will teach or support our summer programming, where, thanks to our online capabilities and data-driven interventions, we have been able to build back summer enrollments to pre-pandemic numbers. I also want to recognize the work of the faculty and staff who will be providing transformative global experiences for our students. Nearly 140 students are enrolled in 11 programs that will immerse them in topics such as migration, global citizenship, comparative conflict analysis, food pathways, and the biology of cancer. They will be studying across the globe, from New Zealand and Peru to Cambodia, Thailand, Spain, and Morocco.

Previewing the Fall Term

When our community returns to campus in the fall, we will be joined by a talented and diverse class of students, thanks to the efforts of April Crabtree and the SEM team. While we are anticipating a smaller class than last year, this class will be the most diverse in USF history. This class represents 42 states, DC, and Guam as well as 38 countries and reflects our deep roots in the Bay Area, which accounts for 35 percent of incoming students. Nearly 35 percent of our first-year students are the first in their families to go to college. The incoming students represent an academically exceptional, passionate, and diverse class of changemakers ready to take on the opportunities presented by a USF education.

As we enter the third year of our membership in the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD), five junior faculty will participate in the Faculty Success Program, which assists faculty in developing the skills necessary to increase research and writing productivity while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Please join me in congratulating the following faculty members:

- Chloe Hunt, Assistant Professor, English, College of Arts and Sciences
• Akshay Pattabi, Assistant Professor, Engineering, College of Arts and Sciences
• Duane Rudolph, Associate Professor of Law, School of Law
• Devanshi Unadkat, Assistant Professor, Learning and Instruction, School of Education
• Shan Wang, Assistant Professor, Mathematics and Statistics, College of Arts and Sciences

Acknowledging Our Academic Leaders

As you know, Senior Vice Provost Shirley McGuire will take a well-earned and overdue sabbatical beginning Aug. 1, after which she will return to faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences. I am extremely grateful to Shirley for her many years of service, leadership, thought-partnership, and dedication to nurturing instructional excellence and curricular innovation. She has made indelible contributions to academic leadership during her four years as associate dean and eight years as vice provost, spearheading the university's efforts on educational effectiveness, instructional continuity, institutional research, and curricular development while developing key academic initiatives. Under her stewardship, USF received a 10-year WSCUC re-accreditation, one of only two institutions to do so that round. Shirley was also a key leader of the COVID Response Team that ensured continuity of instruction during the pandemic. She has been a champion for data-driven approaches to student success and retention and provided continuity and institutional knowledge in academic affairs through key moments of transition. She worked closely with USFFA to reboot the Joint University Curriculum Committee (JUCC) that includes representation from across campus and has played a critical role in launching the core curriculum redesign task force. During her 22-year tenure at USF, Shirley has accomplished a tremendous amount, but what stands out most about her leadership is her willingness to step in wherever asked, her unfailing commitment to the mission and the university's best interests, and the inclusive, generous, collaborative, and mission-driven spirit she has always brought to her work.

I also want to express my thanks to Dean Susan Friewald. As many of you know, Susan has elected to return to the faculty after her current term as dean ends in summer 2024. Since beginning as interim dean and then stepping into the permanent position in the summer of 2019, Susan has mapped out a bold and transformative path to turn around the school's enrollment, enhance student outcomes and success, prepare graduates for thriving legal careers, work with faculty and staff to improve bar exam passage rates significantly, maintain a very diverse student body, hire exceptional and diverse new faculty, revamp career advising and services, and bring prestigious grants and initiatives to the school, including the launch of a cutting-edge Blockchain Law for Social Good Center. Thank you to Dean Eileen Fry-Bowers, who has agreed to chair the search for our new dean, and to all of the committee members who have agreed to serve in this important capacity. The search committee has partnered with search firm WittKieffer to conduct the search for our new dean of the School of Law with a goal of having our chosen candidate in place by fall 2024.

Congratulating Faculty

Finally, please join me in acknowledging our colleagues who are becoming emeriti professors and thanking them for their combined 261 years of exceptional scholarship and dedicated service to our students and the USF community:

- Alexandra Amati, Professor of Performing Arts, College of Arts and Sciences
• Constance (Connie) de la Vega, Professor of Law, School of Law
• Robert Elias, Professor of Politics, College of Arts and Sciences
• Walter Gmelch, Professor of Leadership Studies, School of Education
• Peter Jan Honigsberg, Professor of Law, School of Law
• Kathryn Nasstrom, Professor of History, College of Arts and Sciences
• Maria Ontiveros, Professor of Law, School of Law
• John Sullivan, Professor of Biology, College of Arts and Sciences
• Peggy Takahashi, Professor of Economics, Law, and International Business, School of Management
• Stephanie Vandrick, Professor of Rhetoric and Language, College of Arts and Sciences

I hope that the summer months bring you the opportunity to reflect and rejuvenate and prove a generative time for your scholarly, research, professional, and creative endeavors.

Warmly,

Chinyere

Chinyere Oparah
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

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