



Dear Colleagues,

The past few weeks have brought moving reminders that we are a “beloved community” educating for justice:

- The 50th anniversary celebration of the School of Education’s leadership in educating for justice, which brought together faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and community partners for an energizing evening of joy, connection, and mission;
- An inspiring event honoring the legacy of Gerardo Marín and his contributions to antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion on our campuses and throughout academe that continue to live on through the Gerardo Marín fellows;
- The invitation to dream together about our shared future and design the next chapter of teaching and learning at the 3D Symposium hosted by the Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Technology Services.



Assistant Professor Belinda Hernandez Arriaga, Muralist Nacho Moya, and Associate Professor Rosa Jimenez celebrate the unveiling of a mural that captures SOE's commitment to social justice through transformative education.

These events are important touchstones of *cura apostolica* and they remind me of why I am so passionate about this work. They come at a challenging time when we are engaged in the difficult process of closing the budget gap, while simultaneously making extraordinary efforts to improve recruitment and retention. Many of you have been involved in developing gap-closing plans and pivoting in innovative ways to reduce expenses and to improve enrollments. I recognize that it is hard to undertake such significant cuts, when we have made some strides toward developing and implementing a strategic plan that holds such promise. Our efforts may not yet have yielded the financial results that we would like, but we can see all around us the creative programs, bold initiatives, and new enrollment strategies that are the seeds of our success. I am impressed by and grateful for your creativity, resilience, and steadfastness in the face of the headwinds we face, and confident in our collective capacity to emerge from the current season of difficulties stronger than ever.

Our academic leadership team is committed to making budget decisions with transparency and care for our people in line with our Jesuit values, putting our students at the center of what we do and supporting the faculty, librarians, and staff who are our most valuable resources and enable us to deliver on our promises to students. Even as we address short-term challenges, we continue to look to the horizon, to plan and invest in initiatives that will ensure our future, and to evolve rapidly as the world around us continues to change.

## **Positioning for Our Future**

How are we positioning USF for a strong future? In the near term, we are taking practical steps to improve USF's market position, enhance the attractiveness and visibility of our programs, improve retention, and develop high-demand academic programs. A new Direct App has made applying to USF more accessible for students. A digital marketing campaign will reach high schoolers where they are. A Double Dons scholarship will incentivize USF students and alumni to consider our graduate programs and a new Oakland site will matriculate teacher education and counseling psychology students starting this fall. The Student Success, Retention, and Equity Task Force is developing a high-impact peer mentoring program and is creating targeted interventions based on disaggregated data, such as additional advising support for undeclared students. We are discussing how to enhance the first-year experience and wed more career preparation with our excellent liberal arts education to provide students with more opportunities after they graduate.

We are also engaging in long-term initiatives and planning that will enhance our ability to deliver a distinctive Jesuit education, to imagine new ways forward, and to position us for a thriving future. As Michael Garanzini, S.J. and Michael Baur outlined in *The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm and Its Relevance for the Jesuit University*, "The complexity of the systems and challenges we face — from the environment, to building democracies, to healing racial injustice and historic grievances that have wounded our social fabric — require ... a capacity to see all sides, to work for healing, and to imagine new ways forward."

I wanted to share a few updates about our ongoing work to reimagine Jesuit education, to care for our common home, and to work for healing.

- **Indigenous Engagement:** In February, we moved forward with USF's first formal outreach to the local Ramaytush Ohlone leadership. Fr. Fitzgerald, leaders of the initiative, and I were honored to meet with Chairman Jonathan Cordero, founder and executive director of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone, to hear his ideas for collaboration and launch

the journey to a new land recognition statement developed in partnership with Ramaytush Ohlone leadership. We continue our work to explore USF's historical relationship with Native American peoples, uplift Indigenous sovereignty, and challenge structures that support Indigenous erasure. An advisory committee, led by Associate Professor of Politics Kouslaa Kessler-Mata (Chumash and Yokut) and Associate Vice Provost of ADEI Sabrina Kwist, is being established to oversee these efforts. [Learn more about participating.](#)



From left: AVP of ADEI Sabrina Kwist, USF President Paul Fitzgerald, S.J., Chairman Jonathan Cordero, Associate Professor of Politics Kouslaa Kessler-Mata.

- **Strategic Plan Implementation:** Working groups continue to gather community input and provide updates, as they work to prioritize, develop recommendations, and help us operationalize the strategic plan. Recent community conversations have surfaced compelling ideas for investing in our scholarly, creative, and community-engaged endeavors, highlighting our faculty's public intellectualism and amplifying USF's visibility and prominence. [Catch up on previous community conversations or join the next one](#) with Working Group #6 focusing on "Developing participatory and inclusive shared governance structures" on Tuesday, March 21 from 12 to 1:15 p.m. [Register here.](#)
- **Caring for our Common Home:** The [One Earth Initiative](#) Working Group, launched in partnership with the Lane Center, is spearheading a community-driven journey to develop a multi-year action plan for sustainability and environmental justice at USF in keeping with Pope Francis' [Laudato Si'](#) encyclical. The group is exploring ways to respond to "the cry of the earth" and advance environmental justice by more fully integrating sustainability into our student experience, research and scholarship, cultural life, and facilities. [Learn](#)

[more about their work](#) and provide your input at their community conversation on April 4 from 12 to 1:15 p.m. [Register here](#).

## Celebrating Your Work

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). We are eager to recognize the many faculty, librarians, and staff who are leveraging their talents to invest in our community and fulfill our mission. Please nominate colleagues to be recognized in the [Provost Faculty and Staff Awards](#). We are excited to announce a new Academic Innovation Award, aligning with the strategic plan's call to implement innovative ways of serving students, addressing global challenges, and advancing our Jesuit mission. **Nominations for all provost awards are due by 3 p.m. on Friday, March 24.**

In celebration of Women's History Month, please consider participating in the [Women in Leadership and Philanthropy \(WILP\) Spring Symposium](#) on March 23 or the 4th Annual [Women of Color Leadership Conference & Reception](#) on March 24, presented by the Cultural Centers and the Office of Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ADEI). You may also submit a nomination for WILP's [Heart & Soul Community Champion Award](#), which is presented to an individual or family that exemplifies and demonstrates the core Jesuit values of the University of San Francisco and who aspires to create a more just and humane world through service and philanthropy.

As we head toward spring break for our students next week (and this week for the School of Law), I hope that each of you has the opportunity to take a moment to connect with something that nourishes your sense of purpose and commitment to our beloved community.

Warmly,



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Chinyere Oparah  
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

Join the conversation **#USFCA**



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