August 17, 2017

Dear USF System Community:

Welcome to the new academic year at the University of South Florida, one of my favorite times of the year. There is such energy and excitement across our USF institutions as we look forward to the many contributions of our students, faculty and staff. We have proven time and again that there is no limit to what we can achieve together.

While we look forward to the year ahead, many of us also continue to reflect on last weekend’s events in Charlottesville, Va. I am reminded of the special role our university plays in creating meaningful progress for our communities, our state and our nation. Recent expressions of hatred and racism are a reprehensible step backward.

At USF, we embrace diversity and inclusivity as core to our values, and we are committed to the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech representing all points of view. Critical inquiry … the free and robust exchange of ideas … these are among the pillars upon which our university has been built.

By treating each other with civility and respect, we have greater opportunities to learn, to grow and to enrich our lives – as individuals, as a university community, and as a society.

As President John F. Kennedy reminded us: “Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one’s own beliefs. Rather, it condemns the oppression or persecution of others.”

I encourage all members of our proud USF family to continue to stand together with open minds and open hearts. I wish you a productive and successful year, and I look forward to learning about and celebrating your many accomplishments.

Judy Genshaft, PhD
USF System President