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November 19, 2020

Steven C. Currall  
President  
Office of the President  
4202 E. Fowler Avenue  
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: Urge USF to preserve College of Education undergraduate degrees and the high quality teacher pipeline for Tampa Bay area

Dear President Currall and USF Board of Trustees:

It has been my privilege to work with the University of South Florida (USF) for over a decade to better our community and maximize support for the university through federal grants and federal agencies. Together we have had enormous success. Part of our shared mission in service is to improve the economic opportunities for students and families, our public schools and the entire Tampa Bay community.

That is why I am very concerned by your recent announcement to end undergraduate degrees provided by the USF College of Education.

As local school superintendents, education professionals and many in the business community have expressed, the contributions of the College of Education to our school districts and the community are central to our economic vitality. Our local school districts are our largest employers – and the Tampa Bay area is growing. We must guarantee a strong, continued USF pipeline of the highest quality teaching professionals. USF draws many of its students from our region and when they graduate, many stay and serve our neighbors. The impact of the USF College of Education on the economy of the Tampa Bay region is remarkable, and it must continue.

When I initially learned of the drastic cuts to the College of Education and the recommendation to dramatically change its mission, I asked my team to compile a list of the federal grants that have been awarded to the College. It is impressive. In the last decade, USF's College of Education has won over \$34 million in federal grants. The U.S. Department of Education grants for 2020 to the College of Education are significant, exceeding a million dollars

for Special Education, Middle School education and Literacy and Bilingual Instruction. At a time when diversity is a key issue for USF and all of us, it is outstanding that the Education faculty have received a National Science Foundation grant for \$1.5 million to address pathways for success directed to pre-collegiate Black Males in STEM. The combination of undergraduate and graduate collaboration certainly are key to winning these federal investments.

I also am aware of the population trends in our area and the enormous need for teachers. While other institutions of higher education such as the Colleges of Education at the University of Florida and the Florida State University prepare teachers, those who graduate from USF remain the largest single provider at this time. USF has valued the teaching profession from its founding sixty years ago and I urge you to work with federal and state legislators and others to bolster it.

The Congress has passed several economic emergency aid packages this year and another is on the way that will hopefully provide robust resources for the State of Florida, colleges and universities to avoid draconian cuts such as your decision to scale back the USF College of Education. In fact, this moment provides an opportunity for USF to provide leadership in the area of teacher preparation. Once again it could provide new and diverse pipelines for prospective teachers who will continue to make a mark in the Tampa Bay area and beyond.

I urge you to reconsider your decision. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Education Legislative Assistant, Joicelynne Jackson, at 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor  
United States Representative  
Florida – District 14

Cc:

Tampa Chamber of Commerce  
Addison Davis, Superintendent, Hillsborough County Public Schools  
Dr. Michael A. Grego, Superintendent, Pinellas County Schools  
Hillsborough County Classroom Teachers Association