



USF St. Petersburg Campus Board Meeting

July 6, 2026; 11:00-1:00pm

Ballroom 3

Minutes

Attendance:

- Hossam Ashour - Faculty Council Chair
- Andrea Gonzmart Williams – Campus Board Chair
- Barclay Harless
- Moez Limayem – USF President
- Isaac McKinney III
- Bailey Gilbert - Student Governor
- Debbie Nye Sembler
- Thomas Smith - Interim Regional Chancellor
- Debbie White

Call to Order: Andrea Gonzmart Williams, Campus Board Chair

Andrea opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. She and her husband are proud USF alumni and supporters. Andrea previously served on the USF Foundation Board and is now honored to serve on the USF St. Petersburg Campus Board.

Roll Call: Thomas Smith, Interim Regional Chancellor

Thomas conducted the roll call. All Board Members and Faculty/Student Representatives were present.

Action Items: Andrea Gonzmart Williams, Campus Board Chair

Andrea asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last board meeting, held on April 13, 2026. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Information Items

USF Update: President Moez Limayem

President Moez Limayem welcomed attendees and thanked Andrea for her leadership. He shared updates from his university-wide listening tour, noting that feedback from students, faculty, staff, and community leaders will help shape future strategic priorities.

The President addressed the Marine Science Laboratory fire, commending the resilience and support demonstrated by the campus and community. He reaffirmed USF's commitment to recovery and rebuilding efforts and reported that the USF Foundation's Marine Science Fund has raised more than **\$504,000** to support those efforts.

President Limayem highlighted several athletic achievements, including national championship participation by the women's sailing team, conference championships earned by the women's lacrosse and softball teams, and continued academic success of student-athletes. He noted that all athletic programs have maintained a combined GPA above 3.0 for more than 11 consecutive years and that 100% of graduating student-athletes are employed or enrolled in graduate school.

He also provided an update on the July 1 Sarasota-Manatee campus transition, emphasizing USF's commitment to ensuring current students complete their degrees, maintaining employment and salaries for faculty and staff, and supporting affected employees through relocation and voluntary incentive programs.

Finally, he announced the launch of a university-wide strategic planning process to develop a five-year roadmap focused on talent development, artificial intelligence, innovative teaching and learning, interdisciplinary research, experiential learning, and strategic partnerships. The process will include broad stakeholder engagement and is expected to culminate in Board of Governors approval in spring 2027.

USF St. Petersburg Campus Update: Interim Chancellor Thomas Smith

Interim Regional Chancellor Smith provided an update on the MSL building fire. He expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support received from USF leadership and local officials.

Chancellor Smith led a two-week study abroad program in Poland and Germany focused on Holocaust education. Fourteen students participated, visiting sites including Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sachsenhausen, and Berlin.

Chancellor Smith highlighted the growing work of the TIP Lab and Bright Network, which focus on combating human trafficking and supporting victims. The Bright Network, which connects trafficking victims with support resources, has become a model replicated nationally. Researchers from both the St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee campuses are contributing to this effort.

Chancellor Smith concluded with positive news about the annual Bulls and Brews by the Bay event. The latest event attracted approximately 200 attendees. Over the past three years, the fundraiser has raised more than \$100,000 for student scholarships. He noted that this year's event was the most successful yet.

USF St. Petersburg Student Body Update: Bailey Gilbert

Bailey shared that she is the newly elected Student Government Governor for the St. Petersburg campus for the 2026–2027 academic year and Isabella Prange is the Lieutenant Governor. Their priorities include strengthening student representation, amplifying student voices, and preserving the unique identity of the St. Petersburg campus. She outlined plans to expand student engagement initiatives during the upcoming academic year, including town halls and other opportunities for students to provide feedback and participate in campus decision-making.

USF St. Petersburg Faculty Council Update: Hossam Ashour

Hossam thanked President Limayem for his commitment to faculty, staff, and students, as well as his focus on pursuing bold, transformative goals. He highlighted two key faculty concerns discussed at the council's most recent meeting. First, faculty expressed challenges with rising publication fees and encouraged the university to explore ways to provide financial support for research publication. Second, faculty raised concerns about burdensome administrative processes related to travel and procurement receipts, noting that submitting receipts individually and navigating duplicate reporting requirements can be time-consuming and inefficient. Faculty also discussed the need for better coordination between university departments and the USF Foundation to streamline processes.

MSL Fire Recovery Update: Tom Frazer, College of Marine Science & Mike Kahle, FIO

Dean Tom Frazer and Mike Kahle, FIO Director, expressed gratitude to President Limayem, university leadership, faculty, staff, community partners, and first responders for their ongoing support. They reported that recovery and salvage operations are nearing completion, with efforts now focused on relocating more than 150 displaced faculty, staff, and researchers while preserving the integrity of academic and research programs.

Tom and Mike emphasized the importance of bringing research teams back together in person to continue innovation and capitalize on emerging opportunities in ocean and marine science. The goal is to have the college fully operational by the start of the fall semester. A permanent barrier will soon be installed around the damaged facility, allowing broader campus activities to resume while long-term recovery planning continues.

Legislative Session Update: Lauren Hartmann, Government Relations

Lauren Hartmann reported that despite a challenging 2026–2027 legislative session, USF achieved several major funding successes. The university secured \$7.5 million in recurring operational funding, including support for the Darryl E. Rouson Center for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Research, as well as \$4 million in recurring and \$2 million in non-recurring funding for the Florida Institute of Parkinson’s Disease at USF Health. Hartmann also highlighted significant capital investments, including \$25 million for the Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity and Computing facility and \$10 million for Phase I of the USF Health Translational Research Institute. She shared that state and local elected officials have expressed support following the Marine Science Laboratory fire. As USF completes the insurance assessment process, the university will continue working with local, state, and federal partners to identify recovery and rebuilding needs and pursue funding opportunities to restore and strengthen the facility.

Student Spotlight: Kaileen Alvarado, Summer Academy for Investigating Learning

Kaileen, a senior majoring in Biological Health Sciences with a concentration in Public Health, shared her experience in the Summer Academy for Investigative Learning (SAIL), a six-week paid undergraduate research program. She highlighted the program’s hands-on research opportunities, professional development experiences, field trips, and partnerships with local organizations. Kaileen explained that students develop and conduct research projects, analyze data, and present their findings at a research symposium.

Faculty Spotlight: Tina Piracci & Bill Ellis, 3D-Printing Oyster Habitat

Assistant Professor Bill Ellis, undergraduate student Ella Champ, and Honors College adjunct professor Taylor Crossland presented the Oyster Restoration Brick Project. The undergraduate research initiative is focused on addressing the loss of approximately 90% of Tampa Bay’s historic oyster reefs due to habitat loss caused by shoreline development and seawalls. To address this issue, the project is developing innovative 3D-printed ceramic oyster habitats that can be installed alongside seawalls, providing additional surface area for oyster growth while remaining visually appealing to waterfront property owners.

Roundtable Discussion: Interim Chancellor Thomas Smith

Thomas shared an update on the campus identity and branding focus group. To date, the campus has convened its first meeting, involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and community members. The session was led by Matt Cimitile from Marketing and Communications and Tanya Vomacka from the Provost’s Office. The group identified three major strategic pillars as priorities for the campus. The Board was invited to provide additional ideas and feedback during the discussion.

A second focus group is planned to review and refine the concepts, gather further input from faculty and staff, and then forward the results to the Marketing and Communications team for final refinement. The goal is to complete this process within the next three months.

Adjournment: Chair Gonzmart Williams

Chair adjourned the meeting.