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## Press release : 2002 : 04 : 19 : Culmination of struggle, day of mutual happiness for three who graduate from USF St. Petersburg May 5

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**Culmination of struggle, day of mutual happiness for three who graduate from USF St. Petersburg May 5**

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA (April 19, 2002) – Commencement ceremonies at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg on May 5 will be particularly notable for three people in the black robes.

Ellen Fox will be the most senior senior crossing the stage that day. At age 79, she will receive a bachelor's degree in business. That might seem enough of an achievement, but a lifetime of struggle went into that success.

Mrs. Fox dropped out of school after the seventh grade, married and had four children. Decades later, after her oldest son asked her for help with his college algebra, she decided it was time to further her own education. After completing her high school requirements, Mrs. Fox began attending USF in 1990.

Her goal was go into business with her oldest son, a local CPA. Three years ago, he was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident. As she struggled to assist in his care, she never gave up her studies. "I didn't see any point in turning back," she says.

For Marla and Mark Smith, their graduation will be a time of shared happiness. The couple met four years ago at an orientation session as each started at USF St. Petersburg. Marla, a single mom with three small children, began dating Mark and they soon married. Now parents of a fourth child, both will receive bachelor's degrees in business management.

Ellen Fox and Mark and Marla Smith are among the approximately 300 students at USF St. Petersburg who will earn degrees at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 5 at the Mahaffey Theater in downtown St. Petersburg.

For more information, call (727) 553-3458.