



**University of South Florida St. Petersburg
Spring Commencement Script
May 6, 2012, 6:00 p.m.**

PRELUDE 5:45 p.m.

PROCESSIONAL 6:00 p.m.

(SHANK from back of arena.)

SHANK:

Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise for the procession of the 50th Commencement of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg led by Commencement Marshal Dr. CHRISTOPHER DAVIS, who bears the Mace of the University.

PAUSE

The Spring 2012 Master Candidates of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg;

PAUSE

the King O'Neal 4.0 Scholars, the Outstanding Graduate, and our Vocalist;

PAUSE

the Faculty (*pause*); Regional Vice Chancellors (*pause*), and Deans of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg;

PAUSE

The USF St. Petersburg Student Government Representative and the USF Alumni Association Representative;

PAUSE

The USF Board of Trustees member (*pause*) and USFSP Campus Board Members;

PAUSE

The Regional Chancellor of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg;

LONG PAUSE

The President of the University System, DR. JUDY GENSHAFT.

(DAVIS approaches platform from right side. When the procession is completed and all are at their seats, DAVIS goes to center microphone.)

DAVIS:

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a privilege to welcome you to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg's Spring 2012 Commencement. I hereby declare this convocation open. On behalf of the faculty, I offer congratulations to all the graduates.

And now, the Regional Chancellor of USF St. Petersburg, DR. MARGARET SULLIVAN.

(DAVIS returns to seat; SULLIVAN goes to center mic.)

SULLIVAN:

Good evening and welcome to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

Will the assembly please remain standing and join LAURA DAVIS in the singing of our National Anthem.

(DAVIS goes to center mic. SULLIVAN returns to seat.)

SINGING OF ANTHEM

(DAVIS returns to seat. SULLIVAN returns to mic.)

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, LAURA. You may all be seated.

A distinguished Platform Party joins us for today's celebration. I would ask you to please hold your applause until all introductions are completed.

I would like to introduce representatives of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg Faculty...

(SULLIVAN gestures to faculty on arena floor and platform. Faculty stand, then sit.)

Our Regional Vice Chancellors and Deans...

(RVCs and Deans stand, then sit)

KIMBERLY CHOTO (pronounce SHODO), President-Elect, Alumni Association

(CHOTO stands then sits)

DANIEL McDONALD, Student Government Representative

(McDONALD stands then sits)

Our Outstanding Graduate recipient, BRITTANY LYP (pronounce LIP), and King O'Neal scholars, JOHN BODA, ANDREW THURSTON, and EMILY YOUNG

(LYP, BODA, THURSTON, and YOUNG stand, then sit.)

Members of the USF St. Petersburg Campus Board, Trustee DEBBIE SEMBLER, ROY BINGER, SUSAN HOUGH HENRY, and JUDY MITCHELL; and USF System, Trustee STEPHANIE GOFORTH

(Board members stand, then sit)

And the President of the University System, Dr. JUDY GENSHAFT.

(GENSHAFT stands, then sits)

Please join me in acknowledging these distinguished guests. *(pause)*

And now for our most important guests of the evening – you, the USF St. Petersburg graduates of Spring 2012. You’ve shown us your determination and I hope we’ve sparked your creativity. You brought your intellect and I hope we challenged it to the fullest.

You are ready now – you are ready to face a challenging world with the obstacles that will come along your way. You are ready because you dedicated yourself to receiving an education and earning a degree. It took initiative. It took resolve.

It took hard work.

Each of you has had your own unique experience. You each carved your own path to today’s commencement. Consider the decisions you made, the ideals you embraced and the lessons learned. Take these with you as you leave us to create your next path in life as a USF St. Petersburg graduate.

You each came here for your own reasons and graduate today with your own goals, but yet, you are all united in this accomplishment – a milestone and symbol of the academics you have been and the professionals you will become.

Be proud, graduates, and yet retain your humility. Celebrate, and yet remember the friends, family and professors who helped you along the way. Look to the future and be confident that your past prepared you for where you want to go.

At this time, I would like to introduce Dr. Judy Genshaft, President of the University of South Florida System. She has made it clear that strong institutions such as USF St. Petersburg are an integral part of the university's vision. With great pleasure, I present President Judy Genshaft.

(SULLIVAN returns to seat, GENSHAFT goes to center microphone)

GENSHAFT:

On behalf of the faculty, staff and trustees, I welcome you all to the University of South Florida St. Petersburg Spring 2012 Commencement.

Congratulations to our graduates and thank you for being a part of the University of South Florida System.

This semester, more than 6,000 students are graduating across the USF System. This diverse group came to us from 45 states and 91 nations.

Our oldest graduate is Monica Messer, age 71, who is receiving a Doctorate Degree in Nursing from USF Tampa.

Our youngest graduate is 19-year-old Samantha Ford, who is receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communications from USF St. Petersburg.

We are also proud to have 46 outstanding graduates who will join hundreds of other USF men and women who serve their country as commissioned officers in our armed forces.

All of you had the good fortune to study at the University of South Florida...one of America's leading research institutions.

The degrees we award today signify a special collaboration between students and their professors, advisors, fellow students and university staff. And virtually every degree represents the commitment and help of families and friends.

I would like to ask our graduates' mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, husbands, sons, daughters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, partners and significant others to rise, so that we may show you how much your contributions mean to us.

(Applause)

You may be seated.

Today you are graduating from a first class university that is relevant and engaged.

Our national and international reputation has made great leaps forward in recent years due to the hard work of our students, faculty and staff who are tireless in their pursuit of excellence on all levels.

We've all worked harder in recent years, and it shows..

Not only did the *Washington Post* list USF as one of five up and coming universities to watch, but *The Chronicle of Higher Education* lists USF as a Fulbright Top Producing institution for one of the world's most competitive postgraduate scholarships.

Just this week, USF was granted a 2012 Second Nature Climate Leadership Award! We are one of just 10 institutions nationwide selected for our campus-

wide commitment to sustainability and for reducing our impact on the environment.

Recently, USF was ranked by the National Science Foundation in the Top 50 universities in federal research expenditures, among all U.S. universities public or private –15 spots ahead of the university's standings in the last survey.

Not only does that mean our research is more robust, it also means we're having a bigger impact on the economy at a time when it was most needed.

This spring, we opened up the state of the art Center for Advanced Medical Learning and Simulation, which will draw top surgeons and medical professionals to the Tampa Bay area for training.

Another milestone achievement this year: the USF Health Heart Institute received initial funding which will allow USF to become one of the nation's leaders in cardiovascular care, with a special focus on genomics-based personalized medicine.

We are not only relevant to the times, we are leading the way into the future.

Economists often talk about the "education dividend" of higher education. Our graduates, faculty, students and staff ARE the dividend in the Tampa Bay region.

One of our favorite parts of graduation is hearing your stories and memories of your time at USF.

Jonathon Ellington participated in multiple organizations during his time at USF St. Petersburg, including being part of the sailing team and serving as a tour guide orientation leader for three years. He also had the honor of serving as the President and Vice President of Student Government where he worked

tirelessly with students and state legislature to gain funding for the USF St. Petersburg Student Center.

The USF St. Petersburg Journalism Graduate Program opened new doors for Tanya Napold. She traveled to Haiti and Uganda to do research, which allowed her to connect with professional journalists from around the world.

Michael Lee Jernigan, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in History is a wounded war veteran. He will be accompanied on stage by his 7-year old guide dog, Brittany, from Southeastern Guide Dogs in Palmetto, Florida. Her “puppy raisers” are in the audience. Michael’s wife, Leslie, is also graduating today and will precede him across the stage.

These stories are samples of the journey through a university experience, one we have been proud to share with you at the University of South Florida.

I hope you will look back at our time together at USF St. Petersburg as some of the best years of your life. It has been our privilege to have you with us at the University of South Florida.

Congratulations!

(Applause)

Now it’s my pleasure to introduce DANIEL McDONALD, Student Government Representative.

DANIEL...

(McDONALD goes to center microphone. GENSHAFT returns to seat.)

McDONALD :

Thank You, PRESIDENT GENSHAFT:

Students, Parents, Friends, Family, Professors, Mentors:

Today we gather to celebrate and recognize a significant milestone in our lives. With the support of our loved ones sitting with us today, we have managed to overcome the struggles and challenges thrown our way.

The University of South Florida St. Petersburg has provided for us an environment of higher learning, leadership, scholarship, student life, and a deep appreciation for our natural environment. On our way to and from class, we have had the privilege of watching the most breathtaking sunrises and sunsets over the bay. We have been and are truly blessed.

Today we recognize the commitment and motivation each of you has shown throughout this journey. But this is merely a first step into the next chapter of our lives and of what is to come. I am here to ask you not to lose the motivation that got you here. We must reach into ourselves and re-ignite the passion and commitment to continue and pursue higher endeavors, be it in higher education or in our personal lives.

The moment I set foot on this campus, I felt an immediate connection and decided right then where I wanted to get my education. Toward the end of my senior year in high school, I was rejected by the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. At that point in time, I was at a new low point in my life. I felt that I had not only let my entire family down, but I had let myself down, too. I had no backup plan and had lost all motivation to pursue a career in education. But with the support of my mother, things began to turn around. She helped me reach out to the University to see if there was anything I could do. Two weeks later, I got another letter in the mail, inviting me to be part of the USF St. Petersburg Freshman Summer Institute, now known as the STARS Program. There, a challenge was presented to me: Take three summer

courses and if I did well in each one, I would be admitted into USF St. Petersburg for the fall. I seized the opportunity and never looked back.

I aced each class and when fall came, I wanted to take advantage of every opportunity given to me. I joined Student Government, The Sailing Team, got a job in the Residence Hall, and attended any event I could while maintaining a strong GPA.

I felt that I could pursue anything that came my way, but yet I still experienced failure. I was not accepted as a Summer Orientation Leader, but was placed as an alternate. Late that spring, I received an offer to become an Orientation Leader due to an opening. Needless to say, I accepted the position and tried to motivate every incoming freshman and transfer student I came in contact with for the next two years.

It is important to remember that we will all at some point in our lives experience failure and things may not work out the way we hoped. I lost my nomination for Student Government Senate President Pro Temp two years in a row, but never felt the urge to leave the organization. I stuck around and did whatever I could to ensure fair representation of the student body during my three years as a Student Senator.

We are all here today due to some sort of motivation that each of us has within us. Our motivation is our own unique attribute. I would not be standing here if it were not for the love and support of my family, the guidance and wisdom of my mentors, the lessons I learned from mentoring others, and having a strong passion to do what I could to give back. Reach into your souls and find your passion. Pay close attention to it, let it grow and let it be the fuel that gets you through whatever life throws your way. But please do not let it end here, for this is just another chapter in the book of our lives.

It was indeed an honor to attend USF St. Petersburg alongside each and every one of you! Thank you and always remember, Go Bulls!

(McDONALD returns to seat. SULLIVAN goes to mic.)

SULLIVAN

Thank you, Danny. It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Norine Noonan, Regional Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs.

(NOONAN goes to center podium microphone. SULLIVAN returns to seat.)

NOONAN:

At the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, we take pride in the academic achievements of all our students and we welcome opportunities to recognize

and honor students who consistently meet the highest level of academic performance.

Undergraduate students who are graduating with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher are recognized as graduating with honors. In the academy, we acknowledge the work and achievement of our students with the following honors designations.

Students graduating with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher are marked by the designation *Cum Laude*, “with praise.” Will those students please stand *(pause)* please be seated.

The designation *Magna Cum Laude*, “with high praise,” reflects a grade point average of 3.7 or higher. Will those students achieving at this level please stand *(pause)* please be seated.

Finally are those graduates who are recognized for achievement at the highest honor. *Summa Cum Laude* or “with highest praise” recognizes those graduates achieving a grade point average of 3.9 or higher. Will those students please stand (*pause*) please be seated.

Each Commencement, the USF Alumni Association recognizes the achievements of our graduates by awarding the King O’Neal Scholar Award. The King O’Neal award is given each semester by the Alumni Association in honor of charter graduates Lucas King and Evelyn O’Neal. It is presented to the graduating seniors with the highest possible cumulative grade point average, 4.0. The Spring 2012 graduating class at USF St. Petersburg has 3 qualifying graduates with a 4.0 GPA and they are with us at today’s ceremony.

At this time, we are fortunate to welcome KIMBERLY CHOTO (*pronounce CHODO*), President-Elect of the USF Alumni Association, for our Alumni welcome and presentation of the King O’Neal Scholar Award and Outstanding Graduate Award.

KIMBERLY...

(CHOTO goes to center microphone. NOONAN returns to seat.)

CHOTO:

Thank you, DR. NOONAN.

Today marks your first day as a USF Alumnus, a well-earned distinction you share with more than 250,000 other USF graduates and a title you will proudly hold for the rest of your life. Each of us has unique memories of what made our time at USF special—whether it was the professor who touched your life or the lifelong friends you made along the way—and now you have the opportunity to stay involved and contribute to the continued success of our great University.