

## **REASONS TO OPPOSE UNIFYING USF CAMPUSES FOR ACCREDITATION**

- All institutions of higher education, from the moment of founding, spend extraordinary effort to achieve the designation of “Accreditation” or put simply, “a license to operate legitimately” and offer Baccalaureate Degrees signifying rigorous academic preparation for the degree.
- USF Tampa underwent such examination at its inception in the early 1960’s as did USF St. Petersburg in the early 2000’s. Once achieved, institutional accreditation is highly valued and protected and **normally only lost through lack of meeting standards expected and published by regional recognized higher educational accreditation agencies.**
- While USF ST. Petersburg has met and achieved the “**gold standard**” of accreditation as well as re-accreditation subsequent to the original certification, the question must be asked by any reasonable person, namely: **WHAT PURPOSE IS SERVED AND IN WHOSE INTEREST IS THE PROPOSED EFFORT AT UNIFYING ACCREDITATION UNDER USF TAMPA?**
- The only reasoned answer to the above question is certainly not in USF St. Petersburg’s interest since accreditation is already secured.
- While USF Tampa officials have reportedly denied any role in initiating the accreditation issue, including in a recent video by the USF President, the lack of opposition to the proposed legislation speaks loudly. In fact, a University spokesperson cites numerous presumed benefits of such realignment of accreditation.
- Why then the assumed “power play” by Tampa Campus administrator’s? Some have suggested that by controlling accreditation, USF Tampa would be better able to control admission and student body make-up of USF St. Petersburg, thereby helping Tampa meet certain retention and graduation rates required for Pre-Eminent Status among Florida Universities and therefore qualify for additional funding from the State. How will that benefit USF St. Petersburg with its diverse age student body who may not fit the mold of the typical 18-22 year old college student as might students on the Tampa Campus of USF?

- Others, including a spokeswoman for USF, suggested that all Campuses would be “stronger when working together”. That happens now, after all, the leader of USFSP currently reports to the USF President, and applying that logic broadly would have all Florida State Universities operating under the umbrella of accreditation of the Pre-Eminent Status of U of F.
- Also suggested by Tampa Campus officials is that all campuses would be better off under the proposed arrangement. That assertion is “out of touch” with the founding and continuing mission of USF St. Petersburg, which while now dominated by full-time traditional-age students, includes also serving non-traditional students place bound by virtue of family, income or necessity to hold down a full time job while seeking a college degree to advance their status in achieving the American Dream. Many of these non-traditional students make progress toward their degree at a pace in competition/cooperation with job, family and personal economic considerations. Are those considerations illegitimate?
- Would the citizens of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County be better off under the proposed arrangement? An unbiased answer would be a unanimous **NO**. For evidence of the truthfulness of that answer, it is suggested that the communities of Lakeland, Fort Meyer and the supporters of New College of Florida be asked whether they prefer their current stand-alone status as separate Universities/Colleges in Florida’s State System to their former status as satellites or Regional Campuses of USF Tampa. **The answer majority would undoubtedly suggest a resounding affirmation of their separate status!** While that outcome is not suggested or supported for USF St. Petersburg, the long arc of history demonstrates that as Regional Campuses ascend toward maturity, separate campus accreditation is the GOLD STANDARD, if not entirely separate university status.
- It has also been suggested that achieving Pre-Eminent status for USF will bring additional funds to USF which will be shared with St. Petersburg. That suggestion is naïve and is in direct contrast to the experience of past USF St. Petersburg officials. When separate accreditation and budgets were mandated by legislation sponsored by Pinellas Senator Don Sullivan in the early 2000’s, the first year of that new arrangement saw a faculty position increase of 34 positions, as contrasted with maybe 1 or 2 positions per year in prior decades under USF Tampa budget control. USFSP’s historical data and administrators will testify to the accuracy of this statement. History suggests that USFSP would see a miniscule share (if any) of any Pre-Eminent Status funds.
- It would seem logical that if including USF St. Petersburg student retention and graduation data with that of the Tampa Campus to achieve Pre-Eminent Status is problematic, rather than dramatically altering the core mission of USF St. Petersburg

relative to students served, **TAMPA CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS SHOULD BE DIRECTED AT LEGISLATIVELY CHANGING THE RULES BY**

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- **WHICH PRE-EMINENT STATUS IS ACHIEVED BY EXCLUDING REGIONAL CAMPUSES WHICH HAVE DISTINCTLY DIFFERING MISSIONS FROM THE QUALIFYING METRICS. THIS EFFORT SHOULD BE A SOLUTION WHICH ALL CAMPUSES AND COMMUNITIES AFFECTED COULD SUPPORT.**
- The BOARD OF DIRECTORS of the Retired Faculty/Staff Association will be strongly recommending stripping the proposed unifying accreditation of USF Campuses from any Legislative action in the 2018 Florida Legislative Session.