Press release: 2003: 04: 25: Mormino Named Co-Director of USF St. Petersburg’s Florida Studies Program

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“Harmonic convergence” is how Dr. Gary Mormino describes the state’s first Florida Studies program that begins this fall at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

Mormino explains that “harmonic convergence” is the coming together of several key elements that made it possible to establish the Florida Studies program. It first took, “an enlightened administration to recognize the possibilities and potential of USF St. Petersburg,” he said. “There is recognition of a crying need for a place to cultivate the study of Florida. There is synergy created by the proximity of the university, the museums, the Poynter Institute, the St. Petersburg Times, the Florida Humanities Council, and the Center for Florida Teachers. Finally, there is the concentration of a remarkable core of faculty. All these things had to come together. If any one of these was missing, the Florida Studies program would not have been possible,” he said.

Mormino, who served as a member of the faculty on USF’s Tampa campus for 26 years and is the Frank E. Duckwall professor, is coming to USF St. Petersburg to co-direct the new Florida Studies Program with Dr. Ray Arsenault.

His plans for the program’s future include bridging Florida Studies with other disciplines, such as literature and geography. He also hopes to host various events covering such topics as lost tourist attractions, what impact Brown vs. Topeka had on Florida, and conducting training sessions for state legislators in Florida studies.

The newly established Florida Studies Program joins the ranks of Journalism and Media Studies, Social Responsibility and Corporate Reporting, and Environmental Science, Policy and Geography programs as one of the campus’s newly formed Programs of Distinction.

“Dr. Mormino has been teaching on our Tampa campus for many years,” said Gary Olson, interim associate vice president for Academic Affairs. “We are very excited about his joining Dr. Ray Arsenault at the helm of our new Florida Studies Program here at USF St. Petersburg. Dr. Mormino is a prolific writer and a proven scholar. These two gentlemen will make a formidable team that will assuredly make this a model program,” said Olson.

Mormino received his bachelor’s degree from Millikin University and his doctorate from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. His major fields of study include immigration, urban America, and Florida history. His studies have had an emphasis on Ybor City, the social history of Italian-Americans, and World War II. His research and expertise in these areas have resulted in his being widely published. Articles include Immigrants on the Hill: Italian-Americans in St. Louis, 1883-1982 and Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors, 1886-1982.

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