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USF St. Petersburg Campus Board Endorses Mayor's Airport Proposal

At its meeting on Nov. 18, 2002, the University of South Florida St. Petersburg Campus Board unanimously endorsed the plan that St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker has proposed for Albert Whitted Airport which is located on property immediately to the east of the campus.

Ralph Wilcox, USF St. Petersburg's interim Vice President and CEO, states that "the Mayor's airport proposal promises to help the campus significantly. Closing the east-west runway and changing the flight path will alleviate community safety concerns as planes currently fly very low over the campus and neighboring properties."

Further, the proposal changes the footprint of the airport site making approximately 22 acres adjacent to the campus available for future development. Given that growth on the USF St. Petersburg campus, as well as for partners that include the United States Geological Survey and USF's College of Marine Science, is limited by virtue of it being land locked, this proposal provides additional options for the campus to consider, including the more efficient use of existing university land by building vertically.

"USF St. Petersburg is experiencing unprecedented growth," adds Dr. Wilcox. "We will shortly be employing more than 50 new faculty members and adding senior leadership positions. At the same time we are planning to deliver new academic and research programs to better meet the growing demands of Pinellas County students, as well as public sector agencies and companies. The campus needs additional space for our new professors, staff and students - permanent classrooms, laboratories and additional parking. While we are working with our neighbors to address our short term needs, the Mayor's plan opens a door for us to strategically examine long-term solutions as USF strives to better serve downtown St. Petersburg and Pinellas County."

Campus Board Chair Ann Duncan states, "USF St. Petersburg and its partners are a major economic engine for the city and region, generating more than 80 million dollars a year for the community. Helping the university grow improves the quality of life for all of us and contributes to the intellectual development of the region."
President Judy Genshaft adds, “As the largest of our regional campuses, USF St. Petersburg can play an increasingly important role in improving the lives of the citizens of Pinellas County and further developing the city’s and county’s economy. It is no secret that the campus’ growth has, in part, been hampered by limitations on vertical construction. We look forward to exploring further, with the city and our neighbors, how Mayor Baker’s proposal for Albert Whitted Airport can most positively impact our campus’ ability to better serve the diverse needs of the community.”

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