



**University of South Florida St. Petersburg
Fall Commencement Script
December 16, 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 51st Commencement of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg led by Commencement Marshal Dr. SUSAN ALLEN, who bears the Mace of the University.

PAUSE

The Fall 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 members (*pause*) and USF St. Petersburg Campus Board Members;

PAUSE

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

LONG PAUSE

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

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

ALLEN:

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

And now, the Interim Regional Chancellor of USF St. Petersburg, DR. WILLIAM HOGARTH.

(ALLEN returns to seat; HOGARTH goes to center mic.)

HOGARTH:

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. HOGARTH returns to seat.)

SINGING OF ANTHEM

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

HOGARTH:

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...

(HOGARTH 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, Alumni Association**

(CHOTO stands then sits)

MARK LOMBARDI-NELSON, **Student Government President**

(LOMBARDI-NELSON stands then sits)

Our Outstanding Graduate recipient, DANIEL BOYD, and King O'Neal scholars, ELIZABETH KENT and OTIS WILDER *(BOYD, KENT and WILDER stand, then sit.)*

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

(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)*

Now for the words our students have longed to hear:

Congratulations: You made it!

All those long days and nights of study and worry, of sacrifices made and lessons learned – they're all behind you now.

And yet, like the friendships you made here, the hard work that brought you to this point will never really leave you. The drive and determination you showed during your time with us will stay with you forever. Whatever path you choose, the experiences you had at USF St. Petersburg will guide you along the way.

The education you received came in many forms – thought-provoking lectures, hours spent in the lab, study sessions with your fellow students – or late nights alone, just you and a textbook. Our excellent faculty members were with you on this journey of discovery, stirring your creative juices and getting you to think about the world in new ways.

You should be proud of all you have accomplished. And I hope you also had some fun along the way. I know I look back on my time in college as the most important part of my life. It wasn't always easy but it made me the person I am today.

USF St. Petersburg is not the same place it was just a few years ago and neither are you. We have grown to meet the demands of a complex world, just as you have grown to meet the challenges ahead. As you prepare to enter the work force or move on to graduate school, I hope you will remember the important lessons you learned during your short time with us.

I know I speak for all of us at USF St. Petersburg when I tell you how proud we are of each of you. Now it's your turn: Your turn to challenge and inspire us. To become the leaders of your generation. To set new goals and new ideals. To create a world better than the one you joined.

To make us proud.

I know one thing: You're ready. You can do it.

Go get 'em!

And now I would like to introduce Dr. Judy Genshaft, President of the USF System. She believes that a system is only as strong as its individual parts and that USF St. Petersburg is an integral part of the whole that makes USF great. It is my great pleasure to present to you, President Judy Genshaft.

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

GENSHAFT:

On behalf of the faculty, staff and trustees, I want to thank our graduates for being a part of the University of South Florida System.

This semester, over 4000 students are graduating from across the USF System. This diverse group came to us from 44 states and 83 nations.

Our oldest graduate age 67, is receiving a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from USF Sarasota-Manatee.

Our youngest graduate is 19-year-old Britain Taulbee, who is receiving a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from USF Tampa.

We are also proud to have 16 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.

This is indeed a day to celebrate your hard work, careful planning and unwavering determination to reach your goal.

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.

USF is a Top 50 research university as determined by the National Science Foundation among all universities, both public and private institutions.

We are a global leader in generating new U.S. patents – and that’s why there is such an incredible atmosphere of innovation and creativity here. We have given our students and faculty the freedom to explore new ideas and create new technologies and products – and they are doing so in great numbers.

The Institute of International Education and the Chronicle of Higher Education has named USF as a top producer of Fulbright Scholars – placing our university in the same category with Harvard University, Columbia, Cornell and the University of California Berkley in one of the world’s most competitive postgraduate scholarships.

We are recognized nationally as the 4th most veteran-friendly university in the nation – and I especially congratulate the 132 veterans graduating from the USF System today. We not only thank you for your service, but look forward to your future contributions as leaders in our community.

And this is one of my favorite points of pride: USF was recently named by the Sierra Club as the nation’s 12th “Cool School” for our commitment to sustainability in research and education.

This award is a bold statement for USF: 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.

As graduates – you have contributed to this success while completing your own personal journey through the university experience.

You are writing your own story and determining your own destiny, but also adding to the great potential that exists in our community and region for lasting success.

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

Andrew Saint Martin struggled for 2 years persevering with underemployment and menial work after his company laid him off due to downsizing. He decided to return to school and secure a bachelor's degree with a PTO minor in education to become a high school teacher. After 4 years, Andrew has achieved his goal and has a phenomenal experience at USF St. Petersburg, proving that it's never too late to pursue one's dream.

Elizabeth Biasotti attended two different universities before enrolling at USF St. Petersburg and never felt so much at home as she did here. She created long lasting friendships, and enjoyed the opportunity to interact with professors in small class settings. Her professors have inspired her to change the world in such a way that after graduation she is considering joining the Peace Corps.

Frank Johnson comes from a working class family. College was not planned for him. In the year 2000, he recalls working across the street from the university at the Poynter Institute, and thinking that being a student at USFSP was out of his reach. He credits his mother, who passed in 2009, as his inspiration to pursue his dream. He graduates today with a Master of Arts in Teaching.

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 St. Petersburg.

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 MARK LOMBARDI-NELSON, Student Government President.

MARK...

(Lombardi-Nelson goes to center microphone. GENSHAFT returns to seat.)

LOMBARDI-NELSON:

Thank you, PRESIDENT GENSHAFT:

Graduates,

You will leave today with a great and well-earned sense of accomplishment, and you should be proud of what you have achieved. But we know that this is but a brief celebration at a milestone on a lifelong journey. And you know that we are not celebrating a single step, but the thousands of steps you have made and the tens of thousands more that will follow. Today we celebrate our ability to determine our own futures; to seek our goals and realize them.

We continue on, and along the way there will be great victories, and some

disappointments. And there will be battles worth fighting, even if loss is inevitable. But what you have achieved is evidence of your enduring optimism and your unquenchable faith that by your own works tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow can be even a little bit better than the days before.

You will celebrate today, graduates, but I also suspect you will leave here with a sense of loss. Not for bricks and mortar, or colors or football teams. Or even for the view on the south side of campus as the setting sun paints resplendent reds and oranges across Bayboro Harbor while metal fittings clang gently against the masts of sailboats. Instead, you will mourn the loss of the community you helped create and that has briefly travelled with you on your journey. You will miss the people you have comforted, and been comforted by, and loved, and been loved by. And you will even miss those with whom you disagreed, because you believe truth will ultimately prevail, and discourse can only make you both stronger and more resilient.

You learned during your time here that it takes many individuals to form a community. You learned that many of your fellow graduates are here “because”—

—because they want to save people in forgotten corners of the earth; because they want to equip themselves for great adventures; or because their parents toiled long hours to provide an opportunity they themselves never had.

And you learned that many of your fellow graduates are here “despite”—

—despite studying chemistry during the breaks in a 60-hour work week; despite a four-year degree taking eight years because mom doesn’t have any more time in her day; or despite coming home from war to a home that now seems both familiar and strange at the same time.

You learned that everyone is fighting great battles and they are worthy of your empathy, your support, and your benefit of the doubt. This absence of cynicism is what makes our community. Cynicism is as ugly as it is easy. It

will erode our communities from something worth caring about, worth fighting for, into something disposable, worthless, and weak. The cynic says the American Dream is two-point-five kids and a white picket fence, the stuff you can acquire and the people you can defeat. You know that your American Dream isn't nearly so tangible, or as easy, or as shallow. I believe it is the idea that you can leave the places you traverse better than when you arrived; that you can be a builder of people, and of communities, and of yourself. Together, we can create an environment that fosters the dreams of individuals, that keeps your achievements attainable for those that follow, and preserves the great things created from noble principles

Graduates, you leave here today and enter a world that needs you. You are not the leaders of tomorrow but the leaders of today. If things are broken, they can be restored. Be willing to toil for miniscule steps that advance the causes of justice, compassion and sincerity against the forces of entrenchment and selfishness. The days ahead might be difficult, but you have prepared yourself for the task. Your optimism and ability will lead the way, if you let them.

I thank you for the opportunity to follow in your footsteps. I thank you for leaving USF St. Petersburg better than when you arrived. And I thank you for allowing me to learn from you and for providing a community I can proudly call my own. I can't wait to see what you do next. Again, congratulations!

(LOMBARDI-NELSON returns to seat HOGARTH goes to mic.)

HOGARTH

Thank you, MARK. It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. NORINE NOONAN, Regional Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs.

(NOONAN goes to center podium microphone. HOGARTH 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 graduating seniors with the highest cumulative grade point average, a 4.0 GPA, by awarding the King O’Neal Scholar Award. The King O’Neal award is given in honor of charter graduates Lucas King and Evelyn O’Neal.

The recipient of the King O’Neal award is honored with a certificate of accomplishment and a gold medallion of the university seal.