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Letter, 2005 March 24, Tallahassee, to President Judy Genshaft

Debra Austin

Judy Genshaft

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March 24, 2005

Dr. Judy Genshaft
President
University of South Florida
4202 East Fowler Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33620-6250

Dear President Genshaft:

The purpose of this letter is to address the issue of the University of South Florida system for accreditation purposes. Although there are many configurations of "systems" across the United States, I understand the common features are as follows: (1) institutions within the system have separate regional accreditation; and (2) two or more of these institutions operate under the same governing board.

As you know, in 2001, the Florida Legislature directed the president of the University of South Florida to seek separate accreditation of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus and the University of South Florida Sarasota/Manatee campus. The effect of this action was to establish the foundation for the creation of two autonomous entities specifically for accreditation purposes. As such, when implemented, the plan would indeed create two institutions within USF that would be accredited separately and, in effect, meet criterion #1 for consideration as a system for accreditation purposes only.

The second common element of systems is that the autonomous institutions operate under one governing board. The Florida Legislature established the University of South Florida Board of Trustees during 2001 to govern the entire university. Although campus boards were statutorily created for USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota/Manatee, the ultimate responsibility for operations of these two entities as well as for the campuses of USF Tampa and USF Lakeland rests with the University Board of Trustees (UBOT).

It is this UBOT that the Florida Board of Governors (created by a constitutional amendment in 2003 to operate and be fully responsible for the state university system) expects to continue to govern all units of USF. Although the UBOT may delegate some responsibility to the various campuses for efficiency in operations,

Dr. Judy Genshaft
March 24, 2005
Page 2

it nevertheless is ultimately responsible for all of its campuses. To date, I have seen the USF Board of Trustees fulfill its responsibilities to govern the campuses and I have no doubt it will continue to do so in the future. Thus, I believe criterion #2 is satisfied.

With the above two conditions met, the University of South Florida appears to display characteristics necessary to be called a "system" for accreditation purposes.

Sincerely yours,

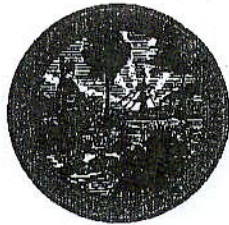


Debra Austin, Ed.D.
Chancellor

DA/nmb

cc: Mrs. Carolyn Roberts, Chair, Board of Governors
Mr. Dick Beard, Chair, USF Board of Trustees

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