

**State University System
Education and General
2021-2022 Legislative Budget Request
Form I**

University(s):	University of South Florida
Request Title:	Preeminence/National Rankings
Date Request Approved by University Board of Trustees:	Subject to approval at September 8, 2020 USF Board of Trustees Meeting
Recurring Funds Requested:	\$50,020,903
Non-Recurring Funds Requested:	
Total Funds Requested:	\$50,020,903
Please check the request type below:	
Shared Services/System-Wide Request	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unique Request	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

I. Description

The University of South Florida (USF) is requesting a recurring investment of new state dollars beginning in FY 2021-22. By accelerating USF's trajectory, this investment will create economic advantages for the state of Florida by providing numerous positive benefits for current and future USF students and faculty, for the State University System (SUS) and for the state of Florida as a whole.

With USF's momentum, the impact of additional state resources of \$50 million represents an opportunity for the state to further support one of the most promising universities in the nation.

For example, in the past five years, USF has risen faster in *U.S. News & World Report's* (USN&WR) annual rankings of national universities than any public or private university. Furthermore, leaders in higher education are recognizing the increasing impact of USF. For instance, as Holden Thorp, provost at Washington University in St. Louis noted, it is the "...University of South Floridas of the world that are the real game-changers for students and their communities..."¹

To fully leverage its positive impact on the state of Florida, USF strives to become a Top 25-ranked public university in USN&WR's annual rankings. Additionally, USF's aspirations are to maximize the state's opportunity to be home to another member of the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU). AAU evaluates new members based upon their academic reputation, as well as their national leadership in its research and development enterprise. USF is well on its

¹ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Well-Do-Elite-Colleges/246100>.

way – already positioned as a highly-ranked public institution in research expenditures and annually in the Top 10 for intellectual property (e.g., patent) creation.

Our request is the first phase of a multi-year investment plan – in concert with other external and philanthropic funds contributed by the university. It is particularly timely because the new investment will be made within a year of the date from which the newly consolidated USF will be operating as one Preeminent State Research University, geographically distributed. The investment will benefit all communities, all campuses, all students and all faculty of the newly consolidated “One USF.” The consolidation officially took place in July 2020.

The justification for this request is divided into the following sections:

1. Why invest in USF? A University with a Trajectory of Increasing Academic Excellence;
2. Florida’s Benefits from Additional Prestigious Universities;
3. Broad Benefits from Additional State Funds Invested in the Future of USF;
4. Building an “Architecture of Academic Excellence” for USF; and
5. Strategic Deployment of Investments to Further Enhance Academic Excellence.

Why Invest in USF? A University with a Trajectory of Increasing Academic Excellence

Evidence shows that a dollar invested in USF has stretched farther and delivered greater returns to students and the economy during the last decade than at any public university in Florida or the United States.

Consider USF’s² remarkable ascent in national rankings over the past decade. Indeed, since the first year of our current institutional strategic plan in 2013, USF has:

- Achieved the largest gain in *USN&WR*’s rankings of any public or private university in the United States, rising all the way up to #44 among public institutions in the 2020 rankings.
- Achieved and maintained a Top 50 ranking among all public universities in the United States in six of the 10 official rankings approved by the Board of Governors (BOG) to measure national preeminence.

² At times throughout this document, the term “USF” may refer to the historical data, ranking, etc. of the USF Tampa campus. Prior to July 2020, the three separately accredited institutions of the former “USF System” were classified differently and reported separate federal data and therefore received separate national rankings. Consolidation has eliminated the need for this separate reporting and ranking going forward.

Furthermore, USF's rise in the national rankings during the past several years has – not coincidentally – corresponded with record-breaking gains in student success metrics.

- USF is ranked as the #1 public research university in the nation for gains in the six-year graduation rate of its students between 2008 and 2018. USF raised its six-year graduation rate by 25 percentage points during that decade, a gain of six percentage points greater than the #2 ranked institution in America during that same time period³.
- USF raised its four-year graduation rate from 35.5% in 2011 to 59.4% in 2019, which was the largest percentage point gain (+23.9%) in the SUS during that time period.
- USF is ranked #1 in America among all public universities for Latino student success⁴.
- USF is ranked #6 in America and #1 in Florida among all public universities for black student success⁴.
- USF is ranked #9 in America and #1 in Florida among all public universities for Pell-recipient student success⁵.
- USF is ranked #9 in America and #1 in Florida among all public universities in *USN&WR's* new “Top Performers on Social Mobility” rankings for 2020, demonstrating success enrolling and graduating Pell Grant recipients⁶.

Florida's Benefits from Additional Prestigious Universities

The Association of American Universities (AAU) is considered the most prestigious of all university associations. It is an invitation-only association that consists of 36 American public universities, 27 American private universities and two Canadian public universities. Currently, the University of Florida is Florida's only member institution, public or private.

Why should taxpayers and policymakers in Florida seek more AAU member institutions? The answer is simple: The most talented faculty, students and entrepreneurs gravitate to the most prestigious institutions, particularly when those institutions are located in large, metropolitan areas such as the AAU member institutions in the cities of New York, Boston, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Houston, Seattle, Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia and others. Moreover, membership in the AAU, in its most basic sense, is a recognition that Florida universities are nationally prestigious, and thereby so is Florida's entire State University System.

³ [Graduation Rate Trends: Public Research Institutions](#), The University of Utah.

⁴ The Education Trust, 2017.

⁵ Third Way, May 2018.

⁶ <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/social-mobility>.

Additionally, the AAU institutions – despite representing fewer than two percent of American universities – are awarded 60 percent of the nation’s approximately \$40 billion in federally funded research each year. Upwards of 70 percent of America’s Nobel Prize winners, National Academy of Sciences members and National Medal of Science winners are faculty members at AAU institutions. The AAU institutions represent America’s greatest economic development assets by being awarded almost 5,000 new U.S. patents per year, executing over 4,000 licensing agreements and creating over 3,600 operational startup companies annually⁷.

Consequently, Florida – with only one AAU institution – may be lagging in the battle for intellectual capital and research funding, which are primary factors in the recognition and ranking of elite universities and university systems. California boasts ten AAU member institutions (seven public) and New York is home to six others (two public). Texas has three AAU members, two of which are public. Florida is the only one of America’s top 10 most populous states that is home to fewer than two AAU member institutions; five of those 10 states boast at least two *public* AAU institutions. Focused state investments, coupled with increased institutional fundraising and responsible university stewardship of existing resources, could allow other Florida institutions – and especially USF – to cross the thresholds necessary to be considered for eligibility by outpacing existing AAU members’ performance.

Given the historical track record of AAU institutions to date, the state and taxpayers will be more than repaid for these additional investments. As more of its top research institutions join the ranks of the elite national universities, the state as a whole will be elevated to new economic and reputational heights. Although AAU does not guarantee membership to any institution based on a level of achievement, the association is quite transparent in revealing the “indicators” it looks for in its prospective members⁸. The AAU’s most important membership indicators (“Phase I Indicators”) relate to research competitiveness and the quality and impact of the institution’s faculty. They include competitively funded federal research expenditures, National Academy memberships and faculty awards, and faculty research citation volume and impact. Secondary, or “Phase II,” indicators that are considered include non-competitively awarded research funding, doctoral education quality, postdoctoral appointments and undergraduate education. The full listing of AAU Membership Indicators is available on the AAU’s website, www.aau.edu.

Broad Benefits from Additional State Funds Invested in the Future of USF

The 2018 Florida Legislature mandated that by July 2020, the former “USF System” must consolidate into one university, geographically distributed. This

⁷ <https://www.aau.edu/who-we-are/aau-numbers>.

⁸ <https://www.aau.edu/who-we-are/membership-policy>.

goal was accomplished when on 12 June 2020 the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approved the consolidation of USF with USF St. Petersburg and USF Sarasota-Manatee effective July 2020⁹. One USF affords the State of Florida the opportunity to maximize the impact of a major, highly ranked research university located across a large metropolitan area. In fact, USF (at #44 in *USN&WR*) is already Florida's highest-ranked public university in any of its major metropolitan areas and is poised to continue its upward trajectory.

Until June 2020, the Tampa Bay region was served by the three separately accredited institutions of the former "USF System," each with a different mission. The newly consolidated, Preeminent USF already has campuses in Tampa, a city of nearly 400,000 located in a county (Hillsborough) with a population of nearly 1.5 million residents; St. Petersburg, a city of over 250,000 residents located in a county (Pinellas) with a population of nearly 1 million residents; and Sarasota-Manatee, representing two counties with a combined population exceeding 800,000 residents. Overall, more than 3.25 million Floridians reside in these four Tampa Bay counties alone, a population larger than 20 U.S. States can claim.

The decision by the Legislature to consolidate the former "USF System" into one university, geographically distributed provides the first opportunity in the Tampa Bay region's history to be fully served by one preeminent, nationally ranked research university. The USF Board of Trustees' (BOT) Consolidation Plan calls for investment in all three campuses to raise the national profile of One USF and to provide students and faculty with new academic and research opportunities never before available.

This LBR contemplates the initial phases of that investment in all three campuses, as well as the resources necessary to develop and strengthen specialized, nationally renowned academic and research centers of excellence on each of the three campuses.

One USF also allows the institution to maximize new investments for even greater returns, which will be realized in every corner of the Tampa Bay region. Instead of three USF System institutions competing for limited state resources and philanthropic gifts, One USF allows new investments to pay dividends for all three campuses. This multiplier effect of new financial investments in a single USF will greatly benefit Florida, as one of its largest and fastest-growing regions is recognized internationally as a destination for exceptionally talented students and faculty. It sends a message to corporations looking to avail themselves of that talent in a large and growing population center.

For the first time ever no particular municipality or county in Tampa Bay will be the exclusive "home" to the region's top public research university, nor will any single campus be the primary destination for its talent and commensurate corporate investment. Rather, each of Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas and Sarasota counties will be home to a campus of a top-ranked research university

⁹ <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/06/June-2020-Actions.pdf>.

with access to the world-class talent, research programs and economic development initiatives available through a united USF.

USF's geographical location and unique vision for alignment across Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee make it a strong candidate for new investment, which can stretch each dollar for tripartite benefit. This provides the best return on investment to the state, and importantly, across the entirety of the eight-county Tampa Bay region.

Building an "Architecture of Academic Excellence" for USF

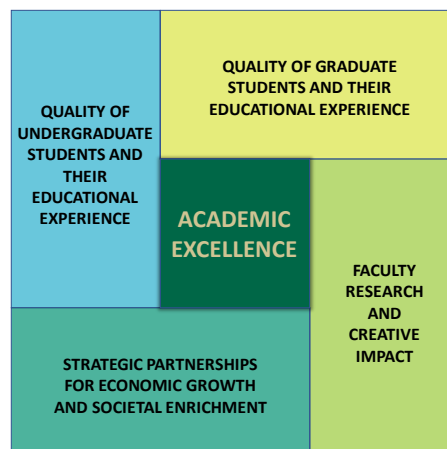
USF, which is a relatively young university compared with other national peers, has traditionally fared well in national rankings that compute only objective data and where institutional reputation is not a dominant factor in the rankings.

Although *USN&WR* and *AAU* consider certain objective data elements to evaluate institutional performance, a large component of their rankings and membership decisions are also based on an institution's national academic reputation for excellence. USF has more work to do in this regard. Indeed, much of this LBR is tailored to requesting and deploying strategic investments in specific, targeted areas that will build upon USF's already growing national academic reputation.

Leadership of USF refers to these key components and the plan to address them as the "*architecture of academic excellence*"¹⁰. The "architecture" is built upon four components:

- 1) Quality of undergraduate students and their educational experience;
- 2) Quality of graduate students and their educational experience;
- 3) Faculty, research and creative impact; and
- 4) Strategic partnerships for economic growth and societal enrichment.

Collectively, these four components form and drive the overall academic reputation of any public research institution.



¹⁰ Adapted from: <https://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Provost/Provost/PDF/Continuing-the-Ascent.pdf?la=en>.

An institution's academic reputation and its effect on *USN&WR* rankings and AAU membership cannot be overstated, and in fact the two are closely intertwined. Consider that:

- 21 of the current *USN&WR* Top 25 public universities are members of the AAU¹¹;
- 29 of the 36 public AAU members are ranked in *USN&WR*'s Top 40; and
- Only four of the 36 public AAU members are ranked outside the *USN&WR* Top 50, the lowest of which is ranked #64 (USF, at #44, currently ranks ahead of four public AAU member institutions and is tied with three others)¹².

A sustained investment in USF over a period of time, targeted in the four components of the "architecture" described above, will position USF to raise our national academic reputation. This, in turn, will continue to raise our national rankings and the likelihood of becoming eligible for AAU membership in the future. This trajectory also builds on the BOG's stated vision for the SUS that by 2025, the State University System of Florida "will be internationally recognized as a premier public university system, noted for the distinctive and collective strengths of its member institutions." A key strategy for fulfilling this vision will be to promote the successes and achievements of USF and the SUS to the leadership of other universities as well as to other opinion leaders nationwide to raise the overall reputation of USF and the entire SUS.

Strategic Deployment of Investments to Further Enhance Academic Excellence

Based on the architecture outlined above and USF's extraordinary track record of success over the past decade, any new recurring investments provided by the Legislature and Governor for this initiative will be deployed specifically to achieve the following goals, all of which will advance USF's national prestige:

- Increased student success outcomes, including improved FTIC retention rates and four-year and six-year graduation rates.
- Increased individualized attention for student success by lowering the student-to-faculty ratio and the proportion of classes with fewer than 20 students and with fewer than 50 students.
- Increased faculty resources and productivity, including more competitive faculty salaries; the ability to hire more National Academy-member faculty and other world-class scholars; increasing external grant funding and research citations; and citation impact. Additional faculty will be

¹¹ There are currently 26 schools ranked in *USN&WR*'s Top 25 Public Colleges and Universities because three institutions are tied at #24 in the 2020 rankings. The only non-AAU members ranked in the Top 25 are the College of William & Mary (#12), University of Georgia (#16), Florida State University (#18), University of Connecticut (tied #24) and University of Massachusetts–Amherst (tied #24).

¹² USF is currently tied at #44 with AAU members University of Colorado–Boulder, University of Oregon and University of Utah and ranks ahead of the University of Arizona (#53), Iowa State University (#55), University of Kansas (#59) and University of Missouri (#64).

- focused primarily in areas of strategic emphasis as identified by the BOG, including science and mathematics, engineering, business and medicine.
- Enhancements to the quality of and access for incoming students, including attracting students with high SAT and ACT scores, students who graduated in the top 10% of their high school classes, as well as continuing to provide access for Pell grant recipients and others.
 - Enhancement of institutional reputation among academic peer institutions and rankings publications across the country.
 - Increased community support through philanthropy and alumni giving.

Specific investments in this first phase will be made in the following areas to enhance USF's overall national and international academic reputation via the "architecture" plan:

Quality of Undergraduate Students and their Educational Experience

\$2.0 million to enhance undergraduate student recruitment and support services.

Quality of Graduate Students and their Educational Experience

\$3.5 million to enhance graduate student recruitment and support.

Faculty, Research and Creative Impact

\$8.0 million to retain current high-performing USF faculty.

\$8.8 million to hire 20 additional National Academy members and other world-class scholars.

\$5.8 million to hire 25 additional full professors.

\$4.0 million to hire 25 additional full-time associate professors.

\$6.8 million to hire 50 additional full-time assistant professors.

\$5.8 million to hire 55 additional full-time instructors.

\$2.8 million to hire 25 additional technical personnel to support the above faculty hires.

Strategic Partnerships for Economic Growth and Societal Engagement

\$2.5 million to support innovative new national and global research partnerships and R&D initiatives.

This first-phase investment will result in a net gain of 175 additional faculty members, contributing to USF's overall five-year plan to add 375 net new faculty. During both the first year and the five-year plan, (if new state funding is provided) faculty will be hired at each of the three campuses consistent with the USF BOT's strategic priorities for each campus.

II. Return on Investment

The combined effect of the return on investment will:

- Strengthen Florida’s position as the top state in the nation for higher education, thereby enhancing the global prominence of Florida;
- Propel USF on a trajectory toward a *USN&WR* Top 25 public ranking;
- Advance USF towards AAU eligibility;
- Improve student success outcomes and students’ educational experiences; and
- Increase institutional impact as an engine for innovation and economic growth.

Given that 21 of *USN&WR*’s Top 25 public universities are members of the AAU – and the fact that positioning USF for membership in the AAU has been the goal of the USF BOT in the institution’s Strategic Plan since 2007 – USF will continue to benchmark the success of the investments against that aspirational peer group’s performance. Our goal is to meet or exceed the average of the 36 public AAU institutions’ latest performance on each metric.

USN&WR’s rankings are derived from 15 specific metrics that serve as the publication’s formula inputs. In seven of those 15 metrics, USF already achieves above or very near the current average of the 36 public AAU members’ achievement level.

Notably, USF currently exceeds the average achievement level of public AAU universities in two student success outcome metrics assessed by *USN&WR* in its rankings. These include a comparison of each institution’s actual six-year graduation rate compared to that predicted by *USN&WR* and an institution’s success rate in graduating Pell Grant recipient students when compared against their Non-Pell Grant students.

The seven metrics in which USF’s current performance is already competitive with the average performance of all public AAU members are:

<i>USN&WR</i> Metric	Average Performance of Public AAUs	Current USF Performance
First-year Retention Rate	92%	90%
Pell Grant Six-year Graduation Rate	75%	72%
Over/Under Predicted Performance in the Six-year Graduation Rate	+3%	+12%
Ratio of Pell and Non-Pell Grant Six-year Graduation Rate	90%	95%

Proportion of Classes with Fewer than 20 Students	41%	45%
SAT Scores for the 25 th – 75 th Percentile of Incoming Students	1190-1400	1170-1330
Annual Alumni Giving Rate	11%	12%

Despite being near or ahead of the average AAU members’ performance in the above metrics, USF’s aim is to continue to improve in each of those areas. In the other eight *USN&WR* ranking metrics, USF strives to improve its performance to match the current average achievement level of the 36 public AAU institutions.

<i>USN&WR</i> Metric	Average Performance of Public AAUs	Current USF Performance
Six-year Graduation Rate	81%	73%
Academic Peer Assessment	3.7	2.8
Average Faculty Salary	\$162,522	\$120,073
Proportion of Faculty with Highest Degree in their Field	92%	82%
Proportion of Fulltime Faculty	92%	84%
Student-to-faculty Ratio	17:1	22:1
Incoming Enrollees who Graduated in Top 10% of their High School Class	61%	34%
Average Spending Per Student	\$78,627	\$34,898

It is worth emphasizing that many of the above metrics (in which USF lags the current public AAU average performance) are directly related to available financial resources. They include: faculty salaries; the proportion of faculty with the highest degree in their field; the proportion of full-time to part-time faculty; student-to-faculty ratio; and the average institutional spending per student.

All of these metrics will be positively impacted almost immediately by the proposed investment in USF and the strategic deployment of the funds as

outlined above through the “architecture” plan. More than three-fourths of the proposed first-year investment is aimed directly at hiring additional faculty and improving the salaries of current high-performing faculty to allow USF to catch up to its national peers.

Similarly, the “architecture” plan contemplates spending additional resources to recruit and retain more high-achieving high school students in order to improve USF’s performance in two of the remaining *USN&WR* metrics (percentage of students from the Top 10% of their high school class and the six-year graduation rate).

The final metric, the Academic Peer Assessment, is strictly a reflection of external perceptions of USF’s academic reputation. The “architecture” plan is designed specifically to achieve gains in this outcome through targeted investments and awareness campaigns. This metric is, however, a “perceptual” ranking that tends to lag actual performance. A sustained effort will be necessary through these investments to communicate the strengths and achievements of USF and the SUS as a whole to national peers to see the requisite gains in this critical final metric. Even with some expected lag time in assessment ratings, improvements made in the financial resources metrics outlined above through this investment will continue USF’s upward ascent toward the Top 25.

In summary, USF has demonstrated a track record of using targeted investments to achieve results that well exceed other universities’ performance. USF embraces metrics-based accountability; we relish it, and our results speak for themselves. The timing is auspicious now for a major investment of new state funds into USF given its national momentum and trajectory, the opportunities afforded through consolidation, and the economic impact to the state by having a major nationally ranked research university located in one of Florida’s fastest-growing metropolitan areas. The “architecture” plan developed and described in this LBR presents the vision and plan to deploy those state assets to maximize the return on investment for USF students, for taxpayers, for the SUS and for the entire state of Florida.

III. Facilities:

	Facility Project Title	Fiscal Year	Amount Requested	Priority Number
1.	N/A			

2021-2022 Legislative Budget Request
Education and General
Position and Fiscal Summary
Operating Budget Form II
 (to be completed for each issue)

University: University of South Florida
Issue Title: Preeminence/National Rankings

	<u>RECURRING</u>	<u>NON- RECURRING</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>Positions</u>			
Faculty	175.00	0.00	175.00
Other (A&P/USPS)	25.00	0.00	25.00
	-----	-----	-----
Total	200.00	0.00	200.00
	=====	=====	=====
Salaries and Benefits	\$29,123,394	\$0	\$29,123,394
Other Personal Services	\$5,500,000	\$0	\$5,500,000
Expenses	\$7,397,509	\$0	\$7,397,509
Operating Capital Outlay	\$0	\$0	\$0
Electronic Data Processing	\$0	\$0	\$0
Financial Aid	\$0	\$0	\$0
Special Category (Specific)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Faculty Retention	\$8,000,000	\$0	\$8,000,000
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	-----	-----	-----
Total All Categories	\$50,020,903	\$0	\$50,020,903
	=====	=====	=====