

## EDITORIAL

# USF's presidential search is biased in Law's favor

By Editorial Board

The university's search for its eighth president resembles more of a reelection campaign for Interim President Rhea Law, giving opposition retired U.S. Army Lt. General Jeffrey Talley an inherent disadvantage.

When Law was appointed Aug. 2, she expressed no interest in the permanent position. However, she changed her mind Feb. 23, a week before a presidential search meeting where she received immediate support from the committee.

As soon as Law threw her hat in the ring for the position, 97% of candidates withdrew their applications, understanding the weight her experience as interim president would have in the



Interim President Rhea Law's exposure to USF and Tampa Bay community halts any momentum retired U.S. Army Lt. General Jeffrey Talley could have made it in the race for the university's next president. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

Presidential Search Committee's final decision, according to a March 1 Tampa Bay Times article.

Law's leadership at USF has birthed a well-received five-year strategic plan, has ended possibilities of future development on the North Fletcher Property and has shown support to build an on-campus stadium. As a result, her efficient use of her eight months in the position serves as an undeniable testimony of her potential once in the permanent position to the committee.

Talley's resume of leadership positions paired with his experience in academia, which Law lacks, has mobilized him into the final decision making process. The decision came as a result

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# Plans for on-campus stadium prompts concerns and motivation from students



Katherine Mailly

STAFF WRITER

Plans for an on-campus stadium have progressed with Sycamore Fields as the recommended location, leaving

some students excited for the future of USF Athletics, while others are unsure if it's needed.

Vice President of Athletics Michael Kelly and Senior Vice President of Advancement and Alumni Affairs Jay Stroman, heads of the on-campus stadium planning committee, presented the location at the March 8 Board of Trustees meeting. They received verbal support from the BOT members, however no decision has been made yet.

Several students said that they had no preference on whether or not the stadium was built because by the time the construction is finished — currently projected to be 2026 or 2027 — many will have graduated.

Junior biology major Cruz Wood said he had some concerns surrounding the funding being invested in the project. The cost of the stadium is currently estimated to cost up to \$300 million, according to Kelly.

Wood said funds should instead be used for essential purposes such as improving housing and dining, while sports is an “extracurricular” outlet for funding.

“I don't care about sports, so I don't care that a stadium is being built,” Wood said. “But I do care about what they aren't doing in favor of building this stadium.”

The pandemic was another deciding factor against the project due to the crowded nature of

sporting events and COVID-19's contagiousness, Wood said.

These sentiments were echoed by others, including junior theater major Monica Ruiz. Funding large amounts of money for the stadium when Beta Hall regularly deals with broken elevators, washing machines and dryers doesn't make sense, according to Ruiz.

But others disagreed, viewing the stadium's construction

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## OCS

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as an opportunity to bring the spotlight, as well as more funding, to USF.

Jake Zellak, a senior English education major, said the stadium could also bring more representation to the university. USF is often overlooked in favor of UF and FSU, according to Zellak, and he believes the stadium's attraction will bring more recognition and talented teams in the future.

"I personally don't care that much from a student perspective," Zellak said. "But the general Florida public doesn't even know we exist and they love football, so if we get a stadium, hopefully we'll get a better team and eventually maybe get some recognition."

Sophomore psychology major Daniel Demarin said the stadium should have been built sooner,

citing the university likely has had the resources to do so.

"It's definitely going to positively impact the community," he said. "I think it will bring more school spirit to the school."

Alum Bri Rolon also said a stadium would serve to bring the community closer together and increase school pride.

"I trust that our board of directors is making the best decisions when it comes to funding," Rolon said. "I think the on-campus stadium will provide a plethora of financial gain for USF and the city of Tampa."

The stadium could also present an opportunity to financially benefit USF through its branding and image, he said.

"It could also drive admissions because it will build the brand of USF Bulls," he said. "It will be a good call."



As plans for the on-campus stadium progress, students both critique and praise the project. ORACLE PHOTO/ALEXANDRA URBAN



The Presidential Search Committee interviewed the candidates March 4 in Traditions Hall at the Alumni Center. ORACLE PHOTO/LEDA ALVIM

## EDITORIAL

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of a simple majority, dwarfed by the unanimous support of Law with votes and vocal discussions among the committee.

Consequently, Talley's advancement to the final stage of the search was met with his own confusion. Tempted to forfeit his bid to the interim president, Committee Chair Mike Griffin had to convince Talley to stay, ensuring a fair evaluation of both candidates' potential for the position, according to a March 2 Tampa Bay Times article.

"Although I had been notified by the search firm that I was selected to interview, it was in the context that I would be part of a larger and broader group," Talley wrote in an email to the Tampa Bay Times.

"After additional discussions with the search firm and receiving a personal call from the Chair of USF's Presidential Search committee, I was better able to understand how the search committee objectively reached the decision of two semi-finalists."

Similarly to how Talley is

given the respect of consideration for the position for his plethora of accomplishments, the committee's adornment of Law is justified in her relentless support of USF.

Talley's initial skepticism to the process is valid, as the notable bias the search committee has for Law puts into question its reasoning for keeping Talley as a candidate in the first place.

At the March 1 meeting, there were 18 candidates in the running. The committee members breezed by 15 of them, and only looked at Law, Talley and Dean of Yale's School of Public Health Sten Vermund's resumes.

The search feels as if it is being conducted for show and to make the university look like it is continuing a fair contest, as opposed to offering a genuine examination of potential presidents.

For comparison, FSU's 2021 presidential search totaled a 35-person applicant pool, and elected nine candidates for the interview process, over quadruple the number of candidates as USF's interview process with just Law and Talley.

With a process that has only examined three applications and interviewed two candidates, the notion of keeping Talley in the race seems theatrical in itself. Presidential searches should be expansive and thorough, something USF has seemingly rejected in favor of Law's victory.

If the university is favoring Law for the position, accepting applications and convincing Talley to stay in the race appears to be for no more than avoiding controversy over the election process.

As committee member Jose Valiente put it after the committee interviewed both candidates March 4, Law is a "known commodity." That said, her interim trial run as president equipped her with exposure and experience to the university's community and current dilemmas other candidates, such as Talley, would be forced to imagine dealing with.



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# Looking back at the basketball season

Editor in Chief Alexandra Urban photographed the women and men's basketball teams' final home games March 2 and 3.



Senior forward Bethy Mununga finished 11th in the country in rebounding with 11.4 boards per game. ORACLE PHOTO/ALEXANDRA URBAN



Senior guard Javon Greene finished second on the team in scoring with 8.8 points per game. ORACLE PHOTO



Freshman guard Sara Guerreiro enjoyed an increase in playing time this year and will look for an even bigger role next season. ORACLE PHOTO



Sophomore guard Jamir Chaplin was one of the Bulls best perimeter defenders this season. ORACLE PHOTO/ALEXANDRA URBAN




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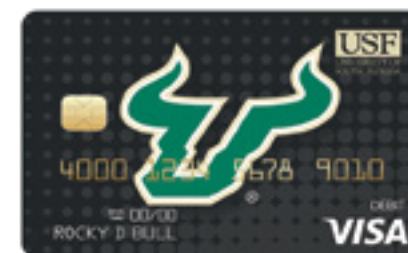



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## Death of DeSantis' health care act protects patients

By Neel Kulkarni  
CORRESPONDENT

Gov. Ron DeSantis asked the Florida legislature to pass the Free Speech of Health Care Practitioners Act on March 3, according to a news release. Flaws in DeSantis' news release, and the proposed act itself, makes it evident the governor acts on legislation to expand freedoms without considering the consequences.

The bill died in the Senate and House on March 14, and its lack of advancement in the Florida legislature is a positive result for those in the health care field.

The act, a combination of House Bill 687 and Senate Bill 1184, would have made it more difficult for health care workers to lose their licenses and certificates for their outspoken opinions. Any health care provider who offers medical advice outside of the practitioner-patient relationship would be protected by this act.

"A board ... may not reprimand, sanction or revoke or threaten to revoke a license, certificate or registration of a health care practitioner for exercising his or her constitutional right of free speech, including, but not limited to, speech through the use of a social media platform," SB 1184 said.

Medical professionals already have the right to speak freely, but they practice in an evidence-based field which allows for the publication of evidence-based findings. By blindly taking steps to protect free speech in health



A new act fighting for freedom in health care prioritizes discourse over patients. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE

care, the necessity for evidence in promoting science will be overlooked.

A medical professional does not need a "practitioner-patient relationship" to cause harm. With certification and licensure comes responsibility, and people look up to medical professionals for guidance during a health care crisis.

By allowing doctors and nurses to spew misinformation that causes harm to people outside of the practitioner-patient relationship, this bill affects the very people that health professionals should seek to protect.

Since the pandemic response has become a partisan issue, health care providers have been able to act as political agents rather than neutral scientists. Florida's surgeon general, Joseph Ladapo, has publicly stated that masks do not save lives.

This contradicts data like that gathered by Stanford and Yale university in a 2021 randomized trial. It was found that the

distribution of surgical masks resulted in a 12% reduction of infection to COVID-19.

It is the certification boards' role to hold health care professionals accountable for the health advice they offer to the public. While physicians have free speech, they do not have the right to use their title to interject misinformation into public conversation.

The March 3 news release furthers its support of this bill by quoting Florida's Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis as he explained why a new bill should be passed to protect medical practitioners' free speech.

Allowing the promotion of non-factual ideas does not lead to success, it leads to a misinformed audience.

To fight misinformation, give the certification boards the freedom to choose whether its certified members are promoting good health.

*Neel Kulkarni is a senior majoring in biomedical sciences.*

## USF tackles gender performance gap in fresh way

By Marcelene Pilcher  
OPINION CO-EDITOR

USF's Office of Student Success has partnered with Mentor Collective to initiate a mentorship program aimed at narrowing the gap between male and female college performance in 2022.

This mentorship program is a great additional resource for students, and USF should be applauded for spotting a performance gap and making the efforts to close it.

At USF, a study found that women graduate at higher rates, and in better standing, than men. From 2014 onward it identified several gaps between genders in college performance.

The study showed male students are 62% more likely to receive one D or F and 76% more likely to have a 2.0 or lower GPA.

In response to these findings, USF partnered with Mentor Collective to match mentee students with peer mentors to support their transition to college life. The program isn't just academic, it also aids students in making connections on campus.

These mentors are a resource for students to find study groups and peers in their same major or focus to help academically. The current group of mentees was selected through invitations to members of summer and fall cohorts from 2020 and 2021, according to USF's press release.

The gender gap is not special to USF.

About 74 men received a college degree for every 100 women in the U.S. in 2021, according to a study by Brookings' Institute. Women are also 10% more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than men in the same programs.

USF is tackling the issue where they can make a difference.

"We know there are 15 or 20 different reasons — social, biological and cultural — that help explain why men are struggling by the time they reach college," said William Cummings, a professor of humanities and cultural studies who chairs the Status of Men Presidential Advisory Committee.

"Most of the things on that list are beyond our control and we can't change them. We need to focus on the core result, men are not as successful because they don't complete enough credit hours as quickly as they should. That's where we need to direct our effort and resources."

Whether the reasoning is within their control or not, USF has found a tangible way to assist a group of students who are falling behind, and should be lauded for their efforts.

Every student deserves a chance at a successful college experience.

*Marcelene Pilcher is a junior majoring in integrated public relations and advertising.*



# BASKETBALL

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UCF in the regular-season standings and fell to the Knights in the tournament championship game.

Over the course of the season, USF proved themselves to be among the top two teams in the conference and it's a position the program seems to be locked into for the foreseeable future.

## Roster Holes to fill: Post players

Rebounding and interior defense have been the calling cards of the last few women's teams, spearheaded by senior forwards Bethy Mununga and Shae Leverett. But with both players leaving the program, it leaves concerns about who can fill their void.

Mununga was one of the best rebounders in the country, finishing in the top 12 of Division I in rebounds per game the last two seasons. She was also a key offensive piece with her work on the glass, averaging 9.4 points per game.

Leverett was the anchor of USF's defense and was a six-year veteran for the program, she was a key piece to each of the Bulls' postseason runs over the past few years.

Although coach Jose Fernandez has a stable of frontcourt players, outside of forward Dulcy Fankam Mendjiadeu, they are mostly unproven.

## One big question for next season: Returners

There could potentially be even more roster turnover for the Bulls depending on the decision of junior guards Elisa Pinzan and Sydny Harvey. Academically, both are seniors but will have the opportunity to return for an extra year of eligibility due to

COVID-19 if they choose to use it.

Harvey and Pinzan are two of USF's most important players on both ends of the floor. Losing either one could be a big blow for Fernandez.

Pinzan played the most minutes of anyone on the team over the last few seasons, playing all 40 minutes multiple times this season. Harvey became the 25th player in program history to score 1,000 career points.

## A year to forget for men's basketball

The 2021-22 season was tough to predict from the jump, as the roster turnover to coach Brian Gregory's team was substantial. The team returned just four players from last year's squad and welcomed 10 new faces, the majority of which were underclassmen.

A preseason coaches' poll tabbed USF to finish toward the bottom of the AAC standings, a glass-half-empty prediction that turned out to be optimistic. In reality, the Bulls finished dead last with a 3-15 record in conference play.

USF could never string together consecutive wins and failed to advance past UCF in the first round of the AAC Tournament.

## A foundation to build upon

The team's overall youth and inexperience deserve a mention as a major factor in the lack of success.

Of the 10 incoming transfers, only one was a four-year senior with a seasoned college career in guard Javon Greene. Junior guard Serrel Smith Jr. also arrived with experience at Maryland and East Tennessee.

For the rest of the transfers and the true freshman, even a disappointing season will serve them well going forward. The

familiarity with Gregory, the coaching staff and chemistry with teammates should provide for a strong base going into 2022-23.

Transfer portal chaos notwithstanding, the only unknown as far as returning starters is sophomore guard Caleb Murphy, who has previously expressed interest in turning pro. As of now, he and sophomore center Russel Tchewa will likely combine as the Bulls' top scoring options going forward.

## One big question for next season: The offense

USF's offensive struggles have been well documented over the course of the season. Aside from the worst shooting percentages in Division I, the Bulls also had the third-worst scoring average at 57.5 points per game.

With a full offseason to work with a group of players that are now familiar with Gregory's offensive system, the Bulls should see improvement next year. That's not exactly saying much though.

If this team's offense does not improve significantly, Gregory's position should be in question, regardless of the recent extension he was given. Having the country's worst offense two seasons in a row is simply unacceptable.

# BASEBALL

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its explosive offense.

The Bears' pitching staff was able to hold USF down for six innings, giving up just one run in the second. The strong pitching allowed the offense to rack up insurance runs in case the Bulls mounted a comeback.

USF's offense woke up in the seventh with a four-run inning but it wasn't enough to catch up to Mercer. The Bulls couldn't recreate their performance from the day before in what turned to be an off-day for just about everyone.

"We didn't play well," Mohl said. "No hit through six innings. It took us to the seventh inning to get a hit. But the pitchers were not good. [On Saturday] I challenged those guys after the game, and you saw what they did [Sunday]."

The Bears finished the day with a 14-6 win setting up a rubber match for Sunday's game.

## USF 3, Mercer 2

For the second weekend in a row, the Bulls finished the series with a Sunday walk-off from Lane. Up until that final inning, though, USF looked grim.

After being held scoreless

for eight frames, the Bulls tied the game 2-2 in the bottom of the ninth. Lane brought the last runner home with a single up the middle to pull off the stunning comeback.

"I was proud that the guys never gave up and we walked them off for the second Sunday in a row with Carmine getting a walk-off hit," Mohl said.

It wasn't just the rally of the hitters that helped secure the game but the efforts from the pitching staff as well, particularly the work of sophomore Hunter Mink, that kept Mercer's offense relatively quiet all day.

Mink put in yet another great outing from the bullpen, allowing just one hit in 3.2 innings pitched. The transfer from Florida has contributed to five saves at USF so far.

"It's been a pretty smooth transition," he said. "The coaches are awesome, warm, welcoming, having me here. The guys trust me and I think that's the best way to succeed is just have fun out here and I'm having fun doing it. I guess that's the key to my success so far."

*USF will remain at home for a weekend series beginning Friday against Niagara at 6:30 p.m. The game will be broadcast on ESPN+ and iHeartRadio Bulls Unlimited.*



The Bulls celebrating sophomore infielder Carmine Lane's second series walkoff of the season. USF ATHLETICS PHOTO

# USF basketball: Two polar opposite seasons

By Francisco Rosa and Alberto Camargo

With both USF basketball seasons coming to a close, now is the time to reflect on what both teams accomplished this season and take a look at what Bulls fans can expect next season.

The women's team maintained its reputation as perennial conference title contenders. Meanwhile, the men showed there is still a long road to success for the program as they finished in the basement of the AAC.

Here is some insight into where both programs stand at the end of their respective seasons.

**Women's basketball remain among AAC's best**

Coming off an AAC regular-season and tournament title in 2021, USF women's basketball had sky-high expectations this year. The Bulls were ranked in the AP poll's Top 25 and were tabbed to once again finish at the top of the conference.

While the Bulls didn't reach those same heights as they failed to repeat as conference champions and were eliminated in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, they still had another strong showing in 2022.

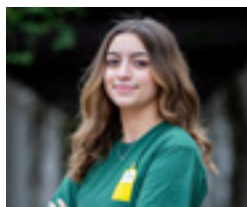
USF managed to get wins over teams ranked in the top 10, including a 57-54 win over reigning national champions Stanford. In conference play, the Bulls finished second to rivals

■ See BASKETBALL on PAGE 7



USF men and women's basketball had varying levels of success over the 2022 season. USF ATHLETICS PHOTO

## Bulls battle through another series win against Mercer



Lanie De La Milera

STAFF WRITER

Coming off its high-scoring 14-9 win against Florida International, South Florida had a lot more to prepare for with a weekend series against Mercer, one of their more competitive

matchups since opening weekend.

Mercer (16-4) came to Tampa with eight batters hitting over .273 and their rotation holding a collective 2.44 ERA. Meanwhile, USF (13-7) only has five batters over .265 and a team ERA of 4.54, leaving the team with a difficult matchup against the Bears.

Games 1 and 2 of the series showed the offensive capabilities of each team, but the last ended up in the hands of USF after yet another walk-off series win.

### USF 10, Mercer 2

Despite the Bears being one of USF's toughest opponents this season, USF dominated at the plate and on the mound to take the first win of the series.

Redshirt junior pitcher Orion Kerkering took the Friday start after a solid outing against Bradley on March 11. In six innings pitched, he allowed four hits, one earned run to go along with seven strikeouts.

Mercer held a 1-0 lead for three innings, but the Bulls bounced

back in the fourth to take a 5-1 lead.

Redshirt sophomore outfielder Daniel Cantu began the rally with a two-RBI single followed by an RBI groundout from infielder Carmine Lane and a two-run home run to center field by sophomore outfielder Drew Bratcher.

The Bulls continued to command the game offensively, including a home run from freshman outfielder Jackson Mayo. The St. Johns, Florida native has made a quick impact

in the lineup with a .350 batting average.

"Obviously, you got to take your lumps as a freshman, but he sees the ball, he takes good at bats, plays good defense, and he's gonna be a really special player," coach Billy Mohl said.

### Mercer 14, USF 6

The roles were reversed Saturday when Mercer took control of the game with 17 hits and 14 earned runs, showing off

■ See BASEBALL on PAGE 7