To Members of the USF Community:

Because you are so dedicated to your University of South Florida, we know you must be worried about the legislature's on-going budget negotiations. These are very difficult times and many are working diligently to ensure that USF has the resources it needs to continue our missions: providing world-class education, research and service. It is vital that the USF community – students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends – be kept informed at this crucial juncture in our university's history.

What is the current situation? There are vast differences between the House and Senate budgets. The Senate education budget is better. Many have rightly concluded that it would be devastating for Florida’s universities should the House budget be adopted. Students would be denied opportunities and communities would suffer if we are forced to shut down numerous degree programs, lay off dedicated faculty and staff and curtail or cut crucial university services.

All of this comes on the heels of our ongoing efforts to grapple with the effects of the over a quarter-billion dollars we and our sister state universities have already lost to previous budget reductions. The USF we all know and love cannot continue as we know it with a $78 million cut in state support to our already strained budget. That equates to a staggering 25 percent reduction in our state appropriations.

You can make a difference and, perhaps, turn the situation around for the better.

What can you do?

Thank members of the Florida Senate for acknowledging the crucial role Florida’s universities play in driving economic development and enhancing the lives of their constituents. Ask them to stay strong defending their budget position.

Ask our friends in the House to move to the Senate’s position.

One more point worth making: proposed tuition increases are helpful, but they do not come close to making up for the cuts.

Who should you inform of your concerns? Your own House members or Senators. You are their constituents and they respond best to folks who live in their respective districts. Also, you have professional, personal, civic and other relationships with legislators. They know who you are. Let them know how you feel. Remind them that cuts to our state universities will hurt Florida’s families. Enrollment caps will close the doors of our university to qualified students. For those students already enrolled, their path toward graduation and successful careers will be slowed and/or altered. Florida’s economy will continue to suffer from one of the nation’s lowest rates of residents with bachelor’s and advanced degrees.

Your opinion is important and it would mean a great deal if your elected representatives and senators were aware of your concerns. Let them know that you understand that they have a very difficult job to do and that they care about their universities, but the extent of the House budget cuts would cause serious damage to USF and the economy.

Thank you for your continued support. Below are email links to crucial members of the House and Senate Leadership teams. Also, we’ve provided links to both to House and
Senate members’ e-mail so you may communicate directly with them. Please write no later than tomorrow and please remember to do so only from your personal e-mail accounts and computers during non-work hours.

The Honorable Larry Cretul, Speaker of the House larry.cretul@myfloridahouse.gov
Representative Dean Cannon, Speaker-Designate dean.cannon@myfloridahouse.gov
Representative Bill Galvano, Rules Chairman bill.galvano@myfloridahouse.gov
Representative Adam Hasner, Majority Leader adam.hasner@myfloridahouse.gov
Speaker Pro Tempore Ron Reagan ron.reagan@myfloridahouse.gov
Representative David Rivera, Chairman, Education & Economic Development Appropriations david.rivera@myfloridahouse.gov
Representative Will Weatherford, Chairman, State & Community Colleges and Workforce Appropriations will.weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov

The Honorable Jeff Atwater, President of the Senate atwater.jeff.web@flsenate.gov
Senator J.D. Alexander, Chair, Ways & Means Policy and Steering Committee alexander.jd.web@flsenate.gov
Senator Mike Fasano, President Pro Tempore fasano.mike.web@flsenate.gov
Senator Mike Haridopolos, President-Designate haridopolos.mike.web@flsenate.gov
Senator Al Lawson, Democratic Leader lawson.alfred.web@flsenate.gov
Senator Evelyn Lynn, Chair, Higher Ed Appropriations lynn.evelyn.web@flsenate.gov
Sen. Alex Diaz de la Portilla, Majority Leader portilla.alex.web@flsenate.gov

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