



DR. SANDRA *stone*

The University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) has a new Regional Chancellor and she's a seasoned higher education administrator from the University System of Georgia. She'll lead the growing university as it continues to grow. "It's an interesting university in that it grew backwards," she observes. "Instead of beginning with undergraduate programs and later adding graduate programs, the school began with upper-division and graduate programs and did not enroll freshman until 2013. I want to meet the needs of freshman on campus through specific services and programming during these students' first year in college."

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hen the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) completed its search for a

Regional Chancellor, the institution tapped a seasoned higher education administrator from the University System of Georgia to lead the growing university. Dr. Sandra Stone had served in many academic affairs and student services capacities at both the institutional level and at the state system where she was “on loan” from her home school, Dalton State University.

She arrived at USFSM with the goal of opening a dialogue with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community stakeholders to shape the future of the institution. USF President Dr. Judy Genshaft says, “Sandra Stone is a great fit for the University of South Florida System because she shares our dedication to student success and brings a collaborative spirit, great enthusiasm, and a wealth of experience to USF Sarasota-Manatee.”

As Vice President for Academic Affairs at Dalton State, Dr. Stone was searching for an opportunity to advance in higher education when her husband, a USF grad, noticed the USFSM position posting. He had visited Sarasota often when he was growing up to see relatives, especially his grandparents Lewis and Eugenia Van Wezel for whom the performing arts hall in Sarasota is named.

Dr. Stone’s enthusiasm about the position was based on the growth of the school and the opportunity to shape the institution at this point in its history. She says the position is an excellent match for her skill set that includes management at Dalton State of colleges, the library, two centers, academic support services and chairing the strategic planning process—a task that USFSM is undertaking with input from all stakeholders.

“It’s an interesting university in that it grew backwards,” she observes. “Instead of beginning with undergraduate programs and later adding graduate programs, the school began with upper-division and graduate programs and did not enroll freshman until 2013. I want to meet the needs of freshman on campus through specific services and programming during these students’ first year in college. Even though there is no established timeline, the construction of residence halls for recruitment and retention of freshmen will be discussed in the future. This means that USFSM would become a different type of campus with activities especially tailored to first year students as opposed to the current commuting and upper-division students.”

USFSM is an offspring of USF in Tampa and as such has both financial and academic ties to the main campus while having achieved its own academic accreditation in 2011. About 4,500 students (many of whom attend part-time) are enrolled with 1,012 students who identify USFSM as their home campus. In addition 120 graduate students are enrolled. The school offers 42 bachelor’s and master’s degree and certificate programs in four colleges and employs 97 full-time staff, 83 faculty, 17 part-time staff, and about 25 adjunct faculty.

While Dr. Stone enjoys the integration of academic affairs and student services, she’s also had positive experiences working on campus facilities and understanding how physical space needs to be both welcoming and conducive to what students and staff need.

A major consideration when Dr. Stone accepted the position is the appeal of state colleges and universities that are deeply embedded in the community. She feels at home at a school that offers opportunities for students who

might not go to college and for “first generation” students, that integrates itself into the community by working with economic development councils and workforce development organizations, and that encourages students to be good citizens through civic engagement in service learning.

Dr. Stone self-describes as, “...open to innovative ideas and new information, approachable, transparent, inclusive, and fair. The challenges present in the position include personnel decisions that I know have long-term effects on people’s lives and the politics or hurdles that get in the way of allowing the administration to do the right thing. I’m committed to student success and the reward is seeing the pride when first generation college students and nontraditional students receive their degrees at commencement.”

As Regional Chancellor she plans to engage alumni, grow signature programs such as the PAInT (Partnerships for Arts-Integrated Teaching) program, continue the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) partnership with Mote Marine, and collaborate with local higher education institutions so students who are enrolled at any of the schools may take courses at any other campus.

Future programs include international study abroad programs, programs that respond to the area’s workforce needs, STEM research opportunities, and construction of needed facilities that have been approved but have not been funded. And, of course, every administrator’s goal is to increase private donations and visibility in the community. In addition to supporting the USF system legislative funding priorities, USFSM has specific legislative items including funding for STEM programs, shared law enforcement resources for USFSM and New College, and match dollars for the PAInT program and the Small Business Development Center.

Dr. Stone holds bachelor’s degrees in sociology and psychology and a master’s degree in psychology from the University of West Georgia, a doctorate in sociology from Emory University, and a post-doctoral certificate from Tulane University. She entered higher education administration after careers in medical social work, health care, child protection, domestic violence programs, HIV/AIDS prevention research and was the drug policy advisor to the Atlanta Mayor’s office. She is the recipient of research awards from the Gang Crime Research Center (twice), an award for contributions in health and education from the Georgia Women’s Institute, and the Sociologist of the Year award from the Georgia Sociological Association.

Born in Chicago, Dr. Stone grew up and attended public schools in Tennessee and Atlanta. She is married to Tony Stone, born in London when his father was in the diplomatic corps, and who is a police and forensic psychologist in Atlanta. Her daughter Bailey followed her mother’s initial career choice as a social worker in New York City and her stepson Adam is a real estate analyst in Washington, DC, while her mother and sister live in Georgia.

Confessing to not being a morning person, her perfect day is sleeping late, doing yoga, reading, taking long walks, attending performing arts events, and dining with friends. She also enjoys serial television programs such as *Homeland*, *The Good Wife*, and *Mad Men*. Dr. Stone came to USFSM with a deep desire to make a difference not only for students and her colleagues, but also for the larger community which the university serves. 

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