

College of Public Health Building Dedication

Remarks delivered by USF President Rhea Law

October 10, 2023

Thank you, Trustee Griffin — and good morning, everyone! I am delighted that you have joined us as we celebrate a dear friend of the University of South Florida — the Honorable Samuel P. Bell, III, who was known to many of us as “Sam.”

Before I continue, I’d like to take a moment to recognize our elected officials who have joined us for this wonderful occasion and who continue to support our great university. Thank you to:

- Congresswoman Kathy Castor
- State Representative Karen Gonzalez Pittman
- Tampa City Councilman Alan Clendenin

And representatives attending on behalf of the offices of:

- State Senator Darryl Rouson
- State Representative Traci Koster
- Congresswoman Laurel Lee

Sam was a passionate champion of our great university. He is considered the “father” of the College of Public Health — having played an instrumental role in establishing our state’s first public health college right here at the University of South Florida.

Throughout his work in public policy and as a state representative, he was a fierce advocate for children’s health and making our communities better places to live.

I was fortunate to work closely with Sam during my time at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney. His smart, thoughtful, and caring approach to public policy was tremendously beneficial to our law firm and to our community.

During those days, Sam used to stop by every morning to talk to me. When we would discuss policy issues, he always took the long view. He was aware of the local implications of our work, but he also saw how it could make a difference at a global level.

And when he saw a need in our communities, Sam put in the work to make things better. He loved people... he loved being helpful... and he loved USF — especially the College of Public Health.

And last May, during USF's Spring Commencement, I was pleased to present USF's Distinguished Citizen Award to Sam posthumously, to recognize his outstanding public service to our region and state.

But we knew we wanted to do even more to commemorate all he has done for our university. And I can't think of a better time to celebrate Sam than during USF's Homecoming Week festivities.

Thank you, Betty, for continually supporting USF, for being a true partner to Sam, and for helping us make certain that his legacy lives on through our university and our incredible public health students.

Thank you all for joining us as we honor Sam's many contributions and ensure his impact continues to be felt every day by USF's students, faculty, and staff.

Now, please join me in welcoming Senior Associate Vice President for USF Health and Dean of the College of Public Health, Donna Petersen.