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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty." **Mohandas Gandhi**

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USF on track to improve community, economy

BRADENTON HERALD EDITORIAL | Variety of initiatives bode well for region's future

The University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee is pursuing ambitious expansion plans on several fronts, and the community stands to benefit from stronger educational programs that will boost workforce training.

Currently, the upper-level university accepts students who already hold an associate's or bachelor's degree and want to pursue a baccalaureate or master's, professional certification or continuing education credit. But with the addition of lower-level coursework, the university

aims to attract freshmen and sophomore students.

The most optimistic outlook, according to Dr. Arthur Guilford, regional chancellor and campus chief executive officer, would be gaining accreditation in June 2011 and begin accepting freshman in the fall of 2012. Science and math professors would be hired to fill that portion of the general curriculum.

At the same time, the school plans to expand the campus by building dormitory rooms, a larger bookstore and a coffee shop. USF will start looking for a developer in August

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for a public-private partnership. With the first residences on the grounds, the school will be able to provide a full-fledged university experience. With current enrollment at 4,500, Guilford expects the number to grow to upwards of 6,000 over the next three to five years.

All this continues the university's upward trajectory. After sharing a campus with New College for 31 years, USF began construction on its own center in 2005 and finished its first academic year there in 2007.

USF Sarasota-Manatee is in the process of breaking free of the university's main Tampa campus as directed by the Legislature. Last year, the campus applied for separate accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Guilford said the process is going smoothly, and a SACS site visit is scheduled for November. He expects to secure accreditation next June. Autonomy will give the school greater

control of its destiny — a big plus for our region.

Today, the campus offers more than 800 courses in some 30 academic programs. The College of Business, with programs in accounting, finance, marketing and business administration, is growing rapidly, Guilford told the Herald's Editorial Board. The School of Hotel and Restaurant Management will launch a master's level program in the fall of 2011, and a fundraising campaign is planned so two endowed professorships and a facility with a kitchen can be added.

USF is currently working on moving its south Sarasota County facility into a

new North Port development with the expanded space allowing for continued enrollment growth. Classes will start there this fall.

On an aesthetic level, the school hopes to beautify the portion of U.S. 41 that fronts the campus. That would be a very welcome development, too.

Should the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee accomplish all these impressive initiatives, this community asset will gain additional value in terms of education and economic development as graduates filter into local jobs. Kudos to USF, Guilford and his staff for working to improve the community.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR