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## INTRODUCTION

This issue's NAI Profile features Dr. Steven C. Currall—thought leader, university president, and scholar. Upon receiving his doctorate, Currall began his career as a faculty member at Temple University before moving on to Rice University, where he climbed up the faculty ranks to hold an endowed professorship. Building on his success as a faculty member and scholar, Currall moved into administration, which allowed him to have a larger role in charting the direction of higher education and permitted him to greatly expand his impact on student success. His extensive leadership experience, includ

behavior with minors in research methods and statistics, social psychology, and employment relations. In addition to authoring numerous refereed publications and several books in the areas of innovation, organizational behavior, and organizational management, he has also given presentations and written mainstream publications in his role as an international innovation and organizational behavior thought leader and been the recipient of over \$21 million in research grant funding for his work. As a recognition for his exceptional work as a scholar and as a higher education leader, he has been recognized with numerous professional recognitions, including fellowship in the American Association for the Advancement of Science; appointment as commissioner of-2.7 (a)19.3 (t)02>ang rk. 148 >>BDC BT4ez007 Tc BT(s 7 . )0.5i.6k8147 >>BDC47 (h) 0.5 (0 5

## INTERVIEW

***T&I:*** At the start of the search for a new USF president, there was a large pool of talented and

once dedicated to veteran success, among others. I'm enjoying that and learning about the institution.

My first year has been unusual because of the consolidation. We did a lot of that work in the first four months, so it was an unusual start to the job, but a lot of the work is organizational, and that's an area where I have many interests. The process has involved external folks such as state legislators. I have been involved in interfacing with many external stakeholders, and I've enjoyed that.

**T&I:** I've also seen that you are working on a campuswide initiative to promote community and instill a culture of civility. Can you tell me more about that?

**Currall:** Yes, of course. I think this campus already has a great community, but there's more we can do to articulate and reinforce that. That's why I've started the Principles of Community task force. It's a foundation for the strategic renewal process to rethink the strategic vision of the university. Whenever a community or an institution does that, there's always debate, different perspectives, different views, and sometimes disagreements. I hope that our principles of community will further equip us with the process skills that we need to have a vigorous and rigorous debate but do so in a way that is civil, inclusive, mutually respectful, and evidence-based. All of those are positive aspects of deliberation.

**T&I:** Do you think that universities, including USF, are reacting to our current societal moment, where many see that we lack some civility in our public discourse?

**Currall:** It is a time for us to redouble our commitment

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the strategic puzzle to solve: how to orient us toward truly greater, truly increased academic excellence. at

**T&I:** Do you think that anyone is getting this right

**Currall:** When I was a freshman in high school, I worked part time in the library, and the librarian wrote in my yearbook that she thought I was actually an intellectual, but I just didn't know it at the time. It was in my inauguration speech. I actually showed a slide of the picture of the library with her writing in my yearbook. I didn't know anything about what being an intellectual was at that time. At that age, I was probably anything but an intellectual! When I was in graduate school at Cornell, I was deliberating about whether or not to go into a business setting or go into academia. I had some experiences that led me to go into academia just for the intellectual freedom. One amazing thing about working in higher education is the freedom. There's really amazing academic and intellectual freedom, so during graduate school, that got to be more and more precious for me.

**FURTHER READING**  
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## CONCLUSION

Despite his modest claims of having come into his intellectual legacy later, it is clear that Currall's trajectory matches that of the institution that he now leads, as he has risen quickly through the ranks of higher education to now take up his place as leader of a Florida preeminent university, one that is poised to join the ranks of the most elite U.S. institutions. As we wrapped up the interview, Currall was already looking ahead and imagining the next stage of that work, noting, "We already have a trajectory that is encouraging and appealing, but we're not done yet. We're not finished yet with where we want to be." Just as he has navigated his own path to success, he is more than ready to take on the role of mapping out USF's road forward. Indeed, given the reference to blueprints in his book title, it should not surprise that Currall started out as an architecture major, and even though his career path changed, his taste for building has not—just the medium in which he works. As he humbly puts it, "I like to see myself as an organizational architect. I still have these impulses to build, and now I'm trying to build an even stronger university." With his work on consolidating USF's three campuses, his task force on community principles, and his dedication to working across barriers to promote innovation, there is little doubt that he will succeed in doing just that.

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