

Subject: A message from President Tonjua Williams regarding Hurricane Ian
Date: Thursday, September 29, 2022 at 5:44:24 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: SPC President Tonjua Williams
To: ALLOFSPC

Dear Titan Family,

As of this writing, we have not heard of any fatalities in the Tampa Bay region, and no injuries amongst our students, faculty, staff or community partners. For this, I am eternally grateful. Your health and safety, and that of your families and friends, is always my topmost concern, but especially so during a crisis like Hurricane Ian.

I want to thank all of you for heeding warnings from our local authorities and taking the proper precautions before, during and after the storm. I also want to send special thanks to the following: our facilities, security and IT teams, and the SPC Emergency Management Council, which includes college leadership from all divisions. These teams have worked around the clock for days to prepare and protect our students, employees and campuses and they have been working tirelessly throughout today to assess and remediate our sites so we can get up and running at full speed as soon as possible.

I am also so appreciative and very thankful to Dr. Eric Carver and his team at Midtown, who stayed at the center for three days to serve local residents in need of shelter; to Tricia Gorham and her team, who stayed at the Vet Tech Center throughout the storm to care for our animals; and to Bill Grey, who stayed at the Pinellas County Emergency Operations Center for two days to ensure we had a direct link to information and resources. You are servant leaders and your actions set the example for all to see that selflessness and compassion positively impact so many.

While the Tampa Bay area got lucky this time, Ian's righthand turn has created widespread devastation for our neighbors to the south. My heart aches to learn there have been some deaths, as well as catastrophic damage across southwest Florida. People are hurting and have suffered unimaginable losses. We at SPC will band together and find ways to support them in the coming days and weeks. Please stay tuned. In the meantime, I ask that you keep them in your thoughts, and in your prayers, if that is your practice. I also realize we may have students and employees in the affected areas. Please reach out to your colleagues or your instructors if you have been negatively impacted and we will do whatever we can to support you.

Over the past several days, our Emergency Management Council has been meeting twice each day to discuss academic and operational continuity, facilities, communications, and needs of our students, employees and community members. We will continue to meet over the next several days to discuss our reopening. While our crews are continuing their work on our campuses and we are waiting for full power to be restored at two locations (St. Petersburg/Gibbs and the Keene Center at Midtown), it is my hope that we will resume normal operations this coming Monday, Oct. 3. We will communicate a reopening date in the next day or two as the picture becomes more clear.

I have also been in daily communication with the Chancellor of the Florida College System and the Commissioner of the Florida Department of Education. They have been incredibly supportive and assured me throughout the storm that they were at the ready to provide whatever assistance we may need. We are lucky to have such incredible leadership and I'm grateful to them, as well as the many college presidents throughout the state and across the nation who have been calling and texting daily.

Over the last several days, I have received many calls and texts and heard remarkable stories about members of our SPC family checking in on one another, offering help with food and shelter, and just generally taking care of each other. It is hard for me to express how proud I am of all of you. Titans always rise to the challenge and we put people before possessions. The past week has been stressful, no doubt. Please remember that your mental and emotional health are just as important as your physical well-being. SPC offers resources [for students](#) and [for staff](#), and I encourage you to take advantage of them if you are in need. Please continue to check on your neighbors, friends and colleagues over the coming days, but tonight rest easy as the worst has passed.

Warm Regards,
Tonjua