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President Nikias' recent address to  
the USC faculty.

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Edward P. Roski Jr.  
*Chairman*  
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# ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE FACULTY

BY

C. L. MAX NIKIAS

PRESIDENT

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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**I**t is an extraordinary privilege for me to offer my first annual address as USC's president to you, the faculty of our great university. You have been my colleagues and my friends and my mentors for 20 years. For 20 years, I have cherished this intellectual community. You have encouraged me, you have challenged me, you have stood by me, and we have served together in the trenches. My proudest accomplishments in my academic career have been as a member of this USC faculty. And now, in my new role, it is the highest honor to serve you... and serve with you.

Not an hour of the day slips by without my remembering that the faculty are the foundation of a university. The scholarly faculty are the foundation of all academic excellence, and the cornerstone of a university's aspirations. A university faculty remains a distinct and unique community, representing timeless truths in a dynamic tension with new perspectives and new challenges.

And when I speak here of a faculty community, I speak of both the tenured faculty and the non-tenure-track faculty.

The tenured professoriate remains the ultimate gatekeeper for the academy. As you have done for more than half a century, you vigilantly "stand sentinel" and protect freedom of inquiry and freedom of expression, the relentless search for truth, collaboration, diversity and gender equality, and all the eternal core values that lie at the heart of what it means to be the academy.

And the non-tenured faculty here are our partners in bringing new perspectives and entrepreneurial approaches and expertise to our mission in teaching, scholarship, service, and patient care.

This captures how the distinctive institution of the university faculty is strong, yet adaptive, which is why it has outlived entire governments and constitutions and societies.

So I am ever mindful that all excellence in the life of the mind and body and spirit, all begin and end with you, the faculty.

Allow me now to offer some perspective on recent developments before discussing strategies to dramatically transform our academic foundation in a manner that will allow USC, within the next decade or

so, to reach undisputed elite status within the pantheon of world-class universities.

### *A Continuing Transformation*

Of course, a preeminent intellectual community deserves the best physical community, one that expresses the character and quality of the intellectual community. Thus, we are working to ensure that our two campuses reflect one powerful and majestic academic signature.

The University Park Campus continues to blossom in its own way. We will continue to add quality housing for undergraduate students, and we have just begun planning for quality housing for our graduate and professional students. We will never achieve full status as a residential university unless we can offer quality housing for Ph.D. and MFA and MBA and professional school students in law, medicine, pharmacy, and other fields.

We are breaking ground for a new student health center that will soon meet another pressing need, and that will also feature a clinic for faculty and staff. It will be ready for occupancy in December 2012.

We are in the process of designing the new Wallis Annenberg Building for Journalism that will showcase the latest digital media laboratories for news and information.

And plans are underway to transform the District 3 and University Village area into one of the best academic and commercial and social developments at any urban university, one that connects USC and the immediate neighborhood.

I'm sure many of you recognize the elegant Stoops Building near the corner of District 3. It was built almost 90 years ago, at the "very costly" price of \$66,000. This beautiful Romanesque building will soon undergo some further major transformation and expansion before re-opening as the new faculty club. I've seen the designs: It will be a very elegant, beautiful club for our faculty and staff.

Last fall, we began a five-year major beautification project for the Health Sciences Campus. By this summer you will see a transformation of major

entrances and corridors of the campus. We are also developing a long-range landscaping plan for the Health Sciences Campus, in conjunction with USC master planning efforts. This will establish a green pedestrian network connecting buildings and courtyards, both existing ones and new ones, through tree-lined and well-lit gardens and dedicated pedestrian walkways.

We are also committed to the quality of the everyday experience for our faculty, staff, and students. A new building on Soto Street, which is scheduled to open in 12 months, will include a state-of-the-art gym and a café. The building will also be the new home of our Department of Preventive Medicine.

When all these projects are completed, I'm sure you will find them worthy of the professoriate of a world-class university.

In the same manner that we're improving the facilities for the faculty and students, we are finally upgrading our athletic facilities for our 650 student-athletes. USC's unsurpassed athletic heritage remains the glue binding our Trojan Family together. Its importance to our community demands bigger and better facilities.

Our current athletics facilities, which were built in the 1960s, would not rank even in the top hundred of major colleges. But in just a few months time, four alumni stepped up to make a major new athletic facility possible by donating a total of \$50 million, and we broke ground on the John McKay Center a few weeks ago. It will be a major recruiting tool, and a statement about how USC intends to be the single greatest destination for those who aspire to make their mark in life athletically and academically.

The exemplar of this, of course, is Pat Haden, the seventh athletic director in USC's history. Pat is busy building a special kind of experience for our student-athletes, encouraging them to take advantage of this university's unique cultural assets, and exhorting them to the highest standards, to be students, first and foremost. Pat and I had a meeting with the Academic Senate last fall, where he shared this vision for USC athletics.

We also have added another Division I sport in response to a recommendation from a faculty committee that examined athletics issues. This committee, chaired by University Professor Kevin Starr, proposed that we add lacrosse, a quintessentially North American sport which originated among Native Americans going back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and which is gaining popularity on the West Coast. Pat moved quickly to hire Lindsey Munday as our first head coach. She has been a member of the U.S. national team, including the team that won the 2009 World Cup. We expect this new women's team to compete against many Ivy League schools. We also will consider adding a men's lacrosse team in the next few years.

### *Weaving National and Global Connections*

There are many ways in which we intend to weave USC more fully into the very fabric of the larger Southern California community. I met with over 600 alumni on the Westside two weeks ago. And you should have heard the roar from the crowd when I brought up how the *L.A. Times* Book Festival was leaving the Westside and coming to USC! On April 29 and 30, we will have the chance to display the majesty and the energy of USC to 150,000 people from around the area and around the world. We have a chance to help position USC as the hub of a global city that is coming into full maturity. We are taking a far more active role in planning this event than in the past. Fellow members of our faculty will be showcased strategically throughout the weekend, as will many of our talented students in the arts.

But our cultural efforts go beyond our campus, and even beyond the regional reach of Classical KUSC. We have secured the rights to broadcast USC classical music programming over two stations that will cover the Bay Area and Napa and Sonoma areas. It will connect USC more closely to our many alumni and parents and donors and friends up north. It will help us in recruiting students and friends and donors. In short, this means that the University of Southern California is placing its stamp in the arts even on Northern California. And the timing is outstanding,

as more and more students at top Bay Area high schools list USC as their first choice!

In addition to San Francisco, we also are opening a new office in New York City. Like our global offices in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul, Mexico City, and Taipei, these offices will be hubs for student recruiting, alumni relations, and fundraising.

One global center that USC takes particularly seriously is India, home of one of the most dynamic economic and cultural scenes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the world's greatest industrialists and philanthropists is Mr. Ratan Tata, who lives in Mumbai. I am delighted that he is one of USC's dedicated trustees. Mr. Tata has invited a small USC delegation to visit India in a few weeks, to build connections and partnerships across India.

Chairman Edward Roski and I will lead the delegation, which will include some trustees and deans. And in Mumbai, New Delhi, and Bangalore, we will showcase some of our faculty who are doing pioneering work in neurosciences, urology, digital media, and homeland security—all areas of interest to Indian officials, industry executives, and media. Mr. Tata also arranged for Ed Roski and me to be received by the prime minister of India. And we will celebrate there the opening of two new USC offices in Mumbai and Bangalore.

USC in fact now has the largest enrollment of Indian students in America. This reflects a peculiar phenomenon. Since World War II, USC has consistently been a magnet for first-generation college students from rising economies. I suspect there is an openness and an energy at USC that consistently draws such persons. And given the economic rise of Brazil and other Latin American nations, I believe we must be strategic in recruiting more young talent from that influential region.

### *Shaping USC's Reputation*

Of course, many aspects of our future commitments are being shaped by energetic discussions among and within our faculty, during the ongoing development

of a new USC Strategic Plan. The plan will play a seminal role in guiding the investments and energies of our academic leaders, deans, and academic community.

Provost Elizabeth Garrett and a faculty committee are leading this planning process, which will explore how USC can stake out the most distinct and compelling approach possible in areas such as teaching, research, student life, globalization, and interdisciplinary scholarship. This is a collaborative process, among faculty, students, staff, and alumni and neighborhood leaders. The committee will hold open forums this spring, and I hope you bring your voices and your wisdom to this important discussion.

USC has always been prudent and entrepreneurial, which is why this university has the rare status of being financially healthy. At a time when federal research funding has been under stress, we have relied on our Washington, D.C., Office of Research Advancement to help our faculty gain a greater portion of it. The office has worked with USC faculty on the submission of over 250 large and interdisciplinary proposals in the past four years—to date, 82 of these proposals have been funded for a total of more than \$200 million, and many of them are still pending. This represents a remarkable 30 percent success rate.

In my first week in office as president, I accepted the Academic Senate's recommendation to enhance the Contracts and Grants Office, and brought it under the university's academic umbrella, specifically under the direction of the provost.

Our faculty understand that success requires building bridges across our two campuses. This led to USC's winning a massive \$57 million Clinical and Translational Science Award from the National Institutes of Health! Many top medical schools in California have not won this award.

We also moved cautiously in response to the recession two years ago. We froze staff hiring and many salaries for a year. But as provost, realizing how crucial tuition revenue and student quality are to the health of our institution, I made one exception: I gave Katharine Harrington 50 new admissions staff

positions to make sure that we got the class we needed, and that we continued to grow in academic quality at the student level. Vice President Harrington and Tim Brunold, our dean of admission, and their staff got the job done, and managed to do it with only an additional 20 positions. I appreciate their efficiency, and I believe we all owe them a great deal of gratitude.

Our popularity among top students has been the essence of USC's rise in recent years, and to maintain or increase this popularity amid an economic meltdown was no small miracle.

We remain determined. Five years ago, USC visited 380 high schools, and two years ago, we visited 800 high schools. Now we visit 2,000 high schools, and we strategically target 40 states and eight countries that span the Pacific Rim. This year we received applications from 7,000 high schools, out of 27,000 total in the U.S. We've seen a 10 percent jump in applications, and the applicant pool continues to show growth in quality, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Quality is the key, and we will never rest on that point! Others are cutting back across the board. But a university is carried forward by its reputation for quality more than anything else.

Our freshman class has three times the number of Caltech-caliber students that Caltech's freshman class has! This is an extraordinary development. Caltech enrolls some 200 freshmen each fall. Meanwhile, USC enrolls some 550 students with the same SAT scores and grade point average as Caltech's freshman class.

Of course, we do not seek to be Caltech, or anyone else. We have our own dynamic identity as the single best destination for well-rounded, ambitious students in the arts and the sciences and the social sciences and engineering and the humanities. We have our own unique form of academic community—where a student has many choices in curriculum in terms of minors, majors, electives, and community service and study abroad opportunities; and where a student is immersed in a dynamic environment yet still enjoys the feel of a small college.

### *Reaching Undisputed Elite Status*

At my inauguration I declared my commitment to recruit the world's best faculty to USC, and to give our current faculty the resources to fulfill their immense potential.

Outside sources do not adequately fund new scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Thus, USC has created centralized funding streams to encourage new thinking in these important areas, while also fostering cross-disciplinary approaches that bring the vitality of the humanities and social sciences to other fields.

We continue to develop an environment that nurtures faculty diversity. We have brought in several members of underrepresented groups, including members of the National Academies and leaders of national institutions. We should celebrate the fact that USC is first nationally, among private AAU institutions, in the percentage of minority faculty.

Peter Conti (the current president of the Academic Senate), the provost, and I agree that integrating all our faculty, across disciplines, in a warm and collegial yet dynamic environment, is a process that will yield enormous benefits for our community. This is especially true within the crucial area of USC's clinical health practice. The challenge will be to create a new culture, one that is collaborative and one that allows our academic medical enterprise to be truly academic. For this reason, I was pleased to announce the creation of the post of senior vice president for health. This position will report directly to me, and will boost our efforts to build the single best academic medical center, not only in the Los Angeles area, but in the Pacific Rim.

With pride in our recent successes, we will continue to develop all of the faculty here and help everyone to succeed. This brings us to another great imperative: To achieve undisputed, elite status requires that USC achieve a critical mass of faculty superstars.

We have world-class superstars in this room and across the university. But we do not yet have the critical mass that energizes all of us to the point that

the world recognizes that USC represents the pinnacle of intellectual achievement. This is by far our biggest challenge—a challenge at the foundation of academic excellence, at the very foundation of what it means to be a university.

We must bring in new academic partners who are revolutionaries, who will be remembered alongside you for changing their field and changing society: leading contenders for Nobel Prizes, and Guggenheim Fellowships, and MacArthur Foundation Fellowships (widely known as MacArthur “Genius Grants”), and AAAS prizes and National Academies and National Medals and many other top honors.

We want them in the humanities, in medicine, in the sciences and engineering, in the social sciences. And we should bring superstars in the arts and media, because I believe the five arts schools are USC’s secret weapon. The arts are where USC has an edge over even our mightiest rivals.

Intellectual giants always attract the “bench”—meaning top junior faculty and the top Ph.D. and MFA students who represent tomorrow’s academic elite. Transformative faculty also become great fundraising opportunities, to raise endowment for their chairs and their programs, especially from non-alumni and foundations.

Remember that, in reaching the mountaintop, the last leg is always the most difficult and the most expensive. We justifiably share pride in USC’s academic progress, but consider this: Twenty years ago USC’s endowment was ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in the nation among private research universities. We are still 22<sup>nd</sup> today. We did not gain a single spot. USC raised a great deal of money. But so did everyone else. We were just keeping pace with our competitors. No matter how successful we are academically, we will not be taken seriously by our private peers unless we build our endowment to rank in the top tier of private institutions, perhaps the top 10.

As a result, we are planning to announce in September the most ambitious fundraising campaign in USC’s history. Al Checcio, our new senior vice president for university advancement, is leading our

efforts, working with the deans and faculty. We are building a different kind of fundraising machine: I have told our deans that, to reach our goals, we must become more aggressive, and double our fundraising staff, university-wide, from 200 to 400 people in just the next few years. We will invest in the best staff to raise the support we need for the best faculty and the best students.

And we will continue to focus on massive donations that bring national attention, but we will also place more focus on donors at the \$1 million level or less. We have some 250,000 alumni, and they love their university! As I told our deans, don’t tell me that we cannot identify in the next 10 years 1,000 of them who can endow \$1 million each for student scholarships. That’s a billion dollars of endowment right there!

Our intention is for our overall medical enterprise to develop the ability in the next few years to raise no less than \$1 million a day. I believe that is what we need, just for medicine alone, to reach our goals.

This campaign must not only be about the quantity of money we raise. It’s about the quality of those donations. For this campaign to truly be a success, we must raise significant endowment, at least a quarter of which will go to student scholarships.

We also are in the process of recruiting our first chief investment officer to help us maximize investment returns and manage risk, within the economic climate that we can anticipate over the next decade. This officer’s mission is to build an investment group division that can enhance USC’s ability to realize its lofty academic aspirations.

To lay the ground for our campaign, my wife Niki and I have begun touring key strongholds of the Trojan Family. We met with over 600 enthusiastic, charged-up alumni in Orange County, and they were eager to hear about USC’s progress toward the mountaintop. We met with huge crowds of similar size in San Diego and Beverly Hills.

Last night we went down the street to L.A. Live, where we hosted over 700 people! And we will visit Santa Barbara; San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; New York; and Chicago in the next two months.

Let us ask ourselves: Are the odds, and the gods, in our favor? I personally believe our position is remarkably strong. Our potential for fundraising has not even come close to being fully tapped.

### *USC and the Pacific Age*

Allow me to conclude with some consideration of our particular moment in time. The Atlantic has gone through its age of Enlightenment, in which old assumptions and practices were swept aside to make way for a new moment. This influenced the rest of the world profoundly. And I believe, as the center of gravity shifts increasingly to the Pacific, we will need a new Enlightenment, one specific to the needs of this age.

USC has been designed and built by great women and men, generation after generation after generation, for this very sort of moment.

I am reminded of a debate from the Enlightenment era, in the court of King Louis XIV. Two sides in this debate represented the so-called Ancients and the Moderns. The Ancients were led by Molière. They believed that the Golden Age of knowledge could be found in classical Athens and Rome. Everything after Antiquity represented, to them, an intellectual and cultural decline. The Moderns, led by Bernard de Fontanelle, believed that Antiquity was just that—and they believed that it was they who enjoyed the true Golden Age. After all, they had the ability to test and reject old ideas, and to produce new knowledge, especially through the dynamic engine of modern science and rationality.

This speaks wonderfully of a tension that exists in all preeminent research universities, especially in times of change, in times of enlightenment and

re-enlightenment. The tension between timeless intellectual values and timely innovation. The tension between what must change and what must never change. This tension is not something to be resolved or overcome. This tension is something to be embraced and engaged.

From this tension comes the best sort of perspective and the deepest form of wisdom, as well as the most beneficial forms of innovation. Within this tension we produce a new generation of worthy leaders. And thus USC is poised to achieve the highest level of influence in this global, Pacific age.

This guides us as we lecture on the University Park Campus or the Health Sciences Campus, in our lecture halls and our laboratories and our libraries. And at the end of the day, no matter what our discipline is, I believe we are all faculty of the humanities, with a sense of our place in an ancient academy that is ever pointed forward, moving toward the summit of academic excellence, from which we can make our fullest impact on our world. Within this manner of community, we each find our destiny, journeying forth together.

Think for a moment what a distinct privilege we have today, which none of the previous generations of this university faculty had. Within the next decade or so, if we do it right—and we will—we have a great opportunity to take USC to the mountaintop of undisputedly elite universities.

It is a wonderful destiny for a dedicated faculty of any university, but it is an especially remarkable destiny for this faculty, at this moment in USC's history. Let us move forward together with purpose and determination and passion. And let us write together the most glorious chapter in USC's history. Thank you, and "Fight On," always!