



MEMORANDUM

Office of the Provost

TO: USC Faculty

FROM: Tara McPherson
Chair, Arts & Humanities Initiative Faculty Committee

Barry Glassner
Executive Vice Provost

DATE: August 20, 2008

SUBJECT: Provost's Arts & Humanities Initiative

We write to update you on the outstanding success of the first two years of *Visions and Voices*, the event series of the Provost's Arts & Humanities Initiative, and to invite you to participate in this year's program. These events and the larger initiative aim to integrate the arts and humanities more fully into daily life on campus for, as Provost Nikias observed when announcing the initiative in fall 2005, "The arts and humanities bring [USC's core] values to life, illuminating their complexities and nuances."

When we undertook our initial planning for the series in 2005, we estimated that the kind of culture change we were after would require five or more years to "take hold," but the students have shown us how much we underestimated their eagerness for a series such as this. From the initial kick-off event that drew an audience of over 1,200 during orientation, the students have responded with great enthusiasm and interest. The past two years have included over 200 *Visions and Voices* events on and off campus, attended by over 45,000 and all free to students. The calendar has amply evidenced the breadth and range of the arts and humanities and has run the gamut from theatrical productions to musical performances to art exhibitions to public lectures on topics of social relevance.

During 2008-2009, we will continue the series with another exciting and diverse lineup of events, including many proposed and organized by faculty. Through this program, we will further integrate the arts and humanities into the fabric of daily life for USC students, complementing the work that many of you already undertake in your courses. We encourage you to review the *Visions and Voices* website and to incorporate a selection of these events into your syllabi for the

coming year <www.usc.edu/visionsandvoices>. (You should have received a printed brochure by mail as well.) Participation in the series might, for example, be integrated into assignments for your class or offered as an option for extra credit. You can also use the website to sign up for our mailing list.

As you survey the upcoming programs, we hope that you will also imagine events you would like to see included in years to come and consider making a proposal for the 2009-2010 academic year. Full details on the proposal process are included in the attached RFP. Consider this an opportunity to bring to campus a scholar or artist you would like to introduce to the USC community or to program a lively and stimulating dialogue or performance around pressing social questions. We encourage you to think creatively and to help us build upon the early success of *Visions and Voices*.

The Provost's Arts & Humanities Initiative plays a vital role in the education we offer at USC by encouraging our students to thoughtfully examine the university's core values. Those values include academic freedom and the search for truth; caring and respect for others; informed risk taking; and ethical conduct. Across the series' many theatrical productions, music and dance performances, conferences, lectures, film screenings, and more, *Visions and Voices* also affords an unparalleled opportunity for our students to engage with the central questions and challenges animating our many disciplines. We have already seen the series begin to function as a new kind of forum through which faculty can share the passions that fuel their research with USC students, and the students have responded with unbridled enthusiasm. As the program continues to grow and to expand, we will have a vibrant opportunity to involve undergraduates more richly in the research traditions of the arts and humanities.

If we can answer any questions as you engage with *Visions and Voices*, do not hesitate to contact us.