



ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE FACULTY

BY

STEVEN B. SAMPLE, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 2007

My annual address to the faculty is something I eagerly anticipate. It's an opportunity for me to talk about my favorite subject – the University of Southern California – and I get the chance to thank you, my faculty and staff colleagues, for all that you do for USC and for our students.

Next month I will celebrate the completion of my 16th year as president of USC. It has been an extraordinary pleasure and privilege to work with you these past years, and I'm looking forward to our working together to make USC even better in the years ahead.

We're at one of those watershed moments at USC – a time when the university has the strength and the will to take advantage of a rare convergence of opportunities. The first of these is the fact that USC is playing a major role nationally in redefining the scope and character of undergraduate education. Second, we have the almost unprecedented opportunity to appoint new deans in the college and in six of our professional schools, as well as a new dean of libraries. Third, we're positioned to substantially increase our research enterprise; and, fourth, we have the opportunity to transform doctoral education in this decade as we transformed undergraduate education at USC in the last decade.

Redefining Undergraduate Education

Let me begin with undergraduate education. Last fall I had the privilege of delivering the keynote address to the Annual Forum of the College Board. As you know, the College Board is the organization behind the SAT, the GRE, and AP courses. In front of some 2,000 college admission officials and high school

guidance counselors, I was able to describe how USC is working to redefine undergraduate education.

I explained to them that our efforts have been driven by our recognition of the changing nature of the baccalaureate degree, and the importance of nurturing young people who want to make a positive impact on society.

As recently as 50 years ago, the baccalaureate was the terminal credential for most students, even those in highly selective universities. Of course, some of those students went onto medical school or law school, but the vast majority finished their formal education with a bachelor's degree.

However, the nature of the bachelor's degree has been changing dramatically over the past half century. Today, for most students at highly selective universities such as USC, the baccalaureate is simply a preparatory degree. Almost all of these students will eventually go on to master's or doctoral programs or professional schools.

Ten years ago at USC we revised our entire undergraduate curriculum in recognition of the fact that, for most of our students, the baccalaureate degree would be simply a milestone on the way to becoming an educated person. We realized that the university of the 21st century will have to equip students with the intellectual agility they will need to navigate the future. We therefore created a program to help our students stretch their intellects through what we like to call "breadth with depth." Indeed, most of you have actively participated in this program of breadth with depth in one way or another. As you know, our

students major in whatever field they might choose, but they are then encouraged to take a second major or a minor in a field which is widely separated across the intellectual landscape from their major.

To help foster this concept of breadth with depth, you, the faculty, have created 130 minors, which we believe is by far the widest and richest selection of minors in any university in the country. Our students use their own creativity to find new and interesting combinations of majors and minors. If you were to ask a student at USC, "What's your major?" you might get the following response: "I'm double majoring in computer science and biology with a minor in classics"; or, "I'm double majoring in violin performance and English with a minor in international relations"; or, "I have a double major in communications and political science with a minor in cinematic arts." These are actual combinations of majors and minors that were put together by our students.

Breadth with depth represents a dramatic departure from undergraduate education of the past. In fact, in some ways it's the opposite of what I was encouraged to do some 50 years ago. As an undergraduate engineering major, I wanted to take courses in French, and I was willing to take heavy course loads to do it. But the engineering dean told me that the faculty really didn't want engineering students studying such frivolous subjects as French. To soften his resistance, I came up with a story that I wanted to practice engineering in former French colonies. Only after hearing that did he relent.

In essence, most undergraduates 50 years ago were encouraged to pursue minors that complemented their major. For example, students majoring in English were encouraged to minor in British history or comparative literature; while those majoring in electrical engineering were encouraged to minor in physics or mathematics. But today, when engineering students ask for my advice, I urge them to take as many classes in the arts and humanities as possible. Likewise, I counsel arts and humanities majors to take as many courses as possible in science, mathematics, and engineering.

Breadth with depth leads us naturally to interdisciplinarity, which is quickly becoming the *sine qua non*

of the research university of the 21st century. Why? Because it's often at the boundaries and interstices between the traditional disciplines that creativity and invention can come to full flower. Thus we don't do interdisciplinary work simply for the sake of interdisciplinarity, nor do we do it because it's *au courant* or politically expedient. Rather, we work across the disciplines because it's the best and often the only way to address the complex problems of our world today.

After telling my College Board audience about the redefinition of the baccalaureate degree that is taking place here at USC, I told them of a very positive trend that we are seeing amongst our undergraduates – namely, a desire to become deeply engaged with the communities of which they are a part.

The noted children's advocate Marian Wright Edelman has defined the purpose of education as follows: "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and the world better than you found it." Isn't that an inspiring way to describe education? We're not just filling our students' brains with facts and concepts. We're teaching them values. We're teaching them how to add value to their own lives and to the lives of everyone around them.

We're not merely paying lip service to the importance of serving society and being engaged citizens; we back it up with results. In fact, community service has become a hallmark of a USC education. More than half of our undergraduate students participate in voluntary activities each year, and by the time they graduate, virtually all of our students will have had at least one intense experience in public service.

From the feedback I received from members of the audience at the College Board Annual Forum, I can tell you that USC's approach to reshaping and revitalizing undergraduate education was both new and inspiring to them.

Decanal Searches

Let me now move to the second historic opportunity we have, which is the appointment of eight new deans. As most of you know, the principal responsibility of the provost is to be a pastor to the deans. Of course, deans are formally appointed by the president, but it's

the provost who does most of the work in recruiting deans, evaluating their performance, and helping them achieve their goals.

The authority and responsibility of deans at public universities tend to be very closely proscribed. By contrast, at most private universities deans enjoy a great deal of freedom and concomitant responsibility. Hence, the search at USC for eight new deans takes on a special significance for the entire university. Seven of these decanal leaders guide the College and six of our professional schools. Together they are responsible for nearly three-fourths of our faculty and more than half of our total school population. Our eighth important search, for the dean of libraries, affects the scholarly mission of the entire university.

So far we've appointed outstanding people to two of these deanships – Qingyun Ma in the USC School of Architecture, and Gerald Davison in the USC Davis School of Gerontology. In addition to recruiting a new dean of libraries, we're still conducting national searches for the five deans who will lead the Marshall School of Business, the Annenberg School for Communication, the Gould School of Law, the Keck School of Medicine, and the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.

Enhancing Research

The third opportunity I'd like to talk about involves significantly strengthening our research enterprise. We are redoubling our focus on research and most especially on erasing the artificial boundaries that separate basic research from applied research. Then too, we are concentrating on research that solves societal problems and meets societal needs, in keeping with our current strategic plan.

To advance research on both campuses, we are aggressively recruiting more top scholars in specific areas. One of the ways we're doing this is through cluster hires. This is a process whereby we first recruit a highly respected senior scholar, who then helps the dean and the provost recruit a team of scholars whose expertise and specialties complement one another.

For example, the Keck School's new Center for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine has recruited five outstanding scientists in addition to the center's

world-renowned director, Professor Martin Pera. Other cluster hires are underway in environmental science, bioinformatics, biomedical nanoscience, and alternative fuels.

In addition, we've created a new USC Center for Excellence in Research. The center is the brainchild of Professor Maja Matarić and was heartily endorsed by the Academic Senate. This center aims to do for research at USC what our Center for Excellence in Teaching has done for instruction – that is, achieve greater excellence in research through mentoring and recognition programs. I think this center is a great idea. What I like best is that it was created *by* faculty *for* faculty. And I believe it will facilitate and encourage interdisciplinary research.

On the national level we're taking steps to sharpen USC's competitive edge. For example, our Office of Research Advancement in Washington, D.C., is actively positioning USC as a strong competitor. The office now has three full-time professional staff with many years of combined experience at federal agencies such as NIH, NSF, and DOD. They understand how to promote your research and get the attention of funding agencies. Our Washington office is also helping USC put together research collaborations. The staff is assisting faculty in grant writing, and they're introducing our faculty to some key players in the funding agencies. So far as we know, no other AAU institution has this quantity and quality of staff working in Washington on behalf of the faculty's research enterprise.

Another effort to increase support for research at USC is what we call USC Stevens. As you may know, USC Trustee Mark Stevens, who is a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, donated \$22 million to establish the USC Stevens Institute. It was originally named the Stevens Institute for Technology Commercialization in the USC Viterbi School of Engineering. But since its inception two years ago, USC Stevens has been moved under the purview of the provost's office and has taken on a broader, university-wide vision. That mission is to harness and advance creative ideas and research that will have a positive societal impact.

No matter what your discipline might be, USC Stevens is there to help you. We have faculty from cinematic

arts consulting with USC Stevens along with faculty and students from fine arts, education, engineering, medicine and the physical sciences. USC Stevens is a conduit for moving innovations that are created in the academy into the marketplace and into use by the wider community. USC Stevens is here to provide you with the kind of assistance you've been asking for, including help in licensing, patent processing, promoting educational programs, securing investors and industry partners, creating startup companies, and building interdisciplinary collaborations.

Invigorating Doctoral Education

Our fourth extraordinary opportunity involves graduate education.

Working together over the past decade, we have done a phenomenal job of enhancing USC's undergraduate program. We've revamped the core curriculum, we've dramatically ramped up student selectivity and, as I mentioned earlier, we're playing a national role in redefining undergraduate education.

You've heard me brag a lot (almost *ad nauseam*) in recent years about our freshman SAT scores, and about how they're now higher than Berkeley's. But when we compare the quality of our Ph.D. students and programs to Berkeley's, it's clear that (with one or two exceptions) we're not yet in their league. But we soon will be!

Provost Nikias recently announced the expansion of USC's Ph.D. Fellowship Program. The amount of money we spend on that program has now been tripled. We will now offer more than \$15 million a year in Ph.D. fellowships. We believe that this level of funding will allow us to attract more and more of the best Ph.D. students in the world.

Conclusion

I've touched on four of the extraordinary opportunities which, taken together, make this a watershed moment in USC's history:

- first, the fact that USC is playing a leading role in redefining undergraduate education nationally;
- second, the chance to recruit seven academic deans over a two-year period;

- third, the chance to dramatically improve our research enterprise; and
- fourth, the chance to bring our Ph.D. programs up to the level of the best research universities in the world.

There are, of course, many other developments over the past year which affect our university in important ways:

- the Tenet lawsuit comes to mind, about which I can say precious little;
- the opening of the Galen Center, which brought to fruition a dream that the Trojan Family has had for half a century;
- George Lucas's \$175 million gift to the School of Cinematic Arts – the largest single gift in USC's history;
- Ming Hsieh's \$35 million naming gift to the Department of Electrical Engineering, which so far as we know is the largest departmental naming gift in history;
- the significant increase in new research space on both campuses;
- the continuing transformation of USC into a fully residential university;
- the emergence of our University Park campus as one of the most beautiful urban campuses in America;
- our trustees' trip to China last May, which resulted in the establishment of a new research institute at USC dedicated to studying the U.S.-China relations; and
- the phenomenal success of the Visions and Voices program, which has involved some 10,000 students from both our campuses.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a nutshell, USC is a great institution that is enjoying tremendous forward momentum. We are indeed at a critical and wondrous juncture in our history. Now is not the time for us to let up. Rather, now is the time for us to push forward with even greater intensity.

It is indeed a privilege for me to serve as your president and your colleague in the building up of this noble institution.