

MEMORANDUM

To: USC Senior Administration, Deans, Faculty and Staff

From: C. L. Max Nikias *C.L. Nikias*
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Office of the Provost

C.L. Max Nikias
Provost and
Senior Vice
President for
Academic Affairs

Date: August 1, 2005

Subject: Annenberg Center for Communication and the Institute for Multimedia Literacy

I noted in a recent letter to the university community that the leadership of **President Sample** has poised USC to make the leap from a role as a powerful shaping force for Southern California to a role as a fount of energy and innovation for society as a whole. In the two months that I have occupied this office, I have had the opportunity to learn even more about this tremendous institution, and my belief in our potential has grown exponentially.

Nowhere is USC's potential to influence the world more obvious than in the broadly cross-disciplinary realm of communication. As such, it is my pleasure to offer some observations about USC's opportunities here, as well as to announce some changes that will help us seize these opportunities.

Communication, in all its facets, represents one of the most crucial and complex areas of academic study. As the very foundation of human society and human community, communication cannot help but change us as it itself evolves; and given the rapid acceleration of change in communication, our own need to explore, understand and guide that change becomes even more pressing.

No other university has recognized the need to bring a unified approach that could span the myriad human and technical dimensions of this field. During President Sample's 14-year tenure, USC has built an arsenal of cross-disciplinary research and education programs in communication, multimedia and information technology. Major programs and centers range from the Online Journalism Program in the Annenberg School to the Integrated Media Systems Center and the Information Sciences Institute in the Viterbi School to the Interactive Media Division and the Entertainment Technology Center in the School of Cinema-Television, along with the Institute for Creative Technologies, the Norman Lear Center and the Intellectual Property Clinic, to name but a few.

From Marina del Rey to the Health Sciences Campus, from University Park to Catalina Island, from our facilities in Sacramento, California to Arlington, Virginia, USC scholars and researchers are bringing their diverse interests and expertise to bear on today's communication issues. We have established a solid track record, and in so doing have set standards many other institutions of higher education and research will find difficult to match. Nonetheless, we do not have the luxury of being able to rest on our laurels—especially because our opportunity is so ripe at this moment.

As the relentless march of social and technological events underscores on a daily basis, the world of communication is becoming ever more intricate and, for many people, bewildering. USC will meet this challenge head on by building on our existing communication programs and developing new ones that will set the pace for academia.

The Institute for Multimedia Literacy

The Institute for Multimedia Literacy (IML), which is a project of the Annenberg Center for Communication, typifies the university's approach in this endeavor. Inspired by filmmaker and USC alumnus George Lucas, who has long been a champion of this initiative, the IML is founded on the realization that the ability to communicate fully in the digital age requires a wholly new literacy: a mastery of audio and visual elements in addition to fluency with traditional text.

Under the leadership of **Elizabeth Daley**, who has served as executive director of the Annenberg Center since its founding in 1994 and dean of the School of Cinema-Television since 1991, the IML has grown dramatically. It moved from helping a handful of USC scholars to integrate multimedia into their work to collaborating with some 60 USC faculty members and 1,500 students on a range of programs that extend from the K-12 to post-doctoral levels.

Among the IML's achievements are: the design and implementation of the university's first four-year honors program, culminating in a multimedia thesis; partnering with the USC Rossier School of Education to create an intensive 14-month multimedia track for graduate students in the Master of Arts in Teaching program; collaborating with middle-school teachers and administrators across the nation to incorporate multimedia in curriculum development; and enabling scholars on the University Park and Health Sciences campuses to transform their teaching and research through multimedia.

Since its formation in 1997, the IML has established many of the fundamental principles in this field. In carrying out its mission, it has exemplified key aspects of the university's strategic plan by providing leadership, encouraging collaborations, revolutionizing curricula, and stirring the imaginations of students. The aforementioned IML initiatives, as well as the online journal *Vectors* and the multimedia software program *Sophie*, stand as role models inside and outside academia.

The knowledge gained over the past eight years has brought the IML to a critical juncture, and its work is ready to move from experiment to practice throughout the university. To enable the institute to excel in this transition, I have authorized it to become an organized research unit within the School of Cinema-Television, in association with the Annenberg Center. This change will be effective September 1.

I have appointed **Dean Daley** to serve in the role of IML executive director, in addition to her position as head of the School of Cinema-Television. I believe this action is the logical progression for the IML, the Annenberg Center, and the university as a whole.

In becoming part of the School of Cinema-Television, the IML joins the nation's leading center of thought and practice in this crucial communication field, giving the institute the ability to draw on an incredible pool of scholars and practitioners in the world of sound and image.

For the School of Cinema-Television, which has dramatically expanded its numbers of divisions, faculty, students, and physical infrastructure over the past decade, adding the IML to its organization continues the school's long history of developing new educational models and offering unique opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration. The combination of these two units creates a critical intellectual mass, with numerous applications in the humanities and sciences at USC and beyond.

The Annenberg Center for Communication

The Annenberg Center, which has a tradition of nurturing projects through their nascent stages to self-sufficiency, will focus its resources on new cross-disciplinary initiatives that will explore still-uncharted territory in communication.

In order to facilitate and oversee the IML transition, **Dean Daley** has requested that she be able to focus her time and effort exclusively on the Institute for Multimedia Literacy and the School of Cinema-Television. To meet her request and to ensure that the Annenberg Center is in the most advantageous position to take on its new challenges, **President Sample** has authorized me to appoint **Professor Jonathan Aronson** as the center's new executive director, also effective September 1. Upon assuming his post, Director Aronson will report directly to the Provost.

A graduate of Harvard who earned a Ph.D. from Stanford, Professor Aronson holds joint appointments in the Annenberg School and the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences. As a researcher, writer, and scholar, Professor Aronson has developed a unique expertise in international communication policy and globalization, which makes him particularly well-suited for this position. Among his seven books are *Managing the World Economy: The Consequences of International Corporate Alliances*, *When Countries Talk: International Trade in Telecommunications Services*, and *Trade Talks: America Better Listen!* His most recent writings consider the implications of new communications technologies for globalization and international communications competition. His current research focuses on ways in which communications and network developments related to privacy, equity, standard setting, competition policy, and international intellectual property shape the path of globalization.

At USC, Professor Aronson has held numerous important administrative positions. From 1995-2001, he was the Director of the School of International Relations. He chaired the USC Benefits Committee, co-chaired the University Budget Analysis Committee, and continues to chair the Henry Salvatori Forum. Professor Aronson is a co-founder of the Annenberg Research Network on International Communications, which is currently pursuing important work on the social consequences of wireless communications.

Outside of USC, Professor Aronson held visiting fellowships at Harvard University and at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and has collaborated on a series of projects with the International Bureau of the FCC. He also served as the President of the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs in 1998. Professor Aronson is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and was awarded an honorary doctorate in international relations from St. Petersburg State University, one of the two most important universities in Russia.

Beyond offering the experience needed to broaden the center's activities, Professor Aronson offers outstanding judgment and wise counsel that I have come to rely upon. He played a central role this spring as part of an eight-member faculty transition team that advised me as

I planned the restructuring of the Provost's Office and the selection of my team of vice provosts and associate vice provosts.

The Vision of the Annenbergs

USC's position in the world of communication changed dramatically a dozen years ago, when President Sample and Ambassador Walter Annenberg agreed that Southern California was the new communication capital of the world and that USC was in a unique position to guide the communication revolution.

When the Annenberg family made their record-breaking \$120 million gift to establish the Annenberg Center, their generosity was matched by their vision. They sought to create an institution that would encourage scholars and researchers to look beyond the boundaries of their individual fields. They wanted to see scholars seek out colleagues from other areas who shared the same passion for understanding a problem yet who brought different skills and approaches to discovering a solution. For the past decade, the center has enabled faculty, students, and staff from the Annenberg, Cinema-Television and Viterbi schools to do just this, finding in the process common ground and forging new and innovative partnerships. As the Annenbergs anticipated, such collaborations have been instrumental in enabling USC to become the world-class research and educational center that it is today.

The Annenberg Center for Communication remains a vital part of the University. As a research center, it identifies and explores ways in which digital communications technology affects the broad spectrum of human endeavor. Its facility offers researchers, academics, entrepreneurs, strategists, engineers, producers, and artists a chance to interact and create the communications technologies of the future, as well as examine the impact of today's technologies. The Annenberg Center stimulates cross-disciplinary work involving the three core schools mentioned above, in addition to other parts of the university.

A jewel of the Annenberg Center is the Annenberg House. Adjacent to the center, this stunning facility houses students from a range of disciplines—business, cinema-television, communication, and engineering, as well as those interested in the broad field of communications—allowing them to live together and explore how modern media and technology shape society. Annenberg House supplements the academic experience of its students, providing cutting edge computer resources, presentations and guest speakers, and excursions to cultural events.

In the coming months and years, the Annenberg Center will press on in its role as a catalyst for collaboration. It will continue to foster the work of scholars from the Annenberg, Cinema-Television and Viterbi schools, as well as reach out to more schools and centers around the university.

Reflecting the very nature of communication itself, these initiatives will encompass a sweeping array of issues and draw on the collective wisdom of the USC community. The potential is vast—from probing the promise and peril of what it means to live in an increasingly networked society, to researching the transition into the digital government and democracy in the information age, to developing new communication modes for healthcare for an aging populace, to deciphering how the power that electronic games hold as entertainment can be harnessed for education, to exploring the deepest ethical, social and creative considerations of the communication revolution.

In addressing these issues and others as yet unimagined, Professor Aronson and the Annenberg Center will receive guidance from a Council of Deans, which will be composed of the three deans from the Annenberg, Cinema-Television and Viterbi schools, respectively, with **Dean Geoffrey Cowan** serving as the chair. The council members, Professor Aronson and I will meet at least twice each semester to review the center's activities and to help map the new directions it will take to meet the challenges ahead.

This fall USC will celebrate 125 years of progress, a span in which the university rose from a humble gathering of some 53 students and 10 teachers to a bustling, world-class hub for education and research. This growth came about not by happenstance, but through ingenuity, determination and a willingness to venture forth onto new academic frontiers while others stayed on more familiar territory. I believe the moves we are now making with the Annenberg Center and the Institute for Multimedia Literacy reflect that spirit, and will be integral components in positioning the University of Southern California for its next 125 years.

cc: Steven B. Sample
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