

MEMORANDUM

To: Academic Vice Presidents and Deans  
Faculty and Staff

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

Date: June 10, 2005

Subject: New Appointments in the Enrollment Services Division

Office of the Provost

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

I write to inform you that J. Michael Thompson, vice provost for enrollment management and dean of admission and financial aid, has resigned from his position effective June 8, 2005. Having served in this position since March of 2002, J. Michael worked creatively to recruit class after class of outstanding students to USC, not only in the tangibles that can be measured by rising SAT scores and GPAs, but in the quality of leadership and character that these students exhibit once they arrive on our campus. The University is extremely grateful for his service in this important role.

While the faculty serve as the foundation of academic excellence at a great university, students serve as its pillars. As such, one of my highest priorities as Provost is to ensure that we continue to build an academic community that draws students of unsurpassed breadth, diversity and talent. No factor has been more relevant to USC's rising reputation in recent years than its rapid gains in student strength, and our admission and enrollment efforts must remain a top priority at this moment in USC's development.

Dr. Michael L. Jackson, vice president for student affairs, has agreed to serve on an interim basis as vice president for student affairs and enrollment services. Dr. Jackson will continue to report to me in this new capacity. He served a term as acting vice provost for enrollment management and acting dean of admission and financial aid from March 2001 to February 2002, following the passing of Joseph Allen.

I am also appointing Dr. Katharine Harrington, who has been the associate dean of admission and financial aid and director of admission, as the new dean of admission and financial aid for an interim period. She will report to Dr. Jackson.

When Dr. Jackson came to USC from Stanford University a decade ago, he observed how impressed he was with the "balance" of USC students. While other top universities had some students who excelled in the arts, some in the sciences, some in civic leadership or some in the professions, he noticed that an unusual number of USC students excelled in more than one realm. Thanks to efforts by him and so many of you, we have been able to see this broad-based excellence to an even greater degree at USC, and I fully expect to see even more of it in coming years.

Our ambition as a global university is to build a truly global body of student leaders—young men and women who will shape the 21st century as influential scholars, artists, scientists, entrepreneurs, public servants, professionals and other contributors to the fabric of our society. We will recruit those students who are most capable of playing a cutting-edge role in a range of fields. We especially will recruit gifted students who can interact dynamically with our faculty.

The SAT average of our incoming freshman class has risen by 50 points in the past five years alone; over the past decade, it has risen by an astounding 245 points. Even factoring in changes in the SAT scoring methodology, this in all likelihood is the most rapid increase in recent higher education history. This is a high honor, but a great responsibility too. As we now compete for the same pool of students as the elite universities of California and the United States, we must actively find new ways to differentiate ourselves; to promote our unique strengths; and to showcase how a USC education and student-life experience can benefit the world's most talented young men and women.

We will need to be dynamic and innovative in every phase of the admission and enrollment process, using new technologies and online services to facilitate that process. We also must be strategic in building academic excellence while maintaining a highly diverse student population. Diversity has been one of the Trojan Family's core values and strengths, and we will not lose sight of it.

Drs. Jackson and Harrington will have a very specific and important set of tasks to accomplish:

- Build on USC's recent success in attracting increasingly high quality undergraduate students.
- Work with members of the academic community to develop an aggressive undergraduate enrollment strategy.
- Accelerate the development of internet and web-based technology to provide more integrated online services to all students from the first expression of interest in USC through graduation.
- Expand collaborations between central admission and USC's College and professional schools in the recruitment of undergraduate students.
- Maintain our preeminence in the enrollment of international students.
- Build strong partnerships with the high school counseling community across the country, so they can better understand and communicate about USC's academic programs and quality of student life.
- Promote frequent personal interactions with prospective students and their families by actively involving members of the USC academic community.
- Develop bold new strategies to ensure the enrollment of a diverse group of students, particularly underrepresented minorities.
- Work closely with the USC College and the professional schools to develop and implement an outstanding graduate student admission process.
- Develop synergies among the division of enrollment services, the division of student affairs, academic units, and other administrative offices to ensure USC becomes a national role model for undergraduate student recruitment, admission, enrollment, financial aid, orientation and advising programs.

I have full confidence in the new leadership and our enrollment services staff to accomplish these goals, and we are committed to providing the required resources.

This is an ambitious agenda. Yet we know we must take bold steps if we are to achieve the aims of our new strategic plan and become one of the most productive, innovative and influential research universities in the world. *The recruitment of outstanding and diverse undergraduate and graduate students is a key part of this vision and strategy.*

Just as we aspire to be the university that others will seek to emulate, we expect our student body to be the model for their peers at other schools. We want our students to be the most energetic, bright and creative students anywhere, so that they can foster a learner-centered environment in which learning has no boundaries—an environment in which students and faculty teach and inspire one another, explore new paradigms together, and enrich the Trojan traditions and values that have evolved over the past 125 years.

### **Biographies**

**Michael L. Jackson** is vice president for student affairs and holds a courtesy appointment as professor of higher education in the Rossier school of education at the University of Southern California. He provides leadership for a comprehensive array of student life programs and a staff in the division of student affairs. He came to USC in 1995 from Stanford University where he served as dean of students. Dr. Jackson serves on accreditation teams for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), was president of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy, and practice in the United States with over 1,200 college and university institutional members and 10,000 professional members, and is a trustee and member of the executive committee of the Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, California. He is also a member of the California Educational Facilities Authority. He earned his A.B. with distinction in anthropology from Stanford University and his M.Ed. and Ed.D. in educational administration at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

**L. Katharine Harrington** has served as associate dean of admission and financial aid and director of undergraduate admission since June 2004. She holds academic appointments in the Marshall School of Business and in the USC College. Dr. Harrington has served USC as associate vice provost for academic programs and director of undergraduate retention. In this role she helped administer academic programs across the university, was the provost's liaison with several schools, and was instrumental in the tremendous improvement in USC's retention of students. Prior to joining the provost's office she worked in the USC Marshall School of Business as associate dean of undergraduate programs and as associate director of the USC center for crisis management. She earned her B.S. in business administration at the University of Redlands, her MBA from Pepperdine University and her Ph.D. in religion and social ethics from the University of Southern California.

cc: Steven B. Sample  
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