



# “TIMELESS VALUES, TIMELY INNOVATION: TOWARD INVENTING THE FUTURE AT USC”

REMARKS BY

C. L. MAX NIKIAS

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS INSTALLATION

AS PROVOST

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It is a privilege today to be officially given a unique opportunity to work toward the advancement of one of the world's most unique institutions. This is a university that has the potential to shape and influence an entire planet — and President Steven Sample has now given me the opportunity to help him in this regard. That is deeply humbling, and I am honored.

Everyone now is familiar with the facts, or everyone certainly should be: USC has had the most rapid rise in national reputation of perhaps any university. This is in terms of both traditional metrics of excellence and the harder-to-define, newly emerging standards of excellence within education.

What sets USC apart is that it never rests on its laurels. It has continued to demand that each member of the Trojan Family continue to work harder to support our mission. This attitude, this drive, combined with the rapid changes in society, has opened up for us a large window of opportunity.

We can hope to be:

- a global university — not simply a regional or even a national university, and not simply a university with the highest international enrollment, but one of the world's first truly *global* universities;
- a university that is defining new models for scholarship, for research, for teaching;
- a university that stays true to its core values, and plants those values in its academic community and its students;
- a university that combines timeless truths with timely innovation and creativity;
- a university that has both independence and interdependence — that knows how to work with government and industry,

but also knows when to go back to the ivory tower and work independently;

- a university that is redefining what it means to be an academic community in this new world in which we live.

So now a university that has helped build this region of Southern California is poised to serve as a fount of innovation for society as a whole. It is ready to be the pacesetter on the newest frontiers in the arts, humanities, sciences, professions, and social sciences. What a privilege to be a part of this university's ongoing rise as its chief academic officer!

I have often noted that leadership in higher education will not necessarily come from the richest universities — even though our fundraising efforts have substantially increased our fiscal strength. Nor will that leadership necessarily come from the highest-ranked universities — even though one of the goals of our new strategic plan is to attain the same superior standing they enjoy. Instead, our strategic plan has pointed out that real leadership will come from the research university that can create a whole new model for the future. A university that can:

- create dynamic collaborations;
- revolutionize curricula;
- stir the imaginations of its students;
- master a cross-disciplinary approach in research and education;
- create partnerships that span geographic boundaries; and
- promote our core values.

President Sample often reminds us that our ambition should be to inspire other universities to want to learn from us and copy us. We should become a role model for others in our pursuit of excellence.

USC has an unparalleled opportunity because it has created what others only pay lip

service to: a bridge-building, cross-disciplinary culture that serves society's real needs. Is this an easy task? Certainly not. But, as Thomas Carlyle observed, "every noble work is at first impossible." Ours is certainly a noble task, and I am convinced it is within our reach.

We have reached this level of excellence because of the contributions of thousands of members of the Trojan Family, who gave their time, money, energy, and passion to our efforts.

One group within the Trojan Family must be singled out for special recognition: the faculty of USC. Your scholarly work has propelled us farther. Your achievements have increased our prestige in this nation and around the world. Your ability to carry out cross-disciplinary research has made USC a pioneer on many new frontiers.

We have reached these heights especially because of the vision of one man who saw both USC's excellence and its unlimited potential. I speak of course of USC's tenth president, Dr. Steven B. Sample. President Sample understood what was happening at the surface of education and society as well as what was moving below the surface.

In our age of overspecialization, he understood the need to build up Renaissance men and women — students and scholars who can boast of possessing "breadth with depth," men and women who are deeply grounded in two highly differentiated fields, such as the arts and the sciences. These people, he argued, are the ones who will have creative insights capable of solving society's most intractable problems.

Leonardo Da Vinci, the true Renaissance man, noted, "Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather

becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigors of the mind." At USC President Sample has forged an educational experience that is the best protection from this danger.

Indeed, it is obvious that this outdoorsman and musician and inventor and lover of the arts is himself the model of a modern Renaissance man. His experience as a noted inventor has also helped USC significantly. He observed that good inventors and good leaders must be able to see things from others' perspective as well as from their own unique perspective. That allows them to see new frontiers and new directions. And he is again the model for this. For embodying what the scholar of the 21st century can be, and for carrying USC to new heights, President Sample, we must all thank you.

President Sample has brought us to where we are today. But he is not satisfied. He does not want us to rest. He does not want us to pause to catch our breath. No, he wants us to accelerate the momentum. Thus comes the challenge of taking his vision forward, with urgency and with purpose, and with passion. I am looking forward to it, and I am thrilled to be part of his leadership team.

I could not begin to respond to this challenge, and to be a part of the president's leadership team, if not for my own talented team: Barry Glassner, Elizabeth Garrett, Randolph Hall, Marty Levine, Michael Jackson, Michael Preston, and the rest of the people in the Office of the Provost. I am deeply proud of this team, and I can say on behalf of my team that we are thrilled to respond together to the president's challenge.

I must also acknowledge my fellow senior vice presidents: Todd Dickey, Dennis Dougherty, Martha Harris, and Alan Kreditor. I am indebted to them for embracing me and

offering their support. I am excited to work together with them as the president's senior leadership team.

The book *Shakespeare, Einstein and the Bottom Line* discussed USC's rapid academic rise in the 1990s and gave the credit to Steve Sample and Lloyd Armstrong. The book, by David Kirp of UC Berkeley, said that USC became a "hot" school under them because of "leadership, driven by academic values."

As USC's new provost, I now oversee the outstanding deans, faculty, and student body of this "hot" school. I am grateful. A key person to whom I must express this gratitude is my predecessor, Lloyd Armstrong.

Our Distinguished Professor Warren Bennis has noted that good leaders shine, but great leaders help those around them to shine. I believe that through his hard work, his dedication, and his hunger for excellence, Lloyd Armstrong has carefully polished our academic jewels so that they can shine forth brilliantly. I only hope that I can continue in this same manner. Rest assured, Lloyd's job is not fully done yet, because I plan to turn to him regularly for advice.

**I**n his book *The World Is Flat*, the noted international affairs writer Thomas Friedman notes that technology has leveled the playing field around the world. The United States no longer enjoys the competitive advantages, and the certainty of economic success, that it enjoyed just a few years ago. Yet we can feel good about this university's enthusiasm for bringing innovation and experimentation to our changing society.

Societal and technological forces have rearranged our assumptions about many things: classrooms, libraries, campuses, lifelong learning paradigms, even the very nature

of literacy itself. We must ask ourselves in 2005, What is a university? And what will the university be in 2055? Is it a physical space? Can some or all of it be replaced by other ways of education delivery? Many want to answer yes to that question, and in the process they are minimizing the role that universities can and must play in the future.

And they miss a crucial piece: There is a difference between information and education. There is a difference between data and wisdom. There is a difference between knowledge transfer and an academic community. Knowledge transfer you can get anywhere. But we are interested in creating the best possible environment and culture for education, for transformation.

This is what a university is, and this is what we are redefining for this new era in which we live. The concept of the university is only a millennium old, hardly a sizable portion of history. But since universities were created, they have served as humanity's most enduring institutions, as President Sample has observed.

The Western university has evolved as society has evolved, leading up to the modern research university, and it will continue to exist, and it will continue to evolve. Let us take nothing for granted and assume nothing about how things will look. But let us embark on a bold and uncertain journey of creating the best educational environment for our new day. Our deans will be essential in this process, helping ensure that we are guided by timeless core values that define us as USC.

Our goals are clear, the president's vision continues to beckon us to new heights, and our potential is still far from being fulfilled. What will it take for us to get to where we need to go?

First, we have an effective road map in

the strategic plan that our Board of Trustees has adopted. We will be relevant. We will be global. We will pioneer new educational and research frontiers. We will set the pace for cutting-edge research in nanotechnology for biological and medical applications; in information technology; and in alternative energy sources. And we will be cross-disciplinary in innovative ways.

Second, we must continue to reinforce the foundation of our academic excellence. That foundation is our scholarly faculty. We are proud that, as our role and mission statement declares, “our faculty are not simply teachers of the work of others, but active contributors to what is taught, thought, and practiced throughout the world.”

Third, we must continue to build up the pillars of academic excellence, which are the members of our world-class student body. “Virtue is its own reward,” Cicero said. We take that very seriously. We are building world citizens here, young men and women who will eagerly make a positive impact in all corners of the planet.

Fourth — this is very important — we must affirm what is most essential and most enduring within the human spirit. How will we do this? Through a renewal of the arts and humanities on our campuses.

It is the arts and humanities that will make USC a truly universal university in this coming century. Certainly, we can be proud of how our pioneering scientific and technological work has captured national and international attention. And we can be proud of our many research partnerships with government, industry, and other institutions. All these have done much to increase respect for this research university. But it is our excellence in the arts and humanities that makes us

different from most other great universities.

That is why I am proud tonight to announce a new, university-wide Provost’s Arts and Humanities Initiative.

We do this for a number of reasons. The arts and humanities fully capture the core values of this university. As such, we must ensure that we use the arts and humanities to transmit these values to all our students, no matter what their field of study is. What are these core values I have been speaking of?

They include things like:

- academic freedom — freedom of inquiry, and freedom of expression and debate;
- diversity — the ability to create a richer environment by bringing in a multitude of backgrounds and beliefs;
- ethical conduct and moral discernment;
- team spirit — the desire to work with others to achieve uncommon things;
- a commitment to serving one’s community;
- a relentless, tireless search for truth; and
- an entrepreneurial spirit, with a willingness to take risks.

I believe we can say that USC is the most broadly balanced university in America in terms of the combined arts, sciences, and professions. We probably have the best overall arts programs in the country too. These riches demand to be shared within our academic community and our broader community. In this lies an unmatched opportunity for us to create the manner of academic community for which I have always had a considerable passion.

During my own education, I immersed myself in the Greco-Roman classics, as well as theater and history. It shaped and defined me as a person. Even as a career technologist, I can say that science and technology are tools toward an end. But great art is our end as fully mature human beings.

To ignore the arts and humanities is to commit cultural suicide. The arts and humanities are our teachers, helping us discern what it is to be truly human and to live together in human society. They illumine our way. They ask us to determine how to comport ourselves individually and as communities here and now, yet in conversation with our forebears and in anticipation of our posterity.

At times, like gentle guides, they nudge us to ask keen questions rather than declare pat answers, they quietly invite us to observe with new sight. At other times, they shout like an impatient master, mercilessly shaking us to our very core, cajoling us to interrogate our every assumption and doubt our every certainty, vexing us with ambiguity and incongruity.

I look back to the example of *Antigone*. We must ask ourselves: Why did the great Sophocles write such a play in 442 B.C. at the very peak of Imperial Athens? There was a reason: He was shocking Athenians into reality in a way that no other medium could. Antigone did what was not necessarily legal but was ethical. She knew the difference and shocked Athenians in this. Sophocles was standing conventional wisdom on its head: In a male-dominated yet democratic society, his hero was a woman who stood up to authority. The name *Antigone* in Greek means “Born to oppose.”

In this magnificent dramatic work, as

the story is unfolding, Sophocles also reminds Athenians of democratic principles and values, in the rambling of the chorus, the background noises of the drama, among them:

- separation of religion and state;
- military power that should always be under civilian control;
- the notion of dissent and open criticism; and
- the will of the people.

Most of the core values I spoke of before — the values that make USC what it is — are embodied in this ancient but still lively play. So too are our values, our soul, visible through great works of music from around the world; through visual arts; through architecture; through film and television and emerging forms of multimedia.

Who else can offer the academic and cultural environment that we can offer? What other university can transmit its academic spirit, its soul, through the arts and humanities?

Professor Barry Glassner, who is our new executive vice provost, will be spearheading our Arts and Humanities Initiative. He will work closely with deans, faculty, and students. We will be arranging film festivals, humanities lectures, art exhibitions, and musical performances — not merely to entertain our students, not even just to inspire them, but to challenge them at the core of their own being. To be designated an event or activity sponsored by the Provost’s Arts and Humanities Initiative, the event must be accompanied by a lecture or panel discussion that illuminates how the performance exemplifies particular values of the university.

Southern California has become one of the world’s premier cultural crossroads, and

we will provide incentives for our students to partake of the more than 100 theaters in L.A., as well as its many museums and performing arts centers. We will form partnerships with these institutions to host USC nights — again with discussions and lectures to amplify a performance’s relationship to the soul of USC, to USC’s values.

We intend for all USC students to develop an appreciation of the arts and humanities — regardless of discipline. This is for the physicist as well as the philosopher, for the mathematician as well as the musician, for the pharmacist as well as the journalist, for the engineer as well as the social worker, for the lawyer as well as the historian, for the manager as well as the chemist. It will enrich their lives. We will create the best possible environment and culture for educating tomorrow’s leaders.

I am excited to see this initiative become a reality, and I am convinced it will be a major step forward in the education of USC students. And here is how we will know that we have succeeded: Our students will be hungry for more. When they come to us to demand an encore from our campus arts community, we will know that we have succeeded in helping them become richer and wiser world citizens.

Let me close by responding to President Sample’s challenge, and to extend that challenge here to each member of the Trojan Family. Let us work together to achieve a goal that is difficult yet noble, the manner of goal of which Thomas Carlyle spoke. This will be a monumental undertaking, and it will demand the very best from each of us. What we achieve will be dramatic, and of enduring value.

Our 125th anniversary theme could not be more fitting: We are here to invent the future

and to honor the past. We must look upon our great Trojan Family heritage, and in so doing we will draw the strength and wisdom necessary to move into the future, and to move our world successfully into the future as well. It is a bold and shocking ambition — “to invent the future.” But this is what this academic community was made for. It is why we live and breathe on this campus.

Some years ago President Sample offered some optimistic words about Southern California that I believe are very relevant to us today as the *University* of Southern California. The president noted that when the Los Angeles Aqueduct opened in 1913, the project’s chief engineer, William Mulholland, knew what this simple resource represented: It represented Southern California’s opportunity to grow into a great region with limitless potential. As the water began to flow, Mulholland looked out to thousands of spectators and shouted: “There it is – take it!” President Sample noted that Mullholland was not merely telling Southern California to take hold of the water. He was saying, Take hold of the great destiny that is yours.

Let me draw a parallel: Our president has been providing us with leadership and the resources that give USC a similarly magnificent opportunity. We have the commitment, we have the vision, we have the will, we have the great Trojan spirit. Our president has reminded us that unlimited possibilities belong to the University of Southern California.

President Sample, as your chief academic officer, and on behalf of the entire academic community, I am here to tell you that we agree wholeheartedly. And we are ready to work with you to realize these possibilities. To paraphrase William Mulholland’s words: *There is the future – and we will take it!*