

# Appendix 1.3



## USC'S PLAN FOR INCREASING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

### BUILDING STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF THE 21ST CENTURY

#### A Report on the Second Year of Implementation 2005-2006

The first section of this document examines a range of new initiatives announced this year. These projects serve to implement the strategic plan, and will be assessed next year and thereafter for their efficacy. The second section provides an update on the strategic capabilities and first-year initiatives outlined in the strategic plan.

The university's core values of free inquiry, the Trojan dedication to service and respect, the spirit of informed risk-taking, and ethical conduct underpin a series of new initiatives designed to implement the vision outlined in the strategic plan adopted by the Board of Trustees on October 6, 2004. Each of these initiatives comes in direct response to the three pillars of USC's Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence:

- **Meeting Societal Needs:** The university continues to focus resources on research that will meet the needs of society and help the public understand the import of discoveries made at USC. The new initiatives begun this year will bolster the university's contributions to the communities it serves.
- **Expanding Global Presence:** By reexamining the university's distance learning capabilities and its presence in Asia and Latin America, the 2005-2006

academic year offered USC an opportunity to chart a new course for the coming decades. While maintaining its leading role in the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, USC is also expanding its profile in Asia and Latin America, having opened an office in Mexico City and inaugurated a Global Executive MBA program in China. This presence on the ground in key regions complements USC's work on expanding opportunities for students in communities around the world to benefit from the university's academic programs.

- **Promoting Learner-Centered Education:** The university will lead the movement to a new model where students learn in collaboration with faculty through constant reflection and engagement with the content, and through interactive assessment of the educational process and their own learning outcomes. A range of efforts underway at USC serve to strengthen learner-centered education, particularly a new initiative elevating the role of the arts and humanities in the intellectual lives of students.

This vision for the future takes shape in the following initiatives:

### **Office of Research Advancement**

In restructuring the Office of the Provost, Dr. Nikias created the Office of Research Advancement, which builds bridges between basic and applied research, supports free inquiry, promotes informed risk-taking and ensures compliance with USC's ethical standards. The office also leads USC's efforts to attract federal and foundation research support and develops partnerships with major research universities around the globe.

The office will maintain a considerable presence in Washington, D.C., building strong relationships with federal government agencies and foundations in areas ranging from the biological and medical sciences, physical sciences, and engineering to the humanities and social sciences.

The Research Advancement effort also gives added support to the humanities and social sciences through the appointment of senior scholars to two new Associate Vice Provost for Research Advancement positions focused on those areas.

These bold efforts go far beyond the lobbying pursued by USC's peers, making the university's faculty even more effective as they seek funding for their research.

### **Arts and Humanities Initiative**

Led by the Executive Vice Provost, an interdisciplinary faculty committee, and a Dean's Council, this initiative supports a rich array of arts and humanities events on campus. Events such as film screenings, humanities lectures, art exhibitions, and musical performances will inspire and challenge students to think critically about personal values and ethical behavior.

USC faculty submitted over 70 proposals for events to be included in a 2006-2007 series that promises an excellent initial year and great potential for future growth. Related events began this year, including a recent screening and discussion

of the classic film *On the Waterfront* that brought together students and faculty from across the university to analyze the film's import. The broad range of arts and humanities offerings already underway will complement larger-scale events produced by the Deans' Council each year.

In addition, USC will provide special opportunities for students to take advantage of the city's numerous outstanding theaters, museums, and performing arts centers. These events will be accompanied by discussions and lectures that explore their relationship to USC's core values and allow students opportunities for analytical reflection.

### **Initiative on Faculty Hiring**

Focused on increasing diversity and recruiting the nation's leading interdisciplinary scholars, these hiring initiatives seek to further develop USC's central resource: its faculty.

The university will provide financial resources to help schools recruit outstanding faculty who—through scholarship, teaching, and mentoring—will increase the representation of qualified women and people of color in disciplines and schools in which they are under-represented. A Task Force on Diversity and Faculty Development, appointed by the Provost, will guide this effort, in partnership with the schools and the Women in Science and Engineering program.

USC will also identify, recruit, and hire twelve outstanding interdisciplinary faculty. These individuals will already be high-profile, influential, and productive scholars in their fields and will continue to produce research or other creative work that influences human values, science, and thought. The Provost appointed an Advisory Committee for Interdisciplinary Hiring to assist in identifying and evaluating promising candidates.

### **Initiative on Biomedical Nanoscience**

Nanotechnology has important potential applications for society, including medical science, drug delivery and therapeutic monitoring, targeted imaging, health screening, and organ replacement. USC will become a leader in this emerging field, and the university will take a highly integrative and collaborative approach to three overarching research goals:

1. The detection of disease at the earliest possible time, prior to its ability to cause damage;
2. The delivery of treatment at the right place and at the right time; and
3. The reestablishment of tissue and organ function through innovative approaches.

In order to focus and direct USC's efforts in this area, the Provost appointed a Biomedical Nanoscience Initiative Steering Committee reflecting the diversity and wealth of intellectual strength at USC. Two common laboratories will be established to facilitate collaborative research: one on the Health Sciences Campus and one on the University Park Campus. In addition, faculty recruitment will target researchers whose work will strengthen this initiative.

### **Technology-Enhanced Learning and Distance Learning at USC**

To remain competitive with peer institutions, USC must establish the infrastructure to allow its faculty and students to experiment with new teaching and learning paradigms. To this end, sixteen studio classrooms for technology-enhanced learning (including distance learning) will be created at USC. Three will be located on the Health Sciences Campus, one at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, and ten at the University Park Campus. Two mobile studios will also be developed. Once this infrastructure is in place, the university will provide intensive training sessions for

faculty so they will become comfortable teaching in the studio classrooms.

To oversee USC's strategy in this area, the Provost appointed a Chief Technology Officer for Enhanced Learning. In addition, seed funding will support large-scale development projects which significantly alter course delivery in key areas through a competitive Provost's Fund for Teaching with Technology. An annual Teaching with Technology Prize will also be established to honor outstanding efforts by faculty in this area.

### **First Contact Initiative**

USC strives to provide a small-college experience within the context of a major research university. Many students already benefit from this combination in their schools and majors, but all students should have ample opportunities to interact directly with faculty and to find mentors on campus to guide them as they make important decisions.

Part of the Initiative will target student advisement. To this end, USC will establish a university-wide advisement database. This database, with security similar to the current one used for registration records, will allow the transfer of data between schools and units. In addition, USC's professional staff will focus increasingly on proactive and strategic advisement. A task force on advisement is coordinating these multi-school efforts.

A number of signature events will also define the Initiative, including research fairs, interdisciplinary faculty panels and career mentoring events. Micro-seminars scheduled primarily during Welcome Week will enhance student-faculty interactions from the very beginning of the USC experience.

This Initiative will serve to increase the number of events that allow students and faculty or alumni to interact outside the

classroom, thereby enhancing learning, building community and promoting student retention.

### **Faculty-Centered Initiatives**

Four new initiatives will play central roles in enhancing faculty life at USC:

- The Faculty Growth and Development Initiative will expand workshops and mentoring opportunities for junior faculty, as will new efforts to help faculty connect with peers at USC with whom they share research interests.
- The Family-Friendly Initiative will create a new Center for Work and Family Life to promote health and wellness amongst the faculty. Childcare benefits and services will also be expanded.
- A Retirement Initiative will assist faculty in the transition beyond full-time service with a phased retirement option. USC Senior Care and other medical insurance coverage also assist retired faculty, and the Emeriti Center will be strengthened to promote their ongoing connection with the university.
- The Non-tenure-track Faculty Initiative will increase participation on university committees and create new paths to promotion for full-time, non-tenure-track colleagues. Other benefits, such as eligibility for university prizes and research funds, parental leave and enhanced health benefits are also underway.

Together, these innovations support full-time faculty of all ranks in each stage of their careers and reflect the caring and respect that are hallmark Trojan values.

Each of these initiatives plays a crucial role in fulfilling USC's commitment to its core values by serving the university's many communities and promoting ethical conduct in all its activities.

## **DEVELOPING STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES**

The 2004 strategic plan articulated a series of strategic capabilities to be developed by USC. The following is a brief accounting of the university's ongoing efforts to build these important strategic capabilities and an update on the corresponding first-year initiatives:

### **A. Span Disciplinary and School Boundaries to Focus on Problems of Societal Significance**

In addition to the Biomedical Nanoscience Initiative, USC has also embarked on two other new interdisciplinary research initiatives targeted at critical societal needs.

- The Future Fuels and Energy Initiative aims to create economically viable and environmentally sound alternatives to conventional fossil fuels.
- The Biomedical Imaging Initiative seeks breakthroughs in the study of health and disease through the multidisciplinary application of imaging techniques at all scales—from molecules to man.

These new initiatives build on current activities, begun in prior years, in the areas of genomics, neurosciences, healthcare, and urban issues. Leaders of pre-existing initiatives have all been asked to complete strategic plans to define their future roles and contributions to USC's research excellence.

Other new interdisciplinary resources at USC include the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Its 52,000 testimonies of survivors and witnesses to the Holocaust will serve as a vital resource for scholarship in the humanities and social sciences at USC and around the world. Similarly, the Royal Institute of Applied Gerontology will extend research at USC into the community through a variety of outreach programs.

Inventions generated by these and other initiatives will more quickly lend solutions to problems of societal significance through the new USC Mark and Mary Stevens Institute for Technology Commercialization, which will assist researchers in patenting, marketing and commercializing of their discoveries.

The marquee initiatives above complement several other important efforts underway to promote interdisciplinary solutions to issues of concern to society. The “First Year Initiatives” begun in 2004-2005 remain central to the university’s goals:

**Update on First-Year Initiatives:**

- 1. Graduate Seminars Series.** The Graduate School is considering a university-wide Social Relevance Seminar series focused on a different set of social issues each semester. In addition, existing seminars on Urban and Global issues will highlight their relevance to societal problems, thereby encouraging graduate students to consider the impact of their research on the community. Similarly, a Task Force on Graduate Education is considering how to enhance graduate student quality and diversity, as well as the visibility of USC’s graduate programs. It will report at the end of the spring semester. Next year, a Task Force on Interdisciplinary Education will make recommendations on ways of bolstering boundary-spanning connections in the university’s graduate programs, as well as in the undergraduate curriculum. These efforts all complement the appointment of an Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Programs, who oversees USC’s efforts in graduate education, and a reorganization of the Graduate School.
- 2. Collaborations across Academic Units.** The Provost charged key faculty

committees that oversee academic policies, the curriculum, and research, with identifying ways of reducing barriers to collaboration. A streamlined curriculum review process has been adopted and will be effective academic year 2006-2007. Similarly, each Dean is engaged in discussions with the Provost on fostering interdisciplinary connections with other schools, and changes are underway to encourage units to invest in interdisciplinary activities. The Provost’s new guidelines on appointments, promotions, and tenure also include special provisions to accommodate interdisciplinary faculty. Given the university’s size and the scope of its research activities, one barrier to collaboration within USC is the difficulty in connecting faculty with related research interests. A new university-wide faculty database will bridge these gaps by helping researchers to identify their peers and forge working collaborations. Hiring key interdisciplinary faculty will also build the university’s capacity in this area.

**B. Link Fundamental to Applied Research**

Each of the new initiatives announced this year addresses aspects of this crucial issue. The new Arts and Humanities Initiative challenges students to make connections between timeless and contemporary works of creativity and society’s most pressing concerns. The Office of Research Advancement takes as its central goal the fostering of research activities throughout the university, including supporting the establishment of links between fundamental and applied work. One example of this is its focus on emerging fields such as nanoscience, new sources of energy, and multimedia literacy.

The university is also creating a new USC China Research Institute. The policy-relevant social science research it produces will establish USC as the place where scholars, policy-makers, and government officials turn for the most cutting-edge research on U.S.-China relations.

The Critical Pathways identified in 1998 also remain important foci of USC's efforts to link applied and fundamental research. The Communications and Urban pathways enjoy particular success in building bridges across disciplines and academic units for faculty and students alike. New efforts are underway to build on successful collaborations in the Communications pathway, and the Urban Initiative now offers a graduate certificate program. Beyond these fields, global healthcare has emerged as an area of excellence at USC, with active research programs flourishing in over 20 departments of the university in areas as diverse as Anthropology, Business, Law, Preventive Medicine, and Social Work. The new USC Stevens Institute for Technology Commercialization will also expand the university's capacity to link fundamental and applied work.

#### **Update on First-Year Initiatives:**

1. **Research Agenda.** A faculty committee is engaged in a comprehensive study of the mechanisms to support interdisciplinary research, including both funding and the processes and rules for establishing research units. Although its work is ongoing, its preliminary recommendations include reconstituting the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in a new form to promote innovative interdisciplinary research. In addition, the Office of Research Advancement has become a key resource in guiding research activities that span multiple disciplines.

2. **Service-Learning.** The Academic Senate and the Provost's Advisory Committee on Learner Centered Education are working together to develop recommendations on future directions for service-learning at USC. Moreover, the schools are expanding the range of community service options available to their students, and the Student Affairs division's SCitizen program will foster higher levels of civic engagement throughout the student body. Opportunities for service range from internships and volunteerism to assistance from faculty and students provided to local small businesses through the new USC ImpactLA initiative.

These new efforts enhance the ongoing work of the Community Based Learning Collaborative, which facilitates service-learning opportunities in the community as a fundamental aspect of learner-centered education.

#### **C. Build Networks and Partnerships**

Recent years have witnessed the birth and growth of a wealth of partnerships linking USC to its peer institutions, particularly in Southern California. Two research institutes now link USC with the Huntington Library, Gallery and Botanical Gardens: the USC-Huntington Center on California and the West and the Huntington-USC Early Modern Studies Institute. Both centers include scholars from peer institutions throughout the region, linked together in research networks in which USC is the hub. Similar linkages with the Center Theatre Group and other theatres, museums such as the Getty Center, and other arts venues will play a central role in the new Arts and Humanities Initiative. USC's Deans are leading efforts to forge new links and leverage existing relationships to enhance

research and learning in partnership with peers in the region.

#### **Update on First-Year Initiatives:**

- 1. Global Presence.** The Provost appointed a new Senior Executive Director for Global Initiatives, who will spearhead the university's international efforts. In addition to opening its new office in Mexico City, the university is conducting a survey of USC faculty to identify those with research and teaching interests related to Latin America. This data will inform future decisions related to expanding USC's presence in the region. The university is also exploring opening offices in mainland China and India, two areas central to faculty research interests, student recruitment, alumni outreach, and other international activities. Consideration is also being given to how USC can use technology-enhanced learning to extend its programs beyond the boundaries of its campuses. These efforts are merely the first steps in a major new globalization initiative being developed by the Executive Vice Provost, the Senior Executive Director of Global Initiatives, and an interdisciplinary faculty advisory committee.
- 2. Federal Government Relations.** USC is opening a new office in Washington, D.C., which will house the university's lobbying efforts and create a strong presence for the Office of Research Advancement. The D.C. office will support USC investigators by promoting their capabilities to federal agencies and foundations, and by bringing knowledge back to the campus on research priorities. The staff will also help in the strategic placement of faculty on national research committees to increase our research exposure in the federal government.

#### **D. Increase Responsiveness to Learners**

Beyond the First Contact initiative, numerous other efforts are underway to make the university more responsive to students' needs. The success of the Institute for Multimedia Literacy in preparing students for communicating in the digital age will be expanded into the general education core curriculum. Beginning in 2006-2007, ten courses enrolling a total of 600 students will include multimedia literacy components.

These new courses complement USC's ongoing focus on developing students' critical thinking and communications skills, both oral and written. The university already ensures that every undergraduate focuses on their writing skills, and an assessment of their progress between Freshman and Junior year is underway to evaluate the success of the current writing program and identify paths to continued improvement.

In addition, the university is examining ways of meeting the needs of students who face difficulties in the transition to college by developing new retention strategies specific to the needs of students in each school. USC will also offer a summer bridge program as a pilot project—providing intensive instruction for at-risk students prior to their freshman year.

#### **Update on First-Year Initiatives:**

- 1. Distance Learning.** Provost Nikias announced a plan to decentralize technology-enhanced learning and assist the schools in developing infrastructure to support the residential learning experience. In addition, each school is charged with examining innovative ways to use distance learning to reach out to international or other students who might not otherwise come to USC for educational programs.

**2. Lifelong Learning.** USC is examining new avenues for expanding its lifelong learning opportunities, in some cases through distance education. This issue will receive sustained attention in 2006-2007 under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

**3. Initiative on Pedagogical Technology.** The recently-created Center for Pedagogical Technology supports innovative teaching on campus and in the university's distance learning efforts. Its activities include making grants to facilitate the use of technology in classrooms, particularly in large undergraduate classes. The Center also facilitates innovative, interdisciplinary research projects at USC that leverage new technologies to enhance learner-centered education. An award will also be established to recognize the innovative use of technology in classroom teaching.

**4. Center for Learning.** The Center was disbanded in 2005 and its resources reallocated to other offices. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs are working with the remaining components of the office, including the Center for Excellence in Teaching and the Center for Scholarly Technology, to help coordinate their efforts in support of learner-centered education at USC.

**5. The Administrative Imperative.** The Provost impaneled a Committee to Examine Information Services to make recommendations on improving information technology support at USC. Their counsel led to a restructuring of information services that will empower individual academic units to develop technology services that meet their needs while also improving customer service. In addition, the Information Services Division will be split, making the USC Libraries and Information Services discrete units to ensure that each gets the appropriate attention and resources.

The Enrollment Services division is also undergoing restructuring, with the appointment of a new Vice Provost for Enrollment Policy and Management and the creation of a new Dean of Admission and Financial Aid position.

In addition, the Student Affairs division is leading the effort to conceptualize and implement innovative new student services for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A range of new initiatives seeks to enhance the student experience at USC, such as the SCitizen community service program and the Renaissance Challenge program fostering intellectual dialogue among students. These efforts include the use of technology, most recently in the first-ever Hong Kong Virtual Orientation for students from Asia.