



Chapter 2: Spanning Disciplinary Boundaries to Focus on Problems of Societal Importance

One of the two themes selected by the Accreditation Steering Committee for USC’s Capacity Report is “Spanning Disciplinary and School Boundaries to Focus on Problems of Societal Importance.” USC is committed to creating an academic community for our students that appropriately emphasizes the role of the university in generating the intellectual and creativity activity that addresses issues of importance to our society. In this chapter we discuss two ways we implement that commitment.

First, undergraduates are meaningfully included in the production of research and knowledge, often in an interdisciplinary context. As our 1993 Role and Mission Statement declares: “Research of the highest quality by our faculty and students is fundamental to our mission. USC is one of the very small group of premier academic institutions in which research and teaching are inextricably intertwined, and on which the nation depends for a steady stream of new knowledge, art, and technology.” We have long been committed to interdisciplinary study within an environment of rigorous disciplinary scholarship and teaching, and we work to ensure that our undergraduate students are active participants in both endeavors. The ability to think innovatively – to create, rather than to imitate – is one of the most valuable skills we foster in our students. This skill will define the most successful scholars in the coming decades, and the array of undergraduate research programs reflects the university’s commitment to developing such abilities in our students. Each year, hundreds of undergraduates perform significant original research in the humanities, the physical and life sciences, the social sciences, and the professions. Others create outstanding original works of art, architectural designs, and musical compositions, or achieve exceptional standards in artistic performance.

(http://www.usc.edu/private/factbook/USCRole_and_Mission_Statement_1993.pdf)

Second, USC has long believed that our vision must extend beyond the challenges facing our local community, state or country – instead we are part of a global community. The understanding of international issues remains one of the most vital skills we can foster in our students, and this understanding will help define some of the most influential scholars in the coming decades. To address contemporary issues of societal importance in an effective way, we must infuse our curriculum and our academic community with a global perspective. Given our location in the international city of Los Angeles, this awareness comes naturally to us, and our students are quickly introduced to the importance of thinking globally. This chapter provides evidence that USC is expanding its role as a global institution, spanning international boundaries to focus on problems of importance to the world. Indeed, USC stands as arguably *the* international university, welcoming the highest number of international students at any major university in the country from 115 other nations.

Before we turn to approaches to ensuring that our undergraduate students engage actively in devising and critically assessing solutions to problems of societal importance, it is important to sketch briefly a few of the innovations that provide USC the unique capacity to create a place where interdisciplinary research and globalization are integral aspects of our approach to learning.

An Engine of Ideas and Innovation

Provost C. L. Max Nikias spoke to alumni on the occasion of USC's 125th anniversary about honoring the past and inventing the future. Provost Nikias explained that by being entrepreneurial, risk-taking and far-sighted, USC has carved out a leadership role in communications, biomedicine, and other key frontiers of the 21st century. The University must continue to be an engine of ideas and innovation. Interdisciplinary approaches will be vital to this success, as will the embrace of our role as an active participant in the global community, particularly the Pacific Rim.

Faculty-based Initiatives

Improving the interdisciplinary opportunities for students depends on having interdisciplinary faculty for them to interact with. One approach to erasing artificial disciplinary boundaries is to hire clusters of interdisciplinary scholars who will work together on problems of societal importance. USC has successfully used this approach in two cases. In the first, a highly respected senior scholar in Earth Sciences was recruited who then helped the dean and the Provost attract a team of four additional scholars in either Biological or Geological Sciences who now form the “Geobiology Cluster.” A different approach was taken in hiring a team of seven faculty in the USC College’s Marine Environmental Biology Section of Biological Sciences and the Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies in fall 2006. In this case, we cast a broad net, asking groups of researchers to tell us how they could flourish at USC and interact with the faculty and other resources here. We identified three discrete groups with outstanding and complementary expertise in marine microbiology and chemistry and held a symposium with the intention of hiring all the candidates. This cluster hire involved the cooperation of several departments within the College as well as the Schools of Dentistry and Engineering.

As a result of these cluster hires, USC gained outstanding groups of researchers, and the recruited faculty were able to create their own dream teams of interdisciplinary scholars. These faculty are already providing unique environments for undergraduate research which is often as interdisciplinary as the faculty teams themselves. The marine microbiologists and chemists who joined us through these cluster hires can offer students the opportunity to study environmental microbiology, biogeochemistry of marine systems, and genomics of marine creatures at our George and MaryLou Boone Center for Science and Environmental Leadership on Catalina Island. Other faculty cluster recruitments are currently underway for initiatives in (1) Future Fuels and Energy and (2) Biomedical Nanosciences. Cluster recruitment requires coordination and the support of many schools and the central university administration.

Our ability to attract the top researchers in a variety of fields through cluster hires and more traditional methods means that our undergraduate students have exciting possibilities for hands-on research. They can work on biomedical technology that offers the promise of helping the blind to see at Professor Mark Humayun's Biomimetic Microelectronic Systems Engineering Research Center; they can explore the potential of stem-cell research and gene therapy in curing disease with Dr. Donald Kohn at Children's Hospital L.A.; or they can work at the cutting-edge of neurosciences by working with Professors Antonio and Hanna Damasio at the Brain and Creativity Institute.

A second innovation to ensure that USC produces research at the forefront of knowledge that addresses societal issues is the Office of Research Advancement, which is implementing USC's strategic plan by building interdisciplinary research collaborations that address significant societal needs and by increasing the impact and prominence of our faculty's research. USC received over \$415.2 million during FY 2006 in sponsored research funding and ranked 10th among private American universities in federal research expenditures according to the National Science Foundation. The Office of the Vice Provost for Research Advancement has been enlarged to include an associate vice provost for research advancement; a director of corporate research advancement; and an Office of Research Advancement in Washington, D.C., which is the first university research office located in Washington. This office maintains and strengthens ties between the university's investigators and federal and philanthropic research sponsors. It tracks current and emerging funding priorities in federal agencies, and helps faculty to initiate or expand sponsored research programs.

A third innovation in the research capability of USC stems from a grant program announced in September 2006 using university resources to advance scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. This grant program provides support to individual faculty whose scholarship promises to make especially significant and innovative contributions to the relevant scholarly literature or to attract external support. To ensure that resources are devoted to the most promising and rigorous projects, a blue-ribbon faculty steering committee was appointed, chaired by Donald Miller, Professor of Religion. Applications for the grants awarded for work in 2007-2008 flooded the committee. Forty-one of the 114 proposals were funded, and successful applicants included faculty members from 12 schools and 12 departments within USC College. Just as with federally funded research, these projects often offer opportunities for students to be involved in the creative enterprise. Several faculty members included a budget for hiring undergraduate students to work side by side on their projects, including Theatre Professor Sharon Carnicke's "Stanislavsky's Hidden Legacy to Theatre," and Anthropology Professor Dorinne Kondo's "(Re)Visions of Race: Performance, Ethnography, and Politics in Motion."

Student-based Initiatives

President Sample explained when launching the USC Stevens Institute for Innovation, described below, that as we become one of the most productive research universities in the world, we are also “educating the next generation of innovators.” The definition of an educated person continues to evolve in light of an explosion of scientific knowledge and a dizzying degree of technological and societal change. The faculty’s role is to help individual students foster their intellectual curiosity and self-directed creativity; to expand inquiry skills of investigation, analysis, and problem-solving; to promote the examination of personal values; and to build core skills of literacy, teamwork and leadership. USC is working to provide our undergraduates with this kind of hands-on, active, rigorous experience with research and creative projects. The programs listed below are only a sample of the rich opportunities we offer our undergraduate students. Not only do they allow our students to learn actively and hone their critical reasoning skills, but they also provide students the opportunity to work closely with faculty, developing mentoring relationships that will last a lifetime. Although we believe that we offer substantial research and creative opportunities, we are constantly striving to provide a more varied menu of possibilities to engage our students and faculty.

- **USC College Research Communities:** Six groups of ten USC College sophomores and juniors with similar academic interests worked during the 2006–2007 academic year on significant group research projects, guided by leading faculty members and post-doctoral fellows. Each student group was responsible for developing -- with the help of a faculty member and a post-doctoral assistant -- a detailed research plan for the project. They determined their group’s collective goals and the steps necessary to achieving those goals. Before designing the projects, students attended a team-taught seminar on multidisciplinary research methodologies, which usually included students from two Team Research Communities, allowing for a free exchange of ideas. In spring 2007, all the Team Research Communities shared their findings at a USC College Team Research presentation. USC College Research Communities are being continued in the 2007–2008 academic year.
(<http://college.usc.edu/teamresearch/recommunity.html>)
- **Merit Research Program in Engineering:** Each year, a select group of entering freshmen in the USC Viterbi School of Engineering is invited to work with faculty on current research projects. USC’s Viterbi School of Engineering is the second highest in the nation in research funding per faculty member (nearly \$1million per faculty member) with \$165 million of sponsored research support in fiscal year 2007 (including federal, state, and private sources of support), and it consistently ranks among the top ten engineering schools according to the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings. Consequently, there are many opportunities for including Merit Research students in faculty laboratories. The Merit Research Award is a four-year award.
(<http://viterbi.usc.edu/students/undergrad/research/>)
- **WiSE Undergraduate Research Fellowships:** The Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE) program offers exceptional women the opportunity to engage in paid laboratory research and to establish a mentor relationship with a research-active scientist early in their academic careers. With this early exposure to scholarship in all

fields of natural science, mathematics and engineering, WiSE hopes to enhance the potential for women to choose careers in science and engineering. WiSE Research Fellows go through the process of research: survey the relevant literature, design and conduct experiments, analyze and interpret results, draw conclusions, and communicate the results in written and oral formats. At the end of the Fellowship period, students submit a written report of their progress and present the results of their research at the USC Undergraduate Symposium for Scholarly and Creative Work, discussed in more detail below.

- **Sophomore Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR):** USC College announced an initiative in undergraduate research in September 2007 as part of its mission to become a model 21st century liberal arts college located within a major research university. USC College's competitive advantage over traditional liberal arts colleges is that we have a world-class scholarly faculty engaged in answering major research questions. The purposes of SOAR are to allow all motivated students the opportunity to be mentored one on one by the College's faculty, and to introduce students early in their College careers to the process of serious scholarly inquiry. SOAR will provide \$1,000 of support to any non-course-related research activity involving an eligible student and a faculty sponsor. The funds may be used either to (a) involve the student as a research assistant in the faculty member's project or to (b) cover costs incurred by a student in the course of researching her or his own project. This program is aimed at sophomores in order to ensure that this year of study includes challenging and stimulating pedagogical experiences. Our work in retention suggests that this can be a difficult year for some students, and programs targeted to these students may help them avoid or overcome the "sophomore slump."
(http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/private/documents/SOAR_Initiative_Announcement.pdf)
- **Innovation Studies and USC Stevens Institute for Innovation:** The USC Stevens Institute for Innovation is a university-wide resource designed to harness and advance creative thinking and breakthrough research at USC for maximum societal impact. As the first of its kind, USC Stevens is pioneering a new approach to innovation university-wide, by blending two very important strategic goals: *effectively transferring USC ideas into society*, and *developing the next-generation innovator*. USC Stevens was established through a generous \$22 million naming gift from USC alumnus and trustee Mark A. Stevens. USC Stevens recently launched a pilot program called the "Innovation Inside" curriculum fund, a new curriculum program for all USC faculty members interested in broadening the spirit of innovation in students. The goal is to empower students across diverse disciplines with the traits, knowledge, and skills to address real-world opportunities and challenges, beyond traditional academic means, and thus develop the next generation of innovators. For example, USC Stevens wants students to learn how to create new non-profit organizations (e.g., Teach for America), create novel delivery mechanisms for creative works and ideas (e.g., Creative Commons, Wikipedia), introduce new ways for people to connect and interact (e.g., Craigslist, MySpace), as well as to develop new products, services, and startup companies.

USC Stevens presented the first annual university-wide “USC Student Innovator Showcase and Competition” in October 2007, which provided a highly interactive glimpse into the imaginations of USC student innovators, and a sneak peak at tomorrow’s world. Some of the nearly 40 student presentations at the event included a motorcycle helmet with a smog-filtering air purifier; a visual, self-organizing, relational map of human knowledge that takes Wikipedia to the next level; a community-based digital music collective and record label; and a three- dimensional LED display. Forty-four undergraduates participating, coming from all corners of the university, including the Viterbi, Annenberg, Marshall, Gould, Rossier, Pharmacy, and Thornton Schools, and the USC College.

(<http://stevens.usc.edu/>)

- **Competitive Awards for Undergraduate Research:** In 2007-2008, the Office of the Provost is providing over \$900,000 to foster undergraduate research through a variety of fellowship programs. The Rose Hills Foundation annually provides \$500,000 of this funding for an extensive research fellowship program available to juniors and seniors from Southern California in the life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering. The Rose Hills program is a five year commitment and will fund approximately 60 students. At least eight other campus organizations offer competitive awards for undergraduate research, including the USC Student Senate, the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, the East Asian Studies Center, the Integrated Media Systems Center, the Viterbi School of Engineering, the Sustainable Cities Program, and Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE).
(http://www.usc.edu/research/for_researchers/funding/usc/)
- **Research Clearinghouse:** To encourage students’ curiosity and problem-solving skills, the Office of Undergraduate Programs has been expanding undergraduate research opportunities. The Undergraduate Research Clearinghouse matches student and faculty interests. Students who wish to get involved in faculty research submit information about their background, experience, skills, interests, and availability to assist faculty. Faculty members who are willing to take on undergraduate assistants submit information about the nature of their research, how they would use undergraduate assistants, and how many assistants they could utilize. Nineteen research groups that have or are currently engaged in studies with the assistance of undergraduates are listed on the Undergraduate Research Web page.
(<http://www.usc.edu/programs/ugprograms/ugresearch/clearinghouse.shtml>)
- **Festival of Scholarly and Creative Work:** To highlight the vibrant undergraduate activity in research and creativity, we celebrate a spring Festival of Scholarly and Creative Work, which has three components: the Undergraduate Research Symposium, the Undergraduate Writers’ Conference, and Webfast. We hope to increase the number of students presenting during this three-week spring festival. Not only does it allow students to share their discoveries and be recognized for exemplary work, but it also underscores to students who might not have thought about being involved actively in research the possibilities open to them on this campus, the Health Sciences Campus, our research groups in Marina del Ray (Information Sciences Institute and Institute for Creative Technology) and Children’s Hospital L.A. Over \$22,000 was awarded in prizes.
(<http://www.usc.edu/programs/ugprograms/ughome/>)

Undergraduate Research Symposium: A tremendous stimulus for encouraging students to conduct research and display their creative work is the annual two-day Undergraduate Research Symposium. Organized by the Office of Undergraduate Programs, student work is judged by panels of distinguished faculty and then exhibited in the center of campus for the benefit of the university community. Last year, 120 students presented their work in a variety of ways, such as through poster/panel sessions, art exhibits, and electronic media. In future years, Discovery Scholars, a new program described below, also will present their capstone projects at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.
(<http://www.usc.edu/programs/ugprograms/ugsymposium/>)

Undergraduate Writers' Conference: Each spring approximately 120 students from dozens of disciplines across the university submit academic essays to compete for writing prizes in four categories (research, analytical, creative, professional). The Undergraduate Writers' Conference allows students to present their work orally on academic panels and then culminates in a celebratory banquet where key players from writing-oriented industries (entertainment, law, new media, and radio) explain how writing skills were indispensable to their professional success. Students report that the event helps them to anticipate how their academic writing skills equip them for postgraduate employment.
(<http://angelingo.usc.edu/vol04issue01/UWC.php>)

Webfest: Webfest is an annual contest designed for USC undergraduate, graduate and professional students to exhibit Web-based multimedia projects spanning academic and professional disciplines. Students are invited to submit Websites they have created for a class, university or student organization, or other extracurricular project, either as individuals or groups. Submissions that are of particular interest include students who have developed scholarly and informational Websites, useful Web applications, artistic and creative products, and community-oriented Websites.
(<http://www.usc.edu/projects/webfest/>)

- **Discovery Scholars:** Given all this activity in undergraduate research and creative work, Provost Nikias has just created a new program to recognize excellence in original scholarship and creativity among USC's undergraduate students. Analogous to the highly-successful Renaissance Scholars program that President Sample established in 2000 (discussed in Chapter 3), Discovery Scholars will bolster academic achievement among our talented students, while nurturing the intellectual breadth and flexibility our students will need in this rapidly-changing century. Students from every major will be eligible to earn the designation of Discovery Scholar at the time of graduation through their involvement in research and creative activity. It is expected that scholars who have pursued original research will submit a senior thesis or comparable self-authored report of their work, and that scholars who have engaged in the creative arts will submit representative portfolios. Students will be eligible to compete for a select number of annual Discovery Scholar Prizes of \$10,000, awarded at Commencement for the purpose of post-baccalaureate study. The Office of Undergraduate Programs is working with

representatives from each USC school to formulate a set of discipline-specific eligibility criteria; and faculty panels from each school will nominate a short list of prize finalists from the list of all Discovery Scholars in their schools. A panel drawn from across the university will then recommend prize recipients to the provost.
(<http://www.usc.edu/programs/ugprograms/discovery/>)

USC Globalization

Expanding the internationalization of the university was one of four strategic initiatives in the 1994 Strategic Plan and part of the vision for USC's future in the 2004 Strategic Plan. This section will focus on globalization as it relates to our undergraduate students' experience at USC. We hope to provide them an environment where they become knowledgeable about the interdisciplinary problems facing our global society and where they will learn to thrive in a diverse and global community, relishing the challenge and excitement it provides. A global perspective is one that is nuanced and sophisticated and that hones the critical-thinking skills necessary to deal productively with the problems and challenges students will face in the future. We also attempt to provide students opportunities to travel abroad with professors, engage in international research, and confront the realities of globalization and diversity. Again, the programs discussed below are only a fraction of the ways that students confront global problems in the classroom or in extra-curricular activities; or they use to travel abroad in academic programs designed to foster rigorous analysis of their experiences. During 2006-2007, 1,749 USC undergraduates studied abroad for one semester, for the summer, or for the entire academic year.

Our capacity to introduce new programs related to globalization is substantial because of our long experience with such programs and because of the expertise of our Office of Globalization which serves as the focal contact for international programs and collaboration. In recent years, the university has opened USC International Offices in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Mexico City. In addition, USC is a founding member of Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), a consortium of 37 leading research universities, and continues to play a vital role in the association. President Sample was the founding Chairman of APRU.
(http://www.usc.edu/dept/International_Offices/Globalization/)

Among USC's ambitious efforts to distinguish itself as a global university are the following new initiatives for 2007-2008:

- **Trojans Without Borders:** Trojans Without Borders consists of several prongs, two of which have direct relevance to undergraduate students: (1) the Global Scholars Program, which encourages every student to live or study abroad as a key aspect of her or his education; and (2) Global Outreach, which will extend USC's acclaimed community-service approach to locations around the world. The university-wide program is designed to stimulate our schools to create new programs consistent with our goals. For example, The Viterbi School's new Engineers Without Borders program sent nine undergraduates to Honduras last summer to create a blueprint for providing drinking water and a water-treatment plant for residents of La Estanzuela.

(http://www.usc.edu/dept/International_Offices/Globalization/programs.html)

- **The Global Scholars Award** is analogous to the Renaissance Scholar Awards, which President Sample launched six years ago, and the new Discovery Scholar Awards, discussed above. The annual Global Scholars Award will honor a select number of these undergraduate students who have excelled in their studies both at home and abroad. Global Scholars will be expected to complete a capstone paper, project, or research paper in which they reflect on their international experiences and demonstrate the depth and quality of the students' experiences. Each school will define the capstone project criteria for its students, allowing students some flexibility and room for creativity within their respective academic disciplines. Each school will select its Global Scholar finalists for consideration by a USC-wide faculty committee and the provost to determine the Global Scholar Award winners. A select number of Global Scholar Awards of \$10,000 will be presented at Commencement each year to be applied toward graduate study.
- **The Global Outreach Program** will build on the success of Alternative Spring Break programs, in which about 350 students each year participate in off-campus service-learning experiences with faculty, staff and student leaders. The Volunteer Center organized programs for 157 students in 2006-2007, and another approximately 200 students volunteered through student organizations. Alternative Spring Breaks allow students to immerse themselves in a pressing social issue – such as poverty, environmental sustainability, or economic redevelopment – and learn about a new community and culture. Last year, Student Affairs' Volunteer Center expanded Alternative Break trips to send 66 students to three international locations, including a two-week Alternative Winter Break to Thailand.
- **USC US-China Institute:** In fall 2006, USC launched its US-China Institute. USCI is charged with enhancing understanding of the US-China relationship and how trends in China might affect that relationship. It carries out this mission through research, instructional, and outreach initiatives. USCI's most enduring impact on undergraduates comes through its work to infuse the study of China and US-China relations throughout the curriculum. In spring 2007, the institute began identifying areas in the curriculum where Chinese cases or materials can help faculty illuminate critical issues and concepts and aid students in developing vital skills. In fall 2007, the institute initiated a faculty grants program to encourage faculty members to collaborate with China specialists and graduate students to create new courses on China and to develop China case studies for use in their introductory and other courses. In addition, the USCI faculty research grants program gives preference to proposals that include a significant role for undergraduate students. Among the projects funded this year, one supported architecture students engaged in fieldwork in China on urban building trends. Along with this effort to incorporate China across the curriculum, USCI is working with deans and faculty committees to create an interdisciplinary China studies major and minor. The institute is also laying the groundwork for an innovative China-based summer course on US-China relations. Beginning in summer 2009, this program will bring US and Chinese students together to examine the 21st century's definitive bilateral relationship.
(<http://china.usc.edu/>)

Ongoing programs have established a successful foundation of global learning for USC students in the College in the Schools. The following provide a flavor of the many school-based global experience that we offer our undergraduate students:

- **International Opportunities in the College:** USC undergraduates can study abroad for a semester or year on one of the 50 programs in 29 countries offered by the College. The programs are open to all undergraduates and attract a good number of students from outside the College. The College runs its own programs in Paris and Madrid and has an in-country resident coordinator in the UK for students studying there. In 2007-08 the College will send around 430 undergraduate students abroad for a semester or year. (In 2001-02 the College sent 256 students on semester and year programs.) Undergraduates may also participate in summer study abroad programs. The College has 10 department-run summer programs and is adding several more. In Summer 2007 the College sent over 100 students on summer abroad programs.
(<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/overseas/>)

- **Global Experiential Learning Program of the Marshall School of Business:** The Global Experiential Learning Program at the Marshall School of Business presents an opportunity for students to learn outside the conventional classroom. During the 2006-2007 academic year and summer, approximately 260 undergraduate students participated in one of five week-long trips to important commercial centers throughout Asia (Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taipei). This resulted in nearly 40% of first-year Marshall students traveling internationally as part of their academic work. These trips were uniformly successful and demonstrated the viability of exposing undergraduate students to globalization and international business in this format.

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the Marshall School of Business is expanding its two highly successful experiential learning programs (Global Leadership Program and Learning about International Commerce) by offering the Global Experiential Learning Program to 350 first-year Marshall students. Students will travel to Beijing, Shanghai, Dublin, Santiago, Taipei or Hong Kong. In keeping with USC Marshall's strategic priority, our goal is to offer programs that will provide students with the necessary skills to compete in the global market.

(http://www.marshall.usc.edu/web/Undergraduate.cfm?doc_id=7213)

- **Annenberg International Programs:** The USC Annenberg School for Communication has international programs for undergraduates in Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, London, New Zealand, Singapore, and Sydney. About 120-150 undergraduates participate each year. The International Communications Studies program (ICS) allows both undergraduates and graduate students to study a range of approaches to public communication media across Europe. ICS students divide the five-week Comparative Media in Europe course into stays in London, Paris, Prague, and Geneva, during which they have a Directed Research project and small study group activities in addition to regular class meetings.
(<http://annenberg.usc.edu/CurrentStudents/IntlPrograms.aspx>)

Challenges and Opportunities

USC's long tradition of commitment to interdisciplinary research that includes undergraduates and to meaningful global experiences has allowed us to significantly increase the number of such opportunities in the last few years. Our current goal is to allow all our undergraduates the opportunity to be involved in these kinds of learning experiences; at this point, the University has encouraged but has not required that all undergraduates have an experience abroad or participate with a faculty member in research or creative activity. Our newly created Discovery and Global Scholars programs, our new Festival of Scholarly and Creative Work, and the Trojans without Borders initiative are designed, however, to bring these possibilities forcefully to our students' attention and to signal to them how valuable we believe such experiences are for a comprehensive undergraduate education.

Providing these opportunities can be challenging for an institution:

- Institutional structures may hinder interdisciplinary collaborations, both in teaching and research. We have attacked such hurdles where we have identified them; for example, the recent reform of the university curriculum process was designed in part to remove obstacles to interdisciplinary academic programs and courses and to facilitate important aspects of interdisciplinarity, such as cross-listing courses. The system through which we allocate undergraduate tuition to the various schools now takes account of interdisciplinary programs, the commitment of the school to providing research and creative opportunities to undergraduates, and the programs designed to foster global perspectives. Certainly, we have not eliminated all the structural barriers to interdisciplinary teaching and research, but we are moving vigorously to facilitate these interactions, rather than impede them.
- In addition, both types of interactions can be costly – for the institution and, in the case of overseas study, for the student. We have increased the number of undergraduate research opportunities substantially in the last year, in part, because of the generous grant from the Rose Hills Foundation and the decision by university and school leaders to focus resources on such programs.
- There is also an opportunity cost for schools – if our faculty are working with students in smaller groups and one-on-one interactions, then they may be less able to teach larger classes, whether in the core curriculum or in upper-division courses for majors and minors. Although we have increased the size of our faculty in recent years, we still have a relatively small faculty with many competing demands on their time.
- Finally, study abroad is costly for students, particularly now with the weak dollar. These expenses are especially challenging for students who rely on financial aid to help defray their basic educational expenses. In some cases, schools ensure that there are travel grants and other financial aid for students taking advantage of overseas study through programs that they fund. USC is committed to these kinds of learning experiences, and we will actively pursue external funding and commit the necessary resources to ensure that all our students have an opportunity to take advantage of such programs.