



USC University of
Southern California

USC STRATEGIC VISION
MATCHING DEEDS TO AMBITIONS

Adopted by the USC Board of Trustees
DECEMBER 7, 2011

I. ORIGINS

Founded in 1880, the University of Southern California played a crucial role in bringing a city, region, and state to social and economic maturity. More recently, USC became a national and now an international institution through the acknowledged excellence of its research programs, arts and professional schools, and the rising reputation of Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. As Southern California grew ever more transnational and multicultural, a Los Angeles-based university became global in the diversity of its student body and faculty as well as in the growing range, rising quality and ambition of its programs.

For thirteen decades, USC has been guided by its founding core values: free inquiry, the search for truth, appreciation of diversity, service to community, respect and care for others, and ethical conduct. Like Southern California itself, USC has acted on values of creativity, entrepreneurialism and flexibility. Set down amidst beauties of seashore, mountain and plain, warmed by a Mediterranean climate, USC has acquired as a matter of institutional culture a joy in life, celebrated through a concern for the health and wellbeing of the Trojan Family and the people of Los Angeles. Challenged by the creation of a new American region, USC has acquired a distinctive orientation towards the useful and the relevant, the future as well as the past, which the University has expressed in its professional programs, its active engagement in community service, and its emphasis on translational research.

USC has gloried in traditional university structures and purposes, yet it also made itself a force for transformation, learning to innovate, to improve, to experiment, and to take risks as it evolves in response to new circumstances. From its earliest beginnings, USC combined liberal, professional and arts education to form its own

distinctive approach to interdisciplinary and inter-professional study. Because for nearly half a century USC was the only university in a region known for its creativity, it nurtured an intense relationship to the arts on behalf of the larger community and pioneered instruction in music, architecture, art, cinema, theatre, writing and related fields. It educated the region's professionals: teachers, physicians, lawyers, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, social workers, city planners and journalists. USC has prided itself as well upon a certain habit of mind connected to Southern California: a can-do attitude endowed with more than its fair share of panache. Perhaps this is what has attracted the world to USC and USC to the world.

Once again, as it has in the past, USC is reenergizing these core values, its DNA code as an institution and a community across time: but this time, in the Age of the Pacific – an environment that is far more global, urban and integrated than ever before. As the influence of the Pacific Rim rises, significant demographic trends, unprecedented health, social and economic challenges, revolutions in communication and technology, growing diversity, evolving concepts of democracy, and changing ideas surrounding creativity and individual expression are transforming the global landscape. Nowhere is this clearer than in cities, where grand challenges and globalization intersect, where the problems of our day are made visible, and where efforts to find solutions arise. And in no city is this more the case than Los Angeles, which has emerged as the creative capital of the Pacific Rim and the world's primary gateway between East and West. Today's great universities are called to address global challenges, spark creativity, invent and innovate, connect peoples and help improve quality of life.

USC is uniquely positioned to answer this call: the right university at the right time. The University's breadth, size, diversity, location,

international character and global reach have positioned it as the intellectual, creative and cultural wellspring for the Pacific Rim and emerging societies of Asia and Latin America. What will it take to adapt USC's institutional character to this new environment – to address challenges, to transform, to connect, to translate, and to invent the future?

II. THE PATHS FORWARD

Now is the time to be more creative in our research and teaching, more entrepreneurial in our evolution, more generous-minded in our points of view and outreach, more committed to the role of the university, ancient and new, to gather into classrooms and laboratories, libraries and studios, locally and across the globe. The next leg of our journey charts three paths.

1. ***Transforming Education for a Rapidly Changing World:*** The world is evolving at unprecedented speed; the academy must keep pace. We must create a transformative faculty whose scholarship crosses disciplinary boundaries and whose energy sparks intellectual creativity across our campuses. New modes of learning and societal needs require that we reinvent undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral education. Changing demographics and public demands require we provide greater access to, and accountability in, higher education.
2. ***Creating Scholarship with Consequence:*** We must increase our commitment to translational research, creative work and practice in order to address grand challenges, notably in healthcare, life sciences and engineering, but also in the arts, humanities, professions and social sciences. Collaboration among scientists, clinicians, artists, teachers, humanists, researchers and other professionals should be a defining feature of research universities.

3. ***Connecting the Individual to the World:*** We must promote global and local engagement to foster mutual understanding and encourage citizenship in a global context. As the world grows more interconnected, so does the need for self-reflection and critical thought, appreciation of diversity, aesthetic sensibility, civility, reconciliation and empathy across all spheres of life. The quest to understand others begins with self-knowledge and adherence to the value of human wholeness.

These objectives are grand and must be, for universities hold too much cultural authority and promise to strive for less. With its location, history and potential, USC is primed to achieve these objectives.

III. TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

A – ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: What fields of study will have the greatest impact on society and require attention from preeminent universities in the 21st Century? What are the unique and emerging fields in which USC has acknowledged leadership, those in which our faculty can make an academic impact and those from which our students can benefit most? One of USC's major strengths is our broad spectrum of academic, professional and arts programs. Interdisciplinary and inter-professional programs help us identify emerging fields and create important research collaborations, including teams of faculty, postdoctoral scholars and students at every level. These programs also attract transformative faculty, engaged postdoctoral scholars and outstanding graduate and undergraduate students.

We must preserve quality above all else. Every new faculty appointment, award of tenure, and promotion should provide further evidence of

USC's status as one of the world's premier research universities. This will be achieved not only through the recruitment of new transformative scholars, but by supporting current outstanding faculty, by mentoring others to reach their full potential, and by adapting standards of excellence to new forms of interdisciplinary work and to evolving venues for publication and performance. We must continue to recruit, hire, promote, reward, nurture and retain faculty members who are innovative, respected, prolific, and engaged. Such colleagues act as catalysts, igniting intellectual activity across the University. Our ultimate goal is to create a culture of transformative scholarship, founded on the strengths of a diverse campus in an urban setting, including a racially, ethnically and intellectually diverse faculty. Our faculty community consists of tenured, tenure track, and non-tenure track faculty working in a culture of mutual respect that values the unique contribution that every faculty member can make to the shared enterprise of the University.

Elevating the scholarly influence of graduate doctoral programs depends on identifying core areas of competency, building the ranks of transformative faculty, augmenting fellowship support, creating hubs of interdisciplinary and inter-professional excellence founded on and complementing rigorous disciplinary and professional work, extending the national reach of outstanding flagship professional and arts programs, developing a thriving postdoctoral community, and devising mentoring programs. Success in any one of these areas will have a positive impact on the others and raise the visibility and attractiveness of graduate programs. Given limited resources, we must recognize that we cannot do everything well. It will be imperative that we ask, "What can we do well and what can we stop doing?"

A vibrant community of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars will create the immense intellectual capacity needed to tackle the major challenges of the 21st Century. It also gives graduate students added contact with fellow professionals which, in turn, will help attract the best graduate students to USC. We must expand postdoctoral scholar programs, well known in the sciences, to the social sciences and the humanities. The postdoctoral moment is critical for these scholars, providing them with time and resources to launch their research endeavors. In return, young postdoctoral scholars add intellectual vibrancy and research acumen to the university through their connections to faculty, laboratories and students.

We must continue to build ties between and among our wide array of preeminent, flagship arts and professional programs in order to address social needs – e.g., in health fields (medicine, dentistry and pharmacy), engineering, social work, education, policy and administration (public, business and health economics), aging, law, and communication. Close ties among the professions, the arts, health sciences, the social and natural sciences, and the humanities add depth and complexity to cross-disciplinary dialogue in ways few universities can replicate. Creating hubs of excellence between academic, professional and arts programs advances research creativity and innovation, encourages networking, and provides rich possibilities for social impact.

Given today's rapidly evolving, highly complex intellectual landscape, we must rethink and reshape the traditional undergraduate experience, the structure of our curriculum and the role of the classroom as the preeminent teaching environment to foster curiosity, imagination and creativity. The curriculum should instill interdisciplinary fluency and mastery of emergent literacies and set up new options that join learning to practice.

Students should have the opportunity to engage in critical, cross-disciplinary dialogue on contemporary problems and topics with peers in other fields. Currently, the vast majority of students leave college without examining their fields of study in relation to others. They rarely do interdisciplinary work *after* immersion in an academic concentration. In a world growing ever more interconnected and interdependent, with disciplinary, professional and other boundaries in recess, and technology changing the way students learn, this cannot remain the norm.

New technologies demand new literacies and modes of academic inquiry that students must master. This is particularly true of digital and multimedia literacy. USC is a national leader in the study of new literacies and new media with its strengths in cinematic arts, the humanities, communications, visual and cultural studies, advertising, and new technologies. Competence in new media is, in many ways, an extension of traditional forms of literacy. An appreciation of this connection can instill respect for intellectual depth and rigor.

B – ACCESS: Higher education is an indispensable part of the American social contract and a public good that benefits both individuals and society. At a time when the nation is calling on colleges and universities to increase the ranks of the college-educated, we must do our part to expand access to higher education. Among the most selective private research universities, USC is a leader in education access as evidenced by our enrollment of first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, the size of our transfer class, the diversity of our student body, and programs designed to prepare low-income students for admission to USC.

USC has the largest financial aid budget in the nation. While merit aid has been a part of our

strategy to improve the quality of our undergraduate class, we reaffirm our dual commitment to need-blind admissions and to meeting 100% of demonstrated financial need for all undergraduates. We work diligently to help students succeed, as evidenced by graduation rates that have risen from 70% to 90% in the past 12 years. We must reaffirm our commitment to improve our financial footing to ensure the stability of our financial aid, increase support to students and help them succeed.

As we made progress in student selectivity, many advised that the next step was to cut significantly the size of our transfer class, arguing that other top private research universities admit only a handful of transfers annually. We maintain strong connections to community colleges to provide great students a chance to enroll at USC. We see our commitment to transfers as a commitment to society as a whole. We do not view ourselves as out-of-step with peer institutions; we view our practice as forward looking and worthy of emulation.

In response to the needs of learners who require flexibility to meet other demands in their lives and to provide rigorous lifelong learning opportunities to people throughout the world, USC has worked to make more of our professional programs and continuing education courses available online. This includes professional graduate areas like engineering, education, health and academic medicine, social work, public policy, regulatory science, geographic information studies, aging and communication. We now provide exceptional professional education to a broad and global student body, including through continuing education, which provides lifelong access to USC's intellectual resources. While we will not offer undergraduate degree programs online, we will continue to grow our online presence to increase access to our flagship graduate professional degree programs and to highlight

our increasingly robust continuing education offerings. College graduates must be provided with greater access online to earning master's degrees and advanced certificates. We will not leave to the for-profit sector professional graduate education designed for wide access to those who live far away from our campus.

C – ACCOUNTABILITY: As a private research university with a strong belief in public accountability, this commitment is ironclad: with every student in every program from athletic to academic, with every dollar of state or federal aid, government research funds or contribution from research foundations, in every public pronouncement, and in all business transactions, the university community is committed to ethical conduct and appropriate transparency. We hold ourselves accountable – this is our commitment as the Trojan Family.

We are committed to effectiveness and appropriate transparency at all levels, including graduate and undergraduate programs, student services, research centers, promotions and tenure, clinical outcomes, patient care, and administrative offices. This means establishing clear purposes and learning objectives at degree and program levels, providing evidence of student success, developing varied ways to assess student learning, and maintaining robust systems of quality assurance based on periodic peer review. We must develop reliable indicators of learning aimed at developing creative, inventive, and entrepreneurial graduates. We recognize that evaluating student learning in a curriculum based on creative scholarship may require nontraditional, sophisticated metrics based on holistic development. We want to assess what matters even where it is not easily measured.

Higher education is a public trust and we have a duty to enlarge that trust. It will take time for public officials, accreditors, foundations and

other interested parties to define the terms of accountability. Rather than sit on the sidelines as this discussion continues, we will take the lead in doing so ourselves.

IV. SCHOLARSHIP WITH CONSEQUENCE

A – TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH, CREATIVE WORK AND PRACTICE: Following the Second World War, an unwritten but well-known social contract set the government as major funder of basic research, universities as the entities conducting that research, and the private sector as the space where research findings would be converted into needed goods and services. For most practical purposes this contract began fraying some time ago. Today, society looks to USC not just for basic research but for translational research and professional practice aimed at illuminating and solving real world challenges. Converting research to practical and sometimes entrepreneurial applications will play a pivotal role in creating the future.

USC is uniquely suited to conduct cross-disciplinary research, experiment in the arts, and develop new forms of professional practice because of the close proximity of natural and social scientists, engineers, policy experts, and humanists working across our campuses. The arts in particular have assumed special prominence at USC. Growing up in Los Angeles, USC's five world-class arts schools nourish and are nourished by the global metropolis that has emerged as the creative capital of the Pacific Rim. The arts and humanities are translational by their very nature: they push us beyond established forms of academic research and professional practice, provide new perspectives and shift our vantage points on existing social conditions, identify emerging new phenomena, foster aesthetic sensibility and help us connect and empathize with others. The arts and humanities have intrinsic value as well as value in relation to areas like social work, grand

systems theory, environmental studies and sustainability, and the medical humanities.

The health/medical enterprise is fundamental to a leading research university, and it serves as just one prime example of where USC is creating scholarship with consequence. Addressing human health challenges requires expertise from multiple disciplinary approaches. Health issues affect people across the globe and the sweep of global health challenges are vast, reaching across law, business, communications, bioengineering, international relations, stem-cell research, pharmacy and other areas. USC's growing health enterprise is charged with care of our large and diverse community. For community members, opportunities to join in health-related research will not only advance faculty research in unique ways but can also serve as the basis for enhanced healthcare service and public health for our local neighbors.

B – CREATING CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS: To stay at the forefront of established disciplines while taking bold, creative steps to develop new areas of study, we must encourage entrepreneurial activities through flexible structures that allow faculty to move swiftly into new areas and take the lead in defining the green and growing edge of research scholarship. Future success in addressing complex problems depends upon collaboration on a massive scale. This is especially true in the areas of health and wellbeing where large teams need to work together to contend with problems that have origins that range from molecular to global levels.

We must be as innovative in creating the conditions for success as our faculty and students are in their research. We need to imagine and build new types of research facilities that foster collaboration and informed risk-taking. We must create incentives that reward collaboration rather than competition and which

favor risk-taking over incremental gains. We must create seed funds to jump-start research projects as well as bridge funds to close the critical gap between laboratory discoveries and the direct application of those discoveries to those who most need them. And we must manage growth in ways that will be mutually beneficial for our neighbors.

It is axiomatic that great research universities house outstanding libraries. Strong libraries create spaces that invite exchange, discovery, collaboration and innovation. Library collections, access and services are hallmarks of top-tier universities. Linkages to academic programs create opportunities for scholarly exchange that feed faculty collaboration and innovation. Efforts to connect university libraries to disciplines and forms of artistic and professional practice help us reinforce one of USC's great strengths: the breadth and variety of our curricular offerings. By strengthening ties between our libraries and academic programs, we are creating a new library for the digital age.

New technologies have changed how students communicate, gather information and learn; how faculty teach, conduct research and work with each other; and how services and operations are delivered and carried out. We have re-imagined and upgraded our classrooms, auditoria, and computing centers to support a variety of teaching styles, class interaction, and multimedia formats. We have an opportunity to build the digital university by leveraging digital capacity in teaching, research, patient care, artistic expression, professional practice and service.

V. CONNECTING THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE WORLD

A – GLOBAL AND LOCAL ENGAGEMENT: One of the markers of our age is the rising importance of cities as centers where the global and local are

interwoven. Nowhere is this truer than in Los Angeles. When one ventures into one of the dozens of ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles, or visits our thousands of synagogues, mosques, temples, churches, community centers, and businesses, one experiences a weave of peoples and cultures from across the globe. In Los Angeles, one can see tomorrow's challenges and promises today: healthcare, immigration, grassroots action and cooperatives, malnutrition, social tensions, the effects of inequality, community outreach, engineering challenges, new forms of commerce, and conflicts of rights and responsibilities. We live in the century of cities in which Los Angeles has a prominent role as home to so many diverse populations from around the globe. USC sits literally at the center of this new world.

USC has the talent, resources and will to become a global model of the engaged research university. We are located at the heart of the largest county and metropolitan region in the nation, and California is a larger and more diverse state than any other, with an economy larger than all but seven nations in the world. This provides significant opportunities for interaction with a vast array of organizations (public, private, non-profit), providing rich possibilities for learning, service and social impact. Engagement, particularly through translational research, is a force for transformation.

Every university has responsibilities to its local community, but USC's history and location bring with them a special obligation to our immediate neighbors to create opportunities greater than those of other leading national universities. Our goal is to have a direct impact on improving the quality of life of our neighbors. That impact will be felt through healthcare and patient care, including participation of our community in health-related research, community service programs and many arts and cultural events. We must make it a priority to build institutional ties

and collaborations across the city. Just as we talk about USC's impact on Los Angeles over the last 130 years, we aim to make the coming decades as transformative for the areas immediately surrounding our campuses.

Los Angeles also provides firm ground for student learning through engagement in ways that touch the local community, city and state, the nation and the world. We must continue to build ties to our community, expand our global presence, and strengthen ties to our international students. International students enrich our learning culture, exposing all students to worldviews, conventions, and religious traditions different from their own. USC must draw together the local and global through learning and research, symposia, study abroad programs, student and volunteer activities, professional and clinical practice, residential education, internships, arts programming, experiential learning and service. We must also leverage our many international offices across the Pacific Rim, South Asia and Latin America to support faculty research and extend the Trojan Family across the globe.

B – HUMAN WHOLENESS AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: The desire for wholeness, understanding and connection find expression at USC in several ways, most notably through the arts and humanities, community engagement, spiritual reflection, student volunteerism and the Trojan Family ideal. The desire for wholeness and mutual understanding rests at the core of the arts and humanities and *Visions and Voices*. Taking advantage of Los Angeles as a global center for the arts and new media, we have created a unique environment for students in all majors to participate in the arts and to reflect on important questions about their relationship to others in the local community, across the nation and around the globe. That vision extends to elite graduate programs in the arts, which will serve as the basis for bringing the best

international artists from the Pacific Rim, South Asia and Latin America to our campus for study to form a cadre of creative leaders, whose work will influence USC, Los Angeles and the world.

Los Angeles is home to arguably the greatest geo-religious diversity in the world. USC's diversity, in this as in other areas, is a unique attribute. As appropriate in a secular university with people of diverse viewpoints, all students are encouraged to consider and talk about core ethical questions related to meaning, purpose and identity and to engage faculty, staff, and administrators in conversations about their personal perspectives and the aspects of their lives that provide meaning and inspiration.

Students can choose from over 800 student organizations and thousands of campus activities, student events and community programs to enrich their college experience. The scope of USC's research, service activities and programs allows students to engage in life-changing opportunities locally and across the globe. We must expand these opportunities for participation and volunteerism. Service leads to empathy for others and promotes enlightened citizenship at home and in a global context.

The strong bond represented by the greater Trojan Family – including our neighbors, students and their families, alumni, retirees, workers, staff, faculty and benefactors – is distinct and unsurpassed by any other institution. It extends across the US, the globe and generations. As members of the Trojan Family, student athletes play a unique role in spreading the USC name around the world, while comporting themselves in the highest tradition of academic life. Young athletes deserve our support, remembering they are students first and foremost. In their quest for excellence they are entitled to appropriate academic support and counsel as they navigate standards of compliance in the changing world of collegiate sports.

VI. A CALL TO ACTION

This strategic vision is a call to action, a call to think boldly and to enact the transformations envisioned here. It is a call to faculty, who must be the engines of creativity and ingenuity. It is a call to every school, every department, every institute and every program to transform in ways that will create a university emulated by others. It is a call to all members of the Trojan Family to suggest steps both large and small that will allow the University of Southern California to match its deeds to its ambitions.

We challenge our entire university community to use this vision to guide strategic planning and action for the coming decade. Our schools and divisions will develop their own strategic plans with interschool initiatives being overseen by the Office of the Provost. The schools are best situated to devise specific ways to move forward. At the same time, achieving the new vision will require a higher level of collaboration and connection among them. We will use the annual academic planning process to ensure plans are aligned to this strategic vision, and charge university-wide units with the goal of developing cross-university programs. The Strategic Vision will be used as a statement of academic values to guide our fundraising. A new Provost Committee on Strategic Transformation will work with constituencies to ensure transformational ideas are heard and discussed and to decide which ones will be pursued. This strategic vision will be the touchstone by which we measure progress as a leading voice in academia for the 21st Century.