




MEMORANDUM

To: USC Community

From: Michael W. Quick 
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: November 16, 2015

Subject: Access and Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion

Acts of injustice, bias, and disrespect, against groups and individuals, have been playing out recently across our nation; indeed, our own university has not been immune. As I reflect upon these events, both distant and close, I know that they stand in stark contrast to the Trojan family's core commitment to diversity ideals. I am heartened by the many student voices, including voices here at USC, speaking out in response to such acts -- voices that show a genuine interest in making the world a better place. As I have listened to these calls for improvement, I am reminded of photographs documenting two powerfully positive moments in our university's history. One is a photograph from the 1880s of one of USC's first graduating classes showing a proud, ethnically mixed group of women and men. The other is a photograph from the 1970s of an early class of Topping Scholars -- a transformative program created when students voted to have a portion of their yearly fees fund scholarships to diversify USC's student body. That program continues to this day and is a testament to our students' support of inclusivity. These images represent the best of USC's legacy and our Principles of Community.

These historic photographs resonate deeply within me and prompt two thoughts. The first thought is that, from its inception, USC has shown a bold commitment to diversity and inclusion, and in leading the way toward greater access and opportunity for all. In the current historical context, that commitment reflects our desire to enrich learning by embracing a broad range of ideas and perspectives, our moral support for the cause of social justice, and our realization, in today's increasingly global context, that the more diverse the community, the greater its potential for economic and cultural prosperity. The second thought is that equality is not a given; every generation must re-commit to awareness and action. Indeed, I am grateful to our Undergraduate and Graduate Student Governments, and the Academic Senate -- each of whom recently passed campus climate resolutions -- for reminding us of that very fact. The resolutions, calling for focused campus dialogue and collective action, give me great hope that our community stands ready to work collaboratively for the good of our university, and our world.

Universities should be spaces committed to showing the promise of diversity and helping everyone recognize, appreciate, and respect difference. USC has long strived toward this goal, teaching students that part of being a member of the Trojan community is learning what it means to be a good citizen in a global context -- a person appreciative of all cultures; a person committed to fairness, respect, and equality for all. As a university whose student body mirrors the diversity of the global community it serves, we should be a model for how to foster an open and inclusive campus climate that ensures broad access and opportunity for all members of our academic community regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, race, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

I have been listening to, and brainstorming with, members of our Trojan community about how the university will amplify our commitment to access and opportunity, which is one of the four pillars I outlined when I became provost in April. To this end, I write to you today, not only on behalf of myself but also on behalf of President Nikias and the entire leadership of USC, to share with you actions the university is taking to improve the foundation that is campus climate, as well as the commitment we are making to the pillar that is access and opportunity.

Campus Climate

The following represents the initial steps USC will take to improve campus climate. I look forward to hearing bold, novel ideas from the entire Trojan community, including continuing dialogue with student and faculty governance organizations, which will help us lead on these issues nationwide.

1. It is critical that we ensure our actions aimed at fostering an inclusive campus climate have impact. We must understand what is working and what is not, where we need to direct resources, and how we can be better tomorrow than we are today. Therefore, I have asked Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life, and Ainsley Carry, Vice President for Student Affairs, to co-chair the Provost's Diversity Task Force. Students, staff and faculty will serve as members of the Task Force; we will announce the membership shortly. The task force will (i) meet with campus stakeholders, including student government representatives and the Academic Senate, to gather ideas on how we can continue to improve, (ii) provide suggestions to various units of the university that are engaged in issues related to campus climate (such as the Department of Public Safety, USC Housing, etc.), (iii) periodically assess our progress, and (iv) make specific recommendations to me about additional steps we can take.

2. We must listen to all constituencies who wish to share their views on how to improve USC's campus climate. Therefore, the Office of the Provost will host a series of open forums with our Trojan community. We have asked Professors Tara McPherson and George Sanchez to work with students to organize and moderate these discussions. Among other things, these forums will remind us that we must recognize criticism and complaint as a resource rather than as a problem.

3. There are many scholars and public figures across the nation who engage thoughtfully and purposefully on issues of equity and diversity; we can learn from them. We will create a symposium series that invites these leaders to engage with our community, providing a forum for the kind of critical inquiry and intellectual exchange these issues demand. I invite you to suggest possible speakers and panel ideas. In addition, we must take advantage of the wisdom around us, especially from those who have spent their lives working on these important issues. For this reason, I am pleased to announce that Professor Cecil "Chip" Murray, the former pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church and noted civil rights leader, has agreed to serve as a special advisor to the Office of the Provost on these issues.

4. To be truly effective in improving our campus climate in the long term, it must be woven into the fabric of all we do, and be a responsibility that we all share. That said, there must also be one entity responsible for oversight and coordination of offices, programs, and schools with respect to diversity efforts. The Office of the Provost is the appropriate place for this important task. Shortly after becoming provost, I appointed three faculty of different disciplinary backgrounds, Daniela Bleichmar (Art History and History), Camille Rich (Law) and Larissa Rodriguez (Urology), to serve as Associate Provosts. I brought them on to my team to provide leadership on the major strategic initiatives of the university, including access and opportunity. Because of their backgrounds and expertise, I have now asked them to lead my Office's oversight and coordination of USC's diversity and inclusion efforts. As part of this effort, I have also asked all school deans to identify diversity liaisons, such as senior faculty and/or vice deans, that can best address the needs of the constituents they serve. Given the breadth of this university, I believe this broad approach will be the most effective in addressing these issues.

5. We recently announced a strategic planning process involving the entire university community; this is an effort that, following adoption by the USC Board of Trustees, will chart a course for the university over the next several years. I am calling upon the Strategic Planning Committee to ensure that there is explicit reference to how USC will lead in the areas of access, opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. As part of this process, I am also asking that all school deans provide me with specific goals and the actions their schools will take on these issues.
6. USC Visions and Voices is a singular arts and humanities program that has engaged our community over the past decade, often taking on issues related to diversity, inclusion, access, and opportunity. The Visions and Voices team will intensify these efforts by directing at least \$100,000 per year of their programming budget to engage our community on these issues. The Visions and Voices team will reach out to get your ideas for possible programs.
7. We cannot move forward effectively without direct input from our students about their experiences and to get their ideas for improvement. To provide a new avenue for their voices to be heard, we have established a \$100,000 fund to support student programs and events that enhance our university's understanding of access, opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. This fund will be administered 50/50 by the USG and GSG program boards. In addition, we will also establish another fund of \$100,000 that will be administered through the Office of Religious Life to support campus programming in the university's cultural centers and student support offices.
8. As one of the premier research institutions in the world, our faculty have much to contribute on these issues through their research and teaching. The Office of the Provost will solicit proposals to encourage evidence-based approaches toward understanding racial and other forms of bias in ways that help us improve campus climate. We will also provide funds to enhance courses that probe these issues in rigorously intellectual and uncompromising ways.
9. Recently, a faculty committee was created to make recommendations about creating a vibrant and impactful residential college experience for our students. This committee will work with USC students, staff and faculty, including the residential faculty, to create a residential education-based diversity program that we can assess and modify as appropriate. The goal will be to create a program that is both effective and available to the higher education community at-large.
10. At a large, diverse place such as USC, in a global metropolis like Los Angeles, unfortunate and unwanted incidents will occur. It is imperative that we improve reporting mechanisms so that these troubling incidents can be recorded, investigated, and addressed in a timely manner. To help us in this effort, a reporting button has been added to the USC LiveSafe app available for download to smart phones at <http://dps.usc.edu/services/safety-app/>. This tool allows for efficient, immediate reporting of bias and discrimination incidents. Please download this app today, so that each of you has the ability whenever needed to report these events and help make USC a better community.

Access and Opportunity

Improving campus climate is of tremendous value in and of itself. But creating an inclusive and welcoming environment is also part of the greater goal of how the university fulfills its commitment to enlarge access and opportunity. USC is a leader in educational access in terms of enrollment of first-generation and Pell eligible students, the number of transfer students from community colleges, and programs designed to prepare low-income students for admission to USC. We also have more student religious groups than any university in America and a remarkable population of international students of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and nationalities. Although we are among the most diverse private research universities in the

nation, we are committed to doing more. In addition to our efforts at the undergraduate level, we must also commit to building pipelines that will increase diversity at all levels, from graduate students to postdoctoral scholars to junior faculty to senior faculty. While the percentages of these populations at USC are comparable to national norms for private research universities, we must intensify our efforts. It is our obligation to the future of higher education.

USC's commitment to access and opportunity includes being a good partner to neighbors in the local communities around our campuses. The university has a long history of supporting families, promoting economic growth, and building pipelines to support the academic goals of neighborhood students. USC's *Neighborhood Academic Initiative* (NAI) sends 100% of its students to college, with nearly half getting full-tuition scholarships to USC. The *USC Good Neighbors Campaign* raises over \$1 million annually, most of it awarded to 15 neighborhood elementary, middle, and high schools as part of our *Family of Schools* program. And over 3,500 young students and children participate in *USC TRiO* college access programs and pre-school *Head Start* programs. Finally, over 2,000 USC undergraduates every year meet with local schoolchildren and learn about critical issues facing urban schools through the *Joint Educational Project*.

Taken together, our support of efforts described in this memo for ongoing and new initiatives on our campuses -- including undergraduate scholarships, graduate and postdoctoral fellowships, and recruitment of underrepresented faculty -- will exceed \$80 million each year for the next five years. For programs in the communities surrounding our campuses, our support will exceed \$10 million each year for the next five years. This support does not include investments made by each of our 19 academic units.

In the end, making our campuses more diverse and inclusive is not just about resources. No spreadsheet will tell us what progress will look like, at least not in ways we will find credible and uplifting. Resources are a necessary prerequisite but they will be squandered if not matched by each of us being responsible for making USC a place committed to access, opportunity, diversity, and inclusion.

The entire leadership of USC is very grateful to our students, staff, and faculty for challenging everyone to confront these difficult issues. Of course we will not all agree on every course of action; these issues are large, they are complex, and there are no perfect solutions. In the end, the greatest form of diversity we have is diversity of opinion -- which we need to celebrate, not castigate. It is the foundation for all we do and who we are. We must be prepared not only to support those with whom we agree, but also respect those with whom we disagree. Only in that way will we live up to the promise reflected in the faces staring out at us from those iconic photographs and create a University of Southern California worthy of them, and us.

As always, I welcome your thoughts at uscprovost@usc.edu.

Cc: C. L. Max Nikias, President
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