

\$60 million gift names USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work



September 14, 2016 — Social work pioneer Suzanne Dworak-Peck '65, MSW '67, has donated a historic \$60 million to endow and name the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, cementing its standing as one of the world's most innovative institutions within the discipline and strengthening its renowned educational and research programs. The gift is one of the largest contributions from an individual to a school of its kind.

Dworak-Peck's gift not only provides a capstone to the school's tremendous growth in the past two decades, but also a means for investing in its future — and the future of the social work profession locally, nationally and internationally. By driving discovery of new knowledge and furthering the education of tomorrow's leaders in social work, the gift will enable the school to continue its powerful influence on social work policy, research and education globally. The largest school of social work in the world and a pioneer in the area of military social work, the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work educates one of every 20 master's-level social workers in the United States and has an alumni network of 15,000. The school has informed, impacted and led national policy discussions on issues such as homelessness, aging, veterans' mental health issues and crisis response.

Dworak-Peck, a longtime social work practitioner and leader whose investments have enabled her to make this generous gift, hopes it will ensure the school's future and leave a lasting legacy for its students, their clients, the social work profession and society. "My wish is that this endowment will create greater awareness and understanding for the local, national and global community about the profound impact of the social work profession," she said. "By educating and building professional social workers who are visionary game changers, we are investing in solutions to society's significant problems, like homelessness and poverty."

"Suzanne Dworak-Peck is a visionary who has shown extraordinary leadership in her field, almost single-handedly changing how we perceive social workers. In the trenches from the very start of her career, she has shown that her compassion and selflessness have no bounds," said USC President C. L. Max Nikias. "Her great generosity is matched only by her passion for social justice and her drive to inspire change by reimagining social work so that it empowers everyone it touches. And this gift ensures that the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work will continue to stand as an innovator by which all others are measured."

Over her decades-long career, Dworak-Peck has established herself as a leader devoted to advancing the profession. She has served as president of both the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the organization's California chapter. During her tenure, she strengthened NASW's role in international social

work, particularly its relationship with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), an organization representing social workers in more than 100 countries. She also served as president of that organization and is currently its first, and only, ambassador.

She founded NASW Communications Network Inc., which provided the media and entertainment industries with centralized information and resources for social issues and recognized outstanding portrayals of social workers.

She also sits on the board of the California Social Welfare Archives (CSWA), which conducts its activities under the auspices of the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, with its collections housed in the university's Department of Special Collections located in Doheny Memorial Library. Established in 1979, CSWA maintains one of the most extensive and complete collections of California social welfare history.

Among her many honors are being named Social Work Pioneer by NASW and Social Worker of the Year by the NASW-California Chapter, as well as receiving the NASW Foundation's first International Rhoda G. Sarnat Award for advancing the public image of social work and the George D. Nickel Award for Outstanding Professional Services by a Social Worker from CSWA. In 2016, the USC Alumni Association recognized her exceptional commitment to USC and outstanding contributions to the field of social work with an Alumni Merit Award. That same year, the IFSW recognized her with its Medal for an outstanding contribution to international social work. Dworak-Peck received both her bachelor's degree in psychology and master's degree in social work from USC.

Marilyn L. Flynn, dean of the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, said the gift will support efforts to broaden the school's impact, now and in the future. "We stand ready to accomplish real social change, and Suzanne Dworak-Peck's transformational gift will enable us to do so, by expanding our presence and our influence in discussions that matter, whether they are in the business, political, nonprofit or policy spheres," she said. "Inspired by Suzanne's leadership, we will strive to transform the role of the social worker in a way that allows us to influence the work of the public sector and private sector in order to achieve great social good."

Founded in 1920, the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work ranks among the top accredited social work graduate programs in the United States. A recognized leader in academic innovation, experiential learning, online education and translational research, the school prepares students to become leaders in public and private organizations that serve individuals, families and communities in need. The largest school of social work in the world, it enrolled about 3,200 students this fall and has nearly 160 full-time faculty and 440 part-time faculty, working on campus and in the field. Through internships, its students provide more than one million community service hours annually.

Its graduate-level military social work program focusing on the mental health needs of service members and their families is the first of its kind at a civilian research university, and the first to use virtual patients to train future social workers. This specialized curriculum trains graduate students to address the needs of veterans, service members and military families as they transition from active duty to civilian life. Many of the students who have enrolled since the program began in 2009 have direct experience with the military themselves — either as soldiers or spouses of deployed military.

One of the nation's first schools of social work, the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has continued to build on its historic strengths while adapting to revolutionary changes in the U.S. health, education and welfare systems. Last year, the school's faculty and staff redesigned its curriculum and created four focused departments for specialization: adults and healthy aging; children, youth and families; community, organization and business innovation; and nursing. In addition to the school's traditional Master of Social Work (MSW) and PhD programs on campus, its online degree programs enable students to earn their MSW, Doctor of Social Work (DSW) or Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) from anywhere in the nation.