



A New Vision for the Future

The Inauguration of C. L. Max Nikias

In October 2010, the University of Southern California hosted several days of formal and informal events to celebrate the inauguration of C. L. Max Nikias as the 11th president in its 130-years-and-counting history. “This wasn’t simply about installing a new USC president,” said then-Board Chair Edward P. Roski Jr., who had led the search committee. “This was a once-in-a-generation event, a chance for the university community to take stock of what it had achieved and what it wanted to achieve in the years ahead.”

Nikias officially took office on August 3, 2010; the weekend-long celebration that formally inducted him into his new role took place two months later. Performances and lectures leading up to the inauguration spanned the arts, humanities, education, and globalization, including a Visions & Voices Signature Event with public radio’s Ira Glass.

The highlight of inauguration eve, Thursday, October 14, was a special performance by the USC Thornton Symphony, conducted by former Thornton School of Music dean Larry Livingston. The orchestra performed Tchaikovsky’s *Rococo Variations*, Wagner’s *Overture to Die Meistersinger*, and Respighi’s *Pines of Rome*. Notably, the evening featured the world premiere of a work by Thornton faculty member Erica Muhl composed specially for the inauguration, titled “Burn the Box.” Muhl said the piece had been inspired by a comment she heard Nikias make, in which he quoted management expert Tom Peters on the need not only to “push the envelope” or “think outside the box” but to “rip up the envelope and burn the box.” She said, “I wanted the work to be a celebration for President Nikias but also descriptive of this exciting new period in USC’s history.”

The following morning brought events to a climax with the formal inauguration ceremony, which drew 10,000 guests, including members of the Trojan Family, the local community, and leaders from government, industry, and academia. Roski served as master of ceremonies for the occasion.

C. L. Max Nikias spent nearly two decades on the USC faculty, including five years as provost, before assuming the university’s presidency. On October 15, 2010, some 10,000 members of the Trojan Family, along with elected officials and representatives from the national higher education and local communities, convened to formally inaugurate the university’s 11th president.

The event began with the traditional procession of academic groups. For the first time, students carried flags from their own nations, more than 120 altogether, symbolizing the international character of the university. The Trojan Marching Band unveiled a work composed for the day by award-winning Thornton School of Music alumnus Andrew Norman. Entitled “...toward sunrise and the prime of light...,” the piece was inspired by a passage from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, to which Nikias would make significant reference in his inaugural address.

Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and UC Santa Barbara chancellor Henry Yang spoke at the ceremony, praising the leadership ability of Nikias and calling the USC community forward to seize its opportunities. The featured guest speaker was John Hood, the former vice chancellor of Oxford University and president and chief executive officer of the Robertson Foundation in New York. He discussed the evolving nature of the university’s mission, even as its character remains unchanged. “I assure you, it is USC’s essential character today and in the future that has been consuming President Nikias’s thinking and will guide his journey.”

In Nikias, the university had found a leader with deep roots, going back two decades in the USC community, who cherished the institution’s character and ambitions. Yet it had also found a person with a clear and compelling vision for how it could continue to move forward toward a powerful transformation—one that was under way but far from complete.

Deeply Rooted in the Trojan Family

Nikias, with his wife, Niki, and their two daughters, Georgiana and Maria, had first come to USC in 1991. His initial role at the university was as a professor of electrical engineering.

Within a few years, he was charged with leading the effort to compete with the nation’s top universities for the opportunity to host a national multimedia research center funded by the National Science Foundation. Given that global research powerhouses like UC Berkeley and Columbia made this a major priority of their own, for USC this was a pivotal early test of its ability to “punch above its weight” academically. In 1996, victory came to Nikias and the large team he assembled, spanning both academia and industry. Their



The new president and first lady, Max and Niki C. Nikias, partners for four decades, share a quiet moment in the president's office before the inaugural procession begins. In the next chapter of their journey, they would devote much of their time together serving hundreds of thousands of members of the worldwide Trojan Family.

proposal was ranked the best of the 117 that were submitted, and Nikias became the founding director of the NSF-funded Integrated Media Systems Center at USC Viterbi.

In 2001, he was named dean of USC's engineering school, and had great success in building its academic and financial strength. One of his notable accomplishments was working with technology pioneer Andrew Viterbi and his wife, Erna, to establish a \$52 million gift that would place their name upon the school in perpetuity.

Nikias succeeded Lloyd Armstrong as provost for the university in 2005. As USC's second-ranking officer, he became the de facto COO of a vast city within a city, a multibillion-dollar amalgam of major technical institutes, liberal arts colleges, arts conservatories, hospitals, and laboratories; living and dining facilities for 43,000 students; and the meeting place and spiritual home of 350,000 alumni. He had direct oversight of the university's 19 professional schools, clinical-care enterprises, admissions, and student life.

During his tenure as provost, Nikias launched several academic centers and innovative programs in the arts. He was instrumental in bringing Trustee Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation Institute and its vast video archive of



more than 53,000 testimonies of Holocaust survivors to USC. He also created Visions & Voices, a campus-wide initiative to make the university's world-class arts programs of maximum educational benefit to students in every field.

However, even more vital to USC's health and growth was his financial stewardship. Nikias took on budgetary responsibility for the full university—a role he had previously assumed for the Viterbi School as dean but one that was



On the eve of the inauguration, Nikias greets his mentor, Dr. John H. Siegel, from the department of surgery at SUNY Buffalo. Siegel arranged the NIH-funded research assistantship that originally allowed the Nikiases to come to America as graduate students in January 1979.



Dennis Cornell, standing next to Nikias, joined the president's cabinet in 2010 as chief of staff, following decades of service to USC as its chief of protocol, head of university events, and a faculty member at the USC School of Dramatic Arts.

unlike most provosts at similar institutions, as well as previous holders of the office at USC. Historically, this university-wide responsibility was held jointly by the chief financial officer and the senior vice president for administration and finance. In this role, Nikias strategically invested resources in academic growth and improving student and faculty recruitment while simultaneously building up USC's working capital for a rainy day.

When that day came, in the form of a global economic typhoon at the end of 2008, the university had \$500 million in cash reserves—more than it had ever enjoyed in the past, and a level that still exists today. This gave USC an enviable ability to venture in new directions while other schools holed up and held on for dear life. A number of peer universities may have been far richer, but they were also financially extended in ways that left them little room to maneuver, never mind to improve or grow. Provost Nikias believed USC would now be in a position for academic evolution, or even revolution, at this labile moment within higher education.

Trustees who were involved in the presidential search would later remark that Nikias's vision for the university's future—along with his deep understanding of its community and his successes at every level—made him by far the most compelling contender for the office.

Accelerating the Pace of the Metamorphosis

USC's presidential inauguration and celebration of the future came at a time of global economic and societal flux. When he came to deliver his address on that October morning, Nikias—known as a warm, gregarious person of unbounded optimism—began by acknowledging the situation head-on. He told the audience:

One of the few certainties in our world is that as the pace of change accelerates, the level of uncertainty will increase. But what is uncertainty? In the proper light, uncertainty is the beginning of adventure! And the ability to turn uncertainty into adventure, into a magnificent journey forward, is what defines a Trojan. It is what it means to be a Trojan.

He also assured the Trojan Family that if USC could be bold and aggressive in that difficult climate, it could make incredible progress in the next few years. He reasoned that other universities would inevitably backslide during that same period, and that most would do well simply to maintain their position. In relative and absolute terms, this reality gave USC a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a global institution of unsurpassed excellence and influence across its vast spectrum of intellectual disciplines, spanning the arts and humanities, sciences, technology, medicine, and the professions.

Just as important, he pointed out that new progress would be made at the intersections of these disciplines, where intellectual cross-fertilization occurs. While interdisciplinarity was now widely discussed in the higher education community as an important key to innovation, Nikias emphasized that USC was uniquely able to pursue it.

A Promethean Role in the Age of the Pacific

A striking aspect of the vision Nikias described for the university in his inaugural address was the way in which USC, by coming into its own, could play a role parallel to that of one of the world's most respected institutions. "While USC imitates no one," he said, "I do believe USC has the chance to serve as an intellectual engine in this century, in much the way Oxford University emerged earlier as the intellectual engine of the British Empire and commonwealth nations."



Georgiana (center) and Maria (right) Nikias have both participated in academic processions marking their own receipt of USC degrees. They return to take part in a different academic procession: installing their father as USC's president. In the foreground is John Hood, former vice chancellor of Oxford University, who offered the keynote address.



The reason, he said, was that the much-anticipated Age of the Pacific had finally arrived. The university's Southern California setting was no longer a dusty frontier ignored by the elites on both sides of the Atlantic. The eyes of the top institutions of the previous century now looked west, to consider a new world. He argued that USC shouldn't hope to be merely a part of this Pacific surge but should aspire to lead it:

As our world today is shifting away from an Atlantic to a Pacific century, USC is better positioned than anyone else to lead this



change. To become the intellectual and cultural and spiritual fabric of a world that is tied to the Age of the Pacific. To become the foremost laboratory of experimentation of “East-West” ideas, in scholarship and the arts and media and journalism and culture. To become the campus where the influencers of the Pacific age will be educated, shaped, and molded.

“Destiny has dealt a favorable hand to USC,” he went on to say. “Let us play this out wisely.”



The new president and first lady walk forth in the processional, from the Bovard Administration Building, toward USC's stately Doheny Memorial Library, and into Alumni Park for the formal ceremony.



Peter Conti, then president of USC's Academic Senate, leads the procession, wielding the mace of the university to symbolize the central role of the faculty. Following him are the deans of USC schools and delegations representing a variety of stakeholders in the life of the university.

What It Means to Be a Trojan

For nearly a century prior to Nikias's inauguration, USC had collectively called itself the Trojans. The name was inspired in 1912 by the *Los Angeles Times* sports writer Owen Bird, who praised the university's undermanned track team for fighting like Trojans, despite the odds.

But, as Providence would have it, it would take USC's 11th president, a man of Greek Cypriot origin and a devoted Greco-Roman classicist, to spell out the deepest meaning of what it meant to be a Trojan. And he used his inaugural address to do so, in memorable fashion:

As a child, I grew up reading the various legends of the ancient City of Troy. The Trojan empire represented a classical tradition of excellence and purity of purpose. The Trojans represented a tradition of ongoing renewal. They renewed their great society many times, each time achieving a new glory for themselves and for those who would come after them. No one worked harder than the Trojans, no one was more determined than the Trojans. And their will toward greatness could even bend the will of the gods in their favor.



Moment of transition: USC's 10th president, Steven B. Sample (right), congratulates his successor, C. L. Max Nikias, after placing the Presidential Medallion upon his shoulders.

So in this moment of our renewal, allow me to look back to an epic story told 2,000 years ago, by the Roman poet Virgil. In the epic poem *The Aeneid*, Virgil chronicled the story of the Trojan hero Aeneas. Aeneas and the Trojans responded with courage when fate made it clear that the Trojans would have to seek their destiny beyond the walls of the old City of Troy. So the Trojans set sail and navigated the uncertainties of their times. They navigated their way through raging winds and waters. They navigated through the extreme anger of gods and spirits. They navigated through the full catalog of uncontrollable monsters of antiquity.

Aeneas and the Trojans would reach their destination, where they would lay the cornerstone for a new City of Troy. This Troy would grow into the great city of Rome. Rome—the home to the mightiest and most enduring of all empires. That was the destiny the Trojans began to claim, when they moved from what was comfortable and familiar, when they were willing to lose sight of their native shores and undertake a great journey. Virgil's *Aeneid* makes the timely eternal, and the eternal timely.



With the formal ceremony concluded and the recessional from Alumni Park under way, the new president and first lady greet well-wishers.



The story could not be understood, Nikias said, without realizing that it comes to its conclusion only when the Trojans lay the cornerstone for the mightiest of all empires. The president now sought to bring that same sense of destiny to a broad academic community, one which would fight on to achieve its noble goals in a host of arenas.

Toward the end of his inaugural address, Nikias drew his audience's eyes to that most beloved USC icon, the statue of Tommy Trojan standing guard across from Alumni Park. At the base of the statue was an inscription that could easily be overlooked.

"You may need your glasses to read these lines," Nikias said, "which are



inscribed in very small letters: ‘Here are provided seats of meditative joy, where shall rise again the destined reign of Troy.’”

This destined reign of Troy—or *fas regna Trojae* in the original Latin—would become an increasingly important theme in Nikias’s presidency. In the time of *The Aeneid*, it required a mighty, collective effort to establish the new Troy, which would ultimately grow into Rome. Amid the uncertainty of 2010, Nikias offered a vision for USC’s Trojan Family, if it could summon the same mighty effort:

The destined reign of Troy is an intellectual community that has achieved undisputed elite status—at the very epicenter of global



President and First Lady Nikias and Trustee Edward P. Roski Jr., after the formal ceremony. Roski, a USC alumnus, chaired the 2009–2010 presidential search committee that recommended the election of Nikias to the full Board of Trustees.



Trustee and alumnus Andrew Viterbi warmly greets his longtime friend and colleague. To honor Nikias's Cypriot origins, Viterbi donned the academic garb he had worn earlier that year when receiving an honorary

degree from the University of Cyprus. The digital communications pioneer, with his wife, Erna, endowed the USC Viterbi School of Engineering during Nikias's tenure as dean of the school.

influence. When you are there, there is no doubt, there is no argument, you belong within the pantheon of world-class universities. There is no question that your voice shall be heard, and that your ideas are received. And there is no limit on the impact USC is able to make upon the world.

The inaugural ceremony and the announcement of USC's lofty goals were punctuated with fireworks—not just the usual kind, but also with some bold acts by two trustees who wanted to give tangible expressions of support for the university's renewed vision.

After Nikias had finished his address, Trustee Ming Hsieh stepped forward to pledge to advance USC's work in health and medicine with a \$50 million gift to establish an institute that would bring together engineers, physicians, and scientists to find new ways to fight cancer.

Board chair and master of ceremonies Edward Roski then returned to the podium to announce a second \$50 million gift, this one from Trustee Wallis Annenberg, to build a futuristic facility for the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.





Just call him “Max”: The famed Trojan Marching Band, at USC’s football game the next day against the California Bears, emphatically spells out its support for the new president. Above, the president and first lady cheer on the Trojans, who won 48–14.

Calling the two gifts a “strong vote of confidence in our new president,” Roski said, “One hundred million dollars. I’d say that’s getting off to a good start, Max!”

It was a good start, indeed. But as Nikias himself had emphasized to the audience that day, the road ahead was not to be seen as an easy one. Endurance would be as important as enthusiasm for the upcoming journey, if the USC community was to begin together a new era of growth and transformation.



The Destined Reign of Troy

Inaugural Address, October 15, 2010

There is no adequate way to convey the sense that fills me, standing before you, the women and men of the university that I love, and knowing the profound responsibility with which I have been entrusted.

I shall forever be grateful to all of today's representatives who have offered support and encouragement on behalf of the USC community—our trustees, faculty, students, staff, and our alumni, as well as our friends in the community of Los Angeles and the community of American higher education.

I thank each person in attendance today, for sharing with my family and with the Trojan Family this special moment in our history.

But first, I must take a moment to acknowledge my wife Niki, our first lady of USC. Today is an unusual milestone for Niki and me on our shared journey. Our voyage began more than a third of a century ago, when we decided to pursue the dream of a better life through better education, and to cast our fate across the Atlantic, toward America.

Coming from so far away, so many years ago, we could not have imagined how wonderful this American journey would be. I became forever fascinated by the intellectual electricity and the openness you could find only at an American university. And, far from ending up lost, we were carried along on the gracious currents of goodness. We were welcomed and embraced, and we were given opportunities that we never could have found elsewhere.

So, on our journey, at last, two decades ago, Niki and I reached our Ithaca, by which I mean Los Angeles, and our home at USC. Georgiana and Maria, our daughters, were small children when we arrived in Los Angeles. Our family quickly became a Trojan Family, and we were grateful for how the larger Trojan Family embraced us. We have a passion for this university, and for what it represents. Our family is rooted here. We have immersed ourselves in USC's rich intellectual and cultural life. And we have cherished the great Trojan athletic spirit, which serves as the glue for our worldwide Trojan Family.

Niki and I believe that, when you have been given so much, you have a debt to repay. Because we are grateful,

grateful beyond words, we look for ways to repay that debt. One way is by ensuring that the best students—from here and from abroad—can pursue their dreams here, the dreams that are made possible by the best education.

We have always believed that education is the Great Equalizer for a society. Education lifts up the weak from despair, and it teaches humility to the mighty. Education is what helps us to be fully human and to appreciate the full range of human experience in our own life. Education is what expands our lives to be as vast as the frontiers of the cosmos and the edges of eternity, and yet it gives us deep insight into the fleeting moments of our own inner existence.

Working together to take USC higher, to the undisputed mountaintop, will be our payment on the debt—our debt to this great nation, to the Trojan Family, and to Steve and Kathryn Sample.

In a coincidence of fate, one that the playwrights of antiquity would have loved, we never could have imagined that Steve Sample, the man who signed my diploma and Niki's diploma in Buffalo, New York, would be such a wonderful mentor. Steve and Kathryn Sample demonstrated for us what it means to dedicate oneself fully to the demands of the presidency.

The best way to honor their legacy is to take this great university they have given us and make it even greater. Indeed, we owe it to future generations of Trojans to do so. We owe it to our children and grandchildren.

Uncertainty as Opportunity

Today we live in a time of great anxiety. The wisest experts can find little agreement on what the future holds for our society. Regarding the next 20 years, there is no consensus on

- Which institutions and industries will exist in their current form; or
- Whether the career or specialty that a person has chosen today will still exist then; or
- Whether the ways in which we interact and communicate will resemble the way we do so now; or
- Whether the United States can remain at the forefront of technology, commerce, and culture.

Universities have their own special concerns. The college-age population will decrease in size in the next few years, making competition for students even harder. Universities will be under added pressure to make college affordable for capable young people from every background.

One of the few certainties in our world is that, as the pace of change accelerates, the level of uncertainty will increase.

But what is uncertainty? In the proper light, uncertainty is the beginning of adventure! And the ability to turn uncertainty into adventure, into a magnificent journey forward, is what defines a Trojan. It is what it means to be a Trojan.

As a child, I grew up reading the various legends of the ancient City of Troy. The Trojan Empire represented a classical tradition of excellence and purity of purpose. The Trojans represented a tradition of ongoing renewal. They renewed their great society many times, each time achieving a new glory for themselves and for those who would come after them. No one worked harder than the Trojans, no one was more determined than the Trojans. And their will toward greatness could even bend the will of the gods in their favor.

So in this moment of our renewal, allow me to look back to an epic story told two thousand years ago, by the Roman poet Virgil. In the epic poem The Aeneid, Virgil chronicled the story of the Trojan hero Aeneas. Aeneas and the Trojans responded with courage when fate made it clear that the Trojans would have to seek their destiny beyond the walls of the old City of Troy. So the Trojans set sail and navigated the uncertainties of their times. They navigated their way through raging winds and waters. They navigated through the extreme anger of gods and spirits. They navigated through the full catalog of uncontrollable monsters of antiquity. Aeneas and the Trojans would reach their destination, where they would lay the cornerstone for a new City of Troy. This Troy would grow into the great city of Rome. Rome—the home to the mightiest and most enduring of all empires. That was the destiny the Trojans began to claim, when they moved from what was comfortable and familiar, when they were willing to lose sight of their native shores and undertake a Great Journey. Virgil's Aeneid makes the timely eternal, and the eternal timely.

For this university and for our Trojan Family, our own

quest for undisputed elite status could be likened to the voyage of Aeneas. It means the difference between being a “hot” and “up-and-coming” university and being undisputedly one of the most elite and influential institutions in the world! A Great Journey awaits us, and on the other side of the adventure lies our destiny.

My own commitment to you is to clear and lead the way for you as we move forward in this Great Journey.

My commitment to you is to champion your cause in every way, around the nation, around the Pacific Rim, in our nation's capital, in Sacramento, in City Hall, in Indianapolis, and wherever else you need allies.

My commitment to you is to point the world's attention to you, as the women and men who will drive society forward.

My commitment to you is to seek the outside resources and raise the funds USC needs, relentlessly, in order to secure academic excellence for the long haul.

My own commitment to you, and that of my administration, is to run the next marathon at a sprinter's pace. We can make incredible progress in just the next few years!

The Five Priorities of USC's Great Journey

Look how far USC has already come. Consider the small and dusty village that represented Los Angeles and USC in 1880. Look at USC's breathtaking rise in the past two decades. Look at the impact we are now able to make because of the lofty position USC has now claimed.

And now, consider the voyage that still lies ahead.

USC's Great Journey will be different from that of other great universities. And USC's role and identity will be different, once we have reached our destination of undisputed elite status.

Let's make no mistake about it: When it comes to doing good for the world, we believe there is a USC way of doing it. This way is entrepreneurial, imaginative, collaborative, ethical, adaptable, and global. We must place this USC stamp on the intellectual and the social revolutions that lie ahead.

The Great Journey for USC is ultimately about five priorities, which are ultimately embodied in people—the very best people.

First, our Great Journey requires that we achieve a critical mass of the world's most brilliant faculty minds—the

most productive and renowned intellectual giants of our generation. Transformational faculty whose reputation for productivity will place USC at the vanguard of every intellectual revolution. This requires that we give our faculty the resources to fulfill their immense potential. This requires that we aggressively recruit new, interdisciplinary superstars who can raise the skyline of our entire academic community.

Second, we must build an unsurpassed network and quality of young women and men capable of leading the future—students from all 50 states and from across the Pacific Rim—from East Asia and South Asia and India and the emerging economies of Latin America. And for these students, let us make them a pledge. Let us pledge to build for them a curriculum of unique quality and variety, a rich curriculum that presents them with an unsurpassed range of choices, so that they may explore and discover their strengths and their passions.

Let us pledge to ensure for them unlimited social and cultural opportunities that prepare them for life in the new world that awaits them. May we do this through the most engaging environment for learning and for living. May we do this through an experience that immerses them in the arts and through emerging forms of media literacy. May we do this through an experience that immerses them in the very manner of global diversity, which they must learn to understand and to navigate.

In this way, our students will become world citizen leaders, who can find and open new doors, and who can support one another as a worldwide Trojan Family.

For our third priority, our Great Journey demands that our academic community be equipped to explore and to lead the major new frontiers of human progress:

- In the arts and humanities that infuse our society with imagination, creativity, and wisdom;
- In the social sciences and the professions that organize and mobilize our human society;
- In engineering and sciences that reach out across the cosmos;
- In the digital media that enable human interaction, entertainment, news, and information;
- And in medicine and biology and biotech, which together represent the most promising frontier of our young century.

Fourth, our Great Journey demands that our Health Sciences Campus and the University Park Campus represent one unified USC. Though they are seated at different ends of downtown Los Angeles, they must have one character and one shared identity. Our faculty and students must bridge the distance between the two campuses, with interdisciplinary work that provides USC with a crucial leadership asset as biology and medicine emerge as the queen of the sciences in this century.

The residential and academic environment on both campuses must be perfected—for undergraduate students, for graduate and PhD students, and for faculty masters. USC should be an around-the-clock living and learning community, a rare social and physical environment that radiates academic energy.

And our fifth priority must be to recognize the surrounding community as the jewel that it is. The 224 languages that are spoken in this city, and the 115 nations represented today on this campus, are distinctly representative of a new world that is tilted toward the civilizations of the Pacific. A simple drive up Vermont Avenue does not simply show us a city. It displays to us the extraordinary span of Pacific Rim, in microcosm. We will embrace this community as a unique social laboratory, within the context of our mission in education, social-science scholarship, healthcare, and public service.

This local microcosm of a new, global reality will help USC guide the tectonic shift that is already underway in this world. The old City of Troy was in the heart of the great Mediterranean civilization, which long represented the center of gravity for much of human society's development. The center of gravity gradually moved westward. And for the past two centuries, we have lived in the Age of the Atlantic. Many institutions gained prominence by their proximity and relevance to this region.

For most of this time, Southern California was a far-off outpost in the American West. Yet for decades or even centuries to come, this remote Western outpost will be the hub connecting the United States to a world that is centered around the Pacific Rim. Cultures and ideas will collide in this global Age of the Pacific in ways we cannot yet predict. Who will have the ability to lead, to bring shape to the changes?

A story comes to mind about the chief founder of USC,

Robert Maclay Widney, who would also become USC's first chair of the Board of Trustees. He personally wrote the USC articles of incorporation. In the 1870s, Robert Widney had a strong desire to establish a great university in Southern California. He had accomplished much in his life. He was a U.S. district judge. He helped bring the Southern Pacific Railroad to L.A. He organized the first chamber of commerce and the city's first light and power company. But he wasn't yet able to build a university that could shape the future of this region. For 10 years, Judge Widney struggled. Yet he did not give up.

During that same time, the American West was struggling with an early collision of cultures: Anti-Chinese sentiment ran high across the West. Jealousy, economic fears, and labor disputes fanned the flames of violence and murder. One night, anti-Chinese riots broke out in Los Angeles. Deadly mobs took to the streets. And at a moment of high fever during those riots, Judge Widney plunged into the crowd, at the risk of his own life. Judge Widney held his gun high and fired a single shot. The crowd stepped back. And the future founder and first chair of USC then escorted a number of Chinese immigrants to safety.

It was at that moment, on that evening that the DNA of USC as a global institution was called into being. In that moment, on that evening, the ethos, the character, of USC began to take shape.

Character is destiny, and USC would have a global character. A few years later, Japanese students would be among USC's first graduates. And USC would develop the largest body of international alumni in the world, mostly from the emerging nations of the Pacific. USC would develop an international curriculum that benefits both our American and international students. USC would pioneer transcultural scholarship that addresses the pressing needs of this age.

What USC has accomplished locally and regionally can now be done at a global level.

The New City of Troy

While USC imitates no one, I do believe USC has the chance to serve as an intellectual engine in this century, in much the way Oxford University emerged earlier as the intellectual engine of the British Empire and commonwealth nations.

As our world today is shifting away from an Atlantic to a Pacific Century, USC is better positioned than anyone else to lead this change. To become the intellectual and cultural and spiritual fabric of a world that is tied to the Age of the Pacific. To become the foremost laboratory of experimentation of "East-West" ideas, in scholarship and the arts and media and journalism and culture. To become the campus where the influencers of the Pacific Age will be educated, shaped, and molded.

This is our moment. And, I believe, that should be our vision!

Do you know what alma mater means? It means, literally, "Mother who feeds us all." Consider what it could mean for USC to firmly take its role as alma mater for this Age of the Pacific.

Let the best young minds from across the Pacific Rim compete to receive a USC education. Let us build special scholarship programs for students represented from all Pacific Rim nations. Let them take full advantage of a highly diverse environment they won't find anywhere else.

Great talent exists in America and around the Pacific Rim. Let that talent be refined in the unique intellectual crucible here, which represents a dynamic blend of the arts and humanities and culture, and cutting-edge science and technology, and social sciences and professions.

Indeed, USC, as an American university, is strategically positioned to serve as the intellectual crucible—the intellectual melting pot—of the Pacific Rim.

Destiny has dealt a favorable hand to USC. Let us play this out wisely.

The hero Aeneas and the Trojans completed a great adventure that led to a new City of Troy, which would grow into mighty Rome. For the Trojans of USC and for Southern California, our own New City of Troy can indeed be a New Rome in Higher Education for the Age of the Pacific.

It was said, "A thousand roads all lead to Rome." And in the coming years all roads will lead to Southern California and a great university that sits at its center.

Does all this sound far too audacious? Does all this sound far too bold to be our goal?

Many prestigious universities attract brilliant people. But consider for a moment the full power, the full potential of our

university: USC will allow brilliant people to make a dramatic difference, to improve the lives of women and men and children around our world!

And as we move forward in our new Great Journey, what are the signposts that we are approaching our destination?

When people around the world think of the intellectual giants of the 21st century, they will be thinking of the faculty and students of the University of Southern California.

When people look back in the next century at how the medical revolution exploded forth in life-giving ways, they will see that USC's stamp was placed upon that revolution, as well as on many other revolutions of the mind such as the arts and social sciences.

The critical mass of academic excellence on our two campuses will give us the academic gravitas necessary to pull everything else into USC's orbit.

We will see a dramatic boost in our ability to recruit the world's best graduate and Ph.D. students, who serve as the manpower and womanpower of America's research innovation enterprise.

We will celebrate a Trojan heritage of student athletics that will be more glorious than before. Yes, our Trojan student-athletes are indeed students first and foremost. And so our athletic heritage will demonstrate that the triumphs of athletics and the triumphs of education are the same, at their core. Body and mind, working together, in pursuit of excellence.

We will also know we are reaching our destination when the Trojans are known as the premier network of leaders across the Pacific Rim.

We will all enjoy access to the greatest international network of rain-makers and decision-makers—leaders in scholarship and business and government and the arts and culture.

Thanks to the dedication of countless Trojans and USC friends, USC has already made a remarkable impact.

But as we look ahead, and see what remains to be done, I would like to ask: Are we, the Trojan Family, ready to embark for the most important leg of this journey?

After all, the last part of the journey is often the most complex and the most costly and the most difficult. And yet the greatest prize of all lies ahead.

Let me draw your eyes to the familiar statue behind you, in the southwest corner of this park. Behold there is the figure of Tommy Trojan, who has stood guard for 80 years... without losing his youth or his strength or his optimism.

On the southwest-facing base of the statue are some words from Virgil's Aeneid. I ask you to pass by the statue today and read those words, which are written in both Latin and English. You may need your glasses to read these lines, which are inscribed in very small letters: "Here are provided seats of meditative joy... where shall rise again the destined reign of Troy."

Consider those words: "There shall rise again the destined reign of Troy." Those words call us to work together to claim destiny's promises, and to renew those promises within our individual lives and our collective lives. The destined reign of Troy is an intellectual community that has achieved undisputed elite status—at the very epicenter of global influence. When you are there, there is no doubt, there is no argument, you belong within the pantheon of world-class universities. There is no question that your voice shall be heard, and that your ideas are received. And there is no limit on the impact USC is able to make upon the world.

Ours will indeed be the task of nurturing and guiding this global, Pacific age, and rejuvenating the American pioneering spirit. Ours will be the privilege of finding new ways to bring healing to the ill and insight to the innocent. Ours will be a movement that illustrates the power of a diverse and democratic community in full blossom. Ours will be the task of shaping the most pressing debates of the day. Ours will be an ongoing rebellion against the conventional order of things, as we help individuals and societies, to consider and to create limitless possibilities for themselves.

So too ours will be an intellectual renewal which delights in uncovering and discovering new knowledge, so that we are tantalized by the chance that what we discover today will change what we believed yesterday.

All this is the Great Adventure. All this is the Great Journey. All this is the way forward to the Destined Reign of Troy.

Thank you, and Fight On, Always!