



Luminaries and nearly 1,000 attendees gathered on campus for the opening symposium of the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy in September 2012. The event featured examinations of

potential post-partisan solutions to pressing policy issues. From left: ABC political commentator Cokie Roberts, Senator John McCain, and former Senate majority leader Tom Daschle.



Chapter 9

A Convening Place for the World

Serving as a Vibrant Crossroads

Near the base of the steps to USC's stately Doheny Memorial Library is a plaque placed by the student body, commemorating a convocation address given there by John Fitzgerald Kennedy on November 1, 1960. One week later, Kennedy became the youngest person elected to the United States presidency.

That season, in fact, saw two future presidents at the university, as Richard M. Nixon had appeared on campus a few weeks before. USC also hosted William Taft, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Gerald Ford when each was in office.

Over the following years, USC brought figures of national and international standing to its campuses with increasing frequency; it also represented the Trojan presence in the places where leaders were shaping the world, from state and national capitals to cultural and financial centers across the globe.

"We take our role seriously as a university that is a crossroads and convening place for the world's most important discussions," said Tom Sayles, senior vice president for university relations. "There's no reason we shouldn't play that role in a stronger way than ever, especially given our location in Southern California, one of the major capitals of this new Pacific century. So we bring important people to campus—and many times, we go out to where they are, to discuss with them how we can work with them to face some of society's biggest challenges."

Bringing the World to USC

Following through on this mission, in recent years USC has hosted a number of sitting and former presidents, along with a range of other public servants, spiritual leaders, decorated military officers, and VIPs.

President Barack Obama came to campus in 2010 at the invitation of the students, drawing more than 35,000 members of the academic and local



TOP LEFT: President Nikias, former president George W. Bush, and USC board chair John Mork meet during the Bushes' 2013 visit to campus. USC Marshall School dean James G. Ellis interviewed the Bushes as part of the USC President's Distinguished Lecture series.

BOTTOM LEFT: After giving formal remarks, former president Bill Clinton discusses foreign affairs challenges and other topics with Dean Ellis in another USC President's Distinguished Lecture series event in November 2014.



communities to a massive outdoor event in front of Doheny Memorial Library.

The 42nd and 43rd American presidents made featured appearances as part of USC's President's Distinguished Lecture series. In November 2013, the university hosted George and Laura Bush at a full Bovard Auditorium. Bush offered reflections on momentous events during his years in office as well as insights into his life after leaving the White House, while the former first lady discussed her work in promoting literacy, expanding educational access to women, and advancing human rights.

The following November, USC welcomed Bill Clinton, who shared his analysis of a new "interdependent" global context, which he said required a shift in the manner in which the United States exercised leadership. Former senator and secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton was a special guest on campus in March 2013.

Shinzo Abe, prime minister of Japan, made a high-profile visit to the campus, where he had been a student in the 1970s, in May 2015. A little more



Laura Bush and Niki C. Nikias share personal memories during a visit from the former U.S. president and first lady to the university in the fall of 2013.

than a month later, he returned the favor and received President Nikias as a guest in Tokyo. Later that year Ghana's president, John Dramani Mahama, spoke on campus at the invitation of USC's Center on Public Diplomacy.

While many VIP visits were brief, some led to lasting bonds that created academic opportunities for Trojans. In the summer of 2012, former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger established the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy, dedicated to fostering a post-partisan approach to policy issues. He took on the title of the Governor Downey Professor of State and Global Policy while also serving as the chair of the institute's board of advisers. He also delivered the keynote at USC's 2013 Global Conference in Seoul.

In May 2015, former British prime minister Gordon Brown appeared as a guest lecturer in Professor Steve Lamy's undergraduate seminar "Case Studies in Modern Leadership," analyzing economic and cultural issues of global scope—while also taking the time to chat personally with almost every student in attendance.

Retired four-star general and former CIA director David Petraeus became a member of the Trojan academic community in 2013, taking on the role of a Judge Widney Professor, with a joint appointment at the USC Price



President John Dramani Mahama of Ghana meets with President Nikias in October 2015. The African nation's head of state was a guest of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy, which had invited him to discuss his country and its export efforts.

School of Public Policy. During one weeklong visit in 2014, he mentored Price School undergraduate and graduate students, led ROTC cadets on a morning run in the historic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, paid visits to the Keck School of Medicine's trauma training unit, and lectured at the USC Marshall School of Business.

The university also began to make use of its affiliated Sunnylands estate in Rancho Mirage, California, to host events of global import. Envisioned by the late Walter and Leonore Annenberg as a "West Coast Camp David," the 200-acre property serves as an ideal retreat site for world leaders to explore key issues at length. In 2013, Sunnylands hosted the famous "shirt-sleeves summit," where President Barack Obama and Chinese president Xi Jinping were able to improve bonds as the United States turned its attention increasingly from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Not all the VIPs who appeared at USC came from the traditional halls of political power. In 2011, the 14th Dalai Lama delighted students, staff, and faculty with wisdom and spiritual insights. His appearance at multiple campus events was a part of his first visit to the United States after giving up his political duties for Tibet's government in exile.



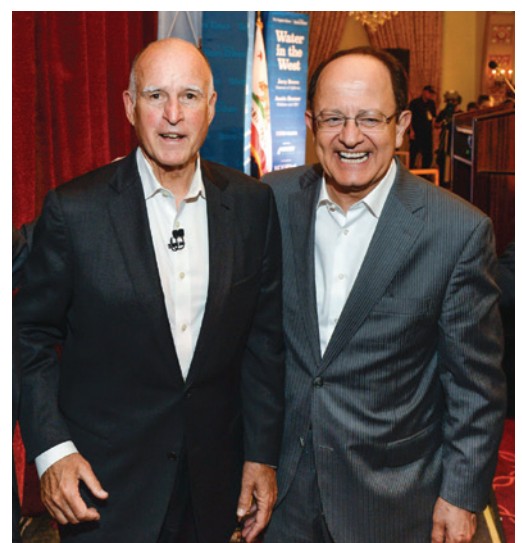
Filmmaker and USC trustee Steven Spielberg greets Holocaust survivor Mira Becker at an event announcing a new genocide research center at the USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Nikias, while provost, was instrumental in bringing the institute, which was founded by Spielberg in 1994, to the university in 2006.



Bringing USC to the World

USC doesn't just bring big shows to campus: It often takes the show on the road, through official delegations and USC Global Conferences, to places that are growing in academic importance to the university.

In recent years, senior delegations to India, Israel, Brazil, Indonesia, Singapore, and Mexico met with high-ranking public officials, civic leaders, and policy makers. In New Delhi in 2011, President Nikiias and Trustee Ratan Tata had a private audience with Manmohan Singh, then India's prime minister. In Israel in 2012, the Nikiases met with then-President Shimon Peres. And in 2015, Nikiias honored José Antonio Meade Kuribreña, then Mexico's foreign secretary, with the inaugural Judge Widney Award.



RIGHT: USC celebrates a \$10 million gift to its School of Cinematic Arts from Sumner Redstone (center), the former executive chair of Viacom Inc. and CBS Corp. With him are (from left) Cinematic Arts dean Elizabeth Daley, Trustee Steven Spielberg, Trustee Frank Price, alumnus George Lucas, and President Nikias.



Domestically, USC's leadership meets regularly with key policy makers at the local, state, and national levels. Each year these delegations, including senior administrators, trustees, and key faculty, visit both Sacramento and Washington, D.C. During the 2012 trip to California's capital, President Nikias held an hour-long meeting with Governor Jerry Brown to discuss developments at the university. In 2015, Nikias led another state capital visit to educate policy makers on how extending Cal Grant support to low- and middle-income students at private universities serves Californians.

In 2012, USC's delegation to Washington met with a host of high-ranking officials to discuss healthcare, innovation, civic engagement, and other issues of mutual interest. The university representatives spent time with government leaders including then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid; House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi; Hawaiian senator Daniel Inouye; and Martha Kanter, who was then undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

In the spring of 2015, Nikias and Provost Michael Quick led another group of trustees, senior administrators, and deans to the nation's capital. The USC officials promoted the work of the university's faculty in vital areas such as health and medicine, cybersecurity, digital media, and national and homeland security.

A Campus Where Stars Constellate

When USC launched the Visions & Voices initiative in 2006, the intention was to direct the spotlight onto its world-class arts and humanities programs. The ultimate goal, as Nikias, who was at that time provost, put it, was "not merely to entertain our students but to bring out the full educational value of the arts, and to challenge them at the core of their being about what it means for us to live together as human beings in society."

TOP LEFT: Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, who studied at USC, enjoys a walk through the campus in May 2015, accompanied by President Nikias, Japan's first lady, Akie Abe, and the university's first lady, Niki C. Nikias.

MIDDLE LEFT: U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, with President Nikias during a 2012 visit to USC, when he also lectured and met with law students; Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy is welcomed to campus by Robert Rasmussen (then dean of the Gould School of Law) and Nikias in 2011.

BOTTOM LEFT: Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti, Provost Michael Quick, President Nikias, and Sol Price School of Public Policy dean Jack Knott meet with General Martin Dempsey, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; California governor Jerry Brown and Nikias meet to discuss the state's approach to water conservation.



TOP: Former secretary of defense Robert Gates, now chancellor of the College of William & Mary, arrives on campus to offer a 2012 installment of the USC President's Distinguished Lecture series.

BOTTOM: The Nikiases welcome former British prime minister Gordon Brown in the spring of 2015. Brown spent two weeks on campus as a guest of international relations professor Steven Lamy to participate in his course "Case Studies in Modern Leadership."



Former Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (center), who joined the USC faculty as a professor of the practice of policy within the Price School of Public Policy in 2013, meets with LAPD chief Charlie Beck (left) and President Nikias at City Hall in 2012.



Over the years, Visions & Voices has drawn many luminaries to campus through a variety of programs, especially its Signature Events series. Highlights have included musician and writer Patti Smith, who discussed her wide-ranging career in a conversation moderated by USC Annenberg School professor Joshua Kun in February 2013. In the fall of that year, students competed lottery-style for 1,235 seats in Bovard Auditorium, where Sir Elton John performed with 40 student musicians from the USC Thornton School of Music in a concert dubbed “Elton John Goes Back to School.”

Beyond Visions & Voices, of course, a variety of USC programs have pulled many other stars into the university’s orbit, both for collaborative



LEFT: President and Mrs. Nikias greet Texas governor Greg Abbott—the parent of a USC undergraduate—during a visit by the governor to the University Park Campus.

performances and in recognition of public service. For example, in April 2015, Fleetwood Mac guitarist and songwriter Lindsey Buckingham was a guest of the Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. During his visit, he spoke to students and performed with the Trojan Marching Band in Bovard Auditorium.

The USC School of Social Work honored actor Gary Sinise with its Crystal Heart in 2011 for his support of American troops. The relationship continued when in March 2014, the social work school and the Gary Sinise Foundation co-hosted a conference examining the challenges facing wounded veterans and caregivers.

Each year, the USC Shoah Foundation presents its Ambassador for Humanity Award. At the 2013 annual gala, the organization honored actor George Clooney; the following year, Trustee Steven Spielberg presented the award to President Barack Obama. When William Clay Ford Jr., executive chair of Ford Motor Company, received the award in 2015, actor Steve Carell emceed the gala, which also featured appearances by Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry and singer James Taylor.

The innumerable and ongoing interactions with so many of the world's most influential citizens energized the USC community and infused it with a sense of limitless possibility. And the university's continuous growth—in terms of academics, reputation, cultural diversity, and even physical infrastructure—ensured that it would remain a bustling crossroads for years to come.

TOP RIGHT: Actor and humanitarian George Clooney (center) receives the Ambassador for Humanity Award from the USC Shoah Foundation in 2013, flanked by President and Mrs. Nikias, Trustee Steven Spielberg, and Shoah Foundation director Stephen D. Smith; Sir Elton John performs with USC student musicians at a 2013 Visions & Voices Signature Event.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Award-winning entertainer Rita Moreno speaks at a 2014 Visions & Voices event celebrating her storied career; President Nikias and international soccer star and UNICEF ambassador David Beckham are honored at the annual UNICEF Ball in 2016, with UNICEF chair Ghada Irani and Caryl Stern, president and CEO of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF.

BOTTOM RIGHT: USC Social Work dean Marilyn Flynn and President Nikias present actor Gary Sinise with the Crystal Heart, the school's highest honor for community service; award-winning director Spike Lee appears at a Visions & Voices event.



Honorary Degree Recipients 2010–2015

Since 1912, USC has used its spring commencement exercise as an occasion to bestow honorary degrees on women and men who have made extraordinary contributions to scholarship, society, culture, and the life and mission of the university. In the past five years, this has included major global figures drawn from the worlds of the arts, sciences, philanthropy, media, athletics, and industry.

** Asterisks denote commencement speakers*



2015: Famed NFL and former USC football coach Pete Carroll with Athletic Director Pat Haden and Provost Michael Quick



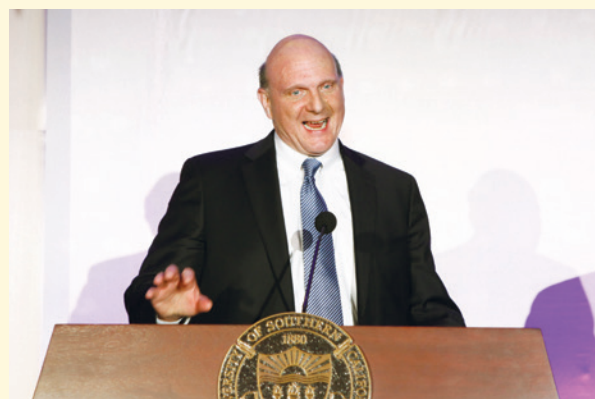
2014: Shonda L. Rhimes, television producer and USC alumna, with then-Provost Elizabeth Garrett and President Nikias



2014: B. Wayne Hughes Sr., USC trustee and alumnus, and renowned business leader



2012: Christiane Amanpour,* award-winning news correspondent



2010: Steven Ballmer,* former CEO of Microsoft



2014: Marc Benioff,* USC trustee and alumnus, and CEO of Salesforce



2015: Ariel Investments president Mellody Hobson,* USC alumnus and benefactor George Lucas, and California attorney general Kamala Harris, with President and Mrs. Nikias



2013: Jimmy Iovine,* music producer and philanthropist, with then-Provost Elizabeth Garrett and President Nikias



2011: Harald zur Hausen, Nobel Prize-winning virologist, with Keck School of Medicine dean Carmen Puliafito



2011: Girish Karnad, acclaimed actor, director, and playwright



2013: Award-winning playwright David Henry Hwang with President Nikias