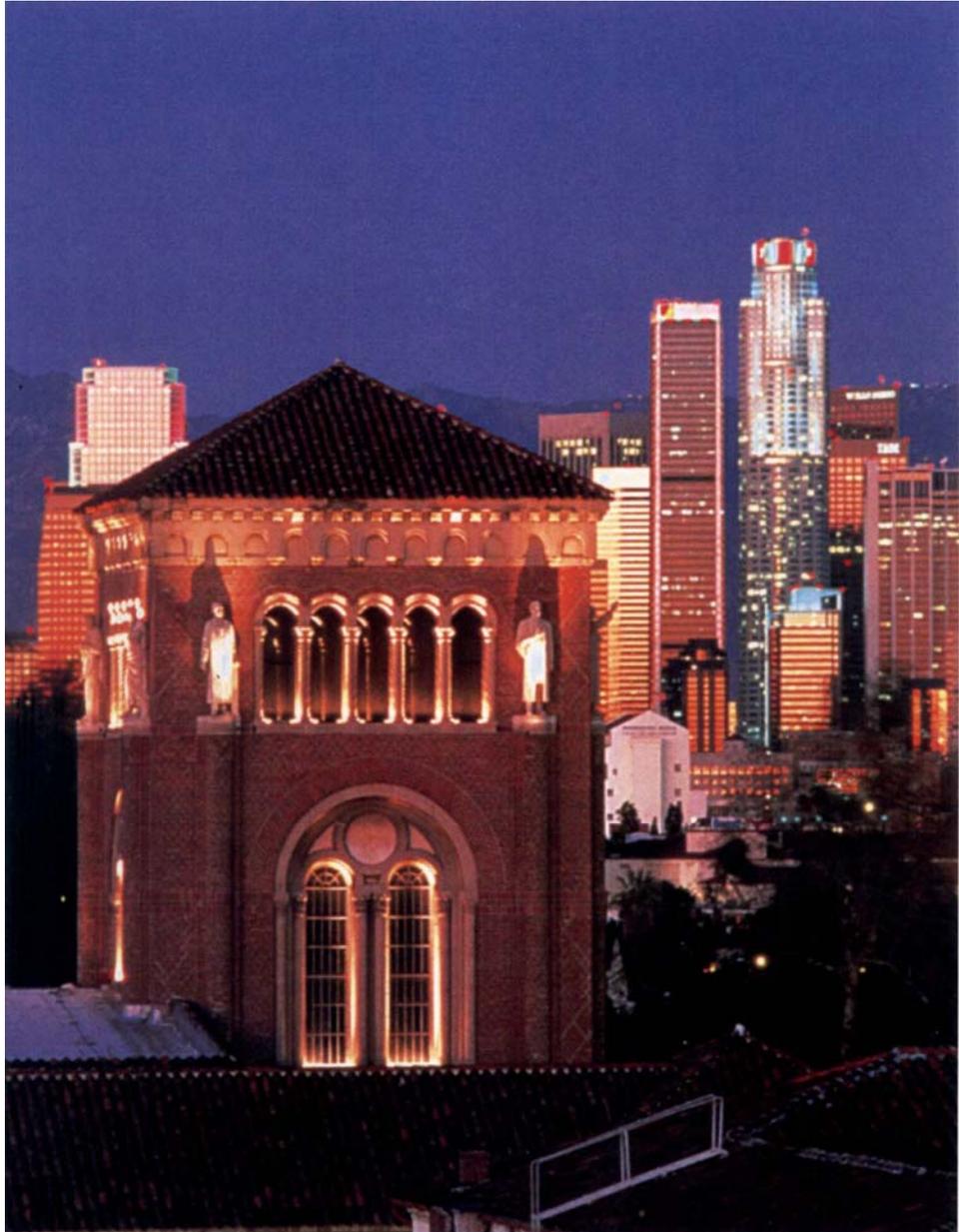


University of Southern California  
INSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL



Prepared for  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

October 15, 2005

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University of Southern California

**Institutional Proposal  
to the  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

October 12, 2005

**Section I: Institutional Context**

Los Angeles was little more than frontier town in 1880 – almost exactly 125 years ago – when the University of Southern California first opened its doors to 53 students and 10 teachers. Today it is a world class research university, and the oldest private research university in the West. USC now serves 16,897 undergraduate students, 15,939 graduate and professional students, and employs approximately 14,400 student workers, 3,000 faculty and 7,900 staff.

USC's University Park Campus, located in the heart of Los Angeles' Downtown Arts and Education Corridor, is home to the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and 16 professional schools. The Health Sciences Campus, to the northeast of downtown Los Angeles, is home to the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the USC School of Pharmacy, and three major teaching hospitals. Childrens Hospital Los Angeles is staffed by the pediatrics faculty of the Keck School of Medicine, and it is considered to be USC's third campus. USC also has programs and centers in Marina del Rey, Orange County, Catalina Island, Alhambra, Sacramento, and Washington, D.C.

The central mission of the University of Southern California is developing individuals and society as a whole by cultivating and enriching the human mind and spirit. The principal means through which we accomplish our mission are teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice, and selected forms of public service. [See Appendix B for the complete Role and Mission Statement.]

Major milestones under the leadership of President Steven B. Sample

Under the leadership of USC's tenth president, Steven B. Sample, USC has enjoyed probably the fastest ascent of any university in the nation in terms of academic quality.

Since President Sample took office in 1991, USC has marked several major milestones:

- Student quality and retention have soared. Entering freshmen in 1991 had an average GPA of 3.42 and average SAT's of 1070. By 2005, GPA's averaged 4.04 and SAT scores averaged 1364. The freshmen admission rate has decreased from 73 percent in 1991 to below 28 percent in 2004, and the sixth year graduation rate has reached 83 percent.

- The University set a new record in higher education by conducting the most successful fund-raising campaign ever, raising \$2.85 billion in nine years. Its endowment more than quintupled from \$460 million to \$2.4 billion.
- USC became the only university to receive four separate nine-figure gifts – \$100 million from Ambassador Walter Annenberg to create the Annenberg Center for Communication; \$112.5 million from Alfred Mann to establish the Mann Institute of Biomedical Engineering; \$110 million from the W.M. Keck Foundation for USC’s School of Medicine; and a second \$100 million from the Annenberg Foundation.
- Six schools have received naming gifts, including the USC Leventhal School of Accounting, the USC Marshall School of Business, the USC Rossier School of Education, the USC Thornton School of Music, the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and most recently, the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.
- USC College began a Senior Hiring Initiative in the 2000-2001 academic year to hire 100 outstanding senior faculty from around the world and increase the College’s faculty by 25 percent. About 80 faculty members have been hired to date.
- USC achieved the rare distinction of having two National Science Foundation-funded Engineering Research Centers – the Integrated Media Systems Center and the Center for Biomimetic Microelectronic Systems.
- The University more than doubled its sponsored research, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security selected USC as its first Homeland Security Center of Excellence.
- USC was named “College of the Year 2000” by the editors of *Time* magazine and the *Princeton Review* for the University’s extensive community-service programs.

#### Strategic Planning and the 1998 WASC Review

The University has completed three strategic plans during the past 12 years under the leadership of President Steven B. Sample and former Provost Lloyd Armstrong, Jr. Planning efforts began in 1991 and culminated in 1994 with four strategic initiatives. USC’s Board of Trustees adopted a revised Role and Mission Statement in 1993, which has guided all three strategic plans. [See Appendix B.]

The 1994 Strategic Plan, adopted by the Board of Trustees on June 8, 1994, was the work of literally hundreds of people, the majority of whom were faculty, and it was supported by a broad consensus among the faculty and deans. The four strategic initiatives included:

- (1) Provide a distinctive undergraduate experience;
- (2) Expand interdisciplinary research and teaching;
- (3) Build on the resources of southern California and Los Angeles;
- (4) Expand internationalization of the university.

WASC initiated discussions with the research universities in 1995 about a new and more effective approach to accreditation, and they explored data-oriented self-studies around quality indicators. USC helped WASC move to an experimental model for research universities and to address accountability in a collaborative rather than a compliance-oriented manner. USC conducted one of four experimental self-studies in 1996-1997, which provided the University with an opportunity to focus on issues of vital importance to this institution, issues that the President Sample and former Provost Armstrong were already engaged in resolving. The focus of the last accreditation review in 1998 was on the University's effectiveness in implementing the four strategic initiatives in the 1994 Strategic Plan.

WASC's Commission on Senior Colleges and Universities complimented USC in 1998 for being well underway in its transformation to a premier research institution. The Commission was impressed with the clarity of the University's Strategic Plan and the progress made by the University to fulfill each of the four strategic goals. The Commission reaffirmed USC's accreditation and urged USC to give full consideration to:

- (1) Continued development of the data portfolio;
- (2) Refinement of the Strategic Plan by developing the next order of specific objectives;
- (3) Provision of a vigorous and continuing program review process;
- (4) Timely review of the general education program, the new writing requirement, and the new system of minors; and
- (5) Continued emphasis on student learning, teaching excellence, undergraduate advising and retention.

<b>Commission's suggestions (1998)</b>	<b>USC's changes (1998-2005)</b>
(1) Continued development of the data portfolio;	(1) Refined the data portfolio and utilized it in annual academic planning cycle; increased the capability of staff in Provost's Office to produce and analyze data.
(2) Refinement of the Strategic Plan by developing the next order of specific objectives;	(2) Created 1998 strategic plan, which defined Critical Pathways of Opportunity: Communications; the Life Sciences; the Arts; and the Urban Paradigm.
(3) Provision of a vigorous and continuing program review process;	(3) Established University Committee on Academic Review (UCAR) in 1999, and 57 academic units have been evaluated.
(4) Timely review of the general education program, the new writing requirement, and the new system of minors;	(4) The General Education program was reviewed in 2004-2005, and the Writing Program is currently under review.

(5) Continued emphasis on student learning, teaching excellence, and undergraduate advising and retention.	(5.a) Training of academic advisers was expanded and the sixth year retention of undergraduates has improved to 83%.
	(5.b) The Learning Community Program was launched in 1998 to help undecided freshmen to find an academic focus with faculty mentoring.
	(5.c) President Sample launched the USC Renaissance Scholars Program in 2000 to honor selected students who graduate with a major and a minor, or two majors, in widely separated fields that demonstrate breadth with depth.
	(5.d) Since 1999, grants from the Fund for Innovative Teaching in the Center for Excellence in Teaching have encouraged innovative pedagogies and assessment of learning. New grants are being offered in the Center for Pedagogical Technology.

## Section II: Institutional Goals and Projected Outcomes for the Accreditation Process

USC will adopt a strategic planning-based approach to the WASC accreditation review, including the evaluation of institutional capacity and the commitment to educational effectiveness.

The 2004 Strategic Plan, USC's Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence: Building Strategic Capabilities for the University of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, had its genesis in the exploration of a simple question: "What should the research university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century look like, and how can USC become the model for this new and developing institution?" The new plan sets forth a vision for the coming years, capitalizing on our unique strengths. The plan also takes into account three distinct trends in higher education: (a) the need to increasingly focus on meeting societal needs; (b) the need to expand our global presence in an increasingly international world; and (c) the need to concentrate on learner-centered education that gives primacy to the needs of the students rather than those of the institution and faculty. To facilitate this evolution, USC's plan is to focus on developing four strategic capabilities, including:

- (1) Span disciplinary and school boundaries to focus on problems of societal significance;
- (2) Link fundamental to applied research;
- (3) Build networks and partnerships; and
- (4) Increase responsiveness to learners.

**USC's goal for the accreditation review process is to better understand students' needs for learning in a more complex and changing world, to develop more effective methods of assessing learning, and to gain more systematic engagement of the faculty and students with improving learning processes. Consequently, our overarching theme for the next four years is "Seeking New Ways to Effect Learning."** Learner-centered education focuses at all levels on meeting the needs of students to contribute in a changing and more complicated world, and involving students as partners in defining those needs. USC's mission has long been defined by attention to learning and students; our goal is to increase this emphasis to meet the challenges and opportunities of the new century. WASC's accreditation process will help us document our progress in developing two of the four strategic capabilities that are defined by the 2004 Strategic Plan.

One example of learner-centered education which is unique to USC is our focus on "breadth-with-depth" in our undergraduate program. Under this rubric, our undergraduates are encouraged to stretch themselves intellectually and professionally by taking at least one minor in a field which differs from their major. It allows students time to explore new ways of thinking and new intellectual perspectives before they focus on their professional training. For example, a student might achieve breadth-with-depth by majoring in English and minoring in Physics. We believe that this approach better equips our students to face personal and professional challenges in a rapidly changing world; it equips them with the critical thinking tools that will enable them to solve new problems and confront unexpected developments

Fifty years ago, the baccalaureate degree was the terminal degree for most students, even those at the most selective universities. But today, almost all of the undergraduates at highly selective universities, such as USC, will ultimately pursue professional or graduate education. Thus the baccalaureate degree for undergraduates has evolved into a foundation for graduate and professional study. Under these circumstances, the education of our students needs to prepare them for a future in a changing world in which they may well have multiple careers.

The goal of "Seeking New Ways to Effect Learning" during the WASC review will assure that the accreditation process stays focused on two of USC's four strategic capabilities that are particularly relevant for undergraduate education. As USC takes bold steps forward, the WASC review process will help us capture what has been done and help us evaluate the changes. The University will frame its 2005-2009 WASC accreditation review around the following two strategic capabilities that are a necessary part of our increased responsiveness to learners:

Theme # 1: Spanning Disciplinary and School Boundaries to Focus on Problems of Societal Significance

Spanning disciplines captures several distinctive aspects of learning that USC values:

- "Breadth-with-depth" encourages undergraduates to stretch themselves intellectually by taking at least one minor in a field which differs from their major.
- Doing research and engaging in creative collaboration is a key mode of learning for undergraduates in a research university.

- Service learning through voluntary service to the community and its integration with academic learning is a key mode of spanning disciplines and exposing students to significant problems in the community.
- Developing an appreciation for diversity in all its forms spans all the disciplines and is essential for developing effective leaders for the future of our society.
- Developing adults who will assume leadership in all realms of society is an expectation that begins with the quality of the undergraduates USC attracts, extends to all disciplines, and is enhanced by our commitment to graduate and professional education.

Specific strategies:

- A) Encourage innovation and interdisciplinarity in USC's curriculum, and ensure that policies are appropriately flexible to allow students to pursue interdisciplinary studies.
- B) Conduct a study of best practices in a limited number of existing interdisciplinary programs and initiatives.
- C) Gather information on the tangible results as a means of assessing the value of sustaining and/or building on these interdisciplinary efforts.
- D) Provide a rich array of extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities that advance student learning and development.
- E) Enable students with different interests, goals, abilities, and learning styles to connect with these opportunities.
- F) Ensure that students are reflective about their experiences outside the classroom and their capacity to solve problems of societal significance.
- G) Involve faculty in the creation and evaluation of these learning opportunities and appropriately increasing responsiveness to the learners.

## Theme # 2: Development of Learner-Centered Education

President Sample firmly believes that universities must concentrate on learner-centered education, which focuses on the needs of students and empowers them as a partner in their education. Key elements of learner-centered education include:

- Expectations for learning and attainment are developed and widely shared among faculty members, students and others.
- Indicators of learning success are identified for programs, and not just for individual courses.
- Program designs consist of integrated courses focused on connected learning outcomes.
- The faculty takes collective responsibility for fostering and demonstrating student attainment.
- The results of a variety of methods of assessing learning are used to inform both the instructor and the student and to improve both courses and programs.
- Powerful instruction creates active and engaged learners, accommodates alternative modes of learning, connects technology and good learning theory, provides good models of successful student work, and gives feedback to students that guides their subsequent learning.

Specific strategies:

- A) Stimulate pedagogical innovation and develop greater clarity about learner-centered educational objectives in the context of a research university.
- B) Continue to shift priorities toward providing what students need to learn in a global world of rapid change.
- C) Change the institutional culture to place more emphasis on delineating specific course and program learning goals (both content knowledge and intellectual skills).
- D) Develop clear indicators to determine if these educational outcomes and skills have been achieved.
- E) Integrate a focus on learning outcomes in program development and review.
- F) Develop institutional data systems that will incorporate continuous feedback about educational effectiveness and connect them to planning and decision-making processes.

### **Projected Outcomes of Seeking New Ways to Encourage Learning**

1. The University seeks to gain a deeper understanding of student learning, and to develop more varied and effective methods of assessing learning.
2. The University expects to gain wider and more systematic engagement of the faculty and students with issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning processes.
3. The University intends to align support systems for students and faculty to create a learner-centered environment and effectively encourage a culture of assessment.
4. The University wishes to gain greater clarity about criteria for defining and evaluating its strategic capabilities and its educational effectiveness.

### **Section III: Constituency Involvement**

The University completed a two-year strategic planning process, beginning in 2002 and culminating with its adoption by the Board of Trustees in October 2004. It involved the President, the Provost, and scores of faculty leaders in setting goals and priorities for building USC's future capabilities. The broad constituency that is being involved in the accreditation process is an extension of the constituencies that were involved in the planning process and the First Year Initiatives in the 2004-2005 academic year. Faculty involvement has been the key element in the preparation of the 2004 Strategic Plan and all developments flowing from it.

#### **New Academic Leadership Team**

The new Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, C.L. Max Nikias, took office on June 1, 2005. He appointed a new administrative team to implement the 2004 Strategic Plan, including Barry Glassner, Executive Vice Provost, Elizabeth Garrett, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and Randolph Hall, Vice Provost for Research Advancement. Looking back at the rapid

ascent of USC's academic quality during President Sample's administration, Dr. Nikias has committed himself to accelerating the momentum.

The Provost is making a concerted effort to assure that emeriti faculty and non-tenure track faculty are added to all University committees and task forces, along with tenured and tenure-track faculty, and gender balance has been a priority for many years. In addition, faculty leaders in the Academic Senate are consulted regularly on committee assignments and are included, along with Deans and other, in planning initiatives and determining the objectives of our academic community.

### Strategic Planning Committee

Eleven leading faculty and deans were appointed to a Strategic Planning Committee in Fall 2002. The Committee drafted core ideas and discussed them with about 200 faculty at two retreats. In September 2003 ten additional senior faculty joined the Planning Committee, and six faculty subcommittees were created to examine key issues. A new plan was drafted utilizing the subcommittees' ideas in January 2004. The draft plan was refined in response to discussions with faculty at open meetings and written comments from the faculty. In April 2004 a draft plan was circulated to the entire USC community for comment, and the Provost hosted an open forum. The final version of USC's Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence: Building Strategic Capabilities for the University of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was approved by the Board of Trustees on October 6, 2004.

### General Education Review Committee

As the themes of spanning disciplinary boundaries and learner-centered education emerged from the strategic planning discussions, the Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences appointed a General Education Review Committee to look for ways to consolidate the General Education program's strengths and to correct its weaknesses after six years of operation. The Committee elected to begin its work at the level of the General Education categories, discussing how to redefine the requirements, clarify the descriptions, identify learning objectives in each category, and ascertain the means of assessment available to ensure that students are in fact learning what we believe an undergraduate at USC should learn. Each panel designed a survey that was sent to all faculty who had taught in those categories, and panelists drafted language reflecting opinions expressed in the surveys. The learning objectives of the program as a whole, and pedagogical goals of the program were clarified in plenary sessions. All faculty members who teach or have taught in General Education were invited to participate and changes were made to reflect their advice; and four student focus groups met to provide guidance to two member of the Student Senate who served on the Review Committee.

The General Education Review Committee realized that the faculty has not institutionalized the identification of learning objectives and outcomes, aligned those goals with course content, or created the "culture of evidence" that will be needed over the next few years in a learner-centered institution. Yet, the Committee recognized that assessment can improve student learning, if the results are used realistically and sensibly by the faculty themselves. The

Committee recommended that USC adopt assessment systems that are non-intrusive and supportive in our efforts to create a learner-centered university.

#### Provost's Advisory Group on Interdisciplinary and University-Wide Programs

To further the goal of interdisciplinary collaboration to address significant social problems, the Strategic Plan committed USC to a First-Year Initiative to be undertaken by a Provost's Advisory Group on Interdisciplinary and University-Wide Programs. Four task forces were formed and the submitted their reports on May 11, 2005. Their advice included creative solutions to financial and structural impediments, creative ideas for interdisciplinarity, and creative ideas for promotion and tenure.

The Provost's Advisory Group has made recommendations that are the source of the specific goals under Theme #1: Spanning Disciplinary Boundaries. These goals will be considered, implemented, and assessed during the next three years.

#### Accreditation Steering Committee

Provost Nikias appointed an Accreditation Steering Committee to advise him on the Institutional Proposal to WASC that is due on October 15, 2005. The proposal is intended to define the University's goals for the multi-year accreditation process and reflect the priorities expressed in USC's "Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence."

Associate Deans of the schools with the largest undergraduate enrollments were appointed to the Accreditation Steering Committee, along with a balanced group of peers from other sectors of the University, including the Academic Senate, the non-tenure track faculty, and the retired faculty. Vice Provost Garrett and two Associate Vice Provosts for Undergraduate Programs and Graduate Programs are ex officio members of the Accreditation Steering Committee.

The Accreditation Steering Committee met on August 31, September 20, and October 5, 2005 to consider potential themes for the accreditation cycle which were proposed by Elizabeth Garrett, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and to critique two drafts of the Institutional Proposal. The Steering Committee adopted the goal of "New Ways to Effect Learning" for the accreditation process, which encompasses two strategic initiatives from the 2004 Strategic Plan. This goal will advance the University's priorities and maintain a sharp focus on learner-centered education. The Steering Committee will meet periodically, as needed, over the next several years to consider self-studies and the progress of the accreditation process.

When approved by the Commission, USC's Institutional Proposal will be shared with about a dozen task forces and committees whose current efforts will affect the University's educational capacity and educational effectiveness. An accreditation website will be established to keep the University community informed about the accreditation process, the framework of the Institutional Proposal, and the work plan and milestones for the future. The University community will be invited to comment on the documents and to offer suggestions of ways to improve the University's educational effectiveness.

#### **Section IV: Approach for the Capacity Review**

The University of Southern California functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, exceptional fiscal stability, and organizational structures to fulfill its purposes. The restatement of USC's mission in 1993 and the sequence of three strategic planning exercises during the past decade have allowed USC to refine its purposes and priorities with unusual clarity. USC has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive strengths, and its place in the higher education community. The University's purposes are broadly understood by members of the institutional community, and they are communicated clearly and consistently to external constituencies.

USC will utilize the accreditation review to look at itself, and its organizational structures, through the lens of the institution's capacity to fulfill its aspirations. **The special emphasis of the Capacity and Preparatory Review will be on the University's capacity to increase responsiveness to learners, to seek new ways to effect learning, and to establish the structures and processes that will support that capacity.**

A new Provost and his leadership team have been appointed, and they are committed to accelerating further the rapid rise in USC's quality. A number of faculty-based assessments of USC's capacity have begun, and there is a commitment by the academic leaders to implement the recommendations. The Provost's initiatives involve the schools as the key agents for implementation in this highly decentralized institution. These reviews of USC's capacity will be the focus of reflective essays that will be incorporated into the Capacity and Preparatory Review self-study, which will be presented to WASC in Spring 2008.

The list below is illustrative of major initiatives related to USC's capacity to be learner-centered, but it is by no means exhaustive. The new Provost and his team are actively exploring capacity issues that effect learning, and he will embark on new initiatives and assessments before and during WASC's review. The current task forces may identify additional questions and issues that will need attention in the next few academic years, such as better assessment tools, including a review of student evaluations and alumni surveys, student life, residential colleges, the technological capacity of classrooms, and the resources of the library and other information services. The expansion of blended classes, with increasing amounts of information and lectures available on-line to supplement will be the subject of additional attention in the next few years. The University's capacity to disseminate information, data, and ideas about new ways to effect learning in this large and decentralized institution is currently the focus of the Provost's initiative to provide technologically-enhanced classrooms, similar to those used now in the Viterbi School of Engineering and the Marshall School of Business, throughout the University. This infrastructure will be used in new and creative ways by the faculty in our diverse schools and programs, and we must work to identify ways to share their experiences and innovations throughout USC.

### Capacity and Preparatory Review

<b>Primary focus of review: Purposes, integrity, stability, resources, structures, processes &amp; policy</b>	<b>USC's focus for review: Major initiatives affecting Capacity</b>
Standard 1: Defining institutional purpose and ensuring educational objectives	Planning Committee to monitor progress on the Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence
	Academic Senate-Provost's Committee on Academic Programs and Teaching
	Task Force on Diversity and Faculty Development
Standard 2: Achieving educational objectives through core functions	Provost's Initiative on Faculty Hiring
	Undergraduate Curriculum Committee-Policy Committee's reform of the curriculum approval process
	University Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures' assessment of policies to ensure appropriate flexibility for students
	Task Force on Interdisciplinary Education
	Task Force on Graduate Education
Standard 3: Developing and applying resources and organizational structures to assure sustainability	Provost's Initiative on Information Services
	Provost's Initiative on Technologically-Enhanced Learning
	Center for Pedagogical Technology, including a Teaching with Technology Fund
Standard 4: Creating an organization committed to learning and improvement	Student Retention and Advisement, including the First Contact Initiative and the Arts and Humanities Initiative
	University Committee on Academic Review's assessment of effectiveness of first cycle of reviews in preparation for Phase 2.

#### A. Planning Committee

A standing Planning Committee will be created by the Provost to provide continuing monitoring progress of the Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence and progress on new initiatives by the Provost. The faculty and staff who were members of the Strategic Planning Committee will serve as the core of this new committee. The Committee's recommendations to the Provost will be made at the end of each Spring Semester.

#### B. Academic Senate-Provost's Committee on Academic Programs and Teaching

USC's "Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence" identifies promoting learner-centered education and calls on us to increase responsiveness to learners in our classes and beyond the classroom. To move USC toward further realizing these goals, the Provost and the President of the Academic Senate have charged the Joint Provost/Academic Senate's Committee on Academic Programs and Teaching to spend the 2005-2006 academic year developing recommendations to help USC better achieve this strategic capability. The Committee, chaired by Professor Lawford Anderson, is seeking to define more specifically what learner-centered education in a research university means for undergraduates at USC. This evaluation will take account of the historical and pedagogical contexts that make USC a unique and leading research university. The Committee will inventory and categorize current learner-centered activities across the University as the first stage of the University's inquiry into educational effectiveness. The resulting inventory is expected to be considerably larger than the limited set of examples listed below under "Educational Effectiveness Review." This inventory will be disseminated broadly throughout USC, and the work of this committee will provide a foundation for further analysis of ways to better understand educational effectiveness.

#### C. Task Force on Diversity and Faculty Development

Co-Chaired by Professor Michael Preston, Special Advisor to the Provost, and Professor Roberta Diaz Brinton, the Task Force will report on the best practices found to be the most effective in the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty. Specifically, the Task Force will:

- Identify what has worked and why at USC in the recruitment and retention of women and under-represented minority faculty;
- Look closely at, and learn from what has worked at other institutions, and tailor these successful strategies to meet the special needs of USC;
- Consult with USC scholars, experts and academic activists on diversity regarding the findings of previous studies;
- Examine the WiSE Program to identify what has worked and why in its successful attempt to increase the number of women in science and engineering at USC;
- Ascertain which strategies have been most effectively used by Deans and Department Chairs in their attempts to recruit and retain women and minority faculty and share these with all schools and departments.
- The Task Force will report by Spring 2006.

#### D. Provost's Initiative on Faculty Hiring

The Provost has proposed a hiring initiative with two prongs: Diversity and Interdisciplinary Scholars. First, the Provost will work with the schools to promote diversity in faculty hiring at all levels – assistant, associate and full professors. He will provide resources to assist with tenured and tenure-track offers to people who, through scholarship, teaching or mentoring, will increase the representation of qualified women and people of color in disciplines and schools where they are under-represented. The Provost's support will be tailored to the needs of the individual appointment and can include financial support in start-up packages, including help with housing costs, and recruiting assistance.

The pool of these candidates is relatively small, so the Provost has urged the schools to aggressively recruit, and to work with him to hire and retain them. The elite research universities are more actively seeking and recruiting top women and minority candidates than ever before, and USC must compete successfully, if we are to increase the diversity of our faculty. Each school's efforts and success will be considered annually during budget meetings and the review of the dean's performance. Everyone will be held accountable, and progress will be reviewed after three years. This aspect of the hiring initiative is consistent with USC's core value of diversity and particularly important given the diverse and vibrant community in which we are located.

The Provost also will provide resources for the schools to hire twelve outstanding interdisciplinary scholars. USC's goal is to hire academic stars at the associate and full professor level who are already influential and productive scholars and who will provide interdisciplinary courses and research opportunities for our graduate and undergraduate students. This initiative will seek scholars who "span disciplinary and school boundaries," and who will have meaningful responsibilities in two or more schools, consistent with USC's Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence.

#### E. Capacity for Innovation and Interdisciplinarity in USC's Curriculum

The Provost has asked the University Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (UCAPP) to review policies to ensure that they are appropriately flexible to allow students to pursue interdisciplinary studies.

The work of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee's Policy Committee (UCC-PC) lies at the heart of the University's academic mission: to ensure that our courses and academic programs are rigorous, pedagogically effective, and based on cutting edge research and scholarship. The Provost is concerned, however, that the current process of course and program approval and review, put in place in the 1980's and 1990's, and not significantly revised in nearly a decade, is not optimal in several ways. He has charged the Curriculum Committee's Policy Committee to recommend reform of the curriculum approval and review process by January 2006.

As part of its current efforts to streamline and improve the curriculum process, the UCC-PC is setting up three task forces on courses, programs, and the online Catalogue. It is important to make the online Catalogue more up-to-date and useable in real time by students, faculty and

administrators. Key issues will include how and when additions can be made to the online Catalogue, how to allow students to better search the Catalogue, how to archive the revisions, and how to minimize confusion resulting from the discrepancies between the published Catalogue and the online version.

#### F. Task Force on Interdisciplinary Education

Professor Elizabeth Garrett, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, will appoint a Task Force on Interdisciplinary Education to follow up on the University Curriculum Committee's proposals. The Task Force will be appointed in the Spring Semester 2006. This Task Force will build on the work of past committees that have assessed USC's capacity to provide rigorous and excellent interdisciplinary academic programs, and it will begin the process of implementing the best of these recommendations. As part of its work, the Task Force will begin to evaluate the impact of minors in expanding interdisciplinary breadth for undergraduates as part of the Renaissance Scholars Model of depth with breadth. The faculty will think about the kinds of interdisciplinary education that ought to be encouraged, and they will reflect on the time to degree and retention associated with minors.

The Task Force on Interdisciplinary Education's work will complement work being done currently in the Provost's Office for Research Advancement to consider research through interdisciplinary collaboration. The University Research Committee's Panel on Interdisciplinary Research will identify USC's most productive and promising interdisciplinary research units and its most productive and promising individual leaders of interdisciplinary research by January 2006. The Panel will make specific recommendations regarding both interdisciplinary themes for emphasis and the organization and infrastructure that would best nurture interdisciplinary research at USC. The activities of this Panel will have implications for interdisciplinary training, since research and training can and should serve one another.

#### G. Task Force on Graduate Education

Vice Provost Garrett will chair a new Task Force on Graduate Education; she will be assisted by Jean Morrison, Associate Vice Provost of Graduate Programs, and Mike Preston, Special Advisor to the Provost. The Task Force will present concrete proposals to the Provost in May, 2006, that can be implemented in the short- and long-term to ensure that our graduate programs, particularly our Ph.D. programs, are of the highest quality and attract student who will be the leading scholars in the future. In addition, the Provost asked for specific proposals to build on our current efforts to increase the number of women and under-represented minorities in our graduate programs. He has asked for recommendations of programs to improve the graduate experience for all our students. In addition, the Task Force will assess the role of the Graduate School in advancing graduate education.

#### H. Provost's Initiative on USC's Information Services

Provost Nikias is concerned that the present information service structure potentially sacrifices its customer service focus, and he has proposed a new federated system. This customer-centric, market-driven service model will define the organization that delivers these services. There will

be some common services that the entire university will use, but beyond those, the individual units may select the specific services they need.

The Provost has made a commitment to effect a meaningful and timely change of information services and their associated governance and funding, which will allow USC to achieve its strategic goals. On September 7, 2005, Provost Nikias announced the creation of two independent committees that will examine future directions and strategies for the University's Information Services Division (ISD), which includes Information Technology Support Services and the USC Libraries, and he asked them to make recommendations for the next generation of the Information Services Division by December 31, 2005.

#### I. Provost's Initiative on Technologically-Enhanced Learning Capacity

The Provost wishes to jump start technology use to enhance interaction between students and faculty, particularly in large classes. Accordingly, he is helping to build at the University Park and Health Science Campuses 8 to 10 new classrooms like those in the Marshall School of Business and the Viterbi School of Engineering. All schools are expected to begin offering online and blended courses. Previously, the former Center for Learning encouraged experimentation by individual faculty, but the schools were not moving aggressively enough toward technologically-enhanced learning. Provost Nikias' strategy is to put the ownership and responsibility in the hands of the individual deans, so that they will be able to make decisions about what they want to achieve in their learning programs.

#### J. Center for Pedagogical Technology

Professor Eugene Bickers, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, is overseeing new Center for Pedagogical Technology (CPT) to coordinate the introduction of classroom technology which enhances, rather than diminishes, the student-faculty relationship. Working with the Center for Scholarly Technology and the Center for Excellence in Teaching, the Center for Pedagogical Technology (CPT) will explore the value added by web-casting, on-line assessment, and class-wide communication tools. Professor Bickers will provide better communication among the three centers and their constituencies, and he will avoid redundancy in their activities.

A Teaching with Technology Fund will support pilot courses which promote collaborative problem solving. Joint ventures with the Institute for Multimedia Literacy will result in the expansion of multimedia literacy into General Education courses in the undergraduate curriculum. The Center will aid in the development of courses which cross disciplinary boundaries and foster new research directions. An annual "Teaching with Technology Prize" also will be established.

#### K. Student Retention and Advisement

Student persistence has improved significantly over the past several years at USC. Each semester, the Office of Undergraduate Programs tracks the enrollment of continuing students and has worked closely with academic units to maximize the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> year graduation rates.

The academic units have been responsible for reviewing transcripts, contacting students, and interfacing with the Office of Degree Progress in order to maximize graduation rates for each cohort. Data has been assembled on undergraduate retention, beginning with freshmen entering USC in Fall 1995, which provide positive evidence that year-to-year retention has increased steadily and 6<sup>th</sup> year graduation rates have risen to 83%.

The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Elizabeth Garrett, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, Eugene Bickers, and the Vice President for Student Affairs, Michael Jackson, will be overseeing additional data gathering efforts to determine where retention challenges manifest themselves. One area of exploration will be how 4<sup>th</sup> year retention figures are distorted by longer degree programs, such as Engineering, Business and Architecture. Another area to be explored is any delay in graduation experienced by students who are encouraged to enroll in majors and minors or to enroll in double majors. During the WASC accreditation review, Professor Garrett hopes to obtain better understand of this key indicator of institutional capacity.

Evaluating advising and improving the University's ability to provide tactical and strategic advising is a high priority. The Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, Gene Bickers, is developing "First Contact" activities designed to bring faculty and students together for mentoring during the freshman year. He also will develop opportunities for strategic mentoring of groups of undergraduates on the subject of career choice, e.g., a "Thinking About..." series in which faculty panels will discuss their own experiences in planning for medical school, law school, MBA programs, and Ph.D. degrees. This will complement the Provost's newly-announced Arts and Humanities Initiatives. Additional projects related to these Initiatives are likely to be identified during the next few years before the capacity review.

#### L. University Committee on Academic Review (UCAR)

Academic program review consists of peer reviews of the University's academic units and programs on a seven-year cycle. The purpose is to foster academic excellence, to determine how to raise the quality of every department to a higher level, and to provide guidance for administrative decisions. A critique of each department's or school's plans and recommendations for constructive change are provided by faculty peers from the best programs in the field at other leading universities (External Review Committees) and by senior faculty from other units at USC (Internal Review Committees). Reports are discussed by UCAR and distributed to the Provost, the Dean, and the department chair for distribution to the unit's faculty. Post-review planning meetings are held among representatives of the department, the Provost's Office and the relevant Dean. Fifty-seven academic units have been reviewed during the first six years, and a final set of reviews is being organized for this academic year. The second cycle of program reviews, UCAR Phase 2, is being planned. We are working to assess the first phase so that we can improve the UCAR process in the future, obtaining better information about certain key priorities for the University in a way that most efficiently uses faculty time and energy.

## **Section V: Approach for the Educational Effectiveness Review**

**A pillar of USC’s vision for the future is the development of learner-centered education. The needs of learners are at the heart of the theme of “Seeking New Ways to Effect Learning.” The special emphasis of the Educational Effectiveness Review will be on the University’s ability to gain deeper understanding of student learning, to gain wider and more systematic engagement of the faculty in assessing learning, and to develop more varied and creative methods to effect learning.**

USC realizes that how we gather evidence of learning by our students and how the faculty uses that evidence of learning to modify and improve instruction in all its forms is a focus of the standards for accreditation.

We will endeavor to appropriately apply WASC’s four principles of evidence that may be applicable across a wide range of settings:

- Evidence should cover knowledge and skills taught throughout the program’s curriculum.
- Evidence should involve multiple judgments of student performance.
- Evidence should provide information on multiple dimensions of student performance.
- Evidence should involve more than surveys or self-reports of competence and growth by students.

We are aware that the Commission's intent is to apply standards of accreditation that are rigorous, but also holistic in scope and flexible in application, and that appropriate evaluation should not consist of a detailed checklist of compliance with every standard and criterion for review for every program and initiative. The Commission encourages multi-faceted approaches that are creative and adaptive to each institution's needs. Thus, there is no intention to require specific methods of evaluation or assessment by each institution; rather experimentation is encouraged as is the sharing of results with others within the institution and 'good practices' across institutions. We also believe that any effort should take account of the unique context of USC as an elite research university that has made remarkable progress over the last decade and plans to accelerate the momentum toward excellence.

Several initiatives have been started at USC and are expected to provide momentum behind the new ways to effect learning and help students prepare for a rapidly changing world. We want to follow some of the creative experiments listed below over the next four years and see how they evolve. These initiatives are only illustrative of the University’s efforts to gain deeper understanding of student learning and to explore effective methods of assessing learning. The strategy of assessment and techniques used will differ in each case according to their context, and several of these pilot efforts are still defining how they will evaluate actual student work and learning results.

The challenge will be to apply the lessons learned in these creative hot spots to more widespread change at the school and institutional level. The desired outcome will be the creation of examples of good teaching practices and appropriate assessment strategies that can be distributed throughout the University and will be used by many faculty members in many departments. The

amount of institutional change also will be monitored and presented to WASC during the Educational Effectiveness review.

#### A. Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum

Critical thinking is a core objective of a liberal education and a goal motivating the development of new learning-centered pedagogies. The evaluation of the development of critical thinking during the early years of the USC undergraduate experience will be a focus of inquiry. What is needed is a system that allows us to assess, as much as possible, the development in critical thinking that students demonstrate between the freshman and junior years during a time when they are primarily engaged in their general education classes. The effect cannot be isolated to general education classes exclusively, but it can provide insight into the net effect of the USC college experience. This is in itself an admirable goal. According to Dr. Ernest Pascarella, *Mary Louise Petersen Professor of Higher Education at the University of Iowa*, "Studies that measure the value added of college are the gold standard of higher education assessment. The challenge is to find a practical way to assess critical thinking development; indeed, it is likely we can never fully measure in an objective way the development of this critical facility. USC College is well situated to develop some aspects of such an evaluation system, and the structure of our writing program provides an excellent opportunity to gather the some of the relevant data about critical thinking. Instead of subjecting students to repeated testing, their class papers in Writing 140 and Writing 340 can be the source of data. A reliable, non-invasive measure has been designed that can be used to measure the development of critical thinking on a campus-wide basis. Through support provided by the College and the Provost's Office, readers have been hired to score sample papers from both Writing 140 and Writing 340 classes. Stage One of the project should demonstrate the viability of the rubric and assessment process. Although this project focuses only on one aspect of critical thinking and analysis, we believe it is a promising new assessment technique that may have broader applicability.

#### B. Encouraging Innovation and Interdisciplinarity in the Undergraduate Curriculum

Undergraduate education at USC is a high priority, and the focus of this WASC review. A powerful and unique component of learner-centered education at USC is our focus on "breadth-with-depth" in our undergraduate program. No problem can be solved with the tools of just one discipline, and solutions are more likely to be found by combining interdisciplinary lenses on problems. Under this rubric, all of our undergraduates are encouraged to stretch themselves intellectually and professionally by taking at least one minor or second major. Information will be gathered on the number of students registered for minors or double majors, the clarity of learning goals (both content knowledge and intellectual skills) for minors, and the evidence that these educational outcomes and skills have been achieved. We will also look at the broader effect of taking minors such the effect on employment and admission to graduate school, overall satisfaction with the undergraduate experience, and delays in graduation and possible reduction in co-curricular involvement that may result from the additional workload. In addition, we will examine the relative benefits of taking a minor that is "as far removed as possible across the academic landscape from their major as possible," as is encouraged by USC's Renaissance Scholar Program, and compare the benefits to a minor that is more closely-related to one's major.

An example of encouraging students to expand their horizons and increase the rigor of their programs has been through the Accelerated Dual Degree Programs that allow outstanding students to begin work on a master's degree while still completing the requirements for a bachelor's degree. In response to a recent upsurge of interest in these programs, an alternative approach, the Progressive Degrees model, has been proposed and approved by the Graduate and Professional Studies Committee, and it will replace the Accelerated Dual Degree Programs in most cases.

Departmental faculty need to be engaged in assessing whether they have articulated learning outcomes for their degree programs. To ensure that graduates consistently achieve stated levels of attainment and expectations for student learning, the faculty of every school needs to begin aligning course work and projects in individual classes, and the assessment of student work, with the degree outcomes they desire. Faculty need to review the effectiveness of capstone courses to integrate the intellectual content of degree programs needs and to consider the utility of expanding the use of capstone courses beyond honors classes. Several groups of faculty have developed or are in the process of developing measures of learning outcomes in their disciplines. The challenge will be to apply the lessons learned in these creative hot spots to more widespread application, where appropriate, throughout the University.

- The Institute for Multimedia Literacy has developed an Honors in Multimedia Scholarship (HMS) Program, which is an innovative four-year program for select students who are interested in new forms of scholarship and research. Honors students experience first-hand what it means to be a scholar in a media rich, technologically enhanced age. Working closely with USC faculty, they create new forms of knowledge using a range of digital media. For their senior year, students participate in a two-semester capstone thesis seminar, where they plan and implement an advanced multimedia thesis project. An evaluation plan is being created to provide ongoing, systematic information that can be used to strengthen the existing program and demonstrate the program's impact on students' learning. An important element of the evaluation design is the development of the Multimedia Profile Framework, which will define the key elements of multimedia literacy, scholarship, and pedagogy. The Framework will be used to design data collection instruments and to track the changes that occur among the various Honors cohorts and partnering faculty as the program is implemented over time.
- The Department of Electrical Engineering in the Viterbi School of Engineering responded to the ABET accreditation review last year with capstone design courses. Five pilot capstone courses were given to students enrolled in four areas of Electrical Engineering. A Capstone Design Course Committee established a uniform format, including: a single project topic for all students in the course; four competing student teams; a project proposal for the development and design of a "product;" inclusion of ethics, economics, manufacturability, and environmental impact in each team's proposal; and a final design presented in both oral and written form. The teams held a case competition before an independent panel of judges from industry to evaluate the quality of the design and to demonstrate the achievement of program outcomes. The Department has plans to continue to refine its assessment techniques.

- The School of Dentistry has developed a problem-based learning program to provide problem-solving skills in a clinical setting to all students enrolled in the DDS program. Curricular learning outcomes were developed by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine and approved by the American Dental Association Council on Dental Accreditation. The emphasis is on clinical observation and small group learning experiences. Learning outcomes include self-motivated learning, skills in the techniques of problem solving in a clinical setting, preparation to handle future advances in dental therapy and care delivery, ability to make medical presentations about patients, effectiveness in group environments, and highly skilled in the delivery of outstanding dental health care. Individual meetings are held each trimester by PBL faculty to communicate with each student about her/his progress.

Even though efforts such as these are encouraging, they are too few in number for a school as large as USC. Most schools contributed a list of ways that learning outcomes are assessed (see Table 6, Educational Effectiveness Inventory), it is clear from looking over those lists that the understanding of how learning outcomes should be measured varies considerably across the institution. Thus, one major goal we have for the next few years is to increase that level of understanding. As the level of understanding increases, we also expect to observe a significant increase in the number and quality of learning outcomes assessment efforts in each school.

#### C. Creative Uses of Technology

- The Center for Pedagogical Technology (CPT) will help to coordinate the introduction of classroom technology which enhances, rather than diminishes, the student-faculty relationship. Working with the Center for Scholarly Technology and the Center for Excellence in Teaching, CPT will fund pilot courses which promote collaborative problem solving, primarily in the large General Education courses. The Center also will aid in the development of courses which cross disciplinary boundaries and foster new research directions, and will explore the value added by webcasting, on-line assessment, and class-wide communication tools. Another project in the planning stages involves bringing Multimedia Literacy approaches into more of the General Education classes, building on two strengths of USC – our core curriculum and our path-breaking Institute for Multimedia Literacy. As all these projects develop, we will assess and oversee them.
- Since 2000, the Fund for Innovative Undergraduate Teaching has funded 35 projects, and all projects contain evaluation strategies with measurable outcomes for student learning. In addition, projects which have the potential to serve as models for other courses, and projects which cross disciplinary lines and foster collaboration among faculty from different units, have been given a competitive edge. Very successful projects include: a Multimedia Learning Tool for Age-Related Diseases (Gerontology); and AngeLingo, Interdisciplinary Online Journal (USC College Writing Program); a Virtual Child Website (Psychology); Moot Court Simulations (Political Science); and Illumin, an On-Line Multimedia Engineering Journal. This year, the Fund has additional resources to distribute and will focus its attention on the classes taken primarily by first-year students.

#### D. Service Learning and Intellectually-Centered Student Culture

- Over 80 undergraduate courses at USC contain a community-placement component that is used to generate or test hypotheses or apply research findings in a real world setting. The Strategic Plan notes that the University will ask every school and department to incorporate one or more appropriately designed service-learning courses into its undergraduate curriculum. The goal is to expand the opportunities for every undergraduate student to enroll in service-learning courses related to the students' core education, including her major, her minor, and her research. The potential benefits for students include heightened self-involvement in the learning process; a deeper, more critical understanding of course materials; acquisition of new skills; better preparation for graduate and professional education or careers; a more vivid appreciation of civic responsibilities; greater cross-cultural awareness; self awareness; fostering core ethical commitments; and a better understanding of the reciprocal linkages between theory and practice. The Service-Learning Subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Committee has recommended that the University conduct systematic assessments to determine if these goals are being achieved.
- The new strategic plan for the Division of Student Affairs is based to a large extent on the assumption that learning occurs as a result of diverse experiences and that it is possible to articulate and assess that learning. Student Affairs contributes to creating intellectually centered experiences for students by partnerships with faculty, including the Academic Culture Initiative, residential college and resident faculty programs, and emeriti faculty mentoring. Student Affairs also sponsors activities which keep intellectual and academic achievement as a central focus, including honor societies, academic recognition programs, and the Spectrum series. Specific learning outcomes for students have been identified, and the Division proposes to collect verifiable evidence in a systematic manner. Developing a Division-wide program of assessment will provide essential feedback for the strategic plan, clear evidence of the Division's value to the academic mission of USC, and a link to WASC's Standards of Accreditation that require "an understandable and coherent plan for assessing the attainment of educational objectives."
- Provost Nikias is interested in creating the best possible environment and culture for education, for transformation. He wishes to affirm what is most essential and most enduring within the human spirit through a renewal of the arts and humanities on our campuses. A new, university-wide Provost's Arts and Humanities Initiative, to be led by the Executive Vice Provost, has been announced that will arrange film festivals, humanities lectures, art exhibitions, and musical performances – not merely to entertain our students, not even just to inspire them, but to challenge them. Every event sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Initiative must be accompanied by a lecture or panel discussion that illuminates how the performance helps us better understand the core values of an academic community. Southern California has become one of the world's premier cultural crossroads, and the Provost will provide incentives for our students to attend events at some of the more than 100 theaters in L.A., as well as its many museums and performing arts centers. USC will form partnerships with these institutions to host

USC nights with discussions and lectures to amplify a performance's relationship to USC's values. Assessment of this initiative will occur along several or all of the following dimensions:

- the extent to which students from a wide variety of majors participate in the initiative;
- the number or range of conversations that students have with one another about art, music, and theater;
- reading of and discussions about critical evaluations of texts, performances, and exhibitions;
- appreciation of the cultural arts;
- level of engagement with and enjoyment of art, music, and drama;
- familiarity with the major players in the arts & humanities who have been brought to campus;
- understanding of USC's core values and level of critical thinking skills;
- overall satisfaction with the USC academic experience.



October 12, 2005

**Steven B. Sample**

President and  
Robert C. Packard  
Professor

Mr. Ralph Wolff  
Executive Director  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges  
985 Atlantic Avenue  
Suite 100  
Alameda, California 94501

Dear Ralph:

The University of Southern California is pleased that the cycle of accreditation review by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) coincides with the implementation of USC's 2004 Strategic Plan for "Building Strategic Capabilities for the University of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." We have been able to design an institutional proposal that aligns the accreditation process with USC's institutional priorities and directions for development. These are issues of consequence to the university and the process will be taken seriously.

We will utilize the accreditation review process to demonstrate that USC is committed to developing and sustaining all the elements of institutional capacity and educational effectiveness that are incorporated in WASC's four Standards of Accreditation. We stipulate that the information that is presented in the proposal and the data in the appendices are accurate and represent the institution fairly.

USC publishes its policies on the university's website and makes them publicly available, including the policies on academic freedom, due process, affirmative action, and conflicts of interest. All of the policies listed in Appendix I of the WASC *Handbook of Accreditation* do exist at USC and are available for review on request throughout the period of accreditation.

USC will abide by procedures adopted by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities to meet the federally mandated regulations of the U.S. Department of Education as outlined in Section VI of the *Handbook*.

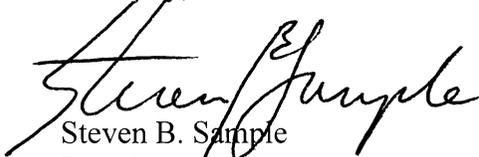
USC will submit all regularly required data, and any data specifically requested by the commission during the period of accreditation.

Mr. Ralph Wolff  
October 12, 2005  
Page Two

The university has reviewed its off-campus programs and degree programs offered by distance learning and determined that they have been approved by the Substantive Change Committee of WASC, when such approval was appropriate because proposed programs represented significant departures, in either content or method of delivery, from past practice. In order to challenge USC students on our campus and beyond in a more learner-centered environment, we will be continuing to innovate with technologically enhanced pedagogy, building on the current use of technology in our academic programs. We look forward to discussing and evaluating our use of technology in our academic programs as part of this accreditation review.

I believe that USC's experimental 1997-1998 accreditation review benefited both USC and WASC. It added momentum to the rate of change at this institution, and it helped WASC create a more responsive model for accreditation and embedded the spirit of experimentation into WASC's activities. I hope that our partnership will be as productive in the next four years as it was last time.

Sincerely,



Steven B. Sample  
President

## **Appendix B: Role and Mission Statement**

*Adopted by the USC Board of Trustees, February, 1993.*

The central mission of the University of Southern California is developing individuals and society as a whole by cultivating and enriching the human mind and spirit. The principal means through which we accomplish our mission are teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice and selected forms of public service.

Our first priority as faculty and staff is the education of our students, from freshmen to postdoctoral students, through a broad array of academic, professional, extracurricular and athletic programs of the first rank. The integration of liberal and professional learning is one of USC's special strengths. We strive constantly for excellence in teaching knowledge and skills to our students, while at the same time helping them to acquire wisdom and insight, love of truth and beauty, moral discernment, understanding of self, and respect and appreciation for others in our diverse society.

Research of the highest quality by our faculty and students is fundamental to our mission. USC is one of a very small number of premier academic institutions in which research and teaching are inextricably intertwined, and on which the nation depends for a steady stream of new knowledge, art, and technology. Our faculty members are not simply teachers of the works of others, but active contributors to what is taught, thought and practiced throughout the world.

Like our city of Los Angeles, USC is pluralistic, welcoming outstanding men and women of every race, creed and background. We are a global institution in a global center, attracting more international students over the years than any other American university. And we are private, little affected by political control, strongly committed to academic freedom, and proud of our entrepreneurial heritage.

An extraordinary closeness and willingness to help one another are evident among USC students, alumni, faculty, and staff; indeed, for those within its compass the Trojan Family is a genuinely supportive community. Alumni, trustees, volunteers and friends of USC are essential to this family tradition, providing generous financial support, participating in university governance, and assisting students at every turn.

In our surrounding neighborhoods and around the globe, USC provides public leadership and public service in such diverse fields as health care, economic development, social welfare, scientific research, public policy and the arts. We also serve the public interest as the largest private employer in the city of Los Angeles, as well as the city's largest export industry in the private sector.

USC has played a major role in the development of Southern California for more than a century, and plays an increasingly important role in the development of the nation and the world. We expect this leadership to continue to play these roles for many centuries to come. Thus our planning, commitments and fiscal policies are directed toward building quality and excellence in the long term.

## Appendix C: Effectiveness of Data Gathering and Analysis Systems

With an eye toward developing a culture of evidence, USC has substantially improved its data gathering, analysis, and reporting systems since our last accreditation cycle. Major improvements include:

1. Establishment of the position of Academic Information Officer (AIO). This person, reporting to the Executive Vice Provost, oversees the quality of student data, prepares institutional reports for external audiences, ensures consistency in internal and external reporting, and provides analytical support for the senior administration.
2. Creation of a “Data Team.” Instead of an Office of Institutional Research, a group of analysts from various offices work with the AIO to provide USC with the analytic support necessary to further the University’s mission. Offices represented include financial aid, admissions, the registrar’s office, the graduate school, and student affairs.
3. Improvements to the Annual Data Portfolio. Now in its third generation, this analytical tool has been designed to provide the Provost and academic deans with information that enhances decision-making in a variety of areas including the annual planning cycle, enrollment planning, and academic program review. It includes high quality longitudinal and cross-sectional data on a variety of topics: admissions, enrollment/student characteristics, retention/graduation, student attitudes, courses taught, faculty composition, finances & extramural funding.
4. Creation of the position of Director of Enrollment Management Research. This person, reporting to the Dean of Admission & Financial Aid, is responsible for increasing the empirical soundness of the admissions strategy with an eye toward bringing in not only a highly-talented entering class but also one that is highly receptive to the type of undergraduate education offered at USC.
5. Development of a program of survey research designed to comprehensively assess the undergraduate experience. Elements of this program include:
  - a. Surveying entering transfer students as well as entering freshmen;
  - b. Assessing student engagement in and out of the classroom via the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ);
  - c. Design of a Senior Survey that, combined with the Entering Student Survey, can measure change over time in perceived learning, personal growth, values, and goals.
6. Several improvements have also occurred concerning data and graduate education:
  - a. Administration of the first comprehensive survey of the graduate/professional student population;
  - b. Introduction of a Graduate Data by Program version of the Annual Data Portfolio. This report includes information on admissions, enrollment and degrees by graduate program and includes a five-year summary. Based on this, graduate data

reports have also been developed that provide support for Academic Program Review;

- c. Online submission of Master's and Doctoral theses. This change provides makes it possible for deans and departmental chairs to more closely monitor the process of granting graduate degrees.
7. Creation of online tools for the dissemination of student information to the university community. Included are:
- a. Student Outcomes Research web site. Provides the results of various student surveys and serves as a portal for the administration of online surveys.
  - b. University Fact Book. Provides descriptive information regarding all enrolled students and first-time freshmen.
  - c. Admissions reports. These reports, which are revised each week during the admissions cycle, provide invaluable information about the progress toward recruiting goals as well information about the incoming class (e.g., academic quality, ethnic composition, geographic distribution).
  - d. MyUSC student portal. This portal is capable of providing students with personalized information pertaining to their academic progress, relevant survey results, and upcoming opportunities for learning.

Although substantial improvements have been made in USC's data gathering, analysis, and reporting systems, our goal is to make several significant improvements in the years to come. Some of the areas that need to be addressed include:

1. Online site for the assessment of learning outcomes. Although there is a growing appreciation for measuring learning outcomes among USC faculty and student affairs personnel, there is at present no mechanism for faculty and staff to share their learning outcomes assessment experiences with one another or for those interested in assessing learning outcomes to develop the necessary skills. A learning outcomes web site would provide perhaps the best opportunity for an exchange of information among faculty and staff. The costs and benefits of such a tool will be assessed as the institution thinks broadly about assessment techniques during this accreditation cycle.
2. Enhanced coordination of student data. Due in large part to USC's decentralized organizational structure, student data is currently located in numerous "silos" across campus with little connection or coordination among them. Ideally, a central repository of student information could be developed that would "mirror" the student data contained in various silos. At a minimum, we need to develop a "road map" to let those interested in learning about USC students know where they need to go to get the information they need.
3. Consider developing a "drill-down" capability for mission-critical data tables. Currently, faculty or staff interested in demographic breakdowns of the student population or examining academic outcomes such as grade-point average, graduation rates or time-to-degree for specific groups of students must request custom analyses. This inefficient process could be improved by automating such requests via "drill-

down” technology. This change could result in an increased use of student data in decision-making. USC will begin to consider the desirability of developing this capability.

4. Administration of alumni surveys. An alumni survey is one of the best ways to track student success after graduation. The last comprehensive survey of USC’s alumni occurred in 1995. The Provost and the school deans will consider the possibility of adding alumni surveys to the University’s and/or to the schools’ responsibilities for regular data collection.

### Appendix D: Work Plan and Milestones

	<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Phase II Capacity</b>	<b>Phase III Educational Effectiveness</b>
Fall 2005	<b>Complete institutional proposal by October 15;</b> Review by WASC staff Conference call with Proposal Review Committee, November 30	Distribute institutional proposal to 14 task forces and committees that are reflecting on capacity issues.	
Spring 2006	Approval by Commission	Gather task force reports.  <b>Appoint Capacity Working Group</b>  Working Group analysis of WASC's standards and USC's institutional capacity	Develop program of survey research to assess the undergraduate experience;  Create online tool for assessment of learning outcomes;  Begin regular alumni survey; begin survey of graduate students
Spring 2007		Capacity Working Group evaluates progress on capacity; drafts reflective essays; and circulates draft "Preparatory Review" document to Academic Senate, Student Senate, Deans, Academic Councils, and Departments	EE Working Group collects Year 2 data on major EE initiatives and places on website;  EE Working Group evaluates success of assessment strategies and distributes best practices to all deans and departments.  Modify course information in the Student Information System;  Develop analytical version of STARS report.

			Administer second set of alumni and graduate student surveys
Fall 2007		<p>Capacity Working Group refines reflective essays;</p> <p>Evaluates data portfolio exhibits;</p> <p>Writes concluding essay;</p> <p><b>USC submits Capacity Report to WASC</b> 12 weeks before site visit (35 pages plus appendices)</p>	<p>EE Working Group evaluates success of assessment strategies;</p> <p>Automate analyses of mission-critical data tables</p>
Spring 2008		<p><b>Capacity visit by WASC team;</b> USC's institutional response to team report; Commission action;</p> <p>Decision on 18 or 24 months before EE review.</p>	<p>EE Working Group collects Year 3 data on major EE initiatives and places on website;</p> <p>EE Working Group evaluates success of assessment strategies and distributes best practices to all deans and departments.</p>
Fall 2008			EE Working Group prepares reflective essays on educational effectiveness
Spring 2009			EE Working Group collects Year 4 data on major EE initiatives and places on website;

			EE Working Group revises reflective essays and circulates draft Educational Effectiveness Review to Academic Senate, Student Senate, Deans, and Academic Councils for feedback;
Fall 2009			<b>USC submits Educational Effectiveness Report</b> – 12 weeks before site visit (50 pages plus exhibits and appendices)  <b>Visit by WASC team;</b> USC's institutional response to team report; Commission action
Spring 2010			<b>Alternate date for visit by WASC team</b>

## **Appendix E: Data Exhibits**