UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Institutional Report for the WSCUC Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
January 6, 2021

Remote Site Visit – March 3-5, 2021

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COMPONENT 1: INTRODUCTION

From its founding in 1880, the University of Southern California evolved quickly from a traditional liberal arts college to a college that housed a school of music, college of medicine, and programs in law, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, education, and several social sciences. By 1930, a graduate school, and schools of architecture, fine arts, social work, business, international relations, and cinematic arts were added.

USC's rapid growth and the diversity of its programs are inseparable from its history as the first institution of higher learning in Southern California, serving the population of a rapidly-developing region seeking to combine a traditional education in arts and letters with applied and professional training to create new academic paradigms. USC's School of Cinematic Arts, for example, was founded in 1929 by members of Los Angeles' burgeoning film industry. As the first filmmaking program in the nation, the school brought together the worlds of art and commerce, technology, creativity, and critical inquiry to create an entirely new field of study around the powerful medium of film. The university's connection to the region is similarly reflected in the Keck School of Medicine, formerly USC College of Medicine, established in 1885 as the region's first medical school. Keck faculty and residents have continued to staff the Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center (LAC+USC) since its opening in 1933. The largest single provider of healthcare in Los Angeles County, LAC+USC remains one of the busiest public hospitals in the nation.

Because of its special history and location in one of the most dynamic regions of the United States, USC prides itself on being an institution with a long tradition of bringing together disparate academic areas and fields of study to respond to emerging opportunities and to create new ventures. Inquiry into the relationship between discrete bodies of knowledge is a defining feature of our institutional identity, while reflections on their differences define our academic pursuits. Today, with USC encompassing 23 distinct academic units across the spectrum of liberal arts, health, professional, and arts disciplines, the university continues its tradition of nurturing an academic community that responds to the complex and unscripted challenges and opportunities that characterize the modern world.

This accreditation process occurs at a time of dramatic and rapid change at USC driven by a new administration that took its place at the initial stages of this accreditation review, a set of revelations that led to governance changes across the university and the launching and undertaking of a culture journey. Through the COVID-19 pandemic and recent social unrest that has swept the nation and Los Angeles, there has been a constancy of commitment to prepare the next generation of leaders and professionals, pursue a research program that positively impacts the nation, deliver clinical care that is recognized as among the best in the country while serving the neediest, and serve the public good. As demonstrated by this document and its appendices , despite these upheavals, USC remains an anchor institution in Los Angeles with strong academic programs, extensive public outreach, and longstanding community service partnerships.

This Institutional Report was assembled from the activities of the Accreditation Steering Committee drawn from across the campus that, following WSCUC guidelines, assembled data providing evidence for program strength and depth, developed answers to questions posed by WSCUC, and undertook deep and reflective studies of two thematic areas.

The remainder of this section outlines: 1) USC's institutional context, including its history and organization; 2) institutional values, including distinct elements of the USC educational experience, how we address diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the myriad ways we serve the public good; 3) selection of our institutional themes; and, 4) responses to earlier commission recommendations.

1. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Modern research universities emerged in response to – and helped propel – the social, political, and economic revolutions that transformed the nation and the world over the last 150 years. USC was born in this period. From its founding, USC consciously declared itself not a "pastoral college" removed from the world of human affairs, but a "city university" connected to the world of human affairs, to advancing society, and to elevating humanity. USC and Los Angeles grew and evolved symbiotically, each nurturing and succeeding because of the other – and over the past 140 years, both in their own ways, have grown into global powerhouses. USC's new vision builds on this legacy.

Three elements situate USC in the world of higher education. First, we are a large private research university consisting of a multidimensional and diverse liberal arts college, innovative professional schools, and a mix of conservatory-quality arts schools. Second, the university is set in the heart of the global metropolis of Los Angeles, arguably the most diverse urban center in the world in terms of ethnicity, gender identity, religious practice, language use, artistic expression, national origin, economics, and other key markers of urban centers. Third, USC's college and schools share a commitment to liberal education, as reflected in our principal institutional mission, "…the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit." These three elements are reflected in almost every part of the university's values, makeup, and history.

The combination of a liberal arts college, professional units, and arts schools has made USC a leader in promoting interdisciplinary teaching and research that address societal needs. USC's institutional makeup and location in Los Angeles, and on the Pacific Rim, have helped create a culture that rewards entrepreneurship, encourages global engagement, and values diversity. With the arrival of new leadership with a new vision that builds on institutional history and leans in to the future, USC is well positioned to push forward.

2. INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

With strong leadership from President Carol L. Folt, USC embarked on its Culture Journey, a university-wide initiative to explore our values, align supportive behaviors that bring those values to life, and develop opportunities to improve our systems. This was an inclusive process including a survey to which 20,000 Trojans responded and 175 Town Halls and Culture Sessions with over 4,400 participants. In November, President Folt announced to the USC community our six unifying values to guide our actions as we unite to achieve our mission:

- *Integrity*: We do the right thing
- *Excellence*: We bring our best selves
- *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*: We all belong
- *Well-being*: We honor the whole person
- *Open Communication*: We share openly and honestly
- *Accountability*: We take responsibility

The values we have developed are the foundation we will use to achieve our goals. These are aligned around four pillars:

- [Access and Affordability](): "to open our doors wider for students from all backgrounds."
- [Sustainability](): "to take on sustainability, like never before, and build expertise that can reach around the world."
- [Environmental and Racial Equity](): "to deepen our public partnerships, and become the leading university in reimaging the urban future."
- Leading the Imagination Economy: "to leverage the formidable talent of our faculty and schools, by pursuing bold ideas in areas where USC has a distinct advantage."

USC is comprehensive in the domains of human knowledge and experience reflected in the research and educational programs offered. These pillars provide narrative and direction to enable these programs to share a common sense of purpose and to align in developing joint initiatives for advancement.

3. SELECTION OF INSTITUTIONAL THEMES

Once USC was approved to participate in the Thematic Program review, TPR, meetings were held with the Provost and Executive Vice Provost to discuss an approach that would align the themes to the priorities in the most recent strategic plan. USC's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) was asked to draft a set of possibilities for discussion. Those options were debated first with the Provost's Leadership Team. Discussions continued with members of the Executive Vice Provost's leadership team and other key campus stakeholders. After further revision, the themes were discussed by members of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate. The themes were later reviewed at a special session at the WSCUC Academic Resource Conference that included other TPR institutions. The Provost approved a final version that was discussed at two consecutive sessions with Interim President Wanda Austin's Leadership Team where the themes were subsequently adopted.

Our themes reflect the history and aspirations of USC and enable exploration of areas of activity that are embedded in the pillars on which we will build into the future. First, we chose to undertake a deep look at the programs and practices that lead USC to **embrace the inclusive spirit.** Programs

that enhance inclusivity enable us to pursue excellence, ensure equity, and build prosperity. In a time of disruption across higher education, and as we rethink how the comprehensive programs at USC can be aligned to address current challenges, we chose to explore how our programs **embrace the convergent spirit**. Intellectual and cultural challenges embedded in the four pillars require us to reimagine the curriculum, build collaborations within and beyond the academy, create new knowledge, address the world's most intractable social challenges, and prepare graduates to face those challenges with optimism, creativity, and purpose. In Components 8.1 and 8.2 below, we discuss these themes. Also, please see Appendix 1.01 (Team Reference Materials), Appendix 1.02 (Student Enrollments), and Appendix 1.03 (Students Success) for contextual information and data.

4. RESPONSES TO EARLIER COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summarizes our responses to previous Commission recommendations from our ten-year reaccreditation in 2011, a special visit in 2015, and our Mid-Cycle Review in 2016.

2011 COMPREHENSIVE REACCREDITATION REVIEW: RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

"Continue development of assessment and program review"
   a) We now conduct university-wide assessment of core competencies with partners in General Education, the USC Writing Program, and USC Libraries, some of which are national exemplars for innovative and effective learning assessment.
   b) Program Learning Objectives (PLOs) are posted on all USC school websites – they can be viewed centrally here. Faculty buy-in has grown with regard to renewing, assessing, and publicizing PLOs. They recognize this as important to improving quality, increasing the efficacy of program review, and fostering a critical conversation with students and peers around the changing nature of disciplines and areas of study.
   c) We launched a new program review process devoted to undergraduate programs, in addition to our established University on Curricular Academic Review (UCAR) process, which now focuses solely on graduate programs.
   d) UCAR graduate program review has expanded to cover the USC's many Masters-level programs, most of which also undergo specialized accreditation reviews.

"Promote student success"
   e) USC's six-year graduation rates have stood at 91-92% from 2013-2019. As previously reported (2015), USC's graduation rates rose from 70% to 91% between 1998 and 2013.
   f) Disaggregated by various indices – i.e., race/ethnicity, international, socioeconomic status, area of study, gender, etc. – only one group falls more than 2 percentage points below the

university average (i.e., native Hawaiian/other). We always disaggregate retention and graduation numbers (see Appendix 1.03). We work diligently to raise rates for all students.

g) We have devised a four-pronged tactical approach to supporting student success: 1) All undergraduates have course plans devised with advisors to ensure a path to graduation. 2) Faculty identify students who are struggling by the midpoint of each term so advisors can reach out to those students. 3) Advisors follow-up with all students who fail to register for a subsequent term to ensure they stay on path to graduate. 4) Added financial support is provided to help seniors facing hardships complete their remaining course requirements.

"Study interdisciplinary learning: general education and minors"

h) General Education was redesigned, with a new program implemented in 2015.

i) The university offers well over 200 minors programs for students to choose from, which can be viewed loosely as discipline-based, topical, cross-disciplinary, or interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinary study and learning is examined in greater detail in Component 8.2.

2015 SPECIAL VISIT: RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

"Enhance program review"

j) We redesigned a process for Undergraduate Program Review (UPR). Undergraduate liberal arts majors were prioritized and each has gone through review, along with some student programs like Moot Court and our Language Center. Finally, all undergraduate professional and arts programs have been reviewed or are scheduled for review.

k) As noted above (d), UCAR graduate program review now includes USC's Masters-level programs, most of which also undergo specialized, programmatic accreditation reviews.

"Leverage institutional research capacity"

l) We consolidated several resources within the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), including research staff in the Registrar, Student Affairs, Admissions, and the Graduate School. Reporting lines related to IPEDS, rankings, and other governmental reporting were migrated to OIR. We purchased a Tableau server that has advanced our research capabilities and allowed us to roll out significant visualizations that help increase student success. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Tableau also allowed us to develop multiple enrollment tracking tools to monitor trends across all USC programs.

"Implement new general education requirements"

m) USC's new General Education program was implemented in 2015. See (h) above.

"Find ways to share experiences and expertise of USC faculty engaged in the assessment of student learning"

n) The USC Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) sponsors multiple events, discussions, and presentations on effective teaching, student learning, course learning objectives, and assessment. CET also sponsors multiple Institutes open to all faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral scholars that deepen the discussion of teaching, student learning, and educational effectiveness across disciplines and academic units.

o) Student learning assessment is integrated into the program review process. Program review is faculty-driven. Programs have access to baseline data from the Office of Institutional

Research on student registration, course performance, and graduation. Results of reviews are shared with faculty and discussed within the programs.

p) All new course and program proposals include written learning objectives which are reviewed by faculty on the University Committee on Curriculum.

q) Student learning, learning objectives, and assessment tools are regularly discussed and revised for online degree programs by members of the Online Learning Council.

r) Academic units discuss and analyze learning assessment findings to improve program quality and effectiveness. Assessment of student learning for the five competencies is discussed across campus by faculty engaged in assessment of critical thinking, writing and oral communication, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning.

"Eliminate barriers to interdisciplinary learning"

s) The Provost provides grants for interdisciplinary teaching.

t) USC has established several academies and societies to foster interdisciplinary learning.

u) We have created Interschool Research Centers that address important social challenges from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including USC Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience, USC Race and Equity Center, Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society, and Center for Human Applied Reasoning and the Internet of Things (CHARIOT).

v) The Provost established several university-wide steering committees on homelessness, sustainability and security, lifespan health, the arts and social change, and immigration to build cross-disciplinary approaches to solving urgent social challenges.

w) We established the Arts in Action program to leverage strength across the arts and other areas to promote social change, including communication and journalism, the humanities, public policy, and social work. In fewer than two years, USC has collaborated with two dozen non-profit organizations, local schools, and cultural institutions.

2016 Mid-Cycle Review

"Make more easily accessible on the website data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation and evidence of student learning"

x) We updated our USC Facts and Figures page to include data on student success and learning, including retention and graduation data, accessible from our main homepage. It also includes links to the College Navigator and College Scorecard for USC.

"Ensure that all academic programs have been reviewed or are scheduled for review"

y) All programs reviewed or scheduled for review can be viewed here.

2019 WSCUC Letter

"Changes in policies, practices, patterns and resolutions of complaints, and culture, including an update on the accomplishments of and challenges facing the Commitment to Change initiative, the President's Campus Culture Commission, and Campus Culture and Wellness Council"

z) See Component 8 on "Culture Change and Governance."

"Changes in roles, responsibilities, structure, membership and training of the USC Board of Trustees; verification that the Board complies with WSCUC Governing Board Policy"

aa) See Component 8 on "Culture Change and Governance."

COMPONENT 2: COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS

Component 1 highlights new leadership's vision for USC moving into the future, describes its institutional context, the extraordinary social conditions we and other institutions have had to navigate this year, the process of selecting our themes, and our responses to previous WSCUC recommendations. Component 2 asks that we show compliance with the WSCUC standards. The Accreditation Steering Committee formed a working group to collect information demonstrating how USC meets WSCUC's four standards:

1. Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives;
2. Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions;
3. Developing and Applying Resources and Organization Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability;
4. Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement.

The Steering Committee completed two WSCUC documents: the first is a comprehensive inventory of Program Learning Objectives (PLOs) for each of USC's over 400-degree programs. The second, the "Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet" that provides evidence for each of WSCUC's Criteria for Review (CFR) under the standards.

The ALO and an Instructional Designer from the USC Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) coordinated completion of the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI). The main parts of WSCUC's compliance document were completed by the working group and presented to the steering committee. Committee members helped to crosscheck the document against elements of the narrative in the institutional report. Both worksheets – the IEEI and the TPR compliance document are listed in this institutional report in the appendix:

- [Appendix 2.01 USC Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI)](#);
- [Appendix 2.02 Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements Form](#);
- Several additional appendices referenced within the Review under the Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements Form (i.e., [appendices 2.03-2.09](#)).

Synthesis/Reflection: Areas of Strength. At USC, PLOs are deeply tied to the academic core of the university. Completing the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI) required the

participation of deans, department chairs, program directors, and hundreds of faculty from our 23 academic units. Faculty involvement in this process is a point of pride for the university.

Our approach to designing and implementing PLOs engages faculty in the conversations critical to establishing and maintaining what a degree in a particular major signifies. In addition, learning objectives must be dynamic and change with societal shifts, the backgrounds of students, and new knowledge as it is developed in the discipline. We view the discussion of course and degree content by faculty and students as essential to ensuring high quality programs and continuous improvement, and is something we choose to nurture. Below we offer several examples of modes of assessment and how they are embedded in academic units.

1. USC has developed tools to aid in capturing quality of learning outcomes in standardized formats as an effort to ensure program quality. University-wide assessment through the Critical Thinking and Writing Project, as reported in Appendix 2.04, utilizes on direct evidence of student learning. The assessments include hundreds of writing samples taken directly from writing courses that all USC students complete; evaluators read the essays multiple times with no identifying data about their respective course sections, the instructor of record, the students enrolled, or their year in school. The assessment findings are discussed with department faculty and have led to important pedagogical changes to the Writing Program curriculum – for example, how to write a more effective prompt. More detail on this and other learning assessment programs are available here;

2. USC's six arts schools conduct comprehensive and multiple assessments of all students through regular recitals, performances, exhibitions, and screening of student work, and other performance showcases for which faculty evaluate student work at multiple points during a term and over their students' years of study. Many of these assessments are individual. Those evaluations are discussed widely and become the basis for change and continuous program improvements. For example, the School of Dramatic Arts revised its stage management curricula based on faculty discussions following a review of annual main stage productions. These practices have gone on for decades – in some cases, centuries – within the arts and are the standard used to obtain highly reliable, direct evidence of student learning;

3. For the past 10-years, USC has grown its online presence to over 110 graduate degree programs so working professionals across the nation can access the programs they need without interrupting their professional lives and/or clinical practices in order to move to Los Angeles to continue their educations. All online programs are required to provide learning objectives, to undergo regular program reviews, to complete course-mapping exercises, and to develop assessment plans. As these practices helped us better understand the online modality, they also led faculty to new insights into on-ground instruction. For example, how to structure more effective group projects and how to reimagine classroom spaces to increase participation and connection among students (See Appendix 1.04);

4. Over 20 programmatic accreditors review our schools and individual programs. The names of those organizations appear under CFR 2.1. They range from Architecture, Social Work, and Dentistry, to Engineering, Education, Business, and Public Policy;
5. Over the past 3-8 years since our last reaccreditation, we have upgraded greatly our Academic Program Review system. Our goal is to integrate evidence of student learning into program reviews at all levels of instruction – graduate and undergraduate. Most recently, we are proud of the work of our USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences for integrating learning assessment expectations for all undergraduate program reviews and for undergoing a recent course mapping exercise for all of their majors. Since 2013, every undergraduate liberal arts major has undergone program review, including extensive use of external reviewers;
6. We have significantly improved our institutional research capacity over the past five years. Research staff in the offices of the registrar, student affairs, admissions, academic information, and the graduate school have migrated into a new Office of Institutional Research. This centralized all reporting lines related to IPEDS, rankings, and other governmental reporting efforts. Prior to this, reports were scattered across campus. The purchase of a Tableau server was also important. This added capacity allowed us to develop multiple enrollment tracking tools to monitor trends across all our programs during the COVID-19 crisis.

USC has focused significant attention and resources on improving student success outcomes (e.g., retention, graduation, etc.) and these are examined in detail in other parts of this self-study (Components 8.1 and 8.2 and Appendix 1.03).

Synthesis/Reflection: Areas to Address. We are committed to having the standards used in assessment remain with the faculty in each program. At the same time the Office of the Provost provides tools to improve methods of assessment and assure the assessments are applied in a consistent and uniform manner. To this end, the USC Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) sponsors events on learning objectives, teaching excellence, and online pedagogy and assessment. Instructional Designers at CET, and across our academic units, work closely with faculty on course and syllabus design. As an example, over the summer of 2020, over 1,000 faculty members participated in CET programs designed to enhance online teaching for the Fall semester.

We are augmenting our efforts in advancing student success in three areas:

- First, we wish to increase access to USC, and to make the university more affordable for talented prospective students from underserved communities, and for others who lack the economic means to attend USC. In February 2020, USC President Folt announced a major initiative to make the university more affordable to undergraduate students from low and middle-income families. This $30-million increase in financial aid funding eliminates tuition for US families that earn $80,000 or less per year (to be phased in over

four years, beginning with the 2020 freshmen class). This increase in aid is in addition to the annual amount of financial aid awarded from all sources (including federal and state aid, loans, etc.), which stood at $681 million in 2019-2020. Of that total, $400 million comes from USC's own resources. These figures place the university at the top of all institutions providing need-based financial support for undergraduate students. Key to our success is close connections with high schools, college counselors, and prospective students and their parents to make them aware of those resources. (See Appendix 8.11)

- Second, we are intensifying our efforts to increase our 4-year graduation rates so undergraduates complete their programs in a timely fashion without sacrificing learning experiences they wish to pursue.
- Finally, we are redoubling our efforts to achieve experiential equity for all students, notably through our First Generation Plus Success Center, recently established by the new administration. With all the special programs and opportunities available to USC students, we want to find and close any opportunity gaps that may keep select groups of students from pursuing desired programs and experiences, especially first-generation, transfer, and low SES students, all of whom are served by the new Success Center

COMPONENT 8.1: EMBRACING THE INCLUSIVE SPIRIT

1. INTRODUCTION

The inclusive spirit – diversity, equity, and inclusion – has been a central part of USC's identity since its founding in 1880. Indeed, a female student, Minnie Miltimore, was the university's first valedictorian in 1884. In recent years, USC has restructured and developed robust initiatives to advance inclusivity. Among our current efforts is a look back on our history to better understand the context of why and how our buildings and monuments were named. Already, one prominent building on campus was renamed.

Our commitment to inclusion rests on the foundational value we place on supporting the diversity of cultures and backgrounds and the role USC plays in addressing discrimination and bigotry. Recognizing that our faculty and students are drawn from society at large where discrimination remains deeply embedded, we work to create an environment that reflects our values and to provide students, faculty, and staff with an example of an organization that operates in accordance with our values. Academic programs are built to embrace the diversity of human experiences with full recognition that better solutions are found when incorporating diverse perspectives. In addition, and through quite distinct programs, we are committed to being inclusive of those who have not had access to higher education through structural barriers based on race, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. To prepare students for success, we provide extracurricular experiences to ensure they feel welcomed and role models from diverse backgrounds who live by the values we hold. Below we provide a discussion of ongoing activities starting with administrative changes we are implementing, efforts to diversify the faculty and how academic programs embrace the inclusive spirit, and ending with the "Call to Action" which outlines actions launched in the Fall 2020 that will accelerate our efforts to enhance our inclusive spirit.

2. STRUCTURING EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Human Resources and Employee Relations. Following several high-profile incidents at the university, it was determined by the Board of Trustees that USC needs to restructure its human resources and employee relations operations. This began with the hiring of Senior Vice President

for Human Resources Felicia A. Washington and continues with the redesign of the HR structure. In accordance with USC's agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, the EEO and the Title IX functions have been reimagined, streamlined, and enhanced as part of the new Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) while new policies and procedures for reporting and addressing reports of protected class discrimination and harassment and related retaliation have been implemented. While these functions are managed centrally, the implementation is having a positive impact in each academic and administrative unit across campus by encouraging reporting and promoting awareness of rights and responsibilities. This build out of HR and equity functions will be an ongoing process over the next couple of years.

3. DIVERSIFYING OUR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Diversifying the faculty. The USC educational model holds that students are taught by role models. These individuals should reflect a diversity of background, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultures that represent the human experience. Achieving this goal remains a challenge. In 2018, the Provost invested $50 million to "Fostering our Diverse Community" – an initiative representing a joint effort by the Office of the Provost and the schools. The initiative has been implemented by the Executive Vice Provost's office, with the deans submitting proposals directly to the Executive Vice Provost. In each proposal, the school describes how an individual will contribute to, and/or promote, diversity in their field and how they will enhance the quality of the university's faculty. Deans may request matching funds for salary and/or start-up packages over up to 5 years. These new funds are used in the hiring and retention of new tenure-track and research, teaching, practitioner, and clinical faculty (RTPC), as well as postdoctoral fellows. Since fall 2018, we have committed just over $16 million of these allocated resources in response to proposals from 16 schools. The majority of this funding, nearly $12 million, has been committed to support the hiring of 36 new faculty at all ranks across 13 schools and in all three divisions of the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. These new hires are helping us improve the diversity of our faculty in areas experiencing historic underrepresentation.

The remaining $4 million has been committed to strengthening diversity within our dual-career initiative, helping schools hire the partners of faculty we have recruited, retaining strong faculty who are being recruited elsewhere, and supporting the diversification and advancement of our postdoctoral scholars.

In addition, the *Provost Assistant Professor Fellowship* program provides research stipends to select new assistant professors who contribute to diversity in the faculty ranks at USC.

TABLE 8.1: Comparison of 2020 versus 2010 Faculty by Track (T/TT v RTPC), Gender and Ethnicity
Tables based on IPEDS data
Data analysis date: 12.28.20

	Tenure/Tenure-Track (T/TT)			
	2020 Female	**2010 Female**	**2020 Male**	**2010 Male**
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0	2	0
	0.21%	0.00%	0.19%	0.00%
Asian	74	45	179	160
	15.85%	11.66%	17.38%	14.90%
Black or African American	20	18	26	22
	4.28%	4.66%	2.52%	2.05%
Decline to state	34	20	48	56
	7.28%	5.18%	4.66%	5.21%
Hispanic or Latino	30	17	43	28
	6.42%	4.40%	4.17%	2.61%
Nonresident alien	13	14	36	44
	2.78%	3.63%	3.50%	4.10%
Two or more races	8	0	18	0
	1.71%	0.00%	1.75%	0.00%
White	287	272	678	764
	61.46%	70.47%	65.83%	71.14%
TOTALS	**467**	**386**	**1030**	**1074**

	Research, Teaching, Practitioner, Clinician (RTPC)			
	2020 Female	**2010 Female**	**2020 Male**	**2010 Male**
American Indian or Alaskan Native	8	0	2	0
	0.51%	0.00%	0.14%	0.00%
Asian	358	134	333	166
	22.82%	19.34%	22.56%	19.01%
Black or African American	82	29	41	13
	5.23%	4.18%	2.78%	1.49%
Decline to state	67	47	78	65
	4.27%	6.78%	5.28%	7.45%
Hispanic or Latino	123	39	93	35
	7.84%	5.63%	6.30%	4.01%
Nonresident alien	30	19	50	50
	1.91%	2.74%	3.39%	5.73%
Two or more races	61	0	54	0
	3.89%	0.00%	3.66%	0.00%
White	840	425	825	544
	53.54%	61.33%	55.89%	62.31%
TOTALS	**1569**	**693**	**1476**	**873**

Training to Foster Diversity in Faculty Hiring. Each school at USC appoints a Diversity Liaison who participates on search committees at their respective schools and is responsible for ensuring that qualified candidates from underrepresented groups are identified.

Hiring a Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer. This will be a new senior-level position at the university that will be a member of the President's Senior Leadership Team. The university has launched a national search and expects to fill the position in early 2021.

Diversifying the student body. USC has enrolled more first-generation undergraduate students each Fall term since 2012, and well over 20% of graduate students at USC are the first in their families to attend college as well. First-generation undergraduate cohorts entering USC between 2009 and 2013 have a six-year graduation rate of over 91%. Similarly, the number of Pell grant recipients at USC has increased steadily since 2010, from 540 to 621, with 6-year graduation rates of this population at 90-94%.

TABLE 8.2: Undergraduate enrollment by race/ethnicity, 2010 and 2019

	2010 number	2010 percent	2019 number	2019 percent
Black/African American	771	4.44%	957	4.7%
Hispanic/Latinx	2372	13.65%	3124	15.35%
Asian American	3750	21.58%	4331	21.28%
White	7476	42.96%	7511	36.91%
International	1955	11.25%	2705	13.29%

With our new Affordability Initiative, we aim to raise diversity at USC even more. As reported in table 2 above, from 2010 to 2019 USC increased undergraduate enrollment of Black/African American students (771/4.44% 2010 to 957/4.7%), Hispanic/Latinx undergraduates (2372/13.65% to 3124/15.35%) and Asian American students (3750/21.58% to 4331/21.28%). White student enrollment remained relatively stable, but declined in percentage in 2010 and 2019 (7476/42.96% to 7511/36.91%). The enrollment of International undergraduate students increased during this time (1955/11.25% to 2705/13.29%). We are working to increase those numbers, of course, and in the process, improve the academic experience for all our students.

Providing Student Support. College access and pipeline programs represent the first step in helping historically underrepresented students. Many such programs exist at USC – for example, through the Graduate School's Diversity, Inclusion, and Access Initiative (DIA) provides multiple opportunities for underrepresented students to apply for 10-week summer research opportunities in various Ph.D. disciplines or to earn stipend top-off awards.

However, gaining access and helping to fund an education is not enough; with the goal of diversity comes the responsibility to support those students. The recent launch of the First Generation Plus Success Center now serves several populations, including first-generation, transfer, and DACA and UNDOC students, with added programming space for Black, Asian Pacific American, Latinx/Chicanx, Veteran, LGBTQ+, Native American and Middle Eastern students, Former Foster Youth, and students needing accessibility services. Prior to the new center, first-generation college students received bolstered support through Dornsife College, and through the

creation of our [Basic Needs Student Equity and Inclusion Programs](#) in 2019 that includes emergency aid, including the disbursal of CARES Act funding, a food pantry, and case management for housing insecure students. Finally, the Norman Topping Student Aid Fund provides scholarship and mentoring support to help students build knowledge and social capital in addition to the strengths and assets that first-generation college or low-income students bring to campus.

USC's numerous student cultural and identity centers – the first of which, [Latinx Chicanx Center for Advocacy and Student Affairs (LA CASA)](#), was established in 1972 – have provided some of the most active and sustained student support over the decades. The creation of LA CASA was soon followed by the development of the Black Student Services Department in 1977, now known as the [Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs](#). These initial centers were later joined by several other key centers, including [Asian Pacific American Student Services](#), the [LGBTQ+ Resource Center](#), the [Veterans Resource Center](#), and [the Disability Service & Programs](#). Collectively, these centers engage thousands of students in leadership development, identity-based programming, mentorship, and advocacy every year.

4. **SUPPORTING UNDERSERVED LOCAL SCHOOLS AND STRENGTHENING THE COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE**

Increasing access and opportunity. For years, USC has served as a catalyst for positive change in its surrounding neighborhoods. University resources fund three specific types of pathway programs that support college access and completion: for middle school students, at high schools, and through further support midway through the postsecondary educational process.

USC engages in a number of initiatives to help students access postsecondary education in our community. While we enroll many of these students at USC when they finish high school, many will choose to attend other higher education institutions. The purpose of our investment in these young people, and in our neighborhood, is to uplift peoples' lives, support underserved schoolchildren, and strengthen the college-going culture within those families, high schools, and neighborhoods proximate to our campuses. Over decades, these efforts have helped build networks of mutual support.

Pipeline Programs for Local Youth. Several USC programs engage and prepare underserved local school children with preparation for college. The [Leslie and William McMorrow Neighborhood Academic Initiative](#) (NAI) is a seven year, pre-college program that starts with students at local schools in the 6th grade. This program brings students to campus on weekdays and on Saturdays for supplemental instruction, trains teachers, and provides learning materials, tutors, and support for families to prepare students for college. Parents are actively involved in this program, which was expanded to include the neighborhood around our Health Sciences Campus. NAI has 900 students currently enrolled and graduates 70-100 students every year. Ninety-eight percent of NAI students fulfill their dream of attending college. Those who gain admission and enroll at USC do so with full-tuition scholarships and USC plans to scale up the program to enroll 1,100 students. In 2020, 94 NAI students graduated from high school – and at the time of writing this report, all planned to attend college in Fall 2020, including 36 at USC. (See [Appendix 8.12](#))

In a prime example of building the college pipeline, the USC Rossier School of Education helped establish [Ednovate](#), a charter school network currently managing six college-prep high schools including [USC Hybrid High College Prep](#), from which every graduate was accepted to at least one four-year college in 2016. The [USC Viterbi School of Engineering](#) partners with Crenshaw High School to help students prepare for college enrollment, while the [Young Researchers Program](#) (YRP) pairs high school students with USC Ph.D. students and faculty in STEM fields to work on lab projects, culminating in presentations with family and friends. Over 100 high school students have participated in YRP over the last decade. [Summertime](#), a program sponsored by the Pullias Center in the Rossier School, brings together high school graduates each summer to build "college knowledge." USC's Price School of Public Policy is engaged in a multi-year collaboration with East Los Angeles Renaissance Academy (ELARA) at Esteban Torres High School and with Public Matters, a social enterprise nonprofit, to help students examine corridors within their communities ([East LA, ELARA Student Showcase](#)). Price also offers the [Ross Minority Program in Real Estate | Lusk Center for Real Estate](#). And the USC School of Architecture plans to

launch a for-credit high school program (A-Lab) in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District in the Fall of 2021.

Over 3,000 underserved local schoolchildren participate annually in preschool Head Start programs and USC TRiO college access programs, including Upward Bound, Upward Bound Science, McNair, and Educational Talent Search that support students from middle school through college. The McNair program, which supports high achieving, first-generation college student success, has been particularly impactful with at least 30 to 40 enrolled annually in graduate programs from 1996 to 2015, 150 Master's degrees completed, 22 Ph.D. degrees conferred, and nearly 38 other doctoral degrees awarded to date.

A more recent addition to the portfolio of support programs, Bovard Scholars, works with high school students to prepare them for the college admissions season by helping them with standardized testing, college admissions essays, and forms, and to learn about careers and foster leadership skills. College counselors work with students even after the program ends, continuing into their senior year of high school. With over 383 students enrolled over the past four years, Bovard Scholars go on to attend universities around the country, not just USC, as this commitment too is about supporting the dreams of local youth and benefitting all of higher education.

Service Learning and Community Outreach. The university's work on inclusivity extends well beyond our campus borders. The USC Dornsife College's Joint Educational Project (JEP) is a service-learning program that focuses on meaningful service, reflective learning, and civic engagement. Nearly 2,000 students annually participate in four JEP programs focused on health and wellness, K-12 schools, pre-law education, and community service at 56 locations across Los Angeles. In reflective assessments, USC student participants report gaining a deeper understanding of equity, social justice, and economic factors affecting homeless, and others note how service learning strengthens intercultural competencies. Service learning programs at JEP complement those competencies and learning outcomes framed in the general education curriculum's Global Perspectives requirement. (See Appendix 8.13)

The Ostrow School of Dentistry has a wide-reaching [Community-Based Oral Health Clinics](#) program with Dental school faculty and students serving community patients at clinics located across Los Angeles and California. At La Maestra Community Health Center in San Diego, clinicians partner with center staff to improve health and wellness among members in that very diverse community. Similarly, Dornsife College has engaged in developing [programs to counter environmental impact](#) that disproportionately affect low income and communities of color.

These examples of the spirit of inclusivity bring to bear substantial resources related to research and advocacy for policy change and show how our university leadership, faculty, staff, and students support equity and activism. It is important to note that all of these programs are taking place in urban contexts marked by extreme economic inequality. While the communities around USC's University Park and Health Sciences campuses are rich with diversity and families that are thriving and striving for better lives for their children, they often lack critical access to health care and other means of wellness. These communities are fighting for environmental and social justice; they include the Watts social unrest of 1965, the social unrest of 1992, and the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. These are the areas in which we know partnerships and growth are essential as we enter the next decade. Investing in these communities is not about investing in ourselves, but rather we see this as providing opportunities to help families and individuals improve their lives and in turn strengthen the region and state and fulfill higher education's calling to serve society.

5. **FOSTERING THE INCLUSIVE SPIRIT: TEACHING, CULTURE, AND CLIMATE**

As we have shown, in pursuit of improving access and advancing the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion, USC has successfully established new administrative positions and structures, diversified its academic community, supported new students, staff, and faculty, and created pipelines within the university and in the community. We clearly have more to do to meet our goals and, as indicated by the actions taken by the campus, USC is intentionally working to build a culture that will foster a more inclusive community – one in which all feel heard, valued, and academically challenged. In this section, we outline efforts to provide research and teaching

support, enrich our culture through the arts and humanities, and bridge student and academic life in our Residential Colleges.

Student Focus. Over the past two years, USC has increased efforts to support students, their well-being, their education, and the outcomes of their education. These include the elevation of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Winston Crisp, to the President's Senior Leadership Team, the expansion of efforts under this VP to create inclusive cultural center programs, and providing more resources for student well-being. In addition to investment in the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life, USC has invested heavily in student health by moving oversight of the Student Health Center to the Keck Health System and doubling the number of psychiatrists in Student Health. The activities of these professionals have pivoted greatly to tele-health visits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the onset of the pandemic, the campus shifted to online teaching and the campus developed programs to ensure connectivity of students through online mindfulness classes, purchasing and loaning of computers, establishing mobile hotspots in the US and around the world. While the impact for these efforts lies in the attention paid to individual students, a proxy for impact can be found in the expenditure of an estimated $50 million to $75 million on these activities. In addition, the university delivered $19M in CARES act funds directly to students with the most needs.

The recent launch of the First Generation Plus Success Center now serves several populations, including first-generation, transfer, and DACA and UNDOC students, with added programming space for Black, Asian Pacific American, Latinx/Chicanx, Veteran, LGBTQ+, Native American and Middle Eastern students, Former Foster Youth, and students needing accessibility services. We created Basic Needs Student Equity and Inclusion Programs in 2019, before the pandemic, which includes a food pantry and case management for housing insecure students, and helps distribute emergency aid, including disbursal of CARES Act funding. As the pandemic struck, we leveraged the Basic Needs programs to provide students with information on how to access needed resources.

In mid-March 2020, the university moved quickly to convert over 1000 courses to an online modality and provide training to over 1000 faculty to improve and expand virtual teaching. All

student services also moved online as all undergraduate and graduate students worked to adapt to online learning for all their courses. Student Affairs launched a new student portal along with dozens of activities and events aimed at bringing students together virtually. Early internal surveys showed 29% of students reported poor internet connectivity and another 17% reported difficulty finding a private place to participate in classes. In addition to formal course engagement, we knew that poor connectivity would affect the thousands of informal interactions between and among students and faculty that go on every day, in classes and beyond them. By April 2020, we established a Hot-Spot and Laptop Loaner program to help students with special technology needs.

More recent surveys indicate our efforts to support students with basic and technology needs helped, particularly our more vulnerable students. While students attempted fewer units when compared to past terms, we found no significant difference between vulnerable student populations and the larger student body. Where differences were found – e.g., Pell students reduced their course load more than non-Pell students by 15.1 units to 15.4 units – we do not expect that to impact their progress toward degree. Furthermore, with university resources and CARES funding to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic, all students, including vulnerable student populations, improved their GPAs and were less likely to find themselves on academic probation than in prior terms. Finally, we were buoyed to learn that our first-year retention rate for vulnerable student populations exceeded that of the general student population, suggesting our support efforts helped maintain academic progress and retention.

Teaching Resources and Research Centers. The spirit of inclusivity extends to curricular and co-curricular learning. For example, the Global Perspectives general education requirement on Citizenship in a Diverse World features courses that examine diverse cultures, and how structures of power affect individuals based on race, class, gender, and other identities. The GE committee is currently discussing ways to bolster the place of diversity within GE in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and calls for stronger institutional awareness of structural racism and the historical legacy of anti-Blackness.

The [USC Center for Excellence in Teaching](#) (CET) launched a teaching fellows program to build strong teaching practice among the fellows and faculty peers in each school, strengthen classroom learning, and train faculty and teaching assistants to [reduce bias in the classroom](#), including the use of gendered pronouns. In 2018, CET also worked with faculty to transition away from traditional learning evaluations, citing well-documented research pointing to the role of bias in such evaluations and how they disadvantage women and minoritized populations – disadvantages that can hurt chances for promotion and tenure considered in the faculty performance review process.

The university has also invested in resources to support equity and inclusion through the presence of numerous research centers. Professor Shaun Harper returned to USC in 2017 to lead the [USC Race and Equity Center](#) that serves faculty and university leaders on our campus and across the country with fully developed programs and resourses. Two additional research centers housed in the Rossier School of Education, the [Center for Urban Education](#) (CUE) and [Center for Education, Identity and Social Justice](#) (CEISJ) have also provided support for the USC community and for higher education at large. The [Institute for Diversity and Empowerment](#) at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism is another resource, bringing scholars and luminaries to explore diversity, identity, and culture.

The Arts, Culture, and the Inclusive Spirit. The inclusive spirit extends to the arts at USC through several university and school-based programs, taking advantage of the University's strengths in the arts. [Visions and Voices](#), USC's arts presentation program, features a broad array of events intended for all students regardless of their major or year in school. Over 100 events and workshops are produced annually, many of which are conceived and organized by faculty and schools throughout the university. In addition to events held on the University Park and Health Sciences campuses, students also choose from opportunities to experience Los Angeles's cultural landscape at events throughout the city. Events are all free for USC students, and almost all are free to the public. In practice, at least three-quarters of annual programming funds support events and

activities that advance USC's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. During the pandemic, these events have continued unabated in a virtual environment.

As previously mentioned, the university launched Arts in Action (AiA), a community-facing series that plants seeds for positive social change by forming collaborations between community partners, students, and faculty in intensive arts projects to serve the community. The projects span a wide range of art forms and address complex social challenges. Since 2018, Arts in Action funded programs have led to collaborations with over twenty local non-profits, underserved local schools, and cultural institutions. In that same period, AiA has sponsored projects addressing mass incarceration, homelessness, foster care, access to arts for underserved schoolchildren, and veterans, and more. The projects also encourage exploration of USC's core values – freedom of inquiry, respect for diversity, commitment to service, entrepreneurial spirit, informed risk-taking, and ethical conduct. Over three-quarters of AiA events and projects advance DEI as well, making Visions and Voices and Arts in Action essential elements of USC's efforts to enrich diversity and foster inclusion.

Outreaches by USC arts schools are equally strong. Kaufman Connections, based at the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance partners with 32nd Street Elementary School, a magnet school focused on visual performing arts, media arts and engineering. Kaufman students volunteer at the elementary school to provide cultural movement practice courses that, "foster community, confidence, and social-emotional learning for each child." The Institute for Theatre and Social Change (ITSC) at the USC School of Dramatic Arts provides a research and development forum for expressive and interactive dramatic art practices, education, and therapy, as well as training and networking for local, national, and international organizations dedicated to the expressive arts and social justice. The USC School of Architecture engages in developing student-based learning, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, centered on homelessness and new solutions to low-income housing and sustainable means to counter environmental racism. The school has ongoing connections with the Los Angeles mayor's office with many of its faculty acting as leaders in the field.

Bridging the Curriculum and Co-curriculum. At USC, inclusivity is reflected in our thriving residential college model and the [Faculty in Residence](#) program that allows students an opportunity to learn in classroom settings and in informal conversations in residential spaces. Robust programming helps first-year students acclimate to residential life, and partnerships with academic programs and faculty bring research, career information, and current events into the residential colleges. The residential education program focuses on providing diversity, a sense of belonging, and identity for students in campus housing.

While the pandemic forced us to pause many of these experiences, ongoing assessment efforts have allowed the residential education staff to identify areas of success and areas of need. For example, despite a diverse resident assistant and professional staff, the quality of experience for minority undergraduate residents varies widely. African-American students report concerns about sense of belonging, with over one-third responding on a survey that they have a low sense of connection to the residential college, that they do not feel their identities were valued, or that they do not feel a part of the Trojan community. Along some of these same measures, Latinx, first-generation college, and international students expressed similar views. The residential education staff review data regularly, evaluate ways to improve the residential experience for all residents, and implement new programming to create a more inclusive experience for all.

Campus Climate. Campus climate includes the experiences and perceptions of students that affect sense of belonging and connection with a university. A poor campus climate has implications for student retention, engagement, academic success, and overall well-being.

USC examines campus climate and its impact on the inclusive spirit in a number of ways. USC now administers the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC), designed by the USC Race and Equity Center, to hear from all USC undergraduates. Following the comments posted on a [Black@USC](#) Instagram account, we resolved to redouble our efforts to understand and respond to the issues described there and to respond to racism, harassment, and bullying. First, we are holding a series of public forums for Black undergraduate and graduate students, and Black staff, faculty, and alumni to learn more about the experiences of fellow Trojans. Second, this year

we will administer racial climate surveys to all faculty and staff to learn how every racial/ethnic group experiences USC's campus climate. Third, we have expanded bias reporting – through USC's Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX (EEO-TIX) that seeks to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and harassment, along with all other forms of protected class discrimination and harassment on campus.

Last summer, an impeachment proceeding was initiated by students against a duly elected Vice President of USC's Undergraduate Student Government (USG). Looking closely at the case, and factoring out the extremes of social media that began dominating the airwaves, the proceedings were halted because we concluded the current processes for the removal of USG elected officials were insufficient to ensure integrity. As those processes were being reviewed, the elected official in question made the difficult decision to resign her office. Both she and at least one other student who had supported her impeachment were subjected to online bullying and malicious threats that neither student could have predicted and, almost certainly, did not intend. The manner in which the social media firestorm that ensued intensified and exacerbated the situation is something we, and other universities across the nation, continue to study and learn from.

In recent years we have tapped USC data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) that found that first-time, first-year students who enrolled in Fall 2015 and 2016 have a pluralistic orientation that is the same as or better than the national average. Pluralistic orientation includes tolerance of others with different beliefs, the ability to work cooperatively in diverse contexts, the ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues, and the ability to see the world from others' perspectives.

In 2018, USC participated in the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) Student Enrollment Survey (SES), which focuses on academic engagement, co-curricular engagement, health and wellness behaviors, use of support services, and overall student experience. Some questions from the University of California Undergraduate Experiences were included in the SES administered at USC, allowing our campus data to be benchmarked against UC Berkeley. USC had a response rate of 65% for this undergraduate survey. Key findings on campus climate, diversity,

and perceived discrimination include the following percentages of students who agree or strongly agree:

- 87% : students of their sexual orientation are respected on campus
- 77% : students of their religious beliefs are respected on campus
- 74% : students of their gender are respected on campus
- 70% : students of their political beliefs are respected on campus
- 67% : students of their race or ethnicity are respected on campus
- 64%: students of their socio-economic status are respected on campus

This same COFHE Student Enrollment Survey found that student respondents who identified as bisexual, gay, or other were less likely to feel respected at USC when compared to students who did not identify with one of these identities (59% vs 90%), and that males were far more likely to feel respected than women (86% vs 64%). Individuals who fell within the "URM" (underrepresented minority, no disaggregation available in the survey) category were less likely to feel respected than those who considered themselves not URM (45% vs 72%) and, those who were first-generation college (54% vs 71%) were far less likely than counterparts to feel respected. USC Student Affairs is working in conjunction with the student cultural centers to address these issues.

Campus climate, equity, and inclusion is also assessed through the Healthy Minds: Equity in Mental Health survey that is based on the Equity in Mental Health Framework supported by the Steve Fund and the Jed Foundation. USC Student Affairs surveyed students in Fall 2018, and found that while most students felt they were treated fairly on campus (83.6%), nearly a third said they were concerned for their safety on campus (31.6%). Black/African American students reported the lowest sense of belonging on campus, were the least likely group to feel they are treated fairly, reported the lowest satisfaction with USC efforts towards inclusion, and were the least likely to feel valued by faculty, teaching assistants, and administrators.

Latinx/Hispanic students reported feeling the least valued by other students (69.3% feel valued), and Latina females report the lowest sense of belonging (35.2%, which is in the lowest quartile of belonging), compared to all other groups by race/ethnicity and gender identity. Relative to other groups by race/ethnicity and sexual orientation, only 65.9% of Latinx LGBQ students felt they were

treated fairly on campus, and this group felt the least valued by faculty, teaching assistants, other students, staff, and administrators. Only 56.5% felt that they are valued by other students.

The Healthy Minds survey also found that Asian American students reported lower sense of belonging, and this is especially true among LGBQT+ students and Master's students. Additionally, the survey identified some emerging needs among Middle Eastern/Arab and Mixed Race students which requires further study, and data related to at-risk drinking among White students.

As with other studies, the Healthy Minds survey found that perceptions of campus climate, inclusion, or safety differed when considering intersecting identities. When data were examined by student race, gender, and first-generation college status, for example, sense of belonging was lower than mean scores examining those students identifying with only one of these groupings alone. A committee of university leaders, faculty, and students are examining these findings and developing recommendations and proposals for addressing these concerns. In addition, a new first-year course called Thrive was introduced to assist students in developing healthy relationships, improving time management, and better maintaining their overall well-being.

6. CALL TO ACTION

In the late summer of 2020, USC redoubled efforts to build an inclusive campus. These are embodied in a "Call to Action" which has blossomed into a dozen activities:

1) **Renaming the Center for International and Public Affairs**. With the support of the USC Board of Trustees, removal of former university president and eugenicist Rufus von KleinSmid's name from one of our most prominent campus buildings. The renaming is proceeding through an inclusive process overseen by our nomenclature committee with the goal of choosing an individual whom all can celebrate.

2) **Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer**. As mentioned above, the university is conducting a search for its first-ever Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer (CIDO). As part of the process, the search committee invited members of the USC community to several listening sessions to share their thoughts on key priorities and expectations for this critical role. The new CIDO will serve as a member of the President's senior leadership team.

3) **President's and Provost's Task Force on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI)**. Co-chaired by Dr. Manuel Pastor, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies and Ethnicity, and Felicia Washington, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, the task force includes staff, faculty, undergraduate, and graduate students. The task force is identifying structural and institutional processes that perpetuate racism and inequality in areas including recruitment, retention, and experience; and identifying

processes that work well in order to expand and strengthen them. The task force reports directly to the President and Provost.

4) **Community Advisory Board for the Department of Public Safety**. We formed a nineteen-member Community Advisory Board for the USC Department of Public Safety (DPS) that includes student, faculty, and community representatives. It is co-chaired by Dr. Ange-Marie Hancock-Alfaro, Dean's Professor of Gender Studies and Professor of Political Science, and Dr. Erroll Southers, Director of the Safe Communities Institute and Professor of the Practice in National and Homeland Security. The board will help ensure an environment in which people feel safe and respected, and will strengthen the trust between the university, DPS, and our broader community. We view this as critical to achieve the type of inclusiveness and collaboration needed to break down barriers to meaningful progress. The board reports directly to the President.

5) **Space and Programming for Underserved Students**. We launched the [First Generation Plus Success Center](#) last fall. Its programs include high touch advising and coaching, peer mentoring, assistance accessing financial aid and scholarships, and access to a variety of online student success workshops for first-generation college, transfer, and DACA and undocumented students. The center provides physical space for our first-generation students and expanded programming and space for our Black, Asian Pacific American, Latinx/Chicanx, Veteran, LGBTQ+, Native American, and Middle Eastern students, Former Foster Youth, and students needing accessibility services.

6) **Mandatory Unconscious Bias Training**. As part of our efforts to raise awareness of and prevent implicit bias in how we treat each other, online training modules for students, staff, and faculty are being rolled out. The USC Race and Equity Center, directed by Dr. Shaun Harper, Provost Professor of Education and Business and Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership, and a national authority on race in higher education, will conduct the training, called *Equity Now*. In addition, we continue to encourage open discussion to improve training, for example, through a summer webinar series, *Racial Justice + Social Equity + Well-Being*.

7) **Interviews and community recommendations**. The USC Race and Equity Center also conducts focus group interviews with Black students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The aim is to learn about racialized experiences from Black members of the Trojan community to better inform campus initiatives aimed at fighting racism and bias.

8) **Public forums**. We hold public forums for Black undergraduate and graduate students, and Black staff, faculty, and alumni, which include panelists and audience participation.

9) **Surveys of our entire community**. We will use the highly regarded National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC), designed by the USC Race and Equity Center, to hear from all USC undergraduates this year. Since our campus participated in the earliest pilot of the NACCC three years ago, the survey has been administered to over 500,000 students across the nation. This year there will be racial climate surveys of all faculty and staff to learn how every racial/ethnic group experiences our campus climate.

10) **Professional learning opportunities**. The USC Race and Equity Center provides no-cost, multiyear professional learning experiences focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) for USC employees. Each month, the Center offers live, synchronous sessions via a virtual platform, accommodating up to 10,000 people at once. Video of each live session is posted to a password-protected website, permanently available to all USC employees.

11) **Reporting Incidences of Bias**. We have expanded bias reporting to address the powerful testimonies of fellow Trojans like those on the [Black@USC](#) Instagram account and other online venues that were aired last fall. We treat unlawful racial bias, or any type of bias or discrimination, with utmost seriousness. All members of our community who experience bias, harassment, or discrimination may contact the Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX at titleix@usc.edu. We follow up on every incident reported and hold individuals accountable whenever possible.

12) **Community Collaboration**. We will continue to announce new initiatives recognizing the University's important role and responsibility to advance local economic opportunity and equity, strengthen partnerships with minority and women-owned small businesses, community non-profits, economic development organizations, and the public sector to create good paying jobs and support investment in local communities.

7. CONCLUSION

The summary of our work to build an inclusive campus described here captures a point in time where the institution is undergoing rapid change. The expansive nature of programs described above is a demonstration of the commitment of each unit on campus to our values. Our study of this theme shows that while we have much work ahead, our programs are valued, a diverse range of students are attracted to their content and quality, and that these students are well prepared for success upon graduation. Because of the encompassing nature of the issues facing the university, our students and our faculty, there has been a growing need to create the capacity to coordinate activities across the university. This is reflected in the desire to create the position and office of the Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, the building out of the central Human Resources structure, the movement of the Vice President for Student Affairs to the President's Senior Leadership team, and the student focus of activities across the campus. Our society faces changing demographics and suffers a polarization of opportunity, wealth, and health outcomes. As a result, these factors can limit advancement and well-being. At USC, we are actively engaged in addressing these inequities with the programs we have in place, the commitment to change, and in preparing our graduates to thrive in a vibrant, multicultural world. We will continue to grow our efforts in access and affordability and we are excited by the possibilities ahead.

COMPONENT 8.2: FOSTERING THE CONVERGENT SPIRIT

Universities have long characterized human knowledge into disciplines that are characterized by modes of inquiry and problem identification. Over decades, if not centuries, disciplines develop customs and habits of recognizing and rewarding success. Universities provide opportunities for students at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels for students to learn and be trained in these disciplines and the degrees they give certify that students have demonstrated deep mastery of a body of knowledge within these disciplines. Cultures and economies have benefitted from this historical method of classifying knowledge, studying, and learning. In our current stage of intellectual development, the faculty at USC have identified that knowledge and modes of inquiry developed within disciplines can – if not, must – join together to address issues and problems that cannot be attacked by single disciplines alone. Certainly, this state of affairs can result in the development of new disciplines that, over time establish their own unique modes of inquiry and problem identification. At USC we embrace the development of new disciplines. We also embrace a convergent spirit to address issues that require coordination and collaboration between those with different deep understandings of their disciplines that join to work on a common problem requiring more expertise than can be had by a single expert. We identify this desire as convergence and have shifted significant resources towards embedding the spirit of convergence into our educational programs and our scholarship.

For USC, the "convergent spirit" comprises three elements. First, a commitment to interdisciplinarity, modes of inquiry informed by two or more disciplines in productive dialogue, and to multi-disciplinarity, in which individuals are encouraged to cultivate diverse interests and engage with multiple paths of study in parallel. Second, added to this fluency between fields of study, convergence emerges out of the need to address the challenges of our age – medical, environmental, social, economic, etc. These problems are so complex that they require collaboration and substantive input from a plurality of differently trained and differently situated researchers, artists, professional and medical practitioners, policymakers, and computer scientists. Often, the evolving nature and complexity of these problems are such that no one should expect to solve them

in their lifetime. Third, in combining disciplinary sophistication and fluency with this problem-based approach, convergence becomes a form of applied thinking, a habit of mind, and a means of inspiring students to cultivate broad curiosity and interests. Achieving success requires openness to collaboration and optimism that, though ultimate solutions may be years away, progress is within grasp. By incorporating these ideas in our education and research, we aim to foster the ability to successfully navigate and synthesize material across fields of study and social challenges.

The convergent spirit is deeply rooted at USC. From our cadre of [University](#) and [Distinguished professors](#) and [Provost Professors,](#) world-renowned scholars whose research and creative activity are drawn from multiple disciplines, to boundary-crossing majors and minors, accomplished students honored as [Renaissance](#), [Discovery](#), and/or [Global](#) scholars, and engagement with communities both local and worldwide, USC's commitment to integrative study and research is strong.

1. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

USC offers a diverse array of academic programs. With 229 active undergraduate majors (see [USC Catalogue](#)), leading to B.A., B.S., B.F.A., B.M. and B.ARCH. degrees, the university supports a considerable range and depth of study and the pursuit of deep domain knowledge across a spectrum of disciplines. While USC is home to many schools, it is not defined solely by any one of them. The university is a locus for innovation in technology, liberal arts, business, health sciences, or the performing arts. Having so many programs on campus allows USC to sustain an atmosphere where discussions both in academic programs and outside are characterized by an exchange of ideas drawn from a variety of traditions of thought. As a result, USC is uniquely positioned to create academic programs and pathways of study that are distinctively convergent.

We foster convergent thinking in our undergraduates by developing curricula that are rigorous but which expose students to different modes of thinking. Of the 229 undergraduate majors USC offers, 76 or one-third, are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, involving a significant portion of advanced coursework from two or more academic departments. Of these 76 majors, 46 are multi-departmental programs from within the same school, while 30 (40%) draw from two or more

departments across schools. On the average, each year more than 2,900 out of the 19,908 (Fall 2019) undergraduate students at USC are enrolled in one of these 76 majors. In addition, 5,962 undergraduates pursue at least one minor, reinforcing the interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary spirit tied to USC's notion of integrative study.

USC has launched 66 new bachelor's degree programs since 2010, around 60% of which have been specifically designed to address new or emerging problem areas where convergent thinking is clearly required. This includes degrees in subjects such as Human Security and Geospatial Intelligence; Non-Governmental Organizations and Social Change; Environmental Studies and Health; Acting for the Stage, Screen and New Media; Broadcast and Digital Journalism; Arts, Technology, and the Business of Innovation; and Chemical Engineering with an emphasis on Sustainable Energy.

Many degree programs are taught across schools. The Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences runs 17 of these cross-school interdisciplinary programs in partnership with 9 different schools. For example, the Quantitative Biology major, launched in 2017, is a partnership between Dornsife and the Viterbi School of Engineering. This major focuses on the science behind current developments in genomics and proteomics, while leveraging advances in computer science such as big data and artificial intelligence to offer enrolled students an integrated program with strengths drawn from the departments of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Physics, Psychology, and Mathematics within Dornsife, plus expertise from Engineering in Computer Science and Electrical Engineering. In the opposite direction, the Viterbi School of Engineering manages the Informatics major, which was launched in 2018 to combine data science and analytics courses in Computing Science, algorithm, software and coding expertise from the Information Technology Program with courses offered by Mathematics and the social sciences from Dornsife to build a cutting-edge program for students interested in advanced data analytics. Another example is the International Relations-Global Business major which combines expertise from the International Relations department in Dornsife with management courses in the Marshall School of Business and the Leventhal School of Accounting to educate students in international commerce and prepare them to

lead business enterprises with global footprints. Majors such as Philosophy, Politics and Law in the department of Philosophy, or Law, History and Culture in the department of History combine courses in humanities with courses in social sciences, public policy, and the Gould School of Law to serve students with intersecting interests in critical inquiry, cultural traditions and legal structures, many of whom are on a pre-Law track. In the Keck School of Medicine, the major in Global Health combines courses in health sciences with economics, international relations, and math. More recently, a BFA in Musical Theatre combines courses from the School of Dramatic Arts, the Thornton School of Music, and the Kaufman School of Dance. The convergence approach permeates majors within schools as well. As an example, the Kaufman School of Dance is home to "The New Movement" – a hybrid and collaborative approach expressed in studio practice, music, choreography, performance, new media and scholarship where artistic preeminence is combined with thoughtful industry access. By encouraging interdisciplinary and collaborative work, USC Kaufman seeks to transform dance. The same can be said for the Thornton School of Music where students are asked to become proficient with divergent traditions of classical and contemporary music, many adding instruction and training with new technology and emerging trends in the music industry. Blending the rigors of a traditional conservatory-style education with the benefits of studying at a leading research university, the Thornton School offers students a thorough music education in a real-world context.

In addition to its majors, USC offers 190 minors, one of the largest provisions of minors in the United States. Of these, 25 are specifically designated as "interdisciplinary minors" that incorporate diverse fields of study and/or are offered across schools. These include offerings such as "Applied Theater Arts" offered between the School of Dramatic Arts and the Rossier School of Education, "Psychology and Law" offered between Dornsife College and the Gould School of Law, and "3-D Art for Games" offered jointly by the Roski School of Art and Design, the School of Cinematic Arts, and the Viterbi School of Engineering.

Another 80 minors focus on "special topics" for students drawn to topics that either complement their primary domain studies or are quite disparate from them. For example, "Songwriting" or

"Playwriting" in the Thornton School of Music and the School of Dramatic Arts, respectively. Or "Law and Internet Technology" at Viterbi, "Geobiology" in the Earth Sciences Department, or "The Dynamics of Early Childhood" in the Rossier School of Education. Each provides students the opportunity to foster integrative learning in less intentional ways that are still just as valuable.

Naturally, there are challenges. As previously noted, 66 new undergraduate majors have been added to the curriculum since 2010. While this reflects a commitment to interdisciplinary study and ensuring a vital and relevant curriculum that keeps pace with changes in science, technology, culture, and business, this cornucopia of offerings leads to challenges in students choosing majors and graduating on time and leads to concerns over distribution of resources. To address the first issue, we have developed strong advising structures discussed below and are currently undertaking a deep dive into how to increase the four-year graduation rates.

As USC has held relatively constant the number of undergraduates for a decade, the creation of more majors and the attendant building specialized curricula has the potential of spreading resources every more thinly. The barriers to shifting majors are held at modest levels such that competition for enrollment can arise. As always, the responsiveness of faculty to the challenges facing society requires an ongoing balancing of resources.

In an effort to encourage exploration of different traditions of thinking at the individual course level, in 2018, the Office of the Provost launched its Interdisciplinary Teaching Grant with a view to supporting interdisciplinary curriculum development through team-teaching and other models that utilize expertise across the disciplines, the arts, and the professional schools. The aim was to expose students to the broad strengths of USC faculty and multiple disciplinary perspectives on the issues addressed in their courses; provide faculty with the opportunity to reach broader audiences and explore common problems from different disciplinary perspectives; and build relationships across the university that might lead to further interdisciplinary partnerships.

In 2019, as a result of curricular planning within the college, Dornsife launched its own interdisciplinary program. Known as the Integrative General Education program, the initiative seeks to pair new or existing GE classes from different required categories around a shared theme, issue,

or idea. The syllabi of these classes are developed in dialogue with one another, with students enrolling in both sections simultaneously. The goal is to provide an opportunity to engage in a more integrated GE experience that models the interdisciplinary spirit of the liberal arts. Four initial courses have been developed with the program that launched in Fall 2020.

An example of the sorts of interactions derived from the breadth of programs at USC that stand outside formal requirements or credit hours can be found in the [Sidney Harman Academy for Polymathic Study,](#) which was established in 2012 and offers a series of workshops, retreats, and programs intended to promote interdisciplinary learning across USC student communities. Through conversations, research projects and dialogues involving faculty, postdoctoral scholars, graduate students, and undergraduates, the Harman Academy exposes students to broad disciplinary approaches, fields of study, and modes of inquiry. Run by university faculty in collaboration with library faculty and staff, the Harman Academy allows the libraries to play an indispensable role in uplifting the convergent spirit.

Finally, successful interdisciplinarity depends upon academic excellence within each discipline, along with thoughtfully designed and mentored educational programs. In this respect, convergence is built upon the strengths of USC's traditional departments and the continuity they provide in terms of knowledge, training, and modes of inquiry. The result is that while encouraging faculty to develop multidisciplinary programs, attention to sustain strong disciplines is essential – thus emphasizing the value of building a culture of collaboration and teamwork.

2. STUDENT SUCCESS

USC's students have become more academically accomplished and intellectually curious over the years as shown, in part, by high school grade point averages, standardized test scores, and extracurricular interests. Our undergraduates are seeking intellectual challenges and opportunities; we see this through the academic programs they design and the course of study they pursue. The university's emphasis on integrative study opens up a considerable number of academic opportunities for its students. With an open curriculum and deep catalogue of classes, students are free to develop highly personalized courses of study, enhanced by applied and experiential learning,

and supported by an advising community that is geared towards making the most of the academic experience.

Double Majors and Minors. USC undergraduates are actively encouraged to declare minors and double majors. One of the considerable strengths of a USC education is the ability to combine majors and minors in such permutations that students are able to customize their programs of study. At the time of writing, 30% of USC students have declared a minor. Of these, 90% are pursuing a minor outside their major school or division. The schools with the largest percentage of students pursuing a minor are Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism (40%), the Iovine and Young Academy (39%), Dornsife College students in the social sciences (39%), the School of Pharmacy (38%), and the Keck School of Medicine (37%). The schools with the largest percentage of students pursuing a minor in a different school than the one that houses their major are the Iovine and Young Academy (39%), the School of Pharmacy (38%), Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism (36%), the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology (36%), and Dornsife College students in the social sciences (34%). Some schools, such as the Marshall School of Business, have actively adjusted their curriculum to require fewer units to allow students to take advantage of opportunities beyond the business curriculum. As such, 27% of Marshall students have declared a minor, with 100% of those minors in schools outside Marshall. (See [Appendix 8.21](#))

Just under 9% of USC students are currently enrolled in two or more majors. Of these, more than 70% have major objectives from two different colleges, divisions, or schools. The majority of these are combinations of majors from different divisions within Dornsife, such as humanities and social sciences (10%), or natural and social sciences (6%). The balance combine a program from Dornsife with one from the professional schools, with the Marshall School of Business and Dornsife representing 10%, the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and Dornsife at 8% and the Viterbi School of Engineering with Dornsife at 6%.

Given the mobility among the majors, USC pays special attention to ensuring our students complete their degrees on time, as reflected by our 4- and 6-year graduation rates. Curricular policy aims to be as flexible as possible without impacting academic quality or integrity, providing elective

and certain GE credit for AP examinations with a score of 4 and above, and permitting students to double count courses in some instances, such as counting appropriate GEs towards the major.

Advisement and Student Support. Quality academic advising is also key. Once admitted, every student is assigned an academic advisor who is considered a fundamental partner in the academic journey and with whom many students build a close working relationship. For those pursuing multiple programs of study, many have more than one advisor. USC academic advisors provide a range of services, including new student orientation advising and welcome programming, general and mandatory advising, progress audit reporting, not-registered reporting, and at-risk advising. All students are required to participate in mandatory advisement in March-April and October-November. In addition, the Office of the Provost requires regular reporting to ensure timely progress, including third- and fifth-semester audits and outreach to non-registered students. Advisor caseloads vary by school, but a 2018 self-study and external review by NACADA, the professional organization for academic advising, of the largest advising unit (Dornsife College) found that caseloads were in accordance with national averages for private research universities.

USC is somewhat unusual in relation to its peers inasmuch as it requires prospective students to declare a major on the Common Application. Despite the large degree of student mobility this produces (48% of students admitted into Dornsife, for example, will switch out of the major to which they have been admitted), the evidence strongly suggests that this does not impact time to degree in a significant way. This is equally the case for under-represented minority and first-generation students as it is for students outside those categories. It also recognizes the fact that, institutionally, USC is committed to meeting student demand for courses, to the extent that it is not unusual for schools to allow under-enrolled sections to proceed if they contain students who need the course to graduate.

As students can change their majors with relative ease, the work of advisors becomes especially important, helping students to tailor their course plans for maximum efficiency. For those who are undecided, the advisors help them assemble a course plan to explore options while making sure they also complete the same general education requirements applicable to undergraduates in all schools

and stay on track to graduate. For those who already have firm major objectives, the advisors help them develop the best course plans to accommodate any possible minor, a second major, or a future semester studying abroad. Internal transfers to high-demand or technical programs in schools such as Cinema and Engineering can be competitive, but generally speaking, USC puts no barriers in place for students who wish to move across majors and/or schools, and our academic advisors also help students navigate these transitions.

Honors and Other Opportunities. Because of the wide range of academic options available, since Spring 2000, USC has honored graduating seniors who elect to pursue major-minor combinations in widely different fields. Known as Steven and Kathryn Sample Renaissance Scholars, eligible students must have at least a 3.5 overall grade point average and a 3.5 grade point average in disparate programs of study. In 2019, 250 seniors were recognized as having met these criteria with eleven selected to receive $10,000 prizes at Commencement towards graduate study.

Beyond majors and minors, USC hosts a number of programs that exemplify the convergent spirit. Established in 1974 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Thematic Option program is an honors program for which prospective students apply. This living-learning community recruits around 200 students a year, providing an alternative route through the general education curriculum with interdisciplinary classes that emphasize reading, writing, and a thematic approach to the integration of knowledge. With an active community of over 350, Thematic Option remains one of USC's more sought-after academic programs for highly motivated incoming freshmen and as a space for curricular experimentation by USC faculty.

Established in 2008, the Problems Without Passports program was designed to combine research and international travel through problem-based learning. Each course presents students with a complex societal problem with transnational implications, such as global health issues, questions of sustainability, and the competition for resources. Using open-ended research techniques, students are required to identify the kind of information necessary to understand the problem and design potential solutions. In 2020, USC was poised to offer eight such courses across four continents. USC also operates a distinctive Maymester program, regularly offering around 30

intensive classes a year, which while officially part of the spring semester load, are taught exclusively in the weeks immediately following the end of regular spring semester classes. Maymester topics are varied, but all incorporate research, travel, and experiential learning from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Recent courses include field Geology in the Aegean islands; culture and identity in Kyoto, Japan; postcolonial diaspora in Parisian hip-hop; and the culture of soccer in Brazil.

USC also actively engages our students in the creation of knowledge. USC undergraduates have direct access to many diverse research opportunities both on-campus and across the Los Angeles area, via a wide spectrum of programs ranging from clinical to laboratory to social science. Before they graduate from USC, greater than 35% of all undergraduates have participated in one or more research projects on either the University Park Campus, the Health Science Campus, Children's Hospital of Los Angeles or the Informational Science Institute at Marina del Rey. USC also actively helps students seek internship opportunities, as a platform to integrate what they have learned in the classroom with problem solving experience in practice. Close to 40% of all USC undergraduates have participated in one or more internship opportunities, many of those following graduation. (See Appendix 8.22)

3. IMPACT THROUGH RESEARCH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

USC has an annual research expenditure of almost $900 million. Its faculty are highly research active, both as individual scholars, members of cross-disciplinary or cross-institutional research teams, or as members of USC's numerous Research Centers and Institutes, including those within USC schools and several Cross-School research centers and institutes.

Research Institutes, Centers, and Academies. The convergent spirit thrives in USC's research programs. The National Science Foundation defines "convergence" as "a deep integration across disciplines" as researchers from discrete fields bring their expertise to bear on common research challenges, and in so doing create new frameworks, paradigms, or even disciplines as their methods, knowledge, and data become "increasingly intermingled or integrated" (see NSF on convergence). In science and engineering research, multi- and/or cross-disciplinary approaches to new problems

have been driven almost by necessity. The grand challenges cited by NSF for the next decade are all in multi-disciplinary fields: artificial intelligence, big data, the rules of life, quantum information science, the human-technology interface, and convergent science. Given that NSF is the funding source for approximately 27% of the total federal budget for basic research conducted at US colleges and universities, this lends urgency and incentive to convergent research. While the majority of the research output at USC comes from single-PI grants, many of these projects are multidisciplinary from the beginning.

To support such research, USC has invested significantly in cross-field initiatives. In 2014, USC opened Dauterive Hall, a 98,000-square-foot building housing interdisciplinary social science research and bringing together experts in health, economics, human behavior, and policy research. For example, the Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics brings together scholars from the schools of Public Policy, Gerontology, Social Work, Medicine, Business, Engineering, and Pharmacy, recognizing the interaction between social and clinical sciences in addressing major health policy challenges.

In 2017, the Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience, the largest building on the University Park Campus, opened. The Center provides 190,000 square feet of research and collaboration space, bringing together a network of scientists and engineers from Dornsife, Viterbi, and Keck to work on a series of health-related research problems, such as cancer research, neurological disease, and cardiovascular disease. The Michelson Center aims to redefine how science is done at USC. The collaborative model it represents is also transforming the training of graduate students and postdocs in the laboratories, preparing them for a new era of integrative thinking in the sciences. Also housed within the Michelson Center is the Bridge Institute, a group of researchers dedicated to dismantling the silos that have developed from the deepening of disciplinary expertise in the health sciences. The goal of the Institute is to bring together leaders in chemistry, biology, medicine, mathematics, engineering, physics, and nanosciences — as well as experts in such areas as animation and cinematography — to build the first atomic resolution structure of the human body.

In 2013, USC established the Iovine and Young Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation. Conceived with a view to nurturing critical thinking and creativity at the intersection of four essential areas – arts and design; engineering and computer science; business and venture management; and communication – Iovine and Young originally reported to the dean of the Roski School of Art and Design before becoming 20th academic school in 2018 and moving into its purpose-built facility, Iovine and Young Hall, in 2019.

In late Fall 2020, the campus announced the establishment of the position of the Senior Vice President of Health Affairs. This position will report directly to the President and oversee the Keck Health System and the Keck School of Medicine. This position was developed because of the need to better integrate education, research, and clinical activities at USC. The SVPHA is charged to build a virtuous cycle where research and education lead to better clinical outcomes. This position should be filled by the end of the academic year.

Faculty Appointments and Recognitions. Of USC's 4,604 faculty, 27% have joint appointments across departments and schools. These include scientists, engineers, medical clinicians, visual and performing artists, humanists, social scientists, policy experts, and legal practitioners. In some departments, such as the department of Gender and Sexuality Studies, the department of American Studies and Ethnicity, the department of Comparative Literature, and the department of East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC) the majority of faculty have joint appointments, several across schools. These include colleagues such as Akira Lippit, who in addition to his appointment in EALC, is appointed in the department of Comparative Literature, and is the T.C. Wang Family Endowed Chair in Cinematic Arts.

To recognize the growing number of faculty engaged in work of this kind, the university has accelerated the recruitment and recognition of Provost Professors, a group of outstanding interdisciplinary scholars appointed by the provost, who are notable for their contributions to the culture of interdisciplinary research and education that is a hallmark of academic life at USC. This cadre of 17 scholars includes individuals such as Wändi Bruine de Bruin, Provost's Professor Public Policy, Psychology, and Behavioral Science, who studies the way in which individuals make

decisions about their health, well-being and the environment, and who has appointments in the Price School of Public Policy and Dornsife's Psychology department; and Terence Sanger, an Electrical Engineer, Computational Neuroscientist, and Child Neurologist specializing in research and treatment of movement disorders in children, who has appointments in the Keck School of Medicine's department of Neurology and the Viterbi School of Engineering's Biomedical Engineering department.

The interdisciplinary interests and culture of collaboration among our faculty and their commitment to public engagement have resulted in a series of collaborations designed to address the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty in the Price School of Public Policy, for example, have collaborated with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to launch an ongoing program to monitor COVID antibody prevalence, one of the first such initiatives in the country. The Center for Economic and Social Research's "Understanding Coronavirus in America" study is tracking public attitudes to the pandemic, while at the national level, the USC-Brookings Schaeffer Initiative for Health Policy provides regular public forums for researchers and the public to engage with national leaders, including the Food and Drug Administration Commissioner, the Administrator of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Initiative experts have also testified in front of a US House of Representatives Subcommittee, and briefed numerous Congressional members and staff.

USC also brings practitioners and experts from across the worlds of industry, policy, and creative expression into the classroom to enrich curriculum. The rank Professor of the Practice include world-renowned writers such as Geoff Dyer and Robin Coste Lewis; political professionals like Robert Shrum and Mike Murphy of the Center for the Political Future; William Forsythe of the USC Choreographic Institute and Artistic Advisor at the Kaufman School of Dance; and, Mike Patterson John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts.

Success in building convergent research and education programs requires developing a welcoming infrastructure. This involves ease of joint appointments in different departments or schools and understanding how to manage different expectations for service commitments. In

addition, department and school promotion and tenure committees are challenged to create understanding of how to judge individual contributions in collaborative projects. Schools and the university as whole work to create recognition processes for excellence in collaborative scholarship and teaching (e.g., designation as Provost Professor). We continue to develop budgeting processes that incentivize collaboration.

Research, Community, and Global Engagement. For students, forms of research and discovery, applied and experiential learning, and the ability to turn thought into action and bring abstract thought to bear on the world, have become a major component of a USC education. Benefitting from their access to world-class researchers, practitioners, and facilities, USC students enjoy a thorough provision of research opportunities, internships, overseas studies, and service learning.

More than 35% of all undergraduate majors participating in one or more on-campus research projects before they graduate from USC. Many have their work showcased in the Provost Symposium for Scholarly and Creative Work. Similarly, the university's Discovery Scholars distinction, awarded annually as part of the university's commencement distinctions, recognizes students who have excelled in their coursework while also demonstrating a commitment to creating new knowledge through research, or by creating new artistic works.

As noted previously, the Joint Educational Project (JEP) is one of the oldest and largest service-learning programs in the United States. JEP engages as many as 1,500 students each year into its service-learning, work-study and volunteer programs, each of which partners with faculty to offer for-credit opportunities that integrate the material learned in the classroom with service in nearby schools, community-based organizations, health-care facilities, prisons, legal clinics, and homelessness groups.

In AY 2018-19, the 3,801 students who completed an exit survey administered by USC Career Services reported 1,639 internships undertaken during the course of the undergraduate career. This speaks to a large number of students having access to these opportunities. While Career Services is the central hub for helping students in their internship search, several schools augment these

services with tailored in-house programs. In the Marshall School of Business, for example, internships are considered an integral part of the curriculum, with 87% of Marshall students taking at least one internship before graduation, Internship Guidelines – Marshall. Marshall also offers international internship opportunities through its Winslow-Maxwell Global Summer Internships program that provides connections to businesses across the world. In a similar vein, the School of Cinematic Arts offers an "Industry Relations" program that helps match students to opportunities in film and TV, while Dornsife offers a "Gateway Internship program" which couples on-the-job placements with mentorship by a distinguished professional (most often an alumnus), along with participation in a seminar series designed to strengthen career preparedness and skills.

In AY 2018-19, the most recent year for which final figures are available, USC sent more than 3,000 students to study in 59 overseas destinations (see Dornsife Overseas Studies). The university recognizes the importance of students whose commitment to internationalizing their learning by spending at least ten weeks studying abroad through their eligibility for the Global Scholars award, another one of USC's commencement distinctions. A global outlook, however, is not entirely dependent on students studying abroad, as the diversity of USC, the number of languages represented on campus, and the many multilingual communities of Los Angeles, play an important role in our education.

Los Angeles' connection to the Pacific Rim, for example, is reflected in a series of Centers and Institutes related to East Asian cultures and languages. These include the East Asian Studies Center, the Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Cultures, the Center for Transpacific Studies, the Korean Studies Institute, and the US-China Institute . USC has also embraced the Pacific Asia Museum (USC PAM), a cultural site in Pasadena with a collection of 15,000 objects, spanning more than four thousand years and the region extending from Persia to the Pacific Islands. USC PAM is now one of two nationally accredited museums at USC along with the Fisher Museum of Art.

The university is also closely connected to Spanish-speaking communities in Los Angeles. The "More Than a Business: Empower Women, Secure Communities," program offered by Dornsife's office of Experiential and Applied Learning in partnership with First National Bank, for example,

supports students in the departments of Latin American and Iberian Cultures and Economics as they work with small women-owned businesses in South L.A. to develop business plans and translate key documents. The Latinx and Latin American Studies Center, along with the interdisciplinary Latinx/Latin American Studies major housed in the History department, will continue to provide experiential learning and civic engagement opportunities in these important communities.

In addition the convergent spirit is embodied in experiences we provide students in our professional schools. One example can be found in Arts in Action discussed earlier connecting students from across campus but in particular our arts schools with our community. Other examples can be found in the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the School of Pharmacy, the Ostrow School of Dentistry, and programs in the Occupational Sciences and Physical Therapy where students and faculty provide state-of-the-art health care to the communities they serve. Community programs, such as Fit Families, again staffed by students and faculty, operate the Oral Health Center and Community Health Fairs increase health awareness in surrounding areas. The Mobile Dental Clinic travels the streets of our neighborhoods, providing free dental services to thousands who would otherwise go without. A Street Medicine program travels downtown's Skid Row to help homeless access health care. Community outreach coupled with student learning can also be found in the Gould School of Law which provides deep and impactful experiential learning through their Immigration, Intellectual Property and Technology Law, International Human Rights, and Mediation Clinics, and their Post-Conviction Justice Project. Experiences of this type can be found throughout the university and deeply embed the commitment convergent thinking in the academic programs of USC.

USC's commitment to convergence is not a passing one, nor is it limited to one or a few boutique programs and or initiatives. In essence, USC continues to undergo a transformation from an approach where success is associated with deep disciplinary exploration to one where we define success around impact. The result of this transformation is that individuals with exceptional knowledge of their disciplines converge to work on issues that their disciplines alone cannot

address. While knowledge of each discipline and deep domain knowledge are required to identify and resolve the problems, success is achieved by collaborating to identifying and tackling new challenges.

The breadth and scale of USC, the social constructs of degrees and their names, and how they are valued outside academia and traditions deeply entrenched in disciplines preclude rapid changes along these lines. The effort is inherently creative. As demonstrated in the preceding sections, we continue to be committed to these transformations.

Across campus, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a growing sense of urgency that the changes we are undertaking require attention. Dramatic changes are emerging. These discussions and changes can be seen from the visual and performing arts, medicine and engineering, to the humanities, social and natural sciences, and the professions. We are in the process of restructuring the educational experience of our undergraduates, the way we organize and deliver services, and how we review programs, and approve new curricula. Our structures, policies, practices and pedagogy are undergoing rapid change as we continue to alter views and approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion, how we hire faculty and staff, and how we admit new students. This convergent and problem-based approach affects our outreach to neighbors and how we serve the communities around us. It is part of the fabric of our institutional history and the weave and possibilities of a new tomorrow.

COMPONENT 8.3: CULTURE CHANGE AND GOVERNANCE

In response to a number of revelations of distressing activities disclosed in the time period of 2017-2019, WSCUC lodged four inquiries (from July 2017 to May 2019) asking for additional information and USC's responses to each of these three primary incidents. Those letters and our responses are also in [Appendix 8.31](#).

1. WSCUC'S CHARGE TO USC

As a follow-up to their inquiries, our WSCUC liaison informed us that our reaffirmation would include the opportunity for the visiting team and the WSCUC Commission to consider efforts we took aimed at culture change and changes to the structure of our board governance. Noting that USC had faced a number of troubling events over a relatively short period, WSCUC asked that we address two areas in this section of our institutional report:

> *Changes in policies, practices, patterns and resolutions of complaints, and culture, including an update on the accomplishments of and challenges facing the Commitment to Change initiative, the President's Campus Culture Commission, and Campus Culture and Wellness Council*

> *Changes in roles, responsibilities, structure, membership and training of the USC Board of Trustees; verification that the Board complies with WSCUC Governing Board Policy*

2. COMMITMENT TO CHANGE, CULTURE COMMISSION, AND WELLNESS COUNCIL

The tumultuous episodes of the past few years included abuse by a staff gynecologist in student health, the use of drugs and inappropriate behavior of the former Dean of the Keck School of Medicine, and an admissions bribery scheme involving employees in Athletics. These matters have forced the institution, including the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students, to reflect on our values, devotion to our mission, accountability, and our commitment to students, patients, and each other.

The "Varsity Blues" athletics admissions matter provides a case in point. In March 2019, the U.S. Justice Department announced an investigation into the scheme that resulted in the admission

of dozens of students to several universities, including USC, based on false athletic pretenses. As a result of these revelations, USC instituted several changes, including:

- Every student-athlete candidate's file is reviewed on three levels — by the head coach, the senior sports administrator for the particular sport the student plays and the Office of Athletic Compliance — before being delivered to the Office of Admission for review.
- Each USC head coach must certify in writing that the student is being recruited on the basis of their athletic ability.
- All undergraduate applicants are required to sign an attestation, in addition to the attestation required by the Common App, affirming they submitted their own application, the information is true and accurate, and should any misrepresentation be found, regardless of source, it is grounds for immediate revocation of admission.

Other changes were made as well. A brief summary of USC's cooperation with investigators and our response to this challenge are available on the USC Commitment to Change website.

Commitment to Change Initiative. USC launched the Commitment to Change website in May 2018 to communicate directly with the USC community about specific actions taken moving forward. As the process of making changes commenced under the leadership of Interim President Wanda M. Austin, we sponsored several listening sessions with students, staff, faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and alumni. We engaged officers of the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Government and, of course, the Academic Senate and the Staff Assembly, who all played active roles in how we would move forward. The voices of other faculty groups, Trustees, and deans were also heard.

The feedback from those sessions and consultations informed our search for a new president and, later, a new provost and other senior leaders. Presaging what these sessions confirmed, a 2018 report by the Task Force on Workplace Standards and Employee Wellness (written before revelations of misconduct at the Student Health Center – see Appendix 8.32) summarized four objectives – and simultaneously acknowledged where we found ourselves lacking:

a. Institutional contributions had sometimes been allowed to out-weigh abuses of power, including toxic behaviors;
b. We needed to improve transparency, accountability, shared governance, and strengthen a shared sense of ownership;
c. We needed to be attentive to the well-being of each member of the USC community and to the healthy functioning of every unit;
d. Staff, students, and faculty needed to feel safe expressing their concerns — confident they will be heard, appropriate action will be taken, and that no retaliation will occur.

Several organizational changes ensued to strengthen [Reporting and Support Services](#) and to address the serious offenses in our student health operations. First, The Board of Trustees [reorganized and developed robust governance structures](#). Second, USC brought all student health systems under the Keck Medicine of USC, hired three new female gynecologists, and added ten new counseling positions to the USC Student Health Center. Third, the university established a single, centralized resource for all complaint monitoring and investigations, which was recently absorbed into a new office described below (i.e., EEO-TIX).

In June 2019, as noted earlier, USC hired Felicia Washington into the newly created position: Senior Vice President for [Human Resources, Equity & Compliance](#). The creation of this senior position and the hiring of Ms. Washington were intended to centralize and bring greater coherence to our operations, policies, and practices, and to increase accountability. In this new structure, the Office of Professionalism and Ethics (OPE) now falls under the Senior Vice President's administrative authority, as do the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) and the Title IX Office, which have been consolidated into the [Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity & Title IX](#) (EEO-TIX Office). Most recently, in July 2020, USC announced the appointment of a Vice President of Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX, who assumed her position in September.

More changes may come. Like every other university, we began 2020 during a pandemic, sharpened political tensions, and deepening concerns over racial inequality. We also felt a heightened concern for ethical standards and mutual respect. But we believe these changes will help promote transparency, increase accountability, and ensure that complaints registered by any member of the university community will be investigated, tracked, and adjudicated as fairly and as quickly as possible. We have work ahead of us in rebuilding trust within our community.

President's Culture Commission. The [Culture Commission](#) was formed in November 2018 with a general charge to oversee efforts to assess and improve campus culture. With the arrival of President Folt, the scope and scale of the Culture Commission expanded as new leadership assessed what it would take to put USC back on a positive trajectory.

The new "Culture Journey" is guided by the [President's Culture Commission](#) and the [Working Group on University Culture](#). This extensive, multi-year initiative brings current students, staff, and faculty together to explore USC's culture and shape opportunities to improve the way we interact every day as well as the university's systems, processes, and services that shape those interactions. At the center of the initiative lies the commitment to engage all members of the USC community in shaping USC's culture together, by identifying our shared values and changing our organizational systems and processes to encourage the alignment of our behaviors with those values.

During the spring of 2019, the campus hosted 46 Town Halls and 126 Discussion Sessions with over 4,000 students, faculty, and staff who shared their thoughts on the meaning and implications of the Poll results. Facilitating the discussion sessions were 120 members of our USC community who received training and served as culture facilitators and advocates guiding those conversations.

On July 24, 2020, the Working Group on University Culture announced its [Key Finding Report](#), summarizing the results of the Discussion Sessions. At the most general level, wide consensus was reported around several key themes:

- We must be a university where we all belong – where we are committed to respect, equity and the inclusion of diverse identities, voices and experiences at the personal, team and institutional level.
- Leaders at every level must be accountable for their decisions and the resulting outcomes.
- We need a clear vision tied to our mission and aligned with individual and institutional ethical principles and behaviors.
- Our values must be reflected in the way we assess performance, and in our systems governing recognition, rewards, and incentives.
- We must ensure open and coordinated communications, inclusive decision-making processes, and clear pathways for escalating and addressing concerns without fear of retaliation.
- We must invest in developing the professional skill sets of our managers and leaders tied to clearly defined career paths, mentorship, and feedback.

As the academic year continues, the Culture Journey enters its next stage, with (a) a range of activities aiming to foster self-awareness in our behaviors and interactions, and (b) ongoing work aimed at aligning our systems and process with our desired values.

The Culture Journey is an ongoing process. With the COVID-19 crisis, the Black Lives Matter protests across the nation and around the world, and internal cultural climate challenges faced by our BIPOC and gender fluid communities, international students, and other underserved communities, the focus of the Culture Journey will continue to evolve.

Campus Culture and Wellness Council. The work of the Campus Culture and Wellness Council took institutional form with the creation of a new Office of Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention in 2017. That entity serves as an umbrella under which several offices operate, including Campus Support and Intervention, Campus Wellbeing and Intervention, and Threat Assessment and Management. These additions provide greater coherence to how the university approaches wellness and crisis intervention. Together, services offered by these offices have enhanced the availability of support, from how we address individual crises and potential campus threats, to opportunities offered upstream that promote individual and campus wellness. Examples of these include adding additional mental health counselors, access to emergency funds, individual counseling, mindfulness training, yoga, Thrive courses for students and employees, focused workshops and training, preventive measures concerning risk management, etc. Our hope is that these opportunities will keep manageable challenges from becoming full-blown crises.

In addition, the university established an Office of the Ombuds with two ombudspersons appointed in 2019 to serve the University Park Campus and the Health Sciences Campus. Because conversations with ombudspersons are informal and remain confidential, and because ombuds are trained to remain impartial, they provide a safe place on both campuses for faculty, students, and staff to navigate policies, issues, concerns, and conflicts without fear of reprisal or judgement. Furthermore, sharing information with an ombuds does not "let the university know" about an issue or concern, but if individuals wish to notify the university, the Office of the Ombuds will direct them to the appropriate campus reporting unit. One goal of the ombudspersons is to promote and embody an ethical, empathic, and engaged culture that is committed to problem solving, dispute resolution, and workplace wellness.

The university continues to assess priorities and our organizational structures, processes, and personnel to ensure our capacity to meet the needs of our communities.

3. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES – USC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Prior to the last two years, the most recent structural changes to the Board of Trustees occurred in 1928 with the amendment of the university's articles of incorporation to make the Board of Trustees self-perpetuating rather than selected by the Methodist Episcopal Conference. That freed the church from providing USC with financial support. The action also freed up fundraising in a general community that had seen USC as "ruled" by the church. By 1952, another change dropped the requirement that a majority of trustees be members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, further secularizing the university. By the end of the following decade, USC became a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), signaling its ascension to the ranks of the top research universities.

In pursuit of reforms to its structure and processes, the Board established a Special Committee on Governance Reform in 2018 that, over a fourteen-month period, sought input from campus and other stakeholders, including administrators, deans, faculty and staff representatives, alumni, and other experts. On November 5, 2019, the USC Board of Trustees announced a series of changes to USC's board governance structures, processes, and membership following the discussion of the Special Committee's findings. The changes included the following:

- Reduce the overall size of the Board from 56 (as recently as 2019) to 35 members within the next few years; as of January 2021, the number now stands at 44
- Commit to a future Board composition that reflects the diversity of the USC community
- Implement term and age limits for all current and future Trustees
- Reduce the number of Board committees from eleven to nine
- Restructure the Executive Committee membership to be comprised of the Board Chair, immediate past Board Chair, University President, and Committee Chairs
- Strengthen requirements for Board membership
- Establish new criteria and role requirements for future Life and Honorary Trustees
- Publish all committee memberships to the USC website for community reference

Trustees are elected to five-year terms with a mandatory retirement age of 80. Several of our trustees have previous board service experience in the higher education space and many have

experience with risk management in various settings. The [Executive Committee](#) roster is available online and holds regular meetings on or about the first Wednesday of January, March, May, September, and November. [Standing Committees and their rosters](#) are now available on the USC website. Each committee meets at its discretion and may establish regular meeting dates.

The Board holds its annual meeting on or about the first Wednesday of June. The Board holds regular meetings on or about the first Wednesday of February, October, and December, and either March or April. Special meetings of the Board may be called at any time by the chairperson of the Board or by any five trustees or by the president of the university. In addition, Board members do not vote on questions before the Board that might create a conflict of interest or otherwise benefit them financially (e.g., direct or indirect contractual, employment, personal or familial financial interests). Finally, Board members do not receive compensation for their service, other than the Chair of the Board who may receive some compensation and no Board member may be compensated as an employee. In all cases, care is taken to avoid conflicts of interest. The [Bylaws of USC](#) were amended in June 2020 to reflect many of the changes described here. Together, these changes demonstrate that the Board is committed to acting with a high degree of independence, in accordance with WSCUC's Governing Board Policy.

COMPONENT 9: CONCLUSION

USC is a private research university with a public purpose, leading some to describe us a "private/public." USC's commitment to the public good is longstanding. Almost from its founding, USC declared itself not a pastoral college removed from the world of human affairs, but a city university committed to advancing society and elevating humanity.

In today's higher education world, USC's history is prescient. Public universities increasingly emulate the strategies of their private counterparts, just as more private institutions focus on their public purposes and join public institutions in proclaiming their aims to serve the common good: to be more diverse, inclusive, and equitable; to become more accessible, affordable, and sustainable; to reimagine the urban future; and to pursue bold ideas on multiple fronts and through ever more complex collaborations. This emerging convergence (even blurring) of the private and public parallels calls for greater inclusiveness as the world grows more diverse, complex, and dynamic.

Our work to increase access, embrace inclusivity, diversify our student body, and increase interdisciplinary opportunities have been ongoing since our reaccreditation in 2011. At the undergraduate level, USC now enrolls more Pell-eligible (20%) and first-generation college students (18.6%) than at any point in its history; no racial/ethnic group constitutes a majority of our overall student body (including our 2020 First-Year class), and we have ranked first in the total international student enrollment among from Fall 2001 to Fall 2012. For Fall 2012 through Fall 2019, we were ranked second or third in total enrollment of international students (see additional student body demographics here and in Appendix 9.01.

As student body diversity increased, so did our undergraduates' interdisciplinary ambitions, with nearly half of our undergraduates pursuing a second emphasis (either a second major or a minor) as part of their studies. At the same time, USC students remain connected to the city of Los Angeles through programs like the Joint Educational Project, the Neighborhood Academic Initiatives, USC TRiO, the Family of Schools, Arts in Action, and countless volunteer opportunities that promote civic engagement and community service. Today, USC has a more diverse and international undergraduate student body, pursuing more challenging academic programs, and

engaging in more community outreach than ever before – and they graduate at the highest rates in our history: from 70% in 1998 to 92% in 2013, and 91-92% since. The first-year students in the Fall 2020 class included 22% first-generation college students; 30% underrepresented students of color; 26% were straight-A students and the average test score was in the 95th percentile.

1. **NEXT STEPS**

In pursuing our two themes, several issues requiring attention arose – many paralleling the four pillars reported earlier in this report. Those questions, and six steps we plan to pursue in response to those questions, are summarized under the headings of those four new initiatives below.

Access and Affordability. We aspire to be the model for top private research universities striving to increase access and affordability regardless of economic class, ethnic and racial background, gender and sexual identities, veteran status, religious belief, and/or national origin.

1. As we foster the convergent spirit in our students and support students who want to pursue more academic opportunities, raising our 4-year graduation rate becomes a priority. In addition, we shall make achieving experiential equity for students for whom affordability remains a challenging goal a priority. Activities initiated to address these challenges include: The Provost Graduation and Retention Task Force will draft recommendations to improve the four-year graduation rate, which stands currently at 78%. They will consider all options that do not erode USC's academic quality or integrity, or students' ability to pursue the programs and experiences that brought them to USC in the first place. Options being discussed include additional fourth-year funding, changes to advisement, and changes to academic policies shown to slow students' progress to degree. The Task Force is made up of enrollment experts across USC's 23 academic units.
2. In order to achieve experiential equity for all students, USC's Executive Vice Provost and new Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer (CIDO) will convene a working group and recommend to the Provost ways to ensure no student must forgo a special academic program or experience due to a lack of economic resources – i.e., overseas studies, Problems-Without-Passports and Maymester travel courses, conference opportunities, etc. – and that no student's time at USC is prolonged unnecessarily due to lack of economic resources.

This relates to the convergent spirit, the inclusive spirit, and student success.

Sustainability and Reimagining the Urban Future. Upon her arrival to USC, President Folt announced that sustainability would be central to her administration. Efforts kicked-off with the President's Zero Waste Inauguration in September 2019. By the start of the fall term, a Presidential Sustainability Working Group had been convened and a Sustainability Plan was adopted. The

primary foci of the plan are to develop new educational programs, conduct more research on sustainability, and make the university's operations more sustainable. Measures under consideration to make our operations more sustainable include:

- Elimination of single-use plastics.
- Strengthening USC's zero-waste policy.
- Dramatic reductions of greenhouse gases.
- An expansion of waste diversion and recycling programs.
- Supply chain changes for sustainable procurement.
- Installing more charging stations for electric vehicles at USC parking garages.

No longer limited to narrowly delineated environmental challenges, we now see sustainability as central to reimaging the urban future.

3. Conceived as such, the sustainability lens also encompasses the everyday challenges of cultural and social life, including those on our campuses. Specifically, how to create a rich and diverse culture and strengthen campus climate. Through the efforts of the President's Culture Commission, USC is working to strengthen institutional culture and values, and foster trust and open communications across all constituencies and with leadership. The President's Culture Commission, the Working Group on University Culture, and the Division of Student Affairs will collaborate to find new ways to diversify our culture and increase sense of belonging among all student groups.
4. Guided by a Provost/Academic Senate/Staff Assembly Task Force and in partnership with USC's Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer (CIDO) and the USC Center for Race and Equity, we will conduct racial climate surveys of all faculty and staff to learn how every racial/ethnic group experiences our campus climate.

We want to set an example within and beyond higher education for how to pursue equity, be more inclusive, and produce graduates who embrace diversity as a primary foundation for sustainable cultural and economic prosperity. This relates to the inclusive spirit, core values, campus climate, sustainability, and reimagining the urban future.

Deepening Public Partnerships. We are building partnerships through outreach and service in our surrounding neighborhoods and throughout Los Angeles. We provide learning opportunities and access to health resources, conduct community-based and practice-based research, and help support local schoolchildren as they prepare for college. According to a 2015-2016 study, USC's overall economic impact in the Los Angeles region and California was estimated at $8 billion, much of which benefits the communities proximate to our campuses. How shall we foster deeper

connections to Los Angeles' rich ecosystem of non-profits and help our neighbors and our city achieve a more prosperous future, particularly in areas like health, sustainability, the homelessness crisis, arts engagement, and other forms of environmental and regional justice?

5. The Office of University Relations will sponsor a <u>biannual convening to reimagine the urban future</u>, open to all community partners (i.e., non-profits, cultural institutions, local schools, etc.) and faculty, students, and programs engaged in community outreach to leverage USC's immense impact in Los Angeles. One goal will be to create new collaborations and link community partners to each other and to potential campus partners and resources. Another will be to familiarize USC faculty and students with the countless outreach programs the university sponsors that often align to their scholarly and creative work.

We will reimagine the urban future through community and non-profit partnerships, arts engagement projects, and solving intractable social challenges like health disparities, climate change and sustainability, homelessness, and educational equity in the urban context. This relates to the inclusive spirit, the convergent spirit, community outreach, and environmental and regional equity.

Pursuing Bold Ideas and Leading the Imagination Economy. Because the problems of this century do not fall neatly into narrowly defined academic disciplines, USC invests in work that is highly collaborative, interdisciplinary, and innovative – work that reflects these new realities and that demand new pedagogies and curricular approaches. USC already brings together faculty and students in cutting-edge, multi-disciplinary settings where discoveries are made and new treatments and policies are devised in the [Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience](#), which joins natural science, medicine, engineering, and more, and [Dauterive Hall](#), which promotes advanced interdisciplinary social science research. In addition to these facilities, we engage varied groups in countless other studio, performance, exhibition, lab, screening, and workshop spaces that encourage collective and collaborative work. USC also supports academic programs known for cross-disciplinary and curricular experimentation, including the [Iovine and Young Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation](#), the [Harman Academy for Polymathic Study](#), visual studies, gender studies, media studies, ethnic studies, and the Thematic Option. How will we continue to leverage research capacity to address urgent social needs? How will we reinvent our

curriculum and refine pedagogy so our graduates leave eager to embrace collaboration in order to take on problems that defy simple solutions with imagination, ingenuity, and optimism?

6. The Office of the Provost will support <u>research funding to explore bold ideas</u> that lead to unexpected breakthroughs, and promote collaborative projects that address intractable social challenges.

We want to lead the imagination economy by pursuing bold ideas and addressing the new realities and challenges of the 21st century. This relates to the convergent spirit, to research support and sparking curiosity-based inquiry, to curricular renewal, to excellence in teaching and mentoring, and to our commitment to free-inquiry and advancing knowledge production.

2. FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE TPR PROCESS

The Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation has allowed us to focus on areas of critical importance to the future of the university while demonstrating we meet all of WSCUC's Standards. We commend WSCUC for devising the TPR and allowing USC, and others across the Western region, to better connect the standards of accreditation to institutional priorities, including student success and educational effectiveness, and the needs of our society. The opportunity to pursue our reaccreditation by examining critical institutional themes serves all of us well – colleges and universities, students, faculty, accreditation, higher education, and the public good.