





CHAPTER

6

A New Era Begins

On the afternoon of August 17, 2017, the air in the USC Village’s central piazza carried a particular charge: the intense summer heat added to the day’s expectant mood, as scores of chairs, giant videoscreens, and cardinal and gold decorations created a marked sense of anticipation. There was even a bit of mystery, as a stage at the center of the piazza showcased a large installation, completely shrouded in bright red draping.

The formal dedication of the USC Village followed the New Student Convocation ceremony.



The Trojan Marching Band led students, parents, and faculty to the central piazza.

A TROJAN DEDICATION

The day had been carefully chosen. The Village’s grand opening immediately followed the fall New Student Convocation, a pomp-filled university tradition that welcomes the newest class of students into academia, and one that signals the start of a fresh academic year.

The six grand buildings of the USC Village deserved their own inauguration—and it was only fitting that its first student residents stood alongside friends and supporters who had long dreamed of that day.

“We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the many students and parents, faculty and friends, architects and construction crews, elected officials and dedicated donors, whose sustained support has made this moment and this project possible,” President Nikias said, welcoming the crowd.





The crowd numbered in the thousands, and most had been led to the central piazza by the Trojan Marching Band, its spirited sounds guiding them from Alumni Park. Nikias invited the university's dean of religious life, Varun Soni, to deliver an interfaith message, accompanied by university representatives of three different religious views. Their words lent a somewhat solemn tone to the event, reminding everyone gathered that the day marked a meaningful milestone, a red-letter date in the university's 137-year history.

The gathering featured a range of speakers, including university representatives of three different religious views (above right). Varun Soni (fourth from left), USC's dean of religious life, delivered the invocation.



The afternoon's speakers included the president and vice president of Undergraduate Student Government, Austin Dunn and Morgan Monahan, as well as the president of Graduate Student Government, Kristopher Coombs Jr. (at the podium).

“This project has been a labor of love for all of us,” Nikias said. “We built this village to show our enduring commitment to our exceptional students and our beloved neighbors.”

The community responded with similar words of appreciation. Antonio Villaraigosa, who was mayor of Los Angeles when the project was approved, said: “Thank you for understanding the key to the future of this university is in its connection to its neighborhood.” Councilmember Curren Price, who represents Los Angeles’ ninth district, which includes USC, echoed this sentiment.

The presidents of student government, both undergraduate and graduate, represented the voices of USC students. “It’s nice they invest in their students,” said Katia Ellati, a junior, in the crowd. “It’s cool that the people around us, not just the students, get to use [the Village]. It’s bringing the community together.”

“I think it’s truly amazing. It’s brand new and we’re the first ones to experience that,” said Shane Mitchell, a sophomore studying political science.









While the new shops and imposing buildings seemed to grab everyone’s attention, Nikias reminded the audience of the less tangible benefits. “For our campus, and for our community, the USC Village will be far more than a collection of stunning structures,” he said. “It will be a bridge that brings us all together, uniting the members of our diverse and distinctive academic community.”

He continued: “It will serve as a scholarly sanctuary, an ideal environment for living and learning, a place where the pursuit of knowledge extends beyond the classroom, and beyond the boundaries of disciplines. It will be a testing ground for new ideas and new experiences, acting as a catalyst for creativity. And it will be a powerful economic engine, generating thousands of new jobs for our community and our city.”





The artist Christopher Slatoff (left, top) spoke just before the majestic Hecuba statue was unveiled. He was joined by President Nikias and USC's first lady, Niki C. Nikias.

As the event drew to a close, Nikias turned everyone's attention to the mysterious, shrouded installation. To center stage, he invited Christopher Slatoff, the artist who had spent months creating the statue of Hecuba, and who now awaited her unveiling.

Slatoff seemed to fight his emotions, and spoke glowingly of artist Gayle Garner Roski, the namesake of the USC Roski School of Art and Design, who had provided input on the statue over the months, along with Nikias.

As the bright red draping was lifted, cardinal and gold streamers shot into the air, and the crowd erupted in applause. Katia Ellati, a business major, seemed particularly excited by the new statue, a counterpart to Tommy Trojan. "I thought it was amazing, especially because she's a woman," she said.

Sophomore Lauren Young added: "It's showing the true diversity of USC."



STUDENTS AT HOME: LIVING AND LEARNING

As the dedication ceremony wrapped up, students continued to settle into their rooms, unfurling posters on the walls, greeting neighbors in the halls, and placing plants in their windows. Some even created videos showcasing their new digs on Snapchat, YouTube, and other social platforms.

With the USC Village, the university added eight new residential colleges, bringing its total to 14. USC follows a centuries-old model developed at Oxford University: in this system, each student is assigned to a “college,” where they build close relationships with faculty-in-residence mentors and their fellow students.

Ainsley Carry, USC’s vice president for student affairs, stressed the importance of such relationships. “When you’re 18 or 19, there are few things more important than belonging,” he said. “We want to make it easy for students to belong.”

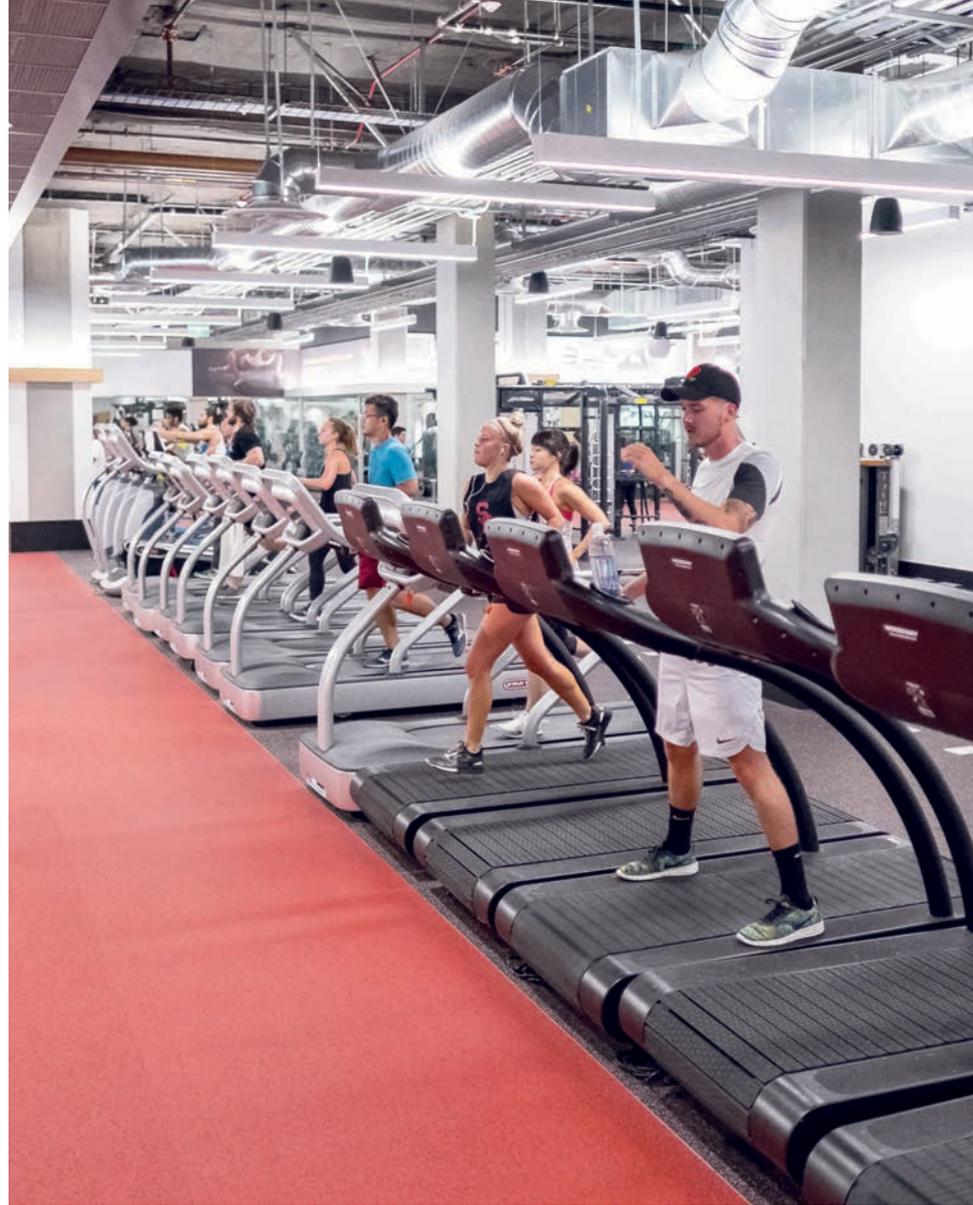
For the 2,500-plus students living in the USC Village, there is a range of options. Some live in an eight-person suite, while others live in a single. Many more live in a quad, or a four-person unit, laid out in various configurations. In total, the residences offer 16 different floor





(Above left) In the days leading up to the USC vs. UCLA football game, the USC Helenes guard the Hecuba statue, building on a tradition begun by the Trojan Knights, who have long protected Tommy Trojan from external incursions during rivalry week. (Above) A student in her dorm room. (Left) Students from McCarthy Honors College on Move-In Day.





The USC Village features a 30,000-square-foot fitness center. This includes group exercise studios, which offer cycling, TRX suspension training, boxing, yoga, Pilates, martial arts, and personal training, as well as other fitness programs.

plans; most include a kitchen and a common area, some of which are outdoors. There's also a 30,000-square-foot fitness center.

More than 12,000 pieces of furniture—most of which were built from recycled materials—fill the USC Village: a vast collection of beds, dressers, desks, chairs, couches, and tables. A factory in nearby Montebello created two-sided mattresses, which students can flip over to choose between a firm or a soft side.

Sprinkled throughout the residential colleges are 80 student lounges, two-thirds of which feature audiovisual equipment, allowing students to share presentations and class assignments with others, or perhaps watch television and screen films. The remaining lounges are quiet spaces, so students can concentrate on their own studies, or simply relax in a quiet environment.



The color scheme for each lounge, as well as each lobby, changes among the buildings, giving each residential college a signature look and feel. “We tried to pick out flexible, modern furniture that incorporated colors from the building into each lounge,” said Jan Edson, an interior designer who worked on the project. “The color scheme for each building is based on landscapes, and you’ll see that echoed as you walk through the residential life lounges.”

The windows, meanwhile, provide ample natural light. From their rooms, students can see the exterior of the USC Village and the paseos below, as well as portions of the University Park Campus. Some even have views of the downtown Los Angeles skyline.

Sprinkled throughout the residential colleges are 80 student lounges. Some are completely quiet, while two-thirds feature audiovisual equipment, allowing students to easily share homework projects.



Filled with natural light, and found throughout the eight residential colleges, the student lounges lend themselves to collaborative work.





FACULTY MENTORS

Living alongside the students—and serving as mentors—are faculty from different schools and units at USC. These faculty-in-residence—with support from the university’s residential education staff and from resident assistants—organize programming, including lectures, group outings, and dinners. These experiences range from day trips to Watts Towers to evening performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

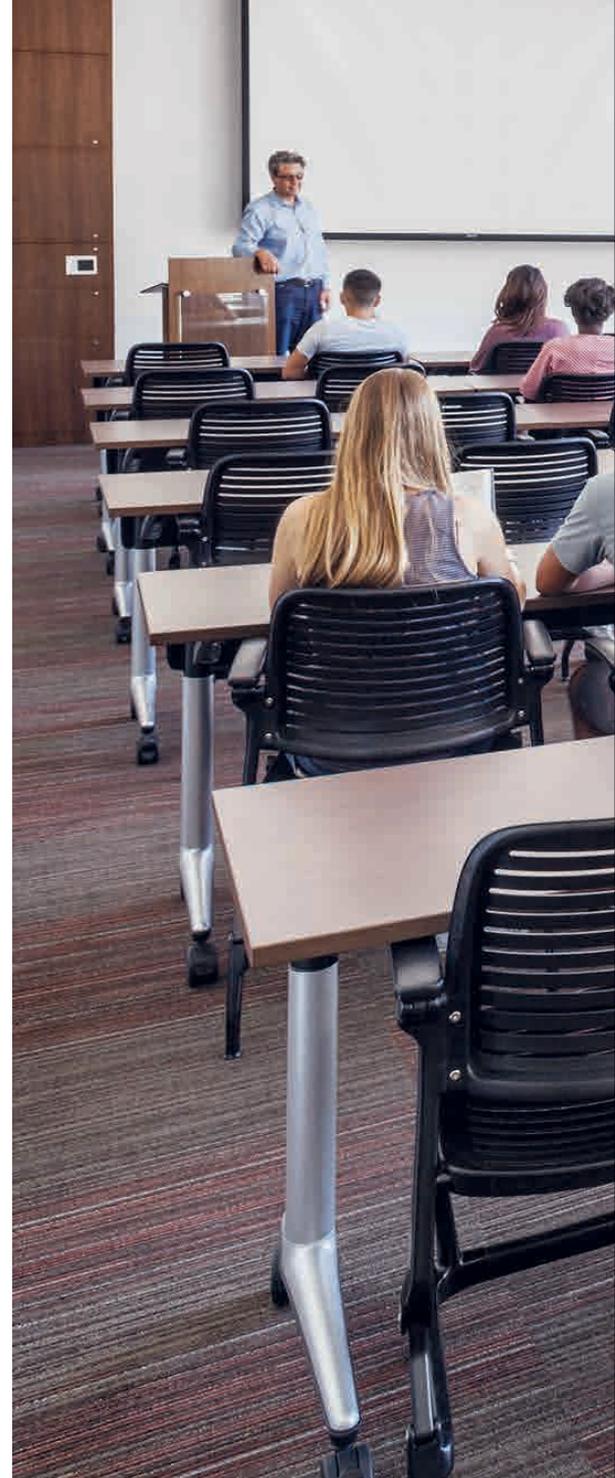
At the USC Village, six faculty members play this critical role. They went through an intensive selection process, and build meaningful relationships with students during meals, conversations, gatherings, and outings.

“We’re here to build authentic, caring relationships,” said Professor John Pascarella, of the USC Rossier School of Education. Pascarella resides in McCarthy Honors College, having previously spent five years at South Residential College.

“We want to draw from students’ diverse backgrounds, to expose them to growth opportunities they’re not going to get in class,” he said. “We want to connect students with alumni and cultivate a commitment to service, which aligns with our mission as a university.”

In addition to the faculty-in-residence, and in preparation for the USC Village, the university increased the total professional staff to 27 and the total graduate student staff to 10 in residential education. By the time the USC Village opened, the university had expanded its number of residential assistants by nearly a third.

“Residential education is more than a job,” said Emily Sandoval, senior director of residential education. “It’s a way of living. A lot of us grew up in this field as RAs. You share your life with students.”



Faculty-in-residence live alongside the students and serve as mentors. (Bottom, left) Neelesh Tiruvilumala (at left), Laura Baker, and John Pascarella.







A DAY FOR THE COMMUNITY

The first Saturday after the grand opening, the university hosted a special open house at the USC Village, a gathering that focused on the community, a chance for the university to express its gratitude to the thousands of neighbors who had been so central to the project's vision and realization.

"Every time you see these spectacular structures, every time you visit the USC Village, we hope you will take great pride in the pivotal role this community played in making it possible," President Nikias said at the event's outset. "And we hope you will always see it as a symbol of the extraordinary things that can be accomplished when we work together with a common purpose, a common vision, and a common ambition."

Among the hundreds gathered was Pat Lewis, who has two children in USC's Neighborhood Academic Initiative. She expressed her hopes that the USC Village would draw more visitors to South Los Angeles. "I want them to feel a sense of home, a sense of belonging," she said. "It makes us feel so good that this is built."

Nikias thanked community members such as Lewis, who had become ambassadors for the project, and who pushed for approvals. "The USC Village is the story of thousands of people who showed their support at dozens of meetings and hearings, many of whom found their voices by speaking in front of our city council for the very first time," he said.

He went on to praise the elected officials, who had become champions for these community members. "[These] elected officials paved the way for progress, creating an economic engine that will provide a wealth of work for people right here in our local community."

Four of these elected officials spoke that afternoon, including Congresswoman Karen Bass, who represents California's 37th district. She commended USC's efforts to hire local workers during the construction phase. "If you needed some tools, if you needed a driver's license," she said, "USC went the extra mile." This support paid off, as 20 percent of the construction team lived within five miles of the Village.

On the first Saturday after the dedication, USC formally welcomed the local community.



Other elected officials included California state assembly member Reggie Jones-Sawyer, who represents the state's 59th district, and Mark Ridley-Thomas of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

Councilmember Curren Price, who had also participated in the grand opening earlier in the week, spoke of the Village's enduring benefits for the community, notably increased economic opportunity and approximately 800 new jobs. "The Village is the first major investment to come to South L.A. in a long, long time," he said. "In fact, it's spawned other transformational developments in the area."

Among those developments was the new USC-built fire station on Hoover Street, as well as the Village's community room, which can be used for local events and neighborhood gatherings. USC also provided



(Above left) Councilmember Curren Price (at left); Council President Herb Wesson and his wife, Fabian; President Nikias and his wife, Niki; Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas; and Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer. (Above right) Councilmember Price. (Middle) Maria Guadalupe Garrido, a community leader and Trojan parent. (Bottom) Nikias with Congresswoman Karen Bass.





Village

WELCOME
US
COMMUNITY



the city with \$20 million to support affordable housing in the local area. And when Los Angeles hosts the 2028 Summer Olympics, the entire structure will serve as the media village, housing journalists from all over the world.

In his speech, Nikias also acknowledged the architects and construction crews, whose “incredible craftsmanship has helped us reinvent the ancient village for this modern moment.” To honor their work, Nikias invited Lloyd Silberstein, USC’s vice president for capital construction, and Willy Marsh, the director of construction, to the stage. “Over nearly three years, the success of this entire project rested on the calm and capable shoulders of these two men and their very talented teams.”

Surrounding the speakers that day were the USC Village’s many new storefronts; Trader Joe’s, Target, and Starbucks attracted the most attention, but other well-known retailers, such as Barilla, Honeybird, and Nail Garden, drew visitors with samples. The latter offered quickie manicures, appropriately limiting the color options to cardinal and gold.

“I think it’s wonderful,” said Beverly Matthews, who lives off Crenshaw Boulevard, and whose daughter and husband are both Trojans. “It’s good they invited the community to be a part of a new phase in USC’s history, so the neighborhood can feel more a part of USC.”

Nikias offered some historical context for the gathering. “Today we celebrate how our university and our city have grown up alongside each other, and have brought out the best in each other,” he said. To elaborate, he shared the story of USC’s first building, Widney Alumni House.



“Architects offered their designs for free,” he said. “Companies provided lumber at cost, and local citizens shared the story of a great university that would soon rise from the dusty plain.”

Like the USC Village, the Widney Alumni House had its own inauguration ceremony, and one speaker compared the then-budding university to “... a giant sequoia, which was starting from a little seed.”

To this, Nikias added: “After all of these years, we are very proud to say that our roots still run deep in our cherished community.”

As if in tacit agreement, the still-young grand oak—a tree that commonly symbolizes strength and endurance—stood just behind Nikias, its branches towering over the gathering. As the USC Village opens its arms to the wider community, its roots will spread, finding ever-firmer standing in the landscape of Los Angeles.



Many community members visited the new retailers and restaurants for the first time.





A CELEBRATION OF GRATITUDE

Some weeks after the dedication ceremony, on a warm October evening, the university community celebrated the USC Village's key benefactors. At a gala dinner in the central piazza, and with more than 1,000 people present, Nikias praised the small group of philanthropists whose financial support drove the project: those who provided naming gifts for the eight residential colleges that would house 2,500 students each year.

Nikias likened these individuals to the venerable patrons of centuries past. "Think of the Renaissance or the Enlightenment movements, when their extraordinary generosity acted as a sort of alchemy, transforming the arts and other fields of study, and determining the destiny of entire societies," he said.

"With the creation of the USC Village, we celebrate the benevolent benefactors whose visionary philanthropy has forever transformed the physical and intellectual landscape of our beloved university."



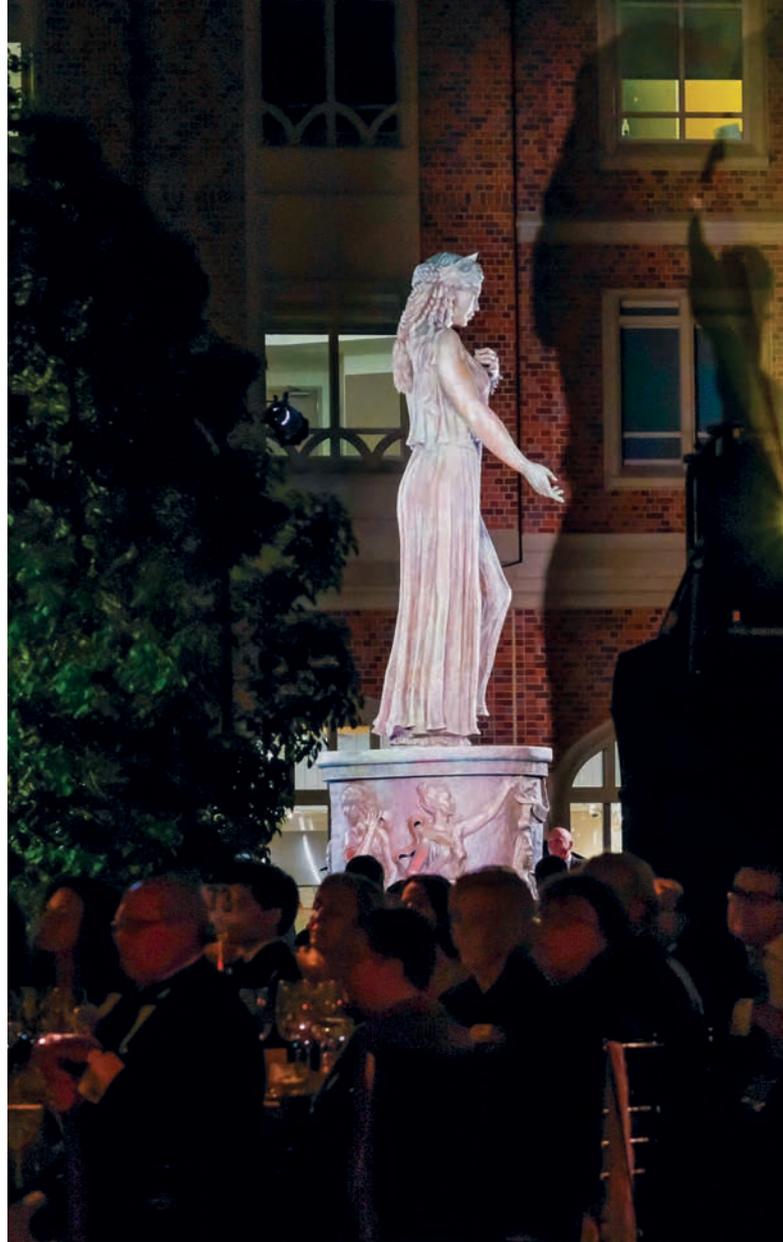


While their impact was tremendous, their number was small: David Bohnett; Charles and Jessie Cale; Ray and Ghada Irani; William and Leslie McMorrow; Kathleen Leavey McCarthy; and Shelly and Ofer Nemirovsky. This group also included an anonymous donor who named a residence hall in honor of A.C. Cowlings.

As the Trojan Marching Band guided guests to the central piazza, and the atmosphere took hold, the gratitude translated into a musical, colorful paean to the USC Village—and all that these philanthropists had made possible. Part of this tribute featured warm words from other key players in the project’s advance, including the mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti.

“USC isn’t just a friend—it is a full partner to this city,” Garcetti said. “[We acknowledge] your belief in this institution, and in this great town, by erecting this, which won’t just be housing, but will be a home—a transformative home for generation after generation of young people who will come here to live out their dreams and their aspirations.”

(Above) Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. (Right, clockwise from top) President Nikias and USC’s first lady, Niki C. Nikias; Hecuba statue; students from the USC Thornton School of Music performed; USC Trustee Kathleen Leavey McCarthy.





The USC Village will allow faculty to mentor students, so it was only natural that the evening included some words from one of the university's most esteemed faculty members, Jacob Soll, who holds appointments in both the Leventhal School of Accounting and the Dornsife College.

The evening's program—as had been the case with both the dedication and the community day—included remarks from student leaders: Austin Dunn and Morgan Monahan, the president and vice president of undergraduate student government, respectively, as well as Kristopher Coombs Jr., the president of graduate student government. Their presence underscored students' centrality to the project's vision.

(Left, top) The evening included the university trustees, senior leadership, faculty, and friends. (Right, top) University Professor Jacob Soll. (Right, middle) Representatives from undergraduate and graduate student government spoke. (Right, bottom) The SoCal VoCals, a USC a cappella group, performed.

(Following page) USC Thornton student Landon Shaw performed (at left, bottom).





The evening also included a special presentation on the Hecuba statue, as the sculptor, Christopher Slatoff, and Gayle Garner Roski took the stage. Students from the USC Thornton School of Music performed Yannis Markopoulos’ “Mother, Magnanimous,” an appropriate selection, given Hecuba’s place among literature’s greatest mythical matriarchs.

The evening ended with a presentation of Leonard Bernstein’s “Make Our Garden Grow,” with colorful, swooping images projected on the walls of the USC Village. These animations—inspired by a theme of growth, and drawn from garden scenes—changed rapidly, as multi-hued flowers bloomed in the blink of an eye, and as intricately rendered vines wrapped around the walls, their tentacles traveling as quickly as water rolling down a stream. The presentation ended with some traditional symbols of USC, as the color palette culminated in just two: cardinal and gold.



To conclude the celebration, USC Thornton groups performed Leonard Bernstein's "Make Our Garden Grow," from the operetta *Candide*. Striking animations—symbolic of growth and of USC's history—danced across the walls of the USC Village.







Numerous donors supported many aspects of the USC Village, but at the gala celebration, President Ninkias paid special tribute to those benefactors who provided a naming gift for one of the eight residential colleges. In addition to those highlighted here, the group included an anonymous donor who named a residential college in honor of A.C. Cowlings, with one residential college still to be named.



David Bohnett

David C. Bohnett Residential College

With a master's degree from the USC Gould School of Law, and distinguished tenures at two Los Angeles law firms, Chuck Cale has been a pillar of the legal profession for decades, and now serves as a managing member of Griffin Opportunities. He and his wife, Jessie, a graduate of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, also endowed the Charles Griffin Cale Director of Athletics' Chair. Chuck served on the organizing committee that brought the 1984 Olympics to Los Angeles; when the Olympics return in 2028, members of the international media will pass through the residential college that now bears his and his wife's names.



Charles and Jessie Cale

Jessie and Charles Cale Residential College



Ray and Ghada Irani

Ghada and Ray Irani Residential College

Growing up outside Chicago, in a family that valued community service, David Bohnett showed an early interest in technology, as well as the arts. But it wasn't until he arrived at USC that his interests converged. As an undergraduate at the USC Marshall School of Business, he minored in computer science, and developed a pioneering set of technical skills. In the early 1990s, long before the internet was ubiquitous, he launched the web-hosting service GeoCities, which allowed people to create personalized websites. Its extraordinary success fueled his philanthropy, which has since focused on social justice, equal rights, and economic equality.

During his lengthy career at Occidental Petroleum Corporation, where he served as chairman and chief executive officer, Ray Irani built the company into one of the most successful energy exploration enterprises in the United States. With his wife, Ghada, by his side, he brought tremendous esteem to USC as a trustee, alumnus, and faculty member, and now serves as a Judge Widney Professor of chemical engineering and chemistry. In addition to the residential college, he and Ghada provided the naming gift for Ray R. Irani Hall, a home for cutting-edge interdisciplinary research at the university.

At USC, Kathleen Leavey McCarthy's roots run particularly deep: an alumna, she is the daughter of longtime benefactors Thomas and Dorothy Leavey. When the Leavey family formed a foundation, Kathleen honed her philanthropic vision, and now chairs the charitable organization, providing a natural bridge between its mission, and that of her *alma mater*. The foundation's legacy at USC already included notable gifts to create Leavey Library and McCarthy Quad. Kathleen has served on the board of trustees for more than three decades, and along with her husband, Frank Kostlan, remains one of the university's most generous benefactors. Among the residential colleges' naming gifts, hers was the first to be announced.



Kathleen Leavey McCarthy

McCarthy Honors College



William and Leslie McMorrow

Priam Residential College

With this naming gift, Bill and Leslie McMorrow build on their impressive philanthropic legacy at USC, having already created the William J. McMorrow Global Real Estate Program at the university. Bill is a double alumnus of the Marshall School of Business, a USC trustee, and a venerable figure in the realm of real estate. Early in his career, and with impressive forethought, he purchased a company with only one office and 11 employees; today, the company—Kennedy Wilson Holdings—has 27 offices around the world and more than 500 corporate employees. He and Leslie have brought this same expansive vision to their philanthropy.

As an undergraduate at USC, Shelly Nemirovsky developed a love of literature, and an appreciation for the power of education. After graduating as an English major, she worked in the financial services industry, and opened an interior design business. She also discovered her passion for philanthropy, and has served on many nonprofit boards, while leading fundraising campaigns that advance education, the arts, and civic growth. With this naming gift, Shelly and her husband, Ofer, the former senior director of a private equity firm, have chosen to direct their philanthropy in support of USC students.



Shelly and Ofer Nemirovsky

Shelly and Ofer Nemirovsky Residential College