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Viterbi donates \$15M to USC

By Gary Robbins

THE UNIVERSITY OF

Southern California's historic attempt to raise \$6 billion in private donations will get a lift today from Qualcomm co-founder Andrew Viterbi, who is giving his alma mater \$15 million to boost engineering and the study of genocide.

Viterbi is building on his previous support to USC, where he sits on the board of trustees. Ten years ago, he and his wife Erna donated \$52 million to help develop the Viterbi School of Engineering, whose graduate program is ranked 11th nationally by *US News and World Report*.

These two gifts are part of the roughly \$115 million that the Rancho Santa Fe couple has made since the late 1990s to a variety of institutions, ranging from USC to the San Diego Opera to San Diego's Rady Children's Hospital.

"USC has undergone greater improvement than any other university in the country over the past 50 years," said Viterbi, who earned a doctorate in digital communications at the private school in 1962. "It has an international reputation. I am pleased to be part of it."

The university's climb has been made possible, to a large degree, by its ability to raise private donations. USC began its latest capital campaign in 2011, announcing that it will try to raise \$6 billion by 2018. It's one of the largest capital campaigns in the



Andrew and Erna Viterbi of Rancho Santa Fe have donated about \$115 million to a variety of institutions since the late 1990s. *Steve Cohn*

history of American higher education. Philanthropy experts said the goal might be too high. But USC has already raised \$3.5 billion, some of it coming from its 12,000 alumni in San Diego County.

During the current fiscal year, USC has raised \$850 million in private gifts. That figure almost equals what the University of California San Diego has raised during the past seven years combined. USC's fundraising prowess has become an issue locally; UC San Diego officials are worried that USC will scoop up a lot more donations here if it is successful in its current attempt to gain control of the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla through a takeover or merger.

UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep Khosla said last Friday that the campus would be happy to explore a merger or some other alliance if Scripps Research is interested.

Viterbi declined to talk about the

situation other than to say, "UC San Diego is virtually across the street from Scripps Research. There have been plenty of opportunities for them to talk."

The Viterbis' new \$15 million donation to USC represents emotional touchstones for the couple. The university says that \$5 million will support the USC Shoah Foundation, which studies the Holocaust and other genocides. The other \$10 million will go to the engineering school.

Andrew Viterbi and Erna Finci left Europe for the U.S. with their families shortly before World War II due to the spread of anti-semitism. They met in Los Angeles in 1956 and married two years later.

Viterbi worked in academia and industry after leaving USC. In the mid-1980s, he co-founded Qualcomm with Irwin Jacobs. The company has become a world leader in wireless communications. Analysts say the entire industry has benefited from the so-called Viterbi algorithm, which is used to separate signal from noise. It has improved everything from cell phones to DNA analysis.

In a statement, USC President C.L. Max Nikias said, "Andrew and Erna Viterbi stand among USC's most ardent champions, and this generous gift reflects their longstanding commitment to investing in people."

USC News

Viterbis' \$15 million gift establishes endowed chairs and fellowships

The couple's gift will support scholarship at USC Viterbi and the USC Shoah Foundation

By Jessica Raymond

TRUSTEE ANDREW J. VITERBI

PhD '62 and his wife, Erna, have added to their rich legacy of philanthropy at USC with a \$15 million gift to boost scholarship in engineering and genocide studies.

The namesakes of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, the Viterbis will support two areas of the university especially important to them, designating \$10 million for USC Viterbi and \$5 million to the USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education.

The couple's gift comes as USC Viterbi approaches the 10th anniversary of the Viterbis' original \$52 million naming gift in 2004. USC Shoah Foundation marks its own 20th anniversary this year as well.

Directed from the Andrew and Erna Viterbi Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego, the gift will create five endowed faculty chairs and five graduate student fellowships at USC Viterbi.

The gift will also endow the Andrew J. and Erna Finci Viterbi Executive Director Chair at the USC Shoah Foundation. USC Shoah Foundation Executive Director Stephen D. Smith will be installed as the inaugural holder of the chair.

"Andrew and Erna Viterbi stand among USC's most ardent champions, and this generous gift reflects their longstanding commitment to investing in people," said USC President C. L. Max



Erna and Andrew J. Viterbi *Courtesy of KPBS*

Nikias. "Through these endowments, the Viterbi School and Shoah Foundation can support transformative faculty and talented students, helping them to advance research that will benefit our world for generations to come. We remain deeply grateful for the Viterbis' continued confidence."

Dubbed an "engineering legend" by USC Viterbi Dean Yannis C. Yortsos, Andrew Viterbi co-founded Qualcomm, one of the foremost developers of wireless telecommunications products and services. He created the now-legendary Viterbi algorithm, which has applications in many fields, including wireless and satellite communications, data recording, speech recognition and search engines.

As children, Andrew and Erna fled Europe to the United States with their families before World War II due to growing anti-Semitism. Seeing his parents struggle to support their family, Andrew dedicated himself to his education and won a scholarship to MIT. He received bachelor's and

master's degrees in electrical engineering from the school in 1957, and went on to earn his PhD in digital communications from USC.

A member of the Board of Trustees since 2000, he holds the USC Presidential Chair in Engineering and serves on USC Viterbi's Board of Councilors.

Erna Viterbi is a longtime member of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's Board of Councilors and has held leadership roles at philanthropies around the world. Together with Andrew, she has given generously to educational institutions, health sciences research, veterans' causes and arts organizations. The couple resides in San Diego, California.

Their gift provides significant support for USC Viterbi's \$500 million initiative, which aims to bolster endowment funds for faculty research, student scholarships, academic programming and capital projects. The Viterbi initiative has raised more than \$241 million.

The Viterbis' gift also puts the USC Shoah Foundation's fundraising initiative over \$72 million — nearly half of its \$150 million goal. This contribution represents a landmark in the institute's history, as it is the largest gift the institute has received since becoming part of USC in 2006.

These two initiatives support the larger Campaign for the University of Southern California, a multiyear effort that seeks to raise \$6 billion or more in private philanthropy. Three years after its launch, the campaign has raised more than \$3.4 billion.