

# USC delegation takes key concerns to Washington

*Research and a proposed college rating system top the agenda in bipartisan discussions for a group led by President C. L. Max Nikias and Provost Michael Quick*

By Eric Abelev

**WASHINGTON** — With cherry blossoms blooming and spring in full swing, USC President C. L. Max Nikias led a delegation of trustees, senior administrators and deans to the nation's capital Wednesday.

Running two concurrent tracks led by Nikias and Provost Michael Quick, delegates discussed with lawmakers a number of pressing issues affecting higher education including research funding, student aid, veteran care and a White House proposal to rate the nation's post-secondary institutions.

Delegates met with a bipartisan group including: Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.); Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.); Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.); Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the House minority leader; Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Calif.).

## Security discussion

The group also engaged in a roundtable discussion with Alejandro Mayorkas, deputy secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Mayorkas discussed the department's priorities including cybersecurity and talent development, and signaled his interest in developing a closer working relationship with USC.

Across both sides of the aisle, legislators voiced their support for maintaining medical and defense research funding and



USC President C. L. Max Nikias met with several government officials, including Alejandro Mayorkas, deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Photo by Eric Abelev

expressed tremendous interest in USC's Institute for Creative Technologies and CREATE (National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events) initiatives, which enable technology-driven innovations in areas including intelligence and veteran care.

With more than \$687 million in annual research expenditures including over \$430 million from the federal government, USC's research enterprise relies on adequate and sustained federal funding for basic and applied research.

"The research we carry out at USC carries a dual benefit," Nikias said. "Of course, it creates the foundation for major advances

in areas such as health and medicine, communications, food, economics, energy and national security. But it also helps educate students to be scientific leaders and innovators.

"It is my hope that funding for these important programs will indeed be sustained."

## Concern about ratings

In addition to research, lawmakers shared USC's concerns about the potential for a government-imposed rating system that lumps the nation's 4,000 post-secondary institutions together, while ignoring key academic metrics.

"While we are 100 percent in favor of accountability and transparency," Nikias said, "we want to ensure that any information disseminated by the government paints an accurate picture for parents, students and other stakeholders. Based on the information we have today, however, we have serious concerns about how a government rating system would achieve this important objective."

Following a full day of back-to-back meetings with legislators, Nikias hosted a reception for elected officials, alumni, parents and friends of the university. In his remarks to the audience of nearly 200, he spoke about USC's significant economic and cultural impact, and provided an update on the construction of USC Village, which is on track to be completed by 2017.



## USC in D.C.

1. (left to right) Trustee Christopher Cox, Senator Barbara Boxer, President Nikias, Trustee Bruce Ramer, and Trustee Lisa Barkett.
2. Senator Dean Heller and Trustee Bruce Ramer. Senator Heller is a USC alumnus.
3. President Nikias and Representative Mimi Walters.
4. A bald eagle, accompanied by its handler, added to the patriotic atmosphere at the Capitol during the delegation's visit.
5. Representative Adam Schiff and President Nikias.
6. (left to right) President Nikias, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Bruce Ramer, and Christopher Cox.
7. President Nikias, Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, and her husband, Edward Allard.
8. President Nikias and Representative Judy Chu.
9. (left to right) Jack Knott, dean of the Price School of Public Policy; Martha Escutia, vice president, government relations; Karen Symms Gallagher, dean of the Rossier School of Education; Representative Ted Lieu; Provost Michael Quick; and Trustee Robert Padgett.
10. The delegation hosted a reception for elected officials, as well as Trojan alumni, parents, and supporters.



Photos 1-8, 10 by Eric Abelev; photo 9 courtesy the Office of Rep. Ted Lieu