

USC Iovine and Young Academy's latest groundbreaking project: an actual groundbreaking

Ceremony kicks off construction of a new home for the innovative center, where students combine culture, business and technology — and immediately get down to business

By Joanna Clay

Much like a startup itself, when the USC Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Academy started at USC four years ago, it had to be scrappy.

It took a part of a fourth floor in the Ronald Tutor Campus Center in the middle of campus. A couple of classrooms — dubbed “the garage” — served as the hub for its first group of 30 students. It made use of every bit of space, converting conference rooms to classrooms, but the academy outgrew that space as the student body tripled.

Now that’s changing. On Wednesday, academy founders Andre Young (aka Dr. Dre) and Jimmy Iovine donned hard hats and dug into fresh soil to kick off construction on the academy’s first building: Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Hall.

Opening in 2019, the building will become the new hub for the academy’s students, where they can print prototypes on 3-D printers, weld metal or jump into a studio to edit a video.

“It will stoke the fire of students’ imaginations, and it will propel the next generations of inventions and products that will transform our lives,” USC President C. L. Max Nikias said at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Iovine and Young donated \$70 million in 2013 to create the academy. The idea came from hiring for their headphones company Beats. They wanted people who didn’t just have a handle on culture, tech or business, but had an approach that spanned multiple disciplines.



Academy director Erica Muhl, Andre Young, Jimmy Iovine and USC President C. L. Max Nikias pause during Wednesday’s groundbreaking ceremony. *Photo by Gus Ruelas*

The academy combines all three in one cohesive curriculum. Students receive a Bachelor of Science in Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation. The school also debuted an online Master of Science in Integrated Design, Business and Technology degree this year.

“I hope at this school we can help our students to dream big, execute and build the courage to stay in the saddle,” Iovine said Wednesday.

First class, first startup

The academy is graduating its first class in May and already has produced its first startup. Mira, an augmented reality company, launched its \$100 augmented reality headset, dubbed Prism, at Comic-Con this summer. Investors include musician Will.i.am. and Salesforce founder, chairman and CEO

Marc Benioff. More startups could debut as the academic year continues, since students’ senior year is focused on building a product or company.

Many of the USC Iovine and Young Academy students got the chance to talk to Iovine after the groundbreaking ceremony, where they posed for a picture and shared project ideas. Thanks to the academy’s intimacy — just 114 students are enrolled — it’s not uncommon for Iovine to stop by to give a talk at the garage, maybe bringing Snapchat founder Evan Spiegel with him.

With their own career website, academy students have nabbed internships at Facebook, Hulu, Sony and Oculus. There’s also an annual pitch competition in which students have the opportunity to win \$10,000 to help grow an idea.



Jimmy Iovine and Andre “Dr. Dre” Young appear with academy students at the groundbreaking.



President Nikias (right) with Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young.
Photos by Gus Ruelas

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Music legends Dr. Dre, Jimmy Iovine break ground for new USC academy

By Darsha Philips

LOS ANGELES — Music business legends Dr. Dre and Jimmy Iovine broke ground Wednesday for a new academy named for them at the University of Southern California.

The Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation will focus on four areas: art and design; engineering and computer science; business and venture management; and communication.

The goal is to offer students an interdisciplinary approach that encourages entrepreneurial spirit while training them in technical and business skills.

“I’m hoping that it will bring to them independence of thought to be able to work in the world between technology and liberal arts,” Iovine said.

In 2013, the two music moguls donated \$70 million to help build the 10,000-square-foot academy, which is scheduled to open in fall 2019.

Dr. Dre, born in Compton as Andre Young, launched his career with the influential 1980s rap group NWA, then became an established solo artist and producer.

In 2008, he launched the Beats by Dr. Dre headphone line. In 2014, Apple bought

the brand for \$3 billion, making him by some estimates at the time, the richest man in the hip-hop business.

Iovine started as a recording engineer and producer in the 1970s, working with artists such as John Lennon and Bruce Springsteen.

In 1990 he co-founded Interscope Records which, with its subsidiary Death Row Records, helped launch a number of influential hip-hop acts in the 1990s and 2000s, including Tupac Shakur and Eminem. Iovine worked with Dr. Dre to launch Beats.