

Nikias honor reflects USC's investment in brain mapping, bioscience

The university's president receives the Humanitarian Award of the Society for Brain Mapping and Therapeutics.



USC President C. L. Max Nikias and his wife, Niki C. Nikias, arrive at the 15th annual Brain Mapping Foundation Awards Gala. *Photo by Eric Abelev*

By David Medzerian

USC President C. L. Max Nikias was honored on April 14 with the Humanitarian Award of the Society for Brain Mapping and Therapeutics. The award is presented to physicians and scientists who have made significant contributions to survival and quality of life of patients across the globe.

“It’s a tremendous honor to accept this award on behalf of the university,” said Nikias, emphasizing the priority USC has given to this important discipline.

“Because of the potential to improve the lives of so many people around the world, we have made significant investments and multidisciplinary appointments to advance our capabilities in brain mapping, neuroscience and the biosciences more broadly.”

Leader in brain mapping

USC has emerged as a leader in brain mapping, a field that straddles biological science and engineering and brings improved measurements to clinical treatments for diseases such as Alzheimer’s and autism.

The field’s leading researchers like Paul Thompson and Arthur Toga make their home at the USC Mark and Mary Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute and its Laboratory of Neuro Imaging. Among the researchers’ projects is the ENIGMA network, the largest brain-mapping project in the world. Harvard University radiologist and leading imaging expert Bruce Rosen once described Toga and Thompson’s group as “the world’s premier lab when

it comes to finding insights about the brain in massive amounts of data from scans and genetic tests.”

USC’s investment in the field also includes creating the Alzheimer’s Therapeutic Research Institute of the Keck School of Medicine of USC as leading Alzheimer’s researcher Paul Aisen came to the university. Aisen and his staff have enrolled more than 1,000 people in international clinical trials and are still seeking more participants.

And in November, the university debuted Michelson Hall and the Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience, a multidisciplinary center that brings scientists from all over the university — the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the USC

Viterbi School of Engineering and the Keck School of Medicine — to solve the world’s most pressing health problems.

Nikias praises USC’s priorities

“This recognition is a testament to the advances USC has already made, and the trajectory the university is on, to be a global leader in these disciplines in the decades to come,” Nikias said.

The Society for Brain Mapping and

Therapeutics honors pioneers in brain mapping at its gala each year. This year’s event was held at the Millennium Biltmore hotel in Downtown Los Angeles. In addition to Nikias, the list of honorees included Nobel laureate Eric Kandel and U.S. Rep. Ted Lieu.

“We have many university presidents and distinguished individuals who were nominated, but Dr. Nikias was the finest candidate because he is a Renaissance

man who has impacted humanity through significant contributions to medicine, science, technology, art and policy,” said Babak Kateb, chairman and CEO of the Society for Brain Mapping and Therapeutics.

“Our global strategy is to break the boundaries of science, technology, medicine, art and healthcare policy, and Max has clearly achieved that.”



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1 President Nikias accepted the Humanitarian Award on behalf of the university and all of the groundbreaking researchers at USC.

2 President Nikias with Babak Kateb (center), president of the Brain Mapping Foundation, and Vicky Yamamoto, a cancer researcher at the Keck School of Medicine

3 President Nikias with Ali Marjaninejad, a USC biomedical engineering student

4 President Nikias with (from left to right) Dong Song, recipient of the Young Investigator Award and research associate professor at USC Viterbi, and his wife, Helen; and Ted Berger, director of USC’s Center for Neural Engineering

5 President Nikias and USC’s first lady, Niki C. Nikias, with USC trustee Ming Hsieh, who is a former recipient of the Humanitarian Award, and his wife, Eva

Photo 1 by Leonard McLeod; all other photos by Eric Abelev



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