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Around the Globe

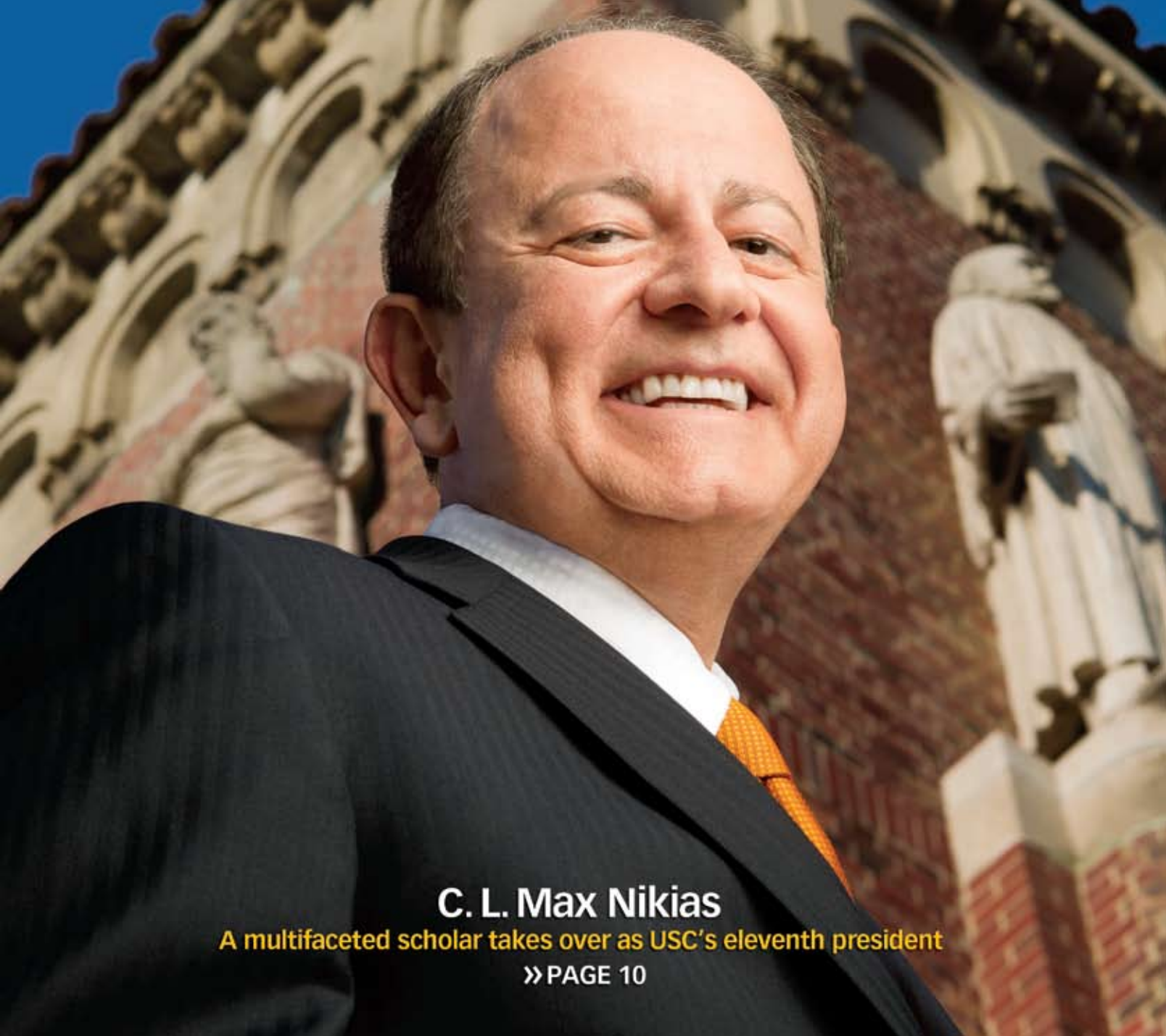
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C. L. Max Nikias

A multifaceted scholar takes over as USC's eleventh president

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What's New

NEWS & NOTES ON ALL THINGS TROJAN

President C. L. Max Nikias

USC's 11th president is widely hailed for his energy, innovative ideas and skill in building partnerships.

IN ANNOUNCING the selection of C. L. Max Nikias as USC's 11th president, Board of Trustees chairman Edward P. Roski, Jr., called him "a remarkable and inspiring leader, a brilliant scholar, and the best possible person to lead our university forward," an opinion that is widely shared among faculty, students and alumni.

Over the course of his career as a researcher, educator and university administrator, Nikias has earned accolades for his leadership, innovation and fund raising, as well as his ability to build partnerships among varied constituencies.

As the university's chief academic officer since 2005, he is credited with accelerating the university's recent academic momentum, recruiting new leadership, strengthening the academic medical enterprise, helping attract a series of major donations to the institution, creating innovative cross-disciplinary programs, enhancing the university's globalization efforts, and increasing support for students at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels.

His selection by the Board of Trustees

followed a search process that involved an advisory committee of trustees and senior faculty representatives working with one of the nation's premier search consulting

firms serving higher education. Between November 2009 and January 2010, the advisory committee met with 15 key USC constituent groups, including students, faculty, alumni leaders, community representatives, staff, and various university supporters and friends. After reviewing approximately 75 candidates, the committee interviewed seven finalists, all of whom were sitting presidents or provosts at major universities.



OVERHEARD » "I interviewed a number of sitting presidents and provosts. It's no accident we chose our incumbent provost, a Ph.D. in electrical engineering and a maven of innovative technologies and teaching."

- Warren Bennis, USC University Professor and leadership expert, in *The Washington Post*

"It is a testament to Max Nikias' abilities that, from such an impressive group of educators, he was unanimously recommended by the advisory committee," Roski said. "During his 19 years as a faculty member and administrator at USC, he has provided distinguished service to the university in a variety of roles."

Although Nikias was widely expected to succeed USC President Emeritus Steven B. Sample, he told the *Daily Trojan* that he took nothing for granted, and was thrilled when he got the official call. "In the whole space of higher education today, this is by far the very best job," he said.

He called it "the greatest honor to be given this opportunity to work toward realizing the dreams and aspirations of the Trojan Family."

"This incredible, wide-ranging university represents an electric environment, one remarkably skilled at producing new ideas and new leaders to strengthen our society," he added.

"Moving USC forward, and accelerating its breathtaking momentum, strikes me as the most rewarding endeavor in American higher education today."

"It has been said that the only sure way to predict the future is to invent it. And because USC's faculty, students, alumni and staff comprise a global intellectual community of unsurpassed breadth, energy and dedication, I have exceeding confidence in USC's own future."

"My wife, Niki, and I and our daughters love being a 'Trojan family,' and we love being a part of the greater Trojan Family. To be able, then, to lead the Trojan Family forward now is the opportunity of a lifetime, as we write together the next chapter in USC's extraordinary history."

AFTER BEING named provost in 2005, Nikias worked with faculty and deans to develop a number of new programs that would help create a distinct academic environment at USC.

To enhance the undergraduate experience for USC students, he established new scholarship programs that reward innovative scholarship and global academic immersion. He also sponsored a USC Arts curriculum that encourages cross-arts interdisciplinary programs, including minors, progressive degrees, joint degrees and joint classes.

He drove the creation of USC's groundbreaking Visions and Voices initiative in the arts and humanities, now in its fourth year, which has drawn tens of thousands of undergraduates from all disciplines to a

range of artistic and cultural programming.

Nikias launched other initiatives as well, including a quintupling of funding for Ph.D. fellowships to \$20 million per year, a grant program for advancing scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, and a program to recruit leading interdisciplinary scholars as Provost's Professors.

He recruited new leadership to the Keck School of Medicine of USC, spearheaded the integration of the school's 19 faculty practice plans, and oversaw the transfer of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital from Tenet Healthcare Corporation to the university.

Nikias also was instrumental in negotiating on behalf of the university the relocation of the Shoah Foundation – originally established by filmmaker and USC trustee Steven Spielberg – and the establishment of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

Nikias established an Office of Research Advancement in Washington, D.C., that has been directly responsible for helping faculty win more than \$140 million in federal research funding in the past 30 months.

NIKIAS WAS RECRUITED to USC in 1991 to develop a national-caliber center for multimedia research, and became the founding director and principal investigator for the Integrated Media Systems Center (IMSC). In a fierce competition in 1996, USC's IMSC proposal to NSF was ranked first out of 117, a pool that included proposals from America's top-ranked research universities.

He served as dean of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering from 2001 to 2005.

During a fund-raising campaign that lasted under four years, he secured a naming gift from Andrew J. and Erna Viterbi, as well as other gifts from major donors and institutions for individual academic departments and institutes. Nikias was the only dean in USC's history to secure more than \$200 million in such a brief period of time. He recruited 30 world-class faculty members to the USC Viterbi School and also tripled the number of women on the faculty.

In April 2008, he was named inaugural holder of the Malcolm R. Currie Chair in Technology and the Humanities. As president, he also holds the Robert C. Packard President's Chair.

Each fall, Nikias teaches a micro-seminar to incoming freshmen on the development of democracy and the dramatic arts within ancient Athens. ●



Left to right: Maria, Niki, Max and Georgiana Nikias outside Mudd Hall

C. L. Max Nikias

» **EDUCATION** Graduated with honors from Famagusta Gymnasium, a school in Cyprus that emphasizes sciences, history and Greco-Roman classics. Received diploma from National Technical University of Athens, also known as National Metsovion Polytechnic, Greece's oldest and most prestigious institution of higher education. Earned M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from State University of New York at Buffalo.

» **PROFESSIONAL** Internationally recognized for pioneering research on digital signal processing and communications, digital media systems, and biomedicine. Founding director of two national research centers at USC: NSF Engineering Research Center on Integrated Media Systems and Department of Defense Center for Research on Applied Signal Processing. Innovations and patents in sonar, radar and communications systems adopted by Department of Defense. Author of more than 275 journal articles and papers, three textbooks and eight patents. Mentor of more than 30 Ph.D. and postdoctoral students.

» **HONORS** Member of the National Academy of Engineering and fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), California Council on Science and Technology, and American Association for the Advancement of Science. Recipient of 2008 IEEE Simon Ramo Medal.

» **PERSONAL** Wife Niki has an accounting degree from Athens University of Economics and Business in Greece, and an MBA in finance from SUNY Buffalo; daughter Georgiana is a third-year student at USC Gould School of Law; and daughter Maria is a senior at the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. ●

For more information on President Nikias, visit <http://www.usc.edu/president>