USC launches new Health Policy and Economics Center

By James Grant

A major new research center focused on health policy and economics has been established at USC, Executive Vice President and Provost C. L. Max Nikias announced Sept. 23.

The Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics is funded by a $12 million operating gift from Leonard D. Schaeffer and his wife, Pamela Schaeffer. Leonard Schaeffer was the founding chairman and chief executive officer of WellPoint, the nation’s largest health insurance company, and is a recognized expert in health policy and health economics.

The Schaeffer Center will be headed by Dana Goldman, who previously served as director of the RAND Corp.’s health economics, finance and organization division.

“At a time when the nation is struggling with health care reform, we are honored to announce the creation of this new interdisciplinary center, which will bring together USC’s extraordinarily wide range of expertise in order to address one of the most significant issues of our time,” Nikias said.

“The addition of Dana Goldman and three of his distinguished colleagues from the RAND Corp. to our faculty will greatly expand our existing strengths in research and analysis of critical policy decisions,” he added.

“The center is a collaboration between the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development (SPPD) and the USC School of Pharmacy. In addition to his post as director of the Schaeffer Center, Goldman will hold the Norman Topping Chair in Medicine and Public Policy at SPPD, and he also will hold a faculty appointment at the School of Pharmacy.

Two of the three new faculty members—Geoffrey Joyce and Neeraj Sood—have been appointed associate professors at the School of Pharmacy; the third, Darius Lakdawalla, has been appointed associate professor at SPPD. They will be joined in their research and outreach activities by current USC faculty experts in pharmacoeconomics, public insurance and health care financing. Also joining the Schaeffer Center will be Vivian Wu of the School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

Schaeffer’s gift will assist the new center in its first four years of operation. Significant additional support for the start-up has also been committed by the provost and the deans of the two schools.

“I am pleased to help the university establish a research center at a time when we must set biases aside and challenge assumptions if we are to succeed in transforming health care,” Schaeffer said. “By using a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, this new center is uniquely positioned to produce innovative research, reliable data and independent analysis that can lead to more effective health policy solutions.”

The schaeffer research will focus on five key areas: reducing unnecessary spending; improving insurance design; understanding how public policy affects medical innovation; identifying the macroeconomic consequences of U.S. health care costs; and improving comparative effectiveness and outcomes research.

Goldman said the new center’s anticipated research projects include study of how coverage gaps in certain federally funded programs impact health care.

C. L. Max Nikias, executive vice president and provost

**A warm welcome for new dean of Dentistry**

By Beth Dunham

Avisha Sadan stepped into his role as dean of the USC School of Dentistry in early August and was feted at a Sept. 23 reception attended by numerous Health Sciences faculty members and other USC leaders.

Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine, welcomed Sadan to USC and hailed him as a strength collaborator who would foster ties between Dentistry and the Keck School.

“He is an accomplished clinician, a great leader, and someone I feel very comfortable working with,” Puliafito said. “Our goal is to continue working closely in terms of research, clinical affairs and the advancement of medicine.”

Sadan thanked attendees for their warm welcome and highlighted the continuing cooperation between the two schools, mentioning a newly awarded grant that will fund hiring of two new faculty members with dual appointments in the School of Dentistry and the Keck School of Medicine.

“We’re looking forward to increasing our collaboration,” Sadan said.

**USC hospitals implement six key upgrade projects**

By Jon Nalick

Several significant facilities upgrades are well under way for both USC University Hospital and USC Norris Hospital to improve the quality of the patient care experience and to provide state-of-the-art care.

The projects are designed to boost operational efficiency, modernize and upgrade patient rooms and public areas, and improve quality of care.

“I want to thank so many of our physicians and staff for their participation in the planning process. Their input and guidance will create a very exciting health care environment in the near future,” said Mitch Creem, CEO of the hospitals.

While a number of projects are still in the planning phase, six priority projects are moving forward as described below.

**Outpatient Surgery Move to Doheny Eye Institute**

Effective Oct. 5, ambulatory surgery cases currently performed inside the USC University Hospital operating rooms will be scheduled in the first floor of the Doheny Eye Institute building, which previously served as an outpatient surgery area. Services located at the new, temporary outpatient Surgery Center will include ophthalmology, orthopedics, ENT, plastic surgery, urology, gynecology and general surgery.

The Doheny space has been recently renovated to house ambulatory surgery, and a permanent home for an expanded state-of-the-art outpatient surgery center is being built in the basement of the HCC II building.

**Operating Room Upgrades at USC University Hospital**

The outpatient surgery move in October will allow for prompt upgrading of the USC University Hospital operating rooms to accommodate new equipment and other technology requested by Doctors of USC faculty surgeons for the care of their patients.

Surgeons will enjoy not only upgraded surgical suites, but also the additional capacity to schedule more cases each day.

**UPDATE: Eye Institute**

Avisah Sadan (left), dean of the USC School of Dentistry, and Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito reaffirmed the high level of cooperation between the schools at a reception welcoming Sadan Sept. 23.

From left are Leonard D. Schaeffer, his wife, Pamela, and Dana Goldman, who will head the Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics.

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**UPDATE: Eye Institute**
Diet author credits USC Norris with saving his life

By Yvonne Baetz

Diagnosed with late stage colorectal cancer after a regular check-up, diet book author and former chemist A. J. Djo listened to his doctors deliver a bleak prognosis: his tumor was too large for surgery and no chemotherapy could help. Instead of giving up, Djo and his wife scoured the Internet for the best cancer care they could find—and soon began treatment at USC Norris Cancer Hospital that ultimately saved his life.

Three years later, he recently ran his first half-marathon and now speaks to cancer survivors and their families about the importance of nutrition and exercise. “The key to survival is going to USC Norris Cancer Hospital,” Djo said, crediting the hospital’s “one-stop-shopping” approach to care as crucial for his cure.

He said that another factor in surviving cancer is working to create and maintain a loving network of family and friends, adding that for him, “I also found that I had a loving network at Norris, too.”

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Djo completed and published The Hot Diet, a book on the importance of diet and nutrition during his cancer treatment. He said his next project will be a personal book about surviving his battle with cancer that addresses practical issues such as money, lifestyle changes, goal-setting and helping people.

The Weekly is published for the faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors in the University of Southern California's Health Sciences Campus community. It is written and produced by the Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing staff. Comments, suggestions and story ideas are welcome. Permission to reprint articles with attribution is freely given.

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Next Issue: October 9

SCHAEFFER: Center for Health Policy and Economics to bolster campus collaboration

By Joe Peters

With a title like “Run 4 Her Life,” the upcoming 5k/10k run in Glendale may sound like a fictional thriller about a woman in peril, but the lethal danger the title hints at—breast cancer—is all too real.

Expedition Inspiration, an organization formed to raise funds for breast cancer research through organized outdoor activities, created the event, which is hosted by the Americana in Glendale, Oct. 18.

Proceeds from the event will support breast cancer research at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Expedition Inspiration’s annual Laura Evans Memorial Breast Cancer Symposium.

In addition to the run, the event at the Americana will feature live entertainment, a health expo, and a post-race party.

For families, the event also offers a 5K Family Run/Walk on a USC Track & Field certified fast course.

Celebrities attending the event will include Marcellus Wiley of ESPN, and co-chairs Shannon Tweed and her daughter Sophie Tweed-Simmons.

Shannon Tweed said, “Being involved with breast cancer awareness, although it’s a selfless activity, there’s a selfish element in it for me. I want my daughter to be informed and conscious about the disease and its prevention and treatment.”

To promote environmental consciousness, emedia group is providing runners with eco-friendly running bibs made from seed paper. If planted after the event, these will bloom into black-eyed Susans, providing a lasting memento of the event.

“We are grateful to be part of this event that Expedition Inspiration has created to raise funds for breast cancer research,” said Michael Press, the Harold E. Lee Chair for Cancer Research at Norris.

“As we learn more about the molecular and genetic causes of breast cancer, we are positioned to attack this deadly disease at its origin and to prevent its development in thousands of women,” he said.

Run 4 Her Life is scheduled for 7 am on Sunday, October 18, at the Americana at Brand, 899 America Way, Glendale, CA.

Pre-registration costs $35 per runner, and Run Day tickets are $40.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit http://run4her-life.com, or call (661) 259-7337.

“Run 4 Her Life” fundraiser for USC Norris set for Oct. 18.
Doheny patient raises awareness, funds for rare eye condition

By Leslie Ridgeway

After suffering the effects of a rare condition that robs victims of the center of their vision, 19-year-old Jeremy Poincenot decided the best way to deal with his situation was to hop on a bike.

Poincenot, a patient of Alfredo Sadun, professor of ophthalmology at Doheny Eye Institute, arranged a three-day tandem 185-mile bike ride in late July from Santa Barbara to his hometown of Carlsbad, CA. The ride brought attention to his condition—Lieber’s hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON), which earlier this year left him legally blind.

“We raised almost $3,000,” said Poincenot. “Four of my friends stepped up to help me, and two people came with me to make a documentary. It was amazing, and was the highlight of my summer.”

Poincenot’s contribution supports research conducted by Sadun in rural Brazil, where he is working with a family group who all suffer LHON. The condition has an incidence of one in 50,000, Poincenot and his mother, Lissa, also spoke to the Luminaries, a philanthropic group that supports Doheny, about his experience.

LHON makes it impossible for Poincenot to drive, recognize faces and read without assistive technology. It is often misdiagnosed, Poincenot said that doctors initially thought he might have a brain tumor.

In addition to raising awareness of LHON with a Web site (http://web.mac.com/poincenot/cure/Home.html), Poincenot is continuing his studies at San Diego State University and meets with Sadun every six to eight weeks.

“He said he has seen signs of improvement,” Poincenot said. “Dr. Sadun gives me hope.”

HOSPITALS: Multiple improvement projects under way

Continued from page 1

demand increases.

Upgrades to new Norris Inpatient Tower at USC University Hospital

Improvements to the current Norris tower will include installing more sinks for frequent hand washing and additional nursing telemetry for patient monitoring, as well as flat screen televisions and patient communications systems. These upgrades should be completed by March 2010.

Ellen Whalen, chief nursing officer for the hospitals, said that the chief goal is to enhance patient safety and comfort.

“To that end, we are organizing patient care units by service,” she said. “This will ensure patients are cared for by nurses who are specially prepared to address their specific needs, and they will be in an environment specially equipped to support them as they progress through their hospital stay.”

Relocation of Norris Inpatient to Norris Inpatient Tower at USC UH

By early November, many Norris surgery patients will have their surgery at USC University Hospital and then be admitted into USC University Hospital inpatient rooms. Plans call for all Norris surgery patients to receive their post-surgical care at USC University Hospital by February 2010.

The transfer of Norris inpatients will not actually entail the move of patients from one hospital to the other. Instead, a gradually increasing proportion of Norris patients will be scheduled for surgery at USC University Hospital and then be assigned to rooms in the new USC University Hospital tower.

Creem said the change will “ensure that our cancer patients have the best patient rooms we can offer, which affords the opportunity to merge the compassionate care at Norris with the compassionate care at University Hospital. We need to identify and embrace the best of what we have to offer our USC patients and their families—regardless of where they receive their care.”

An assessment of space utilization at Norris will provide recommendations for renovating existing inpatient units to provide expanded outpatient programs and services for a growing cancer patient population.

“The expertise of our Norris faculty is constricted by available space in their current building,” Creem explained. “By moving Norris inpatients to University Hospital, we can explore the utilization of the vacated space for a women’s health program, a men’s health program, and other services that appeal to patients who seek the most comprehensive cancer care available.”

Upgrades to the 1991 USC University Hospital Tower

An ambitious project slated for completion in late 2010 will focus on modernizing and updating the older hospital tower. Improvements will include seismic upgrades, additional telemetry, pathology services and room enhancements—all of which will bring the tower’s rooms and services into parity with the newer Norris Inpatient Tower.

Public Space Improvements

Concurrent with the project to update the older inpatient tower, another initiative aims to improve the patient and family experience upon arrival while also improving patient flow throughout USC University Hospital. The project, targeting lobbies, family waiting areas on units and other public spaces, is intended to create a more modern, consistent and comfortable interior design.

The initiative is slated for completion in late 2010.

“We need to identify and embrace the best of what we have to offer our USC patients and their families—regardless of where they receive their care.’’

—Mitch Creem, CEO of the USC hospitals

Jeremy Poincenot (center) celebrates his ride from Santa Barbara to Carlsbad, CA. The ride was a fundraiser for the Doheny Eye Institute, supporting research for a rare condition called Lieber’s hereditary optic neuropathy.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A series of Sept. 28 Los Angeles Times articles on diet featured doctoral candidate in the Department of Preventive Medicine Emily Ventura as a nutrition expert. Ventura visited participants’ homes to advise them on how they could improve their eating habits.

A Sept. 26 New York Times article highlighted the work of Professor of Ophthalmology Mark Humayun, Chief Scientific Officer of the Doheny Eye Institute and colleagues in a story on technological advances toward curing blindness.

On Sept. 24, MedCenter Today Online ran a US News story reporting that Mark D. Amey has joined USC as chief information officer for several units.

A Sept. 24 New York Times article quoted Assistant Professor of Plastic Surgery Brian Kinney about Sculpta, a long-lasting facial filler that just received Food and Drug Administration approval for cosmetic use.

A widely carried U.S. News & World Report article reported that clinicians from the Keck School of Medicine will work with USC engineering, communication and computer science faculty to create a speech-to-speech (S2S) translation system for clinics, emergency rooms and ambulances.

On Sept. 23, MedCenter Today Online ran a USC News story reporting that Preet Chadha has been named chief of the Jane Anne Nohl Division of Hematology and Center for the Study of Blood Diseases at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital. Medical News Today also reported the announcement.

A widely carried Sept. 22 U.S. News & World Report article featured research led by Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at CHLA Steven Mittelman which found that leukemia cells may hide in fat tissue. The findings may explain why obese children with leukemia are more likely to develop chemotherapy resistance and have higher relapse rates. United Press International, Science News, AHN, and the NCI Cancer Bulletin also covered the research.
Calendar of Events

This Calendar of events is also online at www.usc.edu/hsccalendar for the Health Sciences Campus community.

Saturday, Oct. 3

10 a.m. – Noon. “Fight On for a Cure,” Various speakers and free cancer screening assessments. NOB Areyto Aud. Info: (323) 442-7673

Monday, Oct. 5

Tuesday, Oct. 6


Wednesday, Oct. 7
8:30 a.m. “Pathology/LDS.” M. Rose, USC. GSH 11-321. Info: (323) 266-7923


Thursday, Oct. 8
Noon. Research Center for Liver Diseases Seminar. “Ongoing Barriers to the Use of Hepatitis C and Stem Cells in the Treatment of Liver Diseases.” In Fox. Univ. of Pittsburgh. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

Friday, Oct. 9
11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “Current Trends in MI Treatment.” Joseph Tusecno, UC Davis. BTT 221H03. Info: (323) 865-3950


Saturday, Oct. 10
11:30 a.m. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “Grief and Bereavement,” Sidney Zook, UC. San Diego. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

Wednesday, Oct. 14
8:30 a.m. “Introduction to Radiology,” Alison Wilson. USC. GSH 11-321. Info: (323) 226-7923


Tuesday, Oct. 13

4 p.m. KOSM Research Seminar. “Modeling Stem Cells.” Arthur Lamont, USC. Irvine. MCH 256. Info: (323) 442-1144

Friday, Oct. 16

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “CNS Lymphomas.” Tracy Batchelor, Massachusetts General Hospital. IPT 221H03. Info: (323) 865-3950

Monday, Oct. 19

Tuesday, Oct. 20

By Leslie Ridgeway

Applications and devices that can help people manage their health and communicate with their health care provider will be subjects of discussion at the Body Computing 3.0 conference on Oct. 9.

This year’s conference, sponsored by the Keck School of Medicine of USC Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, takes place from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 9, at the UPC Town and Gown Banquet Hall. The conference is preceded by the popular Body Computing Slam and dinner at 5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 8, at the Davidson Conference Center, where experts in healthcare, technology and entertainment meet to “think out loud” about the future of technology in health care.

Guest experts from companies including Microsoft, Qualcomm and the Mayo Clinic will join with experts from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, USC Viterbi School of Engineering, and USC School of Cinematic Arts for talks on everything from what happens when personal health data is used in gaming devices to how to create devices that are as interesting and fun to use as they are useful for managing one’s own health.

The conference also includes demonstrations of iPhone apps that enable users to track their heart health, and that allow physicians to interact with patients and to share data and communicate with other physicians.

For more information on the conference, go to http://objc.com/bodycomputing/

Triathlon raises $1 million for CHLA for pediatric cancer research

Pediatric cancer research was the big winner at the Nautica Malibu Triathlon on Sept. 13, with $1 million raised for the Pediatric Cancer Research Program at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

The Nautica Malibu Triathlon has raised more than $2.7 million for pediatric cancer research at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles in the three years the hospital has been the beneficiary of the event. Teri Hatcher (“Desperate Housewives”) led the field of celebrity competitors, including Felicity Huffman (“Desperate Housewives”) and her husband William H. Macy (“Shouts,” “ER”), Jason Lee (“My Name is Earl”), Jon Cryer (“Two and a Half Men”), Mario Lopez (“Extra”), Jeremy Piven (“Entourage”) and more.

The Pediatric Cancer Research Program at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles provides groundbreaking treatments and therapies for some of the most serious and life-threatening pediatric cancers that strike children everywhere.

“Our ongoing commitment and dedication to medical research and disease prevention at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles is making a difference in the fight against this terrible illness,” said Stuart E. Siegel, director of the Children’s Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, and professor and vice chair, pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. “Those of us responsible for the Pediatric Cancer Research Program are very, very grateful for the generosity of all involved with the Nautica Malibu Triathlon and, together, we look toward a time in the future when research will conquer this horrific disease.”

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