USC Health Sciences leaders hail Samples’ service to USC

‘I’m proud that in the years ahead you will have the opportunity to improve the quality of life for even more people... The best is yet to come for our Health Sciences Campus, for our hospitals and for all the health-related professions at USC.’

— USC President Steven B. Sample

By Ina Fried

USC Health Sciences leaders gathered May 10 to honor USC President Steven B. Sample and First Lady Kathryn Sample as the university’s 10th president prepares to step down in August.

They were joined by university officers, hospital executives, clinical leaders, members of the USC Board of Trustees and members of the Keck School of Medicine Board of Overseers at a luncheon in the midst of USC’s academic medical center.

Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School; R. Pete Vanderveen, dean of the USC School of Pharmacy; and Mitch Creem, CEO of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, presented the Samples with a Tiffany crystal bowl engraved with a caduceus in recognition of nearly two decades of leadership at USC.

In the acquisition of the two USC hospitals and the creation of the academic medical center, Sample showed “tremendous courage and flexibility,” both signs of great leadership, Puliafito said.

Creem called the decision to purchase the two hospitals “a bold and brilliant move.” He said, “We have so much to look forward to—a future of excitement, anticipation and inspiration, a future that includes creating a model of innovation and care that we are committed to care for the rest of the country to follow, a future full of meaningful research that will yield new discoveries, new treatments and new procedures.”

Vanderveen shared his sentiments reflecting his “great respect and admiration for the Samples” in a short poem, that concluded, “Dr. Sample showed us how to lead with humor, class and dignity.”

On behalf of the Health Sciences faculty, Peter A. Jones, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, expressed appreciation for Sample’s work in changing perceptions of the university in Los Angeles, in the nation and around the world. “What you’ve really done for us is to make us a first-rate university. For that we’ll always be grateful,” he said.

Sample expressed his own gratitude in return, thanking deans, administrators, faculty, staff and hospital partners for all that they do. “You do far more than heal people’s bodies,” he said.

By Meghan Lewit

Rebuilding the social and institutional fabric of Haiti was the main focus of a May 6 town hall meeting featuring top-ranking Haitian health officials.

The event, hosted by Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito and Vice Dean for Medical Education Henri Ford, followed a day of meetings to discuss current challenges and needs in Haiti, and how USC may be able to provide further assistance.

The USC/L.A. County Haiti Medical Aid Team has been traveling to Haiti since Jan. 15, three days after the deadly earthquake killed more than 200,000 people, injured more than 300,000, and left up to 1 million homeless.

Four teams including 27 Keck School faculty members and Los Angeles County Health Department staff have taken personal vacation time to provide uncompensated care, sleeping in tents during their weeklong medical missions.

“The unmet medical needs in Haiti are tremendous,” Puliafito said. He noted, however, that the goal is for Haiti to be able to care for its own in the future. “It will only work if there are Haitians providing health care in Haiti,” he said.

The delegation included Ambassador Leslie Voltaire, U.N. special envoy of the Government of Haiti; Alex Larsen, Haiti minister of health; Ariel Henry, chief of staff, Haitian Ministry of Health; and Claude Surena, president, Haiti Medical Association.

The delegates discussed the difficulties of rebuilding infrastructure and meeting the continuing medical needs. Many displaced Haitians are living in temporary camps with little access to health care. The country is facing a deficit of human resources and has lost many health professionals following the earthquake. Officials are also working on a process to coordinate the non-governmental organizations and aid groups that have flooded Haiti since January.

See HAITI, page 2
Flora Laney Thornton, a philanthropist with a lifelong interest in higher education, the arts, preventive medicine and numerous charities, died May 7 of pulmonary disease. She was 96 and attributed her longevity to practicing what she preached about preventive medicine.

Through the Flora L. Thornton Foundation, she made a number of generous gifts to health-related programs at USC, including $1.5 million to endow the Flora L. Thornton Chair in Preventive Medicine; $1 million to support a floor in the Norman Topping Tower at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, which houses the Department of Cancer Prevention; and $2 million to establish the Flora L. Thornton Chair in Vision Research at the Dsheny Eye Institute and the Keck School of Medicine of USC. She also established an endowment fund in support of Keck Professor Francine Kaufman’s youth fitness program at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

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— USC President

Flora Laney Thornton, philanthropist, USC benefactor, 96

USC neurosurgeon receives prestigious Durante Prize

Michael Apuzzo, the Edwin M. Todd/Trent H. Wells, Jr. Professor of Neurological Surgery, Radiation Oncology, Biology, and Physics at the Keck School of Medicine has received the Francesco Durante International Prize in Neurosurgery.

The presentation took place at the Civic Center Auditorium in Letojanni, Sicily, with more than 500 international academicians, political leaders, and representatives of several scientific societies.

During the presentation, a 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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John M. Peters, the Hastings Professor of Preventive Medicine, 75

By Jon Nalick

John M. Peters, the Hastings Professor of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine and a renowned authority on the effects of air pollution on health, died May 6 at his home in San Marino of pancreatic cancer. He was 75.

Peters, the founding director of the division of environmental health in the Department of Preventive Medicine, also founded the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center and directed it for 10 years. Researchers at the center—a USC-based, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)-supported center—study how a wide variety of environmental factors and personal factors interact to produce human disease.

In a message to Keck School faculty on May 7, Dean Carmen A. Puliafito hailed Peters as “one of the legends of environmental and occupational health.... His focus of his research was to investigate and quantify environmental risks and then contribute to strategies to mitigate those risks in the workplace and everyday life.”

Born April 24, 1935, in Brigham City, Utah, Peters studied at the University of Utah, receiving his bachelor's degree in biology in 1957 and his M.D. in 1960. He decided to pursue occupational medicine as a career, receiving an M.P.H. in 1964 and a D.Sc. in 1966, both from Harvard University. He stayed on the faculty at the Harvard School of Public Health until 1980, as one of the pioneers in the field of occupational medicine. He published landmark studies on the health effects of silica, asbestos, vinyl chloride and other chemicals, and he did pioneering studies on the health of firefighters and granite workers.

In 1980 he moved to USC and founded the division of environmental health in the Department of Preventive Medicine. Perhaps his most important scientific contribution, which he made as the founding director of the Children’s Health Study (CHS) at USC, was to systematically address the question of chronic effects of air pollution on California’s children through a long-term health study.

The study’s research findings on the long-term effects of air pollution on children’s lungs helped to establish that:

• Current levels of air pollution have chronic, adverse effects on lung growth;
• Air pollution affects both development and exacerbation of asthma;
• Living or going to school close to busy roads and freeways is linked to asthma, reduced lung function growth and increased school absences;
• Genes affect the risk associated with exposure to air pollution.

These findings have had a significant impact on public health and public policy. At USC, Peters established two national research centers, one on environmental health sciences and another on children’s environmental health funded by NIEHS and the Environmental Protection Agency. Through these centers he recruited numerous investigators to USC who will continue to carry on his commitment to improve public health through environmental health research.

Jonathan Samet, the Flora L. Thornton Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine, acknowledged Peters’ distinguished professional successes, but also mentioned these scientific achievements. John was an extraordinary mentor, leaving a legacy of leaders at USC and around the world.”

Peters received numerous honors for his work, most recently receiving the 2009 Haagen-Smit Clean Air Award from the California Air Resources Board. In 2009, he garnered the Harvard University School of Public Health’s Alumni Award of Merit. Peters also received the 2009 John M. Peters Award from the Environmental and Occupational Health Assembly of the American Thoracic Society. He was the first recipient of the award, which was named in his honor. In 2004, Peters received the Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars award, honoring former postdoctoral fellows and junior or visiting faculty who have gained distinction in their fields.

The John Peters Fund for Environmental Research and Education was established a year ago to sustain research and education in environmental health at USC. To make a memorial donation to the fund, contact Clara Driscoll at 323-442-2358 or clara.driscoll@usc.edu or visit usceoms.com/johnpeters.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth Koenig Peters (former faculty member of Preventive Medicine), sister Jody King, children John Peters, Philip Peters, Susa Brush and Charles Peters, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

A May 7 Futurity article featured research by professor of preventive medicine and director of the Master of Public Health program Thomas Valente and colleagues that developed a new measure to identify “bridging individuals” in social networks. These individuals act as critical connectors, facilitating the flow of information or spread of diseases between social networks.

On May 6, KNX Newsradio interviewed vice dean for medical education Henri Ford about the Keck School of Medicine-hosted town hall meeting on the status of the recovery of Haiti.

A May 6 San Diego Union-Tribune article reported that a presentation by professor of preventive medicine and pathology Thomas Mack, who conducted research on cancer cases in a Carlsbad neighborhood, has been posted on a new website created by San Diego County’s Health and Human Services Agency.

On May 5, The Huffington Post ran an op-ed by assistant professor of clinical medicine Michael Hochman and a Harvard University colleague about comparative effectiveness research.

On May 5, KABC-TV quoted professor of neurology Leslie Weiner about the Nancy Davis Center Without Walls, a collaboration of seven centers dedicated to multiple sclerosis research, including USC. A Los Angeles Daily News article also quoted Weiner about the center.

On May 4 Los Angeles Times article quoted professor of obstetrics and gynecology Daniel R. Mitchell Jr. about oral contraception.

A May 4 United Press International article featured research by professor of ophthalmology and preventive medicine Rohit Varma that indicates that Latinos have higher rates of vision disorders than any other ethnic group in the United States.

A May 3 Los Angeles Times article cited a Keck School of Medicine study, which found that if the mother smoked during pregnancy, there were long-lasting changes in her children’s epigenomes.
Calendar of Events

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

Monday, May 17
11:30 a.m. USC Norris Auxiliary Speaker Series. “USC World Class Institute of Urology,” Indeck Gull, USC. Sun Gabriel Country Club. Info: (626) 282-0516

Tuesday, May 18


Wednesday, May 19
8:30 a.m. “Arhythrias in the Critically Ill,” David Cesario, USC. BIF 734. Info: (323) 226-7923


Friday, May 21
8:30 a.m. Surgical Grand Rounds. “Quality, Value and Access in Critical Care,” Thomas Bachman, Emory Clinic. NRT Arsey Aud. Info: (323) 442-2506

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “PET/CT and Lymphoma,” Robert Henderson, USC. IPT G21103. Info: (323) 865-3950

1 p.m. USC Physical Sciences Oncology Center Seminar. “Physical Sciences for Optical Molecular Imaging in Oncology – Adventures in the Translutions Woods,” Daniel Farber, USC. CSC 201. Info: (323) 442-2856

Monday, May 24
8:30 a.m. Surgical Grand Rounds. “Quality, Value and Access in Critical Care,” Thomas Bachman, Emory Clinic. NRT Arsey Aud. Info: (323) 442-2506

11 a.m. ZNI Seminar “Decom1: Cell Recognition and the Assembly of Neural Circuits in Drosophila,” 8. Lawrence Zimpel- sny, UCLLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2414

Tuesday, May 25
Noon. Women in Management. “USC Hospitals: At One Year and Beyond,” Mitch Ceccin, USC University and USC Norris Cancer Hospital. CHP 111. #15 members, #18 guests. RSVP: www.usc.edu/or/wim. Info: (323) 442-1865

Thursday, May 27
Noon. Dean’s Translational Medicine Seminar. “Molecular Physiology of the Control of Body Weight,” Rudolph Leibel, Columbia Univ. KAM Mayer Aud. Info: (323) 442-1626

Friday, May 28
11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds. “Pathology of Follicular Lymphomas – Part 2,” Bharat Sathwani, USC. IPT G21103. Info: (323) 865-3950

Monday, June 14
11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. Center for Craniofacial Molecular Biology Symposium. “Genes & Research and Application.” Various speakers. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-3370

Friday, June 18
7 a.m. USC Physical Sciences in Oncology Center Symposium. Various speakers. USC Dawson Conference Center. Info: (323) 442-2596

Thursday, July 8 – Sunday, July 11
8 a.m. 10th Annual International Head & Neck Symposium. Various speakers. USC Health Sciences campus. Registration deadline: May 15. Info: (323) 442-7432.

Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week’s issue—although three weeks’ advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to The Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2122, or e-mail to iblavauk@usc.edu.

In case of an emergency...
Call the Emergency Information Phone: 213-740-9233. The emergency telephone system can handle 1,400 simultaneous calls. It also has a backup system on the East Coast.

Visit the USC Web: http://emergency.usc.edu This page will be activated in case of an emergency. Backup Web servers on the East Coast will function if the USC servers are incapacitated.