



Star Rosencrans

Above, Pharm.D. student Cedona Watts receives her new white coat at a ceremony on Aug. 19. She was one of 189 students entering the USC School of Pharmacy's class of 2014.

White coat ceremonies welcome USC's newest health professionals

By Ina Fried and Kukla Vera

Pride radiated from the faces of parents and families as new students, one by one, donned their white coats—symbols of the health professions they were entering—at ceremonies on campus this month.

White coat ceremonies held this month include those of the Keck School of Medicine, the USC School of Pharmacy, and divisions of the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry.

At the Keck School of Medicine's ceremony on the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad on Aug. 13, Dean Carmen A. Puliafito said, "Today we're not only welcoming our medical students into the community of medicine, but we're also welcoming all their family members and friends into the Trojan Family."

He added, "What we've tried to do this week is let the medical students know there's lots of hard work ahead, but



Ryan Ball

Keck School of Medicine students recite the Hippocratic oath as part of their ceremony held on Aug. 13 on Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad.

it's important to still have that sense of inner joy and enthusiasm for what you're doing."

Henri Ford, the Keck School's vice dean for medical education, discussed the white coat as a symbol of the "greatest journey and most rewarding adventure"

of the students' lives. While the white coat is a symbol of authority and empowerment, "most importantly it represents a beacon of hope for many suffering patients," he said.

"The empowerment

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Childhood obesity forum slated for Sept. 10

"Childhood Obesity: A Call to Action," the annual health summit of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, will be held at the University Park Campus on Friday, Sept. 10.

The summit, which focuses on health disparities, will take place from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Town and Gown. Sponsors include the Keck School of Medicine, the USC School of Pharmacy and the

Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC.

U.S. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, who represents USC's Health Sciences Campus, will lead the eight-member Congressional delegation attending the event. The summit will help lay the groundwork for federal policy as Congress considers legislation regarding elementary and secondary education, child nutrition and transportation programs.

The summit will highlight

USC's research and policy expertise in childhood obesity, particularly among racial and ethnic health minorities. It also provides an opportunity for USC faculty, students and staff to join together with policymakers and community health and advocacy organizations.

There is no fee to register. However, RSVPs are required by Sept. 1. To RSVP, go to www.usc.edu/esvp using code: "summit" or call (213) 740-1744.

NCI awards USC cancer researchers \$23.5 million

By Leslie Ridgeway

Epidemiological cancer surveillance research at the Keck School of Medicine has won \$23.5 million in federal funding as part of the ongoing National Cancer Institute (NCI) national cancer statistics program.

The award continues funding that the Department of Preventive Medicine has been receiving since 1992. The funding supports the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance program, established in 1970 by Brian Henderson, distinguished professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine and Kenneth T. Norris, Jr. Chair in Cancer Prevention, to conduct epidemiological research on cancer. Dennis Deapen is currently director of the Cancer Surveillance Program.

"When the California Department of Health Services made statewide cancer reporting mandatory in 1988, the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program was designated their agent for L.A. County," Deapen said. "In 1992, the NCI wanted to establish a cancer registry with greater numbers of Hispanic cancer patients, and we said, 'Here we are.'" The NCI's national cancer registry includes all ethnic groups, age groups and genders in selected geographic areas.

The data collected by the USC L.A. Cancer Surveillance Program is added into the NCI's Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program, a source of information on cancer incidence, mortality and survival in the United States. This is the fourth cycle of funding won by the USC Department of Preventive Medicine from NCI, Deapen said.

The \$23.5 million award will help the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program in its mission—to identify every new cancer case in the county, receive a standard report on each case and monitor each case in terms of survivorship.

The data maintained by the program is often the basis for future NCI research projects studying ethnic, gender and other differentiating factors in

'Because of new research projects that are added on, the amount of total funding is expected to roughly double over the next seven-year period.'

—Dennis Deapen, director of the Cancer Surveillance Program

cancer. Investigators researching survival or other rates of a certain cancer among different ethnicities would turn to the USC surveillance program for data.

"Because of new research projects that are added on, the amount of total funding is expected to roughly double over the next seven-year period," Deapen said.

More than 1,800 research papers using data from the Cancer Surveillance Program have been published in medical journals, with 348 being published in just the last year, Deapen said.

SEER currently collects and publishes cancer incidence, mortality and survival data from population-based cancer registries covering approximately 26 percent of the U.S. population. The SEER Program registries routinely collect data on patient demographics, primary tumor site, tumor morphology and stage at diagnosis, first course of treatment and follow-up for vital status.

The SEER Program is the only comprehensive source of population-based information in the U.S. that includes stage of cancer at the time of diagnosis and patient survival data.

For information on the USC Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance program, go to <http://bit.ly/9ukzLc>. For information on SEER, go to <http://seer.cancer.gov/about>.

New colorectal surgery chief sees opportunity at USC

‘USC is strategically placed for the coming evolution of health care. It’s an excellent environment where we can mix high-tech, cutting-edge science with an excellent research base, and couple that with direct patient care.’

— Anthony Senagore, chief of the division of colorectal surgery at the Keck School of Medicine

By Sara Reeve

Anthony Senagore was appointed chief of the division of colorectal surgery at the Keck School of Medicine on July 6. Prior to joining USC, Senagore served as vice president and chief academic officer for Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids, Mich., and professor of surgery at Michigan State University, West Michigan Medical School. In the following interview, he gives his assessment of the strengths of the division, as well as his plans for its future.

Q: How did you first become interested in colorectal surgery?

A: I enjoyed the breadth of the surgery. [Years ago] endoscopy was difficult to do in the field of general surgery, and laparoscopy didn’t exist on a fundamental level. So when I [completed training], if you really wanted to develop an academic career, colorectal surgery was one of the new areas to do that. It allowed me a good mix of minor anal/rectal cases, major abdominal surgery and endoscopy.

Q: What intrigued you about the prospect of coming to USC?

A: The Department of Surgery at USC is well known, and the opportunity to participate in the development and expansion of the division of colorectal surgery under Vaughn Starnes was a great attraction. The strength of the other division chiefs was another major advantage because you really have a full-service surgery department that allows you to do not only the straightforward basic surgery, but also take on the more complex procedures where you need other specialties to help with interdisciplinary care and the medical support, particularly in medical oncology.

Q: What do you see as the strengths of the USC colorectal surgery program?

A: The advantage here is that the market for colorectal services is significant in the L.A. area, and there really is no dominant program in terms of academic colorectal surgery in the region. So we really have an opportunity to

build on the reputation of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, but expand [its reputation] into all the other components of colorectal surgery—benign colon pathology, minimally invasive surgery and pelvic floor disorders.

Q: What are your goals, both short- and long-term, for the colorectal division?

A: I think that my strategy is really to develop a division of colorectal surgery that has name recognition regionally, nationally and internationally in our specialty. To do that means that we will have to have broad experiences that we demonstrate to our colleagues with high-quality peer-reviewed research, and in addition, to our payers and patients, that we demonstrate high-quality/high-value medical care.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts or impressions about your work at USC?

A: I think USC is strategically placed for the coming evolution of health care. It’s an excellent



Anthony Senagore

environment where we can mix high-tech, cutting-edge science with an excellent research base, and couple that with direct patient care. I think the realignment now between University Hospital and the USC physicians’ group is really the requisite for integrated medical care delivery. Everything today is pointing toward a bundled care model—at least for inpatient care—that requires that the hospital and the physicians are completely aligned in the delivery of patient-centric medicine.

Mixed practice makes perfect

Struggling with your chip shot? Constant drills with your wedge may not help much, but mixing in longer drives will, and a new study shows why.

Previous studies have shown that variable practice improves the brain’s memory of most skills better than practice focused on a single task. Cognitive neuroscientists at USC and UCLA describe the neural basis for this paradox in a new study in *Nature Neuroscience*.

The researchers split 59 volunteers into six groups: three groups were asked to practice a challenging arm movement, while the other three groups practiced the movement and related tasks in a variable practice structure. Volunteers in the variable practice group showed better retention of the skill. The process of consolidating memory of the skill engaged a part of the brain—the prefrontal cortex—associated with higher level planning.

The group assigned to constant practice of the arm movement retained the skill to a lesser degree through consolidation that engaged a part of the brain—the primary motor cortex—associated with simple motor learning.

“With variable practice, you’re basically solving the motor problem anew each time. If I’m just repeating the same thing over and over again as in the constant practice condition, I don’t have to process it very deeply,” said study senior author Carolee Winstein, professor of biokine-

siology and physical therapy at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry.

“We gravitate toward a simple, rote practice structure because we’re basically lazy, and we don’t want to work hard. But it turns out that memory is enhanced when we engage in practice that is more challenging and requires us to reconstruct the activity,” Winstein said.

Winstein’s team, led by Shailesh Kantak, a graduate student in biokinesiology at the time of the study, verified the neural circuits involved through harmless magnetic interference applied immediately after practice.

Volunteers in the variable practice group who received magnetic stimulation in the prefrontal cortex failed to retain or “consolidate” the arm movement as well as those in the same group who did not receive magnetic stimulation.

This implied that the prefrontal cortex was necessary for consolidating the memory.

Likewise, constant practice volunteers who received magnetic stimulation in the primary motor cortex failed to retain the arm movement as well as volunteers in the same group who did not receive magnetic stimulation.

“While it may be harder during practice to switch between tasks ... you end up remembering the tasks better later than you do if you engage in this drill-like practice,” Winstein said.



Jon Nalick

Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito welcomes first-year physician assistants at their orientation on Aug. 17 at the Alhambra Campus. During his remarks, Puliafito praised the Physician Assistant Program and told the students that with the new health care government regulations, physician assistants will be in high demand and highly valued.

The Weekly

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Eying future growth, USC fine-tunes Health Sciences Campus Master Plan

By Katie Neith
A more complete look at the USC Health Sciences Campus Master Plan was offered at an Aug. 11 town hall meeting held in the Aresty Auditorium. The newest plan takes into consideration feedback that was garnered from students, faculty and staff during similar meetings held earlier this year.

“Over the past several months, we’ve been working with a lot of your colleagues and senior administration in trying to identify major goals and issues for this campus in terms of a long-range master plan,” said Laurie Stone, executive director of Land Use and Planning, USC Real Estate and Asset Management Department. “While we have a concept plan, it’s not final yet.”

The architectural team working on the HSC Master Plan offered overviews

of the long-term plan. Adam Gross, campus planning director, Ayers Saint Gross, based in Baltimore, and Scott P. Kelsey, principal in charge, CO Architects, Los Angeles, made brief presentations on the team’s work in the master planning process and encouraged members of the audience to provide input on the plan thus far.

“When we talked about creating a new campus, we talked about the idea of creating a world-class campus,” said Kelsey. “We want to develop a campus that has a high degree of efficiency, but is also very beautiful.”

Kelsey outlined some key initiatives that focused on improving education, patient care and research, such as developing a new medical education building, creating connectivity on the campus, enhancing the patient experience, focusing on the long-term

growth of research programs and providing more amenities on campus.

Gross gave more detailed descriptions of how some of the key initiatives may be realized.

“The real theme is connections. Connections to the four disciplines [of education, patient care, research and amenities] in a more seamless way, a more elegant way, a more beautiful way, a more efficient way and a safer way,” he said.

Scott Baker of Melendrez, a landscape design firm, also focused on connectivity of the campus and talked about some more immediate solutions to help enhance the campus, such as improved formal entries to campus, wider pedestrian walkways, larger drop-off areas for inpatients and outpatients, more green space and additional street trees and landscaping.

“Great campuses are walkable campuses,” said Baker, who said a major goal of the plan is creating a pedestrian network.

The group also addressed the need for amenities on campus, showing proposed plans for new student housing, a hotel, a conference center, restaurants, retail and a fitness facility.

The architectural team will conduct another town hall and series of meetings in October. The goal is to finalize the master plan after the October meetings and have a master plan that is ready to present to USC’s Board of Trustees for approval in early 2011.

For more information on the HSC Master Plan, visit www.usc.edu/community/hscmasterplan/ or send your comments, feedback or questions to hscmp@usc.edu.

Etcetera

The Los Angeles HIV/AIDS Women’s Task Force recognized the LAC+USC Maternal Child and Adolescent Center (MCA) June 22 at the annual Leadership Awards Breakfast for commitment to serving women and families living with HIV. MCA, under the direction of **Andrea Kovacs**, professor of pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine, received the Agency Award. **LaShonda Spencer**, associate clinical director of MCA and assistant professor of clinical pediatrics at the Keck School, accepted the award on behalf of MCA.

The task force also honored the president of the MCA Clinic’s Spanish-speaking Community Advisory Board with the HIV Peer Award. This award recognizes a woman living with HIV in Los Angeles who has made significant contributions to the HIV community through professional work, volunteering, community organizing and/or mentoring.

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Mitchell Lew, a Keck School of Medicine alumnus from 1987, will receive the USC President’s Award on behalf of the USC Asian Pacific Alumni Association

and the USC Alumni Association Board of Governors at USC Alumni Association’s Volunteer Recognition Dinner Oct. 1 in the new Ronald Tutor Campus Center Trojan Ballroom. **Barbara House** will receive the Widney Alumni House Award on behalf of the Keck School. House is a founding board member of the Keck School’s Parents Association. The event honors outstanding alumni volunteers and organizations for their dedicated service to USC. To purchase tickets, see alumni.usc.edu/vrd.

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Susan Groshen, professor of research in the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has been named a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA).

The ASA is the nation’s preeminent professional statistical society. Fifty-three recipients were recognized for their outstanding professional contributions to and leadership in the field of statistical science.

The Fellows received their certificates at a ceremony on Aug. 3 at the annual Joint Statistical Meetings in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Exhaled nitric oxide linked to increased risk of childhood asthma

By Meghan Lewit
Children with elevated levels of exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) are at increased risk for developing asthma, particularly among children without a parental history of the disease, a study by researchers at the Keck School of Medicine has found.

The findings suggest that FeNO may be a useful biomarker for identifying children at risk for the disease, and in developing strategies for preventing asthma.

Researchers found that children with the highest levels of FeNO were more than twice as likely to develop asthma compared to those with the lowest levels. Higher levels of FeNO were linked with development of asthma most often in children whose parents had no history of the disease.

The study appears in the *European Respiratory Journal*.

Nitric oxide is a gas that is produced by the cells that line the inner wall of the lungs’ airways, and may be a marker of the inflammatory process that occurs in the lungs prior to asthma onset. Although a number of studies have documented the growing prevalence of asthma during

the past several decades, the factors causing the rapid rise of the disease are not fully understood.

“We believe this is the first study to demonstrate the predictive value of FeNO for identifying children who are at risk for developing asthma,” said Tracy Bastain, a doctoral student in the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine and the lead author of the study. “Our results were strongest in children whose parents had never had asthma, suggesting that FeNO might help to identify additional susceptible children.”

The USC study drew upon data from the Children’s Health Study (CHS), the longest epidemiologic investigation ever conducted on environmental contribution to children’s respiratory health. In 2004, USC researchers measured the level of FeNO in 2,206 healthy, asthma-free children from 13 communities in Southern California. Between 2004 and 2007, they tracked the respiratory health of the children with annual follow-up questionnaires.

Previous studies have found that FeNO is elevated



Congratulations, Versant residents!

A total of 47 people completed the 20-week Versant residency program, which places registered nurses in patient care units throughout the USC hospitals. Their graduation was held at San Antonio Winery on July 9. All of the graduates are now working independently in their hired units as full-time registered nurses.

Calendar of Events

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

Tuesday, Sept. 7

Noon. Women in Management Luncheon. “Women: Cancer Risks and Prevention,” Christy Russell, USC. Cost: \$15 members, \$18 guests or nonmembers. NRT LG 503/504. RSVP at www.usc.edu/org/wim or call (323) 442-1865

Wednesday, Sept. 8

Noon. ZNI Seminar Series. “Critical Periods in Auditory Cortex Development,” Daniel B. Polley, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Harvard Medical School. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Thursday, Sept. 9

Noon. “Iron, Alcohol and Oxidative Stress,” D. Harrison-Findik, Univ. of Nebraska Medical Center. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

Friday, Sept. 10

Noon. Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences Seminar. “Structure, Function, and Drug Discovery in the G-protein Coupled Receptor Superfamily,” Raymond Stevens, Scripps Research Institute. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-2341

Wednesday, Sept. 15

3:30 p.m. Global Health Lecture Series. “Border Stories: Tackling HIV, TB, and STIs on the Mexico-US Border,” Steffanie Strathdee, UC San Diego. UPC: Davidson Conference Center. RSVP to global.health@usc.edu or call (323) 865-0419

Thursday, Sept. 16

Noon. “Pre-malignant Consequences of EGFR-Mediated Tissue Repair,” David Polk, USC, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

Friday, Sept. 17

11:30 a.m. USC PSOC Seminar. “Nucleosome Positioning and Chromosome Structure Archaeobacteria to Man,” Jonathan Wisdom, Northwestern Univ. Pizza and beverages will be served. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-2596

Tuesday, Sept. 21

Noon. ZNI Seminar Series. “Survival and Regeneration in the Nervous System,” Jeffrey L. Goldberg, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Thursday, Sept. 23

8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. 14th Annual Max R. Gaspar Vascular Symposium. “Vascular Emergencies and Complications,” R. Patrick Clagett, Univ. of Texas Southwestern Medical Ctr. Millennium Biltmore Hotel. Info: (323) 442-2555

Noon. “Cyclotides, a Novel Natural Peptide Scaffold for Drug Discovery,” Julio A. Camarero, USC. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1283

Thursday, Friday, Sept. 23-24

Noon. Fourth annual Body Computing Conference. Multiple speakers. Fees for USC personnel and sponsoring companies are waived. For more information or to register, call (323) 442 6134 or visit <http://tiny.cc/5cmjv>.

Friday, Sept. 24

8 a.m. Dept. of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. “Recurrent HCV Infection Following Liver Transplantation: Pathology, Differential Diagnosis, Liver Biopsy and Beyond,” Lydia Petrovic, USC. NTT 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

Noon. SOP-PPSI Seminar Series. “Synthetic Polypeptide Materials for Biomedical Applications,” Timothy J. Deming, UCLA. Refreshments will be served. PSC 104. Info: (323) 442-4118

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) 442-2832, or e-mail to eblaauw@usc.edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location, and a phone number for information.



Lisa Brook Photography

KECK SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE FUN IN THE SUN—Above, Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito (right) welcomes Ryan Casserly (left) and Samantha Myers to the School’s new student reception at the dean’s home in Pasadena on Aug. 11. Right, returning students Lon Manson (left) and Sara Safadi play a bag toss game at an Aug. 10 reception for returning Keck School students, also held at the dean’s home.



Lisa Brook Photography

WHITE COAT: Students don potent symbol of their profession

Continued from page 1
that this white coat brings cannot be fully realized until you learn to exhibit the following qualities: character, compassion, sensitivity, patience, honesty and integrity. These qualities are the essential scaffold of professionalism. ... And to that list I will add teamwork,” Ford said. “Let this white coat serve as your constant reminder of the need to exhibit these attributes for the rest of your lives.”

The new students received three pieces of advice from Eric Hsieh, assistant professor of clinical medicine and the recipient of the 2010 Humanism in Medicine Award.

- Read. In addition to all the reading required by the medical profession, Hsieh encouraged students to read from varied sources outside of medicine—newspapers, magazines, novels. “You’ll find that by doing that, it will be a lot easier to connect with your patients. All this reading also will serve as the fuel for all of the interests that you have outside of medicine. All those interests, combined with medicine, will keep your life fulfilled.”

- Don’t spend so much time reading. “What you’re really learning to do here is how to think. No matter which field of medicine you’ve taken a special interest in, you’re going to be a detective.” Students will learn to pick up and interpret clues “so the result will be the correct diagnosis. We can’t put all of those experiences into books.” But experience in “a few fantastic hospitals” will

provide ample opportunity to develop these skills.

- Listen to your patients. “You’ve got to listen to what they say, listen to how they say it. Listen to their tone, their cadence, even listen to the pauses. All of it can be a clue for you. ... Often times the best doctors tend to be the best listeners.”

He added, “If your parents are here today, you should give them all a hug. It’s a pretty big day for them, too.”

The ceremony also included the 2010 Faculty Teaching Awards. To see the recipients, visit <http://tinyurl.com/25eujhf>.

At the USC School of Pharmacy ceremony on Aug. 19, Dean R. Pete Vanderveen welcomed the incoming Doctor of Pharmacy class on the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad. During the ceremony, the 189 students entering the

class of 2014 were “coated” by either a faculty member or a member of the QSAD Centurion board of directors. QSAD Centurion, a support group of alumni and friends, sponsors the annual event.

The day included Vanderveen’s welcome address and a keynote speech from associate professor Irving Steinberg of the Titus Family Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Economics & Policy, who advised the students to make the most out of the education the School of Pharmacy is sure to provide them.

Edith Mizaian, a lecturer in clinical pharmacy at the school, administered the “Oath of a Pharmacist” to the new students, and Fred Weissman, associate dean for academic and clinical affairs, gave the closing remarks.

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