

USC President Nikias casts USC as trendsetting academic leader

By Amy E. Hamaker

The future of online education in higher learning, the global and local nature of university activities and the reintroduction of humanistic principles were topics touched on by USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD, in his address to Health Sciences Campus faculty on Feb. 11 at Aresty Auditorium.

Nikias discussed the changing face of higher learning, noting that online courses at USC are leading the way in terms of maintaining academic rigor and integrity. USC will not offer massively open university courses or online degrees for undergraduates, he said.

However, USC's masters, executive and graduate programs will reach 7,600 students globally and bring in \$123 million in revenue this year, a figure that is unprecedented for a top American research university.

Nikias expects that all USC schools will have some online offerings by next year, and hopes to double



Tom DeSanto

USC President C. L. Max Nikias describes USC's strengths and challenges at his annual address to the Health Sciences Campus faculty on Feb. 11.

enrollment and degree offerings online over the next five years.

The president also cited notable achievements for the USC community, including:

USC's freshman class continues to be outstanding: The university received 51,000 applications for 2,600 freshman slots, and of those accepted, more than 600 received perfect grade point averages in high school. "We have more Cal Tech

freshman than Cal Tech itself," joked Nikias.

USC has the world's largest contingent of international students, hailing from 115 nations; most of USC's current freshmen come from outside of California.

USC remains an "intellectual magnet for talent," said Nikias, citing the recruitment of Arthur W. Toga, PhD, and Paul Thompson, PhD,

and their Laboratory of Neuro Imaging, and the appointment of Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, as chair of the Department of Ophthalmology and director of the USC Eye Institute, with Mark Humayun, MD, PhD, returning full-time to a leading research role.

Exciting growth continues, with the recent USC Pacific Asia Museum alliance, the new USC Parker

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'USC is now a rising power in medicine, interdisciplinary health and patient care during a time when medical science is moving to the forefront.'

—USC President C. L. Max Nikias

Businessman invests in USC Stem Cell Kidney Disease Team

By Cristy Lytal

Can patients with kidney disease be effectively treated with injections of stem cells or other cells that are not fully differentiated? Chinese businessman Yong Chen has pledged \$400,000 to begin answering this question.

Chen's gift establishes a Yong Chen Zhongmei Group USC Kidney Research Fund to support research led by USC researchers Andy McMahon, PhD, and Laura Perin, PhD.

Cross-institutional research efforts such as these are central to USC Stem Cell, a collaborative, multidisciplinary initiative working to translate the

potential of stem cell research to the clinical imperative of regenerative medicine. Perin, assistant professor of research urology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and principal investigator at The Saban Research Institute at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, and McMahon, director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC, are key members of the USC Stem Cell Kidney Disease Team.

According to McMahon, who heads USC Stem Cell, one in 10 adults in the United States — more than

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Jon Nalick

Journalist Owen Bennett-Jones (right) discusses his experiences in Pakistan and other nations with Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito during a Feb. 12 lecture at Mayer Auditorium.

BBC journalist stresses need for cultural awareness

By Jon Nalick

Owen Bennett-Jones, freelance British journalist and a host of "Newshour" on the BBC World Service, captivated audiences in Mayer Auditorium as he told tales of how local culture can shape — or sabotage — efforts to improve education and health worldwide.

He described how a leader in north-west Afghanistan shunned offers to build for free a school in his region, saying simply, "I don't want it." Later, while

hunting with a would-be benefactor, the leader shot ducks that fell into a lake. He whistled and several men jumped into the water to retrieve them. The leader mused, "Do you honestly think they'd do that if they went to school?"

"And that is what you're up against," said Bennett-Jones: "Local elites who are quite determined to keep their people uneducated so they can hold on to the power that they've got."

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Save the Date: Lasker Lectures

This year, the Keck School of Medicine of USC will host the 2014 Lasker Lectures.

The first lecture will be held March 4 at 4 p.m. in Mayer Auditorium and will feature Richard Scheller, PhD, executive vice president, research administration at Genentech, and Thomas Südhof, MD, professor of molecular and cellular physiology at the Stanford University School of Medicine.

To RSVP, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/usclasker1>

First female department chair still vital to Keck School at 90

Nancy Warner, the first woman in the United States to be named chair of a pathology department at a coeducational school of medicine, said of her 1972 appointment: ‘That just wasn’t done back then.’

By Ryan Ball

Picking at her smoked salmon with chopsticks at the faculty center named for Hugh A. Edmondson, MD, who preceded her as chair of the Department of Pathology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, Nancy Warner, MD, Hastings Professor of Pathology, emerita, reflects on her legacy at the school.

At the age of 90, Warner remains a formidable presence, one that has been felt on the Health Sciences Campus since she became the school’s first female department chair in 1972. In fact, she was the first woman in the United States to be named chair of a pathology department at a coeducational school of medicine.

“That just wasn’t done back then,” Warner said of her groundbreaking appointment. “The people in the department were very gracious, all of them. There were some big professors, and I didn’t know how they were going to take it. But there was no problem.”

Warner was selected to succeed the retiring Edmondson by then Keck School Dean Franz K. Bauer, MD, whose wife and mother both had medical degrees. She believes they put more than a little pressure on him to consider a female candi-

date. Likewise, she would be going against the grain at the time, recruiting a number of women to faculty positions.

Originally from Dixon, Ill., where Ronald Reagan was the town’s lifeguard, Warner earned her medical degree from the University of Chicago. She was inspired to go into pathology by the school’s two female pathologists, who were highly respected.

During her 11-year tenure as chair of the largest university-based pathology department in the nation, Warner would, in turn, be a role model for students at USC.

Warner stepped down as chair of pathology in 1983 to practice surgical pathology at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. Meanwhile, she continued to teach, which she said has been one of the great joys in her life.

Named outstanding teacher by USC’s Year II medical students four times, Warner also received The American Society of Clinical Pathologists’ Distinguished Pathology Educator Award in 1994 and USC’s Distinguished Emeriti Award in 1996.

Although she officially retired in 1993, Warner has remained active at the Keck School. That dedication earned her the Emeriti



Ryan Ball

Warner stepped down as chair of pathology in 1983 to practice surgical pathology at the USC Norris Cancer Center, but she has continued to teach at the Keck School of Medicine.

Center’s 2009 Inaugural Paul E. Hadley Faculty Award for Service to USC.

In addition to her work on the board of directors for the Edmondson Faculty Center, the Retired Faculty Association and the Medical Faculty Women’s Association, she has given generously to the university. Dividend

reinvestment from inherited stock has allowed her to offer support for a number of USC initiatives, including several Keck School programs and the USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

Warner lives in Pasadena where she enjoys photography, birdwatching and genealogy.

JONES: Journalist warns that the best of motives can be ‘totally misinterpreted’ abroad

Continued from Page 1

He delivered his Feb. 12 lecture, “Global Health: A Journalist’s Perspective,” as part of the Distinguished Lecturer Series sponsored by Keck School of Medicine of USC Dean Carmen A.

Puliafito, MD, MBA.

Bennett-Jones stressed the crucial importance of cultural awareness in the creation and administration of global health programs, and warned, “Sometimes what we do can be totally

misinterpreted.”

He pointed to vaccination efforts in Pakistan that have been perceived locally as part of a nefarious U.S.-led plot to sterilize Muslims, noting that nurses and the police who protect them

during vaccination efforts have been murdered in an effort to thwart the program.

He also warned that the mere presence of outsiders often alters local citizens’ behaviors in unpredictable ways. “We underestimate the extent that, just by being there, we change the situation,” said Bennett-Jones, offering a few examples. A calm demonstration in Peshawar might, with the introduction of a foreign news crew’s video camera, escalate rapidly into an anti-America riot with police responding with tear gas. Alternatively, if a journalist rides along with a police officer, it might inhibit the officer from accepting a motorist’s culturally acceptable bribe to settle a minor traffic violation — and result in the surprised motorist’s incarceration.

Still, he noted that cultural awareness can help people navigate the local environment and make great strides possible.

He cited the example of a public health program

in Vietnam promoted by then-U.S. Ambassador Pete Peterson in the 1990s. Peterson, whose son died in a car crash, advocated for a program to require Vietnamese motorcyclists to wear helmets to reduce the high incidence of traffic fatalities and head injuries common at the time.

The Vietnamese saw Peterson’s passion as he gave out helmets and understood that the American was making a personal gesture as he ended his ambassadorial term. The program’s organizers, recognizing a cultural reluctance for individuals to stand out from the crowd, pushed to have everyone nationwide switch to wearing helmets simultaneously, Bennett-Jones said: “They did it, and it worked.”

Bennett-Jones concluded by emphasizing that without a deep cultural understanding of the local environment, outsiders can do as much harm as good. But, he said, with care and preparation, “sometimes you can get it right.”

HSC News

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Keck School researchers link gene to brain tumor growth

In a groundbreaking study, Anat Erdreich-Epstein, MD, PhD, associate professor of pediatrics and pathology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has linked the level of messenger RNA of the gene PID1 to clinical outcomes of patient with certain types of brain cancer.

With colleagues at The Saban Research Institute of Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Epstein also found that, *in vitro*, PID1 inhibits cell growth of medulloblastomas and gliomas as well as atypical teratoid/rhabdoid tumors (AT/RTs).

The study, done in collaboration with a group from Heidelberg, Germany, was published online in the Dec. 3, 2013, issue of *Clinical Cancer Research*.

Discovered only in 2006, PID1 regulates insulin signaling and mitochondrial function in fat and muscle cells. The few research reports on PID1 have focused on the gene's biological

role in conditions such as obesity, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease, but to date, PID1 has never been associated with cancer.

After analyzing reports of hundreds of medulloblastoma patients, initially in children and later in both children and adults, Erdreich-Epstein found that the level of PID1 coding material, PID1 mRNA, in tumors was highly correlated with the outcome of the patients. Higher levels of PID1 mRNA directly correlated with increased patient survival time.

In the test tube, increasing PID1 promoted tumor cell death and reduced the proliferation of the brain cancer cells. Similar correlation of higher PID1 mRNA and longer survival were observed in cohorts of adult patients with glioma. Furthermore, experiments in laboratory cultures of medulloblastoma, AT/RT and glioma cells showed that PID1 has a tumor-inhibitory effect in these brain cancer cells.



Ryan Ball

NEW CFO NAMED—Robert Allen has been named chief financial officer for Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital. As CFO, Allen will oversee all financial planning, analysis, reporting and operations at the Keck Medical Center of USC and help to manage its sustainability, fiscal health and short-term and long-term financial goals. Prior to USC, Bob served as CFO for two of Catholic Healthcare West's largest Los Angeles facilities, California Hospital Medical Center and Glendale Memorial Hospital and Health Center.

New ARCS fellowship nurtures emerging scientific talent at the Keck School

By Ryan Ball

When the ARCS (Achievement Rewards for College Scientists) Foundation Inc. was established in 1958 to provide financial awards to U.S. graduate and undergraduate students for innovative pursuits in science, engineering and medical research, the Soviet Union had just launched Sputnik and the United States feared it might fall behind on the technology front.

Although the Cold War space race has long since

cooled, the foundation continues to foster emerging talent — including Keck School of Medicine of USC postdoctoral research fellow Rachel Service, PhD, the first recipient of a \$10,000 postdoctoral fellowship awarded by ARCS and The John Douglas French Alzheimer's Foundation.

Service is exploring multiple areas of structural biology, and she believes that understanding the structure of and functional relationship between proteins is key

to developing new therapies, studying disease processes and advancing clean energy, among other pursuits.

"It's a really big field, one in which you have to be very clever to solve these problems," Service said.

Service's mentor, Ansgar Siemer, PhD, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute within the Keck School of Medicine of USC, said he admires her independence and

leadership skills in the lab, where she mentors undergraduates and graduate students.

"The proteins we work on are difficult to make and complicated structures to push in the right form, and I think she's done a great job optimizing the system," Siemer remarked.

For Service, a major draw to working in Siemer's lab was the opportunity to be trained on the new nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer. The cutting-edge

technology allows the team to decipher the atomic resolution structure of amyloid fibers, which are linked to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

Cheryl M. Craft, PhD, professor of ophthalmology and cell & neurobiology at the Keck School, is co-vice president of university relations for the ARCS Inc. Los Angeles Founder Chapter, and she currently sits on the executive and international scientific advisory boards of The John Douglas French Alzheimer's Foundation. She said Service was chosen for the inaugural fellowship because of her intelligence, academic achievements and potential to advance research in Alzheimer's.

"It's important for us to look at not only the clinical translational research, but also the basic research that goes into a project," said Craft. "Looking at her overall background and what she wants to accomplish here in Ansgar's lab, I think it's essential that she has that support."

The fellowship award was presented in honor of Maggie McKnight Russell, a long-time supporter of numerous Los Angeles nonprofit organizations.

ADDRESS: President Nikias sees great potential in patient-care growth

Continued from Page 1

Institute for Childhood Cancer and the building of the USC Village student and retail space and Norris Healthcare Consultation Center.

Funding for USC research is at an all-time high, with more than \$120 million in high-profile research grants coming to USC during the past three years.

The \$6 billion Campaign for USC reached the \$3 billion mark late last fall, with three years left to go. Half of the funds came as the result of 23 transformative gifts of \$25 million or more; the other half came from 208,000 donations from members of the Trojan Family, including \$738 million from USC parents.

Patient care at the University has been delivered largely on a local level, said Nikias, noting that although entities on the Health Sciences Campus already draw

1 million patients a year, it has barely scratched the surface of its potential.

"We are intensifying our efforts to make Keck Medicine the leading academic medical center of the Pacific Rim," he said. "USC is now a rising power in medicine, interdisciplinary health and patient care during a time when medical science is moving to the forefront."

Overall, Nikias believes that USC should be guided into the future following five fundamental principles:

- showing an unwavering commitment to academic quality and integrity in online education;
- seeking financial viability in everything;
- becoming pacesetters in patient care and experimentation;
- knowing when to be global and

when to be local; and

- continuing to lead the way nationally in reviving the humanities and arts.

"I believe we at USC make a noble and powerful statement to our peer institutions and to our world when we reaffirm an unwavering loyalty to our humanistic principles as we explore the newest intellectual frontiers," he said.

"USC has reached full maturity; there is no one else to chase now," Nikias added. "There is no one else to copy. The roads we choose from here on out, we choose based on what we believe to be best for our future and for American higher education. Our faculty is the foundation of all scholarly excellence. They do much of their best work in close collaboration on campus, and the results are gaining international recognition."

ETCETERA

Six researchers from the Keck School of Medicine of USC were recently selected to join the Society for Pediatric Research. Membership in the society is based on peer nomination and election, and marks the member's standing as an internationally recognized pediatric researcher.

The newest members will be honored at the Society for Pediatric Research annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on May 3. Researchers to be recognized include:

Jamie Wood, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics; **Robinder Khemani**, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics; **Vincent Wang**, MD, MHA, associate professor of clinical pediatrics; **Yong-Mi Kim**, MD, MPH, PhD, assistant professor of pediatrics; **Douglas Vanderbilt**, MD, assistant professor of clinical pediatrics; and **Toni Frederick**, PhD, MSPH, associate professor of pediatrics.

In the January 2014 issue of the journal *Chest*, **Renli Qiao**, MD,

professor of clinical medicine, and colleagues from China and the United States described their joint efforts in establishing pulmonary and critical care medicine as a subspecialty in China. Qiao has played a major role in helping China see the need for improved post-MD medical training in all fields.

The Harrington Discovery Institute at University Hospitals Case Medical Center has named **Mark Humayun**, MD, PhD, professor of ophthalmol-

ogy and biomedical engineering and professor of cell & neurobiology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, as a recipient of a 2014 Harrington Scholar-Innovator Award.

The award supports drug discovery efforts of great promise at renowned institutions across the nation.

Humayun received the award — \$200,000 over two years — for his work on the development of an oxygen delivery device to treat ischemic retinal diseases, a leading cause of blindness worldwide.

Calendar of Events

Monday, Feb. 24

Noon. Keck School of Medicine Research Seminar Series. "Measure Once, Cut Twice: Strategies for Using Patient Reported Outcome Measures in Comparative Effectiveness Research," Albert W. Wu, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Aresty Auditorium. Info: maryjane.chua@med.usc.edu

3 – 5 p.m. Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute. "How to Review a Manuscript," Jon Samet, USC. Harkness Auditorium. RSVP: ecde@sc-ctsi.org

Tuesday, Feb. 25

8 a.m. Department of Neurology Grand Rounds. "Seizure Prophylaxis: Standard of Care or Standard of Practice," Benjamin Emanuel, USC. Herklotz Seminar Room, ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-7686

10 a.m. The Scripps Research Institute Seminar. "Cutting-Edge Findings from the International Space Station: Cancer Treatment Delivery, Space-based Stem Cell Research and Other Exciting Advances," Tara M. Ruttley, NASA. Saban Research Building Auditorium, CHLA. Info: (323) 361-8715

Noon. Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research Seminar. "Mechanisms Regulating Endogenous Neural Stem Cell Plasticity: One Cell at a Time," Michael Bonaguidi, Johns Hopkins University. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-8084.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

Noon. Cancer Center Grand Rounds. Gordon Hager, NCI. Aresty Auditorium. Info: pat.castro@med.usc.edu

Thursday, Feb. 27

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. 2014 Center for Technology and Innovation in Pediatrics Annual Symposium. "A New Era in Pediatric Innovation," various speakers. Info and registration: tinyurl.com/lbma2t

Noon. Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "A Small 'Ship' Sails Far: The Pleotropic Function of Nuclear Receptor SHP," Li Wang, University of Utah. Info: asmadera@usc.edu

6 p.m. USC Verdugo Hills Hospital Health Talk. "Tips for a Healthy Heart," Eric Lee, USC. Info: (818) 952-2213

Friday, Feb. 28

8 a.m. Saban Research Institute Seminar. "Surgical Treatment of Pediatric Epilepsy," Deborah Holder, USC. Saban Research Building, First Floor Auditorium, CHLA. Info: emillan@chla.usc.edu

Saturday, March 1

7 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Neurosurgery Conference. "Evaluation and Management of the Patient with Brain and Spine Metastasis," various speakers, USC. Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-2555 or www.usc.edu/cme

Tuesday, March 4

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Of Babies and Bathwater: Managing the Transition to DSM-5," Michael D. Jibson, University of Michigan. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

4 p.m. 2014 Lasker Lectures. "The War on Cancer," Richard Scheller, Genentech; "Towards a Molecular Understanding of Synapse Formation, Autism and Schizophrenia: Neurexins and Company," Thomas Südhof, MD, Stanford University School of Medicine. RSVP and Info: www.usc.edu/esvp (code: Lasker)

Wednesday, March 5

7:30 a.m. USC Institute for Integrative Health Seminar. "Networking Breakfast and Discussion," Lourdes Báezconde-Garbanati, USC. SSB 114. Info and RSVP: rmrangel@usc.edu

Friday, March 7

11 a.m. Diabetes and Obesity Research Institute Seminar. Barbara Nikolajczyk, Boston Univ. School of Medicine. NRT LG 503/4. Info: trujille@usc.edu

Saturday, March 8

8 a.m. – noon. Colorectal Cancer Continuing Medical Education Presentation. Various speakers. Glendale Memorial Hospital, John Stauffer Auditorium, 1420 S. Central Ave., Glendale, CA 91204. Info: (818) 244-8161.

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. Submit calendar items online at tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number or email address for information.

New health system board provides strategic direction

USC recently created the USC Health System Board, a new body that will provide high-level direction for the operations and strategic development of the University's medical enterprise and joint ventures for surgical centers.

With the 2013 addition of USC Verdugo Hills Hospital, the clinical enterprise now includes three hospitals, more than 600 faculty physicians practicing through the USC Care Medical Group, five community-based ambulatory care clinics and a new medical foundation to engage community physicians in private practice.

In a Dec. 20, 2013, memo describing the inaugural appointments to the board, USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD, said that its members "will advise the university on strategic growth initiatives and financial performance of the system, and will monitor quality of care and service across the system."

Nikias will serve as the board's chair, with Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of USC Health, serving as vice chair.

The board also includes the following additional members, whose three-year terms began Jan. 1:

- Robert Abeles, MBA, USC senior vice president and chief financial officer
- Carol Mauch Amir, USC general counsel
- Edward Crandall, MD, PhD, chair, Department of Medicine
- Todd R. Dickey, JD, USC senior vice president, administration
- Scott Evans, CEO, PharmD, MHA, Keck Hospital of USC, USC Norris Cancer Hospital
- Elizabeth Garrett, JD, USC provost and senior vice president of academic affairs
- John Kusmiersky, USC trustee
- John Niparko, MD, president, USC Care Medical Group
- Carmen Puliafito, MD, MBA, dean, Keck School of Medicine of USC
- Leonard Schaeffer, USC trustee
- William Schoen, USC trustee
- Shawn Sheffield, MBA, MHSA, chief strategy and development officer, Keck Medicine of USC
- Vaughn Starnes, MD, chair, Department of Surgery
- Mark Stevens, USC trustee
- Debbie Walsh, RN, MSN, CEO, USC Verdugo Hills Hospital

CHEN: Gift will help spur hunt for stem cell therapies

Continued from Page 1

20 million people — suffer from some degree of chronic kidney disease.

"The only curative thing you can do is a kidney transplant, and thousands of people die each year because of a shortage of donor organs," added McMahon. "So there's a real need for us to develop novel stem cell-based therapies, and Mr. Chen's gift will help make this possible."

McMahon will lend his expertise in kidney development, repair and regeneration to Perin's mouse studies, which demonstrate that injections of stem cells derived from amniotic fluid can improve the course of kidney fibrosis and prolong survival. The new collaborative research team will provide preliminary data for future clinical research and therapeutic applications benefiting the many patients in need.

The gift will also provide the means to hire two dedicated postdoctoral fellows for two years as well as project-related laboratory support.

"The generous support of Mr. Chen will enable the research team to accomplish fundamental steps in the translation of stem cells as a therapeutic target for chronic kidney disease," said Perin.

Chen is owner of the international Zhongmei Group, which owns



Front row, from left: Andy McMahon, PhD, director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC, and Guangfei "Gary" Chen. Back row, from left: USC Stem Cell program director Qing Liu-Michael, program development director Kelli-Ann Nakayama, Hongxia "Helen" Zhang, Yong Chen, and McMahon lab postdoctoral fellows Lori O'Brien and Sanjeev Kumar.

hospitals, specialty centers and a medical school in China, and promotes

medical education, training, investment, research and development.

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