

# The Weekly

**USC** UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

PUBLISHED FOR THE USC HEALTH SCIENCES CAMPUS COMMUNITY

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 17

## Keck School receives \$5 million from Ellison Foundation

By Meghan Lewit

The Keck School of Medicine has announced a \$5 million gift from the Ellison Medical Foundation to support cancer research under the direction of David B. Agus, a renowned oncologist and cancer researcher who joined the Keck School faculty on April 1 as a professor of medicine.

Agus will serve as principal investigator for the project titled “Molecular Technologies in Cancer.” The initiative will focus on molecularly targeted therapy, which holds promise as a new paradigm for cancer treatment.

“The generous gift from the Ellison Medical Foundation will allow the initiation of this exciting program and advance the clinical translational work at USC,” said Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito. “Dr. Agus is an outstanding choice to lead this project, which we believe will make a significant impact on cancer treatment in potentially revolutionary ways.”

The Ellison Medical Foundation is a non-profit organization founded by Lawrence J. Ellison, an entrepreneur and CEO of Oracle Corporation. The foundation is dedicated to supporting new, creative research that might not be

funded by traditional sources.

“It is my pleasure to work with Dr. Agus and his research associates in developing new technologies to help patients with cancer,” Ellison said. “I believe his unique approach to medical oncology will help better control many of the diseases impacting mankind today.”

Agus’ research in proteomic technology seeks to integrate clinical trials, pre-clinical studies and molecularly targeted therapy—which focuses on molecular and cellular changes that are specific to cancer—to predict which patients will likely respond to a specific anti-cancer therapy. He will lead a team of researchers at the USC Center for Applied Molecular Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine.

“My team and I are so honored and excited to team with the Ellison Medical Foundation to begin these new programs at USC to help

bring new technologies and high quality care to patients with cancer,” he said.

In addition, Dr. Agus will direct the new USC Westside Prostate Cancer Center, a multi-disciplinary center that is focused on cutting-edge

care for patients with prostate cancer. The center is located at 8900 Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills.

Prior to joining the Keck School of Medicine, Agus served as the director of the Spielberg Family Center for Applied Proteomics and research director

of the Louis Warschaw Prostate Cancer Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He and his research team have focused on factors influencing the development and progression of cancer.

In the laboratory, Agus conducts research focused on understanding the biology of cancer and the development of new drugs and treatments for cancer. He also uses new technologies in the field of

proteomics and nanotechnology that reveal valuable information regarding “on” and “off” switches of the cancer and ultimately a more complete understanding of the various factors that influence cancer development, progression and response to treatment.

Agus has published numerous articles and received several awards in the fields of cancer research and drug development.

Agus graduated cum laude with honors in molecular biology from Princeton University and received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

He completed his medical internship and residency training at Johns Hopkins Hospital and a fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Agus’ profile gets an extra dash of glitz when he is showcased in the June issue of *GQ Magazine* as a “Rock Star of Science.” The feature highlights the need for more medical research funding and includes celebrities such as Sheryl Crow, Josh Groban, Seal and hip hop artist Will-i-am. The issue hits the stands on May 25.

**“My team and I are so honored and excited to team with the Ellison Medical Foundation to begin these new programs at USC to help bring new technologies and high quality care to patients with cancer.”**

**— David B. Agus, professor of medicine**



David B. Agus

## USC School of Pharmacy ranked among best in U.S.

By Kukla Vera

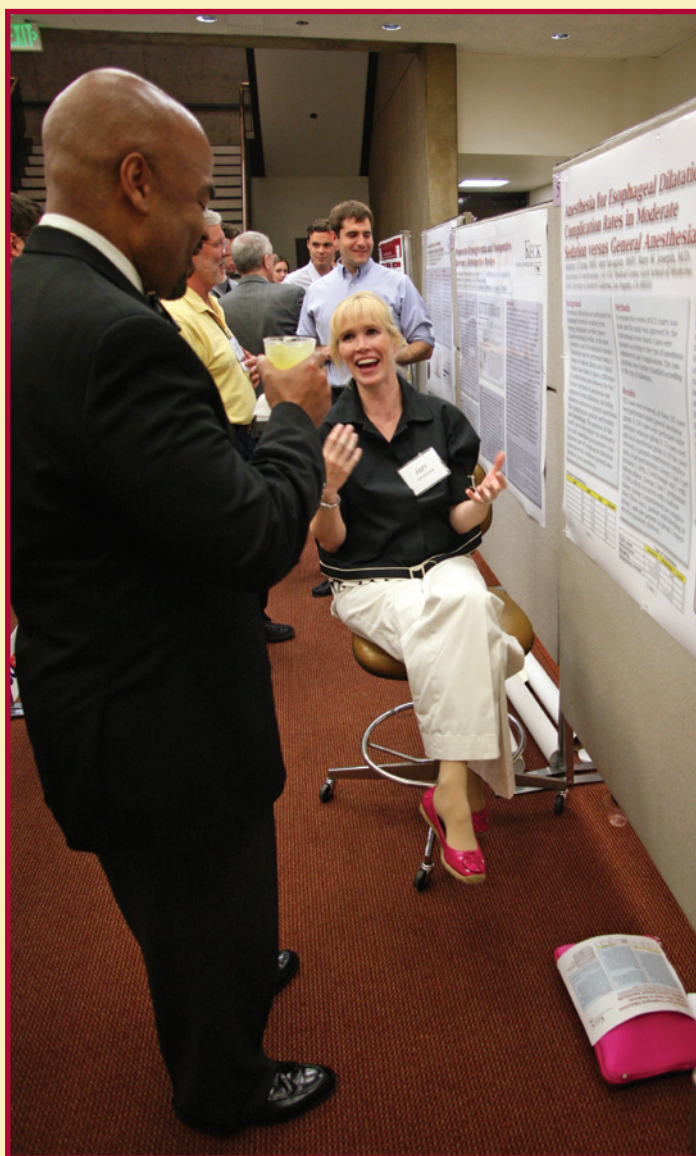
This year’s edition of the “America’s Best Graduate Schools,” released by *US News and World Report* on April 24, placed the USC School of Pharmacy Pharm.D. program among the elite in the nation.

Ranking as the top private school program, the School of Pharmacy is 15th in the overall rankings. The rankings are based on the results of peer assessment surveys conducted the prior year.

According to Dean R. Pete Vanderveen, “Recognition by our peer institutions is a great credit to the innovative work of our faculty and the exemplary performance of our students. I look forward to continuing to lead our school as one of the most progressive Pharm.D. programs in the nation.”

For decades, the USC School of Pharmacy has been recognized nationally for progressive curricular development in pharmacy education. The school has also emerged as a national leader in clinical pharmacy services, especially in their provision to underserved communities, having won top national honors for these services from the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, the American Pharmacists Association Foundation and the Association of Health-System Pharmacists.

The Pharm.D. program is a four-year post-graduate course of study. Upon completion of the Pharm.D., many graduates go on to do residencies or fellowships.



Jon Nalick



**POSTER SESSION**—Dozens of student researchers presented their findings on May 4 as part of the annual Medical Student Research Forum & Poster Day, held in the Hoyt Gallery of the Keith Administration Building.

Left, fourth-year medical student Amy Savagian discusses with Henri Ford, vice dean for medical education, a study on anesthesia for esophageal dilation, in which she participated.

Above, second-year medical student Kieumai Vo explains her group’s pathology poster, which focuses on myeloid-derived suppressor cells in murine solid tumor models.



# Hospitals open up budget process to employee participation

By Ina Fried

Wider participation in decision-making will be a key part of developing the capital budget for USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital for the new fiscal year beginning July 1.

Calling the new capital budget process “a big organizational change,” Jonathan Spees, hospital chief financial officer, contrasts the previous, mostly top-down process with the new process that will involve a cross section of the organization in making capital budget allocations.

In addition to being more inclusive, the process also will be more objective, Spees said, with established criteria and a rating system for ranking all capital requests.

Each department will submit its budget request for capital items that cost more than \$5,000.

“Department heads will collaborate with physicians and staff to create the department’s request,” Spees said. “It’s important for everyone to offer ideas and to contribute.”

A new Resource Allocation Committee, chaired by Spees, will include physicians and staff leadership from key departments such as nursing. The committee will review and rank all capital requests, and develop a capital spending plan for the year.

Departmental capital requests will be rated and ranked on these criteria:

- Strategic impact
- Impact on safety
- Measurable quality impact
- Financial return
- Customer impact.

The Resource Allocation Committee will use a participative process to establish the ratings, debating the relative merits of various projects.

“It’s a good opportunity for each of our committee members to call upon himself

or herself to be objective and to make decisions to benefit the community,” Spees said. “We’ll need to challenge ourselves to be impartial in deciding what’s good for the enterprise, not just defending our parochial interests.”

Within the limits of available funds, requests will be funded in the order in which they are ranked. While the amount available for capital spending is “substantially higher” than in recent years, there are still constraints, Spees said.

“One of the goals of the Resource Allocation Committee is to get people to think

and make the connection between the hospitals’ net income and funds available for capital spending,” Spees said. He predicts positive outcomes “when everyone makes the connection between decisions made on the operating side and dollars available to buy equipment and invest in facilities.”

The formal capital budget process will begin on July 1, and managers will make presentations supporting their budget requests during August. The approved spending plan is expected to be in place by mid-September.



Veronica Jauriqui

**CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LEADERSHIP IN NEUROSURGERY**—The Keck School of Medicine’s Department of Neurosurgery celebrated 35 years of extraordinary accomplishments and leadership in the field of neurosurgery at a day-long symposium and reception on May 1. The event, attended by more than 140 people, included lectures by preeminent neurosurgeons from across the country. It culminated in the presentation of The Michael L. J. Apuzzo (left) Professorship for Advanced Neurosurgery to Charles Y. Liu (right) associate professor of clinical neurosurgery at Keck. Apuzzo is the Edwin M. Todd/Trent H. Wells Jr. Professor of Neurological Surgery and Radiation Oncology, Biology and Physics at the Keck School. The professorship, which provides ongoing financial support to a leading faculty member in the field, was created through a gift from Ernest Bates, CEO of American Shared Hospitals Services.

# Healthcare Marketing Report honors five recent marketing projects

By Bryan Schneider

The *Healthcare Marketing Report* has given USC five awards in this year’s national Healthcare Advertising awards for marketing efforts on behalf of The Doctors of USC, the Keck School of Medicine and USC Norris Cancer Hospital. Winners were announced on April 27.

The Keck School of Medicine received Gold

(first place) in the external publications category for *Keck Medicine* magazine. The new magazine, launched last summer, is aimed at alumni and friends of the Keck School. The USC Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing office publishes the magazine with design by IE Design and Communications.

The Doctors of USC received three awards including

a Gold in their competitive category for the total advertising campaign for the faculty practice last year. The award recognized marketing efforts led by the USC Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing office in collaboration with outside marketing firm Swanson Russell Associates. Efforts included advertising signage in the Coliseum and the Galen Center and print ads in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Downtown News*, *Keck Medicine* magazine, Trojan football and basketball game programs and other USC publications. A centerpiece of this ad campaign featured print ads and a live action commercial with USC football coach Pete Carroll in a Doctors of USC waiting room with the slogan “See the Doctors Coach Carroll sees.”

Another Gold award was given for an animated ad appearing at the scorer’s table during basketball games at the Galen Center. In the ad, a basketball bounces across a digital screen revealing the slogan “See the doctors they see” and featuring the web address DoctorsofUSC.com.

The Doctors of USC Web site ([www.doctorsofusc.com](http://www.doctorsofusc.com)) received a Silver award (second place) for videos appearing on the home page featuring stories of USC doctors treating patients and showcasing leading-edge technology and care.

USC Norris Cancer Hospital received a Bronze award (third place) for its lung cancer print ad that ran in *Antelope Valley Lifestyle*, *San Gabriel Valley* magazine and *Health Beat* magazine.

The Healthcare Advertising Awards is the oldest, largest and most widely respected healthcare advertising awards competition nationally.

The awards are sponsored by *Healthcare Marketing Report*, the leading publication covering healthcare marketing, advertising and strategic business development.

More than 3,600 entries were received in this year’s competition.

A national panel of judges reviewed all entries based on creativity, quality, message effectiveness, consumer appeal, graphic design and overall impact.

The Weekly

Next Issue: May 22

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.

**Associate Senior Vice President, Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing:** Jane Brust

**Executive Director of Communications and Marketing:** Ina Fried

**Editor:** Jon Nalick

**Contributors:** Eva Blaauw, Cheryl Bruyninckx, Veronica Jauriqui, Meghan Lewit, Carol Matthieu, Katie Neith, Sara Reeve, Leslie Ridgeway, Bryan Schneider and Kukla Vera

**Senior Vice President, University Relations:** Martha Harris

**Phone:** 323-442-2830 **Fax:** 323-442-2832

**E-mail:** [hscwkly@usc.edu](mailto:hscwkly@usc.edu) **Web:** [uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/](http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/) **RSS:** <http://www.usc.edu/hscw>



# Graduate students invite teens to consider health-related careers

**By Meleeneh Kazarian**  
More than 25 Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School students recently attended a student career panel to hear about the personal experiences that led several USC students to pursue graduate education.

The April 14 event, sponsored by the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Governing Council, featured eight USC students from pharmacy, public health, dentistry, occupational therapy and medicine.

During the two-hour panel session, Kate Swartz, a first-year public health student, described being an undergraduate at an all-female university, how she came to choose USC for graduate school, and her interest in health communication—specifically about her passion for anti-smoking education.

Later, first-year medical student John Mahajan urged the younger students to shadow a physician and volunteer in a hospital in order to learn more about the field, and Jasmine Walton, first-year dental student, explained how she chose to apply to dental school because of her love for arts and crafts.

“That’s so cool!” exclaimed one high school student as Yasmin Alia Khan, a second-year public health student, shared her global health research experience in Africa and discussed opportunities for students to study abroad.

After hearing from each panel member, the high school students asked about undergraduate course work, scholarship opportunities, and specific requirements for each graduate school program.

They also shared their personal ambitions to pursue careers in the health sciences, including physical therapy and neurosurgery.

Many of the students said they had read books by physicians or had shadowed health care professionals in order to experience a day in the life of a doctor first-hand.

Swartz said she was impressed with the high school students, adding, “I was stunned by the intelligence of the young men and women that I met there. I am confident that they will be the hard working medical students of tomorrow.”

Sonya Soni, second-year public health master’s student and



Meleeneh Kazarian

First-year medical student John Mahajan discusses opportunities for pursuing a career in medicine with students at Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School on April 14. The event was sponsored by the Graduate and Professional Student Senate Governing Council.

GPSS community service chair added, “After spending quality time with some of the students after the event, they informed me how grateful they were to hear words of wisdom and insight.”

Mahajan described participating on the panel as a “great experience. It was incredibly exciting to see high school students so enthusiastic about health professions. I think it will be a great opportunity for HSC students to become involved with Bravo in the future.”



Jon Nalick

**THE NURSES OF USC FIGHT ON!**—At a May 7 awards ceremony, hospital leaders recognized outstanding nurses. From left are: Linda Jefferson, Anabel Cantero, Stephanie Johnson, Ellen Whalen, Mitch Creem, Cecile Sison, Glenn Ehresmann, Illuminata Galicia, Rusty Galicia, and Leanne Haskins. During Nurses Week, hospital nurses also received gifts of license plate frames that read, “The Nurses of USC” and “Fight On.”

## Hospitals honor The Nurses of USC

**By Leslie Ridgeway**  
Mitch Creem, CEO of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, recently hailed nurses and staffers as “extraordinary” at the Nurse Week Nurse Recognition Awards—and underscored that praise with gifts and cash prizes.

“This is all about you,” he said at the May 7 event at University Hospital.

Eight nurses and staff members were celebrated at the annual event for the compassion, dedication and enthusiasm that wins accolades from patients.

Each award winner received a cash prize worth from \$750 to \$1,500, as well as an engraved clock and bouquet of flowers.

“Your staff is outstanding. I felt like friends and family were taking care of my husband,” read Ellen Whalen, chief nursing officer, from a letter written by a patient.

Creem took the opportunity to ask nurses

and staff to join him in his campaign to make improvements and increase nurse retention.

“We need to hear about what needs to change,” he said. “The more nurses we have, the longer they stay, the better off we will be.”

Chief of Staff Glenn Ehresmann noted the nurses’ sense of purpose, adding: “You go that extra mile, and we don’t say ‘thank you’ enough.”

Award winners include:

Care Partner of the Year, UH: Illuminata Galicia

Care Partner of the Year, Norris: Linda Jefferson

Nurse Advocate of the Year, UH: Cecile Sison

Nurse Advocate of the Year, Norris: Stephanie Johnson

Nurse Leader of the Year, UH: Deidra Bonner

Nurse Leader of the Year, Norris: Anabel Cantero

Nurse of the Year, UH: Gina Greco

Nurse of the Year, Norris: Leanne Haskins

## The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

Complete listing at:  
[www.usc.edu/uscnews/usc\\_in\\_the\\_news](http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/usc_in_the_news)

The May 10 issue of *Ocular Surgery News* quotes Keck School dean **Carmen A. Puliafito** on optical coherence tomography (OCT), a technology he co-invented. A photo of Puliafito next to an OCT device in the Doheny Eye Institute appears on the cover. See the article at <http://www.osnsupersite.com/view.aspx?rid=39201>

On May 9, NBC’s “The Today Show” aired an interview with preventive medicine expert **Jonathan Samet** about electronic cigarettes.

A May 8 Associated Press article quoted cell and neurobiologist **Ruth Wood** about HCG, the drug reportedly used by baseball player Manny Ramirez.

A May 7 *Contra Costa Times* article quoted fertility expert **Richard Paulson** about HCG, the drug reportedly used by baseball player Manny Ramirez.

On May 6, KABC-TV interviewed neurologist **Leslie Weiner** about USC’s participation in the Nancy Davis Center Without Walls

program, a national network of multiple sclerosis research centers. Fox News affiliate KTTV-TV also noted that USC is part of the program.

A May 6 widely-carried HealthDay News article quoted Alzheimer’s disease expert **Lon Schneider** about a new Alzheimer’s drug that inhibits the function of HDAC2, an enzyme that may be involved in cognitive deterioration.

A May 4 *Chicago Tribune* article quoted preventive medicine expert and dietitian **Jaimie Davis** on ways to avoid weight gain while on vacation.

A May 3 *Ventura County Star* article noted the Keck School of Medicine in an article about a program that mentors middle school children interested in becoming physicians.

A May 3 *The Desert Sun* article featured research by cardiologist **Howard Hodis** into the development of a noninvasive diagnostic test that measures plaque thickening within the carotid artery.



# Calendar of Events

This Calendar of events is also online at [www.usc.edu/hscalendar](http://www.usc.edu/hscalendar) for the Health Sciences Campus community

## Monday, May 18

**Noon.** “Late Medical and Surgical Complications Post-Transplant,” Miroslaw Smogorzweski, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar. “Optogenetics: Development and Application,” Karl Desseroth, Stanford. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

**Noon.** “Case Presentations,” Saro Khemichian, USC. D&T Bldg. B3B 105. Info: (323) 409-7995

**4 p.m.** “Research in Progress,” Jacob Ahdoot, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

## Tuesday, May 19

**Noon.** Cancer Center Grand Rounds and Poster Session. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 865-0801

## Wednesday, May 20

**8:30 a.m.** “Comprehensive Management of Subarachnoid Hemorrhage,” Steven Giannotta, USC. GNH 11-321. Info: (323) 226-7923

**Noon.** “Vascular Access,” Sue Hanks, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar. “Plasticity and Neuromodulations in the Visual Cortex,” Yang Dan, Howard Hughes. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-3219

## Friday, May 22

**8 a.m.** “Alzheimer’s Disease Research Update Day: Is Alzheimer’s Disease a Normal Part of Aging?” Various speakers. USC Andrus Gerontology Ctr. Info: (323) 930-6280

**8 a.m.** CHLA Grand Rounds. “Mechanisms of Viral Bronchiolitis at the Interface of Innate and Adaptive Immunity,” Jürgen Schwartze and Edward Clark, Univ. of Edinburgh. . CHLA Saban Research Auditorium. Info: (323) 361-2935

**8:30 a.m.** “Role of Herpes Viruses in Pulmonary Fibrosis,” B.B. Moore, Univ. of Michigan. GNH 11-321. Info: (323) 226-7923

**11 a.m.** Hematology Grand Rounds. “Acquired Hemophilia: Diagnosis and Treatment Options,” Doris Quon, Orthopaedic Hospital. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3950

**Noon.** “Case Presentations,” Kiran Nandmuri, USC. OPT A5C 129. Info: (323) 409-7995

## Wednesday, May 27

Noon. “Renal Biopsy,” Michael Koss and Vito Campese, USC. GNH 4420. Info: (323) 226-7337

## Friday, May 29

**8 a.m.** Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. “Tumors of Unknown Primary – Determining Site of Origin,” Noel Weidner, UCSD. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

**8 a.m.** CHLA Grand Rounds. “Surgical Evaluation and Treatment of Persistent Pediatric Obstructive Sleep Apnea,” Aaron Lin, USC/CHLA. CHLA Saban Research Auditorium. Info: (323) 361-2935

**9 a.m.** “Media and Peer Influences on Food Intake and Alcohol Use in Young People: An Observational Experimental Approach,” Rutger Engels, Radboud University Nijmegen. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-2637

**11 a.m.** Hematology Grand Rounds. “Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis, Diagnosing and Current Management,” Ravin Rupani, USC. IPT C2J103. Info: (323) 865-3950

## Tuesday, June 2

**11:30 a.m.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “Community Partnered Research in Mental health, Kenneth B. Wells, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

**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 HSC Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2832, or e-mail to [eblaauw@usc.edu](mailto: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.



© Steve Cohn

**SUPPORTING CANCER RESEARCH**—Hosted by Keck School of Medicine alumnus Paul Toffel and his wife Beverly (far left) at their La Canada estate on May 3, USC supporters and donors were treated to a private tour of the residence—named as the 2008 Pasadena Showcase House of Design—and delicious food. Guests also heard a presentation by Keck School otolaryngologist Uttam Sinha (right) on his head and neck cancer research and also enjoyed the comedy and singing of thyroid cancer survivor Joe Piscopo (center), best known as a former cast member of “Saturday Night Live.” Pictured alongside Sinha is his wife Sheila Kar.

## Keck School student named Fulbright Scholar

Poonum Dhokia, a master of public health student from the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has been awarded a Fulbright scholarship for 2009-2010.

Dhokia will complete her degree in biostatistics and epidemiology this summer. She will then spend a year in India examining attitudes and beliefs that impact how Indian parents detect autism in their children. She plans to use her findings to develop a pamphlet that can be distributed to the public to combat the late detection rate of autism in India. Her undergraduate majors at UC Irvine were environmental analysis and design, with a minor in biological sciences.

USC has 13 finalists for Fulbright scholarships this year, and seven students already have received acceptance letters. The grants are for one year of study and/or research that can be pursued in more than 140 countries. The students, who are headed to Laos, Spain, Thailand, India, Mexico, Austria and France, represent the USC Rossier School of Education, USC College, the USC Thornton School of Music, the USC School of Cinematic Arts and the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Noosha Malek, director of academic recognition programs, said acceptance letters come in over several months, and it will be mid-summer before the university knows how many of this year’s finalists will be studying internationally.

Established in 1946, the Fulbright Program aims to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries, through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills. The Fulbright Program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the

United States Department of State.

Approximately 294,000 “Fulbrighters,” 111,000 from the United States and 183,000 from other countries, have participated in the program since its inception more than sixty years ago. The Fulbright Program awards approximately 7,500 new grants annually.

Currently, the Fulbright Program operates in over 155 countries worldwide.



Jon Nailck

**CANCER FIGHTING FORUM**—Los Angeles City Councilman Tom LaBonge speaks at a Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week event on April 29 at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. LaBonge, whose wife is a cancer survivor, emphasized the importance of a sense of community and family that is needed to support patients fighting cancer. He was one of several speakers at the event, which was sponsored by the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, USC Norris Patient Education and Outreach Center, Jennifer Diamond Cancer Resource Library and the Head and Neck Cancer Support program.

USC Health Sciences  
Public Relations and Marketing  
1975 Zonal Ave.  
KAM 400  
Los Angeles, CA 90033

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
University of Southern  
California