

President Nikias gives first address to HSC faculty

By Sara Reeve

Speaking to faculty on the Health Sciences Campus in his first major speech about the academic future of the university, USC President C. L. Max Nikias answered the question of why he chose this campus for his address.

“Because we will be placing a spotlight on this campus,” Nikias said. “This is your moment to shine—to shine on the Los Angeles stage, and the national stage, and the international stage, as the Pacific Rim grows in power and influence. Why this campus? Because the ancient and noble profession involving medicine and human health is getting ready to dominate this century.”

The address, held in the Mayer Auditorium on Aug. 25, acknowledged the university’s history as a “global research powerhouse,” with a strong commitment to “conquering new intellectual frontiers.” Nikias noted his belief that as the 21st century would be the age of medicine and biology, medical schools and the biological and health sciences would become more central to life at leading universities.

“All the leading universities will be known for their medical and health sciences schools that perform translational research and deliver world-class patient care by increasingly translating new ideas from the laboratory to the clinic,” said Nikias.



USC President C. L. Max Nikias delivers his first presidential address to the Health Sciences Campus faculty at Mayer Auditorium Aug. 25. Nikias spoke on the challenges and opportunities that the 21st century holds for USC as a whole and also for the campus.

Stating the desire to build on USC’s position as a leading research university, Nikias described his priority to strengthen the Keck School of Medicine and position it among the very best medical schools in the country.

Key to that strengthening is the development of a vibrant academic medical center. The April 2009 acquisition of USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital, and the recent integration of all physician practices into the university, has provided the university with fiduciary control of all of its medical enterprise operations and an increased level of autonomy.

“We are playing to win

here,” he stated. “Let’s make no mistake about it. When it comes to doing good for the world, we believe there is a USC way to do it, and we compete for the right to do it the USC way. This way is entrepreneurial, engaging, forward thinking, ethical, adaptable and resilient. We aspire to put this approach to work as we build the very best academic medical center in Southern California.”

Nikias outlined several initiatives designed to increase patient revenue and prestige, both as a university and an academic medical center with a top-tier medical school. He announced a campus beautification project on tap for this year, which will provide a welcoming place for patients, faculty, students and staff.

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—USC President C. L. Max Nikias

Hospitals launch new technology assessment and adoption program

By Tania Chatila

The USC hospitals have implemented a new team of physicians and support staff to help streamline and analyze requests for new technology purchases.

The Value Analysis Committee (VAC) was launched earlier this year and evaluates the adoption of new products

based on peer reviews by other physicians. These new products can include anything from graspers to robotic technologies.

“The VAC is an important tool in our assessment of new technology,” said Chief Financial Officer Jon Spees. “This committee helps the hospitals respond to the needs

of our physicians and patients, while at the same time recognizing the importance of effective supply chain management.”

In this new process, physicians requesting a new product from the hospitals are asked to submit a request to the committee and then present their case for adopting

the new technology at a VAC meeting.

Following a thorough evaluation that looks at impact to quality of care cost, and the potential for hospital-wide adoption, the committee makes a final decision. If the committee does not approve a request, an appeals process ensures the physician another chance to make the case.

Hospital administrators say the practice will help offset supply costs and streamline standardization efforts.

“This is a best practice that occurs in most academic medical centers across the country,” said Jean Sargent, director of supply and materials management for the Health Sciences Campus. Sargent spearheaded the effort to launch the Value Analysis Committee. “It will help to ensure we are prudent with our expenses. We have existing physicians, returning physicians and new physicians, and we want to make sure we meet the needs of everyone.”

The Value Analysis Com-

mittee is chaired by Chief Medical Officer Don Larsen, co-chaired by doctors Mary Marx and Fred Weaver, and includes other USC physicians such as Ray Matthews, Namir Katkhouda and Earl Strum. Support staff on the committee includes representatives from administration, finance and nursing, among other departments.

“I see this as yet another wonderful opportunity to include our physician leaders in the decision-making processes affecting our hospitals,” Larsen said. “I’m excited about what this committee will be able to accomplish.”

In addition to review of new product proposals, the committee also has established procedures for product trial and evaluation, and strengthened efforts to better track the use of products from outside vendors in the hospitals.

Sargent said the committee is also looking at hospital-wide product standardization as a way of ensuring better pricing on orders.



Jon Nalick

SUPPORTING ALZHEIMER’S RESEARCH—Left, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez (D-CA) recently visited the USC Alzheimer Disease Research Center (ADRC), which received a nearly \$11.5 million, five-year renewal from the National Institute on Aging. In an Aug. 16 meeting with Sánchez, Helena Chui (center), director of the ADRC and chair of the Department of Neurology at the Keck School of Medicine, and Lon Schneider (right), director of the clinical core of ADRC and professor of psychiatry, neurology and gerontology at the Keck School, discussed H.R. 2987: Cure and Understanding through Research for Alzheimer’s Act of 2009. The bill, which Sánchez supports, would ensure sufficient resources for Alzheimer research and education, with a particular emphasis on outreach in Hispanic populations. A main focus of the ADRC is outreach to the Hispanic community.

Scout gathering finds medical team well prepared (to serve 36,000)

By Ryan Ball

Whenever you get five boys together, it's a good idea to have a first aid kit handy. Multiply that number by 800 and you're going to need much more than a box of Band-Aids and a bottle of peroxide.

Glenn Ault, assistant professor of colorectal surgery at the Keck School of Medicine and associate dean for clinical administration (LAC+USC Medical Center), knows it takes a serious medical installation, and generous help from the military, to look out for the well being of 36,000 kids and their family members.

Ault served as Assistant Chief Medical Officer for the southern region at the recent Boy Scout Jamboree in Fredericksburg, Va.

Ault has been involved with the Boy Scouts of America since his own badge-earning days and was thrilled to have the opportunity to lead a team of nearly 800 medical services personnel in upholding the famous Scout motto, "Be Prepared."

The 10-day ultimate campout took place at Fort A.P. Hill, a sprawling military base that saw so many visitors that, overnight, it became the seventh most populous city in the commonwealth of Virginia.

With two years of planning and 19 medical facilities scattered throughout the base, Ault and his colleagues were ready for anything and everything.

"We prepared for all different types of things: heat injury, storms and in today's day and age, a shooter on the base," Ault said.

Worst-case scenarios avoided, Ault and company mostly attended to routine injuries.

He said, "We had fractures, bumps and bruises, sprains, cuts and things like that. The majority of what we saw was rashes and insect bites. Seven kids had to be sent out with appendicitis and one kid had testicular torsion. The usual things you would



Glenn Ault (center left), associate dean for clinical administration (LAC+USC Medical Center), recently helped lead a team of nearly 800 medical services personnel at the Boy Scouts of America's annual Jamboree. With him are Lt. Col. Bradley Golden (left), nurse Ruth Reynolds (center right) and Lt. Col. Bradley Snow.

expect to see with kids happened while we were there. That's why we really focused on having E.R. physicians, pediatricians and internists there in our clinics to be able to do that front-line primary care stuff."

Being on a military installation afforded Ault the opportunity to work with a joint task force of the Northern Command based in Colorado Springs, where Ault and other team leaders did some training in March. Additional training took place in May at Fort A.P. Hill.

"Those guys were phenomenal to work with," noted Ault. "I left there with a huge, tremendous respect for our military."

The Air Force brought in an EMEDS unit, which is essentially an inflatable 50-bed mobile hospital that is currently being used in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This became known as Jamboree General, or Jambo General for short, and

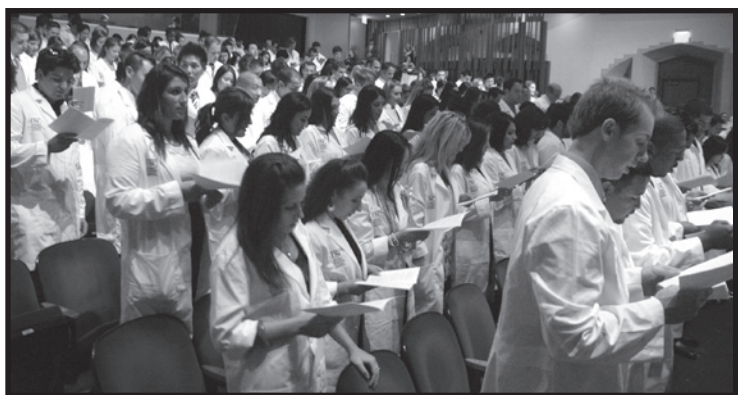
it was there for cases requiring more than routine first aid. There was also a pharmacy station and podiatry, ophthalmology and dentistry clinics on site.

Ault said the jamboree provided an opportunity for him to give back to something that has helped shape his life, noting that the qualities scouting instills in a boy are the same qualities that make a good physician.

"I hear all the time around here about people who do some really neat stuff as volunteers or as part of some community outreach, and I think it's part of being a Trojan," Ault concluded. "Whether it's the Good Neighbors Campaign or giving of yourself with Operation Smile like the plastic surgery guys do, there's so much that folks from this university do and, trust me, I was out there carrying the Trojan banner."

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—Glenn Ault, associate dean for clinical administration (LAC+USC Medical Center)



Beth Dunham

A White Coat Ceremony for the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, held Aug. 27, welcomed 176 future dentists and 34 future dental hygienists into the profession. At the ceremony, Dean Avishai Sadan told students, "By putting this coat on today, you commit yourself to always put your patients first, to always do only what is right for them, and to never compromise the ethical and clinical standards for which the Ostrow School of Dentistry is known."

Primary Care Week 2010 set for Oct. 18-21

The Keck School of Medicine and Charles Drew University will host Primary Care Week 2010 (PCW 2010) from Oct. 18 through Oct. 21.

PCW 2010 aims to highlight, educate and celebrate the importance of primary care within the institutions and communities.

Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito will host the opening reception on Oct. 18 with keynote speaker Robert K. Ross, president and CEO of the California Endowment.

Registration begins on Sept. 1. Early reservations are encouraged as seating is limited.

For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/2bsylup> or contact Yvonne Banzali, primary care community medicine coordinator, at Banzali@usc.edu or call (323) 442-1678.

Physical Therapy unveils new center Sept. 10

The Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry will host an open house Sept. 10 at the Bice Clinical Research Center.

The new facility has been customized for testing human research subjects and conducting clinical research trials and evidence-based practice in rehabilitation. The Bice Center enables research faculty to continue to attract collaborators, obtain outside funding for clinical research, and provide upgraded facilities for human subjects and visitors.

Located in the Center for Health Professions (CHP) building, the facility is named in recognition of alumna and past chair of the Division's Board of Councilors, Kathleen Bice, for her generosity in making the lead gift to establish the center.

The open house will be held from 1:30–3 p.m. in CHP 159 and is open to all Health Sciences Campus faculty and staff.

RSVP by e-mail at villagra@usc.edu or by calling (323) 442-1193.

The Weekly

Next Issue: Sept. 17

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

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USC hospitals launch Facebook page to strengthen ties to patients, community

By Leslie Ridgeway and Tania Chatila

The USC hospitals are making their mark in the world of social media.

USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital launched their first official Facebook page on July 12, in an effort to connect hospital staff and physicians with current and prospective patients.

“This Facebook page will allow us to enhance the existing bonds we have with our patients,” said hospitals CEO Mitch Creem. “We can stay connected with our patients, learn what they like about us, read their suggestions for improvement, address their concerns and create relationships with future patients. This will also be a forum to celebrate the accomplishments of our faculty and staff and the miracles that happen here every day.”

The Facebook page has more than 320 “fans,”



USC hospitals launched their Facebook page on July 12 and it has already attracted more than 320 fans.

including patient Ricki Lee Albertoni, who posted: “YOU GUYS ROOOOOOOOOOCK!! I had my liver transplant there on July 13th, and was out in 7 days. (Fastest in USC History, I believe) Best experience

ever. Dr. Genyk, Dr. A., Dr. Shapfer... Raffi, Caryn, Julie (some of my favorite nurses) You all made it possible.” Just a few days prior to launching the Facebook page, the hospitals also kicked off Hospital Connect, a

new online blog for hospital employees. With more than 30 posts and dozens of comments, the blog is providing a unique forum for employees to receive important information and dialogue with their colleagues and members of the USC hospitals management team.

“Regardless of the topic, our employees should feel comfortable providing honest feedback,” said Creem. “Their comments and ideas concerning the successful operation of our hospitals are important to me, and this blog was created for them.”

To participate on the Facebook page, join Facebook by going to <http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=173>

The USC Health Sciences Public Relations and Marketing Office manages the employee blog and Facebook page, as well as a presence on Twitter, with more than 200 followers. Go to <http://twitter.com/USCHealthNews>.

‘We can stay connected with our patients, learn what they like about us, read their suggestions for improvement.’

—USC hospitals CEO Mitch Creem

Keck School researchers pursue blood-based biomarkers for cancer detection

Keck School of Medicine researchers will test whether a set of blood-based biomarkers can assist mammography in the early detection of breast cancer with a \$180,000 grant announced from Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

The grant will fund research into whether specific biomarkers, or minute substances in the blood, can effectively distinguish breast cancer patients from their healthy counterparts and whether an inexpensive, less invasive screening strategy can be developed based on this approach.

“Breast cancer progression is marked

by increased levels of a DNA modification, known as DNA methylation, at certain positions in the human genome, and this increase can be detected in the blood from these patients,” said investigator Simeen Malik, post-doctoral research associate at the USC Epigenome Center. “The research will help us detect these differences in the blood, an approach that may be more effective than current image-based screening techniques like mammography since it is based on the underlying biology of the tumor.”

These diagnostic tests could poten-

tially be administered more frequently than mammography, which may result in earlier detection of the breast tumor by 6-12 months, Malik said.

Malik and Peter W. Laird, director of the USC Epigenome Center, will lead the research in collaboration with investigators at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and City of Hope National Medical Center.

The Komen for the Cure grant is part of \$2.8 million in research money Komen is investing in California medical institutions this year alone. These funds are part of a \$59 million portfolio

of research grants that Komen is funding in 2010 to find the cures for breast cancer and to end the disease.

“We can’t say it often enough: early detection saves lives and too few women are getting the screenings they should be getting today. This is a global issue, one that Susan G. Komen for the Cure is putting considerable energy into solving by funding research that may lead to more portable, accessible and more accurate breast cancer screening on a global scale,” said Ambassador Nancy G. Brinker, founder and CEO of Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

NIKIAS: The largest fundraising campaign in university history will soon be announced

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Referencing the legendary ability of the face of Helen of Troy to launch 1,000 ships, Nikias joked, “If the new face of our City of Troy could bring a few thousand new patients, we are all going to be very happy.”

Attracting new interdisciplinary faculty who can serve as bridges between the two

USC campuses was also stated as a key priority by Nikias.

He acknowledged the recent \$58.6 million Clinical and Translational Science Award presented to USC by the National Institutes of Health as an example of the stellar work that can be achieved when schools work together. The award-winning team is comprised of faculty

from eight different schools at USC.

“It is when our faculty, professors and students join with others and learn to challenge our views that discovery and invention can reach new levels on our campuses,” he said.

Key to all of these goals is an effort to increase revenue substantially.

Nikias told faculty to expect the announcement later this year of the largest fundraising campaign in university history.

While the effort ahead may seem daunting, Nikias affirmed that he believes the university’s position is strong, with plenty of untapped potential.

“At the very moment when the center of gravity

of our world is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, we will be able to extend USC’s influence where it lies most,” he said. “Given USC’s location, our international heritage and our academic strengths, this university can hope to embody the intersection of the Pacific century and the biological century.”

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

An Aug. 24 Bloomberg News story quoted Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research Director **Martin Pera** about a court ruling blocking federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research. A second version of the article also ran in *BusinessWeek* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

An Aug. 22 front page *Los Angeles Times* article featured research by associate professor of molecular microbiology and immunology **Paula**

Cannon on the use of gene therapy to create HIV-resistant cells.

An Aug. 18 *The New York Times* article quoted professor of psychiatry, neurology and gerontology **Lon Schneider** about the failure of a promising Alzheimer’s drug in clinical trials.

An Aug. 22 *Orange County Register* article quoted Flora L. Thornton Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine **Jonathan Samet**

about a study on the health effects of cell phones.

An Aug. 11 *Nature* article featured assistant professor of cell and neurobiology **Qi-Long Ying** and colleagues, who successfully created the first “knockout” rats—animals that are genetically modified to lack one or more genes—through embryonic stem cell-based gene targeting.

Bloomberg News, in an Aug. 10 widely carried HealthDay News article,

featured research by Keck School of Medicine student **Tanmai Saxena** and colleagues, who found that women who reported using estrogen hormone replacement therapy for 15 years or more had a 19 percent greater risk of breast cancer compared with women who never used hormone therapy. CNN, CBS News, United Press International, Scripps Howard News Service, Asian News International, Medical News Today, Medscape, *The Money Times* (India), WebMD and *The Sun-coast News* also covered the study.

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. NRT LG 503/504. RSVP at www.usc.edu/org/wim or call (323) 442-1865

Noon. USC Norris Cancer Center Grand Rounds. “CD19 and CD22 Co-Receptors in Biology and Biotherapy of Lymphoid Malignancies,” Fatih M. Uckun, USC. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 865-0801

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

8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Childhood Obesity Seminar: “Childhood Obesity: A Call to Action.” Various speakers. Town and Gown, UPC. RSVP at www.usc.edu/esvp using code: summit or call (213) 740-1744.

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

Monday, Sept. 13

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar. “The Physiology of Diabetes Genetics,” Richard Watanabe, USC. Pizza at 11:40 a.m. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-1144

Wednesday, Sept. 15

Noon. CTSI Regulatory Affairs Grand Rounds. “Surviving an FDA Inspection of your Clinical Trial Site,” Frances Richmond, USC. Coffee and light refreshments served. CHP 106. Info: (323) 442-3321

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, CHLA. 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

Monday, Sept. 20

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar. “Gene Knockout Rats,” Qi-Long Ying, USC. Pizza at 11:40 a.m. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-1144

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

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.

NCI awards \$2.5 million to USC cancer researcher

By Ellin Kavanagh

Fatih Uckun, professor of research pediatrics at the Keck School of Medicine has been awarded \$2.5 million from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to support development of a new class of anti-cancer drugs against acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common form of cancer in children and adolescents.

Uckun and his colleagues have been developing rationally designed and cancer-specific nanomedicines that target the survival machinery of leukemia cells as potent cancer “smart bombs.”

“Our long-term goal is to translate recent research discoveries in nanotechnology and biotherapy into effective patient-tailored treatment programs for the most common form of childhood cancer,” said Uckun, who is a member of the Saban Research Institute of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. The work will be accomplished in close collaboration with other

member institutions of the NCI Alliance for Nanotechnology in Cancer.

Nanotechnology refers to science and engineering performed on a molecular level. Applied to oncology, nanotherapeutics can target the infrastructure of cancer.

“The development of these nanomedicines will be a significant step forward to overcome chemotherapy resistance in childhood leukemia,” added



Fatih Uckun and colleagues are developing cancer-specific nanomedicines that target the survival machinery of leukemia cells as potent cancer “smart bombs.”

Paul Gaynon, professor of pediatrics and medical director of the Therapeutic Advances in Childhood Leukemia consortium.

Stuart Siegel, director of the Children’s Center for Cancer and Blood Diseases at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, said, “We are excited about these nanomedicines because they may provide the foundation for therapeutic innovation against childhood cancer.”

Center for Work and Family Life celebrates 30 years of service

The USC Center for Work and Family Life is celebrating its 30-year anniversary this year, and center staff encourages all employees to familiarize themselves with the range of free services available to University employees.

The center’s employee assistance and work/life programs are available to all benefits-eligible university faculty, staff and their dependent family members, and are meant to support a healthy balance between work and family life.

Among the services offered are confidential, short-term counseling services for a wide range of work-related and personal concerns, consultation and coaching on a variety of issues such as workplace human relations and family matters, and wellness classes on topics including stress management and communication.

“For 30 years the University has supported this program, which is focused on helping our faculty and staff to be productive in both their personal and professional lives,” said John Gaspari, the

center’s executive director. “We approach issues with our clients from both a problem-centered and a strength-based perspective, and our professionally trained and licensed staff is committed to supporting the health and well-being of all University employees.”

The center is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to

5 p.m, and is located in the Center for Health Professions, 1540 Alcazar Street, Room 233B.

For more information about programs and services, visit www.usc.edu/worklife or call (213) 821-0800.

For more information on the variety of wellness programs available at USC, visit <http://wellness.usc.edu>.

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