

Harvard scientist to lead Keck's stem cell research

The University of Southern California announced this week a major scientific recruitment to the Keck School of Medicine of USC, one that will have a transformative effect on the medical and biological sciences across the university's campuses and in the regenerative medicine and biology communities.

Andrew P. McMahon will leave Harvard University to join the university on July 1, 2012, as a Provost Professor and the inaugural holder of the W. M. Keck Professorship of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine. He also will hold an appointment in the Department of Biological Sciences in the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. In addition, he will chair the newly created Department of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine at the Keck School and serve as director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC.

"As USC advances its ambitious fundraising campaign, we will continue to make bold investments in recruiting world-class faculty," said USC President



Andrew P. McMahon

C. L. Max Nikias. "Dr. McMahon's appointment marks a significant milestone in these efforts, and will dramatically bolster the medical and biological sciences at the university, elevating our programs to an entirely new level."

McMahon is currently the Frank B. Baird Jr. Professor of Science in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University and is on the Executive Committee of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. In 1993, he joined Harvard University as a full professor, and from 2001 to 2004, served

as chair of its Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology. McMahon is currently a professor in the Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology and principal faculty member in the Harvard Stem Cell Institute.

McMahon says he decided to come to USC because of university leadership's compelling vision for the future and the university's strong potential to achieve it.

"There's an obvious investment being

made to advance the university as a whole and to enhance the stem cell and regenerative medicine program," he said. "It's also quite appealing to have the opportunity to build something at an institution that is clearly heading to the big leagues."

In establishing his laboratory at USC, McMahon will bring a team of highly accomplished researchers from Harvard. At USC, McMahon will be charged with recruiting a new generation of the world's top biological scientists to our campuses. USC anticipates building a core group of faculty across the university to pursue science that will benefit the university's entire life sciences research enterprise, as well as contribute to larger efforts to better understand basic human biology.

In addition to conducting research and leading USC's regenerative medicine and biology efforts, McMahon will teach undergraduates and graduate students at USC, fulfilling a commitment to helping students learn basic scientific concepts.

"During the recruitment process, Dr. McMahon specifically requested the opportunity to teach undergraduate students each year at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences—a testament to his belief in the importance of mentoring future scientists," said Provost Elizabeth Garrett. "This will be an outstanding opportunity for USC's

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'He has clear vision and knows great science from mediocre science. He's at the forefront of regenerative medicine, breaking ground in creative ways while maintaining rigorous thinking.'

—Clifford Tabin, George Jacob and Jacqueline Hazel Leder Professor and chair, Department of Genetics, Harvard Medical School

USC President Nikias discusses the future with HSC faculty

By Amy E. Hamaker

USC is poised to take its rightful place as a world-class medical and research center during the coming decade, which will be a time of impressive growth in the areas of biological and health sciences, said USC President C. L. Max Nikias during his annual address to Health Sciences campus faculty. The address was presented on Feb. 8 at the Aresty Auditorium.

Nikias gave a comprehensive update on the university's progress over the past year and thanked faculty members for their unwavering support of university goals.

He stressed that USC is perfectly poised in its location on the Pacific Rim and as a premier research university to take advantage of the emerging importance of biological and health sciences. The goal, he said, is to translate powerful new ideas into something that can impact human life.

Health sciences and patient care already have become an important aspect of the USC brand. Spending for the Health Sciences campus represents 45 percent of USC's budget. "The purchase of the two hospitals and the integration of Keck faculty practices made USC a very different enterprise overnight," Nikias told the audience. "The \$150 million W. M. Keck Foundation naming gift gives us the financial and academic reputation we need to make an academic medical enterprise."

According to Nikias, numbers are up among all of the Keck Medical Center of USC properties:

- Revenue at Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital grew from \$390 million to more than \$600 million over the last three years, and the Keck School of Medicine faculty practice has seen an increase from \$121 million to \$142 million.
- There has been a 22 percent increase in hospital

admissions and a 33 percent increase in surgeries in the past year.

- New satellites in La Canada and Beverly Hills have flourished, with Pasadena due to open this year.

Recruitment of translational researchers has had a "catalyzing effect" on biological sciences on both campuses. Nikias specifically cited the recent

appointment of Andrew P. McMahon as director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC, the first W. M. Keck Professor of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and the first chair of the newly created Department of Stem Cell Biology and

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Ryan Ball

C. L. Max Nikias (right), president of the University of Southern California, shares a cup of coffee with USC Provost Elizabeth Garrett (left) at an early-morning reception before his annual address to the faculty of the Health Sciences Campus.

USC Institute of Urology receives \$13.3 million gift

‘Today the USC Institute of Urology is an internationally renowned powerhouse in robotic and open surgery. ... Surgeries that were once considered fantasies are now fact.’

—C. L. Max Nikias, USC president

An announcement from USC President C. L. Max Nikias of an anonymous gift of \$13.3 million was the highlight of a special meeting Feb. 7 hosted by the USC Institute of Urology. The gift will fund the USC Urology Robotics Center of Excellence and the Program for Prostate Cancer Targeting.

“Today the USC Institute of Urology is an internationally renowned powerhouse in robotic and open surgery. Tomorrow we look forward to being a cutting-edge comprehensive world leader in urology,” said Nikias, announcing the gift. “Surgeries that were once considered fantasies are now fact. Our Institute of Urology is helping redefine and reshape the field of urology.”

Attended by over 130 USC physicians, top administrators and staff, the event was billed as “Urology Vision 2012.” Inderbir S. Gill, professor and chairman of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology, executive director of the USC Institute of Urology, and associate dean (clinical innovation) of the Keck School of Medicine, presented updates on the department’s advancements since his arrival in 2009 and plans for the future.

After joining USC in April 2009, Gill quickly built his team in three months. The department currently consists of 21 faculty physicians and researchers, 18 urology residents, 10 post-graduate fellows, five physician assistants and 29

staff members. Gill emphasized that his team’s focus is on cutting-edge innovation and research, developing world-class clinical programs, growing the USC clinical enterprise, and creating targeted outreach satellites.

“To be successful, you need a market differentiator. A true market differentiator implies being the world’s best at a specific endeavor which also drives your economic engine. You are lucky if you have one true market differentiator,” said Gill. “USC urology has two: robotic kidney and prostate cancer surgery, and open bladder cancer surgery. Additionally, we lead in epigenetics research.”

In the two and a half years since Gill joined USC, the Institute of Urology has grown significantly: clinic visits increased by 35 percent, major urologic surgeries by 86 percent (cancer surgeries by 140 percent, robotic/laparoscopic surgeries by 10-fold) and inpatient admissions by 78 percent. As a result, from 2010 to 2012, annual departmental collections increased by 68 percent. Peer-reviewed publications increased by 84 percent, and in 2012, the department’s National Institutes of Health research funding totaled \$3.3 million.

As a testament to its excellence, in 2011 the USC Institute of Urology was second in the nation in NIH rankings, and 18th in the nation in *U.S. News &*



USC President C. L. Max Nikias (right) and his wife, Niki, (center) congratulate Inderbir S. Gill, executive director of the USC Institute of Urology, on the institute's recent gift of \$13.3 million at a special meeting on Feb. 7.

World Report rankings.

In addition to advancing within USC, the Institute of Urology is also actively extending its services regionally, nationally and internationally. As an example, Gill is leading a group of USC urology surgeons to China next month as a sequel to their 2011 China trip.

Fit Families nutritionist wins Maestro Positivo positive role model award

By Cathy Curtis

Sara Train, a nutritionist who teaches healthful cooking as part of the Fit Families program of the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy at the Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, has received a \$2,500 Maestro Positivo (Positive Role Model) award from the California Milk Processor Board (CMPB). A matching amount was awarded to the Fit Families program, the charity of Train’s choice.

The division launched Fit Families in 2006 as a free wellness program for underserved children and adults living near the Health Sciences campus.

Children ages 10 to 17 at high risk for diabetes and conditions associated with inactivity receive evaluations, exercise programs and nutrition counseling.

Fit Families delivers its services through lectures, discussions, exercise, interactive demonstrations, one-on-one counseling, and tutorials on diabetes and nutrition. The program currently partners with El Sereno, Griffin Avenue, Murchison Street, Sheridan Street and Evergreen elementary schools, as well as Bravo Medical Magnet High School. The program is supported by the USC Good Neighbors Campaign.

Train, who holds weekly nutrition

classes for 20 to 30 participants, was one of three winners of the Maestro Positivo contest. She is planning to publish a Fit Families cookbook based on her classes.

“I am passionate about seeing people interested in taking care of themselves and sharing those values every week with their kids,” Train said.

The contest was open to Californians ages 13 and up. Contestants submitted an essay in Spanish describing the type of work they do to promote nutrition and healthful living, why it’s important to do such work in the Latino community and how the grant would

help the nominee’s charity.

The award ceremony was held on the Health Sciences campus on Jan. 30. Speakers included Cheryl Resnik, associate chair and director of community outreach for the division; Jose Huizar, Los Angeles City councilman; and Steve James, executive director of the CMPB.

Established in 1993 to increase milk consumption in California, the CMPB is known for its “Got Milk?” and “Toma Leche” (“Drink Milk”) campaigns. The board is funded by all California milk processors and administered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

The Weekly

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MPH STUDENTS VISIT SACRAMENTO—On Feb. 6 and 7, USC Master of Public Health students traveled to Sacramento with Professor Michael Cousineau to attend the annual meeting of the Insure the Uninsured Project. Students heard from state leaders, including Health and Human Services Secretary Diana S. Dooley and California Health Benefits Exchange Executive Director (and USC alumnus) Peter Lee, about plans to implement the Affordable Care Act. Prior to the meeting, the class met with California Senator Ed Hernandez from Los Angeles (pictured here in the back row, center), who is chair of the Senate Health Committee. They also met with USC alumnus Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health. Support from the Dean’s Council on Health Care Reform and Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen Puliafito helped make the trip possible.

MCMAHON: Advance stem cell research across all USC institutions

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undergraduates to learn directly from a world-renowned scientist.”

McMahon will work closely with USC’s clinicians to develop new stem cell therapies.

“In leading the Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC, Dr. McMahon will bridge our Health Sciences campus, the research departments at the Keck hospitals, and a number of schools and academic departments on our University Park campus, including the Viterbi School of Engineering and our biology and chemistry departments within the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences,” said Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito. “The Broad Center will provide a central core around which these scientists—and those at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles—can come together.”

McMahon and his team study the mechanisms that underlie the assembly, repair, and regeneration of critical organ systems, and have made enormous contributions to the understanding of the way the kidney matures during development.

In building knowledge on these subjects, they seek to provide an

informed, logic-based platform for translating basic research into practical applications in the area of regenerative medicine.

This carries enormous potential for the treatment of human disease, as stem cell science offers a particularly broad reach. It can provide insights into normal and abnormal development in human cells, and holds the potential for the repair and replacement of human tissues and organs.

McMahon’s basic research has yielded important findings into the biology of mammalian signaling factors that have been translated into clinical medicine with the development of a novel anti-cancer drug, vismodegib, the first FDA-approved hedgehog pathway inhibitor, in a Curis/Genentech partnership.

Before arriving at Harvard, McMahon led the Department of Cell and Developmental Bitology at the Roche Institute for Molecular Biology in Nutley, N.J.

He previously held the position of staff scientist at the National Institute for Medical Research in London, where he started his independent research program.

McMahon received his bachelor’s degree from St. Peter’s College,

Oxford University, and his Ph.D. from University College in London. He subsequently worked for three years as a postdoctoral fellow at the California Institute of Technology.

McMahon is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Royal Society (London), as well as an elected Associate Member of the European Molecular Biology Organization. He has served as an editor of the journals *Development* and *Developmental Biology* and on the editorial boards of several other scientific journals, including *Genes and Development* and *Current Biology*.

McMahon’s wife, Jill, is also an accomplished scientist and will continue her research at USC as part of her husband’s team. The McMahons’ daughter, Samantha, is a senior at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, and their son, Sean, will start high school in the fall. An avid trail and marathon runner, McMahon is eager to learn about recommended running trails in the Los Angeles area that he and his wife might explore.

‘McMahon has pioneered new ways of looking at the complex three-dimensional organization of the kidney. This has had far-reaching importance for development of other organ systems and for diseases that affect the kidney.’

—Brigid Hogan, George Barth Geller Professor and Chair, Department of Cell Biology at Duke University

NIKIAS: USC faculty ‘are the strong foundation of all academic excellence’

‘Faculty are the strong foundation of all academic excellence at a university.’

—USC President C. L. Max Nikias

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Regenerative Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine and USC. Nikias thanked USC Provost Elizabeth Garrett and Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito for their work on the recruitment.

Nikias also discussed the importance of increasing the university’s endowment. Currently, the university is 23rd nationally, but Nikias believes that USC’s endowment must be in the top tier of private institutions to compete and secure academic gains for the long term. “The Campaign for USC requires an enormous amount of hard work,” he said, “but we are determined to reach [our \$6 billion goal].”

The USC faculty continue to play

a central role in helping keep the university strong:

- During the previous year, 26 USC assistant professors joined the ranks of the tenured professoriate.
- Forty-three USC faculty members were honored with 55 medals, prizes and awards, while 18 were elected to prestigious academies and societies, and 13 received honorary degrees from universities all around the world.
- There was an 11 percent increase (to a total of \$454 million) in research dollars raised this last year, and a 43 percent increase in research spending over the last five years. Additionally, USC faculty members have won more than \$452 million in research grants from government-based sources in the last five years.

“Faculty are the strong foundation of all academic excellence at a university,” said Nikias. “We are grateful for your accomplishments as faculty, and for your very presence.” Overall, USC is poised to be an “intellectual and cultural engine in this century,” said Nikias. “This is our moment, and that should be our vision toward which we journey together. Destiny handed us a favorable hand May we always move on with determination and spirit.” Sandeep Gupta, president of the USC faculty, introduced Nikias. Members of the Department of Pediatrics at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles and others who were unable to attend in person were able to watch the address live via webcast.

USC hospitals bootcamp program flexes leadership muscles

By Tania Chatila
The USC hospitals are preparing to launch a fourth comprehensive management training course for directors and managers. The course is part of an ongoing effort to promote leadership development and enhance employee relations within the organization. The Trojan Bootcamp leadership program was launched in 2010 and has since successfully graduated 72 directors and managers from across the Keck Medical Center of USC over three different sessions. The most recent cohort completed its training program in January, and 78 more leaders are on a waiting list for future cohorts starting in the fall. “We initially created this program in response to feedback from our 2010 Employee Partnership Survey,” said Chief Human Resources Officer Matt McElrath. “We wanted to give our managers and directors a tool to help them lead better—to connect with their staff, promote engagement and foster collaboration. Since then, the program has grown into a career-changing experience for so many of our employees.” Administrators from Keck Hospital of USC and

USC Norris Cancer Hospital developed Trojan Bootcamp in collaboration with USC’s Professional and Organizational Development team, a part of USC Career and Protective Services. This team also leads the courses—intense, all-day sessions spanning 10 weeks and covering a multitude of management topics including business management, effective communication, employee relations and change management. In the program, medical center leaders focus on their own leadership growth through personal assessments. The course curriculum is specifically tailored to address the dynamic, complex field of health care. Bootcamp participants work collaboratively to share leadership experiences, and visits from high-level administrators from across USC put leadership principles into real-life context. “The lessons we learned in Bootcamp were invaluable,” said Kevin Kaldjian, manager of administrative operations and a graduate of the most recent Bootcamp cohort. “It was really powerful and rewarding to be able to go through this experience with a room full of talented, dedicated, committed leaders.

We were able to take our experiences as managers and build on them, strengthening our own abilities to lead our teams to excellence.” In addition to learning about new ways to meet leadership goals and challenges, each cohort is also tasked with a capstone project following completion of the course. The project is a gift back to the organization. For example, recent cohorts have been focused on efficiency in meetings and ways to spread the medical center’s mission among all staff and physicians. “The development of our managers into more effective leaders is a key investment in our future,” said hospitals Chief Operating Officer and interim Chief Executive Officer Scott Evans. “In order to really move forward and excel as a trusted leader in health care, we need to learn how to work together collaboratively with our peers and our staff. This program is helping to grow and inspire our leaders, so that we can move forward as an organization—facing the same challenges and accomplishing the same goals together.” For more information about Trojan Bootcamp or to sign up, contact Lisa Lawrence at lawrencelisa@verizon.net.

KECK STUDENTS ORGANIZE HEALTH SCREENING—First- and second-year Keck School of Medicine students organized a health fair at Miguel Contreras Learning Complex on Jan. 26, in partnership with the Academic Leadership Community and the Alliance for a Better Community. The fair represented a new collaboration between the Keck School and the L.A. Unified School District. At left, nearly 300 community members attended the health fair. At right, first-year medical student Erin McGuire volunteers in the Arts & Crafts and Domestic Violence Awareness section.



Photos by Seth Bricel

Calendar of Events

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

Tuesday, Feb. 21

11 a.m. Keck Hospital Guild of USC Speaker Series and Luncheon. “Knowing Your Numbers: Risk Factors and Prevention of Heart Disease in Women in the 21st Century,” Helga Van Herle, USC. DEI 3rd Floor Auditorium. Luncheon following program: \$25. Info: (323) 254-0600

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. “A Call for Fundamental Change in GME,” Lawrence Opas, USC. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

Wednesday, Feb. 22

4 p.m. USC Levan Institute for Humanities and Ethics Annual Distinguished Lecture. “Know Thyself Origins, Identity, Ethos, Authenticity,” Nikki Giovanni, world-renowned poet. UPC: TCC The Forum. Info: (213) 740-5499

Friday, Feb. 24

8 a.m. Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. “HistoMosaic: A Novel PCR-Based Technique for Tissue Analysis,” Emil Kartalov, USC. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

8:30 a.m. Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine Research Seminar. “Asthma: Of Mice, Men, Models, Microarrays and Mechanisms,” David Erle, UC San Francisco. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

8:30 a.m. Surgical Grand Rounds Visiting Professorship Lecture. “Mentorship: The Critical Investment in the Future of Academic Surgery,” Michael Bentz, University of Wisconsin. DOH 1st Floor Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-2506

Noon. Medicine Grand Rounds. “Elevated Troponins in Non-Cardiac Disease vs. Timing of Treatment for Endocarditis,” Ronald Garcia, USC. IPT Conference Rm. B. Info: (323) 226-7556

Noon. Center for Applied Molecular Medicine Seminar. “How the Proteasome Picks its Substrates for Degradation,” Andreas Matouschek, Northwestern University. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-3849

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 email 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.

Jamie Oliver Food Foundation improving health of Los Angeles children, say Keck School professors

By Pauline Vu

The Jamie Oliver Food Foundation is making a positive impact on the eating habits of children in the Greater Los Angeles area through its Food Revolution “Big Rig” Mobile Teaching Kitchen, according to faculty at the USC Childhood Obesity Research Center at the Keck School of Medicine.

The foundation, established by celebrity chef and activist Jamie Oliver, aims to curb childhood obesity by bringing its 70-foot-long big rig-turned-mobile-kitchen to several Los Angeles and Orange County communities. In partnership with The California Endowment, it offers cooking courses and nutrition lessons to youths ranging from ages 8 to 17. The Childhood Obesity Research Center is the project’s research collaborator and third-party evaluator.

In South Central Los Angeles, the first wave of the pilot study involved almost 100 youths from the Challengers Boys and Girls Club. The program has already yielded improvements in the children’s confidence in their cooking skills and beliefs in the positive benefits of cooking. In one student evaluation, a participant wrote that the class “inspired me to eat better.”

“A lot of the kids report they’re making the recipes at home,” said Emily Ventura, the co-principal investigator leading the evaluation. “The parents told us that after class their children pleaded with them to buy more fruits and vegetables. ... I think it’s been a very empowering experience for the kids and their families.”

The classes show youths how to cook healthy meals made from fresh ingredients, such as whole-wheat pancakes with fruit or spaghetti and meatballs from scratch. In each 90-minute class, foundation staff teach the children and teens at least two recipes.

“Jamie Oliver is a very talented, creative person who’s made a lot of change here in Los Angeles in such a short amount of time,” Ventura said.

The foundation has partnered with the Keck School to measure the program’s effectiveness.

Ventura is collaborating on the project with Childhood Obesity Research Center director Michael Goran, professor of preventive

medicine, physiology and biophysics, and pediatrics and holder of the Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Endowed Chair in Childhood Obesity and Diabetes; and Donna Spruijt-Metz, associate professor of preventive medicine.

In November 2011, the second teaching series in Long Beach began. The foundation plans to also offer the courses in Santa Ana and other neighborhoods of Los Angeles.

The USC team conducts surveys before the program and then again at five and 12 weeks. The questionnaire notes such things as children’s personal and family eating habits, whether the kids help with the cooking or grocery shopping, and how confident they are in their cooking skills. Researchers also measure the kids’ height, weight and body mass index to note changes. Results of these evaluation efforts will be forthcoming.



The Keck School has partnered with the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation to test the effectiveness of its mobile kitchen, which has visited several communities in Los Angeles and Orange County to offer cooking and nutrition courses.

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