We stand at the edge. On one side is the familiar, a world filled with complexity and complacency. On the other, the thrilling space where discovery and progress reside. It is time for us to step forward.

We will advance human health by creating models to explore new treatments and cures. We will preserve our environment by leveraging urban coastal Los Angeles to develop sustainable practices. We will improve our communities by studying the past’s relevance for the future and by understanding the social and economic impacts of behaviors.

The collective power of USC Dornsife’s faculty and students across a spectrum of disciplines uniquely positions us to offer comprehensive solutions to our global society’s toughest challenges. Join us at the frontlines as we define scholarship of consequence for the 21st century.
We Are Frontline Scholars.

Join us to define scholarship of consequence for the 21st century.

Our Test Bed
At USC Dornsife, our faculty and students stand side by side. Our experts push the boundaries of their own research while imparting their wisdom and skills to our students, training them to lead the next generation of problem solvers. Our classrooms extend out into our communities and around the globe to ensure knowledge results in action. An international center for arts, culture, technology and trade, Los Angeles is the test bed for our innovative ideas, and ultimately the world will be the proof of our triumphs.
Health

Decisions, Decisions
Humans are creatures of habit, but what exactly does that mean? Psychologist Wendy Wood seeks to answer that question. By teasing out the complex details of how people form habits, she is uncovering ways to change bad habits and form good ones. These insights, ultimately, will empower individuals to lead healthier and more successful lives.

Nobel Victory
Well before computers were commonplace, Arieh Warshel saw the power they could bring to studies of chemistry. That insight fueled decades of research that revolutionized the way chemists study molecules. The work earned him a Nobel Prize in Chemistry and changed the field forever. Today, his methods are being used to predict the interaction between pharmaceuticals and their drug targets.

Philosophy of Care
The top-ranked USC School of Philosophy provides students headed for careers in medicine, biology, psychology and other health care fields with a broad humanistic perspective not found in professional education and the critical tools to deal with the ethical issues that may arise in their professional lives.

Maxwell Lawlor
Neuroscience Major
To find new ways to fight obesity, Maxwell secured funding to work on a project called "Virtual Sprouts." Maxwell and his fellow researchers use an interactive gardening game to engage children, while simultaneously teaching them about vegetables and healthful eating. Through the game, the youngsters learn to select, plant, tend and harvest their own gardens and crops. Maxwell worked in local schools with large minority populations and high poverty rates, both of which are risk factors for childhood obesity.

45 percent of daily behavior is repeated regularly and is thus susceptible to habit formation.

Seeing is Believing
The humanities, social sciences and natural sciences all rely strongly upon visual evidence — what the eye sees. However, the way evidence is seen or presented matters. The Visual Studies Research Institute examines how methods of visualizing evidence have evolved throughout history and influenced the way academic institutions pursue study in those fields, and how they might improve their approach.

Nobel Prize Winner
"Such diversity — intertwining molecular biology, linguistics and marine biology into one collaborative project — reflects the intellectual and integrative nature of USC Dornsife." — Laura Kagami, Human Biology Major

An Octopus with Answers
Parkinson’s and other diseases often include speech disorders. Linguist Khalil Iskarous and marine biologist Andrew Gracey know that the movements of octopi and a commonly studied worm called C. elegans are similar to that of the human tongue. Studying both, their research teams, including undergraduate Laura Kagami, hope to understand how speech disorders arise and how to curb them.

Worldwide Wellness
As global populations expand and age, issues affecting human health loom large. USC Dornsife’s majors in health and humanity and environmental science and health, as well as a new program in health and human sciences, are preparing future professionals to address issues affecting public and individual health worldwide, ensuring a better quality of life for all communities.

Philosophy of Care

Worldwide Wellness

Seeing is Believing

Maxwell Lawlor

Nobel Prize Winner

An Octopus with Answers

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The World Health Organization predicts the number of cancer cases worldwide to soar by 70 percent, reaching 24 million a year by 2035.
Translating Care

Carlos Rodriguez
Ph.D. Student, Psychology

Carlos is examining the efficacy of Forgotten Memories, a fotonovela co-authored by professor Margaret Gatz. The pamphlet — akin to a comic book — was created to educate the Latino community about the early signs of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. His goal is to assess how people respond to this modern form of outreach and help potential sufferers seek treatment during the early stages of the disease.

Improving the Human Condition

Layer by Layer
Inspired by Leonardo da Vinci and the spirit of the Renaissance, The Bridge@USC is leading a new convergence by uniting the best minds in chemistry, biology, medicine, mathematics, physics, engineering and neuroscience as well as experts in animation and cinematography. Together, they will build the first atomic-resolution structure of the human body, accelerating the creation and implementation of novel therapies and cures for a host of intractable diseases and conditions.

Light Saver
Artificial light draws humans and insects together, making it easier for disease-carrying bugs to infect people. For example, six million people worldwide are infected with Chagas disease, which is transmitted by a bug that is attracted to lights. Scientists in the Spatial Sciences Institute (SSI) are investigating how fine-tuning the light from LED bulbs can make it less attractive to insects — giving all the benefits while reducing the risk of illness. Through such projects, SSI faculty develop the next generation of spatial thinkers, empowering them with capabilities to solve real-world issues.

Music Matters
Researchers in the Brain and Creativity Institute, led by Antonio and Hanna Damasio, are uncovering the neurological basis for a wide array of mental functions — from emotion and decision-making to the creativity expressed in the arts, sciences and technology. They have shown that elementary school students undertaking music training have stronger hearing skills. This, in turn, can strengthen their reading and improve their ability to understand nuances in conversations. The research adds to the growing evidence showing that music benefits academic performance and learning for children.

Crystal Clear
Medical questionnaires, opinion polls and other data-gathering tools often ask people to “self-report” information. Unfortunately, this can lead to widely varying answers that may be hard to interpret. The Center for Self-Report Science aims to help, researching ways to ensure answers are accurate, reliable and, most importantly, useful.
Sitting in a naturally arid region, with dense transportation networks, large population and coastal ocean, Los Angeles offers the perfect setting for the study of sustainable living in an urban seaside environment. By contrast, the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center on Catalina Island provides a valuable setting for researchers to study differences between urban coastal Los Angeles and a more pristine island environment.

Hidden Secrets
Earth scientist Sarah Feakins and her team collect sediments from rivers, lakes and oceans to help shed light on the history of our planet’s changing climate. In the laboratory, they analyze chemical signals contained within the waxy molecules derived from plant leaves to reveal a hidden record of past climate and plant cover over long geological time. Their research also aims to illuminate the influence of climate change on human evolution.

Environment

The Air We Breathe
Today’s atmospheric carbon dioxide has risen by about 40 percent above pre-industrial levels. USC Loker Hydrocarbon Research Institute scientists, including Founding Director and Nobel Laureate George Olah and Director G.K. Surya Prakash, have developed an easy-to-make material that can scrub large amounts of carbon dioxide from the air. They hope to find a low-cost, low-energy method of turning the captured carbon dioxide into methanol — which can be burned as a fuel source and used as a chemical feedstock.

Better for All
Low-income communities of color are often close to pollution sources and therefore have a higher risk of cancer and respiratory illnesses such as asthma. Hoping to improve conditions for all, the USC Racial Equity, Environmental and Economic Equity program, led by Manuel Pastor, not only generates comprehensive data on environmental justice, social movements and economic equity issues, but also drives that research from university halls to public policy by partnering with change agents on the ground.

North Pole Politics
As the polar ice caps shrink, the Arctic’s oil and gas reserves are becoming accessible along with the opportunity for new tourist industry and expanded commercial shipping routes. The Arctic is also quickly becoming a zone of interstate confrontation as key national players assert their territorial claims. Through the USC Dornsife Problems Without Passports program’s “Ecological Security and Global Politics” course, undergraduates travel to Iceland, Norway and Finland to explore the policy issues surrounding climate change and its impact on the region.

Future of Food from the Sea
USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies scientists are seeking to understand how shellfish respond physiologically to challenges such as temperature fluctuations, increasing ocean acidification and disease. By using cutting-edge molecular and genetic techniques, and by monitoring and modeling coastal conditions to examine the link between organisms and their environment, they will help commercial growers and resource managers identify potential threats and generate workable solutions.

Protecting Our Environment

AUSTIN REAGAN
Environmental Studies and Political Science Major

Austin became determined to seek global environmental justice during his first Problems Without Passports trip to Belize. There he visited a Garifuna village where much of the land had been devastated by oil drilling. Since that experience, Austin has participated in an internship with an environmental consulting firm and drafted a university-wide sustainability and climate action plan. He has also served in Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti’s office helping to write sustainability policy. His ultimate goal is to create laws to reverse the devastating effects of climate change.

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Coastal marine fisheries contribute $5.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy.
Harnessing Potential

Bonita Lam
Ph.D. Student, Marine Biology and Biological Oceanography

Based at the USC Wrigley Marine Science Center on Catalina Island, Bonita focuses on discovering new microbial metabolisms in ocean sediments. She and her colleagues believe these biological processes have the potential to help clean up toxic pollutants and even generate energy. Specifically, she studies processes that she hypothesizes play an important role in the biological, chemical and geological cycles of the ocean, especially in little understood regions such as the deep biosphere. She hopes to identify which microbes can clean up toxins and how they do it, so that scientists can most effectively harness their potential to improve the marine environment.

Fueling the Future

Electric City

Historians at the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West examine the Southern California Edison archive at The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens to understand how our post-war society remade cultural and social history. The collection of 70,000 images from the late 19th century to the early 1970’s provides a visual narrative of change in and on the built landscapes of greater Los Angeles during key era of explosive metropolitan expansion.

Habitat Harmony

Complex and varied, the environment rests in delicate balance— an equilibrium that is continually threatened by human activity. Through the Environmental Studies Program, students and faculty members explore humankind’s relationship with the Earth and how to ensure its health for generations to come. Emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of environmental problems, the program culminates with a capstone experience in which students join teams of faculty with complementary backgrounds in science and policy.

Liquid Energy

Chemist Richard Brutchey and his team have developed a potential pathway to cheap, stable solar cells made from nanocrystals so small they can exist as a liquid ink and be painted or printed onto clear surfaces. Liquid nanocrystal solar cells are cheaper to fabricate than available single-crystal silicon wafer solar cells but are not nearly as efficient at converting sunlight to electricity. The researchers created a stable liquid that also conducts electricity through a synthetic ligand that not only works well at stabilizing nanocrystals but actually builds tiny bridges connecting the nanocrystals to help transmit current.

Battery Powered

USC Dornsife scientists have developed a water-based organic battery that is long-lasting and built from cheap, eco-friendly components. The new battery, which uses no metals or toxic materials, is intended for use in power plants, where it can make the energy grid more resilient and efficient by creating a large-scale means to store energy for use as needed. The batteries could pave the way for renewable energy sources to make up a greater share of the nation’s energy generation.
Fighting Homelessness

Thalia Henderson
English and Psychology Major

Thalia is a participant in the Joint Educational Project’s Community Scholar program. Her research explores education for homeless or formerly homeless people at a nonprofit organization located on Skid Row. Thalia conducts interviews with individuals to help establish what barriers exist between them and further educational opportunities. Her objective is twofold: to improve her own skills as a psychology researcher and to provide the community partners with an outline of suggested, realistic improvements that directly address learning within the populations they serve.

Mindful Research

The Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR) is investigating how people around the globe live, think, interact, age, invest, and make important, life-changing decisions. Through in-depth research and analysis coupled with the use of innovative technology, CESR provides a deeper understanding of human behavior in a wide range of economic and social contexts. Their ultimate goal: to improve social welfare by informing and influencing decision-making in the public and private sectors.

Age of the Pacific

Los Angeles is home to the largest concentration of Koreans outside of Korea itself. By examining contemporary issues of business, politics and culture, the Korean Studies Institute (KSI) seeks to have a meaningful and lasting impact not only on Korea and America, but also on the links and people that connect the two countries. KSI’s translational research reaches beyond academe to help frame and explain the important issues of the day to leaders and policymakers.

Service + Learning

The Joint Educational Project combines academic coursework with hands-on experience in neighborhoods surrounding the university. The nearly 2,000 USC students who participate annually in the service-learning program volunteer in local K-12 schools as mentors, tutors, classroom assistants and instructors; help community-based nonprofit organizations build capacity; work in Los Angeles hospitals; promote reading and math development; and conduct science lessons.

Together, Stronger

The complex issues surrounding religious illiteracy and intolerance affect everyone: the rich and the poor, the religious and the secular, the powerful and the weak. Rooted in the rich, 2,000-year-old Catholic spiritual and intellectual tradition, the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies fosters interdisciplinary research and inter-faith dialogue that leads to mutual respect and a more profound understanding of the human condition.

Fostering Support

Students within or exiting the foster care system often face unique obstacles to obtaining books, study supplies, housing, and even food. The Trojan Guardian Scholars program supports these students by providing resources that enable them to experience USC in its fullest, while achieving their goals of academic excellence, self-sufficiency and career success in their desired professional fields.

“arich Heritage

Armenians have been a significant and thriving component of American life since the Jamestown Colony. The Institute of Armenian Studies is asking new questions about the ancient culture and history of Armenians, in the context of contemporary global issues such as migration and democratization, as well as focusing on the contemporary diaspora, the developing Republic of Armenia and issues stemming from the 1915 Genocide.

Poetic Insight

We tell stories to remind ourselves what should be, what could be and the human truths of what we know. This is how community is forged, both large and small.”
—David St. John, Professor of English
Understanding Childhood

CONSORTIUM
Ph.D. Student, Economics

Teresa uses data analysis to explore how childhood health shocks, such as malnutrition and exposure to pollution, later impact adult lives. She is interested in the connection between a person’s physical and cognitive condition during childhood and his or her adult success such as level of education, employment, and wages. Her research will help inform discussions about programs aimed to improve children’s circumstances on a large scale.

One World, Many Voices

In our highly interconnected world, understanding is key to progress and to a peaceful future. USC Dornsife offers outstanding language programs — Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Persian (Farsi), Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish — to ensure students are well-equipped to succeed in this global age.

Next-Gen STEM

Each summer, high school seniors from areas nearby USC gain hands-on research experience from renowned USC faculty and graduate students. Through the USC Young Researchers Program, these motivated students spend six weeks gaining basic tools to help them enter college and pursue degrees in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. In another program, mathematics faculty and undergraduates use math-based games to help high-school students explore mathematical concepts.

Teaching through Testimony

History is best learned from those who lived it. USC Shoah Foundation — The Institute for Visual History and Education — makes this uniquely possible. With tools such as the institute’s flagships educational platform, IWitness, students gain an understanding of 20th-century history, develop 21st-century digital literacy skills, and deepen their ethics and sense of community based on personal learning from testimonies.

Opening Doors

There is no better way to experience government than at its seat. The USC Dornsife Washington, D.C. program offers students instruction from experts with extensive real-world experience. Comprising three international relations courses on American foreign policy, espionage and intelligence, and contemporary international politics, the immersive program includes internships with Washington’s many policy-focused organizations including government agencies, NGOs, advocacy groups and congressional offices. The once-in-a-lifetime opportunity aims to complement each student’s program of study and career goals, setting the stage for success.

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Paths to Progress

Being at the frontlines, we understand the complex problems facing us in human health, the environment and our communities. We also see the paths forward to real solutions. While each is unique, there is one common thread to forging them all: your support. By investing in the USC Dornsife Initiative, you will empower our students and faculty to take bold, daring leaps to improve our world. Discovery can’t wait. The time to act is now.

The USC Dornsife Initiative

Our $750 million fundraising initiative will magnify the impact of Dana and David Dornsife’s historic $200 million naming gift by generating critical support for students, enabling the continued success of our faculty, expanding infrastructure, and promoting cross-school and cross-disciplinary learning. Your partnership will allow us to build our endowment and invest in strategic priorities that enable us to accelerate to even higher levels of excellence in teaching and research. It will also ensure the flexibility to advance existing programs as well as the new ideas that will make USC Dornsife a powerful force for transformation in addressing global challenges, connecting peoples and improving the quality of life.

"USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences stands on the frontlines in realizing USC’s moral obligation to tackle intractable problems that will redefine the global public good for the 21st century."

Michael Quick
Provost, University of Southern California