admittance into the Bac/MD program made all the difference. The number of applications to the College rose in 2004, the admit rate was reduced and the College exceeded its enrollment goal—clear indications that the College is attracting and matriculating more talented students than ever before.

Undergrads Embrace Variety and Richness

Chad Agy matriculated into the freshman class of 2008 at USC College this fall. He was the captain of his high school soccer team, concertmaster of the orchestra and editor of his high school newspaper. He got a 1430 on his SAT and took 11 AP classes. In his spare time, he enjoys fishing, hiking and biking with his friends in his hometown of Park City, Utah. Unlike most of his peers, Agy knows what he wants to do with his life.

He wants to become a doctor. Agy applied to USC and to the Baccalaureate/MD Program at USC College last fall as a high school senior. He won acceptance to both, meaning that following his senior year of college, there will be an open spot reserved for him in the first-year class at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The Bac/MD program is for students who know they are interested in a medical career, but want a rounded undergraduate education outside of stringent pre-med requirements. “Initially, I was attracted to USC because of its reputation as one of the best schools on the West Coast,” Agy explains, and “its pleasant climate and diversity.” In the end, USC was his college choice over Yale, Dartmouth, UCLA, UCSB, UCSD and CU-Boulder. He claims that a Trustee Scholarship and his Undergraduate education, the theme of this issue, is rich in experience both inside and outside of the classroom. In a special insert, Dean Joseph Aoun unveils the principles that guide undergraduate education at USC College. All students, he says, should be prepared to lead a rich, full life.

Undergraduate education, the theme of this issue, is rich in experience both inside and outside of the classroom. In a special insert, Dean Joseph Aoun unveils the principles that guide undergraduate education at USC College. All students, he says, should be prepared to lead a rich, full life.

A Setting for Synergy

Undergraduate education at USC College encourages students to pursue an education that is rich in experience, both inside and outside of the classroom. The curriculum is structured to provide a coherent, integrated introduction to the breadth of knowledge that a “well-educated person” needs. With nearly 80 majors and 50 minors in the College to choose from, the environment helps students discover their passions and talents.

The College’s Faculty Recruitment Initiative has improved the student-to-faculty ratio and diversified the faculty, exposing students to cutting-edge researchers and multidisciplinary scholars. Faculty are personable, approachable teachers who help students understand the terms ‘rigor’ and ‘critical thinking.’ In the 1990s, USC faculty and leaders worked for three years on a plan to completely revamp the undergraduate curriculum as part of a blueprint to move the university into a position of leadership. The result was a more coherent and integrated curriculum in the College for every USC undergraduate. Whether they are majoring in business, journalism or biology, all USC undergraduates take a core set of courses taught by full-time, tenure-track faculty.

The curriculum consists of classes in General Education, Writing and Diversity—and ensures every USC undergraduate the opportunity to acquire the intellectual skills of critical analysis, empirical verification and written and oral communication they need to tackle any major they choose during their College career.

“College graduates are going to have multiple careers, some of them not yet describable. The purpose of the College education is not just to prepare students for their first job, but to prepare them to maximize the possibilities and opportunities for the rest of their lives,” says Joseph Aoun, dean of USC College. “We don’t want our continued on page 4
A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

A New Reality

imes have changed. Today’s college students will likely have several very different careers over their lifetime. They will live longer than previous generations, in a society that changes rapidly. What students end up doing for a profession may not even exist today. Just 25 years ago, computers began transforming our lives in radically unforeseen ways. Today, discoveries are being made in numerous emerging fields. With each new breakthrough, comes a new career path—some not yet imagined. Clearly today’s society is based on knowledge, as opposed to narrow expertise. It is no longer sufficient to know how to do something; rather, it is essential to know how to learn to do something new.

In this issue of USC College Magazine, we feature undergraduate education. On these pages you’ll meet students who consider variety and depth to be a key ingredient in their undergraduate experience. Many of our students are combining majors in widely disparate fields, like neuroscience and philosophy, or classics and religion, while picking up an unrelated minor along the way, perhaps global communication, critical approaches to leadership or Italian.

What you’ll find, is that College students are preparing for much more than their first job—they are preparing for a lifetime of learning. Our faculty challenge students to think analytically, write carefully, express themselves in different media and develop their own views about the world.

Bob McKnight

Partnership supports a number of activities and programs, designed to use children’s love of the ocean to enhance and improve science and environmental education within K-12 classes. QuikScience builds on the work of the federally funded USC/COSEE-West, one of only seven centers nationwide.

In a special magazine insert, I elaborate on some of the principles guiding our undergraduate education at USC College. Our goal is for men and women to have a challenging, first-rate educational experience here, one that prepares them to thrive in whatever path they choose.

When our students graduate, with a taste for research, overseas study, and community service on their palette, they should be uniquely prepared to handle the challenges of a changing society—prepared to live a rich, full life.
A Golden Collaboration

In an innovative collaboration, The Huntington Library and USC’s College of Letters, Arts & Sciences have established a new scholarly center dedicated to examining California’s history, economy, cultural influence, demographics and prominence on the world stage.

The Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West links outstanding faculty from USC College with the Huntington’s unparalleled collections on the history of the western United States, including rare books and manuscripts, maps, photographs and other treasures.

The Institute is directed by William Deverell, who recently joined the USC faculty as a professor of history following eight years as a Caltech faculty member.

“Preserving and studying the rich history of California and the West is a priority for USC College. Many of our historians are leaders in this field and we have been recruiting more faculty with similar expertise,” says USC College Dean Joseph Aoun.

“Wedding this expert group of USC College faculty to the Huntington’s world-class archive will expand our horizons and magnify our capabilities. This partnership provides a multiplier effect, giving us resources we wouldn’t otherwise have, and positions the Institute as the premier destination for scholars, graduate students and post-docs who are interested in advancing their research on California to even higher heights,” says Aoun.

The Institute offers team-taught history courses at the graduate level, sponsors a wide variety of scholarly investigations and offers an array of public symposia, workshops and conferences.

“In California, we have the fifth largest economy in the world, remarkable innovation and achievement, enormous diversity and demographic change over time, and a state that has more influence worldwide than many countries do,” says Steven S. Koblik, president of The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino.

“The Institute will do what no other has—look at California and the rest of the West, from a historical perspective—including what factors shaped this place, how that knowledge helps explain who we are and where, perhaps, we are headed,” says Koblik.

The Institute will bring together historians and other scholars, students, writers, journalists and policymakers to investigate and debate the rich history of California and the American West, with full access to The Huntington’s rare materials. The Institute will provide a valuable opportunity for 21st-century scholarship and intellectual energy to explain 18th, 19th and 20th-century California and the American West to the general public and the next generation of historians.

With the Institute in place, the Huntington will serve as an even more powerful magnet for researchers. USC faculty and graduate students will have opportunities to study for a semester or summer at the Huntington, which has been one of the nation’s most important scholarly centers of western Americana and California inquiry since the 1920s.

“The Huntington’s phenomenal archive is tantalizing to scholars,” says Deverell. “The rare material, ranging from personal and business papers to photographs, maps and government documents, is invaluable to people who really want to understand the history of the western United States in the last 250 years.”

The Institute will offer USC graduate students access to the Huntington’s collection of rare books and manuscripts, as they write the new books and articles to be used by the next generation of scholars. In addition, Institute graduate courses will be taught in the classrooms of the Huntington’s new Mungner Research Center.

Because graduate students in history and allied fields will be introduced to the Huntington’s sources and scholars from the moment they enter graduate school, the Institute will enhance graduate education at USC and help recruit graduate students from other top institutions.

The Institute’s benefits will extend beyond academia. Experts from universities and non-university settings will come together to study contemporary California issues. Themes range from public health and the history of medicine to visual culture and Latino identity.

The Institute will sponsor its first panel discussion on California history at the annual Organization of American Historians meeting in San Francisco in April. A week later the same panel will explore the question “What Does California Mean?” at a symposium. Panelists include Kevin Starr, former California State Librarian and USC College history professor, Miriam Pawel of the Los Angeles Times and Janet Fireman, editor of the scholarly journal California History.
The Undergraduate Experience

A Setting for Synergy
continued from page 1

students to specialize in just one thing; we want them to experience many.”

Variety and Richness

The complexities of 21st-century life demand an ever-widening breadth of knowledge. Many careers require expertise in more than one field. A biologist will need math and computing to go along with biology or chemistry, while a business major might require enhanced writing skills.

That’s why the College encourages undergraduate students to combine major and minor skills, and to cross traditional paths to gain a broader educational experience. Students may take a minor that reinforces their major, or major in something completely different from their minor to widen their scope of knowledge. The university’s Renaissance Scholars program rewards students whose majors and minors are from widely separate fields of study.

Dean of Academic Programs Sarah Pratt is responsible for the academic substance of College courses—from Freshman Seminars all the way up to Ph.D. programs. She notes that she is gratified at the number of students grounding their education in traditional disciplines, such as economics, French and biology, and then using this foundation to explore the world in a more comprehensive way, by adding components of professional training, study abroad and service learning.

Pratt is an advocate of the “Not Me” experience—where students delve into areas that are outside of their initial educational expectations. “A pre-med student busily building up a strong profile in biology and chemistry creates a ‘Not Me’ experience when she decides to spend a semester abroad in Madrid focusing on medieval Spanish architecture,” Pratt explains. Another example would be an art history student interning at a biotech firm.

“The College’s programs, courses, majors and minors are encouraging students to reach beyond the old paradigms,” she says. One example: The College offers more than 20 cross-departmental minors, such as Biotechnology, Arabic and Middle East Studies, and Environmental Natural Sciences.

Beyond the Old Paradigm

Sensors (and twins) Aaron and Jordan Kandell have taken full advantage of embracing College opportunities. Aaron is a double major in Creative Writing and Spanish, while Jordan is majoring in Creative Writing, with a double minor in Italian and Cinema. Aaron studied abroad in Madrid and Jordan ventured over to Florence. Both intend to travel and study in Brazil next spring. They both took a Freshman Seminar—specially designed courses for incoming freshman taught by distinguished faculty members—called “Writing to be Read.” And, they participated in the Thematic Option honors program, which Aaron calls a “challenging and more intimate alternative to General Education requirements.” Each year, just under 200 freshman participate in “T.O.”—as it is known around campus—and study with USC’s star academics. The curriculum has been cited by several college guides as one of the best undergraduate honors programs in the country and consists of four interdisciplinary core classes taught around distinct themes. These are augmented with linked writing classes and an annual conference to encourage undergraduate research.

The College also offers many new approaches to classroom instruction. Some involve technological advances, creating multimedia lectures and seminars. Another approach is interdisciplinary learning, such as the course “Science, Technology, and Society,” led by molecular biologists Peter Shugarman and Robert Baker, with guest lecturers from the departments of history, physics, astronomy, earth sciences and religion.

Linguistics Associate Professor Dani Byrd and Psychology Associate Professor Toby Mintz are also joining up this fall to teach “Language and Mind,” an exploration of, among other things, language within cognitive science.

Whether taking classes in the Core, such as “The Universe,” “The Nature of Human Health and Disease” and “Race and Class in Los Angeles,” or a pre-med or architectural requirement, students at USC College have the foundation for a solid, undergraduate education.

—Katherine Yangmee Kim and Nicole St Pierre


The Numbers

6,210 USC undergraduates currently pursue a major in the College.

The Class of 2008 is the strongest in the College’s 125-year history. To date, enrolled students boast an average SAT score of 1555—a remarkable 13 point increase from last year.

In 2004, all ten of USC’s Renaissance Scholar prizewinners had a major and/or minor in the College. Since the program’s inception, 68 of the 70 Renaissance Scholar prizewinners pursued a major and/or minor in the College.

Ten of USC’s last 12 valedictorians majored in the College (1992-2004); 11 of our last 23 salutatorians majored in the College (1993-2004).

Every College faculty member teaches undergraduate courses, even Distinguished and University Professors.

All General Education courses are taught by full-time faculty.

More than 75 percent of the Associates Award for Excellence in Teaching at USC go to College faculty.

College freshmen come to campus from all 50 states and more than 149 countries.

Students jokingly call the College’s honors program Thematic Option, “Traumatic Option.” One explanation: On average, literature-based courses call for reading up to 2,500 pages per semester, while social science and history courses, with more dense nonfiction texts, usually weigh in at 1,500 pages.

The College offers nearly 80 majors and 50 minors. Some new minors include global communication, critical approaches to leadership, and peace and conflict studies.

Last year about 2,000 USC students participated in the College’s service learning program called Joint Educational Project (JEP).

On average, College students complete 3 to 4 internships while at USC.

PHOTO BY KATHERINE YUNGMEE KIM

4 USC College of Letters, Arts & Sciences Fall/September 2004 VOLUME 5 NUMBER 3
Better Writers (Not Just Better Papers)
Program perfects process, critique and craft

Norah Ashe-McNalley’s writing students are scientists. Some are pre-med, some are dental hygienists and others are majoring in such fields as sports medicine, occupational therapy and public health. Her students are pursuing careers in health care and generally speaking, when they are asked to write for their classes, they are often turning in lab reports.

Ashe-McNalley teaches Writing 340—an upper-division writing requirement for all undergraduates at USC—and she leads the Health Sciences writing workshops. Her 340 students are not only assigned to read and write about their scientific fields, they are invited to deeply consider and interpret some of its implications.

In her workshops, students read Dr. Atul Gawande’s essays from Complications: A Surgeon’s Notes on an Imperfect Science. They have been asked to analyze the Tuskegee study, in order to examine how such ethical transgressions in medicine could occur.

Dan Witcher, a senior majoring in biology, says that in high school he was taught to write essays that fell into a certain format. “Every paper turned out the same,” he laments.

But in 340, he found the emphasis was on “finding my own voice and style, and embracing that rather than trying to fit my paper into a preconceived mold.”

Ashe-McNalley and her colleagues in the Writing Program are committed to making “better writers, not just better papers.” They offer reading material to broaden the young writers’ perspectives and interrogate the students to arrive at new ideas. Finally, they teach them proper grammar and form—tools for articulation and for learning how to be their own editors.

25 Years Strong

The Writing Program at USC College was established as an independent unit in 1978, in response to a renewed interest in rhetoric and linguistics and a widespread cultural perception that writing needed to be taught at an undergraduate level.

For nearly two decades, the Writing Program offered Composition 101 and 102—a mandatory, two-term freshman writing curriculum. But in 1997, as an integral part of the university’s reorganization of its undergraduate general education curriculum, the Writing Program split the year-long requirement into one freshman semester and another upper-division semester: Writing 140 and 340.

This curricular structure represents, at the time and even now, an innovative approach in terms of university-level writing instruction.

Writing 140—“Writing and Critical Reasoning”—has three principal themes: process, critique and craft. Each class is capped at 17.

Each Writing 140 section is affiliated with a general education lecture course addressing particular social issues such as “The Holocaust,” “Environmental Issues in Society,” and “Poverty and Welfare in America.” The lecture course, with its discussion section, provides students with the concepts, theories, and topical information that form the basis for the essay assignments in Writing 140.

Dividing the classes in this manner allows Writing 140 to focus more intensely upon their writing and writing process.

Writing Program Director John Holland notes that by the time students are juniors and seniors, they have matured as both writers and critical thinkers. They take their writing more seriously and they more deeply understand the importance of writing in terms of both their academic and professional careers.

Writing 340—“Advanced Writing”—offers instruction in writing for various audiences on topics related to a student’s professional or disciplinary interests. The College offers five versions of Writing 340—Arts and Humanities, Health Sciences, Natural Sciences, Pre-Law, and Social Sciences. There are 20 students in each class, taught by full-time faculty—all of whom have their doctorates.

Last year, student assessment of 340 ranked an outstanding 4.3 (on a five-point scale) and their evaluations of the faculty reached an unprecedented 4.7. “We’re gratified to see that students have not only accepted the upper-division course,” says Holland, “but they have embraced it.”

More than evaluations, student accomplishment is the true litmus test for the success of the Writing Program. Genuine improvement can be charted in the quality of writing between the freshman and junior years.

It is also due to the quality of the thinker.

“Our goal,” the program states, “is to make better writers. There is no better way to do this than by demonstrating that writing is a process through which we arrive at a greater knowledge of ourselves.”

—K.Y.K.

Angelingo?

The bright Angeleno sun peeks behind two curving palm trees on the home page of the new student-created and student-run website Angelingo. The top of the page boldly declares, “We look to Los Angeles/ For the language we use/ London is dead.”

The student journal of arts and culture claims to hold “a mirror up to the Los Angeles, in order to ‘look at the rest of the world through a distinctly L.A. prism.”

Angelingo launched its first issue last April, funded by a $10,000 Innovative Teaching grant from USC’s Center for Excellence in Teaching. Two senior Writing Program lecturers, Kathi Inman Benes and Norah Ashe-McNalley, wrote the successful proposal, motivated by the need to showcase undergraduate writing talent.

A majority of the stories on the site were produced in Writing 340, a general education class that fulfills the upper-division writing requirement in the College. Both Benes and Ashe-McNalley are 340 instructors.

With more than 20 articles written by students and faculty, the inaugural issue included such thought-provoking essays as “Downtown Los Angeles: The Politics of Pride and Prejudice,” a piece on the new Disney Concert Hall and “Pre-Implantation Diagnosis: An Inevitable Quest for Human Perfection” that discusses the medical ethics of normally fertile couples choosing to undergo in-vitro fertilization to screen each developing embryo for genetic disease prior to implantation in the mother’s womb.

Five USC College undergraduates sit on the editorial board of this website. The site allows students to read each other’s work on a wide variety of subjects, and the online medium allows ideas and information to be linked and exchanged in ways that conventional magazines or newspapers cannot support.

“People are definitely interested in being a part of Angelingo—as editors, contributors and readers,” says Mindy Menjou, a student editor. “People recognize the uniqueness of this project and find it attractive. With Angelingo, we have created and filled a new niche, not just at USC, but in the academic community at large.”

http://angelingo.usc.edu

—K.Y.K.
Well-Prepared for Life
With an eye towards tomorrow, students blend the liberal arts

A
fter Liberales is a term that harkens back to the days of the ancient Romans. It comes from the concept of knowledge that is essential for every citizen, and it stresses thoughtful and effective engagement with the world.

As the core of a larger university, the College’s liberal arts education is preparing students for a rich, full life. Because career patterns are changing, students will likely have numerous careers throughout their lifetime. To prepare for this new reality, the College offers many academic options—innovative programs, majors and cross-disciplinary minors—that teach critical thinking and analytical and persuasive writing for those who will be tomorrow’s professionals in the private and public sectors.

“Who would want to hire even the most highly trained professional if that person could not read a text thoughtfully or understand a social conflict with some degree of sophistication?” asks Richard Fliegel, associate dean of academic programs.

Students who put in four years of hard work will find comfort in a recent survey by the National Association of Colleges and employers. It reported that graduates with undergraduate degrees in political science and English literature saw their salaries jump nearly 4 percent from last year. (More than business administration majors.) Not to mention, many of America’s top CEOs were liberal arts majors. There’s Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, a medieval history and philosophy major; and Walt Disney CEO Michael Eisner an English literature and theatre major. Federated Department Stores President Sue Kronick was an East Asian history major.

The following four College undergraduates are among many who have pursued a liberal arts education designed to provide them with a solid foundation for an accomplished career. The diversity of their academic concentrations represents the breadth of academic programming at the College and enables the students to explore their personal and professional interests.

—K.Y.K., ‘04

MAJOR: Health and Humanity
MINOR: Visual Culture
NAME: Jeana Marinelli
HOMETOWN: Vista, California

“I have been pre-med since freshman year, but could never gain the courage to commit to a major until last spring. I strongly believe that I didn’t declare because I was waiting for USC to create something perfectly suited for me. And they did—Health and Humanity. It mixes biology, chemistry and physics with more liberal endeavors such as anthropology, psychology, sociology and religion.

“In this case, keeping my options open proved to be the more auspicious choice; I have had the opportunity to pursue the requirements for medical school while simultaneously exploring other options.”

SUMMER ‘04 INTERNSHIP: Life Through Art Foundation, a Los Angeles non-profit that raises money to support arts education for underprivileged children.

MAJOR: History, International Relations
MINOR: Peace and Conflict Studies
NAME: Daleep Sawhney
HOMETOWN: New Delhi, India

“This minor has offered me a greater insight into historical global violence and the various reasons as to why it has been a theme and continues to be a theme throughout our planet and history. I grew up in Kashmir, a region of both India and Pakistan that is a stormy issue of contention between both nations. Violence was for many years a normal part of my life. I was also in England during the Kosovo war when swarms of ethnic Albanian immigrants sought asylum there. Peace and Conflict Studies has provided me with the opportunity to learn how to form an independent informed decision about the true nature of an international dispute, therefore enabling me to consider and obtain a impartial theoretical resolution.”

SUMMER ‘04 INTERNSHIP: The Red Cross in New Delhi. “My focus this summer has been getting international aid to families in war-torn Kashmir and doing development studies about poverty-stricken regions in India.”

MAJOR: Art History
MINOR: Italian
NAME: Anne Aubert-Santelli
HOMETOWN: Irvine, California

“I am an Art History major, and will be an Italian minor. I became interested in Art History after taking AP Art History in high school. As I was both a dancer and hard worker, I felt that Art History was the perfect blend of my creative and intellectual sides. As for Italian, I fell in love with the language after studying abroad this summer in Verona.”

On Thematic Option: “At first, I was unsure that USC College could offer me small and rigorous classes with top university professors. However, after reading through the TO packet, I knew that I had found the intellectual environment I was looking for.”

RESEARCH PROJECT: Helping Professor Heather James (of the English department) edit the Renaissance section in the Norton Anthology of World Literature.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS: An additional minor in English and/or business.

MAJOR: Critical Approaches to Leadership
MINOR: Visual Culture
NAME: Mariah Martin
HOMETOWN: Fort Collins, Colorado

“Leadership is a vital part of any organization, so studying it has made me a more aware individual in terms of self-awareness, emotional intelligence and awareness of situations and other people. I really enjoyed REL 375, which was a Business Ethics course [in the Religion department].”

SUMMER ‘04 INTERNSHIP: Drama Activity Leader at Barretstown Gang Camp in Ireland for children with serious illnesses.

FUTURE PLANS: Will move to London this fall to be a research assistant for Melcrum Publishing, a company that specializes in corporate communications. “Eventually, I may go into consulting, but I’d like to combine my passions for communication, leadership and ethics and go into executive and life coaching.”
The Scholar’s Apprentice

Undergrads join faculty to create new knowledge

As a sophomore, Nina Hansra says: “I just knew research wasn’t for me.”

This summer, after graduating from USC College with degrees in biology and religion, two years of lab work under her belt, and a publication in a prestigious journal, Hansra has a different view of herself and of research.

“I pictured this dark, quiet, lonely lab. I thought I’d be too afraid to ask questions and that I’d mess up all of the experiments,” she says. “But it wasn’t like that at all. I ended up understanding what we were doing and why we were doing it.”

Currently a first-year medical student at UC San Francisco, Hansra plans to do research in neuroscience and medical ethics, and aims for a career as both a physician and an academic scholar. Increasingly, USC College undergraduate students are teaming up with faculty to do original research and pursue scholarly endeavors.

The rapid growth in the undergraduate research grant program funded by Provost Lloyd Armstrong, Jr. has helped a record number of College students to sign on as scholars’ apprentices in recent years, says Alexander Jun, director of the Office of Undergraduate Programs, which distributes the grants. Last year, the Provost earmarked $350,000 to support the programs—a huge increase from the $100,000 allocated in 1999.

“The chance to work alongside some of the world's top scholars is one of the major attractions of attending a research university,” says Jun. “Student research turns the banking model of education—where facts and figures are deposited into student minds—on its head. Research trains students to think on their feet.”

When faculty and students work together, learning can take place on a number of levels, says Danielle Mihram, director of the USC Center for Excellence in Teaching. “Faculty mentors convey the explicit knowledge of a discipline, but they also share a wealth of tacit knowledge about their field of enquiry, career options and choices, and lifelong decisions. This occurs at a critically formative time in our undergraduates’ intellectual development,” she says.

Confidence Building

Hansra credits her mentor, neuroscientist Michael Quick, for revealing the excitement of research. Helping her reach her own potential and for more concrete things, like reviewing her medical school essay.

Hansra received a Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE) grant for her study, guided by Quick, of a key brain chemical called GABA, which helps regulate communications among brain cells. Low levels of GABA have been linked to epileptic seizures. “The experience really built up my confidence,” says Hansra. She and Quick, an associate professor of biology in the College, co-authored a paper based on the work, which appeared in the April issue of the Journal of Neuroscience.

A Passion for Learning

Senior Jeff Rich always wanted to do research. But the astronomy major and Russian minor needed money for school, and a job left him little free time. So Rich was intrigued when John Bowlt, professor of Slavic languages and literature and art history, asked if he’d like to do research on the relationship of traditional Russian Christian paintings—called icons—and the innovations of early 20th century Russian artists like Wassily Kandinsky.

“Art was a completely new field of learning for me,” says Rich, who admits: “I like to learn anything I can.”

A grant from the Center for Civic and Religious Culture enabled Rich to spend hours in the archives of the Institute of Modern Russian Culture, which Bowlt directs. Rich translated articles from 1914 that showed the emergence of a more secular view of icons. Last spring, Rich finished building a searchable database of the articles, along with detailed abstracts and images.

“The biggest thrill was learning all of this new stuff and then telling people about it,” says Rich. “People say to me ‘Why Russian icons?’ I say, ‘Why? Why study anything? It’s interesting.’”

The project helped prepare him for his next intellectual odyssey—a project with solar scientist Edward Rhodes, professor of physics and astronomy, in fall.

An Early Start

“I really like research,” says USC College junior Yizhou Du, a psychobiology major and budding biomedical scientist, who found research early on.

Her first job, at age 16, was at the Rocky Mountain Laboratories in her hometown of Hamilton, Montana (population 3,700). It was either the local lab, she says, or waiting tables at her family’s restaurant.

Funded by an undergraduate research grant, Du spent this summer studying lipoprotein gene expression in brain cells with mentor Caleb Finch, the ARCO/William F. Kieschnick Chair in the Neurobiology of Aging, and his team, which Du first joined as a freshman.

Du’s project is a part of the lab’s larger effort to understand Alzheimer’s disease and the effects of aging in the brain. Learning how to use cutting-edge molecular biology techniques, she’s investigating just how the brain protein apolipoprotein E (apoE), which rebuilds brain membranes after injury, helps protect brain cells from Alzheimer’s. She’s also studying how estrogen and old age affect the apoE gene’s activity.

“The best part of science is being able to say conclusively, ‘This is what we found out,’” says Du. “The most challenging? Understanding how my corner of the project fits into the big picture.”

—E.E.
**Good Karma**

**JEP’s rich tradition of community service**

M
day it’s karma that caus-es good things to happen to good people. “My mother has always said that everything works out for the best,” says USC College senior and Joint Educational Project Volunteer Anita Nageswaran. “And it really seems that everything does turn out well for me.”

Nageswaran, who is a double major in religion and biology, has sculpted her undergraduate experience around service to others. She, like thousands of other USC students, spends most of her volunteer time at the College’s Joint Educational Project (JEP), one of the nation’s oldest and largest service-learning programs.

**More Than 30 Years of Outreach**

JEP wasn’t always the service-learning powerhouse it is now, but it always had lofty visions. In 1972, the late Barbara Gardner, director of what was then the College’s Center For Urban Affairs, noticed a growing divide between the university and its surrounding community and decided to take action.

“Gardner wanted to develop a way in which USC students and the community could have a more reciprocal relationship,” says Tammy Anderson, current director of JEP.

As a result, Gardner established a program (now JEP) that would act as a broker for mutually beneficial educational partnerships, connecting faculty, students and academic courses with schools, hospitals and community-based agencies in L.A.

The program has blossomed from just 200 USC student participants in its first year to more than 2,000 students participating last year alone. JEP staff and student assistants work with more than 50 faculty to develop service-learning components in courses where faculty believe that community service will enrich students’ understanding of class concepts and readings. At the same time, the program now partners with organizations such as foster care programs, battered women’s shelters and after-school programs.

**Nationally Recognized**

In 2000, Time magazine/Princeton Review recognized JEP’s integral role in USC’s commitment to public service when it featured USC as its College of the Year.

**An Out-of-Classroom Experience**

It’s not your typical summer job. On a sweltering July day, USC College international relations major Rema Christy battles the crowded streets of Tokyo as she leaves her internship at an international tax and accounting firm and fights her way to the subway. She is participating in the USC Freeman Fellows Internship Program, which is funded by a grant from the Freeman Foundation and provides stipends to USC undergraduates to live and work in Asia for a summer.

Placements for students range from a non-profit organization in Kuala Lumpur to a Fortune 500 company in Beijing, and in these environments, participants not only gain useful work experience, but also exposure to a foreign culture.

“I am not very experienced in the tax and accounting system in the U.S., let alone that of Japan,” she says. “Needless to say, I was a bit out of my element.”

While working in a wide variety of summer and school year internships, USC College students are learning more about themselves, how their studies apply to “real world” experiences and how their career goals match their academic pursuits.

“Internships give undergraduate students a glimpse of the components necessary for career success,” says Eileen Kohan, associate dean and executive director of USC’s Career Planning and Placement Center. And what is unique about USC College, says Kohan, is that undergraduate students are typically participating in two to three internships during their four years at USC.

The university’s career planning and placement center places more than 6,000 students in internships each year and nearly 60 percent of students who have a job lined up by graduation had done an internship during their undergraduate career.

The prevalence of the internship experience among USC undergrads certainly points towards a growing national trend. Internships have become an increasingly important aspect of a student’s resume because of the emphasis employers now place on work experience.

Internship opportunities for USC students vary from working in a typical office environment, to a U.S. Embassy abroad, to a soap opera set. All internship placements are geared to complement the classroom experience and USC career advisors work hard to offer as many different and innovative opportunities to students as there are academic possibilities.

“Rather than spending an entire academic career building towards a particular profession, internships offer liberal arts students a taste of what’s ahead without the commitment to that field that a professional degree would require,” says Kohan.

—K.S.
While studying abroad in South Korea, a USC College religion major on his way home from class stops to listen to monks chanting at a Buddhist temple. Thousands of miles away in Costa Rica, a classmate majoring in environmental studies, waits for a bus to take him to class and watches a hummingbird skittishly dart about a garden filled with native flowers.

These sorts of experiences abroad are allowing College students the opportunity to apply their studies in new locales. Whether a biology major in Brisbane or an English major in London, study abroad enhances a student’s overall academic know-how and is quickly becoming an experience that few choose to do without.

In the past five years, more than 1,200 USC College students have studied abroad and the number of students interested in studying abroad increases each year. Available to students are more than 40 programs on six continents, all of which integrate local culture and customs with academic coursework.

“The type of student USC is attracting is looking for diverse experiences. They want to get all they can out of their undergraduate experience and studying abroad is a great opportunity to do so,” says Jessica Patton, a study abroad advisor in the university’s Office of Overseas Study.

Often, such students specifically come to USC because of the College’s location in the heart of Los Angeles.

“USC College, which is located in one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, is especially attuned to the international concerns that shape life in the 21st century,” says College Dean Joseph Aoun. “Study abroad is a natural extension of the sort of academic and cultural curiosity that we encourage.”

Students gain in many ways from spending time away from the comforts of life at USC. Many attain a greater knowledge, if not fluency, of a foreign language, and most prosper from a deeper and more intimate understanding of a culture different from their own.

Studying abroad also gives students a fresh perspective on their curriculum. “An international relations major studying in South Africa will learn how South African academics and politicians approach international relations and that will allow the student to be able to draw connections or notice differences in how IR is practiced in the United States,” says Patton.

And international relations majors aren’t the only ones benefiting from studying abroad.

Sarah Lacour is a double major in biology and French and spent a semester in France studying through the USC Paris program as well as at the Sorbonne. “I feel it is very important for students to experience things on an international level,” says Lacour. “It is so easy to simply see things from the perspective you inherited from your parents or country, but to experience and truly understand events that affect other parts of the world, through the experiences of yourself and others, is truly awesome.”

Beyond the classroom, studying abroad often assists students in cutting the metaphorical umbilical cord that ties them to the comforts of home. It is during this time that most students first feel a real sense of independence and self-discovery.

“I had so many memorable experiences while I was in France,” says Lacour. “Everything from trying to explain U.S. politics to an elderly French couple, to watching snow fall on the Seine River. Perhaps even more meaningful was merely adapting to the day-to-day culture of the country and the sense of belonging I developed. Paris is not so much a destination for me anymore, but a feeling.”

Rachel Mohr, an East Asian languages and cultures major, had similar experiences in Japan. “I played the wadaiko. I watched a Noh play. I planted rice,” says the recipient of the College’s Research/Study Abroad (RSA) scholarship funded by the Freeman Foundation. “I have changed. I have learned a lot from the physical and cultural distance that comes with studying abroad. I have seen America from the outside and there are things I like and dislike about my country and myself now that would have surprised me a year ago.”

-USC College Junior Rachel Mohr

“...overseas study gives students fresh insight...”
Major: Undecided
Learning communities give undecided students an academic home

The USC College of Letters, Arts & Sciences is stepping up to bat for those freshmen and other students who are in transition, unsure what they want to study and in need of an academic home.

The USC Learning Community Program, established in 1998, helps undecided incoming freshman and others who are changing majors to find an academic focus. The program places these students into learning community groups based on their interests. They then attend two classes together, which are centered around a theme—one class is usually a general education class and the other is a gateway course to a major.

The program has recently shifted focus, however. "More than providing a major for these students, the learning communities give them a sense of connection," says Director of College Advising Debra Bernstein. "They feel more connected to their peers, faculty and the advising offices on campus."

While attending classes and studying together, the student groups also see movies, have dinners and go to events such as baseball games or musicals. They are guided by a faculty mentor (who usually teaches one of the community courses), a peer mentor (a student who has usually been a participant in the past) and a staff advisor. Indeed, the sense of belonging and connection students gain from the program is as beneficial as finding a major. "They named the learning communities quite well," says USC College student and program participant-turned-peer mentor Patricia Heck. "They really give students a sense of community. First semester in college is a very lost feeling for most, and it's really helpful giving these students other people just like them and with the same interests to talk to, learn from and bond with."

For more information, visit http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/cas/LearningCommunities/index.html

—K.S.

A Collective Enterprise
Supplemental instruction program offers peer tutoring

Going from high school classes to college lectures is a scary transition for most. For Tania Mitsinikos, a pre-med USC College sophomore majoring in biology and minoring in economics, the adjustment was especially daunting. Fortunately for Tania and the many other students like her, the College offers Supplemental Instruction (SI), a peer tutoring program that matches struggling students in traditionally difficult courses (such as organic chemistry) with upperclass students who have previously taken the courses. This fall over 35 student SI leaders will tutor fellow students in 16 classes, mostly in the natural sciences and mathematics. The program and its student leaders do not focus simply on helping a student to receive a good grade. Instead, the program delves deeper, increasing a student’s retention and instilling better study skills that will remain with them throughout their academic careers.

"Peer tutoring helps students figure out how to become independent learners." —Judy Haw, Director of Supplemental Instruction at USC College

"Peer tutoring helps students figure out how to become independent learners." —Judy Haw, Director of Supplemental Instruction at USC College
What Next?
Advisors prepare students for life after college

W

ith the help of advising offices on campus, USC College students are becoming more creative in the ways in which they translate their studies into careers. Take two current USC College students for example.

Jade Werner, an English major, is pursuing a career in non-profit management or theatre production. Teresa Wang, an anthropology major, wants to attend business school. While on seemingly different career paths, Werner and Wang do have one thing in common. They are utilizing the same resources to navigate their way: the USC Career Planning and Placement Center and the College Advisement Office.

In place to guide students throughout their academic and post-academic experiences, the two offices offer a variety of advisement services, including career and graduate school counseling, workshops, internships, job listings, career fairs and resume days.

Peter Stokes, a student advisor in the College who primarily advises students on graduate and professional school choices, has talked with both Werner and Wang. He helps students who are looking to extend their education into master’s or Ph.D. programs, assisting them with everything from exploration of possible programs to the requesting of letters of recommendation.

Through his work, Stokes has found that College students aren’t always pursuing traditional career paths. “USC College students, because they have been exposed to a variety of liberal arts subjects, are very well rounded,” says Stokes. “College students are quite imaginative in their academic and career choices. We’re here to help guide them through this process and feed their creative juices.”

Wang, a 40-year-old undergraduate student, knows all about imaginative choices. After working for more than 17 years in the technology sector, she returned to USC College to study anthropology and hopes to someday start her own management consulting firm. “It doesn’t make sense to most,” she says. “But, anthropology is directly related to management consulting as well as many other business-related endeavors. The sorts of behavioral and cultural observations that anthropologists make are essential in this line of business.”

Werner, nearly 20 years Wang’s junior, has a slightly different approach when it comes to melding (or not) study and career. “My approach to school right now is that English is what I like to study and theatre is what I like to do,” she says. “They don’t have to be one and the same.”

With the encouragement of the Advising Office and the Career Planning and Placement Center, both students believe that doing and studying what one loves will lead to a successful career—and a very happy life.

—K.S.

The Adventure of Leadership
A hands-on course inspires innovative projects

A

s a leader of several major USC campus organizations, including founder and co-president of the USC entrepreneur club, USC College student A.J. Nagaraj knows a lot about leadership. Still, after enrolling in USC President Steven B. Sample and University Professor Warren Bennis’ spring semester course MDA 365: “The Art and Adventure of Leadership,” he realized he has a lot to learn.

“The course taught me that being a good leader begins with knowing who you are,” says Nagaraj, who graduated in May with a degree in political science and will attend Harvard University’s graduate school of education this fall.

As part of the College’s multidisciplinary activities (MDA) program, the leadership course emphasizes interdisciplinary teaching and research. MDA courses are developed and taught by faculty from more than one program, department or school. MDA 365 used both classical and practical approaches to leadership study, highlighting the work of Socrates, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., while also offering the personal advice and direct knowledge of its professors, Sample and Bennis, who hosted small dinners with course participants. The course culminated in an intensive group project with simple guidelines: practice leadership.

Accordingly, the projects were as varied as leadership itself. One project was the creation of a toy library. The 24th Street Theatre, just blocks from USC’s campus, provided the space for neighborhood children to “check out” toys, which they can borrow for one week. Participant Winter Werner, an English major and College senior, says that the toy library project taught her that with proper leadership skills, six people are capable of accomplishing wonderful things in less than four months. “I also learned how to write a budget—and I’m an English major!” she says.

Another project focused on USC area high school students. Selecting underserved schools, the team worked with school counselors to nominate junior and senior student leaders. The resulting nominees were then taken on a weekend retreat to Sacramento where they participated in workshops that covered both professional and personal leadership.

“My study of the students talked about how happy they were to be in an environment where they didn’t have to defend their ambition,” says project participant Katie Tiefz, a College senior and history and political science major.

Intending to target the USC student body, another project built an online L.A. travel guide, www.beyondusc.com. The site, which considers itself an unconventional travel guide, offers nearly 225 unique reviews of places to go in L.A.

College student Mariah Martin, who worked on the website says, “Our vision was to inspire students to see Los Angeles as an urban classroom.”

In the end, all of the MDA 365 students walked away with a much stronger sense of what it takes to be a leader, not only in business, politics or the community, but also within more personal spheres of influence.

And sometimes, being a leader means letting someone else lead. “This class takes a group of 40 students, who are used to leading multiple student organizations, and puts them into groups with other leaders,” says Nagaraj. “What results is a power dynamic in which egos are bruised, compromises are grudgingly struck and sacrifices are made. You quickly learn that leaders can’t always be leaders in every endeavor they pursue.”

—K.S.
The traditional lecture is under attack by educational scholars on pedagogical grounds. Some, like USC College neuroscientist Michael Quick, look forward to the day when the lecture is gone completely.

Physicist Gene Bickers sees a need to re-think their use in large, introductory science classes.

Sarah Pratt, dean of academic programs in USC College, foresees the evolution of a new model.

“We encourage College faculty to approach teaching with the same creativity and rigor they bring to their research, and that has naturally led to the wide range of methods, innovative techniques and technological solutions that define our undergraduate courses,” says Pratt, a professor of Slavic languages and literature.

Increasingly, she says, College faculty are embracing a mix of methods to invite students into the life of the mind.

“We combine lecture, demos, solving longer problems at the blackboard and other activities as much as possible in our introductory physics series,” says Hans Bozler, professor of physics and astronomy. “Using any single mode throughout a class period—lecture or not—is not ideal.”

Active Learning

“I really enjoy giving lectures, but it’s clear that students are more motivated and learn better in active learning environments,” says Quick, an associate professor of biological sciences.

In one undergraduate neurobiology class, Quick asks students to list questions to help guide the content of the course. Students find answers to their questions by reading original scientific literature, presenting and discussing it in class.

“Ideally, students would teach each other, and I would become more of an expert guide who makes sure they don’t go too far off-track or get lost,” he says.

Encouraging Student Participation

Lectures pose a particular problem for large science courses, says physiologist Bickers.

A 1998 American Journal of Physics study found lectures less effective than interactive methods in teaching undergraduate physics courses, regardless of class size, students’ prior experience with the subject or whether students judged the lecture boring or entertaining.

In response, physics professors and others are turning to new methods and interactive technologies to enliven the classroom experience.

“We’re urgently trying to make lecture classes a two-way experience,” says Stephen Bradforth, an associate professor of chemistry. “That’s especially difficult in large classes, because few students are comfortable answering a question in front of an entire lecture hall.”

Clickers

In spring, Bradforth and Bozler tested a new technology called the Personal Response System (PRS) designed to address that and other problems. PRS encourages student participation in large classes while providing teachers with immediate feedback about student comprehension.

“I call it the ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire?’ system,” says Bradforth. Students use remote control-like “clickers” similar to those used on the TV show, to answer multiple-choice questions anonymously. A computer produces instant results.

Besides increasing attendance, clickers helped Bozler and Bradforth decide whether to spend more time on a subject.

“There were cheers and moans from the students when the answers came up,” says Bozler. “You end up with a lot of teachable moments.”

This year, the College will introduce PRS equipment in three campus lecture halls and a mobile system for the physics department. Bozler says that faculty in psychology, biology, earth sciences, geography, chemistry and physics plan to use the clickers.

Technology’s ‘Reluctant Visionary’

Math Professor Robert Penner has been a low-tech, high-concept teacher for decades, enlivening his calculus classes with little more than chalk and an overhead projector.

Now Penner advocates studio classrooms equipped with “smart boards.” This spring, he taught calculus in large classes while providing teachers with immediate feedback about student comprehension.

“I call it the ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire?’ system,” says Bradforth. Students use remote control-like “clickers” similar to those used on the TV show, to answer multiple-choice questions anonymously. A computer produces instant results.

Besides increasing attendance, clickers helped Bozler and Bradforth decide whether to spend more time on a subject.

“There were cheers and moans from the students when the answers came up,” says Bozler. “You end up with a lot of teachable moments.”

This year, the College will introduce PRS equipment in three campus lecture halls and a mobile system for the physics department. Bozler says that faculty in psychology, biology, earth sciences, geography, chemistry and physics plan to use the clickers.

Language Games

Daniel Bayer, executive director of the College’s Language Center, has introduced new technologies, online resources and led the effort to change language course curricula to improve student learning.

“Now we’re digging deeper, working to make technology even better as a learning tool,” he says.

Bayer is overseeing the creation of an online computer game to guide students through first-year Italian.

This summer Bayer’s team, including Francesca Italiano, director of the Italian Language Program, and the Language Center’s Edie Ann Glaser, produced a demo of a comprehensive “Virtual Italian Experience.”

The game begins with a virtual user visiting a USC Italian course. Next, they’ll add a campus tour and a trip to Italy.

Most faculty agree a need remains for lectures in higher education, but technology and new knowledge provide options that can’t be ignored.

—E. F.
Bilateral Beasts

Discovery forces a re-think of how and when animals first emerged

Animals—in the form of microscopic yet complex organisms—may have existed millions of years earlier than previous estimates, according to a new study by USC College paleontologist David Bottjer and collaborators from Caltech and China.

The team's discovery of tiny, anatomically symmetrical animal fossils pushes the existence of bilaterians—animals with bodies designed with the same mirror-image symmetry that defines most modern animals, including humans—to back about 600 million years ago, says Bottjer, one of the report's lead authors.

The team published their analysis of fossils found in southern China in the June 3 online edition of *Science*.

The exact timing of the emergence of bilaterian animals—which have defined front, rear, left and right body surfaces—has long been a topic of debate in the scientific community. Some trace their beginnings to the Cambrian Explosion, a period 20 to 30 million years long that began roughly 543 million years ago when many of the major groups of animals first appear in the fossil record.

While many paleontologists and molecular biologists have speculated that bilaterian animals are older than that, there was little physical evidence to support the theory until now.

“It doesn’t mean that this is the original bilaterian, but it is likely these represent the early beginnings of bilaterian evolution,” says Bottjer, professor of earth sciences and biological sciences.

The team has dubbed the animal in question *Vernanimalcula guizhouena*, Latin for “small spring animal.” The name is a nod to the “spring” that followed a glacial period some call “Snowball Earth”—an extended period of extreme cold that scientists theorize entombed the entire planet in ice before thawing roughly 600 million years ago. *V. guizhouena*—which rivals the size of four human hairs laid side by side—is thought to have survived the harsh glacial environment, Bottjer says.

*V. guizhouena* had a mouth, an anus and paired external pits that the researchers theorized it used to sense environmental conditions, such as light.

Bottjer and USC College Earth Sciences Postdoctoral Fellow Stephen Q. Dornbos worked with a group of scientists from Caltech and China to analyze the fossils found in a landscape of rolling hills, rice farms and phosphate quarries. The team carted a dump truck full of rock from a quarry to nearby Yunnan, where they used rock saws with diamonds embedded in the cutting edge to produce translucient rock slices that were fixed to glass slides and analyzed under a microscope. From about 10,000 of these translucient slices they found 10 specimens of the small but surprisingly complex animal.

“What it says is that early in evolution bilaterians may have been very small, but eventually they became large. Humans, which evolved much later, are good examples of large bilaterians,” Bottjer says.

—Usha Sutliff, USC News

Hardwiring the Nervous System

How developing neurons find their way

Before the brain can produce thought, control limbs or make us flinch in pain, innumerable connections must be built between the more than one hundred billion cells that make up the central nervous system.

Figuring out exactly how this occurs drives the research of Samantha Butler, an assistant professor of biological sciences, who focuses on how the brain and spinal cord get wired up.

“We are just beginning to understand how these neural networks are built,” says Butler, who arrived at USC College last winter from Columbia University’s Center for Neurobiology and Behavior. “The idea is to look at how these are set up to begin with, in the embryo,” she says. Understanding how the body builds new neural connections would be key to any future scheme to repair damaged neural networks, such as those found in spinal cord lesions—a leading cause of paralysis.

Bottjer studies how axons—the threadlike extensions of neurons that transmit signals from a neuron—hook up with other neurons. During this carefully orchestrated process, axons must grow thousands of times the width of a neuron to form the stereotypical pattern encoded in the genetic blueprint.

Work over the last 20 years has shown that, to navigate this long and vitally important journey, axons rely on a series of molecular cues. These molecules may attract the tip of the axon in one direction or repel it from another direction, guiding the axon to grow toward precise targets in the developing spinal cord and brain, Butler says.

Butler is best known for demonstrating that proteins called BMPs, members of a family of growth factors, can repel axons. Although BMPs had been studied for years by molecular and developmental biologists, Butler was the first to show their important role in axon guidance—a key finding that spawned new interest in the BMP family among neuroscientists.

Butler continues to search for other so-called chemoattractants and chemorepellents, as well as at looking at molecular and cellular events involved in the wiring process. Eventually, she aims to understand how the many guidance cues work together to direct axons on the right path in the spinal cord.

“The practical aspect of this work, which would be dependent on parallel advances in neural stem cell research and medicine, is to see if we could somehow use similar compounds to help re-establish neural pathways after injury,” she says.

—E.E.
Quick on the Uptake

From his style (he prefers black) to his choice of jewelry (a small metal stud pierces his left eyebrow) and his preferred method of transportation (a 24-speed bicycle), USC College neurobiologist Michael Quick makes it clear that he is no stereotypical professor.

What he is a talented, enthusiastic teacher and scientist who, in two short years as an associate professor of biological sciences in USC College, has already had a notable impact in the life of the school and the minds of his students.

Quick’s research studies focus on the communication between neurons that underlies all thought, movement and behavior. Chemical messengers, or neurotransmitters, mediate that communication in the synapses, the gaps between neurons.

Some of these neurotransmitters stand out in terms of their importance in human disease and behavior. Low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin in a synapse, for example, have been linked to depression. Too much glutamate and you may get epilepsy. Parkinson’s, manic depression, autism and many other brain disorders appear related to increased or decreased neurotransmitter activity.

In his attempts to better understand factors that could alter neurotransmitter levels, and thus influence disease, Quick was one of the first to identify and study the role of transporter proteins in the process.

Prozac and similar drugs help keep synaptic serotonin levels high, for example, by blocking the serotonin transporters that move serotonin molecules inside neurons for recycling or destruction. As the transporters do this, they trigger a chain reaction that eventually can lead to a noticeable change in behavior.

“Neurotransmitters important in disease, as well as therapeutic drugs and drugs of abuse, can be regulated by how quickly they are reabsorbed by the cell. And that’s the transporter’s job,” says Quick.

Quick’s investigations have revealed myriad mechanisms for regulating the activity, number and location of transporters, a key step in the development of new drugs that target the transporters. In other promising work, Quick studies the basic biology of addiction, specifically looking at the events that establish and maintain nicotine addiction.

Their work has been progressing well, and the team, presenting their initial results at a meeting of art conservators in spring, has begun to stir up wider interest in the techniques.

Michael Quick’s lab is a hub of activity, with nearly 20 students working on independent research projects at any one time.

Prepping Post-Bac Pre-Meds

An ex-social worker, ex-architect and ex-professional football player sit around a table discussing the chemical properties of a carbon atom. While an unlikely sight for most, the group is actually an accurate representation of participants in USC College’s Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program.

The program, which enables postbaccalaureate students to complete the science and mathematics core requirements for medical school admission, is directed towards students who have graduated with an undergraduate degree in a non-science or non-medical field and now want to pursue medicine.

In its sixth year, the USC program is one of only a few post-baccalaureate pre-medical programs on the West Coast.

What draws students from around the world to this USC program is the sense of community and support the College’s program provides, says Larry Singer, professor of chemistry.

Since coming to USC, in fact, he’s switched the entire organization of his lab, giving undergraduates parts of his own projects to work on and freeing up graduate student time to focus on their own research questions.

He pushes his graduate students to work as independently as possible, he says, pursuing projects of their own design with him acting as a mentor and occasional trouble-shooter. “I really want them to learn how to be scientists, and you can only really learn that by taking on your own project and figuring out how to make things happen.”

—E.E.
Healing by Synthesis
Compounds halt the damaging effects of inflammation

Even the tiniest paper cut kicks the immune system into action. Infection-fighting white blood cells, called neutrophils, rush to the site of injury and initiate inflammation.

Calling for back up, the neutrophils quickly recruit more of their kind to the scene, and commence to kill any bacteria they find. The skirmishes and casualties cause the skin around the cut to swell and redden until, victory in sight, the first wave of inflammation subsides. As the neutrophils retreat, the healing can begin.

Yet, these defensive forces have a dark side as well. Unchecked, raging inflammation can damage the very tissue the immune system is designed to protect. In fact, researchers have linked out-of-control inflammation to an ever-growing list of diseases, from clogged arteries and heart attacks to arthritis and cancer.

Over the last decade, USC College of Letters, Arts & Sciences chemist Nicos A. Petasis has worked as part of a multidisciplinary team studying the natural course of inflammation and what goes wrong in disease. Led by Harvard biologist Charles N. Serhan, the team’s research has altered fundamental ideas about the inflammatory response and revealed the role of biological molecules called lipoxins in regulating the process.

As part of the effort, Petasis and his group synthesized a number of powerful chemical compounds that mimic lipoxin’s anti-inflammatory, pro-healing activity. The compounds, called lipoxins, are now being eyed as candidates for drug development, having shown great promise in quelling disease-associated inflammation in animal studies of dermatitis, asthma, kidney disease and now gum disease and cystic fibrosis.

Natural Inspiration

In his efforts to invent new materials and pharmaceuticals, Petasis, the Harold and Lillian Moulton Chair in Chemistry and member of the Loker Hydrocarbon Research Institute, looks to nature for inspiration. Finding ways to improve on nature’s designs was at the heart of the challenge when Serhan and Petasis began collaborating in 1993.

Serhan and Petasis had worked together earlier as members of the teams of their mentors—Nobel Prize-winning Swedish biologist Bengt Samuelsson and preeminent synthetic chemist K. C. Nicolaou, respectively—who had joined forces to study other aspects of inflammation.

Although Serhan discovered the lipoxins with Samuelsson in the 1980s, he wasn’t able to fully determine their function for years. A breakthrough came when he showed why lipoxins had resisted study. They circulated only a few minutes before enzymes broke them down.

“When Serhan discovered that, we started working synthesizing longer-lasting lipoxin-like molecules,” Petasis says. “My task was to protect the molecules from the enzymes without altering their biological activity.” It was a tricky prospect.

With a rough design in mind, Petasis began his hands-on work. He would send his most promising molecules to Serhan to test for activity and eventual clearing of bacterial infection, initiates the destructive cycle in the lungs that eventually proves fatal for most sufferers of this genetic disease.

The team also tested lipoxin analogs in an animal model of the disease. The airways of animals treated with the analogs showed less inflammation, fewer neutrophils and more successful clearing of bacterial infection than the airways of those receiving no treatment. Critically, those in the treatment group suffered less overall lung damage.

Future Directions

Petasis predicts that unraveling the whole story of inflammation—a tale both complex and redundant—will take time. But some benefits from the research may arrive sooner. The results of animal studies are borne out in future human trials, Petasis’ pro-healing compounds may offer doctors a potent and unique new tool in the anti-inflammatory arsenal.

That would make the molecule’s creator proud. “I tend to follow-up with what happens with the molecules I create,” Petasis says. “You care about them as if they were your offspring. If a molecule you create proves useful, you can have an enormous positive impact.”

—E.E.
Recruiting Success

Just two years after the USC College of Letters, Arts & Sciences publicly announced its Senior Faculty Hiring Initiative, Dean Joseph Aoun says the College has surpassed the mid-point of its goal to recruit 100 new senior and associate professors.

“We’re more than half way there and we have momentum,” says Aoun.

To date, a total of 122 new faculty have joined the College and 52 of those appointments have gone to senior professors or “rising stars”—well established associate professors who are clearly about to break away from the pack. Discussions are underway with other talented faculty who have indicated an interest in joining the College as part of a recruitment strategy that emphasizes brilliance, innovation and leadership.

The USC College ‘professor of the future’ will embrace more than one specialty, melding mastery of several disciplines to address exciting new and emerging fields or to re-think well-established fields. “As we designed our faculty hiring initiative, our aim was to cast a more visionary look at the College. We did not conduct business as usual,” says Aoun. “Many of our professors are creating partnerships with institutions outside of USC, such as the Huntington Library and the Getty Research Institute. Within USC, these scholars are partnering with faculty in engineering, law, cinema, medicine and communication to launch new programs and conduct innovative research.”

These partnerships have a multiplier effect, giving the College and its partners valuable resources they wouldn’t have otherwise.

The College’s strategy, congruent with the draft of the university’s new strategic plan, is to attract scholars who meld fundamental and applied research and scholarship in order to address society’s most pressing problems, needs and questions.

The faculty recruited embody this new vision and are leaders in emerging fields and more than one discipline—in areas as varied as computational biology, literary, visual and material culture; urban space; geosystems; geobiology; philosophy of language and mind; history of art collecting and display; and urban and visual studies.

“This truly has been a USC team effort,” says Aoun. “Provost Lloyd Armstrong and President Steven B. Sample have been instrumental in our success, advising us as the plan unfolded. College faculty, Dean of Faculty Beth Meyerowitz, and the functional deans deserve much credit for recruiting top candidates.”

“We have used the initiative to further diversify our faculty, an important priority for us,” says Aoun. “Joining USC College for the 2004-05 academic year, are 31 new faculty, including 11 senior professors, 8 associate professors, 12 assistant professors.

——N.S.

PROFESSORS

ANNE BALSAMO
Professor of Gender Studies and Cinema TV
Interests: Culture and Technology
From: Stanford University

JEFFREY KING
Professor of Philosophy
Interests: Philosophy of Language
From: UC Davis

ANDREI MARMOR
Professor of Philosophy and Law
Interests: Legal Philosophy
From: Tel Aviv University

CLAUDIA MOATTI
Professor of Classics
Interests: Political Society of Rome
From: University of Paris, France

JOHN CARLOS ROWE
Professor of English
Interests: American Literature
From: UC Irvine

JOHN STRAUSS
Professor of Economics
Interests: Development Economics
From: Michigan State University

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

WILLIAM BERELSON
Associate Professor of Earth Sciences
Interests: Geobiology
Chemical Oceanography
From: USC
As we designed our faculty hiring initiative, our aim was to cast a more visionary look at the College.

We did not conduct business as usual.

—College Dean Joseph Aoun
A Chance Encounter
Alumna gives $500,000 for international study

Fifteen years ago, Helen Graffen Donegan (B.A., ’49) was shopping in Shanghai when a young student approached her, wanting to practice his English. Her late husband Jim, fond of Chinese cutlery, asked the boy to lead them to a reputable shop. The boy offered to pay for the knives in Chinese yuan if the Donegans gave him the equivalent in American dollars.

The Donegans agreed. In order to study abroad, the young boy needed to pay for some of his university exams in dollars. Eventually, the student—Dennis—came to the United States and earned his M.A. at Brigham Young University, and is now studying for his second master’s in finance and economics at Columbia University.

“Dennis is the inspiration,” Donegan—who prefers to be called Helen—says, of her decision to create the Helen Donegan Fund for International Study at USC College. This $500,000 gift annuity will provide scholarships for international students who wish to study at the USC, and for USC students who want to study abroad.

She says seeing how hard Dennis worked to get through school was the impetus behind helping other students who share his ambition. Her sincere dedication to global travel and to her alma mater were also major factors. Helen was born and raised in Walnut, Calif., where her family had a citrus ranch. Inspired by a high school teacher who was a USC alum, Helen was accepted into the class of 1949. She majored in physical education. After teaching for a few years in Whittier and Riverside, Helen took her first cruise in 1957. “I thought I’d died and gone to heaven,” she reflects.

Her love for the sea eventually took her and her husband all around the world. They hosted 10 world cruises, including stops in New Zealand, Tahiti, Rotaranga and Pango Pango. All in all, she traveled that route over 25 times, but she didn’t stop there.

Her life for the sea eventually took her and her husband all around the world. They hosted 10 world cruises, among many other separate trips. The trip to China fostered the relationship with Dennis that continues to this day. A mohair tapestry that graces the head of her bed is a souvenir from a trip to Mombasa. But her favorite place, she says without a moment’s hesitation, is Antarctica, which was evident given the proliferation of penguin paraphernalia around her house.

“The icebergs and scenery are ethereal,” she says, adding that the hikes into the tundra to be with the penguins were incredibly special. “It’s nature at its all-time best.”

Her next dream destination is the Arctic. “I want to see the polar bears,” she explains.

Helen has been extremely active in the Desert chapter of the Trojan League. Six of her classmates—“All Forty-Niners,” she says proudly—have kept alive a Round Robin letter after all these years. Three of them were Helen of Troy and one was a Mortar Board President. They represented four different sororities; Helen was an Alpha Phi. One of the hardest things about seafaring, she admits, was a little pin she was asked to wear on her cruises. The company’s name was Golden Bear Travel, and the pin was of a golden bear.

“I had such a guilty conscience about it,” says the indomitable Trojan, shaking her head at the forced connection with rival schools. “It took me the longest time in the world.”

—K.Y.K.

Making Income Producing Gifts
Helen Donegan and others have increased their annual income while supporting the College’s vision, goals and future direction. Others might consider doing the same.

According to College advancement staff, an increasing number of College alumni are setting up contributions that provide them with an increased annual income as well as a favorable charitable deduction.

For more information, contact Susan Redfield, J.D., Director of Development, College Advancement at 213-740-1628 or email redfield@usc.edu or check out USC’s Planned Giving website at www.usc.edu/plannedgiving.

Perpetual Scholarship
Creating an endowed chair position is an effective way to support both research and education at USC College in perpetuity. Such an endowment, managed judiciously by the College, is a sound, lasting investment in the future. The endowments sustaining these chairs fund general operating funds, giving USC College more flexibility in supporting the activities of its faculty—for example, providing discretionary funds for laboratory space and equipment. They also provide a powerful and necessary tool for retaining renowned faculty members and for attracting new ones.

On April 29, USC College formally celebrated the creation of two new endowed chair positions. Philosophy Professor James Higginbotham was named the new Linda MacDonald Hifl Chair in Philosophy, in honor of the late Linda Mac Donald Hifl. History Professor Joan Piggott was named the new Gordon L. MacDonald Chair in History, in honor of the late Gordon L. MacDonald.

So she did. For five years, she sailed from Los Angeles to Australia and back, on a paradisical route that included stops in New Zealand, Tahiti, Rotaranga and Pango Pango. All in all, she traveled that route over 25 times, but she didn’t stop there.

Her love for the sea eventually took her and her husband all around the world. They hosted 10 world cruises, among many other separate trips. The trip to China fostered the relationship with Dennis that continues to this day. A mohair tapestry that graces the head of her bed is a souvenir from a trip to Mombasa. But her favorite place, she says without a moment’s hesitation, is Antarctica, which was evident given the proliferation of penguin paraphernalia around her house.

“The icebergs and scenery are ethereal,” she says, adding that the hikes into the tundra to be with the penguins were incredibly special. “It’s nature at its all-time best.”

Her next dream destination is the Arctic. “I want to see the polar bears,” she explains.

Helen has been extremely active in the Desert chapter of the Trojan League. Six of her classmates—“All Forty-Niners,” she says proudly—have kept alive a Round Robin letter after all these years. Three of them were Helen of Troy and one was a Mortar Board President. They represented four different sororities; Helen was an Alpha Phi. One of the hardest things about seafaring, she admits, was a little pin she was asked to wear on her cruises. The company’s name was Golden Bear Travel, and the pin was of a golden bear.

“I had such a guilty conscience about it,” says the indomitable Trojan, shaking her head at the forced connection with rival schools. “It took me the longest time in the world.”

—K.Y.K.
Supporting the Promise of Education

For those who knew Michael Sullivan, it seems only fitting that the $1.2 million scholarship fund he bequeathed to the USC College of International Relations (SIR) upon his death in 2000 was designed to further the education of USC College graduates lacking the financial means to pursue advanced degrees.

Sullivan, who received a bachelor’s degree from SIR in 1957, was a true believer in educational opportunity for all. As a high school college counselor in the farming community of Watsonville, Sullivan spent nearly 30 years assisting hundreds of underprivileged minority students, most of whose parents were poor immigrants, attend some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the nation.

“Michael strongly believed that instead of taking three generations to reach the upper echelons of society, bright, poor, minority students could do it in one generation—their own,” says John Sargent, Sullivan’s friend. “He believed that the possession of a postgraduate degree offers the best opportunity for higher advancement.

This year, Sullivan scholarships were awarded to international relations students Gordon Douglas, Trisha Lucero and Ksenija Vidulic, who all attended the London School of Economics, and Suzanne Mays, who is attending the University of Hawaii.

—K.S.

A Sampling of Recent Grants

Pioneer Lyman Alpha Measurements
Margaret J. Gatz, Psychology
Award from the National Institute of Mental Health for Generalized Anxiety Disorder in Older Adults. Award from the Alzheimer’s Association for Risk and Protective Factors for Alzheimer’s Disease

Dennis Hedgcock, Biological Sciences
Award from the University of Washington for Pacific Oyster Study. Award from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Using Molecular Techniques to Preserve Genetic Integrity of Endangered Salmon in a Supplementation Program

Dale A. Kiefue, Biological Sciences
Award from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for ICAMS Nile Delta Project

Yong-Gang Li, Earth Sciences
Award from the National Science Foundation for Seismic Characterization of Core Structure of the San Andreas Fault at Parkfield, California using Fault-Zone Guided Waves

Kenneth H. Nealon, Earth Sciences
Award from Argonne National Laboratory for Analysis of Methanotrophic Membrane Protein Expression in response to Electron Acceptor Availability. Award from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute for Technology for the Investigation of the Nature and Stability of Biosignatures

Magnus Nordborg, Biological Sciences
Award from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences for Haploype Block Structure of the Arabidopsis Genome

David A. Okaya, Earth Sciences
Award from the National Science Foundation for Collaborative Research: Mapping Coastal Tectonic Structure Using Seismic Anisotropy

Susan Owen, Earth Sciences
Award from U.S. Geological Survey for Geologic Analysis of Three-Dimensional Active Faulting in the Venutura Basin

Geraldine Peters, Space Sciences Center
Award from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Geocentric Structures around B Stars in Interacting Binaries. Award from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Geocentric Structures around B Stars in Interacting Binaries

Sonya G.K. Prakash, Chemistry
Award from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology for Advanced Solid Polymer Electrolytes for Rechargeable Lithium Batteries

Wayne Rankin, Mathematics
Award from the National Security Agency for Motive Coindology and Arithmetic Geometry

Paul Frank Singp, Mathematics
Award from Antion Corporation for Feature Aided Tracking (FAT) for M-Track

Ta-Lieng Teng, Earth Sciences
Award from the Central Weather Bureau-Taiwan for Earthquake Strong-Motion Rapid Reporting System and Related Studies

Mark Thompson, Chemistry
Award from the American Chemical Society for Singlet Oxygen Sensitization by Cyclometalated Iridium and Platinum Complexes. Award from New Energy & Ind. Tech. Dev. Org. (NEDO) for Multidisciplinary Approach to Electrical Doping of Conjugated Molecular Films

Curt Wittig, Chemistry
Award from the National Science Foundation for the purchase of a Multi-Tef Mass Spectrometer; Award from the Department of Energy for Photo-initiated Processes in Small Hydrides

College Speaker Series

This fall, some of the College’s most renowned scholars will appear in San Marino, Berkeley, New York and Newport Beach as part of the USC College Distinguished Speaker Series.

The luncheon lectures take place from 11:30 to 1:30. Admission is $35 per person and is complimentary for members of the USC College Associates.

For additional event information, or to RSVP online, please visit www.usc.edu/esvp (enter esvp code #1513). For phone reservations please call (213) 740-1744.

September 30, 2004
The Rise of Los Angeles and the American West — co-sponsored by the Huntington Library
William Deverell, Director of The Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, reveals the secrets of California’s past and talks about the remarkable innovation and diversity that has come to define the Golden State.

The Huntington Library 1151 Oxford Road San Marino, California

October 14, 2004
Science and the Future of the California Coast — co-sponsored by the USC Associates
Anthony Michaels, Director of the USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, discusses the state of California’s coast and the prospects for a healthy ocean.

The Claremont Resort & Spa 41 Tunneel Road Berkeley, California

November 11, 2004
Collections, Collectors and their Stories — co-sponsored by the USC Alumni Association
Malcolm Baker, Director of the USC Getty Program in the History of Collecting and Display, discusses the culture of art collecting. He previously worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Union League 38 East 57th Street (at Park) New York, New York

December 2, 2004
Jesus in America — co-sponsored by the USC Alumni Association
Richard Wightman Fox, USC College Professor of History, talks about his new book “Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession.”

The Four Seasons Hotel 690 Newport Center Drive Newport Beach, California
Book Challenges the ‘When in Rome’ Syndrome

The owner of the Chinese live-animal food shop doesn’t get it. Why was she cited for selling live chickens when the Italian restaurant across the street boils dozens of live lobsters everyday? A man from Yemen is equally mystified. He was arrested for chewing Khat leaves, which yield a wired effect comparable to drinking three espressos. He did not know the leaves are considered a controlled substance in the United States. Renteln was cited for chewing Khat leaves, which yielded a wired effect comparable to drinking three espressos. He did not know the leaves are considered a controlled substance in the United States.

For many immigrants, living in America is a cultural balancing act: they struggle to preserve their native customs while conforming to the laws of their new home.

In her new book The Cultural Defense (Oxford, 2004), Alison Dundes Renteln of USC College examines hundreds of court cases involving customs and religious beliefs linked to alleged drug abuse, animal cruelty and mistreatment of the dead.

“The whole point of the book is to challenge policies based on the ‘When in Rome’ presumption,” says Renteln, a professor of political science. “The right to your culture is a basic human right. People may act in ways that seem totally out of line but make sense when you understand their customs and background.” Although there is no official cultural defense in any legal system, courts often are left to decide whether a person’s culture can offer an explanation of behavior. Yet it’s rare that a judge takes one’s customs and beliefs into account in criminal cases.

Renteln doesn’t believe cultural defenses should be used to excuse an illegal activity. She does think the courts should consider a defendant’s cultural background during the guilt and penalty phases of a case, particularly when assigning a punishment.

As more immigrants make their homes in the United States and in other countries in Europe, arguments concerning the right to maintain one’s cultural identity are becoming increasingly prevalent in schools, workplaces and courts. At the same time, immigrants are feeling pressure to conform to American standards.

But divisions remain—especially in areas where laws are on the books. Renteln started studying cultural defenses a decade ago. At that time, she was ambivalent about using cultural arguments in court.

“In the end, if the traditions don’t involve irreparable harm to [people], the government should not interfere with them. Cultural information should be admissible in all cases to help the court understand motivations, but that does not mean I think culture should always influence the outcome in cases,” she adds.

“I am usually in support of the cultural defense, which means opening the door to evidence about a person’s cultural background. We have to take a case-by-case approach to deciding whether the information should affect the disposition of the case.”

—Gilien Silsby, USC News Service

USC College sails past key milestones on new life sciences building

Now more than halfway to completion, construction of USC College’s Molecular & Computational Biology building is “on time and on budget,” according to Jim McElwain, the primary liaison on capital projects in the College Dean’s Office.

The state-of-the-art, $55-million life science facility is on-track to meet its targeted opening date in May 2005, just two years after construction began on a site next to Kaprielian Hall.

“We’ve met some tight deadlines, and we’ve passed the point when we’re most likely to be hit by delays and unforeseen costs from bad weather or other problems. If everything continues this smoothly, we should have no problem finishing on time and on budget,” McElwain says.

College Dean Joseph Aoun welcomed the news of rapid progress on the construction, adding that fundraising efforts are advancing in tandem.

“We’ve met some tight deadlines, and we’re passed the point when we’re most likely to be hit by delays and unforeseen costs from bad weather or other problems. If everything continues this smoothly, we should have no problem finishing on time and on budget,” McElwain says. College Dean Joseph Aoun welcomed the news of rapid progress on the construction, adding that fundraising efforts are advancing in tandem.

Aoun. “The university and our many college supporters are making a major investment in the College’s research infrastructure, an investment that will enable our faculty to make new biological and medical discoveries and train the best of tomorrow’s scientists.”

Recent milestones include:

• In late April, construction crews finished the building’s concrete frame. After pouring the concrete for the final roof slab the crew joined College faculty and others for the traditional “Topping Out” party.
• With the building’s skeleton in place, the crew started on the building’s skin. In June, they added a façade of brick and stone to the exterior.
• Focus has shifted to the building’s interior. In summer, faculty toured a laboratory mock-up and gave feedback on design.
• Funding continues to proceed with the support of individuals, foundations, corporations and the U.S. government.

—E.E.
industrialist and long-time USC trustee Henry Salvatori deeply believed that service is each individual citizen’s responsibility. It was upon this idealistic bedrock that he established the Grace Ford Salvatori Community Scholarship Fund in honor of his late wife’s longtime association with USC College’s Joint Educational Project (JEP) (for more on JEP, see page 8).

The scholarship, which was established in 1991, is given annually to as many as six College students who best exemplify Salvatori’s community-minded spirit. Salvatori died in 1997 at the age of 96. “Salvatori believed that through service, young people become invested in the community, feel responsible for it and care more about the issues affecting society,” says Tammy Anderson, director of JEP.

This year, the scholarship was awarded to Jacqueline Deelstra, Elizabeth DiGiacomo, Patricia Gonzalez and Rivka Katz, each of who are extremely dedicated to community service and have all volunteered through JEP. “I grew up just a few blocks away from USC’s campus,” says Gonzalez, a junior psychology and occupational therapy major. “So when I’m working with these local kids, I feel like I’m giving back to a ‘little me.’ There is just so much of a need to give back around here.” —K.S.
Faculty News

American Academy of Microbiology

USC College marine microbiologist Douglas Capone has been elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology. Capone has been recognized for revealing the importance of microbes in global nitrogen and carbon cycling. Capone is credited for discovering the critical—and quantitatively important—role nitrogen-fixing microbes play in the movement of nitrogen through marine ecosystems. He was also honored for his pioneering research on plankton, notably the cyanobacteria Trichodesmium—a group of tiny marine algae that can transform atmospheric nitrogen gas into a form readily used by other living things.

Gifford Lectures

Stephen Toulmin, Henry R. Luce Professor in Anthropology and International Relations, has been invited to present at the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. Since their inception in the late 1800s, the Gifford Lectures have become the foremost intellectual event on the subject of religion.

The Economics of Islam

King Faisal Chair in Islamic Thought and Culture and Professor of Economics Timur Kur'an has recently published a book entitled Islam and Modernity: The Economics Predicaments of Islamism. (Princeton University Press, 2004). In the book, Kur'an argues that the doctrine of Islamic economics is largely irrelevant to present economic challenges. Kur'an also has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and will spend the upcoming academic year at Stanford University.

State Ocean Summit

Anthony Michaels, director of the USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies and professor of biology, joined an expert panel advising Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on new strategies to protect and restore the nation’s coastal and ocean ecosystems. The Jackson Citizen Patriot article on the summit held in Sacramento last April. In May, Michael’s received the Title VII fellowship and will spend the upcoming academic year at Stanford University.

Faculty Innovation Honored

Five proposals were awarded grants from the Fund for Innovative Undergraduate Teaching for the academic year 2004-2005. Faculty winners in the College include: Kelli Mustic, assistant professor of sociology, for “SOC 169—New Family Forms in Social Context: Connecting Theory, Practice and Community”; and two lecturers in Spanish and Portuguese, Sofia Ruiz-Alfaro and Claudia Soria, for “IBSP 240—Creating an Online Reader for Spanish 240.”

International Nigerian Conference

C. Sylvester Whitaker, former USC dean of social sciences and neornic professor of political science, was an invited speaker at the International Conference on the Sokoto Caliphate and its Legacies in Abuja, Nigeria, in June. At the conference, he contributed his expertise on colonial transformation and contemporary relevance of the caliphate. A caliph is a successor of Muhammad as temporal and spiritual head of Islam.

BWF Career Award

Genomics researcher Noah Rosenberg, a postdoctoral fellow in molecular and computational biology, has received a 2004 Burrington Wellcome Career Award in the Biomedical Sciences. Rosenberg is one of just 16 young scientists worldwide to be selected for the annual award, which includes $500,000 in start-up funds and aims to foster the development and productivity of promising scientists early in their careers.

Clinical Psychology Society

Professor of Psychology Gerald Davison has been elected President of the Society of Clinical Psychology, a division of the American Psychological Association.

New Neuroscience Director

Michael Quick, associate professor of biological sciences, is the new director of the USC Neuroscience Graduate Program. He replaces Professor Larry Swanson, who will return to his own research and writing.

Highest Honors for Geophysicist

An emeritus professor and member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, Keiti Aki has received the 2004 William Bowie Medal, the highest honor bestowed by the American Geophysical Union. One of the leading seismologists of his era, Aki was selected for his “outstanding contributions to fundamental geophysics and for unselfish cooperation in research.”

Emeritus Professor on Great Plague

Emeritus Professor of History A. Lloyd Mooke, along with his wife, Dorothy, has published a major study of the last great plague in London entitled The Great Plague: The Story of London’s Most Deadly Year. In the book, the Moopests quote their knowledge of history (A. Lloyd) and microbiology (Dorothy) to analyze the results of their original archival research.

Distinguished Lecture Series

Kenneth Neallson, Wigley Chair in Environmental Studies and professor of earth sciences and biological sciences, spoke at the State University of New York at Buffalo’s Distinguished Lecture Series in May.

Christie’s Compounds

Carl Christi, a chemist in the Loker Hydrocarbon Research Institute, has received attention for his recent synthesis of new binary metal polyanide compounds, which hold promise for electronic applications. His work was described in Chemical & Engineering News, a magazine published by the American Chemical Society.

Gay and Lesbian Rights

Walter L. Williams, professor of anthropologies and gender studies, co-wrote (with Yolanda Rettet) Gay and Lesbian Rights in the United States: A Documentary History. (Greenwood Press, 2003). Professor Williams has recently served as an expert witness in several U.S. Immigration Court cases involving gay immigrants seeking U.S. asylum on the basis of anti-gay persecution in their home country.

Student News

A Rising Neuroscientist

Kimberly Christian Up-and-coming scientist Kimberly Christian completed her doctoral studies in a whirlwind of recognition this spring. Christian received the first annual William E. Trusten Student Award from the biological sciences department just hours before being named “Student of the Year” by the USC Neuroscience Graduate Program. In the fall, Christian departs for a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health, where she will continue her behavioral and electrophysiological studies of learning and memory.

History Awards

Doctoral history student Craig Leffon was awarded a $30,000 Social Science Research Council fellowship for research on sexuality for his dissertation on homosexualidentity in the 1950s. Victoria Vantoch, also in the history department’s Ph.D. program, won a year’s fellowship at the National Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian, funded by the Guggenheim Foundation, for her dissertation on stewardesses in the 1950s. Undergraduate history student, Tracy Wang, received a fellowship for the summer program at the Gilder Lehrman Institute at Columbia University.

Doctoral Travel Awards

Alba Hesselrooth, a graduate student in the School of International Relations, and Tomoyo Matsumoto, graduate student in economics, received Association of Pacific Rim Universities Doctoral Student Conference Travel Awards to attend the APRU conference at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Alumni News

Inventor of the Year

Shima Vijayendran (Ph.D., Chemistry, ’99) has been recognized by the Battelle Memorial Institute as “Inventor of the Year.” Vijayendran joined Battelle in 1995 and is one of the leading authorities on specialty chemical and polymer systems for a wide range of applications.

Rebuilding Iraq

Evans Hanson (B.A., Economics, ’00) was quoted in an NBC News segment about the role of civil affairs specialists in Iraq. Captain Evans, a civil affairs specialist, in Iraq, works to find local contractors for reconstruction projects.

Giving Back

It’s all come full circle for Elda Pech (B.A., General Studies ’98), a testing administrator at L.A. Unified School District’s Magnolia Elementary School. This fall, Pech will place volunteers USC students through the College’s Joint Educational Program (JEP) in teaching assistant positions at Magnolia. More than 10 years ago, Pech volunteered as a first-grade teaching assistant through JEP at Vermont Elementary, a school just down the street from Magnolia.

Alum Actor

Austin Nichols (B.A., English, ’02) was featured in a Jackson, Mich., newspaper, The Jackson Citizen-Patriot, for his budding acting career. Nichols was cast in two episodes of the popular HBO series “Six Feet Under,” played J.D. in the movie “The Day After Tomorrow” and will play John Green in the romantic comedy “Wimbledon.”

Outstanding Faculty Award

John F. Kennedy University selected David Nyssen (B.A., History, ’74) as the 2004 honoree of the Harry L. Morrison Outstanding Faculty Award. Nyssen is an adjunct faculty member at JFK University’s School of Law.
Fellowship for New Americans
Jacob Chacko (B.A., Biological Sciences, ’80), a first-year medical student at UCLA, was awarded a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. One of only 10 recipients selected, Chacko will receive an annual grant of $20,000 and one-half tuition for two years.

Devoted California Teacher Retires
After 36 years of teaching in the Charter Oak Unified School District of Covina, Calif., Mike Mandala (B.A., Physical Education, ’57; M.S., Education, ’68) retired. He taught both history and physical education at Royal Oak and Charter Oak high schools.

Commencement Speaker
Heidi M. Hurst (J.D., ’98, Ph.D., Philosophy, ’02), 11th dean of the College of Law at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, was the featured speaker at Monmouth College’s commencement exercises in May.

Neighborhood Academic Initiative Student Success
Karnina Mendoza (B.A., English, ’02), who first came to USC in the 7th grade as a member of the very first Neighborhood Academic Initiative class, has accepted a major Ph.D. fellowship from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She spent the past year teaching in Los Angeles.

Obituaries
Jean-Jacques Laffont, Distinguished Professor, 57
On May 1, USC College Economics Professor Jean-Jacques Laffont died after a long battle with cancer. On May 5, the newspaper Le Monde remembered Laffont as “One of the best economists of his generation,” adding, “Through his research, which ranked with those of Nobel Prize-winning colleagues and his tireless work in developing countries, he made the economic that has done the most for the study of French economics.” Laffont joined USC College in September 2001 as the first holder of the John Elliott Chair in Economics. He was recently named a USC Distinguished Professor. Throughout his life, Laffont provided guidance to international organizations such as the World Bank and some of the largest European and American private and state-owned firms. His book Competition in Telecommunications (MIT Press), translated into Chinese, was an industry handbook. At USC, Laffont was a force behind strengthening the economics department’s research efforts in areas of theoretical and applied economics and was instrumental in attracting numerous senior faculty to USC College’s economics department. Laffont came to USC from the University of Toulouse, where he had built a leading research center. He was the author of more than 200 papers and 14 books. Laffont earned his Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard University in 1975.

David Andrus, beloved teacher, 63
David J. Andrus, USC College professor and peace activist, died June 29 from cancer. Andrus joined the USC School of International Relations as an adjunct instructor in 1994 teaching Latin American issues and served as director of the peace and conflict studies program. Andrus received his M.A. and Ph.D. from USC in Politics and International Relations. At the center of his research was the long-term impact of current U.S. foreign policy, particularly that of post-war Iraq. In 1999, he spent time in Iraq as a member of a humanitarian assessment delegation sponsored by the Red Crescent. He returned to Iraq in June 2003, hosted by Christian Peacemaker Teams, an organization that provides human-shielding and intercultural services to populations suffering conflict.

William E. Trusten, dedicated student advisor, 51
William E. Trusten, a long-time senior staff member in the USC College biological sciences department and an alumnus of USC Thorsen School of Music, died June 9 of cancer. Trusten joined the biology department in 1988, first working with the molecular biology graduate students and then, in 1996, directing the administration of all biology doctoral programs. Trusten helped scores of students successfully navigate the graduate school experience. Before his death, the department created a new student award in his honor. With funds from the department, the College and individuals whose lives Trusten had touched, the department successfully collected $20,000 to endow the William E. Trusten Student Award. At a small, brief ceremony held in Trusten’s hospital room in May, the inaugural $1,000 award was presented to neuroscience doctoral student Kim Christian, now a postdoctoral fellow at the National Institutes of Health. Donations by check in Trusten’s memory may be supported to the endowed award (payable to “William E. Trusten Student Award”) in care of Glen A. Smith, Biological Sciences, AHP 107F, MC 0371, USC, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0371.

Jerome Lawrence, playwright, wrote “Inherit the Wind,” 88
Jerome Lawrence, a faculty member in the USC Professional Writing Program for 16 years, died February 28. Lawrence was a playwright and theater director whose plays include the classic courtroom drama “Inherit the Wind.” He taught playwriting at USC.

Hubert Selby, writer, 75
Hubert Selby, an adjunct professor in the USC Professional Writing Program for nearly 20 years, died April 26. Selby was an internationally acclaimed author who wrote Last Exit to Brooklyn, Requiem for a Dream, and other dark, existential novels that dealt with the victims of a society that had failed them.

Edward C. McDonagh, sociologist, 89
Edward C. McDonagh (B.A., Sociology, ’37; Ph.D., Sociology, ’42) died April 21. He was a professor of sociology at USC from 1947-1969 and dean of the division of social sciences and communications from 1960-69. He also served as dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Ohio State from 1974-78.

William Whitney, historian, 88

Nathan L. Halpern, television pioneer, 90
Nathan L. Halpern (B.A., ’56) died April 3. He developed the concept of closed circuit television, was a trustee for the Central Park Conservancy, and a founding member and president of the East Hampton Beach Preservation Society.

David E. Nuttall, physicist, 62
David E. Nuttall (M.A., Physics, ’74; Ph.D., Physics, ’77) died March 24. Nuttall was a photo-radior detector with the U.S. Air Force from 1960-63 and in 1962 was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal. After graduating from USC, he spent most of his life working in the aerospace industry. He has been honored with the establishment of the David E. Nuttall Scholarship Fund at USC.

Jean Cleveland Roberts, peace activist and environmentalist, 85
Jean Cleveland Roberts, a longtime USC supporter, died June 15. Roberts was a tireless peace activist who, along with her husband Burton, created the USC College Roberts Profosnecmship in Applied Violence Studies. She was also a dedicated environmentalist and helped fund the USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies.

Gerald Deskin, pioneer in educational psychology, 75
Gerald Deskin (Ph.D., Psychology, ’66) died March 9. He was the founder of the Learning Center. He was a columnist for the Los Angeles Daily News and past president of the San Fernando Valley Psychological Association.
Saigon in the Springtime
Examining the ‘historical memory’ of the Vietnam War

Viet Nguyen says, “it’s very difficult to isolate the ‘national’ from the ‘international.’ What the U.S. was doing in Asia, and what was happening within Asian politics and economies, impacted Asian Americans very much.”

Last spring, Nguyen—an associate professor of English and American studies and ethnicity at USC College and a 2002 Raubenheimer Junior Faculty Award recipient—spent his sabbatical leave in Saigon, where he worked on two projects. One is a collection of short stories, and the other is a critical project on the relationship between Vietnam and the United States.

“I am retsoyling myself as a scholar in an age of globalization,” Nguyen explains. “I never intended to do international or comparative work.” He says that when he was a graduate student at UC Berkeley, where he received his Ph.D. in English, he was purely focused upon Asian American claims to a national belonging.

Nguyen notes that the trip has impacted his academic work as an Americanist, and will undoubtedly enrich his classes at the College, where he teaches American literature and film, with a focus on race, nationality, class and gender.

The Personal and the Political

Nguyen was born in Vietnam and spent the early years of his childhood in Buon Me Thuot, a village known for its coffee. The town was also the first to be captured in the 1975 invasion of the south.

Nguyen’s parents—devout Vietnamese Catholic peasants—were doubly displaced. In 1984, as Vietnam was about to be divided along the 17th parallel, they had fled the north, fearing religious persecution and economic deprivation.

And then in 1975 when the south collapsed, Nguyen’s family fled Vietnam for the United States, leaving a hard-earned fortune as tailors, jewelers, auto dealers and merchants. Amidst the chaos, they were also separated from their adopted daughter.

This story, Nguyen informs, is not at all unusual in the Vietnamese American community, where the dissolution of families and the tragedies of war are commonplace conversations.

His extended family in Vietnam still relies upon his parents for remittances. “So,” he points out, “the history of division, dependence and inequality has been very important to me.”

Last spring marked his second visit to Vietnam. Two years ago, his first journey left him “dismayed tremendously by the poverty and the culture shock.” Because of his personal ties to the country, he felt his “unequal and unearned status as a rich tourist,” and he directly experienced the guilt of the dysfunctional relationship that the Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid describes “between tourists and natives because of the larger inequalities of globalization.”

He was forced to revisit issues of identity. “I had to ask myself yet again who I was,” he says. “Vietnamese, Vietnamese American, Asian American or American…What does it mean for me to take my western academic training and live in Vietnam?”

Prejudices and Preconceptions

During his sabbatical, he was skeptical of the Communist state, and questioned its limitations on free speech and economic progress. Part of those biases come from growing up in San Jose, California, in a virulently anti-communist Vietnamese American enclave.

“I wanted to see how the Vietnamese were living and grappling with various kinds of political, cultural and economic issues,” he claims. “I had many prejudices and preconceptions and I wanted to test them against what I saw.”

He has also come to question similar topics in America.

“I want to keep that comparative focus, acknowledging similarities without obliterating differences,” Nguyen states.

His research project will demonstrate how both nations grapple with parallel issues. One major focus will be the “historical memory” of the Vietnam War.

“Both states seem to actively want to suppress troublesome aspects of the past,” he comments.

His Writing

His main priority, he says, has been his fiction writing. He is currently working on a short story collection.

Nguyen’s first book, Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America looked at how politics was dealt with in literature both as a series of events, such as internment, war and exclusion, and as a method of formal expression.

He also examined the political limitations of Asian American identity and culture. What came out of a radical movement in the ’60s has become “a middle-class identity and culture that does more to advance capitalism and globalization.”

He calls his work “basically pessimistic” but credits his recent foray into fiction for making him a better literary critic.

“Being able to write fiction makes a critic more sensitive to the challenges that writers face, and to the complexities of form. I have to think about how my theory of literature can actually be carried out in the writing of fiction.”

Nguyen asks himself how one writes a story about an outsider in Vietnam without objectifying the outsider or the natives. “This question of objectification recurs constantly in literature about Americans in Asia, or by Asian Americans writing about Asia.”

“It’s easy enough for me to criticize writers,” he admits. “But it’s very hard for me to actually do what they do.”

Nguyen also studied the Vietnamese language at Vietnam National University, the most competitive public university in Saigon. He met up with his long-lost sister in June and spent the rest of the summer continuing his studies and conducting research interviews. In the fall, Nguyen will begin a year-long fiction writing fellowship from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

—Katherine Yungmee Kim