Our mission is to advance civil dialogue that transcends partisan divisions and explores solutions to our most pressing national and global challenges.

“I’ve always believed that a lot of the trouble in the world would disappear if we were talking to each other instead of about each other.”

President Ronald Reagan
CHALLENGE

Today’s political divide is wider than at any time since the Civil War. News is fake, facts are discounted and rancor is at historic levels. Now, more than ever, we need innovative pathways to restore dispassionate analysis to the political arena and renew the compromise essential to our democracy. The Center for the Political Future advances a new model for political discourse that opens those pathways.

OBJECTIVES

• Develop a deep understanding of pressing national and global issues and how policy is made at the national and global levels.
• Study and understand the psychological and intellectual scaffold on which conservatives and liberals operate in order to develop more inclusive frameworks for debate and decision making.
• Model and advance civil dialogue demonstrating that individuals with different political perspectives can speak respectfully with each other and find ways to work together.
• Prepare students to become effective citizens by teaching and practicing the skills of practical political leadership.

Former prime minister of the United Kingdom Gordon Brown speaks to USC students while teaching a course on “Case Studies in Modern Leadership” in Spring 2015.
The Center is led by two of the nation’s most experienced and respected political experts, Robert Shrum and Michael Murphy.

Shrum is the Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics at USC Dornsife and has been director of the Jesse Unruh Institute of Politics, which will be a vital part of the Center. He has a storied career as an author and campaign adviser to Democratic candidates. His numerous clients included Edward Kennedy, Joe Biden, John Glenn and Barbara Mikulski in their Senate campaigns, and John Kerry and Al Gore in their presidential races. Overseas his clients included Ehud Barak in his campaign for Prime Minister of Israel, the British Labour Party and Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister of Ireland and the President of Colombia.

Murphy is one of the Republican Party’s most successful political consultants. Murphy has led more than 20 statewide campaigns to victory, including gubernatorial races for Jeb Bush, Mitt Romney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Christine Todd Whitman, John Engler, and Tommy Thompson as well as dozens of Senatorial, United States House and other races. He’s worked on six Republican presidential campaigns and is widely known for his work in the 2000 GOP primaries as a senior strategist for Senator John McCain. He has advised leaders in Canada, Panama, El Salvador, Europe and in the former Soviet Union. He is a widely known political pundit, appearing frequently on NBC, CNN, and NPR.
OUR APPROACH

The Center will include specific research projects, endowed chairs and fellowships, public policy polling and civic engagement to create a powerful combination of scholarly and practical expertise to address urgent questions and to provide a broader dimension to the education of our students.

“We have to become respectful of each other [and] calm the temperature … in our public debate.”

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell
The Center will be a cornerstone of the new USC Dornsife initiative, *The Academy and the Public Square*, which aims to renew and widen the connections between the university and public actors who deal with critical local, national, and global challenges. By inviting political leaders and public voices to be active partners in its mission, the Center will be a leading force for generating engagement between universities and political experts and institutions.
POLITICAL PROGRAMMING
By hosting experts from different points on the ideological spectrum, conferences and workshops test productive means of discourse and draw attention to the solutions across political fault lines. We aim to:

• Understand and contextualize causes of the political divide
• Work toward a common fact base
• Renew civil discourse to find common ground
• Explore the domestic and global implications of different policy approaches.

ISSUES
Conferences and workshops address the most pressing and intractable issues of our time. Many of them will be divisive. But political solutions can only be found on the path that runs directly through points of contention. Unlike traditional political think tanks, the center approaches these issues in a nonpartisan manner. Examples of the issues the center may address include:

• Tax reform
• Immigration
• Healthcare insurance
• Climate change
• Ideological radicalization
• Financial market reform
• Women, minority, LGBT rights
• First and Second Amendment rights
• Terrorism and US foreign policy
• Religious freedom
• Government mandates
• Electoral reform
• Campaign finance

MEDIA RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS
The Center will generate continuing opportunities for media coverage and will be supported by USC Dornsife’s award-winning communication department. The center will maintain its own website and social media channels to extend its outreach. The communication department will produce podcasts, videos, teaching materials and presentations to outside audiences, particularly schools, youth groups, political and civic groups, and the political media.
“What the people want is very simple — they want an America as good as its promise.”
Rep. Barbara Jordan
JESSE M. UNRUH INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
Integral to the Center, the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics will continue to serve students by giving them the opportunity to be politically active and civically engaged through internships, scholarships and professional development. The institute facilitates student internships in the offices of elected officials, non-profit organizations, public affairs professionals, and more. At the institute, USC Dornsife students also conduct research into major public policy challenges at the local, state, and national levels.

BUILDING FUTURE LEADERS
The Center supports an educational mission rooted in the liberal arts that encourages global citizenship, public service and analytical thinking. In addition to opportunities to engage with our renowned faculty and visiting fellows, access to new technology and pedagogical resources help students think about public life and how to shape a future that improves it.

The Center’s civic engagement extends beyond the campus through initiatives that educate and empower high school students, young adults and marginalized communities to take part in the political process.
RESEARCH AND POLLING

TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS
A standing project studying the intersection of disruptive new technologies and politics will examine how digital disruption could be used to strengthen rather than undermine political discourse in the 21st century.

THE USC DORNSIFE/LA TIMES POLL
The poll has earned national recognition for its innovative methodology. Almost alone in 2016, it pointed to the possibility of President Trump’s victory. In partnership with the USC Dornsife Center for Social and Economic Research, the Center for the Political Future conducts an ongoing national survey of political races and public attitudes, moving from the 2018 midterm election to the 2020 presidential contest. In addition, a California poll now uses the same methodology to track trends on issues and candidates in America’s largest state.
RESOURCES AND ADVANTAGES

With academic departments and programs spanning the humanities and natural and social sciences, and with close connections to other schools at the university, USC Dornsife has unparalleled resources that can partner with the Center to help carry out its mission. The following is a sample of them: the national political dialogue.

- School of International Relations
- Department of Political Science
- Department of Economics
- Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration
- Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies
- Shoah Foundation
- Program for Environmental and Regional Equity
- Pacific Rim regional centers (Korea, China, Japan)
- Center for Economic and Social research
- Brain and Creativity Institute

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

The Global Leadership Award will set a benchmark for leadership by annually recognizing a global leader who exemplifies qualities of civility, empathy and personal integrity. The award will be presented at a ceremony on campus, where the honoree will address the university community.
“Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future.”

President John F. Kennedy