I am very happy to be back in the Clinical Area, after several years of working in University administration, most recently as Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Steve Lopez asked me to write a few words for the Newsletter to introduce myself to those of you whom I have not met yet.

I am a clinical health psychologist whose primary interests have been in understanding how individuals deal with and adjust to life-threatening situations that are largely out of their direct control. Much of the work in my lab has involved investigating the distress and disruption associated with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer and the factors that aid individuals in coping and adjustment. This work, which has included a focus on diverse groups of patients and their family members, has involved collaborations with physicians and other health care providers in the United States and Europe. Over the past few years, my interests have expanded to include research on trauma and resilience among survivors of the 1994 Rwanda genocide against the Tutsi. Through close collaboration with organizations in Rwanda, I have gathered interview and questionnaire data about survivors’ experiences during the genocide and their relation to post-genocide adjustment. During my sabbatical last year in Cambridge, MA, I had the opportunity to expand my understanding of the cultural and political contexts in Rwanda through participation in Harvard’s African Studies workshop and other activities in the Cambridge area. I also have been going to Rwanda on a regular basis to offer workshops in the management of post-traumatic stress. Here is a picture of one of our workshop groups from this August.

I have really enjoyed working with the outstanding students (you know who you are!) in my Psych 660 seminar on PTSD this semester. I look forward to meeting everyone else. Please stop by SGM 516 to say hello, if you get a chance.
Dr. Margaret Gatz is retiring from her position in the Department of Psychology at USC effective December 31, 2016. She will not be leaving the university, as she will continue to be affiliated with the Center for Economic and Social Research in Verna and Peter Dauterive Hall (VPD). She has arranged to continue to be Professor of Psychology and serve on students’ committees. Nevertheless, she will be leaving the Department of Psychology and the Clinical Science program. This is a huge loss for us as Professor Gatz has carried out a distinguished research career, primarily in the study of older adults, has created and directed for decades one of the nation’s few clinical geropsychology programs, has held important leadership positions in the department (Department Chair and Director of Clinical Training) and in the profession, has been a wonderful mentor to many, both students and faculty, and has been a most respected colleague.

In this brief summary, I wish to capture the spirit of Professor Gatz as opposed to a litany of achievements. Both merit consideration but I opt for a synthesis than a list. Professor Gatz received her BA in Psychology from Rhodes College in Memphis Tennessee in 1966 and her PhD from Duke in 1972. She continued at Duke for one more year as a post-doctoral fellow in the Center for the study of Aging and Human Development. She was at her first academic post at the University of Maryland, College Park 1973-78 before moving to USC. She has been at USC for 38 years.

It is hard to capture Dr. Gatz’s diverse interests over her 40+ academic career but there are certainly some clear themes. Maryland had one of the top clinical community psychology programs in the nation in the seventies and you certainly see evidence of a community psychologist in her publications and activities. She has worked to improve the lives of others clinically but also institutionally, as evidenced by her significant contributions to bring national attention to older adults in the training of psychologists. There is also considerable evidence of a measurement psychologist, beginning with her early work on Rotter’s locus of control measure to the focus of most of her work in the last twenty-five years, the study of gene-environment interaction in dementia. Professor Gatz has also demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity throughout her career. Most know of her work with older adults but few may recognize that she has a longstanding interest in racial ethnic minority communities. For example, she has an early publication on social competence among African Americans in the 1970s and more recently published an evaluation of a health campaign to improve the brain health of Latinos. In addition, for 5 years she helped to run the Minority Aging Network in Psychology (MANIP) that aimed to recruit diverse students into the field and included hosting two summer programs at USC. These are just some of the key themes from her stellar career.

Dr. Gatz’s awards and honors reflect well her significant achievements. In 2012 she was awarded Fellow status of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the organization that publishes Science. The fact that she has published 249 journal articles and 44 book chapters reflect her considerable academic contributions. In 2006, she received the Donald P. Kemp award from the Gerontological Society of America, the top award from the largest gerontology professional organization. In 2001 she received USC Dornsife’s highest faculty distinction, the Raubenheimer Award for her longstanding contribution in research, teaching and service. She has also received numerous mentorship/teaching awards, from GASP, the Department of Psychology, the Gerontological Society of America, and Division 20 of the American Psychological Association. Several of the leaders in clinical geropsychology were either her students or were more informally mentored by her.

What stands out to many of her colleagues is her selflessness. She lets her actions speak for themselves—contributions to her students, her colleagues, the department, the university, and the profession. We are most grateful Margy. We thank you and wish you well.