



USC Ambassadors

C. L. MAX NIKIAS
President

*Robert C. Packard President's Chair
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and the Humanities*



**President and Mrs. Nikias welcome Trojans
for the holidays**

[Click here to see KTLA's heartwarming story](#)



***Business Insider* highlights
USC's tech leaders**

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impressive Trojan tech alumni](#)



**USC praised for its rapid ascent
among top universities**

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USC's influence and reach](#)



**George Lucas and Mellody Hobson
advance diversity at Cinematic Arts**

*[USC Annenberg receives a generous
grant to support diversity](#)*



**National Book Award for Poetry
goes to USC Dornsife student**

*[Click here to learn about
Robin Coste Lewis' powerful work](#)*



**Steven Spielberg and George Lucas
honored by President Obama**

*[Click here to learn more about
their prestigious awards](#)*



**Professor Solomon Golomb
awarded renowned Franklin Medal**

*[Click here to learn about his stellar work
in space communications](#)*

Dear Erica,

This is always a very special time of year, when the warmth and compassion of the holiday spirit combines with the joy and optimism of the Trojan spirit. Niki and I hope you are enjoying the season with those closest to you, and send you our own best wishes for the coming year.

I would like to begin this letter with two outstanding articles that focused on USC's recent successes, including reporter Joe Matthews' reflection on our university's dramatic ascent. "USC's rapid growth over the past generation from a regional school to a global powerhouse has turned it into one of California's most

influential institutions,” he wrote in the [Sacramento Bee](#). Mr. Matthews went on to stress that our flexibility as a private school has allowed us to raise the university’s endowment and profile. A separate story in [Business Insider](#) focused on the success of Trojan alumni, highlighting nine of USC’s most illustrious tech graduates. The story described their seminal roles in founding a range of dynamic companies, including Salesforce, Box, Apple, MySpace, Lucasfilm, Qualcomm, Geocities, Intuit, and Vizio. The article was a wonderful reminder of the extraordinary talent that has emerged from USC: Marc Benioff, Aaron Levie, Mike Markkula, Chris DeWolfe, George Lucas, Andrew Viterbi, David Bohnett, Scott Cook, and William Wang.

A gift and a grant to support diversity

Furthering USC’s proud history of diversity, the George Lucas Family Foundation announced a \$10 million gift to the university. This gift—directed to our [School of Cinematic Arts](#) by alumnus George Lucas and his wife, Mellody Hobson—stands as the largest single donation for student support in the school’s history, and will provide scholarships for African-American and Latino students, evenly divided between male and female students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. “Hispanic and African-American storytellers are underrepresented in the entertainment industry,” said Mr. Lucas. “It is Mellody’s and my privilege to provide this assistance to qualified students who want to contribute their unique experience and talent to telling their stories.”

Meanwhile, the [USC Annenberg School](#) received a generous \$5 million grant from the Annenberg Foundation to increase diversity in journalism. “If we want a news industry that truly understands and covers all of America, then our news industry has to embody all of America,” said USC Trustee Wallis Annenberg. “We have to attract the best and brightest of every race and ethnicity and economic background—we have to equip them with the most cutting-edge tools and skills so our news coverage can be just as inclusive and forward-looking.”

Trojans receive top awards

[Robin Coste Lewis](#), a Provost’s Fellow and doctoral candidate at the USC Dornsife College, recently received one of our nation’s most celebrated literary prizes: the National Book Award for Poetry. The award recognizes her exceptionally powerful first book, *Voyage of the Sable Venus and Other Poems*, which has drawn spectacular praise. *The New Yorker* describes it as a “remarkable collection,” while *Publishers Weekly* commends her writing as “formally polished, emotionally raw, and wholly exquisite.” Continuing the excellent news for students, a few weeks later, two Trojans—senior **Moriah Mulroe** and alumna **Anu Ramachandran**—were among the 32 recipients of a prestigious Marshall Scholarship, allowing them to pursue fully funded graduate degrees at leading British universities.

In November, USC Trustee [Steven Spielberg](#) was among the 17 exceptionally renowned and accomplished Americans who received this year’s Presidential

Medal of Freedom from President Obama. This distinction is our nation's highest civilian honor—and a well-deserved testament to Mr. Spielberg's extraordinary contributions as a visionary artist and distinguished humanitarian. USC alumnus [George Lucas](#), meanwhile, was among those who received this year's Kennedy Center Honors. In a video clip that played at the event, Mr. Lucas said that the “bright side of the force is love, the dark side is hate... stick to the bright side.” In paying tribute, President Obama described Mr. Lucas as “a vanguard of new Hollywood.”

Among other accolades, a true legend of our faculty—University and Distinguished Professor [Solomon Golomb](#)—received a Franklin Medal, an honor that has previously recognized Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking. Professor Golomb, who is also a 2013 winner of the National Medal of Science, was praised for his prescient work in space communications.

Once again, Niki and I wish you tremendous joy during the holidays. For us, the season began with one of our most memorable [Thanksgiving dinners](#) ever: we hosted 410 USC students in our home! A local news station covered the gathering, which you can see [here](#). It will surely remind you of the special joy Trojans feel at this time of year.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

C. L. Max Nikias
President

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