Town and Gown of the University of Southern California is a nonprofit philanthropic organization whose purpose is to support USC through scholarships for students, building and campus enhancements, and cultural programs.

President’s Message:

Dear Town and Gown of USC Members,

Happy Thanksgiving to you all!

Town and Gown of USC is thankful for all you do to keep our 501(c)(3) a vibrant and continually dynamic donor to our beloved university.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we wish you all a beautiful Thanksgiving and look forward to seeing you at our December General Meeting.

Fight On!

Beth Petak-Aaron
CEO/President 2022-2024
president@townandgownofusc.org

HAVE YOU JOINED OUR 120 Club?

A one-time donation of $120 goes directly to the Computer/Technology endowment fund, which will give opportunity for newly admitted eligible students to receive a computer. Click here to join or use the QR code. Your name will be acknowledged throughout the year.
Our November meeting commenced with the annual Holiday boutique where ACC organizations sold their exclusive Trojan items. Many members and their guests purchased products and books as well as having their own books signed by the author, Nicola Harrison.

The meeting on November 7th, had over 300 members and guests and encompassed a new idea of a program for Town and Gown of USC. We had a book club with the members reading the book Hotel Laguna and then had the author, Nicola Harrison, and alum, journalist Julie Chan, discuss the book. What a treat for Town and Gown of USC to have our first-ever book club! It was so interesting to learn how the author chose the subjects and researched to write a historical fiction book. Nicola Harrison spoke about her three books and the next one that is in progress, which will be about Balboa Island.

Julie Chan, a USC alum, was just as engaging and dynamic as she interviewed Nicola and gave us a snippet of her life and how she was a television reporter, but found a love for interviewing people. She then started her series of interviews with authors to promote their books and share their stories. She’s a passionate speaker with a unique ability to engage and connect her audiences.

There was great excitement in the room as we learned of some of our friends who were in the Pageant of the Masters and could definitely relate to the in depth description of events that happened in the book Hotel Laguna. It was indeed a program that was not only well-attended, but possibly could be the start of a new Town and Gown of USC tradition, judging from the comments and the vibe in the room.

Up next is our annual Holiday luncheon on December 5th with beautifully decorated tables by our members. We will be having the entire Thornton Chamber singer group serenade us with familiar holiday tunes and a sing-along. This event always sells out, so sign up now.

Happy Thanksgiving!
Debbie Wong and Lisa Up de Graff
Vice Presidents, Programs
Help us achieve our 2023-2024 goal of 120 New Members!

Stop by the Membership table in the Courtyard before General Meetings! We'd love to meet you AND your potential new member!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Marianne Hunt Aguilar (Hermosa Beach)
Marianne graduated from USC in 1982 with a double major in Broadcast Journalism and Communications Arts and Sciences. Marianne went on to work as an executive producer, producing large-scale events, training tours and experiential marketing programs. Marianne and her Dad (USC Law school graduate) love going to USC football games together to enjoy the game and USC spirit, but also as great father/daughter time spent together!

Kim Crawford (San Pedro)
Kim taught as an adjunct at USC from 1993-1999. Inspired by the Trojan experience, she graduated with her MBA from Marshall, and years later, her Ed.D. from Rossier. She is a business consultant and the co-founder/CEO of a start-up green-tech firm. She is excited to participate in volunteer activities as an alumna.

Laura Davidson (Ladera Ranch)
Laura graduated from USC with a BA degree in Psychology and received her M.Ed in Teaching & Learning from DePaul University with honors. She is a teacher at St. Junipero Serra Catholic School in Rancho Santa Margarita and is an active volunteer with the Saddleback Valley chapter of the National Charity League. She is married to a Trojan alum.

Joanna Diaz (Whittier)
Joanna earned a MPA from USC's Sol Price School of Public Policy in 2015. Joanna holds a real estate license and is commissioned as a Notary Public through the State of California. Prior to beginning her real estate career, Joanna had a long standing 20 plus year career in the healthcare industry. She serves her community by volunteering at her brokerage's monthly community events and connecting people with the services they need. Joanna is also an alum to the prestigious National Hispanic Leadership Institute, an award-winning playwright and author. During her leisure time, Joanna enjoys international travel with her husband of 30 years. She is a proud USC alumna and continues to Fight On!

Patrice DiRocco (Sherman Oaks)
Patrice graduated from USC with a bachelor’s degree in Art History. She is an alumna of the Alpha Delta Pi Sorority and of Marymount High School. She comes from a large Trojan Family; her brother and sister and their children are USC graduates. She is currently working at USC in central communications. Her hobbies include cooking, shopping and gift wrapping.

Christine Dorgan (Yorba Linda)
Christine is currently employed at The Walt Disney Company where she is Director, Environmental Sustainability and leads Environmental Data, Metrics, Reporting and Sustainable Design. She is a licensed Professional Engineer with her BS in Electrical Engineering and Certificate in Sustainability Leadership. She has extensive volunteer and leadership experience in various professional associations and her community organizations where she has held various board positions. She is proficient in event planning, membership drives, and committee reviews.

www.townandgownofusc.org  www.facebook.com/townandgownofusc  @townandgownofusc
Deirdre Kelly (Anaheim)
As a graduate of USC, Deirdre has worked with many of the richly diverse elements of the legal community. She started at Jones Day, and was then brought in as Vice President and Legal Counsel of American Savings Bank. Afterward, Deirdre joined a vibrant trial group at Kindel & Anderson, and later practiced real estate litigation with Paul Hastings. Deirdre then became a law school professor and today is Assistant Dean for Career Development and a professor at Western State College of Law.

Liza Lafreniere (Ladera Ranch)
Liza graduated from USC in 1994 with a BS in General Studies and earned her multiple subject teaching credential. She was a member of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority. She has a senior at USC and a sophomore at the University of Colorado. She enjoys serving others, crafting and photography.

Wendy Leavell (Huntington Beach)
Wendy is a proud Trojan and T&G Scholar. She earned her Doctorate in 2012 and carries out her Trojan values as the leader of a non-profit in south Orange County and in her work with the Rossier School of Education. Her love of USC has spread to her children, who are currently enjoying their undergrad experience as Trojans!

Jena Liddy (Pasadena)
Jena is a new Trojan parent. She is a pediatrician practicing in Encino. She graduated from Stanford and then UCLA for medical school and residency. She is a member of the Los Angeles Children’s Chorus board and has extensive volunteering experience for schools and the arts. She is looking forward to being part of the Trojan family.

Sherri Nourse (Newport Beach)
Sherri graduated from UCLA with her bachelor’s and doctorate degree. She currently has a media marketing firm, Ambition Media, focusing on entertainment, sports, and brands. She also has a jewelry brand, Audrey Nicole Diamonds & Jewelry. She is a Trojan parent of three, with two daughters winning 3 National Championships in Beach Volleyball and going for a fourth.

Christina (Atteberry) Von Der Ahe (Ladera Ranch)
Christina graduated from USC with a BS in Business Administration. She has property & casualty license and is a Vice President with ARI Global, Inc. where she provides commercial clients with financial insurance solutions. Her skills include public speaking, underwriting, and consultative selling.

Special thanks to our members who sponsored the NEW members above:
Kathleen Campos ~ Caren Edler (x2!!) ~ Carol Fox ~ Jackie Ginsburg ~ Patricia Hamra (x3!!!)
Cindy Hill ~ Devon Hogue ~ Dominique Langerman ~ Kristen Lebsack ~ D'Arcy McLeod ~ Laure Molina
Michelle Nichols ~ Deann Webb ~ Valerie Weiss ~ Debbie Wong
We appreciate your support!

Fight On!
Colleen Stroyke and Bonnie Suffridge
4th Vice Presidents, Membership
FROM YOUR FUND DEVELOPMENT VICE PRESIDENTS

We are so excited to introduce to you, our fabulous members, our latest fundraising efforts for this year. In honor of celebrating “120 years of Town and Gown” and in lieu of the Annual Benefit, the Town and Gown Board has chosen to raise funds, through donations from our wonderful members and different schools at the University, to endow a Technology Fund with the purpose of funding need-based scholarships for computers. Eligible students who will be the recipients of the Town and Gown of USC Technology Scholarships will be determined by the USC Financial Aid office. The Technology Fund will be under the Town and Gown of USC Fund II accounts and the goal for this academic year is to raise a minimum of $50,000. How will we do that, you ask…?

120 Club

The 120 Club was inaugurated at the October General Meeting and is a fundraising donation drive focusing on involving our general membership. When a member makes a donation of $120, the member will receive a 120 Club ribbon to wear on their Town and Gown nametag which will help to promote the drive. To date, 79 donations have been made to the 120 Club totaling $9,480. Of course, we encourage you to donate more than once – the more, the merrier!

Millenium Circle

The “Millenium Circle” was inaugurated in 2022. Members who make a one-time donation of $1,000 or more will qualify for the Millenium Circle. Donations from October through May that cumulatively total $1,000 or more from each member will also qualify for the Millenium Circle.

Donations

Both the 120 Club and the Millenium Circle donations may be made on the Town and Gown website through the Donate portal or by scanning the QR code on this page. Kari May, our wonderful Executive Associate, does an outstanding job of tracking all donations made through the portal and sends us updated lists twice a month. As your Fund Development Vice Presidents, we appreciate your enthusiasm and your generosity as we strive to reach our goal.

Town and Gown of USC Computer Scholarship Student Thank You Notes

We thought you might enjoy reading some excerpts of thank you notes from the students who received scholarships for new computers this year. One of the questions they were asked was “What does this scholarship mean to you?”

- Receiving this scholarship is so much more than just financial assistance; it’s a recognition of my efforts, and encourages me to keep on going.

- I am extremely grateful for receiving this generous scholarship because without this funding I would not be able to afford the very basic mandatory supplies needed to perform as a student. It is truly a blessing to be able to get new technology to support my academic pursuits. I am excited and honored that you have selected me for this opportunity and I thank you and appreciate it more than I can express in words.

- The USC Town and Gown Computer Scholarship not only impacts me academically and financially, but it's also a gift and blessing to my mother. A single mother of three can use all the help and assistance she can get. My mother works hard to provide me with all my equipment from school but sometimes I can't afford the things some people have already. When I found out I was awarded this scholarship the first thing that came into mind was how proud my mom would be and a relief to her. This scholarship can not only help me by using it for materialistic things but by also not worrying about how we'll get the money to buy a new high-quality computer.
and not stressing about how much money we can use for school. Having support from this scholarship and USC's resources is helping me acquire a brand-new computer without me worrying about how I'm going to start my new semester here.

- Coming from a family that hasn't attended college or even thought that college was option this scholarship means the world to me. I wanted to be different than the negative stigmas of not attending college within not only my family, but my community. This scholarship has impacted my life by enabling me to chase my dreams without the worry and stress of finances. It will catapult me into becoming the criminal justice attorney and future Supreme Court Justice without the worry of holding back because of my financial stability. When I learned that I would receive the scholarship I cried my eyes out and thanked God, for the opportunity that I received. From the moment that I began my application for USC all the way up until now, I know that it is important to support others because we are all destined for greatness, but sometimes we need the support and aid from others. Its humbling and exciting to know that there are people that are surrounded around me that want to genuinely aid me to achieving my aspirations I've dreamed of since I was a small child.

- I was ecstatic to find out I received the scholarship for a computer. Mine and my family's finances disabled me from purchasing the computer required for the product design minor; I was considering giving it up. Since I can buy the computer, I am extremely grateful that I still get to pursue it, thanks to you.

Thank you to those who have donated and continue to donate. We are very excited about our efforts and hope you will be, too.

With great appreciation,

Carol Wright and Mary Hall
Third Vice Presidents, Fund Development

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

Town and Gown of USC will be celebrating our 120th birthday on Tuesday, April 2, 2024!

The best place to celebrate our birthday is in the building we built, our own Town and Gown building on campus. Our Board of Directors is actively planning the day and we look forward to having you all in attendance.

Please join us! It will be a day of fun and festivities.
Rachel Cervantes  
USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences: Bachelors in Physical Science  
USC Thornton School of Music: Bachelors in Musical Theatre  
Graduates May 2026  

What is exciting and interesting, or currently challenging you, in your major field of study?  
I am excited by the various types of science classes I am able to take for my major, since it covers a broad range of the sciences. Science has always been my favorite subject, but I am still discovering which science subject I am particularly interested in. My major gives me an opportunity to continue discovering my passions.  

Describe clubs or other on campus activities in which you participate.  
I am a proud member of the Trojan Marching Band, also called the Spirit of Troy. Having grown up watching and following the USC band during football games, I am overjoyed to now be a part of such a passionate group of people. The contagious enthusiasm of its members is what I have loved since childhood, and I am proud to now share my passion as a member of the band.  

Describe any work (paid or volunteer) or off campus associations in which you participate.  
As a Jehovah & #39s Witness, I dedicate a few hours every week to sharing Bible truths and encouragements to interested persons.  

List any recent travels - either for study abroad or other USC related opportunities.  
All my travel for the past year has been involved with the USC Spirit of Troy Marching Band. We travel across the country to support our football and basketball team. These travels have allowed me to explore and experience different cities throughout the country.  

List any new information we should know about your current status, your involvement at USC, or your future plans.  
I aspire to be a k-12 teacher, as some of the most influential people in my life are educators. My career goal allows me the freedom of possibly changing my major as my current major has proven difficult to keep up with given all that I am involved with. I am an active member of the USC marching band, a member of Los Troyanos mariachi group, and am currently minoring in musical theatre. I am currently in the process of changing my major, but my career goal is the same, because I am incredibly inspired by educators and hope to have the same influence on young people as my teachers have had on me.  

Do you have any news to share with Town and Gown of USC? Please email Kari May, karidmay@gmail.com.

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\* Please remember to share your pictures on Facebook and follow us on Instagram. \*