Welcome to a new year at USC   NEW

August 20, 2024

Dear Trojan Family,

We are excited to start a new academic year and welcome our new and returning students, faculty, staff, and alumni to campus. It's a wonderful time to renew and create new relationships, explore something different, and set fresh goals. We have a very busy term ahead, with new academic programs, events around joining the Big Ten, marquee student performances, research breakthroughs, and so much more. We hope you had a refreshing summer and look forward to seeing you.

Over the summer we tightened and expanded our rules and processes designed to ensure our campus is safe and welcoming for everyone. A list of links to this critical information is included below. One thing you'll notice immediately is the improved process of accessing campus. We hope the new system will make it faster and easier.

Last Spring's Challenges: The events of last spring were particularly challenging for campuses nationwide. USC has seen peaceful protests, vigils, and marches for years, including more than 130 last year alone. However, the spring semester brought incidents that tested our values, disregarded our policies, sparked fears, and required unprecedented safety measures.

While many in our community were not directly involved in the protests, we recognize the genuine pain and frustration driving them. This suffering and passion did not disappear

over the summer. We hope by making our policies, guidelines, and rules clearer, we can make USC welcoming and safe for all, no matter what issues or conflicts arise.

Free Expression and Academic Freedom: The ability to express oneself, to assert beliefs, and to dissent is fundamental to our university and our democracy. We each share a responsibility to foster an environment where divergent ideas can be discussed, examined, and challenged without infringing on others' rights and safety.
As we transition to the fall semester, we remain committed to ensuring your rights to free speech, academic freedom, and peaceful protest in accordance with state and federal law. We expect you to follow the university's rules and policies designed to support your rights and prevent disruption of university functions. We also are required by law to maintain a safe and bias-free environment in our classrooms, hospitals, events, and campuses. These values are essential to the Trojan community and do not conflict with free speech or academic freedom. The links below explain free expression and academic freedom, along with legal responsibilities and limitations.

Time, Place, and Manner Rules for Free Expression at USC: USC has long-standing rules, guided by federal and state law, to ensure that everyone can participate fully in a bias-free, free speech academic and on-campus residential environment. These "time, place, and manner" limitations balance your right to express yourselves with the university's responsibility to ensure the rights of all. These include long-standing rules banning encampments, damaging property, blocking access to campus and classrooms, doxing, harassment, and bullying (online or in person), as well as clear guidelines for protests of all sorts.

Over the summer, we reviewed and clarified these policies. You should become familiar with this material, and the Student Commitment which all students were required to read and acknowledge before enrolling. The university will continue to enforce these rules fairly, consistently, and expeditiously, acting quickly to protect campus health and safety.

It always has been a Trojan Family value to be patient and respectful even in heated debates. By adhering to our highest standards, we will continue to maintain a culture of respect and dignity toward others.

University Statements, Communication, and Accountability: Universities and their leaders often are asked to take sides on political, social, and moral issues. Yet, such statements can silence people, be seen as speaking for everyone, and lead to unintended consequences and seeming orthodoxies that stifle people's rights of free speech.

This runs counter to our responsibility to support viewpoint diversity, open and impartial debate, free speech, and safety in all aspects of university life. This understanding drove the Unifying Values written and adopted by the USC community in 2020, which include "fostering a community in which we solicit, embrace, and share diverse viewpoints."

In line with these ideas, going forward as individual leaders or on behalf of the university, we will not post statements or take sides in political or social debates unless it pertains directly to our institutional mission and operations. This posture, sometimes referred to as "institutional restraint or neutrality," has been widely adopted by both public and private universities across America.

Trojans Care for Trojans: Global conflicts, along with social and political unrest or transition, always prompt strong reactions and feelings at universities. We embrace our societal role and encourage Trojans to safely and freely express themselves. At the same time, we call on you to care for your fellow Trojans even if you strongly disagree on issues.

Let's embrace the expression "Trojans Care for Trojans." By working together, we can create a university home for our Trojan Family that values differing opinions, cultivates open dialogue, supports one another, and seeks common ground in a complex world.

We look forward to a great year with you.

Fight On!

Carol L. Folt
President
Robert C. Packard President's Chair

Andrew Guzman

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Steven Shapiro

Senior Vice President for Health Affairs

Links to USC Resources

Accessing campus [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d265ed37bbb7fc0e7e39aeb33882e8fe2f9ddc0c5a0aedb40d7bb61585995ed93e8e15e11f0a0d28a567754c0ef5ae8b1f9]

Free speech [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d26048a85771a85140f27cd543aef8f48a5b4354b9906023fc8f4c0f4d48e255899f16a8caaf7aa22776e5011ef892db9bb]

Free expression FAQs including time, place, and manner [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d2669d804aed129c6221bd034e8bd49347dd74310e683143a6cf4671e913021628e1207ccd39527075e97eff0cb54bb2a6a]

USC policies – prohibited discrimination, harassment, and retaliation [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d267269203b65c96d057c7fa744527e19c0a5f3b10831ff6f22d0a63a9e69d536cc8cac7683a8d2e958662c56dd18ac669b]

Academic freedom [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d263b17b3c8a544605e16445a020d89b3b8e8af93a9aa5f81d8974809af72cf1138d863b6d47380a5d1fc2fbcaca8a1858f] (also see Faculty Handbook [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d264b63f667c6a301ee9b95c41ef9a58d4f39bcb449fc31fb6f97dc548d32da36de278dbb713ba9872fb3fd0e80ac0201ef])

Campus safety [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d2681f06d0921fd143917ed2435480a06186b4fb23cedf7a68494b382330d52598eb8b4fd691d46289e1f39bf771bb4b951]

Care for our Community [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d26349625767f995b63761bbd9aa8cf797f144462585a68ef957ebea4ffd4df616003738bce3de87e067bddd06ca3d9bc1e]

Addressing hate speech [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?qs=7caa675d6e5d0d263d2f7ecc88fb38ce0b58fd3d94df77be34415f1784572bd05f00d2264f

5484d535170ad957f0a1d51a8dc173184065cb]

Addressing antisemitism [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?
qs=7caa675d6e5d0d26761ccd150bb47bea4ca3de779e8eac9ec0ed9e80ba693219adf5e3c7
3a671b4bea7e1b8288d7b6cf776a33f9d8596a23]

USC Integrity and Accountability Code [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?
qs=73f96bfa34b60805cb28b5de3fc74edc7d0cecb78177cef9eae18fd8e323ff24296f06b5f4b
63b238074d2477ac6565dd158adfc01be80f9]

USC Student Commitment [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?
qs=73f96bfa34b6080591fdabcce6af916a94c5ca948a4283d63fa4e0d6aeeec6f1208928fb55
631933331cd2b581530a07effc6f4093f8d32d]

Unifying Values [https://click.comms.usc.edu/?
qs=73f96bfa34b608059882abff047c85dc046302674e12e0b5ba34aff7c2f1342e6e23526016
bc63e350148c4b1db6cdb713fde503a0aadd40]