

TIMELINE HISTORY OF UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles was a rough-and-tumble frontier town in the early 1870s, when a group of public-spirited citizens led by Judge Robert Maclay Widney first dreamed of establishing a university in the region. It took nearly a decade for this vision to become a reality, but in 1879 Widney formed a board of trustees and secured a donation of 308 lots of land from three prominent members of the community – Ozro W. Childs, a Protestant horticulturist; former California governor John G. Downey, an Irish-Catholic pharmacist and businessman; and Isaias W. Hellman, a German-Jewish banker and philanthropist. The gift provided land for a campus as well as a source of endowment, the seeds of financial support for the nascent institution.

When USC first opened its doors to 53 students and 10 teachers in 1880, the “city” still lacked paved streets, electric lights, telephones and a reliable fire alarm system. Today, USC is home to more than 33,000 students and nearly 3,200 full-time faculty, and is located in the heart of one of the biggest metropolises in the world.

Timeline

1870s

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1880s

1880: Marion McKinley Bovard is named the university’s first president, concurrently serving as professor of mental and moral philosophy and natural sciences.

1880: USC formally opens, with 53 students and 10 faculty. A college of liberal arts, a university band and a debate team are established.

1881: USC’s first dormitory, Hodge Hall, is opened.

1884: USC’s school of music is founded.

1884: USC holds its first commencement, with a graduating class of three students; a woman, Minnie Miltimore, is named class valedictorian.

1885: USC’s College of Medicine, the first in Southern California, is established. Eight alumni form USC’s first alumni association.

1885: USC receives a gift to create its first endowed faculty position, the John R. Tansey Chair in Christian Ethics.

1888: USC plays its first football game and trounces the opponent 16–0.

1890s

1892: Dr. Joseph P. Widney (brother of Robert Maclay Widney, and first dean of the university’s medical school) becomes USC’s second president.

1892: USC’s first student newspaper, a four-page weekly called *The University Rostrum*, appears.

1895: Rev. George W. White becomes USC’s third president. USC adopts cardinal and gold as its official colors.

1896: USC’s law school begins when a group of apprentices form a voluntary association to study under a prominent attorney.

1897: USC begins offering courses in dentistry.

1900s

1902: USC's second school newspaper, the Cardinal, is published. The monthly publication lives for a brief three numbers.

1903: George Finley Bovard (brother of Marion McKinley Bovard) becomes USC's fourth president.

1904: USC's first Olympic athlete, Emil Breitkreutz '06, brings home a bronze medal for the 800 meters.

1905: The USC School of Pharmacy opens, as the first in Southern California.

1905: The Women's Club of USC (renamed Town and Gown in 1927) is established to generate support for the university and its students.

1906: The USC Department of Physics offers coursework leading to degrees in civil and electrical engineering.

1909: USC's Department of Education opens, to attain full school status nine years later.

1910s

1910: USC organizes a centrally administered graduate program governed by a Graduate Council composed of senior faculty members.

1911: President William Howard Taft visits the USC campus.

1912: Los Angeles Times sportswriter Owen R. Bird dubs USC's spirited athletic team the "Trojans."

1912: Freshman Fred Kelly '06 becomes USC's first Olympic gold medalist. Greek letter societies are established.

1912: The USC Faculty Wives' Club is formed (renamed the Faculty Women's Club in 1995).

1912: The university announces a groundbreaking course in automotive science, the first of its kind in the world.

1914: A group of international students founds the USC Cosmopolitan Club to "promote friendship" among students from Asia, Latin America and Europe.

1914: The famous African-American political leader, educator and author Booker T. Washington visits the USC campus.

1915: Ten-year-old Teresa Van Grove enrolls at USC, making her the youngest Trojan.

1918: Mrs. Amy Winship, a girlhood friend of Abraham Lincoln, attends USC at age 87 and is fondly nicknamed "the oldest co-ed in the world."

1919: USC's Department of Architecture, the first program of its kind in Southern California, opens.

1920s

1920: The USC School of Social Work is established. USC's College of Commerce and Business Administration opens, the first business school in Southern California.

1921: Rufus B. von KleinSmid, later affectionately known as "Dr. Von," becomes USC's fifth president.

1922: USC dental student Milo Sweet composes the music for USC's official fight song, "Fight On," as an entry in a Trojan Spirit contest.

1922: USC creates an extension division, offering afternoon and evening courses to the community in locations ranging from Glendale to San Diego.

1923: The first Rose Bowl game is played in the present Pasadena location, with USC winning against Penn State 14-3.

1923: The USC Trojans play in the first varsity football game ever held at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, beating Pomona College 23-7.

1924: USC establishes the country's first school of international relations. The university holds its first formal observance of homecoming.

1925: The USC College of Engineering is formed.

1927: USC confers its first Ph.D. to David Welty Lefever in the School of Education.

1929: The USC School of Public Administration opens. USC's Department of Cinema — the country's first filmmaking program — is established.

1930s

1930: The Trojan Shrine is unveiled in celebration of USC's 50th anniversary.

1930: With more than 700 foreign students (10 percent of the student body), USC ranks third in the United States in international enrollment.

1932: USC's Edward L. Doheny Jr. Memorial Library is dedicated.

1934: USC debuts its "University of the Air," an educational outreach program broadcast on radio.

1935: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visits the USC campus and receives an honorary doctor of laws degree.

1937: Gil Kuhn becomes the first Trojan football player to be drafted into the pros.

1939: USC's Elizabeth Holmes Fisher Gallery (now called the USC Fisher Museum of Art) is dedicated.

1940s

1941: The tradition of passing the bell between rival schools is established.

1942: USC's Department of Occupational Therapy opens as one of the first programs of its kind in the country.

1943: In the midst of World War II, some 2,000 military trainees add to crowded conditions on campus.

History

In this section

Biographies and timelines for each USC President and era.

Gallery of USC Presidents

The Era of the Founders 1870-1879

Marion M. Bovard 1880-1891

Joseph P. Widney 1892-1895

George W. White 1895-1899

George F. Bovard 1903-1921

Rufus B. von Klein Smid 1921-1947

Fred D. Fagg, Jr. 1947-1957

Norman H. Topping 1958-1970

John R. Hubbard 1970-1980

James H. Zumberge 1980-1991

Steven B. Sample 1991-2010

C. L. Max Nikias 2010-

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1945: USC establishes biokinesiology and physical therapy departments (now merged into the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy).

1945: The USC Department of Drama is founded.

1946: KUSC goes on the air.

1947: Fred D. Fagg Jr. becomes USC’s sixth president.

1947: A feisty stray dog, nicknamed George Tirebiter, is adopted as USC’s official student body mascot.

1947: The University Senate (reorganized as the Faculty Senate in 1973 and renamed the Academic Senate in 1992) is formed at USC.

1948: Troy Camp is founded.

1950s

1950: USC English professor and distance-learning pioneer Frank Baxter is named by Life magazine as one of America's eight finest college professors.

1952: USC's Health Sciences campus opens.

1952: USC launches the first doctoral program in social work in the western United States.

1952: USC's Institute for Safety and Systems Management begins offering degree programs in safety, human factors and systems management.

1953: University Avenue (today's Trousdale Parkway) is closed to vehicular traffic, marking a major step in creating a self-contained, pedestrian-friendly campus.

1954: For the first time, a white steed makes an appearance at a Trojan football game, with rider Art Gontier. USC's first Songfest is held at the Greek Theater.

1957: USC's tradition of on-campus pre-game picnics begins.

1958: Dr. Norman Topping becomes USC's seventh president.

1959: The USC Associates, the university's premier academic support group, is founded.

1960s

1960: Then U.S. senator John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Vice President Richard Milhous Nixon speak at USC.

1961: On May 17, President Topping announces the "Master Plan for Enterprise and Excellence in Education."

1965: The USC School of Dentistry founds its mobile dental clinic, now the oldest and most extensive self-contained facility of its kind.

1965: Tailback Mike Garrett wins USC's first Heisman Trophy.

1966: The Gamble House is deeded to the City of Pasadena in a joint agreement with the USC School of Architecture.

1968: USC launches "The Urban Semester," a program that sends students out of the classroom and laboratory and into the city streets and halls of power.

1970s

1970: Historian John R. Hubbard is elected as USC's eighth president. President Emeritus Norman Topping is elected as USC's second chancellor.

1970: The USC student body votes to assess itself a fee for a student-sponsored scholarship fund, which becomes known as the Norman Topping Student Aid Fund.

1971: The USC Annenberg School for Communication (renamed the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism in 2009) is established.

1971: USC creates the Department of Emergency Medicine — the country's first.

1972: The USC Joint Educational Project (JEP) — one of the oldest service-learning programs in the United States — is launched.

1972: The USC Information Sciences Institute is founded, providing key support for the development of the Internet into a national and international system.

1973: The USC Credit Union opens its doors.

1974: The USC School of Urban and Regional Planning is founded.

1974: Dedeaux Field opens its gates, and USC's baseball team wins its fifth straight NCAA title — to date still an unmatched record.

1974: The USC Mexican American Alumni Association is established.

1974: USC receives a National Endowment for the Humanities grant for the development of Thematic Option, the university's innovative undergraduate honors program.

1975: The USC Davis School of Gerontology is founded, the first of its kind in the country.

1976: USC launches its "Toward Century II" fundraising campaign, which will bring in over \$309 million in five years.

1976: USC's Black Alumni Association is founded.

1976: Gerald R. Ford, 38th president of the United States, makes a campaign visit to USC.

1977: U.S. President Ford sends USC President Hubbard an autographed \$10 bill to satisfy their wager on the Rose Bowl game in which USC defeated Michigan.

1977: USC establishes an institute dedicated to hydrocarbon research, later named the Donald P. and Katherine B. Loker Hydrocarbon Research Institute.

1979: Fleetwood Mac invites the Trojan Marching Band to perform on the title song for the album "Tusk," which becomes the band's first platinum album.

1980s

1980: USC celebrates its centennial, and James H. Zumberge becomes the university's ninth president.

1981: USC's Doheny Memorial Library celebrates the acquisition of its 2 millionth volume.

1982: USC's pathbreaking NIBS program (Neurological, Informational and Behavioral Sciences) begins training graduate students.

1982: USC inaugurates the annual Academic Honors Convocation to "honor the excellence that is in our midst."

1983: Looking ahead to the summer Olympics in 1984, USC's 1983 Homecoming celebration includes "A Salute to USC Olympians."

1983: McDonald's Olympic Swim Stadium opens on the University Park campus.

1984: The XXIIIrd Olympiad comes to Los Angeles, and University Park campus is the site of the largest Olympic Village.

1984: U.S. President Ronald Reagan visits USC before officially opening the Olympic Games.

1986: USC launches the Freshman Seminars, which address broad topics in contemporary research and scholarship.

1986: The university assumes stewardship of the historic Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Freeman House in the Hollywood Hills.

1987: With the opening of a Carl's Jr. restaurant on campus, USC becomes the first U.S. institution of higher education to own and operate a fast-food franchise.

1988: USC launches the Center for Scholarly Technology and the Institute for Molecular Medicine.

1989: USC becomes the first university in the world to offer a doctorate in occupational science.

1989: The Trojans' new bookstore debuts, with one of the largest collections of trade journals and texts in Los Angeles.

1990s

1990: President James H. Zumberge announces that "The Campaign for USC" has raised \$641.6 million and added more than a dozen new buildings.

1991: Steven B. Sample becomes USC's tenth president.

1993: Ambassador Walter H. Annenberg gives \$120 million to create the USC Annenberg Center for Communication.

1993: USC launches the eight-year Baccalaureate/M.D. Program, a partnership between the college and the medical school.

1994: USC Professor George Olah wins the Nobel Prize in chemistry. The USC Good Neighbors Campaign is inaugurated.

1995: USC launches Friends and Neighbors Service Day, an annual "volunteer blitz" that teams students and community residents to clean up local neighborhoods.

1996: The USC President's Distinguished Lecture Series is inaugurated.

1997: For the 1997-98 academic year, USC for the first time in its history accepts fewer than half of the students who apply as new freshmen.

1998: Alfred Mann gives \$112.5 million to establish the Alfred E. Mann Institute for Biomedical Engineering at USC.

1998: The schools of public administration and urban planning merge to form the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

1998: The General Alumni Association becomes the USC Alumni Association and adopts a new catchphrase: "lifelong and worldwide."

1999: In appreciation for a \$110 million gift, USC's medical school is renamed the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

1999: USC announces its distinctive Renaissance Scholars program.

1999: Time magazine and the Princeton Review name USC "College of the Year 2000" in recognition of its outstanding community service.

2000s

2000: USC launches the Institute for Creative Technologies, a partnership between the university, the U.S. Army and the entertainment industry.

2001: USC's Robert Zemeckis Center for Digital Arts opens as the country's first and only fully digital filmmaking training facility.

2001: USC sponsors its first international conference, convened in Hong Kong.

2001: The Association of American Colleges and Universities singles USC out as one of 16 "leadership institutions."

2002: At the close of the "Building on Excellence" campaign, USC has raised \$2.85 billion in nine years, a record in higher education fundraising.

2003: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security selects USC as its first Homeland Security Center of Excellence.

2004: The Los Angeles City Council dubs January 21 "USC Trojans' Day in L.A." to honor the university's 2003 football, women's volleyball, and men's water polo teams.

2004: USC sends 35 athletes to the 2004 Athens Olympics and wins 17 medals: eight golds, five silvers and four bronzes.

2004: The Board of Trustees approves the university's new strategic plan: "USC's Plan for Increasing Academic Excellence."

2005: The Princeton Review selects USC as one of 81 "Colleges with a Conscience" based on its outstanding record of community involvement.

2005: USC establishes its Federal Relations Office in Washington, D.C.

2005: The university begins celebrating its 125th anniversary.

2006: The university announces the creation of the USC U.S.-China Institute.

2006: An analysis by Economics Research Associates reports that USC is responsible for \$4 billion annually in economic activity in Los Angeles County alone.

2006: In its December "Top 20 Wired Colleges" issue, PC Magazine ranks USC as the eighth-most connected, plugged-in and high-tech campus in the country.

2006: USC University Professor Kevin Starr is awarded the 2006 National Humanities Medal.

2006: USC kicks off Visions and Voices: The USC Arts and Humanities Initiative.

2007: The USC Levan Institute for Humanities and Ethics is created, engaging students with the humanities and a particular focus on ethics and values.

2007: The USC Edward R. Roybal Institute for Applied Gerontology is established.

2007: USC inaugurates the Discovery Scholars and Global Scholars programs to recognize undergraduates who demonstrate original scholarship and creativity.

2007: USC professor of composition Morten Lauridsen receives the National Medal of Arts.

2008: USC breaks ground for the Ronald Tutor Campus Center.

2008: The U.S. Department of State honors USC with one of four inaugural Benjamin Franklin Awards for Public Diplomacy.

2008: USC is ranked highly in the first national "Great Colleges to Work For" poll by The Chronicle of Higher Education.

2008: The university launches the Energy Institute.

2008: The White House awards the 2007 National Medal of Science to Andrew Viterbi, trustee, faculty member and namesake of the USC Viterbi School.

2009: USC ranks number one on the list "Saviors of Our Cities: A Survey of Best College and University Civic Partnerships," and scores highly on others.

2009: USC's ICT and School of Social Work launch a military social work and veteran services program, the first of its kind at a research university.

2009: USC Gould School of Law professor and associate dean Elyn Saks receives a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

2010s

2010: USC opens its sixth international office (and fifth in Asia) in Seoul, South Korea.

2010: The Institute of International Education's annual Open Doors report names USC the country's leader in international student enrollment for the ninth year in a row.

2010: C. L. Max Nikias becomes the 11th president of USC.

2010: U.S. News & World Report ranks USC no. 23 in the United States.

2010: USC becomes the first academic institution in the world to be designated an International Safe Community by the World Health Organization.

2011: University Professor and historian Kevin Starr is inducted into the California Hall of Fame.

2011: Elizabeth Garrett is installed as USC's first female provost.

2011: Construction begins on the John McKay Center, a state-of-the-art athletics facility.

2011: For the second year in a row, GamePro magazine and the Princeton Review give USC's game-design program the top ranking in North America.

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