



Resolution: 03091818

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USC Student Assembly for Gender Empowerment
USC Latinx Student Assembly
USC Service Student Assembly
USC Political Student Assembly
USC Environmental Student Assembly

Date: September 18th, 2018

RE: Student Representation on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee



Resolution

WHEREAS, a series of scandals have rocked the University Community over the past nine months, including then-Dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC Dr. Carmen Puliafito allegedly being under the influence of illicit substances while treating patients and performing administrative tasks,¹ among other faculty and staff complaints and reports of illegal and illicit behavior,² the revelation that Dr. Puliafito's replacement as Dean, Dr. Rohit Varma, had sexual harassment allegations dating back nearly 15 years,³ and that Dr. George Tyndall, a former Gynecologist at the Engemann Student Health Center, has sexual misconduct allegations against him from more than 300 women over the course of his career at the University.⁴

WHEREAS, according to multiple media reports and University admissions, the University administration was aware of these allegations of misconduct for months or years before making them known to the University Community,^{2,3,5} betraying the trust and confidence of the student body and wider University Community.

WHEREAS, on multiple occasions, rather than take the appropriate courses of action against these individuals to protect the University Community and the student body, the University rather initiated quiet payouts,⁶ settlements,³ or administrative reassignments.⁷ With regards to the University not reporting Dr. Tyndall's actions to the California Medical Board, then-President Nikias stated, "In hindsight, we should have made this report eight months earlier when he separated from the university."⁸

WHEREAS, in all of the aforementioned instances, the administration only made the University Community aware of the facts after receiving word from the LA Times that a story was going to

¹ LA Times: Former USC medical school dean used hard drugs while employed at university, attorney says

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-puliafito-medical-board-trial-20180530-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-puliafito-medical-board-trial-20180530-story.html)

² LA Times: Complaints of drinking, abusive behavior dogged USC medical school dean for years

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-doctor-complaints-drinking-behavior-20170730-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-doctor-complaints-drinking-behavior-20170730-story.html)

³ LA Times: USC medical school dean out amid revelations of sexual harassment claim, \$135,000 settlement with researcher

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-dean-harassment-20171005-story.html#](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-dean-harassment-20171005-story.html#)

⁴ LA Times: Number of patients suing USC over sex abuse claims tops 300 as faculty push for Nikias' exit

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lawsuits-usc-20180731-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lawsuits-usc-20180731-story.html)

⁵ pp.6, President C.L. Max Nikias' Letter to the USC Community, May 15th, 2018

⁶ LA Times: 30 more women sue USC over former gynecologist as new interim president welcomes freshmen to campus

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-usc-lawsuits-20180815-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-usc-lawsuits-20180815-story.html)

⁷ LA Times: USC had many warnings about medical school dean's behavior but took little action

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-dean-20171114-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-dean-20171114-story.html)

⁸ pp.5-6, President C.L. Max Nikias' Letter to the USC Community, May 15th, 2018



be, or had already been, published,^{3,9, 10} demonstrating a lack of respect for the student body and wider University Community, and a will to prioritize the image of the University over open, honest, and timely communication with the University Community.

WHEREAS, these scandals caused enormous turmoil in the University Community, including the announcement on May 25th, 2018 that President C.L. Max Nikias had agreed to step down from his role following calls from the Academic Senate and an Alumni petition with over 11,000 signatures.^{11 12}

WHEREAS, on multiple occasions throughout the summer of 2018, before and following the announcement of Nikias' resignation, the Undergraduate Student Government and Graduate Student Governments repeatedly contacted University Administrators and Trustees regarding the importance of increased student representation to avoid the continuance of these extremely damaging scandals, requesting that students representatives become "full, participating members" of "any and all decision-making bodies that establish boards, task forces, committees, or coalitions."¹³

WHEREAS, on July 18th, 2018, USG and GSG leaders met with USC Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso to request the inclusion of two student representatives on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, one from the Undergraduate student population and one from the Graduate student population. According to a joint statement released by USG and GSG, "Chairman Caruso responded that he was 'open to that' and stated that he would bring our request to the rest of the Board of Trustees during their all-hands meeting on August 7th."¹⁴

WHEREAS, on August 28th, 2018, when USC Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso announced the 23 members of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, the group in charge of

⁹ LA Times: A USC doctor was accused of bad behavior with young women for years. The university let him continue treating students

[latimes.com/local/california/la-me-usc-doctor-misconduct-complaints-20180515-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-usc-doctor-misconduct-complaints-20180515-story.html)

¹⁰ Letter from USC president on Carmen Puliafito

documents.latimes.com/usc-letter-dr-carmen-puliafito/

¹¹ LA Times: USC's Academic Senate calls on university president to resign after a series of scandals

[latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-usc-academic-senate-vote-20180523-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-usc-academic-senate-vote-20180523-story.html)

¹² Change.org: Alumni Demand USC Hold Administration Accountable for Supporting Sexual Predators

change.org/p/alumni-demand-usc-hold-administration-accountable-for-supporting-sexual-predators

¹³ GSG and USG Statement - Importance of Student Participation in the Presidential Search Process - September 13, 2018

docs.google.com/document/d/1zJDAUaYt8P17jkWPd503PgT93LwEMRN0q3EUmFRbfC4/edit

¹⁴ GSG and USG Statement - Importance of Student Participation in the Presidential Search Process - September 13, 2018

docs.google.com/document/d/1zJDAUaYt8P17jkWPd503PgT93LwEMRN0q3EUmFRbfC4/edit



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recommending candidates to the wider Board of Trustees to become the 13th President of the University, there were no student representatives on the committee.¹⁵

WHEREAS, despite the aforementioned repeated breaches of trust and lack of transparency on behalf of the University, USC Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso requested that USG and GSG leaders, as well as the student body, take a “‘measured’ leap of faith to trust in the committee and the scheduled listening sessions,” but accept the fact that there would be no students on the committee.¹⁶

WHEREAS, due to the many aforementioned incidents, the student body has lost confidence and trust in the Administration and Board of Trustees of USC after repeatedly mishandling crises,^{17,18} failing to communicate effectively with student leaders,¹⁶ and denying all attempts to have meaningful student representation in the core decision-making processes of the University.

WHEREAS, in acknowledgement of this lack of student trust and confidence, and the harmful effects that current University attitudes have had on the student body, many University Administrators and Trustees have called for and/or promised a change. The University’s Action Plan, spearheaded by now-President Emeritus Max Nikias before his resignation, states that, “[m]oving forward, all of us, and especially anyone who holds a leadership position at USC, will be held to a higher standard, one that lives up to our core values, our Code of Ethics, and an enhanced culture change on our campuses.”¹⁹ Furthermore, USC Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso discussed his plan to “achieve a profound and sustainable shift in our culture” in a letter to the “USC Family” on August 7th, 2018,²⁰ Continuing that message, Interim President Wanda Austin stated in a message to the USC Community just before New Student Convocation that “the university’s senior leadership is fully committed to bringing about change that will renew us—in both purpose and action.”²¹

¹⁵ Message from Board of Trustees Chairman Rick J. Caruso
boardoftrustees.usc.edu/message-from-board-of-trustees-chairman-rick-j-caruso-august-28-2018/

¹⁶ GSG and USG Statement - Importance of Student Participation in the Presidential Search Process - September 13, 2018
docs.google.com/document/d/1zJDAUaYt8P17jkWPd503PgT93LwEMRN0q3EUmFRbfC4/edit

¹⁷ pp.5-6, President C.L. Max Nikias’ Letter to the USC Community, May 15th, 2018

¹⁸ LA Times: USC president admits university 'could have done better' in handling reports of medical school dean's drug use
<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-usc-president-errors-20170726-story.html>

¹⁹ Action Plan
actionplan.usc.edu/

²⁰ Message from Board of Trustees Chairman Rick J. Caruso
boardoftrustees.usc.edu/message-from-board-of-trustees-chairman-rick-j-caruso-august-7-2018/

²¹ Message to the USC Community, August 15, 2018
president.usc.edu/message-to-the-usc-community-august-15-2018/



WHEREAS, despite these numerous promises of a culture change, senior leadership at USC continues to perpetrate the dangerous, exclusionary, and dishonest culture that caused the current crisis through steadfastly refusing to engage students in a meaningful way in the future of the University.

WHEREAS, Michigan State University is going through a similar ordeal as USC, with former MSU Osteopathic Physician and now-convicted child molester Larry Nassar being terminated from the University after revelations of his sexual assault and misconduct came to light, resulting in the eventual resignation of then-MSU President Lou Anna Simon after enormous public outcry over her mishandling of the crisis.

WHEREAS, on August 22nd, 2018, Michigan State University Trustee Diane Byrum held a press conference announcing the members of a 19-person Presidential Search Committee to find candidates to recommend to the MSU Board of Trustees.²² Much like the USC Presidential Search Advisory Committee, the MSU Presidential Search Committee included University Trustees, Faculty, and Academic Deans.

WHEREAS, the MSU Presidential Search Committee, unlike the USC Presidential Search Committee, also included student representation in the form of Katherine Rifiotis, President of the Associated Students of Michigan State University, continuing precedent set set by several other institutions of having student representation on presidential search committees. The MSU Presidential Search Committee also includes staff and labor representation, an additional constituency left out of the USC Presidential Search Advisory Committee.²³

WHEREAS, in addition to MSU, many of USC's peer institutions - large, elite, private research universities - have also had students on their Presidential Search Committees. As outlined in USG and GSG's joint statement,²⁴ all of the following peer institutions have had presidential search committees with no more than 23 members, the size of USC's current committee, and all have had at least one, and usually several, full, voting student member(s) on that committee: Case Western University²⁵ in 2006 had a committee of 13, with one student representative;

²² MSU Today: Board of Trustees Selects Members of Presidential Search Committee
msutoday.msu.edu/news/2018/board-of-trustees-selects-members-of-presidential-search-committee/

²³ Presidential Search: Search Committee Members
msu.edu/presidentialsearch/search-committee/

²⁴ GSG and USG Statement - Importance of Student Participation in the Presidential Search Process - September 13, 2018
docs.google.com/document/d/1zJDAUaYt8P17jkWPd503PgT93LwEMRN0q3EUmFRbfC4/edit

²⁵ Presidential Search: Case Western University | Committee Members, 2006.
case.edu/president/search/members.html



Dartmouth University²⁶ in 2008 had a committee of 15, with one student representative; New York University²⁷ in 2014 had a committee of 23 Total Members, with 2 student representatives; Duke University²⁸ in 2016 had a committee of 19, with two student representatives; Northwestern University²⁹ in 2008 also had a committee of 23, also with 2 student representatives; Princeton University³⁰ in 2013 had a committee of 17, with three student representatives, and, finally, Stanford University³¹ in 2015 had a committee of 19, with one student representative. This sets a clear precedent that, not only is it not uncommon for students to be included in the process, it is, in fact, becoming the new normal - a fact which USC refuses to recognize.

WHEREAS, on September 13th, 2018, the University announced that student media outlets, including the Daily Trojan, would not be allowed to record quotes or document the “Listening Sessions” hosted by the Presidential Search Advisory Committee to gather input, and further allegedly requested that the Daily Trojan delete a tweet reporting on this media restriction, demonstrating the University’s continued proclivity to operate out of the eye of the public, and away from potentially problematic media reports.³²

WHEREAS, Interim President Wanda Austin encouraged students to bring about change at the 2018 New Student Convocation, saying, “[e]mbrace change, and then drive that change. Work on your leadership skills, because we are all leaders right where we stand. And finally, learn to move from the comfortable and familiar, to discover new truths.”³³ This sentiment is also echoed by the mission of the USC division of Student Affairs, which is “[e]mpowering students to transform the world.”³⁴

²⁶ DartmouthLife: Presidential Search Committee, October 2008.

dartmouth.edu/~dartlife/archives/18-5/committee.html

²⁷ The Members of the NYU Presidential Search Committee, July 2, 2014.

nyu.edu/about/leadership-university-administration/board-of-trustees/the-members-of-the-ny-presidential-search-committee.html

²⁸ DukeToday: Duke Trustees Name Presidential Search Committee, May 18, 2016.

today.duke.edu/2016/05/presidentialsearchlist

²⁹ Northwestern Presidential Search Committee Named, April 8, 2008.

northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2008/04/searchcommittee.html

³⁰ Princeton University: The Presidential Search: Committee, October 23, 2012.

princeton.edu/presidentialsearch/committee

³¹ Stanford News: Members of Presidential Search Committee Announced, August 12, 2015.

news.stanford.edu/2015/08/12/search-committee-names-081215

³² Daily Trojan: EDITORIAL BOARD: We will not allow USC to censor student voices

dailytrojan.com/2018/09/13/editorial-board-we-will-not-allow-usc-to-censor-student-voices/

³³ New Student Convocation, August 16, 2018

president.usc.edu/new-student-convocation-august-16-2018/

³⁴ 2014-2017 Strategic Plan: Mission and Goals

studentaffairs.usc.edu/strategic-plan/mission-goals/



WHEREAS, USC Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso has repeatedly discussed the importance of student voice in the selection process, stating to Annenberg Media that he thinks “the students have an important voice in this process and we’re gonna (sic) want to hear that voice.” Later, in an email to student leadership, Caruso stated that “student interests and perspectives are a critical component of the presidential search process.”³⁵ However, in an interview with the Daily Trojan, Caruso stated of the Committee that “[w]e think it’s well representative of the faculty, of the deans and the trustees,” admitting that the Committee is not representative of student voices and openly contradicting his other statements about the “critical” importance of student input.

WHEREAS, the repeated refusal to include student representation is clearly not empowering students to feel that they can bring about change on their campus, nor does it value student voice, and further divides Trustees, Administrators, and Faculty from the student body. This is antithetical to the Role and Mission of the University of Southern California, which discusses the idea that “[a]n extraordinary closeness and willingness to help one another are evident among USC students, alumni, faculty, and staff; indeed, for those within its compass the Trojan Family is a genuinely supportive community. Alumni, trustees, volunteers and friends of USC are essential to this family tradition, providing generous financial support, participating in university governance, and assisting students at every turn.”³⁶

WHEREAS, it is necessary to rebuild broken trust and confidence in University leadership and to bring legitimacy to Presidential Search Advisory Committee.

WHEREAS, all other forms of communication and outreach have been exhausted, with no real action taken by administrators or USC Board of Trustees Chair Rick Caruso despite repeated meetings and prolonged communication, further dispelling any remaining trust or confidence in University leadership.

THEREFORE, THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA DOES HEREBY RESOLVE, that the USC Board of Trustees must, without delay, appoint two student representatives to the Presidential Search Advisory Committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that one representative shall be selected by the Undergraduate Student Government, and one representative shall be selected by the Graduate Student Government, to represent the interests of their respective communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Undergraduate Student Government and Graduate Student Government should ensure that these student representatives, to the best of their ability, represent and

³⁵ Email from Chairman Rick Caruso to GSG and USG, September 11, 2018.

³⁶ About USC: Mission Statement
about.usc.edu/policies/mission-statement/



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empower the incredibly diverse viewpoints and identities of the USC student body, remembering to incorporate the needs of both the University Park Campus and Health Sciences Campus.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these two student representatives are to be full members of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of any of the current 23 members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be presented to University Professor and the Wallis Annenberg Chair in Communication, Technology, and Society **Manuel Castells**, University Professor and the Annenberg Family Chair in Communication Leadership **Geoffrey Cohen**, University Professor and the Cornelius J. Pings Chair in Biomedical Science, Director of the USC Ginsburg Institute for Biomedical Therapeutics and Co-Director of the USC Roski Eye Institute **Mark S. Humayun**, Faculty Diversity Recruitment Advisor **Sharoni Little**, University Professor of English, American Studies and Ethnicity and Comparative Literature and the Aerol Arnold Chair of English **Viet Thanh Nguyen**, Chair of the Department of Dermatology **David Peng**, the Lloyd Armstrong Jr. Chair in Science and Engineering **Hanna Reisler**, Judge Robert Maclay Widney Chair **Leonard D. Schaeffer**, President of the Academic Senate **Yaniv Bar-Cohen**, Dean of the School of Cinematic Arts **Elizabeth M. Daley**, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs **Michael W. Quick**, Interim President of the University of Southern California **Wanda M. Austin**, USC Associates Board of Directors President **Michelle Engemann**, and Board of Trustees Chair **Rick Caruso** by the Secretary within 2 weeks of being passed by the Undergraduate Student Government Senate and then forwarded to any additional appropriate personnel.

X

Debbie Lee - President, USC Undergraduate Student Government