

**Task Force on Workplace Standards and Employee Wellness**

**Interim Report**

*February 14, 2018*

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## Executive Summary

We all want the University of Southern California (USC) to be one of the truly great 21<sup>st</sup> Century universities and one that sets an example for others around the globe. However, over the past six months, USC has been the subject of a series of articles that raise critical questions about the University's principles and processes. In response to these questions and recent events, the *Task Force on Workplace Standards and Employee Wellness* was established to examine our policies, procedures, and practices in order to imagine ways in which these can be improved. This interim report is intended to inform the community of the Task Force's current thinking and to solicit input that will guide its continuing efforts.

The Task Force's work to date has been informed by the input it has received from a variety of individuals and constituencies across the university plus the individual experiences of its members. Issues that were canvassed gave rise to the development of four major "themes" that require attention: (1) not allowing institutional contributions to out-weigh abuses of power, including toxic behaviors; (2) the need for improved transparency, accountability, shared governance, and a shared sense of ownership; (3) the need for a true understanding and promotion of well-being on the part of individuals and units; and (4) the need to be able to express concerns with the assurance they will be heard, appropriate action will be taken, and that no retaliation will occur.

Using these themes as a guide, the Task Force identified recommendations across five core areas it plans to investigate further:

- *Enhancing our Values and Culture*: Renovating the university's existing Core Values; and establishing a culture of the "responsible community member" who adheres to these values.
- *Strengthening our Leadership Model*: Expanding the reporting done by leaders to their units; increasing the expectations concerning leadership consultation with their units; more fully involving faculty committees with access to full dossiers in (re)appointments of academic leaders; enhancing pre-hire background checks for these leaders and their teams; and introducing 360° Evaluations.
- *Amplifying Well-Being*: Taking an inventory and communicating all current "Wellness" services; expanding the understanding of, and access to, aid related to all facets of well-being; and investigating the establishment of an "impairment assessment" protocol.
- *Addressing Concerns of Community Members*: Developing a coherent system for receiving and handling all types of concerns about members of the USC community, based on a trusted one-stop shop for receiving concerns and a peer-based mechanism for handling these concerns; and improving feedback about results.
- *Cross-Cutting Items*: Providing instruction related to leadership and management skills, addressing concerns, and the essentials of well-being; using data collection and metrics to further support awareness, transparency, accountability, and to provide opportunities to recognize exemplary performance; and creating a standing *Campus Culture and Wellness Council (CCWC)* to continue to monitor and adjust our environment in the spirit of ongoing engagement.

The Task Force will continue its work during the spring 2018 semester by including more of the university community in its deliberations, extending these recommendations further while drilling down into their logistics and feasibility, and preparing the ground for the CCWC to continue this work moving forward.

## Introduction

In reaction to the incidents surrounding Dean Carmen Puliafito of the Keck School of Medicine, the *Task Force on Workplace Standards and Employee Wellness* was established by Provost Michael Quick and Senior Vice President Todd Dickey via a memorandum of August 2, 2017, to “examine our policies, procedures, and practices so that we understand what we could have done better and make improvements to do just that.” In this memorandum, the Task Force was provided an initial set of questions to be considered. Although direct responses to these original questions can be found in the Potential Impacts section of this report, we quickly recognized the need to expand on this original charge and to develop a set of recommendations that address the broader issues of *Culture* and *Well-Being* at USC.

The Task Force is not an investigative body, nor has it yet received any insight from the external review that has been commissioned by the Board of Trustees. However, our deliberations have been informed by the initial set of questions, the additional incidents that have occurred since August, the Task Force members’ years of experience at USC and elsewhere, and input from the many others with whom we have been in contact.

We would be remiss if we did not start by acknowledging the enduring pain, anxiety, and embarrassment that these incidents have caused our university community, both symbolically and substantively. As a Task Force and as individuals, we have heard firsthand from many faculty, staff, students, and alumni, and the tone of these discussions has often revealed feelings of anger, cynicism, and discouragement. Underlying this frustration is a deep disappointment with the way the university has handled these incidents. This is especially true at the Health Sciences Campus, where many members of our university community have been struggling with the impact and aftermath of toxic leadership for some time.

As a university community, we aspire to promote and embody the highest values of equity, empathy, and excellence; and we are pleased to recognize the vast majority of people who do the right thing, set the right example, and lead just as they ought. But these incidents painfully remind us that we still have much work to do in order fully to match our deeds to our ambitions. Accordingly, this academic year has been a very difficult time of reflection and humility, challenging us to address the unresolved issues that are implicated by these incidents, including abuses of power and toxic behavior (whether involving sexual harassment or other forms); over-tolerance for and under-attention to such behaviors; fear of retaliation and a sense that nothing would be done if reports were made; inadequate communication, of many forms and in many directions, about concerns; and insufficient shared governance.

As a Task Force, our hope is that implementing recommendations along the lines of those provided in this interim report, following broad consultation and further work to adjust and develop them, will help prevent future similar incidents from occurring, so that we can collectively begin the long process of healing by rebuilding trust and confidence on campus. Only then can we truly live up to the inspiring vision of our Trojan Family as articulated in our mission statement – “an 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.”

## Themes

To set the context for the recommendations, we have attempted to capture the essence of the issues that have come up during our deliberations via four ubiquitous themes.

First and foremost, when decisions are being made about appointments, reappointments, promotions, or continuing employment, **we not cannot allow institutional contributions to out-weigh abuses of power, including toxic behaviors.** More work will be required to precisely define what is meant here by “toxic”, but roughly it implies unfair, abusive, unethical, destructive and/or dysfunctional. Whether directly through action, or indirectly in terms of the poor example they set, individuals who abuse power or exhibit toxic behavior damage others, create dysfunctional environments, and contaminate communities trying to work and/or study together (including by fostering the notion that abusive and/or toxic behavior is normal and acceptable). These behaviors completely disqualify these individuals in our view, rather than simply providing strong negatives to be weighed against strong positives. We must become an organization that stands against such behavior, and does so at all levels.

**The need for improved transparency, accountability, shared governance, and a shared sense of ownership** is the second theme. To maximize its potential, USC must: further strengthen shared governance and ensure appropriate checks and balances on decision making; leverage the full potential of all its members; and collect, track, utilize, and make available data as a tool to sustain the pursuit for constant improvement. There are already many examples of this at USC, but the goal should be to make it a pervasive aspect of our culture.

The third theme is **the need for a true understanding and promotion of well-being** on the part of individuals and units. The aforementioned behaviors provide one major form of threat to this, as well as often illustrating a major failure of it, but the notion is broader and more far-reaching in its implications for the overall quality of work and life. The USC community must improve its “awareness” in terms of appreciation for, and understanding of, the philosophy promoting the proactive pursuit of a healthy body, mind, and spirit. We must expand knowledge of, and streamline access to, a copious menu of available USC resources. Both individuals and supervisors must empower themselves with the ability to self-help, to provide help when concerned for others, and to report crises.

The last theme is **the need to be able to express concerns.** Communicating concerns, with the assurance that those concerns will be attended to, and that the person who expresses them will not suffer as a result, is a must. So much bad behavior goes unreported because of either a disheartening sense that no one will listen – let alone do anything about the problem – or because of a fear of retaliation and/or that they will be blamed. In some cases, the behavior has become so normalized within the culture that it is not recognized as appropriate to report. Furthermore, it is vital that members of the community be able to express about themselves and others concerns for well-being, and not simply matters of bad behavior. The community must feel that help is available, and in a form not automatically injurious to the careers of those reported (to eliminate another reason concerns are too often not reported). With a trusted means in place for expressing and addressing concerns, the notion of supporting and protecting community welfare would become a key priority of the culture.

## Recommendations Summary

We begin with a summary of recommendations and then move to a more in-depth discussion of them. These recommendations are organized into five core areas, including one that explicitly cuts across the others.

### *Enhancing our Values and Culture*

1. Rethink the *Core Values* of the university via an interactive process across the entire community that yields a comprehensive new statement from the Trojan Family about what it wants to be for the future.
2. Renew USC's culture through the introduction of the concept of a *responsible community member* who promotes adherence to the new Core Values.

### *Strengthening our Leadership Model*

3. Enhance pre-hire background checks, to include informal, off-the-record, conversations with samplings of personnel at the candidate's recent organization and web-based resources.
4. Introduce regular 360° Evaluations.
5. Strengthen the principle of shared governance through consultations by leaders of faculty, or staff, or both, as applicable, and provide the ability for consultation to be confidential, as necessary.
6. Extend the use of faculty committees for input in appointment/reappointment of academic leaders, with opportunity to review full dossier, provide input on the whole person including their interaction with staff, and receive an explanation back from the decision-maker with the rationale for the final choice.
7. Expand internal communication and transparency by having unit leaders report back to their units with responses to issues and strategic plans.
8. Add meetings at which the university President can meet at least annually, either individually or as a small group, with the Presidents of the Faculty, Staff Assembly, Graduate Student Government, and Undergraduate Student Government to listen to and discuss faculty, staff and student concerns.

### *Amplifying Well-Being*

9. Perform an inventory and audit of all current services provided by USC for faculty and staff related to the establishment and maintenance of a state of well-being.
10. Amplify the understanding of, and access to, aid related to all the facets of well-being.
11. Investigate the establishment of an "impairment assessment" protocol under certain triggered situations.

### *Addressing Concerns of Community Members*

12. Develop a trusted one-stop shop for expressing concerns about members of the USC community, including one's self, and for creating a central data repository of them.
13. Adapt and implement the Vanderbilt *Co-Worker Observation Reporting System* (CORS) or its equivalent across USC as a trusted mechanism for addressing all types of concerns.
14. Improve feedback on reported concerns to inform and protect both the involved individuals and the community as a whole.

### *Cross-Cutting Items*

15. Provide appropriate instruction and awareness vehicles to illuminate the new Core Values of the university, provide leadership and supervisory skills, and amplify the precepts and resources related to USC's efforts related to Well-Being.
16. Use data collection and metrics to further support awareness, transparency and accountability as well as to provide opportunities to recognize exemplary performance.
17. Follow up this Task Force with a standing *Campus Culture and Wellness Council (CCWC)* that has the responsibility for continued monitoring and tuning of our community's environment.

## **In-Depth Discussion of Recommendations**

### *Enhancing our Values and Culture*

USC's existing Core Values, including the Code of Ethics, has much of value in it, but it needs to be rethought in the context of where the university currently is, and where we want it to be. Our processes need adjusting to help implement a renewed culture, and to hold ourselves accountable for maintaining it. At the foundation of these efforts must be an updated set of Core Values for the university (Rec. 1). However, rather than directly proposing such a set, the Task Force recommends a university-wide process – involving faculty, staff, students, and leadership – to discuss, develop and reach consensus for official adoption by all (including the Board of Trustees). We recognize that the process of listening to all voices at USC will be as valuable as the outcome. To a significant extent, what is ultimately sought is a statement by the Trojan Family concerning how it wants to think of itself and operate moving forward.

To help us understand what might be embedded in this statement, the Task Force has compiled a list of principles that were used to motivate and guide our discussions and which might also be helpful in seeding the development of the new Core Values. These principles are divided into three categories. The first two categories stress what we want to be as a university and an organization. They are positive and aspirational, but reflect values to which we all should be held accountable. The third category is proscriptive, defining various needs of our community that have been exposed by both recent events and our understanding of their underlying causes.

#### Category One – Mission as a University:

- Creating and sharing knowledge and understanding
- Upholding academic freedom
- Encouraging curiosity and creativity
- Striving for convergence, innovation and impact
- Balancing challenging and supporting students and each other
- Sharing governance

#### Category Two – Nature as an Organization:

- Expecting excellence in whatever we do
- Maintaining personal and professional integrity and ethics
- Leading in diversity, equity and inclusion
- Demanding transparency and accountability
- Instilling a sense of ownership over, and shared responsibility for, the organization
- Fostering the well-being of individuals and groups
- Mentoring and aiding those around us
- Breeding responsible leaders and collaborators

#### Category Three – Needs as a Community:

- Reporting and working to eliminate abuses of power, including toxic behavior
- Ensuring that the grounds for sanctions imposed for unethical behavior are unweighted by the individual's stature, position, or contributions to USC's success
- Maintaining a high minimum threshold on the integrity and behavior of both potential and actual leaders when appointing and reappointing
- Eliminating the fear of, and ability to, retaliate for reporting
- Facilitating necessary communication in all directions



Additionally, at the heart of such a cultural renewal, we considered the concept of a *responsible community member* (Rec. 2). Such a member takes individual responsibility for their adherence to the Core Values and is held accountable for doing so. This implies that appropriate modifications to the Faculty Handbook and USC Policies, including the Code of Ethics, will ultimately be needed as a basis for accountability and in criteria for hiring, reappointing, promoting, evaluating, disciplining, and terminating faculty and staff. While respecting the need to think through details very carefully, especially in the context of creating grounds for termination, accountability will be essential.

### *Strengthening our Leadership Model*

Leadership in a university is a particularly complex activity due in part to the diversity of both community members and leaders. We found it useful here to partition our USC leaders into four distinct groups, based on the commonality of recommendations being made for them:

- Group 1 = President
- Group 2 = Leaders of academic schools, divisions, departments, and institutes
- Group 3 = Remainder of leadership teams<sup>1</sup>
- Group 4 = Remaining staff managers and supervisors, and remaining faculty<sup>2</sup>

These groups do not strictly stratify according to the standard university hierarchy. For example, a Vice President (Group 3) would typically be considered as at a much higher level than a Department Chair (Group 2). However, these groups do divide leaders up in a way that the Task Force found useful in making recommendations concerning adjustments to their leadership models. Who exactly is in which group may need to evolve or be refined after further consultation and discussion – including understanding where, for example, coaches should fit – but the Task Force felt that this was a good place to start.

The thoughts and associated recommendations that follow are to be layered and accumulative, starting with those intended for all leader groups, adding more as you move up to higher groups, and culminating in a recommendation solely for Group 1.<sup>3</sup> The Task Force felt strongly that the lack of tolerance for bad behavior should remain the same regardless of group, but that the expectations for exemplary behavior should rise with the increased impact that goes along with higher levels of leadership.

### *Groups 4, 3, 2, and 1*

It is necessary that everyone in these groups meet a set of basic leadership expectations. These begin with extending the concept of the responsible community member, which already automatically applies to them as members of the community, to that of being a *responsible leader*. A responsible leader goes beyond adherence to the Core Values to exemplifying them – including in maintaining a high minimum threshold on their personal

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<sup>1</sup> Includes those with similar core titles, but subordinated via adjectives such as Vice, Associate, and Assistant.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty are included because of their role in shared governance, personnel decisions, running research groups, and educating students.

<sup>3</sup> The Provost is in an ambiguous situation with respect to these groups. As Provost, s/he belongs between Groups 2 and 1. However, as Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs s/he belongs in Group 3. In what follows, s/he will be treated as a member of Groups 2 and 1, except where the President preempts this.

standards/values/integrity – and promoting them. It also includes looking out for those who work under them – at all levels and whether faculty or staff – by eliciting and attending to concerns they express, fostering an environment of well-being and fairness, and promoting their growth and career development. In a university environment, it also necessarily involves a mandate to consult with the faculty, or staff, or both, as applicable, as part of the shared governance process. Lastly, it is also critical to ensure that background checks are done as part of the hiring process for all leaders.

#### Groups 3, 2, and 1

For Group 3 and higher leaders, pre-hire background checks should be expanded to include informal, off-the-record, conversations with samplings of personnel at the candidate's recent organization, plus consultation of web-based information sources (Rec. 3). The Task Force has not yet worked out detailed recommendations for how far these expanded background checks should go, who would do them, or exactly how they should work, but it is critical that more than just the official story is heard concerning all serious candidates for these major leadership positions. For similar reasons, we will also recommend that an adaptation of this expanded process be used during reappointments.

It is also recommended that these leaders should participate in a regular *360° Evaluation* (Rec. 4). Such evaluations would include input from those directly above and below, as well as from co-workers, colleagues and their direct reports.<sup>4</sup> For academic leaders, this should go beyond direct reports to including all faculty and staff in their units; and should include evaluation of their managerial effectiveness. For non-academic leaders, efforts should also be made to extend this concept to include the possibility of input from beyond their direct reports to the full communities involved.

#### Groups 2 and 1

For these leaders, who have unique profiles as heads of academic units, there are additional recommendations tied in one form or another to the general notion of shared governance. In a university setting, this concept traditionally concerns a relationship between the leadership and faculty of a university, under which the faculty contribute in a significant manner to decisions that affect the faculty and academic concerns, and to a varying extent more broadly to what happens at the university. However, with this Task Force, we are also witnessing participation of staff in a key aspect of shared governance, something that should be continued as appropriate in the future.

It is recommended that consultation be mandatory with faculty, and staff as appropriate, for certain key classes of decisions (Rec. 5); and, for situations in which preparing for and/or making such decisions is delegated to Group 3 leaders, this same recommendation applies to them. However, to make this all feasible, particularly given that some of these consultations may involve confidential matters, it is recommended that larger units institute elected faculty (and/or staff) bodies that are small enough for confidential discussions. If the unit is too large for such a body to be sufficiently representative, a second elected faculty (and/or staff) body should be considered in addition that is inherently more representative, but whose proceedings need not be kept confidential. One possible model for this is the Academic Senate Executive Board and the Senate itself. Whether a unit has one or both of these bodies, it is thought to be critical that they have the

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<sup>4</sup> For the President, it should be noted that there would be no co-workers or colleagues to consult.

guarantee of freedom to move into Executive Session, with no presence from the unit's leader or their staff, whenever the body deems it necessary.

It is recommended that faculty should be more of a full partner during the appointment and reappointment process of academic leaders (Rec. 6). Faculty search committees are already often involved in appointments, but their role here is too limited, and they are not typically involved in reappointments. There should always be a confidential faculty committee consulted as part of these processes that has the opportunity to review the full dossier on each candidate for whom they are to provide input, and to provide input on the whole person, not just on their academic accomplishments.<sup>5</sup> Following input from the faculty committee, and a decision by the appropriate leader(s), the final decision should be explained back to the committee so as to provide a final and broader review/check on the considerations involved.

It is recommended that the process of reporting back to the unit after reappointment be refined and expanded on (Rec. 7). The speeches involved in this should include: an update on the status of the unit that includes its status with respect to the university's core values, and which is supported by quantitative data when possible; responses to key issues brought up during the reappointment; and plans for the future, with their relationships to the relevant strategic plan(s) when possible. Quantitative backup that does not make it into the speech should be included in a written appendix to the transcript of the speech. Both the leader's direct supervisor and the new Vice Provost for Leadership Development and Evaluation should be in attendance at these speeches.

It is also recommended that these leaders should provide an annual "State of the *Unit*" speech, at least when not giving a reappointment speech the same year, with comparable content (Rec. 7).<sup>6</sup> The Vice Provost for Leadership Development and Evaluation should be in attendance at these speeches.

### Group 1

There is one additional recommendation that applies only to the President of the University (plus ideally also separately to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees). The recommendation is to meet at least annually, either individually or as a small group, with the Presidents of the Faculty, the Staff Assembly, the Graduate Student Government, and the Undergraduate Student Government to listen to and discuss faculty, staff and student concerns (Rec. 8). This would be over and above the group meetings that are currently held, to enable more direct communication among these leaders.

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<sup>5</sup> It is understood that negative information may be available for internal candidates, from confidential personnel files, that is not available for external candidates, possibly placing the internal candidates at something of a comparative disadvantage. However, it is critical that a more diverse set of eyes see the full dossier, and that any negative information be fully considered by them. In other words, even if less information is available for external candidates, internal candidates with negative dossiers should be evaluated based on them. Some additional training and/or instruction may be appropriate for the committees in such cases. It may also be worth considering requesting written permission from final external candidates for access to their files at their current institution.

<sup>6</sup> For the Provost, it should be noted that this and the third additional recommendation are preempted by the President's annual State of the University speeches.

### *Amplifying Well-Being*

The university must embark on the task of defining “Wellness,” and the related approaches that lead to well-being, in terms meaningful to the USC community. This should be followed by adding the pillars of the concept to the Core Values and, in so doing, making this concept essential to our community’s fitness. Several layers of the USC environment have embarked already on initiatives related to providing and promoting “Wellness,” but these need to be catalogued<sup>7</sup>, expanded, and made available to all (Rec. 9).

In addition, a more significant effort must be made to amplify the understanding of, and access to, aid in the various veins of the concept behind “Well-Being” (Rec. 10). The well-being of an individual can be identified by a healthy physical and mental condition, but the optimal state of health must also incorporate the fulfillment of an individual’s physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and economic potential, as well as a deep understanding of one’s role in society. The community, whether physically based at any of USC’s local sites or only tied in remotely/virtually, must promote and support emotional well-being and healthy interactions with each other. We must elevate the importance of environmental conditions such as ergonomics and indoor air quality. We must find ways to identify and provide pathways for addressing the many and various forms of addiction. In addition to influencing our current community, we also have the opportunity and obligation to mold the leaders of tomorrow with an understanding of the importance and moral necessity, as well as comprehension of the financial value and effectiveness, of providing “well” workplaces. We collectively must appreciate how stress, anxiety, and depression that come from unhealthy environments are a drag on any system and drain it of creativity, inventiveness, effectiveness, and productivity.

To protect our community and ensure one of the most primal aspects of creating a healthy environment, the feeling of safety and stability, it is proposed to explore some form of an “Impairment Assessment” protocol that, when triggered, helps to evaluate the ability of individuals to safely and effectively perform their jobs (Rec. 11). The protocol might be triggered in response to verifiable, significant, sustained changes in behavior, all while the individual is denying any issue. Alternatively, it could be in response to concerns raised by the individuals themselves or by others about their ability to safely or appropriately perform key parts of their job responsibilities. The response to any given assessment could vary based on findings, but would necessarily range from providing aid, to recommendations on where to seek help, and in extreme cases, legal or disciplinary action, as appropriate.

### *Addressing Concerns of Community Members*

To help insure that concerns expressed by members of the community are heard, communicated and handled appropriately, we recommend the combination of: (1) a trusted one-stop shop, possibly based on growing the new USC Ombuds Office<sup>8</sup> that would facilitate the expression of concerns, hear them as much in confidence as is allowable, and direct them to where else in the university they are needed (Rec. 12); and (2) a general peer-based approach, based on an adaptation of the Vanderbilt Co-Worker Observation Reporting

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<sup>7</sup> It is the understanding of the Task Force that an inventory and audit of these services is already underway by members of the new Office of Campus Wellness & Crisis Intervention.

<sup>8</sup> It is envisioned that there would be multiple geographic Ombuds “Offices” for accessibility, but also in recognition of the variations in the cultures and experiences at our different sites, such as UPC, HSC, ISI/ICT, USC Center, and Alhambra.

System (CORS) or its equivalent, to centrally record, further redirect, and handle the bulk of the concerns (Rec. 13).

Having a one-stop shop for expressing concerns would provide a confidential space for our community to submit concerns, while simplifying the massive diversity of possible reporting venues and the complexity of knowing where to go with which request. When in doubt, regardless of subject, members of the USC community would be invited to contact this office, which would then triage and redirect concerns as appropriate. The office would also provide guidance on a range of issues, as well as share with the submitter the protocols of various shops on campus and the boundaries allowable with respect to confidentiality. For example, they would advise on those things that the law requires the university to report to authorities once the institution has been made aware of them. It would also help guide concerns to Wellness organizations when that is the most appropriate response. This office would strive to provide all possible options for anonymous submission of concerns.

One of the main functions of the one-stop shop would be to serve as the reporting conduit to a peer-based system such as a modified version of the Vanderbilt Co-Worker Observation Reporting System (CORS), or its equivalent. In CORS, concerns are recorded centrally. These concerns are then evaluated by a select committee that proposes one of a range of possible responses, based on an analysis that compares the action/issue reported against a community-agreed-upon baseline. On the lowest level, peer-to-peer consultation is used to educate and alert individuals to a concern that has been reported. At the highest level, senior leadership is authorized to act swiftly. Concerns typically escalate steadily as they recur, but can also be promoted directly to higher levels when necessary. This breaks the standard conflation of centralization with escalation, enabling the benefits of centralized tracking and coordination – including providing opportunities for peer analysis of individual or systemic issues – while facilitating responses that are of the right type and scale. The CORS system was originally developed for the medical environment, and has spread to many such nationwide, including recently to USC’s Keck Hospital. What is being recommended here is exploring an adaptation of this kind of process to the larger university, with the aforementioned “community-agreed-upon baseline” being the newly formed core values discussed earlier.<sup>9</sup>

It is expected that the existing organizations at USC that handle different aspects of various types of concerns – including both investigation and wellness units – would continue to play an important role in the new overall process that would be framed by the combination of the new one-stop shop and a CORS-like process. It would also still be possible to approach these organizations directly. However, it would be expected that each organization would now need to submit central updates to the one-stop shop to keep the overall records current (Rec. 12). With this additional effort, it is hoped that the unified role that is played by the one-stop shop, plus the central recording of concerns by the CORS-like process, would greatly improve the necessary communication of concerns and updates across all relevant organizations and units. This workflow should facilitate tracking and responding to concerns, and prevention of attempts at retaliation.

Feedback about the results of investigations or the sanctioning process is a critical piece of the transparency theme mentioned previously. In the context of handling concerns,

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<sup>9</sup> It may be necessary to consider the possibility of units extending the university-wide baseline to include additional aspects specific to their needs, and how then to enable the process to be flexible enough to accommodate these unit-specific extensions.

reporting back matters in particular to those expressing the concerns, and those who may be, or have been, impacted by the behavior reported. Without this feedback, those who have expressed the concerns often come to believe that their issue has either been ignored or received insufficient attention. Likewise, without feedback, those that may be, or have been, impacted by the behavior reported, may live in personal and/or professional unease, or even fear, concerning whether there are unidentified members of their community who could be a danger to them. Such feedback, however, also matters more generally to the community as a whole, as a means of measuring and tracking the health of the university and its organizations. The Task Force recommends that such reporting back be implemented to the full extent possible within the constraint of applicable privacy and other relevant laws (Rec. 14), but the details of how this can be done are still to be worked out.

### *Cross-Cutting Items*

Three of the recommendations cut across and provide necessary support for the other four areas, concerning providing relevant instruction for achieving the recommendations, monitoring the status of the recommendations via data collection and metrics, and continuing engagement with, and reevaluation of, the recommendations beyond the start up phase.

USC community members possess a great diversity of backgrounds and skill sets. Societies, as well as universities, are evolving and becoming more complex at exponential rates. Expectations on the individual grow with each passing day. There is a need to recognize these realities and build support structures for individuals and for our culture. Constant care and effort should be taken to close the gap between current skills and optimal aspirations for an ideal community. One critical structure is the insight and skill-building that can come from various forms of instruction (Rec. 15). Through instruction, all members of the community should be armed with the most current, basic outlines of our governance structures and key statistics, our Core Values including the importance of creating and maintaining a healthy ecosystem, tools related to understanding and addressing concerns, and the overall concept of the *responsible community member*. The Task Force also recognized the need for expanded training for all leaders – Groups 4, 3, 2 and 1 – that explicitly covers how to work with, and/or manage, and lead faculty, staff, and students.

Some of this instruction could occur through an extension of existing online training to a yearly model. Training every other year would still cover current harassment related topics, but the alternate years would focus on additional of the topics raised here. Online training is only one instruction channel, but it can sometimes be one of the most universal vehicles to which we have access. This universality will allow all individuals, both current and new, to understand and appreciate the many facets of our landscape. However, online training by itself has limits, so we recommend also considering classes, coaching, peer mentoring, and other approaches, all of which may require additional resources to make happen across the board. It is also important to consider the differences in instructional needs for existing versus new faculty and staff, and for initial for ongoing instruction.

It is felt that to achieve community-wide goals and to further support awareness and transparency, the use of data and contemporary research should be employed (Rec. 16). Metrics, and in some cases benchmarks, can be used as powerful agents in the process of continued improvement. For example, as the Core Values are adopted and the *responsible community member* concept engrained, we will need instruments for measuring how well we are living up to the ideals that define the culture, and will need yearly updates on where

we stand both as individual units and the university as a whole. Aggregated data resulting from the collection of concerns can shed light on the avenues needing the most attention. Other data related to the pursuit of well-being could help define our expectations.

Data collection and metrics can also be used to celebrate trailblazers and to incentivize individuals or units. When personifying the tenets of the new Core Values, leadership ideals, or the proactive promotion of healthy work places, we further recommend the eventual development of incentives and awards for exemplary adherence to these values as a whole and/or to key elements of it.

In order to ensure that all of the aforementioned principles and aspirations are pursued and kept current with ever-changing times, we must commit to ongoing engagement and reevaluation. The pursuit of constant improvement must be fostered, as there is no one answer or direction for all of the challenges and opportunities that lie in front of us. Therefore, it is recommended that a university-level *Campus Culture and Wellness Council (CCWC)* be formed and tasked with monitoring overall progress, communicating with the community at large to keep it informed, reexamining periodically the Core Values to assess how well they continue to meet our needs, and making recommendations that further tune the culture (Rec. 17).

## Potential Impacts

In this section, the list of recommendations is applied to both the original incident that inspired the Task Force's creation and the original questions posed. Similar stories as the one told here for the original incident can also be told for other recent incidents.

### *Original Incident*

Were the mechanisms suggested by the Task Force's current recommendations in place, there are multiple reasons to expect a different outcome would have resulted related to the circumstances surrounding Dean Carmen Puliafito:

- Enhanced pre-hire background checks and the involvement of a faculty appointment committee concerned with the whole person could have uncovered his historic problematic behavior and ***kept us from hiring him as Dean*** (Recs. 3 & 6).
- The combination of the new one-stop shop and the CORS-like process, as built on a new Core Values and responsible community member baseline, (Recs. 1, 2, 12 & 13) could have provided:
  - the opportunity to ***detect earlier the problems that were developing*** with respect to both his personal well-being and how he treated those around him; and
  - an ***appropriately escalated sequence of responses*** – including impairment assessment, forms of support for his well-being, and sanctions – before a crisis point was reached.
- During reappointment, utilizing a faculty committee that could evaluate his full record and person, having reappointment criteria that emphasized USC's Core Values, and requiring the decision maker to explain their decision back to the committee should then have ***made it less likely he would have been reappointed*** (Rec. 6).

### *Original Questions Revisited*

The charge to the Task force, as expressed in the memo from Provost Quick and Senior Vice President Dickey included a set of questions on which the task force was to begin. We reconsider those here in terms of the recommendations that are responsive to them.

*1. What additional training should be done for faculty and staff on understanding, identifying, and handling the mental health challenges that may occur from time to time across our community?*

The suggested biennial training and awareness vehicles designed to provide a better understanding of well-being and the resources USC has to offer in this regard, should better equip faculty and staff to deal with these challenges (Recs. 9 & 15).

*2. What are our opportunities for improving campus wellness, especially in the health professions?*

The recommended inventory and audit of existing services will be the first step towards assessing the best ways to marshal our resources and to find existing opportunities, as well as providing a start at identifying areas needing attention (Rec. 9).



*3. How do we balance individual and privacy rights with the goal of protecting our faculty, students, employees, patients, and the university; and, to which groups of employees should these more intrusive evaluations apply?*

The Task Force does not recommend pervasive drug testing or other forms of investigations. It was felt that such approaches would simply be too intrusive, leading to significant and legitimate concerns among the faculty and staff, whether they are currently working at USC or potential recruits. Instead, the Task Force was more focused on responding to behaviors that impair one's ability to perform on the job. It is recommending that a form of "impairment assessment" be explored. Such an assessment tool would investigate the ability for one to safely and effectively perform the key parts of one's job responsibilities. Should the assessment raise concerns surrounding the aforementioned, it could trigger the need for more intrusive evaluations including drug testing (Rec. 11). Such a system would render unnecessary the consideration of pervasive intrusions into the private lives of our faculty and staff.

*4. How do we separate allegations of criminal behavior, which should be reported to the police; problems with addiction that call for compassion while the individual seeks treatment; and improprieties that call for discipline or dismissal?*

A combination of elements will help address this. First, the one-stop shop for expressing concerns should reduce the need for community members to understand how to make such determinations, instead placing the onus on trained professional staff (Rec. 12). Second, we are suggesting training that will help community members identify which types of behavior belong to each of these categories, as well as create a better understanding of the signs of well-being disruption, such as addictive behaviors (Rec. 15). Third, the introduction of the *responsible community member* and the associated newly formed Core Values will guide discussions and define pathways for discipline related to improprieties or behaviors not acceptable to the community (Recs. 1 & 2) beyond our existing policies and legal obligations.

*5. How do we keep within the scope of our proper concern to protect patients, students, and co-workers, as well as the university itself?*

The ability for individuals to contact a trusted organization with concerns should increase the likelihood of individuals reporting (Rec. 12), while also providing an opportunity for the University, in the form of the CORS-like committee to pause and ask this question on a case-by-case basis (Rec. 13).

*6. How do we improve our flow of information across separate parts of our complex organization?*

Through the introduction of a central repository of information (Rec. 12), proactive efforts to increase internal communication and transparency between leadership positions and communities (Rec. 7), and general management best practices training (Rec. 15), we should be able to improve the flow of information.

*7. How do we make sure that incoming reports of improper actions, even if anonymous or questionable, get passed on to higher officials and to the Compliance Office?*

Between the proposed one-stop shop for expressing concerns (Rec. 12) and the CORS-like process (Rec. 13), with the communication necessarily built into and between both, reports should consistently be routed to where they are needed.

*8. How do we get a fuller account of the record of those hired for sensitive positions, and better assess them appropriately on an ongoing basis?*

Enhanced pre-hire background checks, expanded faculty committee involvement in appointment and reappointment, 360° evaluations, improved reporting structures and feedback loops, and the new Vice Provost for Leadership Development and Evaluation should strengthen new and ongoing assessments (Recs. 3, 4, 6, 12, & 14).

## **Next Steps**

The intensity with which the university and its leadership have been held up to public scrutiny in recent months has energized USC to work to become what we all want it to be.

As a start to this, in a memo to the Keck School of Medicine on October 10, 2017, Provost Quick proposed some urgent changes, such as a new Vice Provost for Leadership Development and Evaluation, a USC Ombuds Office, and an investigative unit for incidents involving non-protected classes. He also called for strengthened reporting of concerns and for some additional specific initiatives within the Keck School.

During Spring 2018, overlapping with a campus-wide feedback process on this report, the Task Force will break up into four Working Groups to further investigate and develop the recommendations in this report. The charges to these Working Groups will be to:

1. Consider how best to pursue a community-wide effort to redefine our core values.
2. Look into how to adapt and implement the CORS-like process, and how to combine it with a one-stop shop for expression and handling of concerns, USC's relevant existing organizations, and an appropriate approach to reporting back to both individuals and the community.
3. Further develop the recommendations for how to strengthen our leadership model and its interaction with shared governance.
4. Explore the development of additional forms of instruction for both leaders and the broader community, as well as what might be most effective in terms of incentives and awards.

The Task Force on Workplace Standard and Employee Wellness expects to self-terminate at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year, with its work then being picked up by the continuing Campus Culture and Wellness Council. As the implementation of various recommendations becomes possible, either the Task Force or the Council – depending on how long this all takes – will work with the faculty, staff and administration to help ensure that the changes made will move us towards the culture and processes necessary, and thus towards the great 21<sup>st</sup> Century university that we all want USC to be.

## **Appendix I: Composition of Task Force and the Community of Interest**

As its name indicates, the Task Force was created with a focus on “Workplace” and “Employees,” and thus was populated with a mixture of faculty and staff (Appendix I). The primary concern of the Task Force has also thus been on the community comprised of faculty and staff. The balanced appointment of faculty and staff, as well as the split leadership of the Task Force, has been essential in ensuring that the concerns of both groups have been heard, and that the ideas introduced by both have been considered.

Faculty are the vanguard in accomplishing the university’s core academic mission of education and research. Their position necessitates the protection of their academic freedom<sup>10</sup> and includes implications for self-governance, shared governance of the overall university, and peer review as defined in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty also play leading roles in other professional activities – such as patient care and legal, business, cultural, community and engineering services – that provide a critical backdrop for many academic activities while further broadening the university’s overall mission.

Staff are the internal engine. Critical legal, safety, operational logistics, business functions, and student stewardship roles are fulfilled by staff, who are often armed with extensive professional and/or technical training and experience. With the staff-to-faculty ratio at ~3:1, no culture change or sustainability of such a change will be possible without their engagement.

Differences between faculty and staff, and between tenured and RTPC faculty, will be relevant in some of the processes, but the expectation is that the values will be common. In addition, there must also be a general notion of fairness that applies across the board, irrespective of the roles of particular players.

As mentioned earlier, we do recommend broadening the community of interest to include students – who outnumber the combined faculty and staff by more than 2:1 when considering both undergraduate and graduate populations – bringing them into the deliberations on Culture and Wellness, and working towards both appropriate expectations for them and approval by them. It may also be worth considering bringing into the process other representatives from both the emeriti and the alumni so as to encompass the entire *Trojan Family*.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on academic freedom see, e.g., <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/12/21/defining-academic-freedom>.

## **Appendix II: Task Force Membership**

**Paul Rosenbloom (co-chair)**, Professor of Computer Science, USC Viterbi School of Engineering; President, Academic Senate

**Jeffrey de Caen (co-chair)**, Associate Dean for Operations, USC Thornton School of Music; President, Staff Assembly

**Steven Adcock**, Director, Human Resources, USC Marshall School of Business

**Paul Adler**, Professor of Management and Organization and Harold Quinton Chair in Business Policy, USC Marshall School of Business

**Yaniv Bar-Cohen**, Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, Medicine, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Academic Vice President, Academic Senate

**John Brodhead**, Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine; George N. and Mary Lou Boone Professorship in Medical Excellence, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Associate Chief Medical Officer for Medical Services at Keck Hospitals of USC

**Steven Bucher**, Associate Professor of Technical Communication Practice, USC Viterbi School of Engineering; Chair, Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee, Academic Senate

**Paula Cannon**, Professor of Molecular Microbiology & Immunology, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Immediate Past President, Academic Senate

**Lil Delcampo**, Associate General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel

**Edward Finegan**, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and Law, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and USC Gould School of Law

**John Gaspari**, Executive Director, Center for Work & Family Life

**Charles Gomer**, Professor of Pediatrics, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Vice Chair, Faculty Development (Pediatrics CHLA); Past President, Academic Senate

**Rima Jubran**, Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, Keck School of Medicine of USC; President, Keck School of Medicine of USC Faculty Council

**Laura LaCorte**, Associate Senior Vice President, Compliance, Office of Compliance

**Adam Leventhal**, Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Director, USC Health, Emotion & Addiction Laboratory

**Steven Lopez**, Professor of Psychology and Social Work, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

**Janis McEldowney**, Associate Senior Vice President, Human Resources

**Chantelle Rice Collins**, Associate Professor of Clinical Occupational Therapy, USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy; Director of the USC Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice

**Atia Sattar**, Lecturer, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences; Medical Humanities Program Director, USC Levan Institute for Humanities and Ethics

**Varun Soni**, Vice Provost for Campus Wellness and Crisis Intervention; Dean of Religious Life

**Mary Trujillo**, Program Manager, USC Graduate Programs in Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Member, Staff Assembly

**Victoria Young**, Computer Services Consultant, Educational Affairs, Keck School of Medicine of USC; Member, Staff Assembly

**Matt Curran (*ex officio*)**, Director, Trademarks and Contract Compliance, USC Trademarks and Licensing

**Marty Levine (*ex officio*)**, UPS Foundation Chair of Law and Gerontology, USC Gould School of Law, USC Davis School of Gerontology; Vice Provost and Senior Advisor to the Provost