MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the USC Community

From: Margo K. Apostolos
Chair, Honorary Degrees Committee

Date: September 23, 2015

Subject: Honorary Degree Nominations

On behalf of the USC Honorary Degrees Committee, I encourage you to nominate distinguished individuals to be considered for an honorary degree from USC. To download a nomination form and for detailed instructions, please visit the USC Honorary Degrees website at www.usc.edu/honorarydegrees. The committee is currently reviewing nominations for the May 2017 commencement ceremony and later.

The honorary degree is the highest and most public award that USC confers and recognizes a recipient’s extraordinary accomplishments or service. More specifically, it is given for one or more of the following reasons:

• To honor individuals who have distinguished themselves through extraordinary achievements in scholarship, the professions, or other creative activities, whether or not they are widely known by the general public;

• To honor alumni and other individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the welfare and development of USC or the communities of which they are a part;

• To recognize exceptional acts of philanthropy to the university and/or on the nation or world scene; and

• To elevate the university in the eyes of the world by honoring individuals who are widely known and highly regarded for achievements in their respective fields of endeavor.

Only USC faculty, staff, students, alumni, or trustees may submit a nomination. A nomination need not come from someone in the candidate’s field, and the committee also welcomes nominations of persons with distinguished accomplishments outside of conventional academic fields. The committee is particularly interested in candidates from diverse backgrounds and
whose own accomplishments might serve to highlight areas in which the university has
developed exceptional strength.

**Confidentiality is crucial to the nomination process. Nominees must not know that they are under consideration. Further, the nominator should not solicit letters of support from individuals outside of the university. A breach of confidentiality will result in immediate disqualification of the nominee.**

After review by the Honorary Degrees Committee, a slate of nominees of outstanding distinction and accomplishment is recommended to President Nikias and the Board of Trustees, who select the final recipients. Approved nominations are active for three years from the date of approval.

Please note that the Honorary Degrees Committee does not choose the commencement speaker, though the speaker is often awarded an honorary degree.

The following individuals have received honorary degrees in the past three years:

**May 2015**

**Pete Carroll**, Doctor of Humane Letters, the head football coach of the Seattle Seahawks who led his team to Super Bowl victory in 2014. Carroll returned USC football to national prominence during his nine-year tenure as head coach at the university. His “Always Compete” philosophy has led to a successful four-decade career in football. Carroll is one of just a few coaches in football history to have won a Super Bowl and a national college championship. He is also the founder of A Better LA and A Better Seattle, two gang-violence prevention and community-building organizations that empower inner-city youth and forge relationships with service organizations.

**Kamala Harris**, Doctor of Laws, the 32nd attorney general of California. As the state’s chief lawyer, Harris has worked tirelessly on a range of critical issues. Her efforts to target and dismantle the operations of a major human trafficking ring have protected people all over the world. In addition to combating transnational gangs that traffic human beings, guns, and drugs, Harris has aggressively prosecuted mortgage-related fraud and crime during California’s financial crisis. Additionally, she has promoted the adoption of more technology in law enforcement and the incorporation of data-driven policing. Harris, who served two terms as district attorney of San Francisco, is also the first female, first African-American, and first South Asian attorney general in California’s history.

**Mellody Hobson**, Doctor of Humane Letters, president of the Chicago-based money management firm Ariel Investments. Hobson is also chair of the board of trustees for Ariel Investment Trust. The firm has over $10 billion in assets under management.
Hobson is passionate about investor education and has become a nationally recognized voice on financial literacy. She is a regular contributor and analyst for CBS News, the Tom Joyner Morning Show and Black Enterprise magazine. She is also the spokesperson for two reports that examine investing patterns among minorities – the Ariel/Hewitt Study: 401(k) Plans in Living Color and the Ariel Black Investor Survey. Hobson’s active involvement in professional and civic institutions extends beyond finance. She is the chairwoman of DreamWorks Animation and a director of The Estee Lauder Companies and Starbucks Corporation. She is also the chairwoman of After School Matters, a nonprofit organization that provides high-quality programs outside of school for Chicago teens. Hobson serves on the boards of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art and The Chicago Public Education Fund; she was also appointed emeritus trustee of the Sundance Institute. Ms. Hobson delivered the commencement address.

Leonard Schaeffer, Doctor of Humane Letters, a policy expert in health care financing who is considered one of the most transformative health care executives in the nation, holds the Judge Robert Maclay Widney Chair as a professor at the USC Price School of Public Policy. He is the founding chairman and CEO of WellPoint, one of the nation’s largest health insurance companies, and a senior adviser to TPG Capital, a private equity firm. Through scholarly and philanthropic contributions, Schaeffer has dedicated his life to advancing health policy research. He established the USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics and continuously brings together policymakers and industry leaders to solve health care’s most demanding challenges.

Michael Tilson Thomas, Doctor of Music, an award-winning conductor, pianist and Michael Tilson Thomas composer. Thomas has won numerous Grammy Awards. In 2009, President Obama awarded him the National Medal of Arts. Thomas has been the music director of the San Francisco Symphony for 20 years. He founded the New World Symphony and created the YouTube Symphony Orchestra. His compositions are inspired by a range of sources, from Anne Frank’s diary to Emily Dickinson’s poetry. Thomas received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the USC Thornton School of Music. He was named a Judge Widney Professor of Music at USC in 2014.

Ada Yonath, Doctor of Science, a Nobel Prize-winner whose work in observing and documenting the ribosome has significantly advanced understanding of its structure and refocused scholarly discussions about it all over the world. Yonath has also won the Wolf Prize in Chemistry and the Massry Prize, both considered precursors to the Nobel. Yonath has contributed significant research on the effectiveness of antibiotics. She also pioneered the methodology of cryocrystallography, a technique for examining rapid-frozen protein crystals that decreases the adverse effects of radiation that was previously inherent to X-ray crystallography. Yonath is director of the Helen and Milton A. Kimmelman Center for Biomolecular Structure and Assembly at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.
May 2014

**Marc Benioff**, Doctor of Humane Letters, is the visionary founder, chairman, and chief executive officer of salesforce.com, which has become the leader in enterprise cloud computing. A 30-year veteran of the software industry, he stands among the pioneers of cloud computing, and has received widespread recognition for his tremendous success as an innovator and industry leader. In 2000, he launched the Salesforce.com Foundation, which established the “1-1-1 model” of integrated corporate philanthropy. Mr. Benioff received his bachelor’s degree from USC and serves on the university’s Board of Trustees. Mr. Benioff delivered the commencement address.

**B. Wayne Hughes**, Doctor of Business Administration, is a business leader and USC alumnus and trustee, who founded Public Storage, the largest self-storage company in the world, which he grew from one site in Southern California to more than 2,200 facilities in 38 states and seven Western European nations.

**Shonda L. Rhimes**, Doctor of Fine Arts, is a USC alumna and the creator and executive producer of several acclaimed ABC series, including “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Private Practice” and “Scandal,” and has earned widespread recognition for her commitment to featuring empowered characters who reflect the diversity of our society.

**Phillip A. Sharp**, Doctor of Science, is a Nobel laureate whose advances in molecular biology and biochemistry include the discovery of “split genes,” which revealed that a given gene could be present in DNA as separated segments — a landmark achievement that has advanced our understanding of the genetic causes of cancer and other diseases. Sharp is Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**James H. Simons**, Doctor of Humane Letters, is a mathematician and philanthropist, whose scientific work in geometry and topology led to the establishment of Chern-Simons invariants, a theory that has profoundly influenced theoretical physics. He founded Renaissance Technologies, one of the most successful hedge funds in the world, and the Simons Foundation, which advances research in mathematics and the basic sciences.

**Twyla Tharp**, Doctor of Fine Arts, is one of America’s preeminent dancers and choreographers, who has choreographed more than 160 works that include dances, television specials, Hollywood films, full-length ballets, Broadway shows and figure skating programs. She received the 2004 National Medal of Arts.

May 2013

**Sir John Gurdon**, Doctor of Science. Sir John has led significant advances in the field of developmental biology, particularly through his groundbreaking work in nuclear transplantation.
and cloning. For these singular contributions, he was awarded the 2012 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

**David Henry Hwang,** Doctor of Literature. Hwang is a renowned playwright, who authored the Tony-award-winning play, *M. Butterfly.* In addition, he has authored *Golden Child, Yellow Face, Chinglish* and an updated libretto to Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Flower Drum Song.*

**Jimmy Iovine,** Doctor of Humane Letters. Mr. Iovine is the chairman of Interscope Geffen A&M Records, and is the co-founder of Beats by Dr. Dre. He has also co-founded the Iovine Young Academy at USC. Mr. Iovine delivered the commencement address.

**Glorya Kaufman,** Doctor of Humane Letters. Ms. Kaufman is one of the world’s leading benefactors of dance. In 2012, she endowed the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance.

**Edward P. Roski,** Doctor of Humane Letters. Mr. Roski serves as the chairman and chief executive officer of Majestic Realty, Co., one of the oldest and largest privately held real estate companies in the United States. He stepped down as chairman of the USC Board of Trustees in May of 2013.

**Gayle Garner Roski,** Doctor of Humane Letters. Ms. Roski is a noted artist and patron of the arts. Together with her husband, Edward, she provided a naming endowment to USC’s fine arts school, which was renamed the USC Gayle Garner Roski School of Fine Arts.