

MEDIA ADVISORY – Embargoed Until Noon on Tuesday, April 16, 2019

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ON DAY 4 OF GROWING TENT CITY AT USC’S GATES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND STUDENTS TO GIVE INCOMING USC LEADERSHIP 48 HOURS TO RESPOND TO LIST OF DEMANDS FOLLOWING NOON RALLY AND MARCH INTO CAMPUS

*USC’s Continued Inaction in the Wake of Multiple Scandals Has Prompted
Calls for Accountability and a Tent City Takeover by Students and Residents
at University Entrance; Participants Have Vowed to Remain Until Their
Demands Are Met*

LOS ANGELES—On day four of the ongoing Tent City at the University of Southern California (USC), a massive coalition of students, academia and various Los Angeles community groups will rally and march to administration offices, delivering their demands for reform directly to university leaders – and giving them 48 hours to respond. [Their action comes one week after participants announced their demands](#) and called for a meeting with incoming USC President Dr. Carol Folt. Reports of unethical behavior have rocked the campus community in recent months, including the high-profile college admissions scandal and the alleged assault of hundreds of students at the hands of university gynecologist Dr. George Tyndall.

The growing Tent City at the Trousdale Parkway appeared with the start of the “Los Angeles Times-USC Festival of Books” last Saturday, and has remained an epicenter of activism for Angelenos fed up with destructive effects of policies pushed by USC’s leaders – both on campus and off. Participants have promised the Tent City will remain at the University’s gates until the coalition’s demands – including increased access for low-income students, affordable housing and community benefits for residents displaced by USC’s lavish construction projects, and an end to rampant sexual harassment and assault on campus – are met.

Since popping up Saturday, the Tent City has been buzzing with activity, with participants holding a community mass on Palm Sunday, listening sessions with local politicians, and tenants’ rights workshops and legal clinics for residents affected by the rapid gentrification of South Los Angeles at the hands of USC’s civic leaders. The action has drawn elected officials and prominent community leaders from across Southern California and beyond, including Former Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León and Pastor William Smart, President and CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

WHO: USC Forward, Fight for \$15, the LA Tenants Union, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), SEIU 721, USC students and other concerned faculty

WHAT: Rally at Tent City and March to USC Administration Offices

WHEN: Tue., Apr. 16, 2019 at 12 P.M.

WHERE: West Jefferson Blvd. and Hoover St.
Los Angeles, CA 90037

BACKGROUND: USC has lost its way. Instead of being an institution of higher learning focused on values that serve to strengthen their student body and ultimately benefit communities in Southern California, USC is now a source of non-stop scandals ranging from high-level staff allegedly accepting admission bribes and on-campus drug use by the medical school dean to the cover up of decades of alleged sexual assault on students by a USC gynecologist.

Aside from the recent admissions scandals currently making headlines, USC has become a source of greedy policies that are hurting everyone—including students, faculty, local business and residents in the surrounding community. USC continues to drive the widening gap of income inequality in Los Angeles through skyrocketing tuition, bloated administrative salaries, and unnecessary and costly infrastructure projects that are driving long-time residents out of their homes.

With an endowment of \$5.5 billion and assets totaling over \$9 billion, the University has the resources and capacity to be a good neighbor in South LA, and to pay their fair share to support the vital public services that residents rely on.

Indeed, instead of real investment in the graduate workers and faculty responsible for student learning or in the neighborhoods nearby, the university has continued to dump money into lavish infrastructure projects and administrative salaries. USC faculty and graduate workers struggle with contingent, part-time work for low pay along with rampant workplace issues – including alleged sexual harassment and intimidation and retaliation toward those involved in organizing efforts. Moreover, USC’s continued development push in South Los Angeles has disrupted the neighborhood around the university, pushing lifelong residents in the surrounding area out of their homes and placing an immense strain on both city and county resources.

USC is one of the nation’s premier private research universities and the largest private employer in Los Angeles County. The institution has the resources and capacity to make drastic improvements to the quality of life for its employees while simultaneously behaving as a responsible neighbor in South Los Angeles. Yet under the leadership of former USC President C.L. Max Nikias, the university consistently failed to do so.

“USC is a global leader in academic achievement but it is also a citadel of profit in higher education,” said Bob Schoonover, President of SEIU Local 721, a key part of the coalition creating the Tent City this week. “As a great power in this town, USC has a great responsibility to its students, to its employees and to the surrounding community. That means paying attention when USC’s neighbors are mercilessly kicked out of their homes to make way for more luxury housing that nobody in South L.A. can afford, but which USC’s civic leaders insist we keep building. That means taking immediate, effective action to ensure that the USC campus is free from sexual harassment and assault. That means paying living wages to USC’s employees – something that is certainly within reach for a university sitting on a \$5.5 billion endowment and over \$9 billion in assets. And that means respecting the rights of USC graduate workers and faculty to collectively organize. It’s long past time for USC to begin ridding itself of its reputation as a bad neighbor, bad employer, and bad leader. We demand a real investment in student learning. We demand a real investment in the surrounding community. We demand accountability now – and we will fight until we get it.”

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