

USC celebrates Class of 2023 at 140th Commencement

Friday's ceremony had a record number of graduates, President Carol Folt said.

By **NOAH DANESH**
Staff Writer

Graduates of the Class of 2023 gathered at Alumni Park Friday morning to mark USC's 140th Commencement Ceremony.

The ceremony saw a record number of graduates, with the conferral of nearly 5,800 undergraduate degrees and 14,000 graduate and professional degrees, President Carol Folt said in her address. The Class of 2023 is a diverse cohort, she said, with 4,800 first-generation, 6,200 international and 771 veteran graduates.

The ceremony stage was set up in front of Doheny Memorial Library, with chairs for graduates and guests spread across the lawn of Alumni Park — a “beautiful” campus backdrop for the morning's events, said Daniel Hanasab, a graduate who majored in business administration.

“Today's weather really reminded all of us why it's so special to be in Southern California,” Hanasab said.

Following the procession of students into the park to the Trojan Marching Band's rendition of “Crown Imperial,” Kendall Robbins, a graduate of the Thornton School of Music who majored in popular music performance, sang the national anthem.

Dean of Religious and Spiritual Life Varun Soni delivered the event's invocation, during which he highlighted students' hard work and the unity forged among the graduates. Soni acknowledged the expanding abilities of artificial intelligence and the fear that it may disrupt the craft and careers graduates have been preparing for.

“Let us remember the timeless wisdom of the great Persian Sufi poet Rumi, who wrote ‘The only reason there is counterfeit gold is because there is real gold to be copied,’” Soni said. “Likewise, the only reason there is artificial intelligence is because there is human intelligence to be copied.”

Soni said graduates must recognize the unique gifts they bring to the world and use their skills to the service of humanity.

“We are here to commemorate the work that can only be done by human beings: the work of love and joy, the work of excellence and achievement, and the work of sacrifice and service,” Soni said.

During the President's Welcome, Folt said the graduating class faced numerous obstacles during their education, particularly because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Folt's tenure at USC began in 2019 — the same year many of the students in the Class of 2023 began their educational journeys at the University. Bailey Kermani, a graduate who majored in



Matthew Karatsu

President Carol Folt left the graduates with a few final thoughts at the end of the ceremony. She encouraged all graduates to keep service in their lives, take an interest in protecting their democracy, and show compassion while letting gratitude and humility guide them.

cognitive science, said it was meaningful to hear from Folt because of the roadblocks Folt and the students persevered through together.

“Knowing that we all were in the same boat together, there was a sense of comfort,” Kermani said.

Kermani's younger cousins attended her graduation, and were inspired, she said, to witness the excitement of higher education; one of them told Kermani she was “achieving [their] future dreams.” Kermani said the challenges her class overcame made clear the resilience that student's possess.

“If you really, really want something, you'll do everything in your power to get it,” Kermani said. “That's why you're at USC; you're there for a reason.”

Folt implored graduates to keep service at the forefront of their future endeavors. She compared the current superbloom in California — a rare occurrence of an

overwhelming number of flowers blooming during springtime — to the extraordinary circumstances in which the graduates successfully completed their education at USC.

Folt also emphasized the value of slowing down,

showing compassion and embracing gratitude toward one's communities.

“You know the warmth and the security of communities, especially those you've helped build, and you are going to return to them throughout your life,” Folt said. “But you're also ready, absolutely, to go out on your own.”

Valedictorian Isha Sanghvi, a graduate who majored in neuroscience, said in her speech that USC was a place where she developed a strong, supportive community that encouraged her to be ambitious and take initiative, regardless of how daunting her goals may seem. “I've come to find that college is all about falling in love with your friends,” Sanghvi said. “And, somewhere along the way, their confidence and support helps us fall in love with ourselves.”

Frances Arnold, Dolores Huerta and Kevin Feige were conferred honorary doctorate degrees. Arnold is a Nobel Prize winner who contributed to making manufacturing processes across industries more sustainable. Huerta is a civil rights leader who worked alongside César Chávez to co-found the United Farm Workers Union, and Feige, who delivered the event's commencement address, is the president of Marvel Studios and a USC alum.

During Feige's commencement address, he emphasized the importance of resilience in the face of setbacks and encouraged graduates to embrace new opportunities, regardless of how daunting they may appear.

“Always start with ‘yes,’” Feige said, “even when someone asks you to do something you're scared to do, something outside of your comfort zone.”

Feige, who has led the multi-billion dollar blockbuster film franchise at Marvel Studios since 2007, said he was initially not accepted to the School of Cinematic Arts. He was rejected a total of five times, in fact, before finally being accepted into the school.

Even when one is persistent, Feige said, envisioned goals



| see **CLASS**, page 2 |



Kevin Feige, a USC alum and Marvel Studios president, delivered the commencement address, in which he encouraged graduates to always lead with “yes.”

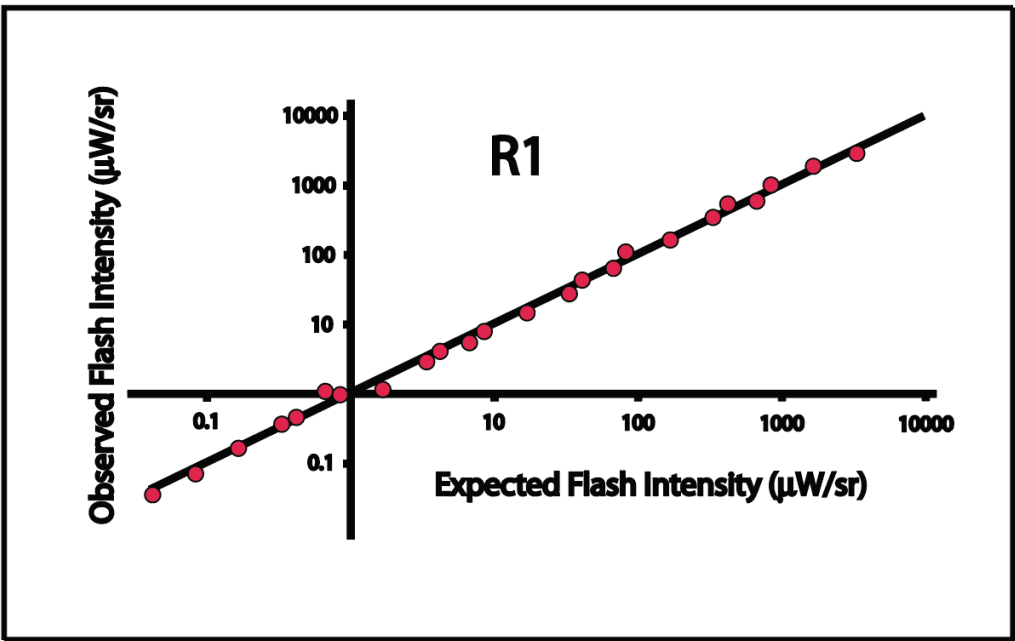
Matthew Karatsu



The commencement ceremony had a conferral of almost 5,800 undergraduate degrees and 14,000 graduate and professional degrees, a record number of graduates.

Matthew Karatsu

AI can't match human visual skills !!



Plot of one subject reported in: Greene, E. & Morrison, J. Evaluating the Talbot-Plateau Law. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 2023, 17:1169162.
[doi: 10:3389/fnins.2023.1169162](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2023.1169162)

Experiments that tested an almost forgotten principle that was formulated in the 1800s demonstrates that we can precisely judge the brightness of a flash sequence across more than five orders of magnitude. This was found with flash durations as short as one millionth of a second. The seven other subjects in this experiment provided data that were as precise as judgments by the R1 subject.

Research on how we register luminance and contrast, as well as the methods by which we encode and identify shapes, continues this summer. Subjects are needed for one or more 1-hour sessions, compensated at \$25 per session, scheduled at your convenience.

Contact Prof. Greene: egreene@usc.edu

CLASS

| continued from page 1 |

sometimes fail to materialize. He said this makes it possible to discover the choice that is genuinely right and more fulfilling. “Not getting your first choice might just be the greatest thing that can happen to you,” Feige said. “Because, you know what’s better than getting your first choice? Getting the right choice.”

In line with his work at Marvel, Feige noted what makes superheroes who they are. While their powers make them “super,” the flaws and moments of doubt are what makes them “heroes.”

“Whatever lies ahead, enjoy every step on your hero’s journey,” Feige said. “Lean into your flaws, make them your strengths, embrace failure, persevere.”

Ariella Simoni, a graduate who majored in biomedical engineering, said she appreciated the engaging and forward-looking nature of the commencement addresses, particularly with themes around technology and AI. “It’s important to bring up [AI] because it’s changing the world,” Simoni said. “It’s an important thing to recognize in academia.”

Hanasab, who will continue on to a graduate program at USC, said one of the most special elements of the ceremony was its display of the strength of the Trojan community. “[People were] spending time together, enjoying each other and being proud of one another,” Hanasab said. “I am so happy and proud of being able to be part of this community.”

At the end of the morning ceremony, School of Dramatic Arts graduate Armand Akbari led the performance of the alma mater, “All Hail.” Folt concluded by encouraging graduates to continue their service to the world and to nurture and protect the planet, sharing a Native American proverb. “We don’t inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children,” Folt said. “Treat our planet well; your children, our children and their children’s children are counting on us.”

OPINION

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Food for thought

Reena Somani

GOOD TASTE



On March 27, I sobbed profusely as I came to terms with the death of my sourdough starter. Though I'd revived Doughby from several near-death experiences, this time was different: his usual mix of bacteria and wild yeast had come into contact with mold. As any sourdough parent knows, mold is game over.

Like much of the Internet, I created my sourdough starter during the first months of the pandemic. From feeding your starter every day to spending over 24 hours preparing a loaf, sourdough is a labor of love. During a time when we all felt starved for community, it felt comforting to be able to care for Doughby.

Three years later, as I cried over the death of an inanimate object on my bedroom floor, even I could recognize it was all borderline ridiculous. But somewhere along the way, Doughby had become a real part of my life.

Isn't that the joy of food? Food is woven into the fabric of our lives, both as a daily ritual and a celebration of important moments. From comfort foods to specialty dishes, food makes up much of who we are.

When I lost my grandmother in 2019, I was immediately struck by all the things we would never be able to do together. There would be no more argument-filled card games or afternoon tea breaks. She would never again walk into my room and giggle as she asked me if the haircut she'd given herself looked even.

It wasn't until later that I realized how much I would miss all the ways she poured her love into the food she made. On special days, she would make

my favorite pulao, a spiced rice dish she always topped with grated beets to give it the most beautiful pink hue.

Every time I crave her pulao and raita, I feel the acute pain of never again being able to listen to one of her poems or chat with her about the latest Bollywood scandals.

Though I'll never have pulao exactly the way my grandma made it, whenever I eat it, I smile as I imagine her rushing through the kitchen to prepare my favorite meal. Cooking and enjoying her famous dishes are ways to connect with the care and compassion she brought to my life.

Considering the central role food plays in our lives, it's not surprising how often we receive messaging about the ways in which we should engage with it. In a country overrun with diet culture and fatphobia, having a healthy relationship with food is near impossible.

A Harvard study showed that, between 2007 and 2016, implicit bias against fat people grew, though all

other biases – from race to sexual orientation to disability – decreased over this time. Even as we live in a society focused on body positivity, fatphobia is on the rise.

Despite the plethora of environmental and genetic factors that impact weight, social media and celebrity culture feed us the idea that there is a give and take between eating and attaining the "perfect" body. In the infamous words of Kate Moss, "Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels."

By assigning moral value to eating, we promote these fractured relationships with food that are far too common. The constant barrage of fatphobic propaganda and body policing paired with the belief that fatness is a personal failing creates an environment in which eating disorders thrive.

As someone who grew up in the early aughts, I'm no stranger to jumping on fad diets to contort my body into the shape society deems acceptable.

Writing this column has been cathartic for me, a reminder that food is what we make of it, both individually and collectively. Food can be joy and celebration just as easily as it can be eating disorders and diet culture.

Over these last two years, I have tried to put into words what food means to me. Food is the lens through which I see the world. Food is an opportunity to understand the world we live in. It lays the foundation for us to process our emotions, create community, and recognize and respond to social injustice.

As I say farewell to "Good Taste," I'm reminded that food is as personal as it is political. I hope you all join me in embracing food as a source of comfort and an agent of social change.

Reena Somani is a graduate student writing about food and its social implications in her column, "Good Taste."

I sold my soul to Daily Trojan — the social contract

Man Truong

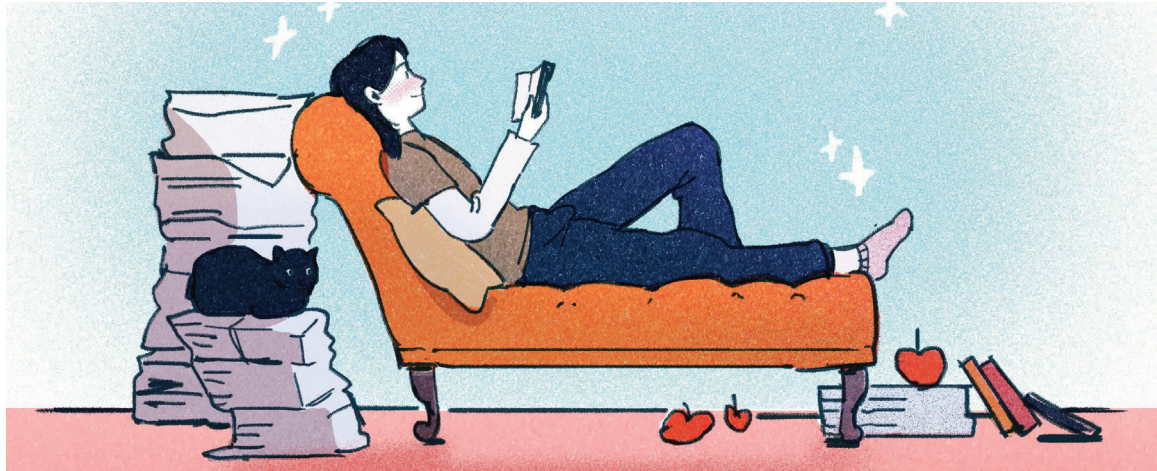
LESSONS LEARNED



My life is not my own. At the moment of my conception, I was already carrying the weight of my parents' hopes and dreams. My older sister had dreams of having a younger sibling. And as child mortality was rampant in the jungles of Huế, Việt Nam, raising a child quite literally took a village. Extended family and neighbors would come pouring into our little home to help in any way they could. And in return, we were expected to do the same. It was an unspoken agreement — a social contract.

For my first birthday, my older sister, who was nine years old at the time and disappointed that my parents weren't planning anything, called up our family, friends and neighbors — quite literally running up and down the unpaved streets, inviting "everybody and their mommies." And so, on the day of my first birthday, with guests flooding into our tiny home, I sat on the floor awaiting the fortune-telling ritual that would set my future in stone: thôi nôi.

Thôi nôi differs because of local culture and traditions. My family would first have to set plates of food, make offerings and say their prayers. When everything was said and done,



Trenyce Tong | Daily Trojan

it was time to see what my future had in store. A tray of assorted objects — a hammer, a stethoscope, a toy car, etc. — was laid out in front of me, each representing an industry or career path. And one-year-old me would crawl and pick up — as everyone leaned in with anticipation — a pen.

The pen represents scholarship — those who pick up the pen are destined to be writers, reporters — anything that has to do with the written word. So I guess in my desperate attempt to break free of the mold that is the stereotypical STEM student, I ended up writing myself into my own destiny. One chosen for me at the age of one, by a boy who I just can't seem to remember.

At the end of the day, it could have gone any other way. After all, I had

just conquered object permanence. I'm Man — I'm one, and I never fucking learned how to read.

I only recently learned about the pen story from my sister, who reveals buried memories for me like some shitty time capsule. But for my family, it sat in the back of their minds, waiting for the day the prophecy would come true. The day I would pick up the pen and write stories to be published. And if I'm going to be real, the last time I touched a pen was when my The American War in Vietnam professor made the class handwrite our midterm essays like cavemen. My dainty hands were not meant for archaic tools. They were meant to overshare silly little stories as I tap (quite daintily) away at the keyboard. That's what I do. I tell stories.

I tell stories to give away parts of my soul. Not in the

creepy-deal-with-the-Devil way, but in more of a making-my-mark-on-the-impressionable-young-minds-of-my-generation way. And so we come to my second obligation: the one to you, the reader.

When I first started writing this column, I was just looking for an outlet for trauma dumping. And little did I know, I found that many readers (like five) could resonate with my stories. So I continue to write myself away, probing the deepest parts of my brain (there isn't much left, by the way) for anything of substance. And there are many lessons that I do not be learning.

But the ones that I have learned, I'd love to share with you. I write out of solidarity with my fellow people with mental illnesses. I write for the things I believe in and

the people I care about. And that brings us to my last obligation: the people I care about.

Call me a people pleaser, bootlicker, whatever you want to call it. I like helping people. My love language is acts of service. I guess somewhere in my search for purpose, I became a submissive little bitch.

But god-damn, am I good at it.

For someone who cannot take care of themselves, I find myself going out of my way to help my friends: driving an hour to visit a friend who's experienced a recent breakup; teaching myself niche subjects to help them with their homework; cooking meals for friends too overwhelmed to do anything else.

I can do anything if I really wanted to. It's just that I feel like I don't deserve to be kind to myself.

In my soul-searching, I have yet to find a reason to do anything good for myself. To extend a crumb of kindness to myself the way I do for others. I guess my final obligation should be to myself. And the lesson that I should be learning is that you don't need a reason to be kind to yourself — that you deserve it no matter what. Because we all deserve kindness. So I want to thank you, reader, and I hope this lesson is one that we can learn together.

Man Truong is a rising senior writing on reflections made in life. In a world full of different personal beliefs and philosophies, he makes sense of it in his column, "Lessons Learned."

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Chamber Ballet Company: Chasséing to success

Students started BCO in 2006 to create an inclusive space for ballet at USC.

By **JULLIANA JIMENEZ**
Staff Writer

With a rich history that traces back to the Italian Renaissance, ballet is one of the most classical and elegant dance forms. Ballet tells stories of tragedies, romance, and even death through the beauty of silhouetted costumes and symbolic choreographies.

At USC, a team of students is creating a space for ballet dancers to reignite their passion for the art form one plié at a time. The USC Chamber Ballet Company runs auditions at the beginning of each semester, said Aivy Levan, president of the club and a sophomore majoring in biological sciences.

While BCo is composed mostly of dancers with a background in ballet, Levan said that the club's selection process has the goal of being as "inclusive as possible." Among members, previous training ranges from globally-ranked gymnasts to first-time dancers. While not all of the dancers are dance majors nor are on a path to pursue the art professionally, at BCo, the dancers exhibit skillfully executed routines and a dedication to their sport.

"Whatever art form, whatever sport you do, it's going to be rigorous. It's going to be challenging and have its own difficulties that come with it," Levan said. "But with ballet specifically, it's definitely been something that hasn't been easy going through it. It does take the muscle, the strength as well as the artistry. And everything, you



Mateo Villalba-Mutis | Daily Trojan

USC Chamber Ballet Company began in 2006 and continues to choreograph and perform ballet and contemporary style dances each year.

have to be graceful [and] not show the effort that goes into it. And beyond the physical aspect of it, it's also very mentally challenging."

BCo members take part in company classes to develop technique and style through collaboration. These peer-taught classes allow members to experiment within the studio, not only as dancers, but also as teachers. The future of BCo, Levan said, includes working alongside

other student artist organizations.

"We're currently working on a collaboration with the USC student orchestra, so a couple members from them will be hopefully playing in one of our pieces," Levan said.

On Sunday evenings, pastel leotards ranging in color from the standard black to matcha green, light pink tights and slicked back buns fill the dance floor of Kaufman International Dance

Center 105. Before any dancing begins, the dancers catch up on their weekends to a backdrop of Katy Perry's "California Gurls." Some gather around the barre to stretch, while others sit on the floor.

After the two-minute stretch, warm-up comes to an end and a wave of silence washes over the room. Anticipation rises as the dancers hurry to the corner before the romantic orchestral

composition of "Swan Lake" plays from the speaker. The dancers leave their casual weekend chatter behind and grande jeté into their routine.

There is a consistent effort to strive for perfection in every practice rehearsal. BCo members spring into their last routine practice of the day: Don Quixote's "Fandango." This time around, half of the

| see **BALLET**, page 5 |

Astrological events of the summer

Jenna Peterson

WRITTEN IN THE STARS



We've finally made it: Papers and exams have turned into beach days and road trips.

Other than constantly refreshing OASIS grade reports, the spring semester is behind us. Whether you're soaking up the summer sun in Los Angeles or somewhere else, it's finally time to destress from the whirlwind of a semester we just had.

Maybe you're set to purely relax this summer, or you have your work cut out for you in a summer job, internship or course load of classes. No matter what your plans for the summer are, a set of astrological events are here to (hopefully) help you along the way.

May 16: Jupiter moves into Taurus

Jupiter only changes signs about once a year, so it's always one of the most defining transits. Jupiter has not been in the sign of Taurus for more than 10 years, but starting yesterday, it entered the fixed earth sign once again.

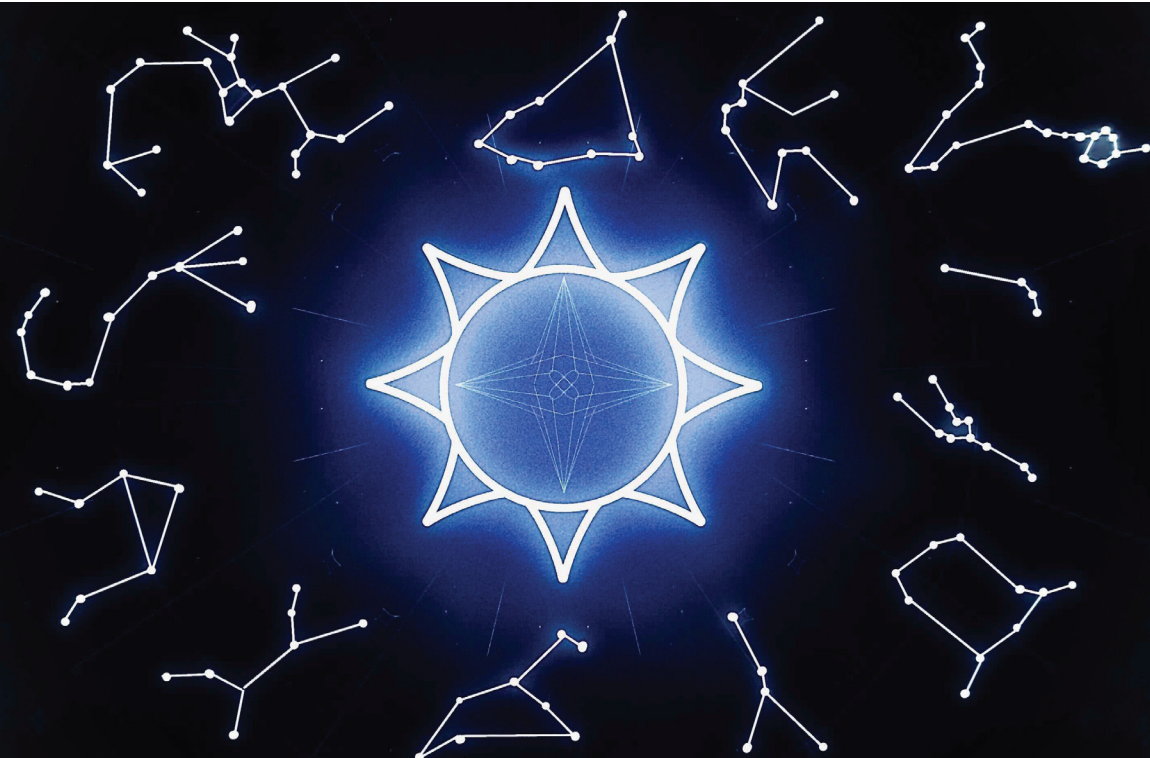
As Jupiter is the planet of luck and fortune, this year is set to be especially lucky for Taurus,

as well as other earth signs (Capricorn and Virgo) and fixed signs (Scorpio, Leo and Aquarius). Taurus is the second sign in the astrological calendar, so we are beginning to settle into the new themes that Jupiter in Aries, the first sign of the calendar, brought last spring.

If you decided on a new career path, found a new romantic partner or happened to win the lottery last year, this summer is the perfect time to look for ways to solidify the themes that arose when Jupiter was in Aries. Taurus is a grounding sign, so it's time to ground your dreams in reality; you'll see them become more true each day.

May 21: Gemini season begins

Ruled by Mercury, the planet of communication, Gemini season makes us better at getting our ideas across and gives us the desire to be more sociable. Mercury is also the planet of knowledge and learning, so you may be drawn to exploring intellectual pursuits. If you're not taking summer classes, or even if you are, now is the perfect time to start learning for fun: Read books without being quizzed on them, watch documentaries purely for fun and have intellectual conversations with your friends and family.



Arielle Rizal | Daily Trojan

Gemini is the perfect season for summer — as a mutable air sign, the season brings a flexible, whimsical energy that is up to you to manipulate as you please. May will be most beneficial for Gemini, its sister sign Sagittarius and other air (Aquarius and Libra) and mutable (Virgo and Pisces) placements.

June 21: Cancer season begins

The end of June brings Cancer season. While Gemini energy can be chaotic and mentally exhausting, Cancer's water vibes provide a chance to slow down, be introspective and reflect. Cancer is ruled by the moon, which rules our emotions, so it can be a very turbulent time emotionally.

Be sure to still make an effort to spend time with the people you love, as it can be tempting to isolate during Cancer season. Cancer season is the perfect time to go on a relaxing vacation with friends and family; just don't do anything too fast-paced.

| see **PETERSON**, page 5 |

BALLET | Ushering in a new era of dance at USC

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dancers change into costume heels. The flamboyant and snappy flamenco moves that compliment the softer ballet moves are a sight to see. The dancers seemingly loop into the same routines until they feel like they get it just right.

It's a humbling sport; the dancers offer themselves up for critique and adjustment. If the timing is off, the steps are retraced to pinpoint the weakest link. Regardless of the company's methods, the members have cultivated a warmth in the community.

"Joining BCo was kind of a way to connect with other people who enjoy doing ballet and who want to be able to take classes every single week and work towards putting on this show," said Victoria Martzloff, events chair of BCo and a rising junior majoring in theatre. "I've always had a connection to it."

Once practice ends, Levan and Marguerite Larson, one of the event chairs of BCo and a rising sophomore majoring in human development and aging, lead a short group meeting to discuss fundraising efforts at Panda Express, and the financial struggles the team has been encountering since preparing for its Spring 2023 showcase at Bovard.

"A couple other directors and board members of different organizations in the arts, we have all thought it was a little strange, disheartening or just difficult that they make us pay for Bovard," Levan said.

Despite experiencing a period of rapid growth and development, BCo still remains a fairly new student organization. This past school year allowed the company to carry out more operations after the coronavirus pandemic halted its efforts to grow, said Lucia Han, BCo treasurer and a 2023 graduate majoring in business administration.

"This year was definitely a developmental year for everyone because most people were new," Han said. "I hope that this entire year was a good learning experience. I really want to see the ballet company be a more cohesive unit. Friendships were starting to blossom; I really hope that it's able to continue in the following year or following years."



Mateo Villalba-Mutis | Daily Trojan

Aivy Levan, director of the club and sophomore majoring in biological sciences, is looking to make dance more attainable to anyone interested in the art.

PETERSON | Celestial events of the new season

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The month will impact Cancers the most, as well as its sister sign Capricorn and other water (Scorpio and Pisces) and cardinal (Aries and Libra) signs.

July 17: North Node enters Aries and South Node enters Libra

Nodes are a lesser-known component of astrology. They are not planets, stars or any other physical object in space, but instead are mathematical points in a birth chart. The North Node represents our soul's purpose in life and the path that we can take to grow into the best version of ourselves.

For example, if someone has a North Node in Gemini, that might mean they are meant to be a communicator and learner. A career in journalism, academia or public speaking may be a good fit for them. With the North Node in Aries, now is the time to be confident, assertive and determined to achieve our greatest desires. It's a fire sign, so it brings a bold passion that we should tap into and encourages us to care less about what others think and stand apart from the crowd.

The South Node is always in the sister sign of the north node since they are across from each other in any birth chart. The South Node is said to represent one's past life and the lessons they learned

that they can apply to reach their current life's destiny.

While this energy is not as apparent during the transit, it is there to remind us that we can tap into Libra's qualities — sociability, open-mindedness and balance — to ground us when we're caught up in the Aries energy. The nodes will stay in these signs until Jan. 11, 2025.

July 22: Venus enters retrograde in Leo

Just before Leo season begins the next day, Venus will enter retrograde from July 22 to Sept. 3. Retrogrades encourage us to look backward and often bring past themes to the present, whether or not we want them to be here.

With Venus representing love, old relationships are likely to come to the surface. It will be tempting to give into these celestial pressures, but you will benefit if you remain strong enough to move forward and create new relationships instead of going back to the ones you left for a reason. Focusing on the present will be extremely important and, come September, you'll be in a much better place relationship-wise. Look at your Venus placement to see how the retrograde will affect you: Leo, Aquarius, Aries, Sagittarius, Taurus and Scorpio will feel it the most.

Not everyone will be at the beach all summer!

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USC Student Affairs
Recreational Sports

NCAA | Trojans had mixed results at tournaments

| continued from page 8 |

Many of USC’s graduating seniors put their names in the record books, with driver Paige Hauschild, driver Grace Tehaney, utility Bayley Weber and 2-meter Mireia Guiral all scoring in this title game. Weber finished her career No. 6 all-time in goals at USC with 214 career goals, scoring 71 of them this season.

Men’s tennis

No. 10 men’s tennis fell short in its national title hopes in a 4-3 loss to No. 7 Michigan in the super regionals May 12. In the Trojans’ NCAA tournament run, they defeated the University of Idaho in the first round and the University of San Diego in the round of 32. This was the 15th consecutive year that the Trojans have advanced to the round of 16.

The Wolverines got ahead early, securing the doubles point with USC losing both of the doubles matches 6-1. USC then tied the game up with junior Lodewijk Weststrate getting the Trojans on the board with their first point. Then, freshman Learner Tien defeated Michigan’s fifth-year Patrick Maloney for the Trojans to take the lead 2-1.

The matches were back and forth the whole day, with game point being on center court between Michigan’s No. 8 senior Ondrej Styler and USC’s No. 25 senior Stefan Dostanic. Dostanic eventually fell in three sets, with the final one being a close 7-6 loss. Although the team as a whole is finished with their season, Dostanic, sophomore Peter Makk and graduate student Bradley Frye will compete in the NCAA Singles and Doubles Championships May 22 to 27.

Women’s tennis

No. 24 women’s tennis fell in the second round of the NCAA tournament May 6 to No. 9 Pepperdine 4-1. The loss brings the Trojans’ final

record to 20-10. This is the second time the Trojans lost to the Waves this season, losing 4-3 in early March.

After defeating University of Nevada, Las Vegas in the first round of the NCAA tournament, the second round started off poorly for the Trojans when they dropped the lone doubles point of the game — already digging themselves into a hole with a 1-0 deficit. Things only got worse for USC after UNLV’s No. 16 sophomore Savannah Broadus defeated USC redshirt sophomore Snow Han on court two, then UNLV’s graduate student Anna Camapana defeated USC sophomore Grace Piper on court six, forcing the Trojans into a 3-0 unescapable hole.

The Trojans’ lone win on the day was freshman Emma Charney defeating graduate student Bunyawit Thamchaiwat in two sets on court four.

The Trojans will have two players competing in the NCAA Singles and Doubles Championships: senior Eryn Cayetano and freshman Maddy Sieg.

Lacrosse

No. 18 lacrosse fell in the opening round of the NCAA tournament May 12 to undefeated No. 5 Denver 10-7. After winning the Pac-12 tournament title and going a stellar 9-1 in conference play, the Trojans ended the season on a disappointing note.

Sophomore midfielder Christina Gagnon led the way for the Trojans with her second hat trick of the season. Redshirt sophomore attacker Isabelle Vitale also helped USC fight all the way throughout the game, scoring one goal and having two assists in the game. USC concluded its season with an overall record of 16-4, its most wins in a season since 2019.

Baseball, track and field and men’s and women’s golf will all have a chance to compete in their national tournaments later this month.



USC men’s tennis was able to capture its fourth straight Pac-12 tournament title and the Pac-12 regular season title. However, the team fell to Michigan in the super regionals, ending their national title hopes.

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SUMMER TROJAN

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How USC sports fared during finals

Spring sports competed in their NCAA tournaments over the last few weeks.

By **DARREN PARRY**

Staff Writer

USC sports are more than familiar with participating in NCAA tournaments. As a whole, the Trojans have won 112 NCAA championships, the third most of any school.

Whether in a sport that deals with bumping, setting, spiking, treading water or hitting a fuzzy ball over a net with a racket, the Trojans have proven they can compete at the top level. Take a look at how these Trojan teams competed in their respective NCAA tournaments over the last two weeks:

Beach volleyball

2021 champions. 2022 champions. And now 2023 champions. USC beach volleyball secured its third straight championship, beating cross-town rival UCLA 3-2 at Gulf Beach Place in Gulf Shores, Alabama May 7. The third-seeded Trojans knocked off the first-seeded Bruins to hoist their fifth overall championship. USC has the most NCAA titles in beach volleyball, with the next closest team, UCLA, having just two. This was the fifth time this season that USC and UCLA faced off against each other, with the Trojans winning only two matches — but they won the most important one.

USC got off to a hot start, taking the first two points of the dual. Graduate students Jenna Johnson and Ashlyn Rasnick-Pope knocked UCLA's duo to take the first point of the dual at the fourth court. On court two, graduate student Madison Shields and freshman Madison White gave the Trojans a two-point lead in their three-set victory. All-American juniors Megan Kraft and Delanyie Maple did not have their best day on the beach, losing in two sets at the top court.

After dropping another game at court five, all the attention was on court three, with senior twins Audrey and Nicole Nourse



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Beach volleyball captured its third-straight NCAA championship and fifth overall after getting revenge by defeating rivals UCLA in the final 3-2.

looking to secure their national championship. The Nourse twins captured their 91st victory as a pair to earn USC another national title.

Water polo

Unlike beach volleyball, USC water polo fell just short in its NCAA national championship game on

May 14 against fellow Mountain Pacific Sports Federation opponent Stanford. This was only the Trojans' third loss of the season, with all three coming against the Cardinal.

USC or Stanford has won every national championship since 2010. This game marked the eighth time the Trojans and Cardinal have faced off

in the NCAA national title game. The Trojans came back to only be behind one goal in the fourth quarter but ended up losing the match 11-9.

The game was back and forth throughout, with USC deleting a three-goal deficit in the second quarter to tie the game up at halftime. Stanford eventually went

on to take the lead 10-6 heading into the fourth quarter. The Trojans went on another three-goal run to get the game to 10-9 with 1:11 left to go in the game. The Cardinal found a way to get the ball in the back of the net again, scoring an insurance goal to take down the Trojans 11-9.

| see **NCAA**, page **7** |

The new-look Lakers just keep rumbling

Sahil Kurup

ROAD TO REVIVAL



After a home loss to the Sacramento Kings on Nov. 11, the Los Angeles Lakers fell to 2-10 on the season, tied with the Houston Rockets for last place in the Western Conference.

Year two of the Russell Westbrook experiment increasingly felt like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. LeBron James connected on a dreadful 17 of his first 71 threes, touting a team-worst plus-minus of -61. Father Time was seemingly creeping up on James, the third-oldest player in the league. Anthony Davis had already missed a game due to lower back tightness. The Lakers' analytics department estimated the team's chances of making the postseason to be a minuscule 0.3%.

Fast forward to today: Rather than offseason partying in Cancun, the Lakers are gearing up to battle the No. 1 seeded Denver Nuggets for the right

to represent the Western Conference in the NBA Finals.

The Lakers did not wake up one morning and suddenly decide to start playing at a higher level. At the trade deadline, the purple and gold sat at the 13th seed with a 25-31 record. General manager Rob Pelinka had exhausted his patience level, reshaping the roster by swapping out six key rotation players, injecting size, speed and strength into the Lakers' roster, yearning for legitimate ancillary shot creation.

These new additions transformed the Lakers from one of the most one-dimensional rosters in the league to an extremely versatile group on both ends of the floor. Since the trade deadline, the Lakers posted the third-best defensive rating in the league.

In the modern NBA, lineup versatility is necessary for championship teams. Can you thrive in different styles of games, whether that be a low-scoring, defensive rockfight or a fast-paced, offensive arms race? Can you throw different looks at opposing stars? Can you go big and pound the glass or go small and space the floor when necessary? The Lakers check all of these boxes.

The addition of D'Angelo Russell and the emergence of Austin Reaves added a different layer never seen from a LeBron-led team before. It's almost jarring to watch James spend so much time off the ball, as Russell and Reaves act as primary ball-handlers in pick-and-rolls with Davis.

Through two playoff series against the Memphis Grizzlies and Golden State Warriors, James was often spaced to the wings or corner or operating as the screener in pick-and-rolls. Through the six games against the Grizzlies in the first round, the Lakers had five different players lead the team in scoring.

Even Draymond Green and Stephen Curry, two guys who have laced up against James in four NBA Finals, were taken aback at The King's new approach. On The Draymond Green Show, Green discussed a conversation he had with Curry in Game 3, recalling that Curry told him he was still trying to figure this new, off-ball version of James out.

Against an elite Nuggets squad, James will likely command the ball much more. Unlike Memphis' Dillon Brooks-Jaren Jackson Jr. duo or Golden State's Green-Andrew Wiggins combo that would switch

the James-Davis pick-and-roll, Denver's will be unwilling to switch two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokić onto James. They'd rather play drop coverage, deterring rim pressure and forcing the Lakers stars to make jump shots.

Russell, Reaves and Dennis Schröder will still see the lion's share of the ball-handling duties. Most of the Lakers' offense will be attacking Jokić in actions, but the proficiency of the Lakers' offense comes down to two X-factors: rim pressure and free throws. If James and the guards can get downhill, generating paint touches to shrink the defense, finding open looks on the perimeter or drawing fouls, they can keep up with Denver's high-powered offense.

The other side of the ball is slightly more complicated simply because of how special Jokić is. His ability to bend defenses with his endless bag of passes makes the center a matchup nightmare. Head Coach Darvin Ham has to either take away his playmaking or his scoring — if Jokić is comfortably putting up 20+ points and 10+ assists, the Lakers will fall short on the road to revival.

Ham will likely opt to take away Jokić's scoring. In previous matchups against the Nuggets, the

Lakers have sent help 73% of the time on Jokić post-ups, either from the perimeter or the baseline.

Davis has been the best defender in the playoffs by a mile, but it still doesn't play in the Lakers' favor to allow Davis to bang down low with Jokić possession after possession. Jokić is too skilled to give him airspace, with an array of hooks and floaters in his arsenal — the Lakers have to show him bodies and make someone not named Jokić beat them.

When asked if he was surprised by the potency of the Nuggets in the second round, Kevin Durant replied, "Hell no! They're a number one seed for a reason, they got a two-time MVP, they got a deep team."

The Lakers have their hands full, and Vegas odds favor the Nuggets to come out of the Western Conference. But the Lakers have defied the odds all season on the road to the storied franchise's 18th championship. Do not bet against LeBron James and Anthony Davis to do it once again.

Sahil Kurup is a rising senior writing about the Los Angeles Lakers and the endless drama that follows them. His column, "Road to Revival," runs every other Wednesday.