

DAILY TROJAN

BEHIND THE SCENES SUPPLEMENT

10.4.2024



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Art by Emma Olivas

FRAME | Photography reveals additional layers to campus scenes

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Jonathan Park / Daily Trojan

White has a material advantage in this chess game between the shadows and paint on the side of Crow Center for International & Public Affairs.



Braden Dawson / Daily Trojan

The mental state of a USC student is divided into two: blurry from stress and a poor sleep schedule, and Traveler. In class, it's just one — and vision isn't the problem.



Braden Dawson / Daily Trojan

Onions have layers. Ogres have layers. The Trojan bust above USC's Physical Education Building does, too, but like Outback Steakhouse's Bloomin' Onion, it seems some peel away.



Braden Dawson / Daily Trojan

The middle child is finally the focus outside of Heritage Hall. If it's 10 years older than its five-year-old brother, how old is it? Eh, nobody cares anyways.

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DAILY TROJAN

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2024 | STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SINCE 1912 | VOL. 213, NO. 28

Unify America provides space for political common ground



Fin Liu / Daily Trojan

The College Bowl program uses an algorithm to pair participants with someone with contrasting backgrounds and political beliefs to discuss their opinions on prevalent issues.

Students across the nation with varying political beliefs engage in civic discussion.

By KIYOMI MIURA
Staff Writer

With the election just weeks away, USC students have been involved in presidential debate watch parties, anti-war protests and voter registration drives.

A handful of students have also participated in political discussions. The College Bowl program, organized by nonprofit organization Unify America, pairs individuals with others of differing political viewpoints to discuss their opinions on prevalent issues.

The College Bowl program uses an algorithm that collects information on a participant's region, age and political affiliation to pair them with

an individual who contrasts them in these categories. Each student's political affiliations are not shared with one another prior to or during the discussion to prevent assumptions from influencing the students' approach to the conversation.

Sherissa Wu, a junior majoring in political science, participated in the College Bowl program last week.

"Because we all live in our own echo chambers and algorithms that

we don't often interact with the other side except for criticizing it," Wu said.

Wu was paired with a student from a religious institution in the South. They failed to see eye to eye on abortion rights and gun regulation. She said that although both of them had some strong-held beliefs that ultimately remained unchanged, it was clear that her partner made an effort to hear what she had to say.

"There are so many issues that are not black and white, or concrete, and so it's nice that if you're a liberal or a conservative, a Democrat or a Republican — you can both find your own position on things, and agree that some issues may be inherently neutral for both sides, or that they aren't always political issues and are still worth having a discussion about," Wu said.

Unify America provides icebreaker questions to get the conversation started, followed by 18 statements that describe potential goals for the United States.

The 18 goal statements were chosen during the founding of Unify America. During the summer of 2019, the founder, Harry Nathan Gottlieb, took a road trip through the southern U.S. to ask various individuals what they believed were appropriate goals for the nation. A list of 18 statements was then derived and is used in current College Bowl sessions.

"The end goal is starting to strengthen students' civic muscles at what we call 'the civic gym,'" said Molly Ostrem, the Community Manager at Unify America. She said in hosting the College Bowl, Unify America aims to foster improvement in several skills, including active listening, critical thinking and articulating arguments.

Once the conversation is concluded, students may choose to share their political affiliations. Ostrem said that students can often be surprised to realize that they had agreed on so many matters despite their differing political affiliations.

Steph Domond, the student programs manager at the Center for the Political Future, said that when it comes to conversing about prevalent issues, diversity of opinion is beneficial.

"I love people getting involved and focusing on the issues at hand, and feeling like they have a voice," Domond said. "One of the worst things you can have is people feeling like their voices are being stifled. That's when people move towards doing antidemocratic things. That's when you have a little more civil unrest."

At USC, College Bowl was introduced in Fall 2022 by the CPF to promote their goals of bipartisanship, inclusivity, diversity of voices and civil conversations. Participation in the program is a requirement for Directed Governmental and Political Leadership Internship and Directed International Relations Field Study. However, participation among students is encouraged regardless of what classes they're taking, what majors they're pursuing or how politically opinionated they are.

Domond said a common misconception is that some people aren't interested in politics. He said the issues politicians deal with influence everyone's lives in one way or another.

"One of the big things that we're trying to do at the CPF now is kind of push back against [the tendency to be disinterested in politics] a little bit, and try to get people to understand that it's really easy to get involved in politics, and that there's probably something you that you care about that you should have a discussion about," Domond said.

Wu said that it can feel frustrating when she hears peers remark that they aren't interested in political matters.

"I feel like people often just opt out, but if you can opt out then why not opt in? I kinda wish some people would be more open to learning about it even if they didn't know anything about it before," Wu said.

The Weekly Frame Depth

By HENRY KOFMAN
Photo Editor

Photography has a unique experience where you can capture images in a 2D space. Regardless of the flatness of the image, skilled photographers can work to make the image feel real and full of life. By adjusting camera settings such as aperture, f-stop and ISO, as well as just having an eye for the world, photographers can see through the depth around us all that we often take for granted. With this idea in mind of bringing the 3D world to our 2D photos, staff photographers Braden Dawson and Jonathan Park took to campus in this week's edition of "The Weekly Frame: Depth."



Jonathan Park / Daily Trojan

Julie Chen-Moonves could learn a thing or two from her alma mater. The statue on top of Bovard Auditorium is always watching, talk about "Big Brother."

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OPINION

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Awaiting belonging in selective extracurricular activities

The exclusiveness in club cultures deprives us of the joy of finding companions.

By **LUISA LUO**
Staff Writer

When I first entered USC, I often contemplated where I envisioned myself belonging. As a half-out-of-state, half-international student, I understood just enough American culture to blend in with my domestic friends, but I still sensed an internal disconnect. Luckily, I had a clear outline for my career ambitions and past-time hobbies, so I figured my involvement would be comprised of pre-professional aspirations and joyful communities.

Joining organizations that also serve as stable, compatible support systems turned out to be a series of strenuous efforts. By the recruitment cycle's end, I felt more drained than fulfilled. During my first year, I was the nervous applicant, dressed in business formal attire I stole from my mom's closet and confined in tiny library rooms. Even as a freshman, I noticed how odd it was to be placed in that position, answering existential questions about my plans for the next three decades or tricky brain teasers that required strange, snarky wit.

Today, the role has switched, and I am now sitting on the other side of the panel, fiercely taking notes on everything the candidate has verbalized and even documenting their body language. Needless to say, the scale of evaluation is intrinsically skewed and extremely biased. Just because I have a year of training in my book does not mean I am more qualified, knowledgeable or suitable than the naively enthusiastic candidate waiting to receive my approval. Little did they know that my decision-making was tainted with self-centered hypocrisy.

After all, who am I to decide if their previous leadership experiences and lengthy personal statements are sufficient? Even after plentiful explorations, I am still

just as unaware. I grew cynical about the idea of turning away my peers, but it's impossible to completely accommodate open memberships and allow every person to receive resources and guidance in a professional environment.

Recognized Student Organizations high rejection rate followed the trend of USC's overall decreasing admission rates, under the pretense of fostering higher quality spaces. However, this semester, in particular, excluding Trojans from exploring new opportunities is inequitable. We are more isolated than ever due to the disrupted flow of student life from the spring.

I'd like to advise the newcomers to combat any prevailing or undermining loneliness by engaging with other like-minded friends in RSOs — but scratch that. Reviewing and eliminating applications triggers intense competition, forcing students to perceive each other as competition as opposed to a "chosen family." To put it simply, we need to issue fewer rejections and consider how we could foster kinships even with those who didn't make it into the club.

Even if they cannot actively take advantage of the clubs' programs, they could still receive tangential connections to the built-in networks they desire. By demanding demonstrations of extensive skills and excruciating rounds of interviews, we give ourselves too much agency to shut the door on people with endless potential, who are pursuing their interests. Clubs are currently structured to feed into a teenage-angst type of superiority complex: for their existing members to pride in the status they obtained and for prospectives to fear they are not "good enough" to belong.

To be fair, there is an inherent distinction between the University's "prestige" and RSOs' self-prescribed "heightened standards." While a high-quality education is the most important step we take as adolescents, being a part of a student organization does not prescribe the same life-altering effect.



Ally Marecek / Daily Trojan

We are living in a new age of anxiety, pressured by rigid benchmarks for where we are "meant to be" at a certain stage during our undergraduate years. Being valued and appreciated by clubs strikes as significant mental validation: proving that, despite only having limited control over our college years, we are accepted by a specific sector of USC. Thereby, we proclaim that space exclusively as our own.

On top of this crowd-dependent satisfaction, we are also conducive to looking up to older mentors who

act as role models. Although receiving advice from upperclassmen is beneficial in certain areas, we are ultimately all navigating our confusing college experiences, and we should not be prompting internal hierarchy based on slight age differences.

Being integrated on campus and finding different clusters of friends fill our capricious hearts. We shouldn't expect anyone to think and operate identically, but knowing that some of our peers align with us more closely than others is

comforting. Taking on additional obligations allows us to contribute to missions much larger than our selfish preoccupations.

It is indispensable for student leaders to recognize that we should strive toward less exclusivity. College is our chance to arrive at full prosperity. No matter how out of place we may feel, we can blossom in the right crowd. So, next time you receive an email that starts with "we regret to inform you," rest assured and pivot to another space that deliberately embraces your presence.

The dining hall experience could be improved — here's how

The strategic solicitation of student input could help improve dining hall food.

By **ELOISE DUMAS**
Staff Writer

Ah, dining halls. The hallmark of the American college experience. As a foodie, I love the idea of the dining hall. But as a nerd, I'm always looking for optimization, and I don't think USC's dining hall experience is entirely optimized.

Specifically, there are always some dishes that are instant hits, others go virtually untouched — or worse, touched but uneaten and promptly thrown away.

Similarly, my dining hall conversations always reach the topic of improvements: "The pasta station could use more sauce options," "One tosta da after 15 minutes of waiting in line is not enough" or "Why haven't we seen the soft serve 'swirl' option since Welcome Week?" And the list goes on.

Interestingly, each dining hall table has a little QR code to scan to give

feedback in an online form. The form consists of six multiple-choice questions, each with a five-point Likert scale ranging either from "far above average" to "far below average" or "extremely satisfied" to "extremely dissatisfied."

The questions ask about the visual appeal of the food, food stock levels, staff attentiveness and friendliness, food quality, menu variety and dining hall cleanliness. The form concludes with a box to share "any comments, suggestions or requests."

This is an excellent idea, but I still see room for optimization. First,

every multiple-choice question has to be answered before the form can be submitted, which could result in inaccurate data from random selections. The questions are also misguided in their scope. Simply asking about our "satisfaction with the quality of the food (taste, texture, aroma, etc.," seems too broad, whereas qualities like visual appeal feel quite niche.

A solution could be to completely revamp the form. A list with every menu item for that day and the option to give each item you tried a rating from 1 to 5 stars would give

dining hall staff insight into which items are most popular and how much of each item to stock.

I do recognize the potential flaws with this plan. Who would be in charge of this new form? It would have to be updated several times a day — each time the menu changes — so it would likely have to be automated. Someone would also have to process the user input and filter it in some way that creates usable data for dining hall staff.

And of course, the biggest issue: no one responds to optional forms.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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Magdalena Bay performs synth-pop nostalgia

The best friend duo rocked the Fonda Theatre stage with their latest album.

By **JASON PHAM**
Staff Writer

Capturing a hypnospace dreamscape of science fiction visuals mixed with synth pop tunes in their album “Imaginal Disk,” the musical duo Magdalena Bay played their first Los Angeles show of the United States branch of its tour at the Fonda Theatre on Oct. 2 before approaching the end of the tour on Oct. 3.

Magdalena Bay, composed of Matt Lewin and Mica Tenenbaum, is a musical duo born from the relationship of high school best friends turned creative partners and musicians who focus on pop nostalgia and synth beats. Their debut album, “Mercurial World,” went viral shortly after being released in 2021, receiving top ratings on Pitchfork and now over a million streams per song on Spotify. Magdalena Bay’s latest album release, “Imaginal Disk,” continues to marry the duo’s traditional groovy aesthetic with seamless transitions between songs and powerful synth waves throughout.

Guests eagerly crowded the Fonda Theatre entrance, coming from multiple different lines and sides of the venue. Despite doors opening at 8 p.m., anticipation built up all the way until performances began, with lines stretching outside well past the beginning of showtime.

Once inside, the crowd didn’t abate and continued to fill the jam-packed space to the brim. Attendees quickly flooded the bar area, and the



Jason Pham / Daily Trojan

“Imaginal Disk” is Magdalena Bay’s newest album, and the duo of Matt Lewin and Mica Tenenbaum performed the album in its entirety alongside older fan-favorite tracks like “Killshot.”

merch line spiraled up the staircase as guests prepared for the show.

At 9 p.m., the concert started with an opening performance by Valgur, a musical duo that also plays alternative synth keys, complementing Magdalena Bay’s style. Between the opener and the main act, hyperpop and rap blared through the speakers, keeping the audience at bay. Shortly after, around 10 p.m., the lights dimmed slowly, and the mood lighting set in.

“Welcome to Magdalena Bay’s Imaginal Mystery Tour,” Tenenbaum said. “We’re so happy to have you here tonight. Now listen.”

Slowly dancing its way onto the stage, Magdalena Bay entranced the crowd with a powerful and emotion-filled performance of “She Looked Like Me!” — the opening song of “Imaginal Disk.” From Tenenbaum’s astonishing vocals to Lewin’s strong instrumentals, the performance set a high standard for what was to follow for the rest of the night.

Magdalena Bay did not disappoint. Shortly after the first song, the duo smoothly transitioned to performing “Killing Time” and “True Blue Interlude,” utilizing different synth or keyboard

interludes between songs to create a natural flow to the show.

The stage design reflected just as much thought and attention to detail as Magdalena Bay’s own transitions and musical composition. Featuring shaped mood lighting, different colored lenses and an oval display monitor with wing attachments, the stage aesthetic leaned into ethereal science fiction themes, mimicking and alluding to elements from its music videos for the album.

As the show continued, the musical duo transitioned to more high-energy songs such as “Image

and “Secrets (Your Fire),” shaking the Fonda floor. Magdalena Bay was consistently engaged with the audience throughout its performance, prompting lots of dancing, clapping and swaying along to songs for attendees to follow.

The concert setlist follows the order of songs in “Imaginal Disk,” as Magdalena Bay played the album in its entirety — a generally rare practice for musicians to do for their tour performances. Aside from their latest album, Magdalena Bay also performed crowd favorites such as “Dreamcatching” and “Killshot,” which became popular on social media earlier in its career.

In terms of fashion, the Magdalena Bay science fiction aesthetic was captured both on and off stage as well. Some attendees wore angel wings as a direct correlation to the song “Angel on a Satellite.” Tenenbaum herself opted for several different outfit changes during the performance to reference specific music video moments, ranging from a sunflower to adorning a cape and faux flame collar piece.

As the show slowly reached a closing point, Tenenbaum took the time to thank both the musicians on stage with Magdalena Bay and the audience in attendance at the Fonda Theatre.

“That’s Matt, I’m Mica, we’re Magdalena Bay and we love you! Alright sing it with me one last time,” Tenenbaum said.

Magdalena Bay finished its electrifying performance with the song “The Beginning,” from the “Mercurial World” album — a fitting finale to the end of the beginning to its tour. Magdalena Bay will begin its global tour for “Imaginal Disk” on Nov. 7, performing at the 2024 Iceland Airwaves Music Festival in Reykjavik, Iceland.

The (fashion) world, according to Noe

Hadyn Phillips

THAT’S FASHION, SWEETIE



Within four years, she worked for Mirror Palais, Harper’s Bazaar Thailand and Collina Strada. Going on her second year with the elusive New York vintage store, Chérir Vintage, Noa “Noe” Levy, works hard with a sweet smile, an innate sense of true style, viral Pinterest photos of her outfits and a hunger for vintage.

So why haven’t you heard of her? Because she’s only 17 years old.

A high school senior on the Upper West Side, Noe knew fashion would be her world since she was 4. Deciding to “create a life for [her] self in the world [she] wanted to get into,” she began sewing her freshman year. Spending most of her time at her sewing teacher’s studio, learning and working retail, she mostly stayed for the wisdom of her teacher who had worked for both Anna Sui and Issey Miyake.

“She had all the stories and she knew all these people,” Levy said. “It was just like every time I was at her studio, I was in a different world.”

Some highlights of her young career include the shoots mentioned above, developing a network with the top new creatives in the fashion scene, including founder of Chérir Vintage Kayla Innes, model Ana Flores, fashion designer Jason Wu and summer



Noe Levy

Noa “Noe” Levy, a New York teenager, has already worked with a number of famous fashion brands even before applying for college.

music breakout stars, Olivia Violet and Remy Bond.

With supportive parents cheering her on, her extended family of friends and mentors have never failed to fuel the fire inside her. Her best friend, who she met on X at 8 years old and colleague at Chérir Vintage now, Ella Devi Weerackody, remembers the first time she came across Noe. Their friendship began from a viral Pinterest photo of Noe in a Burberry skirt, Weerackody’s

first thought was “This girl is so cool, I just want to be her.”

Still “two peas in a pod,” Weerackody continues to echo Noe’s natural it-girl status, in work and in everyday life.

“It’s her number one thing, you know? The books she reads — they’re all fashion books ... listens to all fashion podcasts: she eats, sleeps, breathes fashion. It’s literally what she thinks about when she wakes up,” Weerackody said. “It

is her number one passion, [and] I don’t think that I’ve seen someone as dedicated to the fashion industry as I have seen with Noe.”

Confirming that Noe still continues to be the best-dressed girl in the room, she even has a special contact name for her in her phone: Kate Moss Jr.

Her family friend, “Aunt” Daniella Wrubel, has always encouraged Noe to continue to break into the industry with full force, having experience in the industry herself, particularly in showrooms. And, never once did she doubt that fashion was a world waiting for Noe to sprint into.

“She has always been innately stylish. I remember one time she did this fashion show with a kid’s clothing brand ... and Noe was picking a piece and another piece and another piece that I never would have put together,” Wrubel said. “She walks out of the changing room in this — what I thought was going to look like a crazy outfit — looked so chic. And I was like, ‘this girl is going to be a fashion designer or work in fashion.’”

It’s not always been easy, though. Noe’s lethal combination of quality, unteachable taste and fiery passion was often snubbed out by her young age. Whether it was someone trying to take credit for a shoot she styled or meeting her enthusiastic smile with a snarky, off-handed comment, Noe learned to stop taking things personally. Instead, she met each doubtful and underhanded comment with grace.

“Every single person I work with, I try to learn from. I try to take some of their wisdom every step I

go. I plant seeds everywhere,” Noe said. “I’m just grateful for everyone I’ve worked with.”

Her grit inspires those who inspire her, too. In fact, she inspired Daniella to go back to school, now taking a course on fashion illustration at Parsons School of Design in New York.

“She didn’t just dream it, she lived it, and I was like ‘Oh, you know what? It’s never too late to live out your dream,’” Wrubel said.

Now, Noe is at a crossroads in terms of her future. Although she does plan to go to college, she’s not sure what path of fashion she wants to go down. Whether it’s living out her childhood dreams of design or continuing to build her repertoire in the styling world, there isn’t an ounce of doubt that success will follow her wherever she goes.

“She’s going to be incredibly successful,” Weerackody beams. “She’s a very, very driven young woman. I definitely envision myself working for her on one of her projects later on.”

While she waits for college decisions, she hunts for her vintage grails: a Chanel bangle, Givenchy knitwear and a Prada bowling bag. And, as I wait to see what she does next in fashion — her brand, more editorials or business — all I can say for sure is that the (fashion) world remains according to Noa “Noe” Levy.

Hadyn Phillips is a senior writing about fashion in the 21st century, spotlighting new trends and popular controversy in her column, “That’s Fashion, Sweetie,” which typically runs every Wednesday.

BEHIND THE SCENES

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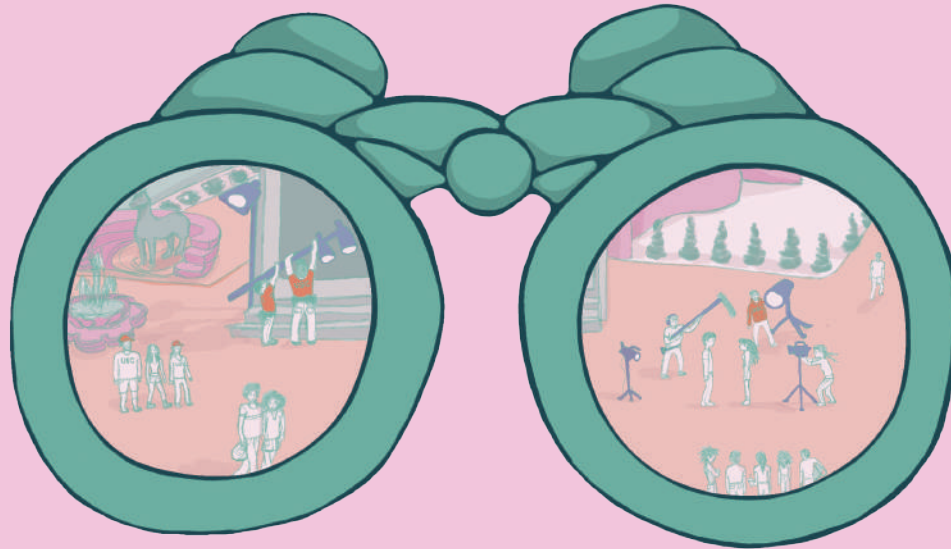
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“All the world’s a stage” — so what’s hidden behind it?

Whether it’s a “game,” “simulation” or a “stage” as Shakespeare put it, life admittedly has its layers, and being a student at USC is no exception.

Coming to the University was an exercise in staying upright while juggling the many attractions that pulled my attention left and right; I wanted to join X club but was busy with Y. I always passed events advertising Z but never had the time to explore. There’s no stopping, and no smelling of roses — but what if there could be?

Life can move at an unrelenting pace, and it’s up to us to push on the brakes. I will be the first to say that the chaos of the day-to-day — juggling jobs, internships, clubs, classes and the needed reprieve at social functions — can be all-consuming



Milan McIntosh / Daily Trojan

and narrow the lens of our world, reduced to what’s next on the to-do list.

But there’s so much more to see if we take the time to look — whether it’s the efforts of a student film’s behind-the-scenes production team, or the dining hall chefs and staff who tirelessly work to keep us fed, or the many small businesses on and around campus — learning about these inner workings opens our eyes to all that goes unnoticed, not only enriching our outlooks on life but helping us settle in our gratitude.

And so I implore you to dig a little deeper. Take a break from the juggling act to placate your curiosity, let the mundane take new focus and learn something new.

— **Ruby Crothwait**,
Features Editor

Student entrepreneurs discuss their paths from vision to venture

Three students share how they turned their passions into self-run businesses.

By **LUCY CHEN & ZSUZSANNA JUHASZ**
Staff Writers

The University sits at the intersection of ambition and creativity, and student-led businesses are an integral part of its entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Creative minds can be hidden in plain sight: dorm rooms, online or at local flea markets. Whether it’s through nail art, makeup, handmade jewelry or other means, students at USC pursue their passions relentlessly — their endeavors fostering a culture of innovation that will continue to push creativity here on campus.

Ken’s Beauty Bar

For companies looking to enter the beauty sphere at USC, the competition on campus is steep — thriving businesses are everywhere, with some of them having been around for years.

However, Kennedy Brabham was not fazed when she got to campus. Having previously owned a second-hand clothing

business in high school, Brabham is no stranger to the entrepreneurial world. Now, her peers largely know her from her beauty business, Ken’s Beauty Bar, which has been getting increased attention.

“When I came during welcome week, everyone was like ‘Oh my goodness, are you Ken’s Beauty Bar?’” said Brabham, a freshman majoring in cinematic arts, film and television production.

Brabham’s humble roots in the beauty industry can be traced back to sixth grade. As a self-taught makeup artist, she experimented with different styles and products within the comfort of her own bedroom. It was only later on in high school that she decided to take this hobby more seriously.

“I watched YouTube tutorials and built from there, and self-taught for a long time,” Brabham said. “But two summers ago, there was a beauty academy by my house ... and I got certified there.”

Now, she’s transformed her passion for makeup into a profitable business that has opened doors for networking within the campus film industry. She recently joined a production set in the School of Cinematic Arts, where she worked as a makeup artist behind the scenes.

“It opens up opportunities in terms of connections, especially within SCA, and it allows you to meet different people that you otherwise wouldn’t have,” Brabham said.

Brabham is also grateful to be a part of such a supportive community, as she finds herself “constantly surrounded” by people who “want to see [her] succeed.” To any young, aspiring entrepreneurs, Brabham’s advice is to “find something unique to you.” Embrace originality and take the gamble.

Todi Nails

When you search up @todinails on Instagram,

see **VENTURE**, page 9 |



Kennedy Brabham

A sit-down with USC’s dining hall chefs

Kitchen managers reflect on their experiences working in USC’s three dining halls.

By **ANYA MOTWANI**
Staff Writer

For many students, a dining hall serves as a vehicle for forging connections. For those working behind the counters, the experience is similar — forming a community that often goes unseen.

Two of USC’s kitchen managers have spent at least a decade working nonstop to feed students, begging the question: What makes working at Parkside Restaurant, Everybody’s Kitchen or USC Village dining hall so conducive to long-term employment?

The short answer: the people.

For Renato Colmenares, kitchen manager at the Parkside dining hall, USC is a place of strong family ties and invaluable coworkers.

“My girlfriend went to school here for her master’s degree in cinematic arts. I got a job here, and then just began liking it, liking the people, understanding the environment and getting promotions whenever I could,” Colmenares said. “Once I hit a managerial role, I was surrounded by people that pushed me.”

The dynamic menus and sense of community in the kitchens would not be possible without collaboration between the chefs and their staff. Strong ties between the dining halls are just as important as cohesion within them for encouraging longevity in working relationships.

“Renato actually was a cook for me when I was a supervisor at EVK, and now he’s a kitchen manager,” said Miguel Gomez, kitchen manager at USC Village Dining Hall.

Gomez’s familial connection to USC goes even deeper.

“My mom actually worked at USC for 21 years,” Gomez said. “She worked at the credit union. So growing up, I spent a lot of weekends [here], and then my brother ended up coming to school here. He received his doctorate from ‘SC, so there’s always been a history.”



Mallory Snyder / Daily Trojan

Chefs Miguel Gomez, Eileen Aguilera and Renato Colmenares each oversee one of USC’s dining halls, creating menus and supervising staff.

After suffering from a car accident that disrupted his plans to become an English teacher, Gomez went on to culinary school to pursue his new dream. In doing so, he moved back to Los Angeles and reconnected with his USC roots.

“I reached out to people that I knew at ‘SC, and they were hiring,” Gomez said. “So I came in as a cook. Started as a cook like my staff here, and then just moved up to supervisor, assistant kitchen manager and now kitchen manager.”

Just as he climbed the ranks, Gomez hopes to serve as a conduit for members of his staff in moving up and out. He never gave up on his passion for teaching and continues to apply those skills and concepts within his kitchen.

“There are some veterans here, but for the most part, it’s a new staff ... They’re here to learn, and they’re eager,” Gomez said. “We get to mold them and see them advance. That’s the teacher in me, again — I love teaching them and watching them learn and then advance and leave. I tell them, the good ones, at least, ‘I don’t want to see you here in six months.’”

While establishing new connections is one part of the job, another facet is bringing in one’s

lived experiences and identities. Conceptualizing the menu is a very involved process, which relies on contributions from the staff, research into food trends, student feedback and a creative approach to limitations.

“[In] creating the menu, some of it comes from personal experience, like growing up in my Mexican family,” Gomez said. “There’s definitely flavor profiles that I lean towards, but I don’t want to make it just that.”

Gomez’s account was not dissimilar to Colmenares’ experience. The Parkside International Residential College houses many international students, so the dining hall’s dishes are often “international-based,” but Colmenares also finds a way to incorporate his small-town Oklahoma roots into southern dishes.

Creativity in the menus is integral across the campus — especially so for Eileen Aguilera, kitchen manager at EVK, who must work within a more structured framework compared to her counterparts.

“We’re trying to give them a well-balanced [meal] within parameters,” Aguilera said. “We do work with a dietitian to try to give them the

see **CHEFS**, page 11 |

Were those tables here yesterday?

Let's take a look into how event planning and setup operates at the University.

By **JENNIFER NEHRER**
Data Editor

On the morning of Sept. 24, Alumni Park was quiet — its gated facade imposed almost a veil of silence and inactivity onto the area, save for the few students who managed to cut through on their way to class, their dorm or a meal. On Sept. 26, the area joined campus in the flurry of Trojan Family Weekend activity, filled with dozens of tables and chairs, food stations, decorations and happy families. By Monday evening, it was silent again.

The apparent shapeshifting of the green could be attributed to magic, but the reality is simply a team of teams — roughly 100 people working at incredible speeds to prepare USC's spaces for the many events it holds throughout the school year.

Beyond pure setup, the planning for any given University event — done far out of the public eye — is occurring nearly 24/7. For Adam Rosen, USC's associate vice president for Cultural Relations and University Events, it's a regular day on the job.

"My department produces all of the events for the president's office and anything that's large or reputational for the University that would be maybe outside of that," Rosen said. "Things like commencement, campus activity on tailgate days, large groundbreaking, building openings, galas, all of those things."

Rosen has been with USC for just over 13 years. He has worked in event planning and event spaces for most of his career, including marketing events for Hollywood. Before USC, he hadn't worked in the same place for



Jennifer Nehrer / Daily Trojan

Trojan Family Weekend is one of the busiest times for USC's many event planning and set-up departments and their collaborators.

more than five years at a time.

"I was looking for a transition," he said. "I was in [public relations] marketing events, and the agency world ... is not a 9-to-5 job. It's like a 9-to-10 p.m. job. And I met my wife and had a child while I was doing that and decided that I wanted to move to something that felt a little more stable, with a little less travel and a little more of a home base."

After interviewing with a few companies he didn't end up liking, his wife convinced him to interview for an open position at the University.

"I almost turned it down," he said. "After a three-and-a-half-hour interview with three people, I called her on the way out and said, A, 'I think I'm going to get this job,' and B, what a great place that this is now versus where I thought it was. And four months later, and I think nine interviews later, I was at the University."

Rosen said one of the biggest changes he experienced was going from producing events himself to managing teams of event producers.

It is a change, however, he has since more than gotten over.

"[It was] something I wasn't sure I was going to love, but I do," he said, "and I love how I'm able to influence and impact the young, incredible talent that comes through our department, whether they're students or the staff, to be able to see how they grow in what they do."

For Rosen and his team, the planning and production never ends. According to Jennifer Ammons, executive director of University Events within the Office of Cultural Relations and University Events, preparations for Trojan Family Weekend 2025 have already begun.

"It really is a full year of planning," said Ammons, who has been at USC for 12 years. "Once you're wrapped up, there's ... a little bit of a breather, but [once we're] closing out, we send out post-event reports."

By Rosen and Ammons' descriptions, planning for almost any event at USC is an elaborate, delicate song

| see **TABLES**, page 11 |

From passive to puppeteering: parents and college applications

USC students examine their parents' impact on their college admissions process.

By **CHELSEA LATTA & KAITLYN SULIVAN-PASCUAL**
Staff Writers

It's been three years since the infamous "Operation Varsity Blues: The College Admissions Scandal" (2021) documentary scrutinized the state of USC admissions. Now, it raises the question: do the realities of this parental conspiracy and influence still impact admissions today?

For incoming freshman business administration student Starina Phu, parental influence was not a significant factor in the process of college applications. Instead, her parents offered helpful tidbits of advice.

"They always told me that 'You don't have to go to an amazing college. You can do what you want, we'll always be proud of you,'" Phu said.

Starina Phu's father, James Phu, expressed sincere confidence in Starina's independence throughout the admissions process.

"I prefer that she make her own decisions," James Phu said. "And again, whatever she chose, I would support her — and in this case, she chose USC."

According to Starina Phu, her father's support — from financial support to driving her to film camp — helped her find opportunities and gain valuable experience to add to her list of extracurricular activities. In addition, Phu's impressive performance in International Baccalaureate courses also led to her graduating within the top 3% of her high school class.

While the circumstances of Starina Phu's admittance to USC varied greatly from those in the "Varsity Blues" scandal, she did take the situation into consideration while applying to USC.

"I was definitely worried that my application would be hindered by someone who was in a higher tax bracket than me, and that I wouldn't get in because someone else paid their way in," she said.

Although Starina Phu was originally admitted for the Fall 2024 semester, she chose to defer her enrollment at USC until Spring 2025, a decision based on both financial and academic goals.

"I don't think it's a secret that USC's tuition is incredibly high," she said. "I also wanted to get a lot of my [general education requirements] out of the way and potentially graduate early, and I thought this was the best way to do that."

Similar to Starina Phu's experience, the application process was also largely in freshman Sophia Arias' hands as her parents took the backseat.

"My college search was really extensive. I did a lot of work to research every choice that I had available to me," Arias said. "A lot of my application was centered around my passion for environmentalism. In my 'Why USC' essay, I wrote about the WMSC Institute — where we all get to do research at Catalina Island. That's a really big part of the environmental science program, and that's why I was initially attracted to it."

She didn't have any family that went to university but was always encouraged to apply to further her education and have access to more

| see **PARENTS**, page 11 |

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Green Qween is a dispensary inspired by the first legal medical dispensaries in San Francisco.



Emily Cao / Daily Trojan

A Good Used Book, which sits on Glendale Boulevard, was started as a pop-up shop in 2017 by Chris Capizzi and Jenny Yang.



The New Beverly Cinema

The New Beverly Cinema, a revival movie theater, screens movies on 35-millimeter film.

Uncovering Los Angeles' hidden gems

Here are five underrated spots to check out when you want to eat, watch or smoke.

By FEATURES STAFF

From running to class to working the clock, time is scarce as it is. So, it's no surprise that many of us haven't been able to check out Los Angeles' many, many businesses. Good thing we looked for you — check out these five unique spots in L.A. that often go under the radar.

Pink & Boujee fuses Mexican food with a colorful twist

If you're a lover of Mexican food and anything pink, you have to visit Pink & Boujee, located only twenty minutes from USC. This Mexican American-owned small business with the slogan "not your basic taqueria" serves tacos, chilaquiles, loaded Hot Cheetos, aguas frescas, coffee and even pink pancakes.

Founded by Boyle Heights resident Yesenia Castro, the taqueria came from wanting to share her

mother's traditional cooking while adding her personal touch of pink. The business originally started in a mobile truck, but "Pink & Boujee" opened its doors to its current location in February 2023.

Not only is the food delicious, the aesthetic is perfect for anyone who loves pink flair. Various neon signs, cushy hot pink booths and pink flowers make for a beautiful eating ambiance. If it's your first time at Pink & Boujee, order the taco trio — with pink tortillas, of course — and a drink from their wide selection of options. You can either go for a traditional cappuccino or branch out and get a pink glitter latte.

If you're ever in the mood for delicious tacos and want a change of scenery, head over to Pink & Boujee for a savory and colorful experience.

— Daniela Mattson, Features Staff Writer

The 'Qween' of dispensaries

In the modern age of L.A., where marijuana is as ubiquitous legally as it has been culturally, there seems to be a dispensary on every

street corner trying to lure in your business. Whether it's with nondescript decals of cannabis leaves on the window or promises of quality products unlike anything you've ever smoked before, it's safe to say the market is vast and oversaturated.

For the customer, they can all start to blur together — each one an indistinct facade housing a trendy and vogue-looking interior of neon lights and marble counters. So what makes one stand out? That's a dilemma Green Qween certainly solved.

Just a 10-minute drive from USC, Green Qween is inspired by the first legal medical dispensaries in the Castro District of San Francisco, a historic LGBTQIA+ neighborhood that offered cannabis to people affected by HIV and AIDS. Their ethos is grounded in representing people of all sexualities within the marijuana industry.

Green Qween offers products from marginalized brands and donates a percentage of their profits to DTLA Proud, a nonprofit community center that provides housing, employment, legal

services and more to queer people of all ages. On top of their philanthropic business model, Green Qween offers great products and exceptional service — check it out to see for yourself.

— India Brown, Features Staff Writer

Retrofit LA features an ideal thrifting selection

The allure of a "hidden" gem is that it's a secret. Spots that are too good to be true are often gatekept to maintain exclusivity, and these places with little foot traffic, charming personalities, quaint atmospheres and great deals get unfairly low recognition.

So, on Vermont Avenue, just south of West Adams Boulevard, is where retrofit la sits — a thrift store that is truly a gem. From USC merch to Kobe-embossed jeans and vintage Guess tees, the store contains one-of-a-kind pieces.

Natasha Sanker owns retrofit la with her brother, and the siblings are both passionate about "costume design and fashion design."

With rack after rack of clothing and accessories, there is undoubtedly something for everyone.

"I don't feel like the kids have a place to come to hang out and find cool stuff," Sanker said. "We just wanted something a bit more affordable for the kids in the community and in college."

Each Monday, the shop gets restocked with more products that are perfect for the college budget and even better for fashionistas. It's safe to say that this hidden gem is more akin to a gold mine, with no shortage of priceless jewels inside.

— Ava O'Connor, Features Staff Writer

Keep it classic at Tarantino's underground theater

Nestled on bustling Beverly Boulevard rests an old movie theater, seemingly taken straight from the past. The New Beverly Cinema has a rich history, ranging from ice cream shop to adult movie theater before becoming a revival movie theater.

Bought in 2010 by director Quentin

| see **GEMS**, page 9 |

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VENTURE | Small businesses on campus encourage pursuing passion projects

| continued from page 6 |

you'll be met with a page full of pastel-colored nail designs — all meticulously handcrafted by Lindsay Cho, a freshman majoring in business administration.

Nail art came as an unexpected hobby for Cho. After starting a small yet rewarding sticker business in high school, Cho's creative ventures evolved and turned a new direction in college — painting nails.

"I started doing nails because my friend always had one coat of polish on, and she looked so put-together," Cho said.

Since buying her first gel kit from Amazon, Cho has never looked back. Initially launching Todi Nails as a side hustle, she intended to only do nails in her free time for some pocket money; she never expected her brand to take off so quickly at USC.

"[Todi Nails] has been successful," Cho said. "I think word of mouth gets around really fast, so it's awesome ... I'm booked for the next two weeks."

Cho has found that her success can also be attributed to a talent for connecting with clients. According to Cho, the most enjoyable part of the business is the joy she finds in social interactions; meeting new people, she believes, has been a quintessential part of her college experience.

"My appointments are like a coffee chat in a sense. [My clients] just sit there for an hour or two, and I just talk to them," Cho said. "Some skills I definitely [developed] were how to talk to people."

However, she admits that it's quite difficult to balance the heavy workload that comes from being both a full-time student and business owner.



Leila Yi / Daily Trojan

"I put off my homework at night and [it] trips up my sleep a lot, because during the day I'm doing people's nails," Cho said.

Despite the challenges, Cho is dedicated to her business. The satisfaction of seeing her clients happy, and receiving Instagram shoutouts, reinforces the passion she feels for her work.

"I just really love doing nails," Cho said. "And honestly, if time wasn't precious in college, I would do it for free — I do enjoy it a lot."

Summer Solstice

Leiah Goode has always loved arts and crafts, so it wasn't a complete surprise when she turned beaded jewelry-making into a full-time venture at the encouragement of her friends.

"I started off making gifts for my friends during their birthdays," said Goode, a sophomore majoring in psychology. "Later, I realized I could expand this and also make money from it."

Thus, Summer Solstice — Goode's jewelry business — was born.

Goode loves the freedom that comes with running her own shop, which allows her to make

money while keeping her schedule open. She feels that her academic commitments take up the bulk of her time, so Summer Solstice is a perfect fit, as it doesn't require her to work on the clock.

"Running a small business is hard, but it's also nice because you get to determine your own hours," Goode said.

Collaborating with others is one of Goode's favorite aspects of managing her shop. When setting up booths at flea markets, she often sells jewelry from other artists together with her own.

"[I really like] the collaboration and vending opportunities with clubs in and outside of campus," Goode said. "I also like to split my shop with other businesses, and it's always fun to combine my efforts with someone else's."

For aspiring entrepreneurs, Goode suggests establishing a business in something that you are deeply passionate about.

"Do something that you enjoy," Goode said. "Making money is definitely a plus, [but the best part is] making things that I love and meeting new people doing it."

GEMS | Local companies spotlight the best of LA

| continued from page 8 |

Tarantino, the cinema is known for only showing movies on 35-millimeter film, most from Tarantino's personal collection. For \$11-15 per ticket, film lovers and casual moviegoers alike can find a sense of community.

"It's a cool environment to watch a film in, to know that the people that you're seeing it with are also engaged in it in a similar way that you are," said William Grosse, a member of USC's Delta Kappa Alpha film society and a junior majoring in film and TV production.

Movies from a diverse range of directors, such as Sidney Poitier, the Shaw brothers, Akira Kurosawa and Sofia Coppola, have all been shown at the theater. However, there are also events such as Tarantino midnight showings, family matinees and double features that have shown romantic dramedies, such as "10 Things I Hate About You" (1999) or "Twilight" (2008). There's a place for everyone at the New Beverly.

— Katherine Meloch-Perez, Features Staff Writer

Community flourishes at A Good Used Book

French crullers brushed with a guajillo chili glaze, tchotchkes fresh from the kiln, complimentary soft drinks and, of course, books — for A Good Used Book, this is the recipe for a perfect Sunday.

The local bookstore, three miles from USC on Glendale Boulevard, hosts "Sunday Funday" every other week with a new roster of local vendors. A mix of makers and small vintage businesses share the space with new and used books curated by shop owners Chris Capizzi and Jenny Yang.

"We want it to be something you know is happening all the time, so you can kind of just pop in and be surprised," Capizzi said. "What we're trying to provide is fertile ground for discovery of inspiration or nostalgia and reconnecting with tangible items and other people who share the same things you like — or even meeting someone that is so different from you that in any other circumstance you wouldn't really be close."

Now approaching its storefront's first anniversary, A Good Used Book started out as a pop-up in 2017, selling their books at flea markets, including the Melrose Trading Post and Rose Bowl Flea Market. The coronavirus pandemic forced them to start from scratch, which eventually gave them the confidence to open their own shop even as online retail became the default business model.

"Other than just the immediate satisfaction of buying something and having it, there's also the community aspect," Lissa Compton, a stylist and bookstore frequenter, said. "[A Good Used Book has] a great selection and lovely vibes, and I love that they have vendors here."

Spencer Richardson, a vendor selling Japanese retro electronics, said that "in Los Angeles, there's a lot of empty retail, a lot of places that haven't recovered. Places that do have retail spaces like this [and are] able to offer that space to other people who make and sell things is definitely important."

A Good Used Book will continue to host events weekly, including a fundraiser raffle for a local volunteer project (@hifistairs) to celebrate their one-year anniversary Friday.

— Emily Cao, Features Staff Writer

what's next at USC Thornton

scan here for more events



Tue. 10/8
7:30 p.m.

Thornton Edge

Thornton's new music ensemble presents a concert in memory of beloved alumna and former faculty member, Sarah Gibson. The program features Gibson's vivid and characterful music, including "Soak Stain" and "I prefer living in color."

Wed. 10/9
7:00 p.m.

*Eventbrite RSVP required

Jazz Night at Carson feat. Gerald Clayton

The USC Thornton Jazz Orchestra is joined by six-time Grammy Award-nominated pianist Gerald Clayton, Artist-in-Residence, on this special Jazz Night at Carson.

Wed. 10/9
7:30 p.m.

*Eventbrite RSVP required

USC Thornton Symphony: Concerto Night

Carl St.Clair, principal conductor of the USC Thornton Orchestra Program, leads the USC Thornton Symphony in Robert Schumann's Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129, Kevin Puts' Marimba Concerto and Sergei Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26.

Renaissance students innovate their own education

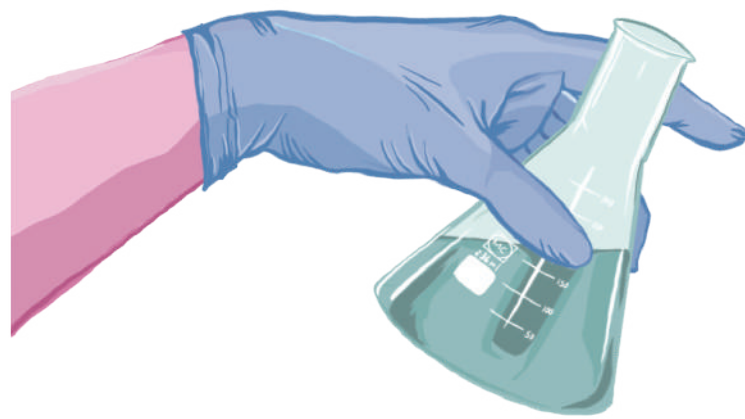
Students blend their varying passions to create a unique, multidisciplinary experience.

By YAHVI SHAH
Staff Writer

In an era where specialization is considered a superpower, a select group of individuals challenge this norm by incorporating seemingly diverse passions into a cohesive academic experience. “Renaissance” students don’t simply explore different passions; they create something new at the intersections. But what drives the pursuit of this multidisciplinary mastery? And more importantly, what can the rest of us learn from it?

Partaking in the balancing act of versatility requires a commitment to discipline. For Ella Harrison, a freshman majoring in biochemistry, it would be nearly impossible to maintain all of her commitments without using proper time management and order.

“I go to ROTC in the morning, and my job at night is for the athletics department,” Harrison said. “I get all my homework done throughout the week and whenever I can over the weekend to balance everything out.”



Mia Claire Chang / Daily Trojan

As a student on the pre-medical track, her course load already includes a plethora of ancillary work and studying; her involvement in ROTC, a campus job and social commitments make her days even busier. However, Harrison still emphasizes the importance of knowing your limitations.

“Don’t put too much on your plate. For me, I have a job at ROTC and I’m pre-med, but I’m going to join clubs after waiting to see how much I can handle,” Harrison said. “Being overwhelmed is not going to help you at all because you’ll just get stressed out and you won’t be able to put your best foot forward for the other things you’ve already committed to.”

Finding the right balance between all of your commitments can be challenging — that’s why prioritization serves as an essential tool for Harrison.

“[I’ve always] prioritized school, so it’s hard to make it to every PT session for ROTC, but school is always definitely priority number one, and then I just have to make sure to get all my work done before my other commitments,” Harrison said.

A majority of renaissance students developed interdisciplinary roots throughout their

adolescence which have translated into their college experiences.

“I did a lot of this in high school too — so going into it for college wasn’t completely different,” she said. “I did cross country and track, so that swapped out with ROTC. And I’ve always wanted to be some sort of doctor, so the military and army was a really good path to get me into that. That’s what motivated me.”

For Iovine and Young Academy students Anika Mantripragada, Saniya Patel and Nitya Peumans, an interest in a variety of fields served as strong motivation to find an intersection that satisfied their enthusiasm for widespread learning.

“I knew I wanted to do business and design, but didn’t want to double major or minor. The Academy allowed me to pursue all of my interests without compromise,” Mantripragada said.

Many students enter college on a defined path in the form of one specific major or track — a norm that can scare students away from pursuing a more open-ended program.

“When I got here and I told people about my major, a lot of them were like, ‘I was going to apply. But then it looked really hard to get in,’” Patel said.

To complement these students’ diverse interests, IYA’s

curriculum follows a less calculated path and allows students to chart their own course.

“It gives you an edge in certain senses, but you have to be very careful what you pair it with,” Peumans said. “Without any kind of technical experience or expertise, it’s hard to just float into this kind of program because, in the interest of breadth, we sacrifice a lot of depth.”

Nevertheless, the unique and interdisciplinary curriculum of IYA can serve as a catalyst for innovative and original thinking.

“I come at problems with a point of view of a designer, while [my brother] looks at it with the point of view of a software engineer,” Mantripragada said. “So we’re going to have different opinions and different approaches, and that can be really really helpful.”

A large portion of becoming a renaissance student is providing yourself a platform where your various interests can be worked and further developed. For Harrison, it’s the medical experience that the ROTC program gives her.

“With ROTC, I’m able to get medical-focused training, in learning first aid and applying it in the field, which complements what I’m studying in biochemistry,” Harrison said.

On the other hand, for Mantripragada, Patel and Peumans, it’s the resources and community of Iovine and Young.

“There was a lot of effort initially to be good at everything, but over time, you realize not everyone is good at everything. We use each other,” Patel said.

A common misconception that arises about renaissance students is that their involvement in various endeavors is a sign of their uncertainty. In actuality, it signifies the exact opposite.

“I’ve always had an interest in healthcare and technology, but then I also had a lot of interest in art on the side. And I wanted to see how I could use the skills I learned in the humanities and the arts to supplement my work in technology,” Mantripragada said.

Renaissance students aren’t dabbling aimlessly — they are crafting a well-rounded skill set that feeds into their ultimate goal. Choosing to balance their various interests rather than sacrificing them underscores the determination and tenacity of these students.

“If you let go of what you care about just to do something that might make it easier for you to get in somewhere, in the long run, it’s not going to make you happy,” Patel said.

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Downtown Women's Center serves LA's unhoused population

DWC employees shed light on the services they provide to address homelessness.

By **ANYA MOTWANI**

Staff Writer

Jill Halverson worked as an outreach worker in the 1970s when she first met a woman named Rosa Arzola in Los Angeles' Skid Row neighborhood.

The former Peace Corps officer was moved by Rosa's story: she worked in homes cooking and cleaning for families before her mental illness worsened, leading her to spend time in various psychiatric hospitals and ultimately unhoused on Skid Row. Rosa inspired Halverson to inaugurate the first location of Downtown Women's Center.

"She met Rosa, and they became friends. Rosa was super inventive in the way she lived her life, and made her circumstances work for her," said Amber Nicolai, volunteer specialist at DWC. "She had a whole bathing ritual where she set out buckets of water in the sun to get them warm, and then set up cardboard for privacy."

Rosa's need to be innovative in the face of great hardship

stemmed from an absence of shelters that catered to women in L.A.

"[The organizations that existed were] either for men only or men and women," Nicolai said. "So, [Halverson] took her life savings, which she had been saving to buy a house, and she bought [DWC's] first location. Once it did start offering housing, Rosa was the first resident, and she stayed until 2019."

Today, DWC offers services to address daily needs of unhoused women, as well as resources for more long-term goals like reintegration and job preparation.

"We serve 150 to 180 meals each breakfast and lunch, and we also have takeaway snacks in the afternoon," Nicolai said. "I particularly love our kitchen because we have a vegan chef running it, so we're able to offer different dietary options, which a lot of places nearby don't really do. We say, 'The kitchen's the heart of the home,' and 'The kitchen's the heart of DWC,' because it is."

The many spaces offered at DWC provide a haven among the bustle of its surroundings. Often, it is the only place for unhoused women to turn to in downtown L.A. — DWC



Downtown Women's Center

The Downtown Women's Center provides services for Los Angeles' unhoused population including housing, healthcare, mental health clinics, meals and rehabilitation programs.

is the only women's health clinic in the Skid Row area. In 2023, DWC's mental health programs served 554 women, and their general health clinic served 1,413 women.

Providing easy access to meals, bathrooms, mail, laundry and phones enables DWC to address the needs of over 5,000 women a year, according to their website. The center's housing first model emphasizes "Housing is the first step," which differs from the traditional models of many shelters. Often, other shelters implement steep barriers before people can access their services.

"We don't have curfews, which is pretty uncommon in places like this. We don't require substance

abuse counseling or drug testing," Nicolai said. "People can stay as long as they want to. We offer mediation services if someone's having trouble, like following the confines of their lease. We'll work with them every way we can ... We have an occupational therapist on site and are doing everything we can to help folks stay."

Collaboration with adjacent organizations in the area expands DWC's influence and mission within the unhoused community. Most recently, the center started its social enterprise, MADE by DWC, which sells candles made by women participating in DWC's job-training program. MADE by DWC has a cafe

and gift shop by DWC's San Pedro Street location and partnered with Homeboy Industries, which provides the cafe's pastries.

Homeboy Industries is the largest gang rehabilitation program in the world. In the same way, they provide a platform for like minded organizations, DWC also engages with the philanthropic side of neighboring educational institutions.

"A lot of sororities and fraternities and different groups will get involved in our group volunteering," Nicolai said.

"There will be things like cooking clubs, where you'll actually

| see **CENTER**, page 14 |



Downtown Women's Center

Organizations such as the Downtown Women's Center model a "housing first" mentality, making living quarters accessible for all.

CHEFS

| continued from page 6 |

healthiest meal, plus food that they would want to eat, as well as enjoy."

However, these guidelines and restrictions do not impede her ability to create fresh menus.

"I think where we have the most fun in our unit specifically is at the Mongo station where we're doing different dishes, and I think that's where we'll get to be more creative," Aguilera said. "I put out a couple of new bars. One was Frankfest, where there were different types of hot dogs from different areas that people were familiar with."

Students have a lot to look forward to in terms of new dining experiences this next month.

"Right now, I'm working on our Halloween menu, because we actually have the Halloween event at our unit, so I'm excited about that," Aguilera said. "I think we're getting to do Beetlejuice [as a theme]."

The relationship between kitchen manager and staff goes beyond just professional. Their close-knit culture is at the core of promoting constructive working conditions.

"Once a week, what we try to do is like a family meal, something different for us to eat," Aguilera said. "I know it's still food, but that is our business, so that's kind of what keeps us happy ... something different, something special."

Ultimately, the dining halls serve a special purpose on campus — to bring the USC community together. It's a place where a little gratitude can go a long way.

"I wish students knew ... that we do everything in our power to make their experience memorable, and my staff works tirelessly. My hat's off to them because without them, I couldn't do what I do," Gomez said. "If they see somebody, say thank you. It'll make their day, and definitely put a smile on their face."



Jiwoo Kim / Daily Trojan

PARENTS | New students reflect on application help

| continued from page 7 |

opportunities. According to Arias, it was her dad who initially wanted her to go to a prestigious school.

"My dad would want me to go where I want, but he also wanted me to go to UC Davis," Arias said. "I think he thought of USC as more of a party school. But when we went to USC, he realized that USC was a better match for me based on the environment and the heavier emphasis on extracurriculars on campus."

In indirect ways, Arias' parents still made small impacts on the writing of her application.

"My mom read one of my essays once, and she didn't like it. She just said it didn't feel authentic," Arias said. "Secretly, I knew she was right, so I did tweak my essay based on her reaction."

Although less hands-on in the college admissions process, her mom did encourage Arias to get involved in more extracurriculars by introducing her to new opportunities.

"She was involved. But at the same time, my mom worked multiple jobs," Arias said. "She didn't have

time to be going to everything I did. So I was more independent when I was in high school."

Most of Arias' application guidance was found outside the home, on her high school campus.

"I had a really good college career program, even though it had only two advisors," Arias said. "I developed a relationship early on with them in my junior year, and I credit a lot of my application journey success to them. None of my family underwent the college admissions process, but fortunately I had them to lean on the whole time."

Arias' mother, Jamie Arias, stood behind her daughter's work to get to USC.

"I don't think we really pushed one way or the other — at the end of the day, college education is going to be good no matter where you go," Jamie Arias said. "In the majority of her closest friend group, like myself, none of their parents had graduated college. So it was more like 'We're going to support you because we want this for you.' Because as a parent, you want your kid to do better."

TABLES | Set-up crews collaborate for USC events

| continued from page 7 |

and dance. The two must coordinate with one other, teams within their department, teams outside of their department but within the University and — last, but certainly not least — outside vendors. In his explanation, Rosen used Trojan Family Weekend as a prime example.

Similar to events such as New Student Convocation, Trojan Family Weekend involves participation from many of the schools at USC. This adds another layer of communication and planning, another set of choreographed moves that the office has been practicing for years.

"It really is a conglomeration of events from all across the University," Rosen said. "All the schools and units, we asked them to provide programming. Part of that is them doing that, as well as opening their classes to parents. And so a lot of it is the communication back and forth to those different groups — we call them our campus partner groups — who are part of that planning process."

Rosen said his office sends emails to these partner groups — a list of about 200 people in total — once a month, or more, asking for updates or informing them of new responsibilities. According to Ammons, the registration and information website for Trojan Family Weekend would go up months in advance.

While the physical setup for events like Trojan Family Weekend might occur just days beforehand, USC notifies its two main partners for this matter, Town & Country Event Rentals and Bright Event Rentals, months in advance as well. Kacey Doherty, event director for Town & Country Event Rentals, said her company has been working with USC for nearly 20 years.

"We work with every department on campus who has event teams and produce different events like groundbreaking ceremonies, student activities, USC commencement and Trojan Family Weekend, football tailgating — anything that is requiring tables and chairs and tents and things that will help the event in motion," she said.

Town & Country works with the University through phone calls, emails and site visits. As part of their services, Doherty and her team produce computer-aided design drawings of the event space in question. These diagrams, Doherty said, are a huge help in planning where each item will be placed and what the company will need to set it up.

Then the time comes to build the event space. For a massive event such as the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books, students might notice tents being erected a full week in advance. For Trojan Family Weekend, the team needed just two days. Ammons says this is largely on purpose to limit the disruption of student life as much as possible.

"If we're in a space, we don't want to take more time there than would be needed so that others can enjoy it," Ammons said.

Ammons, like Rosen, said she enjoys her job and being able to see the fruits of her team's labor, especially during events that bring in more than just students.

"We're a department that really enjoys what we do," Ammons said. "Trojan Family Weekend specifically is always a highlight, because families and parents in particular are just so happy to see their students ... Seeing those reunions at the Welcome Lounge and whatnot are just fun to see — it's just a good vibe, and everyone's happy and excited."

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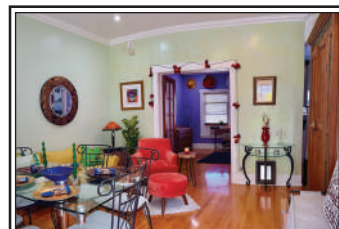
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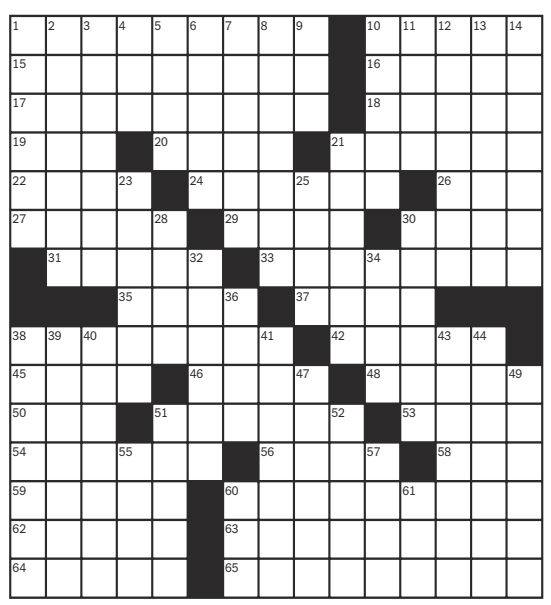
**The New York Times
Crossword**

Edited by Joel Fagliano No. 0830

- ACROSS**
- 1 Consideration when donning an off-the-shoulder dress
 - 10 Vindictiveness
 - 15 Defiant protester
 - 16 Uruguayan cash
 - 17 Illusory quality
 - 18 Did a jeté
 - 19 "The Watercourse Way," per an Alan Watts title
 - 20 They may surround spectacles
 - 21 Obnoxiously loud
 - 22 Ones used to working from home?
 - 24 Mittens might fiddle with one
 - 26 Animal found on either end of a scale
 - 27 "Parasite" setting
 - 29 Dove, e.g.
 - 30 "Job's getting done as we speak!"
 - 31 Many John le Carré characters
 - 33 Glaring oversight by a writer
 - 35 Makes fast
 - 37 Traditional Scottish New Year's gift, representing warmth for the year to come
 - 38 Marked Twain?
 - 42 Summer snack with a swirl
 - 45 Psyche's lover, in Greek myth
 - 46 Lead-in to stakes
 - 48 "I think so," in modern shorthand
 - 50 Symbol of industry
 - 51 Robert in "Heat"
 - 53 Component of the Tower of Hanoi puzzle
 - 54 They're made to measure
 - 56 Neat arrangements
 - 58 U.S.M.C. bigwig
 - 59 Disgusting, slangily
 - 60 Common browser extension
 - 62 Actor/activist Davis
 - 63 Uncommitted sort
 - 64 Advise against
 - 65 Takes for a spin, as a motorcycle
- DOWN**
- 1 Historic figure grouped with Judas in Dante's "Inferno"
 - 2 Handles differently?
 - 3 Genre for Wizkid and Burna Boy
 - 4 Seek reparations
 - 5 Title first used by Ivan the Great
 - 6 Thing of the past
 - 7 Inner selves
 - 8 Occasion for retirement?
 - 9 Chicago W.N.B.A. team
 - 10 Spread out
 - 11 Fellow
 - 12 "Don't ask me again!"
 - 13 Nursery purchase
 - 14 Connoisseur of the finer things
 - 21 Disappear into thin air
 - 23 Deluxe accommodations
 - 25 Gold Bond ingredient, once
 - 28 Film character with an iconic gold bikini
 - 30 "Good heavens!"
 - 32 Waits on
 - 34 Camper's cover
 - 36 Spotted
 - 38 Opening words of a prayer
 - 39 Vital hosp. worker
 - 40 Scrammed
 - 41 Tragic heroine of Irish mythology
 - 43 Snatched, colloquially
 - 44 Quite blue
 - 47 Voyagers, e.g.
 - 49 Portmanteau garments
 - 51 Alternative to hanging out?
 - 52 Babe in the woods?
 - 55 Falco of "The Sopranos"
 - 57 Increase dramatically
 - 60 Back, at sea
 - 61 Green-screen tech.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

A	C	M	E	S	U	I	D	O	D	G	E				
P	R	E	E	N	O	S	C	A	R	W	I	L	D	E	
B	U	G	L	E	W	E	A	R	I	N	G	O	U	T	
S	A	Y	A	A	H	M	I	S	A	C	S				
O	H	M	P	L	E	B	E	M	A	T	E	Y			
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T	R	A	D	E	U	N	I	O	N	E	V	E	R	Y	
B	E	A	D	S	S	P	A	E	R	S	E				



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DINING | Surveys are not enough for improvement



Jiwoo Kim / Daily Trojan

| continued from page 4 |

To best gauge students' dining hall experiences, their opinions should be gathered as proactive input rather than as retroactive feedback. The best way for the University to do this is by forming a dining hall student advisory group, which interested students could apply for.

A dining hall student advisory group could share ideas to improve the dining hall experience and taste dishes before they're prepared en masse. Each member could be assigned certain items to taste each day, and those assigned to the same items could collaborate on a report of their experience with the items.

Menu assemblers could then see how dishes could be improved and how much of each dish should be prepared. Additionally, the group could have a data team backing up the advisory group's findings with quantitative evidence. They could poll peers directly on everything from dietary restrictions to portion sizes.

Combined with the regular input from other advisory group team

members, this will hopefully streamline the allocation of resources and minimize food waste, all while improving the student dining hall experience.

As it is, I see the dining halls as untapped potential. If there are two things everyone at USC seems to like, it's food and opinions, and right now, most opinions on the dining halls are neutral at best. Especially given the price of food around campus, I think effort invested in dining hall improvement would be greatly appreciated and would significantly benefit the University.

An advisory group would give students agency, and as evidenced by the number of RSOs on campus, there are always students at USC willing to rise to leadership positions. I don't think this proposal is entirely unreasonable. But don't take my word for it. Go to the dining halls and try to eat a meal without a single opinion on how the experience could be improved. If it's tricky, maybe you should apply for the advisory group.

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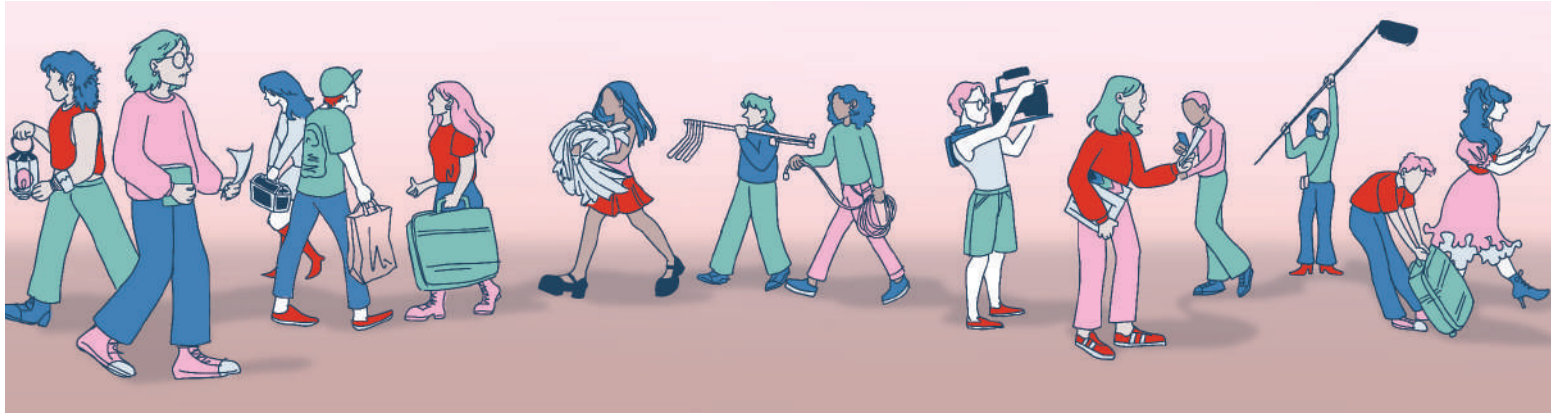
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Bella Hoffman / Daily Trojan

CENTER

| continued from page 11 |

take over the kitchen for the day. Our staff will still be there to guide you and provide ingredients, but it'll be a group of about five to seven who will make the whole meal and serve it."

USC Helenes, a service organization at USC, partners with DWC to provide volunteer time and serve like-minded non-profits involved in the L.A. area. In the past, the Helenes have participated in the kitchen take-over.

"I'm definitely looking to interact more with schools," Nicolai said. "I know a lot of schools have Volunteer Day or different fairs and things like that. I'd love to start tabling as well as at farmers markets ... I've been thinking [a lot about] finding ways to get more diverse populations to volunteer."

Students can feel assured that their time spent volunteering with DWC has tangible impacts on L.A.'s unsheltered community and provides them with an uplifting work environment.

"I started as a volunteer here, and I discovered a sanctuary that was conducive to healing," said Ray Warth, a day center coordinator. "It was a warm, nurturing environment that I found was a natural spot for anybody to find the comfort of a community — to help pick [yourself] up and readjust to any obstacles you're dealing with: urban or personal."

Those at DWC work tirelessly to offer concrete solutions for unsheltered women and gender diverse individuals in L.A., being the only non-governmental organization to do so. Along with these services, DWC also aims to rewrite the narrative around ending homelessness.

"I wish more people knew that most individuals facing homelessness have endured immense trauma, and the myth that people choose this life or resist services couldn't be further from the truth," wrote Zoe Weber, grants specialist. "Compassion, empathy and consistency are key to understanding and addressing this crisis."

'Lingering Sins' showcases identity, dedication

The nuanced student film represents the struggle of independent filmmaking.

By **ALEX GROSS**

Staff Writer

Filmmaking is, traditionally, one of the most inaccessible art forms — especially for college students who are trying to make their presence known in an already oversaturated industry.

However, this hasn't stopped the minds behind the project "Lingering Sins," a student film directed by Madeleine Tsai, a sophomore majoring in cinema and media studies as well as sociology.

"Lingering Sins" is set to start filming in November. Before filming can start, though, copious amounts of financial planning have to take place — especially because Tsai and her producers, Diego Casillas and Pablo Uribe, are operating on a small, independent budget.

"It's obviously harder, you know, to have the funds necessary to make the short film than if you have a feature-length film and a production company supporting you," said Casillas, a sophomore majoring in cinema and media studies.

The film is the brainchild of Tsai and Casillas, who hope to portray their own underrepresented identities in the characters of the story. "Lingering Sins" tells the story of a

young woman who must cope with the death of her girlfriend while being haunted by her past mistakes.

"We just knew that we wanted to make something that centered around the LGBTQ+ narrative and people of color, and so that was something that really motivated us," Tsai said. "I was with Diego, our producer, in Starbucks filming. We sent [screenwriter] Zsuzsanna a 30-minute long voice memo, basically just saying a lot of gibberish, really. And then she was like, 'Okay, give me an outline, and then we'll see what we can do.' So that's kind of how it all started."

Since the idea's conception, the project has quickly moved through pre-production and is now tackling its next steps: casting, marketing and fundraising.

"As a producer, our most important thing is money," said Uribe, a sophomore majoring in business administration. "We're also in touch with the marketing team because without the marketing, it's really difficult to make money."

Marketing has become one of the most important aspects of filmmaking, as production companies like A24 and Neon have pushed the industry standard to include innovative new strategies behind drawing eyes to a film's release.

"We wanted to create an immersive experience between the actors and the audience," Uribe said. "We were thinking of maybe creating a

TikTok account for the actor. They film things and do trends as if they were real people — trying to break the fourth wall, trying to be immersive with the audience."

Uribe and Casillas are both from Mexico City, but it wasn't until they arrived at USC that they had the opportunity to meet. The two founded a production company together, titled Flaca y Polo, which is helping to produce "Lingering Sins" as its first project. Unlike Casillas, who has previous experience working on production crews, this is Uribe's first time producing a film.

"I really like film, but I'm more interested in the business aspect of the entertainment industry," Uribe said.

"For this production company, I would like to actually create it and make it something out in Mexico, because right now Mexico is not producing the quality of films that they had in the '90s, for example."

While Uribe specializes in the business side of production, Tsai and Casillas captain the more artistic endeavors.

"We've been working like crazy. We are very organized about everything so we know the shot and exactly what we're scouting for so we don't lose any time," Casillas said.

Even though the fast-paced schedule of putting a film together can be stressful, the directorial crew of "Lingering Sins" is making sure to emphasize the importance of community at the center of the process.

"We want to create a very relaxed and harmonious work environment where you're there because you like the story, because you want to tell the meaning of that, because you're passionate about what we're trying to do," Casillas said.

Much of the desire to work on independent films is to gain experience in the industry and learn the ropes of filmmaking, but "Lingering Sins" hopes to strike a deeper chord within viewers and crew members alike, showing why it deserves not to be written off as "just another student film."

"The most important part of the film is to support the LGBTQ+ community and showcase the horrendous environments that we still live in in many, many countries. In Mexico, it's very, very hard to be gay," Casillas said. "If the viewer, the actors, the crew, everyone can leave after working on it or watching the film with a good feeling, but also with a question or a reflection, that's the goal."

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FOOTBALL | USC pursues its first road win this fall



Henry Kofman / Daily Trojan

Redshirt junior quarterback Miller Moss threw for 308 yards and three touchdowns Saturday. He also added his first rushing score of the season.

| continued from page 16 |

Brosmer has been a bright spot. The sixth-year signal-caller ranks No. 7 in the Big Ten in passing yards — two spots behind Moss — and has 6 touchdown passes.

While the Gophers' run game has regressed lately, sophomore running back Darius Taylor has still made a handful of end-zone trips, scoring in three of his four appearances this season. As USC's run defense has struggled at times, it will aim to force Minnesota to throw the ball as much as possible and emulate its success in the final 30 minutes against Wisconsin.

Minnesota's total defense ranks fifth in the country, limiting opponents to only 226.8 yards per game with the lowest passing yards allowed.

"They're a really veteran group, and a group that's taken on a new defensive system really well," Moss said. "[It's] an exciting challenge for us."

Upon heading northeast, news broke that senior linebacker Raesjon Davis intended to redshirt, following junior defensive tackle Bear Alexander's

decision to do the same. Sophomore wide receiver Makai Lemon and redshirt senior safety Akili Arnold returned to practice Tuesday after both suffered injuries against Michigan. USC will hope both make timely recoveries.

The Trojans are 6-1-1 all-time against the Gophers with five straight wins. The teams most recently faced each other in the 2011 season opener.

USC's season has been rocky at times through four bouts, but the team has found ways to make late statements and adjust to the new conference. In Minneapolis, the Trojans will look for their first road victory in the Big Ten before they return home for a big test against No. 7 Penn State (4-0, 1-0) the following week.

"Our goal is to start faster," Robinson said. "When we're going, we're a really good football team."

USC's final trip to flyover country will kick off Saturday at 4:30 p.m. at Huntington Bank Stadium, and the Trojans will aim to tune out the ruckus road environment.

VOLLEYBALL | Big Ten play heads to Galen Center

| continued from page 16 |

Daily Trojan. "I think we just have to have a little bit of an edge, a chip on our shoulder and just know what we are, be a little prideful in who we are and what we do."

Following a battle with Michigan, the Trojans will need to quickly turn their attention to Minnesota (8-4, 1-1 Big Ten). Up four spots from last week, No. 12 Minnesota is yet another powerhouse in the Big Ten. The Gophers won their match against the No. 9 Wisconsin Badgers (8-4,

2-1 Big Ten) Wednesday, Sept. 25 and lost against No. 10 Purdue (10-3, 1-1 Big Ten) Saturday.

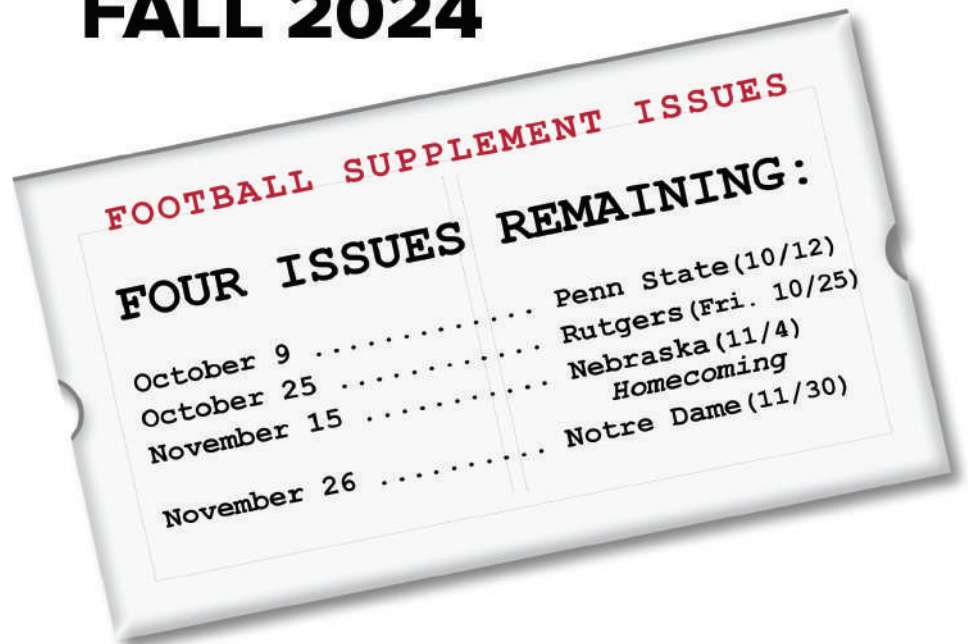
With both matches taking place home at Galen Center, a packed crowd of Trojans will play a vital role in supporting USC.

"Every time we have a home game, I think it's really special," Trubint said. "It gives us a little bit more excitement and joy to plan in front of our fans and make it worth their time coming out."

USC will play Michigan at 7 p.m. Friday and Minnesota at 8 p.m. Saturday at Galen Center.

Tackle a Winning Market: USC FOOTBALL FANS! DAILY TROJAN

FALL 2024



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SPORTS

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Football makes second Midwest trip

The Trojans aim to carry momentum into Minnesota after a hard-fought victory.

By **KASEY KAZLINER**

Football Beat Writer

No. 11 USC showcased its second-half magic the past two weeks and won one game in the process. But back on the road, and with eyes on the College Football Playoff race, the Trojans hope to play more complete games.

USC (3-1, 1-1 Big Ten) initially appeared to be outmatched last Saturday when the Wisconsin Badgers (2-2, 0-1) took an overwhelming 21-10 lead at halftime, but right out of the break, the Trojans fired back and scored 28 unanswered points to win big.

The clutch performance brought USC's overall second-half scoring advantage to 87-23 in four games thus far, showing the team's true potential when adjustments are made.

"We've had a few stretches, but you want to be able to start and sustain [offensive production]," said Head Coach Lincoln Riley at practice Tuesday. "If we don't have it, we've got to be able to snap out of it and find it a little bit quicker."

Set for another 1,000-mile-plus trip to the heart of the Big Ten, USC will face the Minnesota Golden Gophers (2-3, 0-2) next. They're a squad coming off back-to-back losses, with earlier wins over FCS and Group of Five foes.

Like USC, Minnesota went toe-to-toe with Michigan (4-1, 2-0) and made a second-half statement by scoring 21 fourth-quarter points before narrowly losing. The Gophers' rushing attack faltered in their recent losses, as they've only tallied 117 ground yards over



Henry Kofman / Daily Trojan

Junior defensive end Anthony Lucas led the Trojan roster out of the tunnel for last weekend's Big Ten home opener against Wisconsin.

the past two weeks, dropping to No. 108 nationally in total offense with 327.2 yards per game as opposed to the Trojans' 459.8.

Minnesota has also been dormant to begin games this season, only notching 9 total points across five first quarters. While USC is also a second-half team, the Trojans can at least say they've been somewhat productive early in games.

Redshirt junior quarterback Miller Moss catalyzed USC's first Big Ten win over Wisconsin, tossing 3 touchdowns and running 1 in himself. Moss — who's spread his targets across various pass-catchers this season — connected with sophomore wide receiver Ja'Kobi Lane for two scores and found sophomore wide receiver Duce Robinson for a third-quarter touchdown amid the comeback.

The Trojans' offensive line was a glaring issue against the Wolverines — and while it was more stable against the Badgers — it still allowed four tackles for loss and couldn't help establish an efficient run game.

USC's defense made mistakes in the first half but flipped the script as the game progressed and only missed four tackles, its lowest all

season. Redshirt sophomore safety Kamari Ramsey compiled two tackles for loss and stepped up in place of usual standout senior linebacker Eric Gentry, who left the game early with an injury and will be questionable to play against Minnesota.

Despite Minnesota's recent woes, graduate quarterback Max

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Two high-stakes home games lie ahead for women's volleyball

The Trojans have an exciting weekend of back-to-back matches with Big Ten foes.

By **ANNA MUELLER**

Volleyball Beat Writer

The Galen Center will be lit up in gold and cardinal red when USC women's volleyball takes on its next two Big Ten opponents at home this weekend. The Trojans sit at No. 9 in conference rankings after last Friday's nail-biter victory against Utah State and a tough loss against Nebraska on Sunday.

The Trojans (9-3, 1-1 Big Ten) are looking to clear their heads and shake off the dust from their last match against Nebraska (13-1, 3-0 Big Ten). Graduate transfer outside hitter Ally Batenhorst, a former Nebraska Husker, was visibly emotional ahead of the game at Devaney Sports Center.

Batenhorst is looking to take the Trojans to the NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship — an experience she knows all too well after making it there with the Huskers last season.

USC is confident it can get there.

"I think we're prepared," said senior setter Mia Tuaniga about this weekend's matches in an interview with the *Daily Trojan*. "We had a pretty good test this past Sunday against Nebraska and I think we took a lot of learning points away from that and I'm excited to see

how we apply those learning points and then get into it this weekend."

The Trojans will face off against one of the highest-ranked teams in the Big Ten, Michigan (12-1, 2-0 Big Ten), first this weekend. After starting the fall with a spotless record of 9-0, the Wolverines took their first loss of the season in a match against ACC opponent North Carolina (12-1, 4-0 ACC).

Michigan has been receiving praise for coming back from behind in several of its matches so far in order to claim its top spot in conference rankings. Sophomore setter Morgan Burke and graduate outside hitter Allison Jacobs have both recorded career-highs this season with 55 assists and 25 kills, respectively.

In order to come out on top Friday, the Trojans will need to watch out for junior middle blocker Serena Nyambio, Jacobs and Burke. Nyambio currently leads Michigan in blocks, solo blocks and boasts a hitting percentage of 0.430.

Both teams in the upcoming match have exceptional players eager to make statements early in Big Ten play. Fans can expect fierce clashes between these Michigan players and Trojans like Batenhorst, redshirt freshman middle blocker Leah Ford and Tuaniga.

"They're gonna come at us with a lot of fire," said junior libero Gala Trubint in an interview with the

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Braden Dawson / Daily Trojan

Freshman outside hitter Jady Livings averaged 41 total attacks in the five games prior to playing No. 2 Nebraska. Back at Galen Center, the true freshman is eager to get back to filling up the kill column.