

DAILY TROJAN

CRITICAL COMMUNICATION SUPPLEMENT

12.4.2024



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DAILY TROJAN

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New USG leadership takes form at senate



Jake Berg / Daily Trojan

Former vice president Brianna Sánchez was sworn in as president Tuesday night. She said her administration will focus on “continuity and progress” toward USG’s goals.



Jake Berg / Daily Trojan

Former senator Dane Sprague was selected as vice president by the senate in a secret ballot election Monday. Senators also selected Elija Barnes as speaker of the senate during their meeting.

During the meeting the new president, vice president and two senators were sworn in.

By **SEAN CAMPBELL**

Assistant News Editor

The Undergraduate Student Government overhauled its leadership Tuesday night as a new president, vice president, speaker of the senate, affordability and basic needs committee chair, and two new senators took office at the senate meeting.

Former vice president Brianna Sánchez was sworn in as president after Bryan Fernández announced his resignation from the position Nov. 21. Sánchez said her administration will focus on “continuity and progress” toward USG’s goals during a “period of change” in a press release earlier Tuesday.

“As we transition in leadership, I want to reaffirm our team’s commitment to the USG mission, with a strong focus on advocacy, representation, and programming to support and engage the student body,” Sánchez wrote.

Following the removal of former speaker of the senate Diana Carpio on Nov. 19, the remaining senators participated in a secret ballot vote to elect a new speaker of the senate — who immediately became vice president — and then elected the speaker of the senate.

Former senator Dane Sprague was sworn in as vice president at the senate meeting following the vote that concluded Monday. During the meeting, Sprague mentioned his work on bills allowing committees to create temporary commissions and supporting instituting a mandatory sustainability module for incoming students.

In his report to the senate, Sprague said he wants to ensure USG is able to hit the ground running and deliver on promises they have already made to the student body.

Senator Elija Barnes took over as speaker of the senate. In the Tuesday press release, Barnes said he wants to “bring unity” to the 144th USG senate and uplift the voices of the other 11 senators.

“I really want to make sure that senate has the best ability to

create change in any way, shape or form ... and that we are able to provide the promises and change the impactful experience for every single student here at USC,” Barnes said during the meeting.

Barnes presented his projects, including an involvement fair restructure and an end-of-year event to give back to USC staff.

With both Carpio and Sprague leaving the senate, Jad Kilani and Sydney White — the next highest placing finishers — after Tanisha Saraff was disqualified for disregarding sanctions she received for election rule violations — in the Sept. 18-20 special election — were sworn in.

Kilani, a freshman majoring in political science, received 162 votes in the special election, while White, a junior majoring in cinematic arts, film and television production, earned 158. Another candidate, Aidan van Dijk, received the same number of votes as White — the fourth-place finisher — so the senate held a secret ballot vote to determine who would take the seat, according to Sánchez.

As the only freshman senator, Kilani said he wants to involve the perspectives of other freshmen in USG and focus on the transparency,

collaboration and representation principles on which he ran his campaign.

“I’m just honored to have this chance to represent my peers,” Kilani said in an interview with the *Daily Trojan* after the meeting. “I’ll definitely be focusing on emphasizing [freshman] voices and ensuring that freshmen aren’t neglected in the decisions that [USG makes].”

White, who served as an executive aide to 2023-24 chief diversity officer Caleb Stevens, said she is looking forward to continuing Carpio’s laundry stipend project and the revitalization of a restaurant crawl project she participated in during her freshman year.

White said because of her short time in the senate, she will try to “jump on” other senators’ projects to get things done.

During the meeting, Shrinidhi Sriram, a freshman majoring in philosophy, politics and law, was confirmed as the new AFFBN committee chair. Sriram previously served as the interim chair following former AFFBN chair Klarissa Palacios’ resignation Nov. 12 after being removed and later reinstated by a judicial appeal.

Sriram said she wants to focus on Tommy’s Closet — an event that

provides 2,000 thrifted clothing pieces to USC students that cannot afford clothes, a Free Application for Federal Student Aid workshop to keep students up-to-date on changes to the platform and the establishment of work-study alternatives for international students.

The senate unanimously approved SB 144-20, which allocated \$3,350 of legislative funding to a Buddhist Shrine Room at the University Religious Center. The grand opening is set for Feb. 21, senator Patrick Nguyen said while presenting the bill. He also said it was the first Buddhist space implemented on campus.

“As a Buddhist student myself, it is a big hassle for me to travel off campus to visit temples that are not accessible if you don’t have a car,” Nguyen said. “Having this space on campus would allow me to practice my religion freely without any transportation or cost, and it also creates a lot of visibility for Buddhist students on campus as well.”

SB 144-23, which allocated \$1,891 of legislative funding to Wellness Week — an annual event aimed at promoting wellness resources at USC run by Student Health and USG’s wellness affairs committee along with other partnering groups — and SB 144-24, which

allocated \$10,000 to a shuttle from LAX to USC over winter break and \$2,000 as funding for roundtable discussions, were approved unanimously. A full reallocation will occur over winter break, Sánchez said.

During their meeting, senators passed SB 144-22 to remove a shortened funding application cycle introduced due to delays to the recognized student organization applications earlier in the semester, expand the time funding applications are open to Monday and Wednesday rather than only Wednesday and remove a four-event limit per RSO.

In her report, chief financial officer Chisom Obioha said utilization of funding during the fall semester was down, likely due to the RSO delays.

Chief programming officer Hunter Black presented SB 144-21 that, if passed, would amend USG’s bylaws to incorporate the Undocumented Trojan Success Assembly. Black said the assembly’s incorporation passed the programming vote of confidence last week with only one dissenting vote out of 33 and encouraged the senate to pass the bill when it comes to a vote.

“The work I’ve seen with UTSA has been very stellar this year,” Black said. “The directors ... [have] been doing an amazing job, and they are extremely passionate for the work of serving the undocumented plus community and making sure that their voices are heard on campus.”

Chief diversity officer Yasmine ElFarra reported that USG’s internal diversity poll among officers found a 4.03% increase in students of color and a 7.7% increase in LGBTQ+ students on staff in the organization compared to the 2023-24 academic year.

When asked about underrepresented groups in USG, ElFarra said freshmen and sophomores are underrepresented as officers in USG, making up 35.6% of respondents. ElFarra said she would suggest ways to improve underclassman representation to the 2025-26 CDO.

“Fresh perspective[s] are what keeps USG rolling,” ElFarra said. “Ensuring that we have a lot of lower classmen that are coming into the org really excited to pursue projects that they’re passionate about is really important.”



Jake Berg / Daily Trojan

Jad Kilani and Sydney White — the next highest placing finishers in the Sept. 18-20 special election — were sworn in. Another candidate received the same number of votes as White so the senate held a secret ballot vote to decide the senator.

OPINION

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Stay true to your call to action

Antonio Wu

EDITORS' EPILOGUE



When I first joined the *Daily Trojan* as a staff writer for the opinion section, I had no shortage of self-doubt. To find my bearings, I gravitated toward what felt the most organic to myself and my college experience at the time by writing about the lack of LGBTQIA+ community and inclusivity at USC. My first article, once posted on our Instagram account, garnered far more attention than I expected and incurred countless angry commentators.

Looking back almost two years later as an editor and slightly more seasoned writer, I know I would probably shred the article apart if it came past my editing desk today. Besides a few horrifically lengthy paragraphs, the call to action provided no specific demand of either students or the University:

“As young queer adults who have made it thus far, we can, and should, always demand more ... Until true institutional academic support and useful physical space are dedicated to us, and until we as students collectively know to demand it, LGBTQIA+ students will always struggle to have a presence in this campus community.”

Although I stand by these statements today, I concede I offered little detail or plan of action. When writers submit drafts with similar weaknesses today, I challenge them less on their writing prowess and more on this critical step of forming a valuable argument: thinking strategically about how to make change actually happen.

I can vouch for the rigor of this process. Like any other journalist, an opinion writer must consider and acknowledge as many perspectives as possible. Their articles are sourced to hell and back with both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and hardly a day goes by now when an opinion article doesn't incorporate interviews — a crucial area of growth we focused on the most this semester.

I believe that people's voices matter — otherwise I wouldn't have taken on this job — but the harsh truth is that most opinions are not worth publishing. Often, opinions written by college students with even the best command of the English language are limited in originality and relevance, usually stemming from a lack of life experience.

While there was nothing technically wrong with my first article, I can only critique its call to action today because I have two additional years of experience trying, and watching others try, to make change here at USC and elsewhere. There has been no shortage of failures.

In my final year as an undergrad, I'm pushing myself to make a difference in my world outside of

journalism. Like so many of the students who have come through the *Daily Trojan*, I am passionate about social justice and will spend my life working toward it, but I recognize my own “call to action” must extend beyond writing, editing and promoting discourse: It's one thing to speak about what matters, and it is another to do something about it.

I continue learning to balance my idealism with pragmatism and discipline.

No matter how much I may critique my past writing, I know my first article was effective because the very fact that I wrote about being queer at USC was enough to generate a reaction. Four semesters of *Daily Trojan* brainrot later, I've learned how to continue channeling my identity and experiences while arguing with a far more critical lens.

As I take my next steps, I am experiencing a sense of hesitancy that reminds me of my initial self-doubt at the *Daily Trojan*. I've grown comfortable in the newsroom, but outside of it, I fear once again that I am not sufficiently knowledgeable, organized, creative or whichever qualities an effective changemaker must possess.

I probably am not. But those qualities are skills — not identities — and I remain confident that I will grow into them because I know who I am and the world I want to create.

That kind of personal insight can only be won through dedicated self-discovery. When I



Henry Kofman / Daily Trojan

Fall 2024 opinion editor Antonio Wu works a night of production in the newsroom with associate managing and former opinion editor Alexa Avila.

first came to USC, I refused to join extracurriculars for a semester. I focused on creating a close community of people among whom I could learn what it meant to me to be queer and Asian, whether they shared those identities or not. I tested different forms of friendship, intimacy and heartbreak for the first time. I experimented with my major and minor and found peace in valuing learning over grades.

My former opinion editor, Kate McQuarrie, wrote last semester, “Every single one of us faces different circumstances, hardships, influences and life paths, and those inform every belief we hold and decision we make ... which backgrounds and voices we choose to include in

a story and our choice of language or quotes all depend on the journalist.”

So, to my fellow and future writers and editors, place your courage in who you are. The rest will follow. Spend more time living life outside the newsroom than writing about it, and your journalism will benefit tenfold. Your writing is only as deep as the life you lead.

“Editors' Epilogue” is a rotating column featuring a different *Daily Trojan* editor in each installment writing about their personal experiences. Antonio Wu is a senior majoring in public policy as well as pursuing a progressive master's degree in public administration and is an opinion editor at the *Daily Trojan*.

Why wait till Thanksgiving to be thankful?

Edhita Singhal

THINKING OUT LOUD



While Google may disagree, if I had to define college — and put it rather bluntly — I'd say it's running behind the next thing: the next class, party or even the next existential crisis. So immersed in this hustle culture and hungry for the next opportunity, we often find it hard to take a beat to appreciate the motions we are going through. As someone still learning the art of practicing gratitude, I am as guilty as you, but I have to say, all those self-help gurus may be onto something: practicing gratitude daily is important.

Every year, I make a reel to document my experiences in October — my birthday month and also known as my favorite time of the year. As I wrapped up my third year of making these reels, I rewatched



Audrey Schreck / Daily Trojan

the older ones and realized that not only has my ability to time transitions improved but also my reason behind making these reels. The tradition that started as a way to keep me occupied during my gap semester turned into this unnecessarily public display of my life and then transformed into a collage of some of my most beautiful memories.

The funny thing is that I had completely forgotten about some of the moments from the previous reels. I'm also sure that the experiences I call “some of

my most beautiful memories” today will soon fade into the distant past. While the reasoning, activities and people changed, only the feelings of happiness I experienced stayed constant.

In 10 years, I may not recall the specificities of each experience, but I will recall my awe as I saw the sun rise over my city, the thrill of dancing on the table with my friend while screaming “Shake It Off” into the microphone and the calmness that swept over me as I strummed my ukulele. Aren't

these emotions worth feeling grateful for every day?

Posting one Instagram story for what you are thankful for on the fourth Thursday of every November isn't enough. We have so much to be grateful for throughout the year, whether it's for the extra hour of sleep you got because your professor canceled class, the packet of Hershey's Kisses your friend gifted you or USC avenging our loss against UCLA this year. It's important to be grateful for these little moments and the joy they bring you because these tiny specks in a seemingly larger picture are the ones that make life slightly more bearable daily.

While I'm still working on practicing gratitude myself, I believe that college is the perfect time to start doing so. We are only going to get busier from here on out. To ensure that we are optimistic and limit daily crying sessions, even in our most stressful and hectic times, we should start now while we still have a few moments to spare.

My experience and a bit of online research show that there are plenty of small steps one can take to convey gratitude daily. While my favorite is saying two things you are grateful for before bed, you can also attempt saying thank you more. Set an intention for your day in the morning, and discuss what you are grateful for with others and perform small acts of kindness, like holding the door for others. These strategies will help you be more present in the moment rather than chasing the future.

Before I end my last article for the semester, I want to practice what I preach. So, I wanted to thank you for reading my column. I am grateful that you took the time to hear my 2 a.m. ramblings and for giving my writing and me a purpose. Until next time, love Edhita.

Edhita Singhal is a junior writing about life lessons she has learned in college in her column, “Thinking Out Loud,” which runs every other Wednesday.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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Read this book with this album: Winter Edition

Fully commit to a winter read with the the perfect cute companion album.

By ANNA JORDAN
Deputy Chief Copy Editor

As the football team continues to disappoint in the fourth quarter, winter break teases a less frustrating and well-earned fourth-quarter respite from academics. No class means resuming previously abandoned hobbies, just as the impending new year means forming resolutions of better habits, and both often mean a return to reading for fun.

After a semester of reading for class, the only way to hop back into the world

of fiction is with a book you can't put down until it's done. The right winter read needs ambiance and complete and utter immersion — sometimes, just reading the book isn't enough.

Having accompanying music to enhance the vibe brings the reading experience to an entirely new level. With these next five novels, make sure to have Spotify — or, God forbid, Apple Music — open to their complimentary albums for the optimized reading experience.

"Mrs. Caliban" by Rachel Ingalls
— "Melodrama" by Lorde

This bite-sized 1982 novel is filled to the brim with heartfelt absurdism. Despite boasting only 128 pages,

Ingalls' masterpiece tells the epic tale of Dorothy, a suffocating housewife, discovering and providing sanctuary for an escaped sea monster before sparking a whirlwind romance with him that inevitably ends in disaster.

This novel's dense, emotionally jam-packed nature begs for an album that can match its freak — look no further than Lorde's 2017 show-stopper, "Melodrama." With the novel and album running alongside each other, the listener or reader will feel a sense of injustice from the world at their inability to live out their wildest fantasies that will be enough to a minimum of moving on from their ex or a maximum of challenging Cybertrucks on the interstate to race.

"The Sanatorium" by Sarah Pearce
— "Submarine" by The Marias

Nothing gets the pages turning like a spooky asylum-turned-posh Swiss chalet. With a former detective as the narrator, Pearce's hit thriller is the perfect read for anyone looking for an exciting yet horrifying read — ambient, intense and eerie, this novel's isolated and snowy setting seeps through the pages.

The Marias' recent album, "Submarine" goes blow for blow with "The Sanatorium's" sense of snowy ambiance with lilting synths and otherworldly vocals. However, rather than enhancing the novel's terror, the album's gentle pace and fuzzy

instrumentals would perfectly assuage any temptation to put "The Sanatorium" down out of terror.

"The Sirens of Titan" by Kurt Vonnegut
— "Para Mi" by Cuco

The intergalactic satire offers a slyly cartoonish "We Didn't Start the Fire" take on science fiction that brings the bright colors and space optimism of the 1950s. The novel follows the richest man on Earth as he lives an odyssey of romance, interplanetary revolution and constant memory loss. With Vonnegut's classic all-encompassing world-building style, the pages fly by, and it's impossible to walk away from this novel with a neutral opinion.

| see **WINTER**, page 9 |

CARTOON OF MONTH: DECEMBER

Does it snow in Los Angeles? It sure does — with the help of snow machines and studio backdrops!

PERFECT DAY FOR PUFFERS

BY: MINA SUN



CRITICAL COMMUNICATION

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I have a friend with a keen interest in love languages. Historically, there have been five well-known types of these aforementioned love languages, categorized as “words of affirmation,” “acts of service,” “physical touch,” “quality time” and “receiving gifts.” I have been told that I have a tendency towards physical touch, appreciating hugs and physical nearness.

However, my friend thinks of her own personalized love language as “citrus-flavored,” symbolized by the act of splitting an orange with someone you love. Although this could very well fall under “acts of service,” over time this concept has taken its own independent form as E’s invented love language, the 6th type I’ve come to learn.

Even if these concepts don’t quite fit into the established standards of what qualifies as a “language,” they still, of

course, exist as forms of communication. Exchanging information or ideas transcends the spoken word, the written word, grammatical structure and alphabets. It has no form yet has taken many forms, stitching together the innumerable pieces that make up a society, a civilization. Its distinguishing nature helps to shape our individual identities, which crash together through the same medium of mutual expression.

Whether you’ve read the news, listened to music, watched a dance performance or split an orange with a friend, you have taken part in the universally shared experience of experiencing the world. Communication is not only a facet of everyday life; it is a necessity — how we choose to communicate with the world determines what we make of it.

— Ruby Crosthwait,
Features Editor



USC artists advocate without words

Creatives reflect on how their physical mediums convey what words cannot.

By **ANYA MOTWANI & YAHVI SHAH**

Staff Writers

When it comes to using subversive means of communication, whether it be a visual or physical expression, it’s a language that many USC students speak fluently. One such artist is Jenna Schneider, a junior majoring in design who uses recycled materials to impart her message of sustainability. Working within these limitations forces Schneider to rethink how existing items around her can be reused.

“I do a lot of upcycling with clothing, but I used to work with plastic bags and making yarn [out of them], as well as playing with pop tabs, to make chainmail from them,” Schneider said. “It’s crazy how much the world of sustainable textiles has just taken off.”

Schneider’s advocacy is multi-layered: her mediums of choice as well as the work itself, bring awareness to the environment. This issue of sustainability hits home for Schneider since, as an artist, the waste she produces exists alongside everything she creates.

“As a student, it’s unfortunate, but a lot of [what we create] ends up in the trash just because you don’t have space for it. I really try to focus on the issue of sustainability and what we can do as artists to limit our impact,” Schneider said.

Schneider endeavors to show others that being responsible with their materials can open greater opportunities in their creative work rather than limit what they can achieve.

“One impact I hope to have is showing people the different processes that are out there and to challenge others to think outside of the box when it comes to materials,” Schneider said. “I

hope that others seem interested and begin to explore what sustainable art can look like.”

While physical means of communication are effective tools for advocacy, artists are faced with unique challenges as they attempt to connect with their audiences.

“Finding ways to add layers and kind of complicate [how I communicate my feelings] has been a really important part of my journey,” said Anjali Sareen, a senior majoring in art. “[I’m] thinking about how I want to interact with an audience, or [how] I want other people to interact with my work.”

This idea of bringing the audience into the work rather than imparting her message on a more surface level has been a guiding force in her most recent exhibition, *shakti*, which showcases a collection of photographic and sculptural pieces.

“My creative process always starts with me asking people questions,” Sareen said. “I’m inviting people to be immersed,

| see **ARTISTS**, page 6 |



Jenna Schneider

An Annenberg professor’s newspaper will help local news

The Boyle Heights Beat will be used as a prototype for a new local news initiative.

By **JENNIFER NEHRER**

Data Editor

Kris Kelley wanted to go to law school. Instead, she’s fixing the local news crisis.

The adjunct journalism professor spent her undergraduate years at UC Berkeley majoring in English with what she thought was a passion for law, but a case of burnout pushed her in another direction. She tried marketing and advertising, but a move to Spain rerouted her yet again — this time, to assist NBC with coverage of the Barcelona Olympics.

“It was a lot of fun,” Kelley said. “I was basically hired for that summer because I lived in Barcelona and I could speak Spanish, and I could get people around, and they were hiring a lot of PA jobs ... and I ended up associate producing.”

With the itch to pursue a career in news, Kelley applied to graduate school and attended USC for her master’s in broadcast journalism. She did internships with FOX Sports and CNN and stayed in Los Angeles postgrad to work for local news stations in the area.

In 2010, USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism Director Michelle Levander and former La

Opinión Executive Editor Pedro Rojas founded the Boyle Heights Beat. The Beat would be used to teach young, aspiring journalists how to report, and also generate coverage of an underrepresented community. The program received its funding from USC and the California Endowment.

USC asked Kelley to consult for the Beat in its early stages for what was supposed to be a one-month gig. But one month turned into two, two turned into five, and five turned into her now 14 years with the Beat. She now leads the Beat’s community youth journalism project, in which she duplicates her teaching role at USC to mentor young journalists.

“Boyle Heights in general is an immigrant community,” Kelley said. “Ninety-seven percent Latino. It is a community that often just makes it to major media when there’s a gang shooting or something ... These are just voices of people that tend to not be covered or elevated.”

During this time, Kelley mentored high schoolers such as Kevin Martinez and taught them how to be reporters. Martinez, who has since returned to the Beat to be its community engagement director, said Kelley helped him become a better researcher, writer and interviewer.

“Kris was one of the mentors that really helped me develop my writing

| see **PROFESSOR**, page 8 |

Podcasts resonate louder than words

The growing audio medium is redefining how people connect, learn and listen.

By **ALEX GROSS & SAMMIE YEN**

Staff Writers

Imagine tuning into your favorite morning show — not on television, but through your earbuds — as you commute, exercise or simply relax at home. Names like Joe Rogan and Alex Cooper have transformed their voices into powerful brands that garner millions of dedicated listeners. This phenomenon — the podcast — is not only a testament to individual charisma but also to the seismic shift in how people consume media.

In the evolving landscape of digital media, podcasting has emerged as a young, creative medium, captivating a worldwide audience with its blend of accessibility and intimacy. Now a dominant force, podcasts have altered engagement with information and storytelling. Eighty-four percent of United States consumers aged 12 years or older are aware of the podcast industry, a 30% increase from a decade ago.

“Audio is an incredible medium,” said Willa

Seidenberg, a professor of journalism. “It’s that midway between print where you get to hear somebody’s voice, you get to hear the emotion, you get to hear what’s going on — but you’re not restricted by video.”

Podcasting’s unique positioning allows listeners to receive or understand nuanced emotions and details without visual distractions and graphics that might accompany a show.

Seidenberg, the founder and former director of Annenberg Radio News, specializes in audio journalism, having decades of experience as a radio anchor, reporter and producer with Boston and Los Angeles news outlets.

She finds that the democratic medium has allowed the industry to exponentially grow. With just a computer and phone, anyone can create and distribute content, equalizing the creative process that often restricts creators from breaking into other news or entertainment media.

“Anything that you’re interested in or you want to delve into, there’s a podcast for it, whether it’s travel, health and wellness, news, education ... anything,” Seidenberg said.

One microgenre that has exploded with the growth of podcasts is narrative fiction, an audio alternative to other forms of dramatic storytelling such as television.

“It started out with people having great ideas for fictional stories that they wanted to tell, that were stories that otherwise couldn’t really be told in [a] legacy sort of traditional media,” said Jeremy Novick, an adjunct professor of cinematic writing for screen and television.

But audio drama is only one of many podcast styles that have recently come onto the scene. Between casual chat shows, journalistic news productions and narrative fiction, listeners have an overwhelming variety of options to consider when choosing a podcast.

“Anyone who is a consumer of any kind of entertainment has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to their choices,” Novick said.

Whereas this choice overload could be a detriment to other forms of entertainment, the less demanding engagement that podcasts require has made them a popular alternative to visual media.

“I am not asking for your full attention, I’m asking for 40% of your attention,” Novick said.

One of the most compelling aspects of podcasting is its versatility to cater to different listener preferences and lifestyles. The medium accommodates a wide range of formats and episode lengths, from hours-long deep dives to five-minute updates that fit into even the busiest schedules.

“Do you have 60 minutes to sit on your couch and watch somebody tell you that stuff, or do you have 22 minutes to pop in your earphones

and listen to that information in a more condensed platform while you’re loading your dishwasher or walking your dog?” Novick said.

This flexibility is particularly appealing to younger generations who are accustomed to short, digestible bursts of content. The ability to choose between lengthy explorations or short insights aligns with the fragmented attention spans that are characteristic of today’s digital age.

“A lot of college students, especially during the pandemic and after, used podcasts for company, and they would kind of have it on in the background,” Seidenberg said. “It reminds me of many years ago when people would always have the television on, especially people who lived alone.”

Celebrity podcasts have played a significant role in catapulting the medium into mainstream consciousness. Well-known figures like Michelle Obama and Conan O’Brien leverage their fame to attract

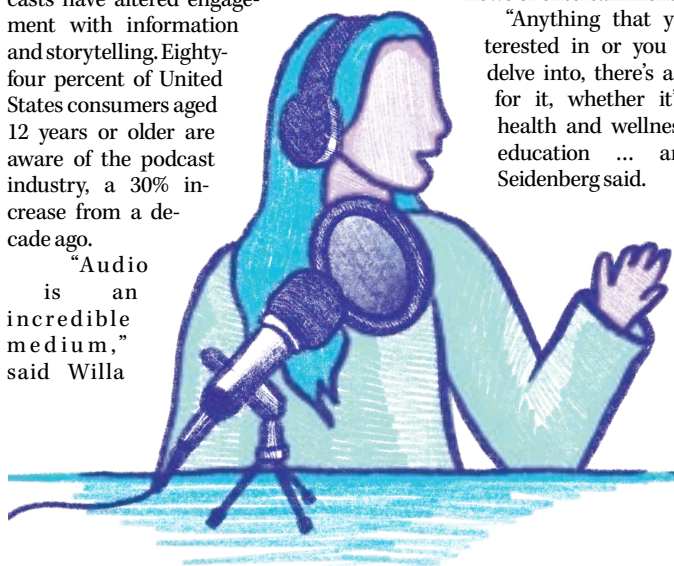
a large, already-existent follower base eager to hear personal stories in a more casual, stripped-back setting.

“It’s a very intimate medium,” Seidenberg said.

“Usually, people are listening on their earbuds, and that makes it even more intimate because you’ve got these people in your ear ... You develop an intimacy with the people you’re listening to in a way video doesn’t.”

This personal bond enhances the effectiveness of podcasts in building loyal communities and making for a more engaging experience for an individual listener. While this societal penchant for podcasts experienced exponential growth in the wake of the pandemic, the industry is still growing, albeit at a much more controlled pace.

“Listenership is still up. People are still discovering this,” Novick said. “There was a period where it felt like what I imagine it was like to be like a record executive in the ‘70s, where people are just like, ‘I don’t know, sounds cool, let’s see if it works.’ And now there’s a little bit more of, ‘Well, it is a cool idea. But who is the audience for this? And how many years do we really think we can get on this?’”



Jiwoo Kim / Daily Trojan

ARTISTS | Dancers, fashion designers communicate their passions

| continued from page 5 |

and I think that kind of has an advocacy of its own.”

Through her pieces, Sareen tells a story about the divine feminine and how cultural contexts inform one’s understanding of femininity. She hopes that her challenges of patriarchal narratives can connect universally with her audience’s lived experiences.

“I’m half Indian and half Guyanese, and in Indian culture, there’s a certain side to this concept that the divine feminine is beautiful, and it comes from this goddess, but she’s also very much associated with being the wife of the God,” Sareen said. “So I was just thinking about redefining the male gaze and how that can be something that’s beautiful and something that’s angry.”

Sareen has always been drawn to expressing herself through unspoken means, whether it be dance, photography, or sculpture. She finds inspiration for her work in her past versions and the stories of those around her.

“I wanted to hone in on very personal narratives and how that can create a universal advocacy for other people,” Sareen said.

Patrick Corbin, an associate professor of practice in dance, has had a similar life mission of leveraging his skills in dance to be a champion for others. Since the 1980s, Corbin has been researching the connection between dance and the brain and has since brought his initiatives to the Kaufman School of Dance.

“I teach a course called Dance and Health: Dance and Ability, and I’ve run three sections of it,” Corbin said. “[One] was focused on dance and Parkinson’s disease. I ran a section that was focused on dancing and Down syndrome, and I’m running a section this semester that is focused on dance and neurodiversity, focusing specifically on autism.”

Corbin has used this connection between dance and neurological conditions to empower members



Anjali Sareen

Anjali Sareen’s recent exhibit, “shakti” contains photographic and sculptural works that contribute to her message on the “divine feminine.”

of impacted communities to find non-traditional avenues for dialogue as well as bring disparate kinds of students together.

“I started my journey [at] the intersection of dance and autism ... and instead of looking at Dance and Ability as an intervention or as a therapy,

it’s really just creating community. Coming together with people, the USC students who are in the course and the communities that we’re working with are all getting better brains because of the work we’re doing,” Corbin said.

For those who rely on multimodal communication, Corbin’s classes

provide a space that reincludes them in the narrative of expression, dance operating as a metaphorical voice for those who cannot speak. His advocacy work on these issues also informs the way he teaches technical classes.

“I hope it’s making me a better and more communicative

teacher,” Corbin said. “I hope that I bring the same amount of joy and passion to each and every population because I feel like that’s my superpower. If you can bring this joy and passion and love to whatever room you’re in, then people are going to feel invited to join in.”

Readers' Circle connects students with incarcerated writers

The program's volunteers provide feedback and teach classes to writers in prison.

By **DANIELA MATTSON**

Staff Writer

"At USC, we have an obligation to leverage our resources, our time, our expertise, our money [and] our critical thinking skills towards the community," said professor Rowan Bayne, the faculty director of Dornsife's Prison Education Project's "Readers' Circle" program and lecturer in the Writing Program.

The Readers' Circle is a program that pairs USC students and faculty volunteers with incarcerated writers who want feedback on their writing, whether creative, non-fiction or poetry. Founded in 2021 by USC alum Keziah Poole, the program has grown into a writing network connecting universities and prisons nationwide to advocate for education access and creative expression in prisons.

To date, the program has processed over 2,800 manuscripts, involved 760 volunteers and worked with approximately 105 facilities across the country from over 30 states.

Despite its expanding reach, the work of the Readers' Circle's local staff and volunteers is what keeps the program running and continues to grow with enthusiasm from students.

"It's so remarkable to see how much uptake and excitement there's been on campus around getting involved with the program," Bayne said.

The program also offers a two-unit writing workshop titled "Inside Out, Outside In," which is offered in conjunction with the Prison Education Project and taught by Bayne as well as PEP Director Nick De Dominic.

Michelle Reilly, a senior majoring in comparative literature as well as mathematics, first became involved in the Readers' Circle after taking the class, and she continues to support the program as a student worker, assistant-teaching an Introduction to Narrative course at the California Institute for Women on Saturday mornings.

"The work they produce is astonishing," Reilly said. "The system does not want members of these communities to be in conversation with one another. They want homogeneity. I think prisons present a deceptive homogeneity, and getting to see that despite all of these barriers to connections ... how impacted both people are in the process and offering themselves through narrative has been really touching."

Outside of teaching, Reilly works on processing manuscripts, clearing identification information and allocating works to editors who have signed up to edit for a particular week. Once edits are completed, Reilly prepares the finished documents and sends them back to the original writers.

"Getting uprooted from my traditional [classes] and placed in this very human community made me think about whose voices we are hearing and why," Reilly said.

Reilly found that the lack of mention of prisons in higher education stood out as one of the most impactful aspects of the course.



Readers' Circle
Professor Rowan Bayne is the faculty director of the Readers' Circle program. Concerning the many volunteers he oversees, Bayne said it's "remarkable to see how much uptake and excitement there's been on campus."

"I just remember how much I looked forward to that course every week. It was probably the most meaningful experience I've had at USC," Reilly said. "It was a class unlike any other class, where people are gathered in a circle ... tapping into their own worlds of great sorrow, hope, humor, to collaborate on an anthology together."

Chloe DerGarabedian, a student worker for the Readers' Circle and a senior majoring in environmental studies as well as non-governmental organizations and social change, has been involved in the program since her freshman year. Now, as an administrative assistant for the program, she works primarily with communication between volunteers and the authors sending in their written works.

"The opportunity to read works from such a disenfranchised group that [we] rarely get to read from seemed like a good opportunity," DerGarabedian said.

DerGarabedian also teaches the Introduction to Narrative Course and initially became involved because of the uniqueness of the program and her love for reading.

The program not only allows authors to submit creative works, but any unique written work they wish to share.

"I remember there was one book I came across where it was like a recipe book. And I really love cooking,

so that was cool. It was like different recipes that [the author] would make in prison. He got a bunch of different submissions from his friends," DerGarabedian said.

Reilly and DerGarabedian are just two of the many students and volunteers impacted by the mission of the Readers' Circle. Bayne, who oversees the student staff and works on new partnerships with other campuses along with speaking engagements, emphasizes the importance of giving writers in prison the opportunity to have their voices heard.

"Prison facilities in this country are just brimming with people wanting to tell their stories, memoirs [and] autobiographies," he said. "It's also an outlet for creative expression in a place where those outlets can be hard to find."

In addition to the Readers' Circle's impact to date, there is still room to expand and resources needed for its mission to reach more prisons and writers. Lack of funding and volunteers to handle the piles of manuscripts and amounts of edit requests they receive limits expansion efforts.

"The staff is definitely a bit more overwhelmed. All of the staff we have are so overworked because we all find this mission really important, as we are so dedicated to making sure it continues well, even

without the resources that perhaps we need," DerGarabedian said. "[USC] doesn't necessarily provide us with a ton of funding, and by that I mean any funding."

Reilly shares similar sentiments, agreeing that the program simply does not have enough volunteers to handle the demand and that even though the program is housed within Dornsife, "there are excellent opportunities that just don't receive enough publicity or attention."

Bayne holds optimism for the program's expansion, as he sees great potential in the growth of partnerships with universities across the country, as the program "is a model that can be replicated elsewhere."

"All that's holding us back in terms of achieving that growth is to have the funding we would need to grow," Bayne said.

Despite its challenges, the Readers' Circle has grown to have an incredible impact, helping to bridge the gap between USC and incarcerated communities and placing an emphasis on the message of education being a human right.

"The beauty of our program is that it offers a way for us to directly contribute or get involved with a complex issue in a way that affirms humanity," Reilly said. "I think that's an opportunity for USC to look within and beyond itself."



Readers' Circle

The Readers' Circle program pairs student and faculty volunteers with incarcerated writers, offering guidance and feedback on their work.

Reclaiming Togvaangar for a new generation

Peyton Dacy

EVERY 40 DAYS



The University of Southern California sits on Tongva land. The Gabrielino/Tongva tribe has lived in this area for time immemorial, far before any Europeans stepped foot in what is now Los Angeles.

At one point, the Tongva language was one of the predominant spoken languages of the L.A. County area. Nowadays, the Tongva language is functionally extinct, as there are no currently known living fluent speakers of the language.

In 1970, the last fluent speaker of the Tongva language died, which for many marked the extinction of the Tongva language forever.

However, the Tongva people have not allowed their native language to die. With the help of UCLA professor Pamela Munro,

the Tongva tribe has been able to recreate their once-extinct language.

"A lot of people feel if they can pray or make up thoughts in the language of their ancestors, it will make them feel closer to their ancestors," Munro said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*.

Indigenous languages are very important and sacred to the people who speak and carry knowledge through the language. Every language holds an entire universe within it. It holds the knowledge of one's ancestors. When lost, we lose an entire way of thinking about the world.

For a community that has already lost so much due to colonization, the ability of the Tongva people to preserve and teach their language to the next generation is something that is truly incredible.

Munro is a linguist at UCLA and works with the Tongva tribe to preserve and teach the Tongva language to the next generation. Over the last 40 years, she has worked tirelessly to reconstruct and teach the language. She has been

able to recreate words that were not recorded in the limited writings of the language using linguistic skills to fill in gaps in knowledge.

Munro has taught Tongva language classes to members of the Tongva tribe for the past 15 years. The members of these classes are responsible for carrying the Tongva language into the modern era. Students such as Citlali Arvizu and Virginia Carmelo, a mother-and-daughter duo, are committed to learning the language of their ancestors.

In a profile article on the National Breath of Life Blog about Arvizu, she explains that her journey to learn the Tongva Language is more than just simply learning the language. To her, learning the Tongva language is a way to connect her family cross-generationally, building stronger bonds with her mother and with her children.

"Learning intergenerationally makes a difference because it allows us to be active with the language," said Arvizu in the interview. "We don't

always have the chance to get together because we're all spread out, but regardless of where our family groups are, I think we agree that the language is neutral and very dear to all of us, so we come together to respect that."

While the fight for the Tongva language is far from over, current members of the tribe hope that their efforts today will create a future where their children and grandchildren will be native speakers of the language.

This future generation of fluent Tongva speakers will be made possible through the efforts of people like Arvizu — who is currently enculturating her children in the language — and through linguist efforts from Munro, who is preserving and revitalizing Tongva.

While L.A. has always been and will always be Tongvan, through the revitalization of their language, continued growth of their culture and potential repatriation of their sacred lands in the future, the rest of the world is starting to see L.A. as Tongvan.

"Tovaangar" is a word in Tongva that means "the world." This word more perfectly captures the true interconnectedness of the Tongva people, their language and the land than this word. It in many ways shows how the language allows the Tongva people to view the world through a Tongva lens, something that had been previously lost but is once again accessible to the younger generation.

"It's a lot of work to put the language out there, and at times it can feel like a lost cause," said Arvizu. "But when I look at communities that have speakers and have integrated their language into their community, I realize it's possible."

Peyton Dacy is a junior writing about the importance of language revitalization as an indigenous language dies out every 40 days. Dacy's column, "Every 40 days," usually runs every other Tuesday. Dacy is also the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director at the Daily Trojan.

Language keeps students connected to their cultures

USC students find solace and struggle while using their cultural languages.

By **ZSUZSANNA JUHASZ**

Staff Writer

USC's diverse student body allows for many languages and cultures to float throughout the population. Whether in unique classes, student-founded organizations or clubs, there are endless opportunities on campus for students to embrace their cultural identities.

Not all students find these groups to be particularly enticing, though. It can be an unfortunate reminder that one's proficiency is better than others despite being the same age and speaking the same language.

Estaban Santos, a sophomore majoring in international relations, was born in New Jersey to a family whose maternal side relocated from Colombia. The only Spanish that stuck with him came while growing up with his grandmother. Identifying as Hispanic, Santos' Spanish is at a conversational level as his only exposure to the language is from speaking on the phone with family and in his Spanish class at USC.

"I don't like speaking [Spanish] if I'm being honest," Santos said. "I don't like speaking in front of [other] speakers because I sound terrible."

The potential disconnect from the language creates a feeling of insecurity, which manifests itself in conversations with people at USC who utilize Spanish more often in their everyday lives.

"When I meet other fluent Spanish speakers, I fall into this very stereotypical, like American category," Santos said.



Yoon Lee / Daily Trojan

Xuan-Anh Lee Biggs, a sophomore majoring in screenwriting, recalls how her childhood in Riverside, California, impacted her knowledge of Vietnamese. Despite growing up hearing Vietnamese from parents who spoke it fluently, she explained that she can understand but struggles to communicate in the language.

"If someone's talking about me, I can vaguely know what they're saying," Biggs said. "I can't hold a conversation back."

Madeleine Tsai, a sophomore studying cinema and media studies as well as sociology, lived in mainland China until sixth grade and lived half a year in Taiwan and still speaks Mandarin fluently. Being close to Taiwan, she was able to visit often and keep familial connections. She later moved to the Bay Area with her parents.

"I speak in Chinese with my grandma because she doesn't

understand English," said Tsai. "All of my aunts and my uncles think my Chinese is terrible."

Despite the challenges of navigating a language barrier to stay bonded with family far away, Tsai enjoys helping her cousins with their English whenever she gets to see them in Taiwan.

"I help her with just trying to figure out the words to say, and she always says that whenever I go back, she has a good opportunity to practice her English," Tsai said.

Growing up, Biggs always enjoyed the combination of Vietnamese and American holidays. Given that her father is originally from the United States and her mother was born in the U.S. to Vietnamese parents, both cultures played influential roles in her upbringing.

Other struggles with the language barrier frequently emerge

in daily life, such as when Santos needs to assist his grandmother. Despite the language barrier, Santos is grateful for this close connection with his grandmother.

"I always know what my grandma's saying," Santos said. "I know enough to always understand her vocabulary. So I'd come with her to translate. I remember she'd always bring me to Ulta."

Raising children while maintaining the family language wasn't simple for Biggs' parents, especially with their daughter receiving an education in English and Spanish. Even with both parents fluent in Vietnamese, Biggs and her siblings found it challenging to retain the language.

"My parents both speak Vietnamese fluently, but they didn't teach any of us, really. I mean, they tried to, but it didn't stick that well because we just heard English and Spanish around us all the time at school," Biggs said.

Communicating within the family can be essential in keeping the language aspect of the culture alive. Phone calls and FaceTime help close the distance between Tsai and her parents and, as a result, help her hold on to her Taiwanese identity.

"[Speaking Chinese is] very meaningful to me because it's one of the ways I can connect with my Asian culture and connect with other Taiwanese people on campus," Tsai said. "When we do have the opportunity to speak in Chinese, it's always kind of like a little bit funny and silly."

Tsai is a member of the Taiwanese American Organization, which strives to create a space where students can learn more about Taiwanese culture.

"I think it's definitely easier to find a cultural community at USC," Tsai said.

PROFESSOR | The Beat offers a communal voice

| continued from page 5 |

skills, develop my confidence in interviewing strangers and overall feeling more comfortable in asking questions that oftentimes are scary to ask," Martinez said.

Five years ago, after USC had hired Kelley to work with the Beat full time and teach at Annenberg, Levander left the program amid other commitments and pressure to bring in more funding. Rather than let the paper go under — and take her job with it — Kelley stepped up to become the executive director and moved the program out from USC.

Now, the Beat is well-known — enough that it caught the attention of the new LA Local News Initiative, a nonprofit collaboration between journalists, philanthropists and organizations with the goal of strengthening local news in the area. To research, members surveyed and spoke with around 900 people across the city to determine what they need from local news.

"[The] Boyle Heights Beat actually came up in surveys more than once, so while it's very hyperlocal, we have been around long enough that I think there was a reputation that it's community service," Kelley said. "We're providing these for a community that otherwise maybe wouldn't get that news. They came to me to learn about how to do local news in a crazy city like Los Angeles."

After speaking with Kelley and the Beat, the initiative's founders asked to use the paper as a model and bring the senior staff in as

program leaders. With this, Kelley earned a new title: Managing Director. Her colleagues at USC feel she has more than earned it.

"[Kelley has] put in the work, put in the time, really worked at setting up a system, working with students," said Rebecca Haggerty, associate director of Annenberg's undergraduate journalism program. "She has a lot of patience, which you need, but also a level of initiative and entrepreneurship and drive."

Kelley said she is thrilled the Beat can be used as a model for the initiative both because it brings a voice to the community and because the funding gained as a result has allowed her to be more strategic about the paper's coverage.

"I was literally wearing a lot of hats, as far as raising all the money, heading all the editorial — I had a lot of jobs," Kelley said. "Instead of focusing on survival, we can actually create strategic plans of how to reach even more people and how to grow our audience and how to do a better job of serving the community."

Even so, Martinez said Kelley is always happy to do any work she can for the Beat. He said she continues to help him with smaller tasks when needed and still acts as a mentor to him and others.

"She's always willing to roll her sleeves and just dive into the weeds of this work," Martinez said. "She has this deep passion for journalism, but more specifically to train high school students to be reporters, and so she's willing to do whatever she can to make sure that students get that support."

QUALITY TIME BY SHEA NOLAND



Shea Noland / Daily Trojan



Henry Kofman / Daily Trojan

The Marias is a band led by Maria Zardoya as the main vocalist. Their music builds upon a serene atmosphere with lilting synths and otherworldly vocals, causing a sense of calmness to the listener.

WINTER | Prepare for snuggling up by the fire over the break with cozy novels

| continued from page 4 |

In order to complement this winter read, “The Sirens of Titan” requires a quirky audio companion with body and style. Cuco’s third album, “Para Mi,” offers exactly that: its tracks are cohesive with trippy production and colloquial lyrics that balance the album as a silly yet heartfelt group of songs talking about making your way through life with your eyes closed and hands out.

“The Eye of the World (Wheel of Time, #1)” by Robert Jordan — “Wasteland, Baby!” by Hozier

For fans of high fantasy, Robert Jordan’s “Wheel of Time” series sports thorough worldbuilding and a strong ensemble of characters. Five people from a tiny village are thrust into a

mythical plot centuries in the making to determine whether good or evil will prevail, with teenaged Rand Al-Thor at the center of it all in a Paul Atrides-esque twist of fate.

Hozier’s folksiest album, “Wasteland Baby!” is the perfect companion piece to accompany readers through the journey of Jordan’s epic series. With his ability to tell mountain-moving tales with gentle instrumentals and the voice of an angel, there’s no one better to hold the hands of readers as they make their first venture into Jordan’s 14-book saga.

“Salem’s Lot” by Stephen King — “At Folsom Prison” by Johnny Cash

Arguably, Stephen King’s spookiest novel, “Salem’s Lot” is a genre-defying

story surrounding a small town’s fight against creatures of the night — a war no one but a man and a boy realize they are losing. This book is the definition of unputdownable, as perspectives alternating between the voices of the vampire hivemind and the struggling protagonists, and the battles rage on.

With the novel feeling like an old-timey Western stand-off between humans vs. vampires, the reading experience of King’s novel should only be exceeded by none other than Johnny Cash charismatically riling up the residents of Folsom Prison in his 1968 live album, “At Folsom Prison.” This album will enhance the small-town mood and reinforce the classic David and Goliath struggle of a lone, wandering cowboy standing alone against the evil in others.

Fashionista dupe alert

Hadyn Phillips

THAT’S FASHION, SWEETIE



My social media feed lately has been talking a lot about personal style. Not just content like advice and new trends, but how style itself isn’t individual. Interestingly enough, one term that was used a lot was the idea of commodification of style and personal “twists” on things, arguing that when unique interpretations or executions of styling efforts become popular and are subsequently performed because it is popular. As such, it perpetuates the tradeoff of starting a trend by happenstance to being the first to a trend to say that you “called” or “started” it.

It stopped me in my tracks as I ravishingly took in more opinions of the same idea — kind of ironic, no? As I fell down a rabbit hole of how styling efforts aim to please the masses versus the individual and that wealthy individuals who wear only designer clothing, copying looks from campaigns, runways and lookbooks, don’t have a truly personal style. I began to feel a pit grow in my stomach.

Do I, myself, not have style?

I look at my closet and see a variety of pieces that reflect the style of clothes I like. Some tops are those that I save for certain vibes and occasions, such as flea

markets or girl brunches, while others I reach for on a more day-to-day basis. I think overall it reflects me and my various “personas” of “work-Hadyn” and “fashion-Hadyn” so then, why do I feel like I am in a creative rut?

Truthfully, I have felt in a rut for quite some time now. While I believe it has to do with missing the feeling and satisfaction of creating something, as I’ve found joy over the past year in floral arrangements, fashion has always been a lifelong passion of mine that I still can’t seem to execute the way I want to. Why is it, then, that I can observe and draw connections but not execute?

I believe part of it is fear. I get shy when feeling overdressed sometimes, especially in the fall when I feel like I live in leggings to accommodate my job in athletics, and I frequently reminisce on the courage I held as a senior in high school, wearing vibrant neon eyeliner and pencil skirts with corsets over button downs in class.

Maybe part of it is that I need to rediscover some of the courage and love for exploration in fashion, or maybe it is that I am scared that even after my exploration, I will still come up short in how I feel fulfilled, in how I execute and in how others perceive my journey and whether or not I could be labeled “fashionable” or not.

There’s a difference between being fashionable and looking nice, but sometimes the perception of each muddies up

which category an individual can fall into, if not both. For some reason, our generation has learned to call minimalism and elegance “stylish,” “sophisticated” and “trendy” while calling those who take risks of draping, accessorizing and captivating shoes “fashionable” and “avant-garde,” even if the intention may have been flipped.

It seems that we only give the title of creativity queen to those who actively present themselves as taking risks, when in reality, sometimes dressing in a long silk skirt is a risk for someone who has worn jeans every day of the semester.

I believe that to be fashionable and creative is to continue to take risks, even if nobody gets it, and that is because the very quintessential nature of personal style is that it makes sense to you and has been curated by you and your own inspirations, likings and life experiences.

From my head to my toes, in my brain or on my feet, self-exploration has become a backseat passenger in my silent Uber ride. But, with New Year’s just around the corner, it feels only appropriate now to start thinking of resolutions and bouts of self-improvement.

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 runs every Wednesday.

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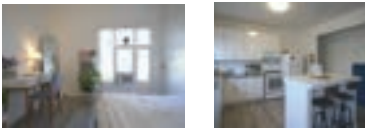
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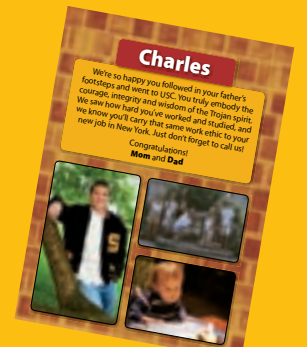
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National Signing Day is more important than ever for USC

Thomas Johnson

BIG TEN BITES



All of the rankings in this article are according to the 247 Sports composite rankings unless otherwise noted.

The most hectic day of the year is upon us. No, I'm not talking about the final week of classes or the upcoming exam period but rather referring to National Signing Day, which always sends tremors throughout the college football world.

USC football, as of 2 p.m. Tuesday, owns the 16th-best recruiting class in the nation, which is assuredly bound to change by the time of publication if the constant recruiting movement we have seen in the past few months is any indication. The Trojans' ranking is surprisingly high, considering they have lost the commitments of three five-star recruits and three other top-100 players in this cycle so far.

Despite the losses, USC still has a chance to finish even higher than No. 16. Recruiting analysts for 247 Sports have submitted "crystal ball" predictions for three blue-chip players — all on the defensive side of the ball — to join the Trojans just in this past week.

Defensive lineman and five-star recruit Jahkeem Stewart would be a major get for USC, since he would be the Trojans' lone four- or five-star commit on the defensive line. That unit has been struggling this season, as evidenced by Notre Dame's 258 rushing yards against the Trojans this past weekend.

USC has struggled to recruit in the South this cycle, but if the Trojans can pull the Louisianan Stewart from the snares of worthy contenders such as Alabama, Ohio State and Texas, the

coaching staff's ventures to SEC country will certainly be worth it.

What should prevent USC true panic in the trenches is that the three players with three or more tackles for loss on the defensive front are all true sophomores or younger, meaning all of them will return barring a transfer. If Stewart signs and junior defensive end Anthony Lucas returns from injury and lives up to his recruiting potential, the Trojans could have a vaunted defensive front.

The other two players experts are predicting will join Head Coach Lincoln Riley and his team — linebacker Madden Faraimo and safety Alex Graham — are both big-time talents in their own rights. If USC is able to sign the full trio, it would be an enormous infusion of talent for Defensive Coordinator D'Anton Lynn's unit.

Even though USC had a worse record in the regular season this year than last, the Trojans' defensive improvements have been stark and provide hope for the future. After giving up around 34.4 points per game last season, the Trojans have dropped that drastically to 23.5 in Lynn's first year running the defense.

With the defensive improvements and solid recruits coming in — the Trojans have four blue-chip defensive recruits currently committed with the chance to add at least three more — the impetus is now on Riley to get his offense set straight.

Despite a clear defensive resurgence, there was an equal offensive regression, with the Trojans scoring 12.1 fewer points per game this season than last. USC still has its bowl game to play, but even if Riley's offense puts up 50 points in its minor bowl game, that would still be a 10.5-point per game reduction from 2023 to 2024.

Of USC's 12 currently committed blue-chip players, a whopping 75% of them are on the offensive side of the ball. The most important players on that list in the short term are offensive



Srikar Kolluru / Daily Trojan

Head Coach Lincoln Riley and the Trojans already have the No. 16 ranked recruiting class in 2025, and they have a good chance to reel in three more blue-chip defensive prospects today on National Signing Day.

linemen Alex Payne and Aaron Dunn, both top-200 recruits who committed in the last two months.

The Trojans are slated to lose two of their starting interior linemen — redshirt seniors Jonah Monheim and Emmanuel Pregonn — to the NFL, and offensive line coach Josh Henson does not have much depth behind them.

Ideally, Payne and Dunn will not start as true freshmen for multiple reasons — including the fact they both project as offensive tackles and not interior linemen — but their additions will be crucial to the line's future and provide meaningful depth for USC.

Their arrival will allow redshirt freshman offensive lineman Micah Banuelos to move back to the middle of the line, which is a better fit for Banuelos who stands at 6-foot-2. Banuelos is currently listed as the second-string left tackle, but Payne or Dunn could potentially slide into that spot as freshmen if Banuelos is called upon to fill the absence of Monheim or Pregonn.

The Trojans have gained and then proceeded to lose the verbal pledges of 13 total players throughout this cycle, yet somehow they are in a good spot heading into National Signing

Day. While USC should shoot for a top-10 finish in the rankings, even a top-20 class would be a blessing after a 6-6 regular season.

It seems the Trojans are set up for a strong ending, but it is National Signing Day, and anything can happen.

Buckle up, today is going to be a wild ride, both at USC and across the country as a whole.

Thomas Johnson is a senior writing about USC's arrival to a new conference and all of the implications surrounding the entrance in his column, "Big Ten Bites," which runs every other Wednesday.

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The New York Times Crossword

Edited by Joel Fagliano No. 1030

ACROSS

- 1 Wrap on a roll
- 6 Like flushed cheeks
- 10 Actor Stonestreet of "Modern Family"
- 14 "Throw me ___!"
- 15 Foxtrot preceder
- 16 Prefix with space
- 17 With 59-Across, instructions for the sets of circled letters
- 20 Head liner?
- 21 The "lava" in a lava lamp
- 22 Member of Tarzan's tribe
- 23 Kristen of "Palm Royale"
- 25 Calculator symbol on a MacBook, e.g.
- 28 Li'l ___
- 30 Popular music genre from Nigeria
- 32 Symbols of electrical resistance
- 33 "The People's Princess"
- 34 Connect
- 36 Contractor's assessment: Abbr.
- 37 Overly lenient
- 40 ___ in Charlie
- 42 Carbon compound
- 43 Certain Disney princess-inspired Halloween costumes
- 47 Oft-repeated saying
- 49 Naught, nil, nada
- 51 Belittle
- 52 City at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône
- 53 Crack jokes
- 54 "Any given Sunday" org.
- 55 Start of some art movement names
- 57 Bud
- 59 See 17-Across
- 65 Thereabouts
- 66 What lives in a hole in the wall?
- 67 Hurdles for some bio majors
- 68 Takes home
- 69 Common connections
- 70 Gave false romantic hope

DOWN

- 1 Sentimental sort
- 2 Father of, in Arabic
- 3 401(k) alternative
- 4 29-Down and others
- 5 Classic soda brand
- 6 Dream stage
- 7 Spooky mo.
- 8 Presented
- 9 Mat class?
- 10 Dig in
- 11 Puts back on a wall
- 12 Words that might follow "This is not a drill"
- 13 Tubes used in sediment sample collecting
- 18 Lake with a spooky-sounding name
- 19 Checkup
- 23 Hunk of gum
- 24 "___ were a rich man ..."
- 26 Louisiana Acadian
- 27 Study of the ear
- 29 Ghoulish character who appears after someone follows the instructions at 17- and 59-Across
- 31 Moratorium
- 32 Lone index finger, symbolically
- 35 Home with a dome
- 38 Agcy. that carries out the Controlled Substances Act
- 39 Original console for the Super Mario games, for short
- 40 Cost of a ride, say
- 41 Data cruncher
- 44 Appear angry
- 45 Garland, Barr, Sessions, etc., for short
- 46 Army rank: Abbr.
- 47 Rock singer Shirley
- 48 Pay to stay
- 50 Fairy tale opener
- 52 Lindsay with a cameo in 2024's "Mean Girls"
- 56 11,000+-foot peak in southern Italy
- 58 Web programmer's code
- 60 Apple devices run on it
- 61 Cleanse (of)
- 62 Chicago trains
- 63 W.W. II arena
- 64 "Last four digits" fig.

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SPORTS

PAGE 12 | WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024 | WWW.DAILYTROJAN.COM/SPORTS

Trojans flop in Palm Springs, prepare for inaugural Big Ten game

USC and the No. 12 Oregon Ducks appear to be headed in very different directions.

By **DARRIAN MERRITT**

Assistant Sports Editor

While the University Park campus emptied out for Thanksgiving break, the Muss Bus was parked in Palm Springs for the Acrisure Classic, an early-season holiday tournament. USC was scheduled to face Saint Mary's College in the semifinal, with a possible championship duel with Arizona State or The University of New Mexico to follow.

And then things went south.

As the Trojans prepare for their first-ever Big Ten conference game against the Oregon Ducks (8-0) on Wednesday, the team is still trying to figure out where things went wrong in the desert. On Thanksgiving, USC (5-3) suffered a humiliating 71-36 loss to Saint Mary's (7-1), the program's largest margin of defeat in six years, and followed it up with an 83-73 defeat to New Mexico (6-2) on Black Friday.

The matchup against Saint Mary's was marked by a total offensive collapse by Head Coach Eric Musselman's squad. The Gaels narrowly led the Trojans 23-21 with five minutes left to play in the first half. They proceeded to outscore USC by a 48-15 margin over the final 25 minutes of the game. Through the full game, the Gaels held the Trojans to zero made shots on 12 3-point attempts and an abysmally low field goal percentage of 26%.

Musselman was visibly irate on the sidelines and was assessed a technical foul in the middle of the second half for stepping onto the court during play.

USC had more technical fouls than made 3-pointers Thursday.

The game against New Mexico was cleaner from a statistical standpoint. Four USC players scored in double digits, including graduate forward Josh Cohen — who reached the mark for the third straight game. Still, the

Trojans couldn't close the gap on the Lobos, leaving the desert as the tournament's only winless competitor.

The same defensive issues that plagued Musselman's squad in non-conference tilts against various mid-major schools came back to haunt the team in Palm Springs. Once again, the Trojans could not stop their opponents from running wild in the backcourt; the Gaels' starting guards scored 26 points, and the Lobos scored 37.

And yet, the road only gets tougher from here.

Galen Center will now play host to a surging Oregon, who put the entire country on notice last week during the Players Era Festival, an 8-team holiday tournament in Las Vegas that featured numerous championship contenders.

The Ducks ran through the field, knocking off Texas A&M, San Diego State and — in dramatic fashion — Alabama in the title game. All three of those teams are ranked in this week's AP Top 25 poll. Oregon, for their efforts, rocketed to No. 12 in the poll with 806 points after only receiving 10 last week.

The Ducks snuck into the NCAA Tournament last year as an 11 seed after winning the final Pacific-12 Conference men's basketball tournament. They're equipped to reach higher heights this year, in part due to the return of senior center Nate Bittle. The 7-foot-tall big man only played in five games last season due to a wrist injury and an illness, but he's been the strongest contributor for the Ducks this season, averaging roughly 15 points and nine rebounds a game.

Successful transfers have also played a role in Oregon's strong start to the season. Starting senior guard TJ Bamba is averaging 13 points per game after arriving from Villanova University, while senior forward Supreme Cook, who made the move to Eugene from Georgetown



Jake Berg / Daily Trojan

Graduate guard Chibuzo Agbo, a transfer from Boise State, scored 13 points in the Trojans' last game against New Mexico. He's averaging 11.4 points and 4.3 rebounds per game in his first season in Los Angeles.

University, scored 11 points in 14 minutes in the Ducks' win over Alabama on Saturday night.

USC will need to play a near-perfect defensive game to keep up with Oregon's legion of offensive weaponry. The Trojans are 1-3 in games where their opponent scores 70 or more points but 4-0 otherwise.

There's just one issue: Oregon has scored more than 70 points in every game this season.

While the Ducks' offense isn't necessarily an unstoppable force just yet, the Trojans' defense is a moveable object, which could spell doom for the home team Wednesday. A strong performance

in this matchup could fuel the Muss Bus going into conference play, but a loss would put any hopes of an NCAA Tournament bid in serious jeopardy well before Christmas.

USC and Oregon will tip off at Galen Center at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday night, with the game airing on the Big Ten Network.

Soccer's season ends on penalty kicks

The Trojans' Elite 8 NCAA tournament run ended in a heartbreaking shootout.

By **THANAWARUN SUVANNACHEEP**

Soccer Beat Writer

After two consecutive wins last week, No. 1-seeded USC advanced to the quarterfinals of the NCAA Tournament to face No. 2 Wake Forest at Dignity Health Sports Park on Saturday. However, the Trojans' journey ended sooner than expected after they fell 4-3 on penalty kicks to the Demon Deacons.

Despite dominating most of the game, out-attempting Wake Forest (15-3-4, 7-2-1 ACC) 19-7, USC (18-1-4, 10-0-1 Big Ten) could not find the back of the net when it mattered most. It was the first time this tournament that the Trojans found themselves behind on the scoreboard, and they were unable to recover. The last time USC trailed in any match was during a 2-1 loss to then-No. 1 Stanford (16-4-2, 5-4-1 ACC) on Sept. 8. Since that game, USC had played 17 matches without falling behind.

In the first 45 minutes of the match, USC failed to score nor defended effectively, allowing Wake Forest to take a 1-0 lead. The goal came from junior forward Caiya

Hanks, a standout performer for the Demon Deacons throughout the tournament so far. With three goals and four assists through the quarterfinal round, Hanks now ranks in the top 10 for single-season points, goals and assists in Wake Forest program history.

The Trojans were able to strike back in the second half, scoring two goals in just 14 minutes to take the lead. The first score showcased a beautiful sequence of teamwork in pressing Wake Forest, beginning with freshman midfielder Ines Derrien's crucial interception to regain possession. She then quickly passed the ball to sophomore forward Maribel Flores, who displayed excellent vision and composure to set up senior forward Simone Jackson, who delivered a clinical finish, bringing the Trojans back into the game with style.

Later on, senior forward Kayla Colbert put the Trojans ahead with a goal in the 58th minute. However, the Demon Deacons' junior forward Alex Wood delivered a dramatic late equalizer, equalizing the contest at 2-2 and sending the game to extra time.

As the match continued, both teams could not find an opportunity to score until the second half of extra time, in which both teams

took turns tracking back and defending with their backs against the wall. USC had a chance to score with a close-range shot from senior forward Maile Hayes and another golden opportunity for freshman midfielder Eleanor Morrissey, but sophomore goalkeeper Valentina Amaral denied both chances. These two crucial stops brought her up to a career-high six saves through regulation and extra time.

The match ultimately ended in a penalty shootout, which once again proved heartbreaking for the Trojans, mirroring their loss to Rutgers in the Big Ten Conference Tournament semifinal a few weeks ago.

It's been an incredible season for USC women's soccer, marked by an impressive 18-1-4 record and a magical undefeated run in its debut season in the Big Ten, finishing with a 10-0-1 conference record and clinching the first outright conference title this season.

As the final whistle blew, it also marked the end of an era for the team's long list of senior players. Despite a deeply disappointing finish, the Trojan veterans had perhaps the best campaign of their careers to finish out their time in Los Angeles, concluding an important chapter in their collegiate careers at the top level.



Ethan Thai / Daily Trojan

The Trojans lost on penalties to the Wake Forest Demon Deacons, a less than ideal end to an impressive debut campaign in the Big Ten overall.