



Norman Topping Scholars form a supportive and close-knit community, where many lifetime friendships begin.

PHOTO BY ROLAND WIRJAWAN

Quarterly Updates for College Counselors

Winter 2010

Don't miss out!

January 10 is the final application deadline for regular freshman admission.

We are thrilled to welcome two new faculty members:

Dr. Murray Gell-Mann, renowned physicist and Nobel laureate who revolutionized our concept of the cosmos; and rock legend Steve Miller, whose trademark blues-rock band has been one of the definitive voices of popular culture. They join our other 3,200+ faculty stars, and offer a vivid illustration of our "depth with breadth" philosophy.

Top Honors for USC

Congratulations to our team of engineering and cinematic arts students, who collected top honors and the \$20,000 grand prize in the "Apps for Healthy Kids" competition from First Lady Michelle Obama.

Counselor News

Forging the Path

How USC helps first-generation students thrive

For most students at selective universities, the road to college is a clearly marked highway, well-traveled by highly educated parents, grandparents and other relatives. But every year, we also welcome another group of enthusiastic, talented students to campus: trailblazers who are the first generation in their families to make the trip.

How diverse are our first-generation students?

The 342 students in this year's freshman class contributed a rich mix of cultural backgrounds:

- 38% Asian
- 34% Latino
- 15% Caucasian
- 11% African American
- 2% Native American or Pacific Islander

To get here, they have had to rise to the top of the educational system without experienced help from home and figure out how to take the right classes, become academically prepared, and manage the complexities of the college search, application and financial aid process. So their success is very likely thanks to you, or a teacher at your school, who noticed and believed in them; yours are the names they never forget. To support your efforts, we have established a number of high school mentoring and summer outreach programs. Like all entering students, first-generation students become instant members of the storied Trojan Family the moment they arrive on campus. They receive a full complement of orientation and counseling activities designed to make them quickly feel at home.

But what makes the first-generation experience at USC stand out from the rest is an opportunity offered nowhere else in the country: the Norman Topping Student Aid Fund. This unique program, now celebrating its 40th year, was developed and is funded by the students of USC. Awarded primarily to first-generation students with financial need and a demonstrated commitment to their communities, the NTSAF acts as a launch pad that provides four years of ongoing financial, social and academic support. The Norman Topping Student Aid Fund office provides study space, computers and printers, individual advising, and a place where scholarship recipients

can relax with staff and fellow students who truly understand them. The program itself pays for the "extras" that enable them to take full advantage of a world-class education. In addition to tuition assistance, Topping Scholars attend retreats, bond with faculty mentors, but most notably, the program covers the cost of two trips, anywhere in the world, for each Topping Scholar to attend a conference or educational program. The result? A 99 percent graduation rate, students who not only thrive but become campus leaders and leave ready to take on the world. And we are pretty sure they will make college-going their new family tradition!



Trojan Voices

What does it take to be a successful first-generation college student? *We asked some of our Norman Topping Scholars what made the difference for them.*

Henry Franco

Junior from Koreatown, Los Angeles, double majoring in International Relations and East Asian Languages and Cultures.

I always knew I was college bound – my mother made it clear I had no other option. She worked in the shadows of the affluent and saw it was their college degrees that gave them flexibility in life. My high school college counselor made the biggest difference in making college a reality for me. She was really passionate and her caring went way beyond a paycheck. She took us to college fairs, on college visits and brought first-generation college students to talk to us. Junior year, she introduced me to USC's college mentoring program, where they walked us through the application steps and encouraged us to apply to a lot of top schools. One reason I chose USC was the chance to be a Norman Topping scholar, which gave me a support network before I even stepped on campus, so I never felt lonely. Instead of feeling shy, I've taken on leadership roles that have changed me as a person, and now I'm headed to China for a semester abroad. My mom comes to events on campus, and I'm encouraging my younger brother to aim high. I tell them, college isn't like I pictured – it's better!

Stefanie Gopaul

Senior from Mount Vernon, New York, double majoring in Biological Sciences and Health Promotion and Disease Prevention.

We came to the US from Trinidad and Tobago to get a better education, and my mom always stressed doing well in school. I was lucky and got a great counselor who told me about a volunteer opportunity sophomore year with a teen AIDS prevention program. That really opened my eyes and I fell in love with the health promotion field. My AP teachers also believed in me and encouraged me to apply to colleges that I never thought I could get into. I picked USC because I knew it was a great research school, and when I visited, I found a beautiful campus where everyone was friendly. My community service passion made me a perfect fit for the Norman Topping scholarship, and my mom and I were blown away when they flew us out to the Scholars Welcome Breakfast before freshman year. The Topping fund has enabled me to do an Alternative Winter Break with displaced families in Peru, attend a program in Hawaii to learn about the struggles of the native peoples, and it paid for my MCAT prep course. No matter where I go next, I now have a whole family of lifelong friends.

Trent

Junior from Valdosta, Georgia, majoring in film.

I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks in Southern Georgia, in a home where no one ever said the word "college." Since I was bad at math and became the class clown vs. the academic star, no one helped me, and I wasn't noticed by my counselors or teachers – except for one. That English teacher, who I am still in touch with, pulled me aside and told me I was a lot smarter than I was acting, and introduced me to the incredible world of Shakespeare. After high school I joined the Navy, learned computers and started a business, but discovered my true ambition was to go to film school. So I moved to LA and enrolled in community college, determined to excel. I helped start an honor society and became a member of USC's SCholars outreach program, where I was encouraged to apply for a Topping scholarship. To my amazement, I found myself attending the premier film school in the country, with supremely talented fellow students who push me to be my best, in classes taught by the giants of the industry. My advice to other first-generation students? Never give up. Dream it, say it, believe it, do it.

How to apply to be a Norman Topping Scholar

Who is eligible? Students applying to USC for 2011 freshman or transfer admission who demonstrate high financial need and community awareness.

What does the application involve? An online application form, two letters of recommendation, and a personal autobiographical statement of not more than three pages.

When is the application due?

Friday, February 12, 2011.

What are the selection criteria? Applicants admitted to USC are considered for interviews for the Norman Topping Award, based on their applications and financial need; primary consideration is given to first-generation college students, and those who live in the local USC community, although selection is not limited to these groups.

How many students are selected as Topping Scholars? About 35 students each year.

■ Learn more at www.usc.edu/ntsaf.

Two exciting new first-generation scholarship opportunities at USC

At USC, we have long valued the unique perspectives that talented first-generation students add to our student body, and are always on the lookout for new ways to find them. So we are delighted to announce two new partnerships we have formed this year, with programs that do a great job of attracting excellent students and sending them to top colleges around the country:

The QuestBridge National College Match helps outstanding low-income high school seniors gain admission and full four-year scholarships to some of the nation's most selective colleges. Virtually all applicants are in the top 20 percent of their class, and more than three-quarters are the first generation in their family to attend a four-year college. In addition to providing financial aid that covers 100 percent of college costs, USC allows Questbridge Scholars to use any other grants they receive to replace work-study funds.

■ Learn more at www.questbridge.org.

The Posse Foundation identifies public high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential who may be overlooked by traditional college selection processes. They are admitted to premier universities in supportive, multicultural teams of 10 students. USC will award our Posse scholars four-year, full-tuition scholarships. The program has been hailed as a breakthrough concept, with over 98 percent of its students completing their college degrees.

■ Learn more at www.possefoundation.org.



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Meet our multicultural recruiters

We are delighted to introduce you to one of the latest addition to our admission staff: Yamilet Medina Lopez. Yamilet joins Associate Director Rakin Hall in supporting multicultural students throughout the application and admission process.

With degrees in Education and Counseling, Yamilet has been an admissions professional for eight years. "I love... higher education administration," she says. "I have had the opportunity to meet and work with amazing students." Originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico, Yamilet is enjoying her membership in the Trojan Family. "USC is a dynamic and engaging place and I love talking to students about all the opportunities here!"



New Tools for Counselors

Here's a new way to put college in the cards for your students!

Need a fun, interactive way to get your students talking and thinking about what it means to go to college, and how to get there? Just ask, and we will send you, free, the newest addition to the counselor's toolbox: "Pathfinder." Based on findings from our research with first-generation students, this boxed card game is designed as an informal, accessible format in which to introduce students to college search strategies. It provides tips for managing the process while boosting their confidence and educational aspirations. It comes to you courtesy of USC's Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA), who is also partnering with the USC Game Innovation Lab to create the video game version. To request your set, contact CHEPA at (213) 740-7218. Hurry, though, we only have 100 sets left!

■ Learn more at pathfinder.usc.edu.



Trojans Achieve a Safety First

USC becomes the only university in the world to receive the World Health Organization's "Safe Community" designation. USC has recently been named an International Safe Community, in recognition of its outstanding work in promoting health and safety initiatives, and creating a culture of safety and wellness for all members of the university community. To earn the distinction, the University established a full range of programs spanning student and residential life, wellness, health and counseling. In addition, USC developed campus lab safety measures, emergency planning, training of first responders and innovative neighborhood programs like Kid Watch, which provides added safety for local children walking to school. We believe the Safe Community designation makes a great place even better.

Counselor News

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A college isn't a trophy; it's a match.



The University of Southern California admits students of any race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical disability or mental disability.



Katharine Harrington



Tim Brunold

Our leaders are on the move!

Congratulations to Katharine Harrington and Tim Brunold on their recent appointments. Harrington, who served with distinction as Dean of Admission and Financial Aid for five years, is now the University's Vice President of Admissions and Planning. In the meantime, Brunold has moved from Director of Admission into the Deanship.

In addition to offering excellent service, maintaining transparency and promoting equity and access, Tim indicates that some exciting new developments and announcements will come out of USC in the near future. Stay tuned!

Important Dates & Deadlines

January 10

Final Freshman Application Deadline

January – February

Auditions for Thornton School of Music and the School of Theatre.

February 2

FAFSA and CSS/PROFILE® filing deadline for priority financial aid consideration

Early February

Admission notification for merit scholarship finalists.

March 2

Student and family tax returns due to Financial Aid Office to ensure offer of aid eligibility before May 2.

Late March

All applicants notified.

May 2

National Candidates Reply Date

How to find your Admission Counselor

Visit www.usc.edu/uga, click on "Contact Us," then enter your high school's name in the "Find your Admission Counselor" box. Or contact us anytime at (213) 740-1111 or scounsel@usc.edu.

USC's Codes:

ACT Code: 0470 Used for sending ACT scores

CEEB Code: 4852 Used for PROFILE® Application and SAT scores

Federal School Code: 001328 Used for FAFSA application