MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty, Students, Staff and Supporters
USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

From: Elizabeth Garrett
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: September 19, 2011

Subject: Future Plans of Dean Howard Gillman

Dean Howard Gillman has decided not to accept an offer to serve a second term as Dean of the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences that I extended on behalf of President Nikias. He has been honored to serve as the 20th Dean of USC Dornsife, since 2007, when he undertook that pivotal position for our university. Perhaps most notably, under his leadership, the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences received a transformative naming gift from Dana and David Dornsife; this gift of $200 million for unrestricted endowment is the largest single gift in the history of USC and the largest in the history of American higher education to name a college of arts and sciences. Dean Gillman will serve as dean for the remainder of this academic year and ensure the continued ascent of USC Dornsife. He has told me that while he considers himself fortunate to have been able to lead his colleagues during these exciting times, he believes that after having spent eight years in important leadership roles at USC--as department chair, associate vice provost, and dean--the time is right for him to explore new challenges and opportunities.

The broad and diverse mission of the Dornsife College has been significantly enhanced under Dean Gillman's leadership. Each year the entering freshman class for USC Dornsife has been more accomplished and more diverse than the previous year’s class, and graduation rates have steadily climbed from 85% to 90%. The creation of new majors and minors has attracted increased student interest in important areas of study, especially in the humanities and interdisciplinary fields. New Block Semester and Maymester programs have enabled students to benefit from more immersive learning experiences and have encouraged faculty to use new models of teaching. Programs such as SOAR and SURF have provided substantial financial support for undergraduate research. Team-based problem-solving courses, developed under the Problems Without Passports initiative, have become distinctive signatures of the USC Dornsife undergraduate experience.
The Dornsife College's many doctoral programs have also continued to improve, thanks in part to Dean Gillman's new block grant system for funding Ph.D. programs. In addition, the Dornsife College has partnered with the Graduate School to focus attention on key metrics of assessment, thus ensuring that resources are allocated in a way that enhances quality and promotes the success of USC Dornsife's more than 1200 doctoral students.

By the end of this year, Dean Gillman will have overseen the recruitment of almost 100 new tenure-track faculty members across the humanities, social sciences and sciences, including transformative scholars who have become Presidential, Provost and Judge Widney Professors and endowed chairholders. This strong infusion of outstanding new faculty set the stage for ongoing innovations and improvements in USC Dornsife's research initiatives and academic programs. During his tenure, the quality and impact of the faculty's scholarship have reached impressive heights, including historic levels of external funding for research (reaching $76 million in 2010), the renewal of two research centers (the Center for Excellence in Genomic Sciences and the Southern California Earthquake Center), the establishment of a $25 million NSF Science and Technology Center on Dark Energy Biosphere Investigations, and consistently strong support for the humanities from the Mellon Foundation. Dean Gillman's commitment to a diverse faculty has been apparent through the hiring and promotion decisions made during his tenure, as well as through the appointment of the first Vice Dean for Diversity and Strategic Initiatives as part of his leadership team.

A building for the prestigious Brain and Creativity Institute will be completed this year and, in partnership with the dean of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, Dean Gillman has pursued a vision for basic and applied research to be centered in the planned interdisciplinary Convergence of Molecular Science and Engineering Building, a university priority in our campaign. During his deanship more than 15 Dornsife faculty members have received honors from the most prestigious national and international academies and societies.

Dean Gillman's achievements in the area of fundraising and external relations include more than his leadership in the unprecedented naming gift for USC Dornsife. He also conducted a complete review of the Advancement and Alumni Relations department. This review led to the restructuring and expansion of the Board of Councilors and focused attention on building support for several outstanding institutes and centers, including the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, the Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, the Brain and Creativity Institute, the Korean Studies Institute, the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, and the Joint Educational Project. He has partnered with the Alumni Association to develop programs that reach out to the tens of thousands of proud alumni of Letters, Arts and Sciences. Importantly, Dean Gillman has positioned USC Dornsife so that it will play a major role in the University’s Campaign. It is very likely that, by the end of Dr. Gillman’s five-year term as dean, Dornsife College will have raised over $400 million in gifts and pledges.

We will immediately undertake a search for his successor. Given the importance of USC Dornsife for the university, I will personally lead that search as the chair of the faculty advisory search committee, which will be appointed in the next few days. We will be consulting with
all the groups who are instrumental to the continued success of USC Dornsife: faculty, students, staff and alumni.

I know that all of you join President Nikias and me in thanking Dean Gillman for his service to the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and to the university. We have been fortunate to benefit from his leadership, and we know that he will continue to make important contributions during his final year.

cc: C. L. Max Nikias
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