

May 15, 2018

Dear USC community,

Nothing is more important to me, or to our community, than the health and safety of our students. As the parent of two daughters who were undergraduates and graduate students at USC, I understand how vital it is for the university to do everything it can to care for the students who put their trust in us. And, as president, I am wholly committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for everyone on our campuses.

That is why I am writing to you today. I want you to hear from me directly on a topic that is deeply troubling, and which concerns a former physician at our student health center. I want to share what we know, and inform you of the steps we took to address the matter.

In June 2016, the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) received a complaint from a staff member about Dr. George Tyndall, a gynecologist at the health center. The university immediately launched an investigation and placed him on administrative leave. He was not allowed to return to service and had no further contact with students. At the conclusion of the investigation, which included the OED, Office of Compliance, Risk Management, and external experts, USC ended his employment in June 2017.

During the investigation, outside medical reviewers concluded that the manner in which Dr. Tyndall performed physical exams did not meet current practice standards and that he made inappropriate remarks to patients, in some cases during the examination process. Some of these comments were racially discriminatory and sexually inappropriate in nature. These comments and his behavior were completely unacceptable and a violation of our values.

Unfortunately, a thorough review of files during the 2016 investigation revealed that there had been complaints about Dr. Tyndall in prior years, and that the former health center director chose to manage those complaints independently. In 2013, the former health center director did make a report to OED prompted by alleged racist comments made by Dr. Tyndall. OED investigated, and at that point in time, did not find conclusive evidence of a policy violation.

When his employment ended in June 2017, Dr. Tyndall stated to the university he was retiring from practicing medicine. Earlier this year, he sent a letter to USC seeking his reinstatement, which prompted the university to file a complaint to the California Medical Board. In hindsight, we should have made this report eight months earlier when he separated from the university.

Further, during the 2016 investigation, two separate independent criminal law experts were engaged to evaluate whether there was any criminal conduct to report to law enforcement; they advised that this was not a criminal matter. Last week we received correspondence from the *Los Angeles Times* that raised the possibility that additional information may exist regarding Dr. Tyndall. Therefore, in an abundance of caution, we contacted the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office to relay this possibility. The DA's office directed us to the Los Angeles Police Department, which we also contacted.

Here is a [link to a more complete summary](#) of the findings and actions taken that was prepared by the USC investigative team.

We expect much of people entrusted with the wellbeing of our students. While we have no evidence of criminal conduct, we have no doubt that Dr. Tyndall's behavior was completely unacceptable. It was a clear violation of our Principles of Community, and a shameful betrayal of our values.

During the 2016 investigation, our teams interviewed many individuals, including students, and attempted to identify any other students who may have had concerns. This process included reviewing the responses of a survey sent to 2,500 student patients, to learn if there were any other issues or complaints identified. Those efforts, which included additional follow-up calls to survey respondents, did not identify any related complaints about Dr. Tyndall's practice.

We urge anyone with additional information or concerns regarding Dr. Tyndall's behavior to report it at this dedicated number: **(833) 889-8833** or the following website: usc.mycompliance.com. We understand how difficult this may be, and we pledge to handle your outreach with compassion and sensitivity. We stand resolute in bringing all facts—however difficult—to light. We also encourage any students who wish to receive support to contact our student counseling services at (213) 740-7711 at our University Park Campus, or (323) 442-5631 at our Health Sciences Campus.

Unrelated to the Tyndall investigation, in early 2016, USC appointed a task force of faculty and staff to review student health with the goal of strengthening oversight and enhancing professionalism and practice standards of student health care, which at the time was under the division of student affairs. As a result of that review, Dr. Sarah Van Orman, a nationally respected leader in student health, was recruited as the center's new chief medical director. The center's leadership, staffing, oversight, and peer review have been strengthened and integrated with our academic medical center, with additional oversight from our CEO of USC Health, Tom Jackiewicz, as well as our vice president for student affairs, Ainsley Carry.

We want to reassure you that our student health centers, under the leadership of Dr. Van Orman and the entire health system team, are committed to providing every student with the most respectful experience and highest quality care possible. We will provide her with the full resources necessary to support her efforts. In addition, as part of the integration with the academic medical center, over the past year the health center staff has received extensive training on reporting. This training will

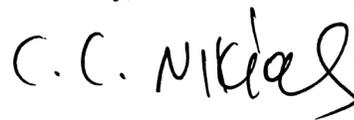
be ongoing with intensive sessions scheduled this summer and fall to ensure that when concerning behavior and actions are noticed, they are quickly reported and addressed. She also will strengthen communications to students about their patient rights and responsibilities.

This issue, and other issues we have confronted recently at the university, teach us that I, my senior leadership team, and the entire USC community must work diligently and continuously to instill a culture that fully lives up to our values. To that end, we are finalizing a comprehensive action plan in which the entire university community will work together to build a foundation based on respect, care, and ethical behavior. In addition, it calls for a major restructuring of USC's operations, that, among other things, focuses on how we handle such complaints and coordinate investigations on both of the university's campuses. This action plan also includes a number of new university-wide policies and revisions to existing policies that will improve our campus culture. I recently met with the executive boards of the Academic Senate and the Staff Assembly, as well as the Task Force on Workplace Standards and Employee Wellness; with each of these groups, I shared the basic elements of this action plan, which the university will roll out in the near future. These groups provided extremely valuable feedback, and I shared with them how their input will be directly integrated into the final version of the action plan. This action plan builds significantly on numerous other steps that the university is taking to improve our culture, and our commitment to our students, our patients, and to each other.

We understand that any unacceptable behavior by a health professional is a profound breach of trust. On behalf of the university, I sincerely apologize to any student who may have visited the student health center and did not receive the respectful care each individual deserves.

In closing, I also want to express my sincere appreciation to all the staff members, faculty, and students who bring forward issues and concerns, and who cooperate in investigations, so we can address them. Your voices enable us to take decisive action to protect our community, and your courage and strength empower all of us to live up to the most cherished ideals and values of our Trojan Family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. L. Nikias". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

C. L. Max Nikias
President