DREAMING TOGETHER
Meet new Dean Vassilios Papadopoulos and learn his vision for the school’s future
One of the top 10 pharmacy schools nationwide and the highest-ranked private school, the USC School of Pharmacy continues its century-long reputation for innovative programming, practice and collaboration.

The school created the nation’s first Doctor of Pharmacy program, the first clinical pharmacy program, the first clinical clerkships, the first doctorates in pharmaceutical economics and regulatory science, and the first PharmD/MBA dual-degree program, among other innovations in education, research and practice. The USC School of Pharmacy is the only private pharmacy school on a major health sciences campus, which facilitates partnerships with other health professionals as well as new breakthroughs in care. It also is the only school of pharmacy that owns and operates five pharmacies.

The school is home to the International Center for Regulatory Science at USC, and is a partner in the USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics and the USC Center for Drug Discovery and Development. The school pioneered a national model of clinical pharmacy care through work in safety-net clinics throughout Southern California and is a leader in the safe, efficient and optimal use of medication therapy that can save lives and improve the human condition.

Results magazine, published semi-annually, highlights some of the school’s latest advances and achievements, as well as the faculty, students, alumni and donors who make this work possible.
Dreaming Together

First, let me say how thrilled my family and I are to join the larger Trojan Family. Thank you for welcoming me as I begin my tenure as the new dean of the USC School of Pharmacy. I also want to express my appreciation to Glen L. Stimmel for his exemplary work as interim dean and for turning over the reins of a school so well poised for continued and growing excellence.

As demonstrated in the Boldly First timeline on pages 4-5, the school is known for pioneering educational initiatives, research and clinical care that set the pace for the field — and that have been instrumental in gaining recognition for the pharmacist’s position as healthcare provider. Looking forward, we will build upon this extraordinary history to address the growing opportunities within this dynamic profession. USC should be viewed as a national — and even international — school of pharmacy, and I will strive to increase awareness and visibility for the school’s unique role.

While our faculty members already conduct cutting-edge research in laboratories, clinics and healthcare policy, the time has come to take such advances to even higher levels. This requires retention and continued recruitment of talented scientists, clinicians and educators, as well as of the brightest students from across the country and around the world who will constitute the next generation of excellence in the field. Then, of course, we need to ensure that our infrastructure and facilities are state-of-the-art and able to support work of the highest caliber.

Frankly, I want the only limits on our faculty and students to be the boundaries of their own ambitious imaginations. When a faculty member or student comes to me with a radical idea that could transform science and improve lives, or dramatically improve how we educate our students, I view it as my job to provide the support to pursue that notion. Then these bold researchers can operate freely to develop therapies to reverse neurodegeneration and cancer, clinical approaches that are life-changing for patients with chronic disease, and policies that spur innovation while reducing healthcare costs.

The possibilities are endless, but only if we start by dreaming big.

To our students and faculty, I encourage you to come to me with those daring ideas. And to our alumni and friends, I hope you will join us in fostering them. As with all scientific endeavors, not every dream is fulfilled. But those that do become reality can make the world a better place.

Let’s dream together.

Vassilios Papadopoulos, DPharm, PhD, DSc (hon)
Dean, USC School of Pharmacy
John Stauffer Decanal Chair in Pharmaceutical Sciences

A computerized tomography (CT) scan of the brain of a patient with Alzheimer’s disease. Dean Papadopoulos serves on the university’s Ensuring Lifespan Health steering committee, which includes a focus on aging and dementia. He also has developed a blood test based on the alteration of steroid levels in the brain to diagnose Alzheimer’s disease and other neurodegeneration. The blood test is now being studied in 500 patients.
Left and top right: The School of Pharmacy Alumni Association supported the recent modernization of the school’s lobby, with new signage and furniture, improved lighting and installation of a big-screen television.

Bottom right: The recently dedicated Dianne Kwock Jung and Lunny Ronnie Jung Centennial Park provides a comfortable new gathering space for students and faculty.
1880
University of Southern California co-founded by pharmacist John Downey, seventh governor of California.

1905
USC School of Pharmacy founded as the first such school in Southern California.

1918
Four-year bachelor’s degree in pharmacy established at USC.

1950
Nation’s first PharmD program pioneered at USC.

1968
Nation’s first clinical pharmacy program developed at USC.

1974
School moves to USC Health Sciences Campus.

1970
First-of-its-kind PhD in pharmaceutical economics and policy established at USC.

1988
Nation’s first PharmD/MBA dual-degree program created at USC.

1990
Annual series of workshops to facilitate clinical education worldwide launched at USC.

1996
Curriculum integrating clinical and basic sciences developed at USC.
2002
Groundbreaking MS in regulatory science degree and dual PharmD/JD established at USC, as well as the Laboratory for Analytical Research and Services in Complementary Therapeutics, the premier university-based analytical resource for the pharmaceutical, dietary supplement and food ingredient industries.

2005
School’s centennial celebrated

2008
First professional doctorate in regulatory science pioneered at USC

2007
Certificate programs in regulatory science established at USC

2009
Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics founded by the USC School of Pharmacy and the USC Price School of Public Policy to conduct innovative research that promotes both wellbeing and value in healthcare delivery

2011
USC Medication Therapy and Safety Initiative launched

2016
USC ranked ninth in U.S. News & World Report and remains nation’s top private pharmacy school; school receives record fourth Pinnacle Award from American Pharmacists Association

California Senate Bill 493, which gives pharmacists healthcare provider status, signed into law after USC plays instrumental role in its passage

First master’s degree in Healthcare Decision Analysis created at USC
SPORE TREK II

Eight species of fungi that survived the Chernobyl nuclear disaster are now showing if they have the right stuff to thrive among the stars, thanks to a USC School of Pharmacy venture with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) and the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. The mission, dubbed BRIC-NP (Biological Research in a Canister–Natural Products) examines if the organisms can produce novel compounds that could be beneficial for medical or agricultural purposes.

“We want to see if they actually make new compounds in space,” Professor Clay Wang, one of the project’s leaders, told Popular Science.

The experiment launched on July 18 aboard a Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral and docked at the International Space Station on July 20.

The BRIC-NP team includes Kasthuri Venkateswaran, a research scientist at JPL, and USC graduate students Jillian Romsdahl and Adriana Blachowicz. The mission is similar to Micro 10, another USC School of Pharmacy collaboration with JPL that shot spores into space. Since those fungi returned to Earth in May, Wang has worked with a research team to isolate, classify and purify the compounds resulting from the fungi’s reactions to space’s high-radiation, microgravity environment.

Each study looks at different fungal species and holds the potential for future breakthroughs. Two of the fungal species studied in BRIC-NP, Cladosporium sphaerospermum and Cladosporium cladosporioides, use radiation for sustenance.

“[Venkateswaran and Wang’s] goal is to use these impressively resilient organisms to point the way to drugs that could impart similar resilience to humans, such as those getting cancer treatment,” reported STAT.online in October.
Drug overdoses have surpassed automobile collisions as the leading cause of accidental death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the upward trend is alarming.

“The opioid epidemic may be the nation’s most pressing healthcare crisis,” says Steven Chen, chair of the Titus Family Department of Clinical Pharmacy and the William A. Heeres and Josephine A. Heeres Endowed Chair in Community Pharmacy. The U.S. surgeon general has urged healthcare professionals to manage pain through evidence-based principles and reform how the country views addiction by “talking about it as a chronic illness, not a moral failing.”

The USC School of Pharmacy is well-positioned to play a leadership role in this effort. Assistant Professor Melissa Durham — a certified expert in pain management — has shifted her responsibilities to focus full time on advancing clinical practice, scholarship and teaching in pain and opioid-addiction management. In addition to her longstanding work in this field, she previously directed the school’s Professional Experiential Programs. Associate Professor Naomi Florea has stepped up to serve as interim director.

“Opioid abuse and misuse is a huge problem in our country,” Durham says. “Pharmacists can play an essential role in decreasing the deaths related to opioid overdose.”

Effective April 2015, pharmacists are allowed to furnish, without a prescription, naloxone kits to reverse opioid overdose after completing continuing education on its use. In July, the school hosted a seminar for pharmacists on opioid safety, and Durham continues to spread the word about tools available to combat the epidemic, such as the Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES) — a prescription drug monitoring system.

In June, the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics released a new study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* demonstrating that a large number — nearly 15 percent — of Medicare patients receive their first prescription for opioids within a week of being discharged from the hospital. The study is one of the first to quantify the rate of new opioid prescriptions amid growing national concern about the use of addictive painkillers.

An estimated 1.9 million Americans aged 12 and older are addicted to painkillers, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The United States hit a record high 19,000 deaths due to opioid overdoses in 2014, the most recent year reported. According to the new study, 43 percent of the Medicare patients were still taking opioids three months after their discharge.
Steven Chen, chair of the Titus Family Department of Clinical Pharmacy, has won an unprecedented third Pinnacle Award from the American Pharmacy Association (APhA), one of the nation’s highest pharmacy honors.

The 2016 award recognizes his collaborative work on two significant initiatives. The first is the national Health Resources and Services Administration’s Patient Safety and Pharmacy Services Collaborative, for which he developed a medication intervention and safety measurement tool adopted by pharmacy teams in clinics nationwide. The second is for his efforts as part of the School of Pharmacy’s own three-year, $12 million Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation grant, which placed pharmacy teams in AltaMed Health Services’ safety-net clinics across Los Angeles to improve patient outcomes while reducing healthcare costs. The latter project was conducted in partnership with principal investigator Geoffrey Joyce and the USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics.

In announcing the award, APhA noted that synergistic federal and private-sector initiatives such as these have dramatically reduced adverse drug events nationwide.

“Dr. Chen’s work exemplifies the dynamic, cross-sector, interdisciplinary innovation that makes the school such a beacon of leadership in improving public health,” Dean Vassilios Papadopoulos says. “It is a well-deserved honor.”

The William A. and Josephine A. Heeres Chair in Community Pharmacy, Chen previously earned the Pinnacle Award for Individual Career Achievement in 2013 and was part of a USC School of Pharmacy team that received the 2007 Pinnacle Award for pioneering work in safety-net clinics. This is the school’s fourth Pinnacle Award.
Rising STAR

Samvel Martirosyan was 5 years old when he and his family emigrated from Armenia for new lives and opportunities in the U.S. More than a decade later, Martirosyan made the most of a particular opportunity offered by USC — the Science, Technology and Research (STAR) Program — which enabled him to conduct research under the careful mentorship of investigators in the laboratory of Professor Daryl Davies at the USC School of Pharmacy. Here, the budding scientist and Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School student discusses that STAR experience — and the difference it has made in his life.

**How and when did you first learn about the STAR program?**
My older brother was the first in our family to be part of it — followed by my twin brother and me.

**What did you learn in the lab at USC?**
I became aware of how demanding research is and the level of professionalism it demands. Dr. Davies’ team guided me toward obtaining skills in communication, patience and work ethics. And, of course, I was exposed to the scientific knowledge at the core of the research they conduct.

**Did STAR shift your ambitions in any way?**
Combining computer science with pharmaceuticals pointed me toward pharmacoinformatics, a newly emerging field with many opportunities. My involvement in the laboratory environment also pressed me to think of philanthropy as a source of satisfaction and happiness in any job. Dr. Davies and his team aim to cure alcoholism. I, too, hope to improve people’s lives.

**What are some of your goals for the future, after high school?**
I hope to earn a doctorate in computer science, then create software in the field of pharmacoinformatics. I also plan to give back to the community in any way I can.

**What most surprised you about STAR?**
How open researchers at a respected institution were to having high school students be part of highly demanding research.

**What’s next for you?**
I’ve applied to USC and several Ivy League schools. I’m interested in studying computer science and perhaps someday working in pharmacoinformatics.

**USC President C. L. Max Nikias, Samvel Martirosyan and USC Senior Vice President for University Relations Thomas S. Sayles**
New USC School of Pharmacy Dean Vassilios Papadopoulos enters Town & Gown for his installation ceremony, followed by USC President C. L. Max Nikias.

Former Dean R. Pete Vanderveen, Dean Papadopoulos and Interim Dean Glen L. Stimmel share a moment at the installation ceremony.

“Infectious Rumors!” is the 10th in the popular series of fotonovelas developed by Professor Mel Baron to reach the Latino community with vital but entertaining health messages. La Opinion, the nation’s leading Spanish-language daily newspaper, once again partnered with the USC School of Pharmacy to make the booklet available as an insert, reaching 60,000 households.
Drug shortages and spiraling costs for lifesaving generic medications have ignited firestorms of public criticism and political condemnation. Yet how do we move beyond grandstanding to find prescriptions for making essential medicines more affordable while also ensuring ample availability? The answers suggested by research at the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics relate to the need for private-sector competition but also point to the need for judicious government involvement.

“The real problem isn’t with insurance design. It is lax regulatory oversight that doesn’t ensure an adequate supply of drugs critical to population health and opens the door to shocking price increases.”

Dana Goldman, in STAT.online

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ... should be authorized to begin buying essential generic drugs and devices on behalf of federal users, including Veterans Affairs, Medicaid and Medicare.”

Goldman

“Healthy competition among multiple suppliers is the best answer to prevent high prices.”

Goldman

“Another option is to require generic manufacturers to justify a price increase greater than 25 percent a year to the FDA.”

Joyce and Sood

“The high price of some brand-name drugs is also front-page news these days, but that’s a completely different market. The potential to earn large profits from new drugs provides companies an incentive to innovate, and there is ample evidence that such innovation has been a critical tool in fighting disease and savings millions of lives.”

Goldman, in testimony before a California Senate committee

“It is clearly time for some sort of government intervention. Our favored option is to treat generic drug manufacturers as public utilities. This would ensure that companies make a reasonable profit without gouging consumers.”

Geoffrey F. Joyce and Neeraj Sood, in U.S. News & World Report

The Schaeffer Center researchers caution that the above prescriptions should apply only to generic-drug pricing, and not be used to stifle innovation and the introduction of vital new drugs.

“Very high initial prices for curative branded drugs can reflect a company’s realization that ending a disease will also end its business. The time is ripe to strike a deal with innovative companies that would align price with value.”

Goldman.

Neeraj Sood, Schaeffer Center director of research
Dean Vassilios Papadopoulos brings wide-ranging expertise, a track record of leadership, and a passion for innovation to his new role at the USC School of Pharmacy.

Graduating from high school at age 17, finishing pharmacy school at 21, publishing his first research paper at 22, completing his PhD and postdoc by 28, and earning full tenure at 32, Vassilios Papadopoulos has “always liked being fast.” He’s also lived all over the world, from his native Greece to his early career in France and Australia, followed by moves to Washington, D.C., and Montreal, where he led more than 500 researchers and 1,200 students at the Research Institute at McGill University Health Centre. While at McGill, he netted the largest government grant in Canadian history.
On October 1, Papadopoulos joined USC as the new dean of the School of Pharmacy, where he will continue his steroid hormone research, which has major applications in aging, cancer, reproductive disorders and neurodegenerative diseases.

Here he shares his career journey, his leadership philosophy and his vision for the school’s future.

**What attracted you to the field of pharmacy?**

**VP** I liked the diversity. At the time, in the University of Athens pharmacy program, it was a mixture of chemistry, medicine and other fields. Pharmacy encompasses such a vast range of possibilities.

**Tell us about your research.**

**VP** My lab focuses on steroid hormones. They are widely used — if you take estrogen, the pill, testosterone or cortisone, you’re taking a steroid. We’re conducting long-term studies to find alternatives to hormone replacement therapy, which can be dangerous. My lab has been working on mechanisms to induce steroid production in the testes and brain so the body can restore its ability to produce its own hormones. And we are working on a new blood test based on the alteration of steroid levels in the brain to diagnose Alzheimer’s disease and neurodegeneration. We are now in a study of 500 patients.

1978

Receives gold medal award from the city of Athens for achievements in high school

1983

Completes degree of extensive studies in animal biology and physiology, University Pierre and Marie Curie, Paris; publishes first scholarly paper at age 22

PHARMACY ENCOMPASSES SUCH A VAST RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES.
Did you practice pharmacy as well?

VP In preparation for my pharmacy license, I practiced under the guidance of a senior pharmacist in the south of Greece, in our family village of Filiatra in the Kalamata region of Peloponneus. It’s an agricultural area five minutes from the sea, growing tomatoes, cucumbers, olive trees — and, at that time, it had only one pharmacy. The pharmacist there also served as the physician, vet and confidante. I learned a lot.

How did you end up in Australia?

VP Many of the people I worked with in Greece and France were trained at the Worcester Foundation for Biomedical Research, near Boston, where the contraceptive pill was developed. Worcester was considered the mecca of steroid research, so of course I wanted to work there, too. I was accepted as a postdoc to work with the director, Peter Hall, but then, a month before I was supposed to leave for Boston, I received a phone call from Hall, who was Australian. He was moving to the University of New South Wales in Sydney. So I changed my tickets, and I landed in Sydney on January 1 with cold-weather clothes. It was 100 degrees outside.

THE SKY IS TRULY THE LIMIT WHEN IT COMES TO THE IMPACT THIS SCHOOL CAN HAVE.

1986

Earns PhD in health and life sciences with distinction, University Pierre and Marie Curie, Paris; enters postdoctoral fellowship at National Center of Scientific Research, Caen, France

1993

Receives Research Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health

You would later chair Georgetown’s Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and become the university’s associate vice president for research. What were your benchmarks of success?

VP You have to identify sources of funding so the good things that are happening can be grown without stopping for lack of funding. For example, we developed and expanded the master’s programs in biotechnology and other areas. You also have to support students and make them feel part of the family. And of course you have to build consensus among faculty.
After Georgetown, you moved to McGill. What were your biggest challenges there?

**VP** I led a number of initiatives to expand our work at the Research Institute at McGill University Health Centre, including what turned out to be the biggest grant in the history of Canada. We had to travel all over the world to work with companies to develop equipment for us that did not yet exist. We constructed a $1.5 billion hospital within the larger medical center. It opened in 2015. It’s a huge operation. I’m grateful for the support I received from the provincial and federal government, foundations, donors, faculty, staff and students.

What attracted you to USC?

**VP** The university is on an undeniable upward trajectory. It’s a bold and exciting place, accomplishing major advances at an impressive speed. USC clearly values innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration. The university is investing in its health sciences enterprise, breaking new ground and forging a distinctive path. And this is a private university, with the flexibility to be nimble and entrepreneurial. That really appealed to me. I also was looking for something different, where I could have a more immediate impact on people’s lives. The school offered a unique opportunity.

How will you apply your philosophy of leadership to the USC School of Pharmacy?

**VP** Even though moving fast is important to me, and science and technology are moving at an extraordinary pace, I am taking time to meet with everybody — including all staff and faculty — to fully understand the environment and the culture. Things that worked in Washington and Montreal might not work in L.A. There is no defined recipe.

What are some of your goals for the school’s future?

**VP** The school has a global footprint with research and educational collaborations around the world. I want to see us build upon this foundation to become a leading international school.

The time is also ripe to expand job placement opportunities for our graduates by enhancing the school’s integration with the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries and by promoting a wider range of options in such areas as government and regulatory affairs, environmental organizations, and beyond.
Overall, I want to see how we can place the school on a trajectory that will be moving up at every level. So much has already been accomplished, and the ingredients are all in place. Now we must put them all together to make the soup — perhaps a nice bisque.

Speaking of food, tell us about your three sons — one of whom is a chef.

VP One has just become a lawyer, another is doing a master’s in computer science programming and our youngest is studying at the Culinary Institute of America — he’s the chef of the family.

Do you and your wife, Dr. Martine Culty, still have family in Europe?

VP My wife has. I just have a sister. She’s an ambassador of Greece, so she moves around a lot, like I have. She was at the consulate in New Orleans, then in Toronto, and then she represented Greece in the United Nations for years. She also has worked in Jordan and in Brussels, where she represented Greece in the European Union. She now heads the European mission in Kosovo. We are both citizens of the world.

At Georgetown, McGill and now at USC, your administrative duties have always been extensive. How do you find time to conduct research?

VP I call it my night shift. I focus on my research after 11 p.m. On Sundays, I may work the whole day. Here at USC, my lab is on the same floor as the dean’s office, so that will be great.

What do you see as the USC School of Pharmacy’s strengths?

VP Certainly its history — not many schools have existed for 100 years. The school has pioneered so many educational initiatives — from the doctor of pharmacy degree to the regulatory science program. Our graduates leave USC prepared to play leadership roles in the profession. This is a real distinction from newer schools.

Our location in Los Angeles is another enormous advantage, and one we should leverage more fully. Our faculty conduct cutting-edge research not only in basic science but also in clinical care and health economics and policy. The sky is truly the limit when it comes to the impact this school can have.
Why I’m a Preceptor

“Being a preceptor is fun, challenging and a good way to give back. As much as you teach these students, they will teach you, too. It is definitely a give-and-take proposition. You can help prepare our potential colleagues for the future of the profession.”

Kristal Gordon, PharmD ’80
Clinical Pharmacist
California State University, Northridge

“I take great joy in giving back to the pharmacy profession by being a preceptor. I enjoy it so much that I even encourage other pharmacists to participate and take on the challenges of contributing to the next generation of pharmacists.”

Margaret Adamczyk, PharmD ’90
Pharmacist, USC Verdugo Hills Hospital

“Being a preceptor forces you to stay up to date with information in order to teach it, which is absolutely critical with the fast-paced changes in our field. Being a preceptor organizes your time and priorities — so you are always reading and learning, in order to be able to practice and teach current information.”

Sofia Gezalyan, PharmD ’06
Pharmacist-in-Charge and Manager of Inpatient Pharmacy Services, Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center

Grant Expands Global Reach

A $200,000 gift from the D. K. Kim Foundation to the USC International Center for Regulatory Science will expand the USC School of Pharmacy’s global reach by establishing funds for international service and summer scholars.

The donation establishes the D. K. Kim International Service Fund, which will support clinical service programs to train pharmacy students as primary healthcare providers in underserved areas of developing countries. The gift also creates the D. K. Kim Summer Scholars Program Fund, which will advance regulatory science internationally by supporting a one-month summer scholars program for students from around the world. The program will foster a collaborative, international learning environment focusing on areas relating to ethics, quality systems and regulatory science.

The first group supported by the D. K. Kim International Service Fund traveled to Cambodia in December 2016 under the leadership of USC Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy Naomi Florea, who has organized a number of highly successful clinical trips to various countries.

The first Summer Scholars Program will involve participants from Korea, Taiwan and China.

“The funding allows us to advance unique programs related to global engagement that otherwise would be very difficult to support,” says Frances Richmond, director of the International Center for Regulatory Science.

The D. K. Kim Foundation was established in 2003 by businessman Dong Koo Kim with the aim of helping build a global community that fights poverty and promotes innovation through entrepreneurship, scholarship and service.
“...I remember the preceptors and mentors who shaped me into the pharmacist I am today. This is my way of giving back. Also, being a pharmacist means you have committed yourself to a lifetime of learning, and what better way to do this than by surrounding yourself with the best and brightest minds thirsting for knowledge?”

Jay Parikh, PharmD ’11
Staff Pharmacist
USC Medical Plaza Pharmacy

When I was a student, I enjoyed meeting and learning from the preceptors from different fields who came out to volunteer their time to supervise us. I definitely wanted to give back as much as I could to the students who are the future generation of pharmacists — and to mentor and teach them about what I’m currently doing in my role as a clinical pharmacist.”

Lily Yip, PharmD ’11
Manager of Clinical Pharmacy Operations and Patient Education, Facey Medical Group, Mission Hills, California

Paving the Way for the Next Generation

QSAD is an abbreviation of the Latin inscription formerly written on prescriptions, quantum sufficit ad: “as much as is sufficient.”

This ancient phrase inspired the mission of QSAD Centurion, the premier support group of the USC School of Pharmacy whose members contribute funds to maintain USC’s excellence as a center of pharmacy education.

“It’s a way of giving back,” says Jana Cohen, PharmD ’73, MBA ’88, who joined the QSAD board in 2016.

Over its nearly 60-year history, QSAD Centurion has raised more than $3 million for the school, enhancing the student experience by contributing to capital projects and technology updates to ensure students have a state-of-the-art learning environment. Members’ contributions strengthen educational and research opportunities, sponsor hands-on community service experiences and underwrite the annual white coat ceremony for incoming PharmD students.

“We are here to keep USC as the leader of the pharmacy profession,” QSAD President-elect Larry Jung, PharmD ’77, says. “Cost should never be the reason that an outstanding student is not able to attend USC,” he adds. “The solution is increasing our scholarships — we need all alumni involved — every gift to the school counts.”

A desire to remain connected with the school and keep it at the top of its game has motivated current President Patty Wong-Dion, PharmD ’74, to serve on the QSAD board for the past nine years.

“QSAD is an organization of enthusiastic alumni, friends and faculty who love and want to support the school,” Wong-Dion says. “There’s a closeness, a camaraderie. The Trojan family spirit, we live and breathe it, all the time.”

To learn more about QSAD, visit pharmacyschool.usc.edu/giving/qsad-centurion or contact Karen Thomas at karentho@usc.edu or 323-442-2483.

Day of SCupport

For USC’s first-ever Day of SCupport, 3,096 members of the global Trojan community demonstrated their loyalty and generosity by donating to support student scholarships, pioneering research, facility upgrades and much more.

The event, held May 4, marked the single largest number of participants in USC’s history to give on a single day. In addition to raising vital funds, the event enabled participants to connect on social media by using #DayofSCupport and “planting a sword” on the giving website as a virtual marker of the Trojan Family’s worldwide reach.

The 2017 Day of SCupport is set for May 4. Check the school’s website this spring and join this special day of connection and support. Every gift counts!
The Power of Mentoring

Meet alumnus Vinson Lee, MS ’01, PharmD ’06. In addition to his career as director of reimbursement access and value at Amgen, he’s president-elect of the California Pharmacists Association (CPbA) and a part-time USC School of Pharmacy faculty member, represents the school on the USC Alumni Association Board of Governors and created an endowed scholarship. He’ll be installed as CPbA president in February, at the Western Pharmacy Exchange.

Here, he talks about the power of mentoring and why he gives back.

Why are you so involved at the USC School of Pharmacy?
My USC pharmacy degree changed my life. I want to make sure others have the same chance at achieving a phenomenal education.

I had great mentors along the way who are now my friends and colleagues. They helped me understand leadership values and the pharmacy profession itself.

Do you have any other Trojan connections?
My wife [Anna Dang, ’12] went to the school. And my sister works at the USC Roski Eye Institute under Mark Humayun, who made the bionic eye.

How did your experiences as a student at the school guide your career?
My whole professional experience grew from roots here. In addition to having great mentors, I was actively involved as a student leader. I was vice president of AMCP [Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy] and was president of Phi Lambda Sigma — the pharmacy leadership society — during my fourth year. And my summer internship turned into my first job out of school.

What is your advice to students?
Pay it forward. I had great mentors who paid it forward to me, giving me advice and opportunities. Students need to do that as well when they become pharmacists.

Why should students consider the USC School of Pharmacy?
The school offers a lot of resources that help students explore their futures. The new pathway programs are really expanding experiential learning opportunities. And the student organizations give a broad perspective of pharmacy, as well as many chances to learn through volunteering.

Why is supporting the Alumni Association so important?
It’s important to ensure students have access to all the advantages we had — and more — because we have to continue to evolve not just our curriculum but also the way we teach. Pharmacy’s going to continue to change, so we have to stay ahead of the curve.

I hope alums who aren’t currently involved will think about joining and giving back at some point.

HEALTH 2.0

Having championed Senate Bill 493, which gave pharmacists health provider status in 2013, State Senator Ed Hernandez (D-West Covina), PharmD ’14 (hon.), remains dedicated to innovative efforts for enhancing the health and wellbeing of California residents.

While addressing the 10th annual Health 2.0 conference in Silicon Valley, he challenged developers to create technological solutions that will improve outcomes and lower costs of care for low-income patients.

Hernandez, who plans to run for lieutenant governor in 2018, also recently authored a California law raising the age limit to buy tobacco products from 18 to 21, and legislation banning e-cigarettes from public places such as schools, restaurants and hospitals. Hernandez hopes these efforts will lead to a significant drop in tobacco use among young people.
COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL HEALTH

Tapasya Desai, PharmD ’10, was named Pharmacist of the Year by the Indian Pharmacists Association (IPA) of California at its 27th annual Trade Show and Banquet in September. She was recognized for her extensive record of community service locally and in India, as well as her volunteer work for IPA.

Desai was equally committed to service during her time as a USC pharmacy student, taking on leadership and organizational responsibilities for USC’s American Pharmacy Student Alliance and USC Associated Students of the School of Pharmacy, and participating in service projects through Skull and Mortar and Phi Delta Chi. She also served as USC’s IPA student representative.

Now an outpatient pharmacist at Kaiser Permanente in Ontario, California, Desai works in the 24-hour pharmacy under the supervision of Doris Wu, PharmD ’01. For the past four years, Desai has coordinated pharmacy services for the annual local health fair sponsored by BAPS Charities.

Her international efforts include spending the summer of 2009 helping implement a mobile-messaging platform to promote health in Karnataka, India, through the Global Impact Program for Innovation at USC. In 2011, she received a three-month leave of absence from Kaiser Permanente to work on service projects in the slums of Ahmedabad, India, through the nonprofit Manav Sadhna.

“My work has only touched the tip of the iceberg of the world of service,” Desai says. “I hope this recognition inspires others to serve from their hearts and remember that there are those who lead lives far more disadvantaged than ours and really need our help and love.”

A Record of Distinguished Service

Scott Takahashi, PharmD ’89, received the Distinguished Service Award from the California Society of Health-System Pharmacists (CSHP) at its Seminar 2016.

An ambulatory care pharmacist for Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center, Takahashi first joined CSHP as a student and has been a pharmacist member since 1989. He was CSHP’s president for 2008–09, and also has served on its board of directors and numerous committees. His service at the chapter level includes being a delegate, secretary and president.

Takahashi’s wide-ranging activities also include volunteer positions with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Asthma Coalition of Los Angeles County, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, National Pharmacy Cholesterol Council and California Geriatric Education Center.

The Distinguished Service Award recognizes one member annually for exceptional and sustained contributions to CSHP at the regional and state levels.
We want to hear from you! Email your updates and career news to pharmcom@usc.edu to be included in the next edition of Class Notes.

1960s

John Sykora, PharmD ’66, was honored in 2015 with the National Community Pharmacists Association’s Outstanding Adherence Practitioner Award as the founder of the appointment-based model. He recently sold Abrams & Clark Pharmacy in Long Beach, California.

1970s

Rita Shane, PharmD ’78, is chief pharmacy officer at Cedars-Sinai.

1980s

Kristal Gordon, PharmD ’80, is a clinical pharmacist at California State University, Northridge.

Mike Rigas, PharmD ’81, is chief clinical officer at the infusion-therapy firm KabaFusion in Cerritos, California.

Mitchell Pellet, PharmD ’82, is clinical operations manager at Kaiser Permanente Woodland Hills Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente Ventura County.

1990s

Margaret Adamczyk, PharmD ’90, is a pharmacist at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital.

Nayan Patel, PharmD ’96, and Ashwin Patel, PharmD ’98, founded Central Drugs Compounding Pharmacy, which has locations in La Habra and Fullerton, California. Nayan serves as CEO and Ashwin as COO.

Scott Evans, PharmD ’98, is senior vice president and CEO of Sharp Grossmont Hospital in San Diego. He was previously CEO of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

Peggy Han, PharmD ’99, is associate director/head of scientific collaborations, bio-oncology, at Genentech.

Michael Shue, PhD ’99, is senior principal scientist at Pfizer Global Research and Development in San Diego.

2000s

Reda Alhoussayni, PharmD ’00, is owner and president of Olive Branch Pharmacy in Los Angeles.

Chris Chan, PharmD ’01, is senior director of pharmaceutical services at Inland Empire Health Plan, a managed-care pharmacy practice.

Dennis Ho, PharmD ’01, is CEO at WeCare Pharmaceutical Services Inc. in San Bernardino, California.

Ken Thai, PharmD ’02, is CEO at K & B Pharmacy Associates Inc. in El Monte, California.

Novik Gukasyan, PhD ’03, is senior principal scientist at Pfizer in San Diego.

Jonathan Hjelm, PharmD ’04, is director of pharmacy operations for commercial programs at Capital BlueCross.
Ashutosh (Ash) Kulkarni, PharmD ’04, is director of translational pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics at Allergan.

Komal Patel, PharmD ’04, is founder of USA Pharmacists Network, an online community that provides updates on current trends and news and promotes ideas for creating the next generation of pharmacy practice.

Sofia Gezalyan, PharmD ’06, is pharmacist-in-charge and manager of inpatient pharmacy services at Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center.

Lindsay Valenzuela, PharmD ’06, is administrator of population health and prescription management at Desert Oasis Health Care in Riverside County, California.

Jonathan Watanabe, PharmD ’07, is assistant professor of clinical pharmacy at the University of California, San Diego, Skaggs School of Pharmacy.

Danielle Colayco, PharmD ’08, MS Pharmaceutical Economics and Policy ’10, is director of health outcomes and value strategy at Komoto Health Care in Bakersfield, California.

Jordan Yingling, PharmD ’11, is a clinical pharmacist at Olympia Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Lily Yip, PharmD ’11, is manager of clinical pharmacy operations and patient education at Facey Medical Group in Mission Hills, California.

Rylan Hanks, PharmD ’13, is director of global research and development and regulatory policy at Amgen. He also serves as a policy committee member with the California Pharmacists Association.

Letisha Wyatt, PhD ’13, is assistant professor, basic science liaison and research data management librarian at Oregon Health & Science University.

Melissa Agnello, PhD ’15, is a postdoctoral scholar in the laboratory of Wenyuan Shi, PhD, a leading oral microbiologist at UCLA.

Shannon Bondy, MS Regulatory Science ’15, is a clinical research specialist in the diabetes division of Medtronic in Northridge, California.

Christine Chen, PhD ’16, is an associate at Analysis Group in Boston.

Kimberly Moore, PharmD ’16, MS Healthcare Decision Analysis ’16, works in global health economics and reimbursement at Edwards Lifesciences Corp.
Foundations Fund
Pioneering Research

Julio A. Camarero, professor of pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences, has been awarded $110,000 from the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA) for a project investigating targeted therapies for ulcerative colitis. Camarero received the grant through CCFA’s Broad Medical Research Program, which funds pilot research into causes, treatments and cures for inflammatory bowel disease. The program has provided more than $50 million for pioneering studies.

Gonocyte Expert Joins Faculty

Martine Culty, PhD, who has joined the USC School of Pharmacy as an associate professor, has been affectionately called “Madame Gonocyte.” She may not have originated the term for these germ cells that serve as the precursor to sperm formation, but if you Google “gonocyte,” her name appears near the top and in numerous entries.

“The main focus of my research is male reproduction and endocrine disruption,” Culty explains. “I explore how these germ cells develop to support spermatogenesis and proper male fertility.”

She also examines gonocytes’ role in testicular cancer, the most prevalent form of cancer in young men. While it can also strike later in life, testicular cancer usually affects males between 15 and 30 years old, “right as they are discovering the world and establishing their lives,” Culty notes.

This research is crucial as the rate of testicular cancer continues to rise. Environmental factors rank high among the potential causes she is investigating. “The male reproductive system is absolutely dependent on the hormones androgen and estrogen to develop,” Culty says. “And a lot of the chemicals in the environment disturb their homeostasis — their balance.”

Culty’s own environment as a child was pivotal to determining her future career. “I grew up in France, in a suburb of Paris,” she says. “And I was always fascinated by biology, plants, animals — everything.” Squeamish about seeing people or animals suffer, she chose not to become a physician or veterinarian. Instead, pharmaceutical research beckoned her with the promise of achieving laboratory breakthroughs that could benefit many more patients than could possibly be cared for in person.

She brings to the school expertise in male reproduction, toxicology, endocrinology, stem cells and the body’s signaling pathways. “The techniques are very similar from one topic to the other,” Culty observes. “In general, it’s about how cells communicate and how disruption can lead to some pathologies.” Germ cells fascinate her “because they go through astonishing changes, including a metamorphosis. You start with big fetal, round cells and you end up with a sperm. It’s like a miracle.”
Lengthening Lives
While Narrowing Disparities

The USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy & Economics teamed with The Hill to seek consensus on how to increase access to healthcare without sacrificing innovation. An audience of 150 attended the conference, held at the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

Schaeffer Center Director Dana Goldman referred to new heart treatments as an example of how innovation can both lengthen lives and narrow disparities, noting the outsized impact that congestive cardiac failure has on minorities. Overall, the condition attacks an estimated 5.7 million American adults, contributing to one out of every nine deaths across the nation each year. Yet, for example, about one in four black women aged 45 to 75 is at risk, compared to one in seven white women.

Effective new treatments are now available, Goldman said, but unless they become more widely adopted, the heart failure rate is predicted to double by 2030.

Getting low-income and minority patients access to doctors is the critical first step, said Ramanathan Raju, president and CEO of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. Despite a big increase in Medicaid enrollment as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), “a concern for all public health systems is: How do we fund care for the [millions of] undocumented and others who are uninsured?”

Samantha Artiga, director of the Disparities Policy Project at the Kaiser Family Foundation, raised concerns about the South falling further behind in health outcomes because so many states in the region declined to expand Medicaid enrollment under the ACA. Blacks are twice as likely as whites to fall into the resulting coverage gap between Medicaid and subsidized ACA insurance plans, she said.

Contrasting views about the ACA’s impact were presented by J. Nadine Gracia, director of the Office of Minority Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, and Senator Bill Cassidy (R-La.).

Gracia lauded the ACA for driving the uninsured rate below 9 percent — including marked gains among minorities — and for making preventive services available to millions at no cost.

Cassidy, who co-authored a new bill to repeal all ACA mandates and replace subsidies with a tax credit, argued that it was failing due to being unaffordable. “When poor people run up against a $6,000 deductible, it may as well be $6 million,” he said.

NIH AWARDS DAVIES
$1.25 MILLION GRANT

Daryl Davies has received a five-year, $1.25 million grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), for research that could lead to new drugs to treat and even prevent alcohol use disorder (AUD).

A professor in the Titus Family Department of Clinical Pharmacy, Davies is widely recognized as a pioneer in the field of alcohol-related research. He focuses on purinergic, P2X4 receptors and their role in the central nervous system’s regulation of alcohol-induced changes in signaling.

The grant enables Davies to build upon work previously funded by the NIH showing the potential of ivermectin (IVM) in reducing alcohol intake. The multidisciplinary team of investigators he has assembled will use state-of-the-art genetic, molecular, chemical and behavioral techniques to translate laboratory findings into opportunities to discover and develop novel therapeutics for alcoholism.

The team has already found that moxidectin (MOX), a drug related to IVM, has lower neurotoxicity potential and an improved margin of safety compared to its cousin. They are now repurposing MOX as a novel pharmacotherapy for AUD, and Davies hopes to begin clinical tests of the treatment in the near future.

These investigations could ultimately translate into therapeutic strategies for freeing countless people from alcoholism’s damaging grip. Alcoholism and alcohol abuse cause approximately 100,000 deaths each year, costing the nation more than $240 billion annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

Jordan Despanie adheres to the Jewish concept of tikkun olam — literally to “repair the world” through acts of kindness that help alleviate suffering. The fourth-year Pharmaceutical Sciences PhD candidate puts this lofty ideal to practical use both as a budding entrepreneur and in the lab of J. Andrew MacKay, the Gavin Herbert Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

There, Despanie is developing nanomedicines to combat triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive disease that disproportionately affects people of African and Hispanic descent and currently has no targeted treatment.

A Creole who grew up in Lafayette, Louisiana, Despanie earned his BS in biology from Louisiana State, with a minor in religious studies. He recently converted from Roman Catholicism to Judaism, but has long sought to ease others’ suffering. He has been conducting research since he was 18.

“I always knew I was going to get a PhD,” he says. Over the years, he has studied oncolytic virotherapy, RNA interference and, while working at Johns Hopkins Hospital, mutations in cystic fibrosis.

Despanie co-founded and serves as chief scientific officer of S-aima Biopharmaceutics, an early-stage biotech company that is developing a blood-substitute nanomedicine with the potential to revolutionize blood transfusions and trauma medicine. If successful, the hemoglobin-based oxygen nanocarrier would be storable at various temperatures and compatible with any blood type.

The company’s presentation earned second place in the Innovation Prize competition at the Annual Entrepreneurship Summit hosted by Biotech Connection. The award included $50,000 in legal assistance.

The prize was a validation of his and his partner’s efforts over the past three years on their startup company. “To finally receive validation for this noble cause is of course very gratifying,” says Despanie, who describes entrepreneurship as both his “true passion in life” and “a difficult path.” “It super-charges your desire to push forward. You need those milestones along the way to keep you incentivized and engaged.”

Two years ago, an attack of bacterial endocarditis nearly derailed his professional journey, as two open-heart surgeries and his recovery required a semester-long leave of absence. More recently, he has been diagnosed with upper-extremity deep vein thrombosis.

But Despanie says these health challenges just cause him to redouble his efforts. “When you survive and you know the value from the medicine and therapeutics you’re having a hand in developing, the onus is on you to further fix the world.”
Target: Aging

The 15th annual Moving Targets symposium homed in on breakthroughs against the mechanisms of aging. Topics covered included metabolic disorders and aging, aging with HIV, aging acceleration in cancer and targeting signaling in aging.

Felipe Sierra, director of Aging Biology at the National Institute on Aging, served as keynote speaker, saying that controlling the rate of aging could rein in the progression of all diseases. “We’re not trying to become immortal,” he added. “We’re just trying to postpone the realities of aging and driving disease.”

The daylong event attracted more than 200 students, faculty members and scientists from industry and the academy.

The USC chapter of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS-USC) presents this research symposium each year, enabling students to engage with scientific leaders in a collegial setting. The AAPS-USC committee members organizing this year’s symposium were Ishan Patil, Samy Habib, Pooja Vaikari, Benjamin Frey, Xianhui Chen and Larry Rodriguez. J. Andrew MacKay, the Gavin Herbert Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences, served as faculty advisor.

Annie Wong-Beringer, associate dean for Graduate Affairs and Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs, had high praise for the student organizers. “They gathered an impressive lineup of renowned scientists,” she says. “This program is unique, as it’s not only a symposium but also a networking lunch for attendees to mingle and meet with our speakers.”

Students also participated in the Young Investigator Awards, a poster competition that offered cash prizes to top presenters. USC students Rebecca Lim, Weiwen Sun, Yvette Wang and Yasaman Bahreini, and Caltech student Katherine Fang, all received awards for their work.

Quiz Bowl Conquerors

USC Doctor of Pharmacy students won first place in the highly competitive Quiz Bowl at the California Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists’ Seminar 2016. The winning team’s members were Maya Ballis, Emily Chang (team captain), Kamlynn Chow, William Duong, Ryan Hays, Weina (Vera) Jiang, Blair Lieu, Lyndsie Okumura, Brian Park, Brian Phan, Denny Woo and Samantha Yeung. First-year residents Brandon Chang, PharmD ’16, and Maynard Lam, PharmD ’16, coached the team, and Associate Professor Susie H. Park served as faculty advisor.

Drug Take-Back Day

We educate the public about the health, social and legal consequences of prescription drug abuse, and provide resources for the community in how to properly dispose of medications.”

PharmD student Tam Phan, director of USC’s student-run Generation Rx, which helped organize the school’s participation in the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day at Kaiser Permanente on Sunset Boulevard.
MEET THE SCHWEITZER FELLOWS

Since its founding in 1940, the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship has grown far beyond supporting the Schweitzer Hospital in Gabon, Africa. The program prepares new generations of professionals to serve and empower vulnerable people around the world and to create healthier communities. Meet the two USC School of Pharmacy students who are serving as Schweitzer Fellows for 2016–17.

MARL AYSON

What issue are you working on as a Schweitzer Fellow?
We’re implementing an “advocate care” program in which student volunteers assist homeless patients at the John Wesley Community Health (JWCH) Medical Clinic on Skid Row. The intent of the program is to increase follow-up rates and provide basic case management for patients to hopefully improve their health and social outcomes through motivational interviewing and rapport building.

Why did you choose the USC School of Pharmacy?
I chose to attend this school because I had a vision to work with the underserved. Dr. Steven Chen has done phenomenal work with safety-net clinics.

What is one of your best experiences at the school so far?
With the support of Dr. Cynthia Lieu, director of Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experience [IPPE] programs, I was given the opportunity to create my own IPPE elective, where I could incorporate clinical pharmacy services into opioid abuse management at a community pharmacy setting. I have gained valuable experience in protocol writing for naloxone and have done a lot of research on how to best market clinical pharmacy services for collaborative practice agreements.

What are your plans after graduation?
Ideally, I would like to expand on the idea of the safety-net clinics, and own and operate an independent pharmacy that provides clinical services for the underserved. I envision a community pharmacy that has a primary care provider who is in collaborative practice agreement with the pharmacist to provide clinical services.

HEESOO KIM

What issue are you working on as a Schweitzer Fellow?
Our homeless advocacy program aims to improve the flow between JWCH’s student-run mobile clinics and the main clinic on Skid Row. We accompany patients to their referral appointments and meet with them regularly to help them take advantage of the health and social services available to them. It motivates me to continue pursuing a career that benefits those who are often overlooked by society.

Why did you choose the USC School of Pharmacy?
As an undergraduate at USC, I became passionate about working with the homeless at Skid Row after participating in an urban poverty program and volunteering at the Los Angeles Christian Health Centers. I saw USC pharmacy students and residents providing screenings and counseling services to patients there. It also displayed the school’s commitment to serving the underserved, which was crucial in my decision to attend USC for my PharmD degree.

How have the resources at USC helped you?
I’m in the dual-degree program for PharmD and a master’s in global medicine. The global medicine program gave me a broader perspective of health and grew my appreciation for the nonclinical aspects of pharmacy that impact patient care. It prepares me to have a holistic approach in caring for my future patients.

What are your plans after graduation?
My immediate plan is to do a residency in psychiatric pharmacy. There are so many barriers to mental healthcare, and I want to use my pharmacy career to make these services more accessible.
New PharmD Concentrations

The USC School of Pharmacy introduced six areas of concentration in the PharmD curriculum in the 2016-17 academic year:

» Comprehensive Medication Management and High-Risk Populations
» Education
» Health Systems and Care Management
» Pharmaceutical Industry
» Public and International Health
» Research

Twelve units are required for each area of concentration and can be completed as part of the regular PharmD curriculum.
Romanian Aid

Carrying 850 pounds of medications and medical supplies, food to share and selfless dedication, a team of USC PharmD students journeyed to Romania as part of the school’s Global Health Initiative. Led by Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy Naomi Florea, they collaborated with local physicians and pharmacists to deliver much-needed care over two weeks in July.

The countryside in Romania is beautiful, but life there can be harsh. Nearly half the population lives in rural areas, where unemployment is high and assets are sparse. The World Bank estimates that 70 percent of rural Romanians live below the poverty line, and the nation’s infrastructure remains ill-equipped to meet their health, educational and other needs. Still, the students were heartened by the openness, spirit and courage of the Romanians they met.

Tam Phan, a third-year pharmacy student, describes one of his patients as a “warrior.” She has four children, including an infant, he says, “and her family has no access to basic resources — let alone medical care. She told me all the money her family makes goes to the children because she puts them as first priority.” Phan adds that the woman prays each day that her children will have better lives than she’s had. She welcomed the student caregivers into her home — one of a number of Romanians who did so.

Care and empathy

Aided by three local physicians and Romanian medical students acting as translators, the USC team treated 600 patients with chronic diseases, including diabetes, asthma, congestive heart failure and parasitic infections common in the agricultural region.

Third-year student Jessica Chandler called it a privilege to provide care for people in an area where a trip to the doctor might cost someone their food for a week.

1. The USC School of Pharmacy delegation to Romania found the experience transformative. “This trip truly opened up my mind to show me the true capabilities of a pharmacist,” third-year student Ryan Hays says.
2. Dozens of pairs of donated eyeglasses were among the 850 pounds of supplies the group carried in suitcases.
3. Naomi Florea, associate professor of Clinical Pharmacy, led the team over two weeks in July.
4. “Our long days in clinic and visits to families devastated by health and social issues afforded me a renewed perspective on what it means to be an effective clinician,” third-year student Elena Trang says.
5. Aided by three local physicians and Romanian medical students acting as translators, the USC team treated 600 patients with chronic diseases.
The team met a woman who had suffered traumatic brain injury due to severe domestic abuse, and a little girl who had narrowly escaped attempts at human trafficking. They saw untreated wounds and fungal infections. They witnessed numerous patients in hypertensive crisis, and a 6-year-old boy who had been wrongly diagnosed with schizophrenia and prescribed antipsychotic medication after suffering night terrors.

“I’ve learned that displaying compassion can go a long way in providing the best possible care for our patients,” fourth-year student Mark Sheng says.

“We saw a lot of people who had never seen a physician for their conditions,” Florea says. The trip is the latest in a series of clinical outreach travels that Florea has organized to enable students to gain invaluable professional — and personal — experience by aiding the medically underserved around the world.

“There are no words for how much of an inspiration Dr. Florea is to me and our team,” Chandler says.

Florea, in turn, was moved by the kindness and the capabilities of the students, who worked long hours in hot and stressful conditions. “They were so kind, had so much empathy, had so much compassion for these patients,” she says. “They came in students; they walked out clinicians. They undoubtedly made the Trojan Family proud.”

“We saw a lot of people who had never seen a physician for their conditions.”

Associate Professor Naomi Florea
Can you identify any of these 1970s-era students in front of the school’s entrance? Send your comments to kellermi@usc.edu.
Your scholarship gift helps the USC School of Pharmacy continue to attract and retain the very best and brightest students.

Support USC School of Pharmacy students and invest in their future. Give now online at pharmacyschool.usc.edu/giving/making-a-gift

Pictured: members of the Class of 2020