USC ranks 3rd in nation for fundraising, bested by Harvard and Stanford

By Larry Gordon

USC is once again ranked third among U.S. universities for its fundraising successes, according to a national survey being released Wednesday. USC was reported to have received nearly $732 million in gifts in 2014.

The annual survey by the Council for Aid to Education found that Harvard University was first, with $1.16 billion in donations, setting a new record. Stanford came next, with $928.4 million. For 2013 results, the previous report put Stanford first, Harvard second and USC third.

Other schools among the top 10 fundraisers in 2014 — all above $460 million — were Northwestern, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, University of Texas at Austin, University of Pennsylvania, University of Washington and Columbia. Three other California campuses were in the top 20: UC San Francisco was 12th, with about $445 million; UCLA, 16th, garnered $430.2 million; UC Berkeley, 18th, at nearly $390 million.

The council’s Voluntary Support of Education survey showed that philanthropy to higher education reached a new high in 2014. Donations to colleges and universities totaled $37.45 billion, up 10.8% from the previous year. Such giving has more than recovered since the slump that occurred in 2009 after the stock market crash. The stock market’s substantial increases in 2014 helped boost donations, the report said.

The report was released as USC announced that it had raised $4 billion in gifts and pledges toward its ambitious campaign goal of $6 billion by June 2018. In a letter to the campus community Tuesday, USC President C. L. Max Nikias thanked donors and fundraisers but warned against complacency.

“We still have $2 billion left to raise, and the final stretch of any campaign is always the most difficult,” Nikias wrote.
By David Medzerian

The Campaign for the University of Southern California — the university’s ambitious $6 billion fundraising effort — has passed a key milestone, crossing the $4 billion mark.

Among all colleges and universities in our nation, only Harvard, Cornell, Stanford, Penn and Columbia have accomplished this,” USC President C. L. Max Nikias wrote in a letter on Jan. 27, “and what is even more remarkable: We achieved this landmark in just 4½ years.

“I share this news with great pride and gratitude, as it represents the collective efforts and dedication of the entire Trojan Family, with gifts coming from every corner of the world, and every constituent group in our community,” Nikias said. Nikias specifically noted the generosity of the USC trustees, along with the university’s parents and alumni. He noted:

- Trustees have given a combined $1.12 billion to the campaign.
- 60 percent of the total amount raised has come from non-alumni.
- USC Athletics has raised nearly $280 million during the campaign, its most successful fundraising ever.

The campaign’s focus is academics, said Albert R. Checcio, senior vice president for university advancement.

“We are humbled by the incredible support of the Trojan Family for the campaign, and excited by how this investment will empower our faculty and students to continue USC’s pursuit of academic excellence,” he said.

Nikias noted that there is still work to be done to reach the campaign’s goal. “The final stretch of any campaign is always the most difficult,” he said.

He concluded, “In a very real way, our campaign advances academic excellence that touches all sectors of society, while cementing USC’s position among the world’s top research universities.”