Lynn Swann will become USC’s next athletic director effective July 1, USC President C. L. Max Nikias announced today.

Swann is a legend in Trojan and NFL football, a highly regarded international media broadcaster, an extraordinarily effective leader and a deeply committed civic figure. The Most Valuable Player of Super Bowl X, Swann is already well known to the Trojan Family, as well as to individuals around the world. Swann will replace Pat Haden, who in February announced he will retire as athletic director on June 30.

“To his new role, Lynn Swann will bring the heart and soul of a Trojan,” said Nikias. “He shares our profound dedication to combining academic excellence with athletic excellence.”

In a letter to the USC community, Nikias said he expects Swann to bring his experience, expertise and sheer love for intercollegiate athletics to important national conversations and reforms, particularly through the university’s leadership in the Pac-12, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the College Football Playoff (CFP) association and the Olympic movement.

“I am excited about coming back to USC — its growth and success under President Nikias has been phenomenal and my family and I are looking forward to being a part of that,” said Swann. “As athletic director, my goals for the student-athletes will be to graduate, to win and to experience.”

Excellence on and off the field
Swann earned his bachelor’s degree in public relations from the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. While pursuing academics at USC, he excelled on the football field, playing on two Rose Bowl teams and a National Championship team in 1972. He was team captain, most valuable player and an All-American in 1973.

Swann later returned to USC to take graduate-level courses in broadcast production along with outside instruction in writing, speech and acting, continuing his education and preparing for his future.

“USC opened doors for me,” Swann said. “I learned about myself, and my education created a pathway to go forward. I was always looking toward preparing for that career beyond football.

“It is foundational for our student-athletes to earn their degree,” he added. “Education is about laying each brick of that foundation, one day at a time.”

His collegiate success led to a storied career in professional football. In 1974, Swann was drafted in the first round by the Pittsburgh Steelers, and quickly became a cornerstone of the Steelers’ dynasty, winning four Super Bowls and playing in three Pro Bowls. In 2001, he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Swann drew on these successes to distinguish himself as an acclaimed leader in both the civic and corporate spheres. He served as president of the national board of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, an organization with which he was active for more than 30 years. As president, he managed more than 300 agencies across the United States and helped establish the organization as the premier mentoring group in the nation.

In 2006, Swann entered the Pennsylvania gubernatorial race — a campaign that drew significant praise for its organization and focus as he attempted to become the first African-American governor in that state’s history. He has further sharpened his governance experience in the boardroom as a director of a range of international companies, with previous service on the boards of the H. J. Heinz Co., Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, and Hershey Entertainment and Resorts. Effective July 1, however, he intends only to serve on the Fluor Corp. board and the board of the non-profit PGA of America, until his term with that organization ends in November.
In addition, Swann established himself as a globally admired media commentator. Since 1976, he has worked for ABC, serving as a host, reporter, and analyst for a wide range of events, including the 1984 Summer Olympics, 1988 Winter Olympics, the International Diving Championships, college and Monday Night Football, the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes, the Irish Derby and Wide World of Sports.

Motivational speaker and more
Swann has emerged as a charismatic motivational speaker, offering an inspiring voice on the importance of assuming responsibility, strong leadership and maximizing opportunities. Recognizing Swann’s deftness as a leader, President George W. Bush appointed him as chair of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

“This new role as A.D. fits with my life focus of leadership, mentoring young people, helping others, and giving them the tools they need to grow and achieve,” said Swann.

Swann also stands as a respected philanthropist, and has raised money to provide scholarships for the Pittsburgh Ballet. His involvement with dance dates back to age 8, when his mother enrolled him in a dance class — a decision that would lay the foundation for the extraordinary coordination, physical precision and keen sense of balance that would become hallmarks of his illustrious career as a wide receiver.

Long list of accolades
Swann received numerous accolades throughout his career, including induction into the National Football Foundation’s College Football Hall of Fame and the Senior Bowl Hall of Fame. In 1997, he received the Walter Camp Football Foundation Man of the Year Award, and in 2000, the Pop Warner Little Scholars Tomlin Award and the Pittsburgh YMCA Man of the Year Award. Swann was voted NFL Man of the Year in 1981, and inducted into the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame and the Bowling Hall of Fame.

More than 200 candidates were considered for the position of USC athletic director, and the pool was diverse and highly qualified.

In his letter to the USC community, Nikias thanked Pat Haden for his stellar leadership as athletic director over the last 5 1/2 years.

Swann is welcomed back to USC with his wife, Dr. Charena Swann, and their two sons: Braxton, who will attend USC this fall as a freshman, and Shafer, a student at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Sixteen things you might not know about Lynn Swann

By Houston Mitchell

USC named former Trojans football star
Lynn Swann as its new athletic director on Wednesday. Swann will take over the job on July 1, replacing the retiring Pat Haden.

Here are a few things you may, or may not, know about Swann.
1. He won the long jump title at the 1970 CIF California state track and field championships.
2. The person who finished second to him that year: Randy Williams, who won the long jump gold medal at the 1972 Olympics.
5. Was selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the first round, 21st overall, in the 1974 NFL draft.
6. As a rookie, he led the NFL with 577 punt return yards.
7. Appeared on an episode of “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood” in 1981, where he showed how studying dance as a kid helped him become a better football player.
8. Won four Super Bowls as a member of the Steelers.
9. Retired after the 1982 season.
10. Was named to the NFL’s All-Decade Team of the ’70s.
11. Was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1993.
15. Ran for governor of Pennsylvania as a Republican in 2006 but lost to incumbent Ed Rendell, 60.4%-39.6%.