USC Annenberg’s media center named for CBS’ Leslie Moonves, Julie Chen

By Yvonne Villarreal

CBS CEO Leslie Moonves and his wife, “The Talk” co-host Julie Chen, are going back to school — at least their names are, anyway.

USC Annenberg announced Wednesday that its media center of the new Wallis Annenberg Hall will be named after Moonves, Chen — an alumna — and CBS.

The 20,000-square foot, two-story space is a fully converged newsroom that houses the school’s student-run digital, broadcast, radio and public relations operations.

Moonves is a member of the USC School of Cinematic Arts’ Board of Councilors and a past member of USC Annenberg’s Board of Councilors. Chen, who also hosts CBS’ “Big Brother,” graduated from the school in 1991 with a degree in broadcast journalism and English.

The naming of the center, hereby referred to as the Julie Chen/Leslie Moonves and CBS Media Center, comes as a result of a joint, undisclosed donation to USC Annenberg. The couple commemorated the building’s christening Wednesday afternoon on campus.

Moonves and Chen join an elite group of Hollywood heavyweights who have cemented their legacy with a prominent USC building named in their honor.

Filmmakers Steven Spielberg and George Lucas have buildings in the School of Cinematic Arts complex named after them. Sumner Redstone in 2013 gave a $10-million gift to the USC School of Cinematic Arts, and not long after a building in its Cinematic Arts complex was christened the Sumner M. Redstone Production Building.
USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism said the media center of the new Wallis Annenberg Hall will be named after alumna Julie Chen, Leslie Moonves and CBS.

The 20,000-square-foot, two-story Julie Chen/Leslie Moonves and CBS Media Center is a fully converged newsroom that includes audio, video and text production. It combines USC Annenberg’s student-run digital, television, radio and public relations operations.

“This generous gift from Julie Chen and Les Moonves prepares today’s communication and journalism students for the world of tomorrow by mastering cross-discipline technology in a real-world setting,” USC President C. L. Max Nikias said in a statement. “The new Chen/Moonves and CBS Media Center is the centerpiece of innovation in a building, the Wallis Annenberg Hall, that represents innovative thinking.”

Chen, host of the CBS shows “The Talk” and “Big Brother,” graduated from USC Annenberg in 1991 with a bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism and English. She is married to Moonves, president and chief executive of CBS Corp. Moonves also is a member of the USC School of Cinematic Arts’ Board of Councilors and a past member of USC Annenberg’s Board of Councilors.

Moonves said they were inspired to contribute by the Wallis Annenberg Hall’s focus on the future of media. “This is a best-in-class, next-generation newsroom that our family and CBS are proud to be part of,” Moonves said. “USC Annenberg has developed a leading-edge, fully converged environment for the creators and journalists of tomorrow, and we’re thrilled to support its future success.”

After visiting the campus and seeing the impressive Wallis Annenberg Hall for the first time, I was inspired to support my alma mater and prouder than ever to be a Trojan,” Chen said. “Spending time with the bright, engaged students I’ve met at USC Annenberg — and seeing these cutting-edge studios and workspaces come to life — energized and motivated me to be involved and hopefully make an impact on future generations of journalists and communicators.”

The Wallis Annenberg Hall, which opened on Oct. 1, was built for $59 million and was designed to offer students and scholars a collaborative environment. It was named after Wallis Annenberg, president and CEO of the Annenberg Foundation.

Digital media production in the media center feeds stories for all of USC Annenberg’s news sites: Neon Tommy, Annenberg Radio News, Annenberg TV News, Intersections and USC Impact. Journalism and communication students share material and expertise among platforms, using up-to-the-minute technologies. It’s also a base for communication scholars to conduct media research, and for PR students to share real-time analysis of social media.

The multipurpose television, radio and direct-to-Web video broadcast studios allow students to stream professional-quality programming to any medium. A signature element of the center is its glassed-in video broadcast studio, visible from Childs Way, that is dubbed the “do-it-yourself” studio because its basic switching technology allows students to direct and produce a Web or TV program while sitting in front of the camera.