



December 17, 2020

Dear Trojan Students and Parents,

As the year draws to a close, I want to thank you for so adeptly navigating the many challenges that were thrown your way over the past several extraordinary months. I hope you and your families are enjoying some well-deserved down time together.

As you may have seen last week, we extended our winter recess by one week for our staff so they can take a much-needed break with their families as well. Our goal is to have our students, faculty, and staff return rested and energized for the Spring semester ahead.

As COVID cases surge here in Los Angeles and around the country, we are heartened that our Trojan community has been adhering to the safety programs we have put in place. That, coupled with our testing and contact tracing protocols, have enabled us to avoid large outbreaks among our students in residence halls and among the thousands of others living near our campuses.

As we prepare for the start of Spring semester, we will continue to follow the guidelines set forth by the state and county. As we communicated last month, we will begin our semester remotely on January 15, but will be ready to pivot whenever we get permission from county health authorities. We encourage those returning to off-campus residences near USC to delay their arrival until conditions in LA County improve.

We are hopeful we may be able to return some students to our residence halls perhaps as early as February – with a focus on first-year students and seniors. **We are planning to open our USC Housing portal for applications in January, and you will hear more details about this after the first of the year.** This early opening of the portal will enable students to apply for campus housing prorated to the time they are actually here. This will also give our USC Housing staff the ability to plan for the return of up to 4,500 students in single-occupancy rooms, if and when we have the green light.

While most learning will likely remain remote during the semester, we know how important it is to have some increased activity for those living on or near our campuses. We are optimistic we will be able to open our libraries and outdoor facilities at a reduced capacity early in the semester and install large tents across campus for studying. Of course, this is contingent on

approval from the county, but we are confident from our discussions with health officials that as soon as increased activity is permitted in Los Angeles, the needs of higher education will be top of mind. Please know we will also continue to offer a robust slate of virtual events in the Spring to help students stay engaged with the University and with each other.

We gained valuable experience from our testing programs in the Fall. As communicated by Dr. Van Orman [earlier this week](#), we are ramping up our testing and screening capacity from 5,000 per week to 100,000 per week as needed beginning in January. We are currently validating a cutting-edge technology solution for rapid detection that we hope to implement soon. We also are adding 50 healthcare workers to our staff to support our testing and screening operations on our University Park and Health Sciences campuses as we plan for increased activity levels. Finally, our vaccine working group is developing a protocol for allocation and prioritization of the vaccine for our USC staff, faculty, students, and patients. You will hear much more about that effort in the coming weeks.

We want you to go into the holidays knowing we are doing everything we can to bring students back to campus safely and responsibly. Our administration, faculty, and staff miss interacting with you – our students – in person as much as you miss being here on campus.

Please stay safe and healthy, and best wishes for a joyous holiday and a happy New Year.

Fight On!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol L. Folt".

Carol L. Folt
President