Dean's Remarks at the Trojan League of Los Angeles

Annual Benefit

November 21, 2011

Good morning, everyone. On behalf of the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development, I would like to welcome all of you to this wonderful event.

I am delighted to see such a tremendous turnout this morning.

*It’s really quite unusual to see such a large gathering of alumni on campus, on a Saturday — especially outside of the football season.*
Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to introduce the SPPD faculty members who will be presenting on today’s panels. As I call your names, will you please stand:

- Dr. Elizabeth Graddy and Dr. Juliet Musso: “California in the 21st Century: Are We Governable?”

- Dr. Dowell Myers and Dr. Harry Pachon: “California’s Demographic Future: New Lessons on Immigration”

- Dr. Darius Lakdawalla and Dr. Mike Nichol: “Healthcare and Health Policy: Where Do We Go from Here?”

- Dr. Gen Giuliano and Dr. Richard Green: “Real Estate Development, Transportation, and Communities of the Future”

Soon, you will have an opportunity to hear from these members of our faculty, as they share their insights on these urgent topics, during the breakout panels. I hope that you will find today’s discussions stimulating, informative, and meaningful.

Thank you all for joining us this morning. We are thrilled that the Trojan League of Los Angeles has chosen to showcase SPPD at this year’s benefit.
Today, I hope to leave you with a better sense of who we are, as a school, and the kind of work in which we engage.

In today’s world, social and economic challenges have become increasingly complex and enduring. In addition to such thorny issues as health care, energy, and security, we have had to navigate through the unprecedented financial crisis and economic recession—one of the most extraordinary challenges of our generation.

We also face enormous governance challenges in the institutions and decision processes by which we make choices and solve problems. The financial crisis, for example, laid bare the weaknesses in the governance of our private corporations and regulatory agencies. The budget gridlock in California shows the weaknesses in state governance.

Successfully tackling these multifaceted, often intractable, problems is what our school is all about. Today’s headlines—rising unemployment, effective public and non-profit management, homeland security, healthcare reform, old infrastructure, transportation gridlock, environmental and financial
sustainability, and a depressed real estate and housing market—are being
tackled head-on by our students, faculty and alumni.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for people and their
communities, here and abroad. We seek to accomplish this mission through
learning, application of professional practice, and research on major issues
affecting communities and society. This vision of a better world is what
SPPD strives to achieve in its work and seeks to instill in its students.

This past year we celebrated our 80th anniversary as a school! In January,
2009 in Los Angeles, we celebrated the anniversary with a wonderful mini-
conference focused on the theme of “Working across Boundaries to Solve
Public Problems.”

Indeed, SPPD today distinguishes itself from our academic peers by
embracing an approach that builds bridges across boundaries to provide
innovative solutions to societal issues.

We build bridges across academic silos with an interdisciplinary approach.
SPPD’s independent, yet related, degree programs in public administration,
public policy, urban planning, real estate development, health
administration, and executive leadership foster innovation across fields.

In addition, we focus on finding solutions to public problems by working
across the public, business, and nonprofit sectors. Housing and
transportation, for example, are not just private sector activities, but
represent the coming together of business with the public and non-profit
sectors in the development of cities.

And finally, more than most policy schools, we connect theory and academic
quality to the community of practice.

In this regard, I estimate that there are over 300 leaders from the community
and the professions serving on the school’s key advisory boards and support
groups. We have many prominent professionals serving as adjunct faculty
and Senior Fellows. In addition, we pride ourselves on our mentorships,
internship programs, residencies, and teaching labs in the U.S. and abroad.
Today SPPD is one of the largest policy schools in the country. In 2009-10 we have over 1450 students, including 815 master’s degree students; 105 Ph.D. and professional doctoral students; and over 500 undergraduate students. We have 12 research centers some of which are federally funded and others that are endowed through generous gifts from supporters.

In addition, SPPD has about 15,000 alumni worldwide, and our graduates take jobs in several fields, including consulting, government, non-profit organizations, foundations, educational institutions, and private firms. They serve as city managers, mayors, city planners, real estate developers, federal officials, and non-profit, health care, and education executives. They include the honorable Joyce Kennard, member of the California Supreme Court, Chris Van Gorder, CEO of Scripts Health Systems in San Diego, Lee Baca, Sheriff of L.A. County, David Dollinger, CEO of Dollinger Properties in the Bay Area, and Margarita McCoy, an early pioneer for women in the urban planning profession.

We are recognized as one of the most distinguished policy schools in the country.
Presently, SPPD ranks #7 among “America’s Best Graduate Schools” for public affairs, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, placing us in the top 3 percent of schools nationwide. This is the 4th consecutive top-10 ranking for SPPD.

Our students achieve very high scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Scholastic Aptitude Test. The GRE scores for Ph.D. students have been especially high in recent years, averaging 1398, one of the highest GRE scores at USC. In addition, SPPD has a policy that all faculty, no matter how senior, must teach on a regular rotating basis in the undergraduate program.

This year our faculty have 110 active research grants and contracts for a total value of $27 million, which places us 3rd at USC in research grants per faculty member—a reflection of both faculty productivity and the quality of research.
SPPD houses 12 research centers focused on important policy and development issues, including 3 endowed centers, one of which is the Lusk Center for Real Estate, whose director, Richard Green, is a presenter today.

I should also mention the METRANS Transportation Center, a federal and state funded center joint with the USC Engineering School, whose director, Gen Giuliano, is a presenter today.

And we have 2 new centers this year, the Center for Sustainable Cities, and the Schaeffer Center on Health Policy and Economics.

The Schaeffer Center is in collaboration with the USC School of Pharmacy. Professor Lakdawalla, whom you will hear from in the health policy session today, is part of the Schaeffer Center and also a former senior economist with RAND.

As you can tell from the issues we examine and the work in which we are involved, SPPD is dedicated to being compassionate and engaged — by having a positive impact on communities and society. Indeed, I have always
felt that the strength of SPPD lies in its ability to make a difference in the world.

SPPD faculty are renowned scholars whose research enriches academic knowledge and helps shape real-world solutions. The faculty are much sought-after experts. In recent months, 31 SPPD faculty members have been quoted or interviewed – some of them multiple times – by the news media, reaching more than 250 million people. They have been cited on topics ranging from health care reform to the financial crisis.

Our professors have delivered expert testimony before lawmakers in Sacramento and Washington. They serve on important advisory boards and federal committees dealing with national transportation, earthquake resilience, infrastructure, climate-change adaptation, immigration, and environmental protection, just to name a few.

Our school is proud to have alumni and faculty working hard, in the highest posts of the federal government, to create effective policies that serve the public good.
- Professor Raphael Bostic: is the undersecretary for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Alumna Hilda Solis: is the Secretary of the U.S. Labor Department

- Alum Alan Hoffman: is the deputy chief of staff for Vice President Joe Biden

- Doctoral Student Barney Melekian: is executive director of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office at the U.S. Department of Justice

And with SPPD’s State Capital Center in Sacramento, our school is able to engage directly with legislators and public officials in state policy and management challenges and opportunities.

The reach of SPPD’s impact extends into the international community as well. Our school has established recent partnerships with the World Bank, the Korean Institute of Public Administration, and the Peace Corps.

These collaborations are examples of our international focus and initiatives, which provide students with a necessary global perspective. Because the
professions are becoming global, it is no longer a luxury to have an international fabric to your school — it is essential for the way we train students and the kind of research we do.

Successfully tackling multifaceted, often intractable, problems and pursuing new exciting opportunities for the future require exceptional levels of leadership and collaboration.

We train students today with an understanding of ethics and public service; knowledge of the inter-relationships between public and private sector problem solving; and a solid policy-analytical, institutional, and managerial knowledge to tackle complex problems. We also want students to learn entrepreneurship and innovation and to seek out new opportunities and plans for the future, not only in business, but also in nonprofits and the public sector.

Our Students come from diverse backgrounds and offer diverse perspectives. Our school has students from 37 different countries; we have students from
39 different US states; about 50% of our students are female; and 41% are minority students.

- They have started their own foundations and companies, served as presidents of volunteer organizations, run political campaigns, managed public and non-profit agencies, made movies, planned new communities, and defended our country.

- *They are tomorrow's leaders*, and they are studying at SPPD in order to have a broader impact on their chosen field and to help shape the world for the better.

I’m sure you will agree that now, more than ever before, it is vital to find lasting solutions to society’s biggest challenges and exciting, new opportunities for the future. And at SPPD, this is, fundamentally, what we strive to achieve.

Thank you!