

Dean Pedro Noguera Installation

October 1, 2020

President Carol Folt, Provost Chip Zukoski, faculty, staff, students and alumni of the Rossier School of Education and of USC, and last but not least, members of the Noguera family who have joined this gathering:

I am deeply honored to assume the title of Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education. I too want to recognize and thank Karen Symms Gallagher, the Rossier Board of Councilors, and my new colleagues—the faculty and staff of USC Rossier—for the strong state in which I found the School when I arrived to join you, just three months ago this very day.

Those who know me may be surprised by my appointment as Dean. They know that I have been reluctant about assuming a position of administrative leadership. My hesitation was not because I don't value and appreciate the need for such leadership, particularly in a school of education. Rather, my reluctance was due to the fact that I have loved being a professor. I love doing research and writing, delivering lectures around the world, and serving on think tanks and as an advisor to school districts, universities and large organizations. Most of all, I have enjoyed teaching and advising students for the last 30 years, and I take great pride in what many of my former students have accomplished.

However, I'm now fully prepared for and excited about the prospect of working in support of other educators in my new role as Dean of Rossier. I am already fully immersed in the job, and I must admit that I love it. I am especially optimistic about our school's potential to do even more work that can transform the field of education. Although I will admit that I am a bit tired of sitting at my desk at home doing zoom meetings and presentations, I have begun coming into the office, and I am truly fascinated and deeply engaged by all aspects of the work we're doing at Rossier. With some of the top researchers in the field and a team of faculty and staff who are committed to students and to providing educational professionals at all levels with the very best training possible, I have been energized by what I've seen and experienced so far.

I now have a new appreciation for the role of Dean. In explaining what it means to be a Dean to one of my granddaughters, I told her that it was like being a coach; you don't get to play the game, but you must develop a strategy and produce results. I am confident that we at Rossier are well-positioned to produce highly significant results. When I was selected for this job by President Folt, I embraced the opportunity because I believe in the power of education, and I believe that,

even in this moment of conflict, tumult and uncertainty, Rossier will have an even greater impact on our field, locally, nationally and internationally.

My belief and optimism are rooted in the research and in my personal and professional experience. From a personal standpoint, I know firsthand the transformative power of education. Growing up in one of few neighborhoods in New York that still today has not gentrified, education transformed my life. It opened doors for me and created possibilities that I never knew existed. President Folt spoke of my parents, immigrants from the Caribbean, and my upbringing with my five siblings. My father was a police officer for 22 years until he was injured in the line of duty. He also drove a taxi while my mother managed our family. Like most immigrants, they knew how to “get the job done,” but they also instilled in us a strong belief in the value of education. They held us to high standards, they imparted a strong sense of discipline and responsibility in us, and they expected us to perform.

But my experience is just one example of the power of education. We know from research that education can break the cycle of poverty, particularly when we focus on educating women and girls. We know that education is the most effective means for reducing recidivism among those who are incarcerated, improving health outcomes, and feeding the democratic spirit in society, because educated people cannot be as easily manipulated by demagogues or misled by hate-filled rhetoric and “fake news.” The research shows us that education is our best resource for countering ignorance, hatred and bigotry.

I believe Rossier is more than ready to lead on many of these issues. We have a proud legacy of training educational leaders throughout California and the nation, and our faculty have received numerous awards and honors for their cutting-edge research and scholarship.

Together, we can and will do even more. I have already begun working with faculty and staff on three initiatives that are critical to our field, and I would argue, to the future of our country. These are:

- 1) **Re-imagining education after the pandemic:** We will launch a series of conversations with thought leaders in technology, media, science, education and policy to explore how we can bring innovative ideas into schools to make them more responsive to the social and emotional needs of children, to make learning more stimulating and engaging, and to make schools more equitable, too.
- 2) **Creating the next generation of teachers for Los Angeles:** Building on our past work with the L.A. Unified School District, our next collaboration will be to design a residency teacher

education program that will increase the supply of diverse, committed and talented teachers to L.A.

- 3) **Education for Democracy:** We will work with historians, seasoned practitioners and several online platforms to design curricula that can be used by teachers to prepare students to think critically, to understand our history and the Constitution, to engage in civil debate, and to be prepared to defend and participate in democracy.

You will learn more about these initiatives in the coming weeks. Through our actions you will see that our mission at Rossier is well aligned with the mission of USC as described by President Folt—a private university with a public purpose. Our goal is to ensure that Rossier will be a leader in devising solutions to some of the complex challenges that face education and society today.

We already lead in so many ways. President Folt mentioned that more than 75 of Rossier's alumni currently serve as K through 12 superintendents in California. Additionally, we have partnerships with dozens of educational organizations and nonprofits, and we work closely with over 150 K-12 schools in Los Angeles alone. We work with school districts across California as well, but increasingly our reach extends across the country and throughout world. All of these activities serve as evidence that USC Rossier has the capacity and vision to lead on many different fronts. Most importantly, we have the commitment of our dedicated faculty, students and staff to play a leadership role in the work that lies ahead.

I'm sure we all agree that these are challenging and stressful times. We live with extraordinary uncertainty that is taking a toll on our nerves and well-being. We cannot predict what will happen with the coming election, when the pandemic will subside and we will be allowed to return to campus, or when we will be hit by yet another disaster, natural or human-made. However, we do know that education continues to be our best resource, and perhaps our most reliable means, to prepare for the future.

It is often said that children are the future. If that statement is more than merely a cliché, we must do everything possible to ensure that all children receive an education that will prepare them for the uncertainty and the challenges they will inherit. Education is in fact our most effective tool for creating a more just, equitable and sustainable world. It is our means for ensuring that our children and future generations will have the resourcefulness, character, mindset and wherewithal to confront the challenges they will face with courage and intelligence, rather than fear and ignorance.

In order for education to rise to the challenge of the moment, we must address the system's flaws and recognize that if we are to use education as a means to prepare for the future, we cannot

afford to simply tinker around the edges of the system as we know it. Too often, the system of education in this country reproduces inequality, reinforces bias, leaves our children alienated and disengaged, and fails to provide the knowledge and skills needed to strengthen our democracy. We can and must do better. We must design a system that encourages all children to think critically, that cultivates their talents as problem solvers, and that grounds them in ethics and values, so that they resist the urge to place self-interest before collective interests, and individual rights and privileges ahead of human rights and social responsibility.

History tells us the stakes are high if we do not do this. To help explain why I believe it is education that must lead the way, I'd like to share the words of the late school teacher and child psychologist Haim Ginott ["HY-em JIN-ott"]. He quotes from a letter that he and fellow Israeli teachers received from their principal every year:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot by high school and college graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education.

My request is this: Help your children become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths or educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

We at Rossier must commit ourselves to working to create an educational system that teaches and reminds children of what it truly means to be human and humane. We must not allow the dismal realities of the present or the threats of the future to overwhelm us, to drive us toward rugged individualism, or to diminish our optimism about creating a better future.

And lastly, as we contemplate the challenges that lie ahead, we must keep in mind that there are always two purposes to education: 1) to impart the skills and knowledge needed to function in society as it is, and 2) to cultivate the creativity, critical thinking and curiosity that future generations will need, so that they have the ability to solve the many problems they will inherit from this generation. Every educator must realize that despite the constraints they may work under, they have the power and responsibility to do both. Here is another quote from Ginott, from his book *Teacher and Child*:

I have come to a frightening conclusion.

I am the decisive element in the classroom.

It is my personal approach that creates the climate.

It is my daily mood that makes the weather.

As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous.

I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration.

As that brand new teacher in Providence who President Folt referred to, at the school that was regarded as the worst in the city, I quickly saw the power I had once the classroom door closed. With your support, I am confident that USC Rossier can lead our field in unleashing the power of education for every student, without exception. I believe education can be both the instrument of inspiration that Ginott spoke of, and the tool we so badly need right now for social transformation.

Thank you.