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Good afternoon and welcome! My name is Ernest Wilson and I am Dean of the USC Annenberg School.

I wish to thank President Sample, Provost Nikias, Wallis Annenberg, the university board of trustees, our Annenberg board of councilors, alumni and valued friends for joining us today to mark an important milestone in the life of the school. You honor us with your presence.

Two and a half years ago when I became Dean, I was privileged to join this great institution, one that was at the cutting edge of all that is important in our rapidly changing information society - technology was converging, media business models were exploding; for some, confidence was eroding; for many others, the new technologies brought great optimism of a new dawn of digital communications.

This confronted us with big challenges and big opportunities.

Our serious challenge as a relatively large institution was how to be exceedingly nimble, and to stay ahead of the curve. We took to heart Alan Key's observation that the best way to know the future is to help invent it. So we are.

I led a school-wide re-imagining of all we do, root and branch. The entire faculty and the students debated who we are, what our core values are and how we should lead into the future. I am happy to report the result is a new strategic plan that we like to refer to as Annenberg 3.0.

At the heart of our plan is one simple sentence that defines who we are: **USC Annenberg 3.0 is an innovative, full-service school in a networked university in the most global city in the United States.**

What does that mean exactly and how will that help to address the communication crisis? It means that in a new communication environment where everything is converging, we must leverage our own convergence. Happily, USC Annenberg has operated under a model of convergence for years.

We are one of the few schools in the U.S. to offer journalism, communication and public relations all under one roof. In 1994, the merger of three separate academic units into one communication powerhouse enabled us to confer undergraduate, master's and Ph.D. degrees. Since then we have developed mid-career professional education programs and dozens of research centers. Because we have all of these programs operating side by side, we have the unique breadth, firepower and the academic authority that makes us unique.

We are fortunate to be networked within this great research university. Annenberg is closely connected with many other schools and programs, and our faculty regularly collaborate and innovate with scholars across the campus.

And our location, in the center of the media capital of the world, provides special opportunities for our students and faculty.

At the moral and ethical center of our work must be communication for an equitable, diverse and democratic society.

Journalism education and media literacy, superior journalism, a free press and democracy are inextricably linked. Where there is no free press, there is no democracy.

It is incumbent upon us at USC Annenberg to step up and support the future of the profession and train the next generation of media leaders.

In this context we are frequently asked, “If not the Annenberg School, then who? If not now, then when?” The answer we give, of course, is, “Annenberg – now and always.”

We are already creating the future. Communication school director Larry Gross and his world-class faculty occupy the cutting edge of that important field. From Los Angeles to Washington to Beijing, people turn to our communication faculty as *the* experts for important issues of our day.

And under the leadership of our director of the journalism school, Geneva Overholser, Annenberg is emerging as a leader in digital media, multi-platform storytelling, and new business models for distributing information in the public interest.

As a result, students in both areas, communication and journalism, are learning how to be entrepreneurs and innovators as well as ethical, objective, and highly skilled analysts, and we are very proud of them.

We have accomplished much in a very short time. But we know there is still much to do.

As we move forward, we will continue to draw on the invaluable guidance and wise counsel of Wallis Annenberg. She has been a great friend of the school, a tireless advocate of innovation, and she has become a dear friend to Francille and me. Thank you, Wallis.

And now I would like to turn the program over to a great advocate for the integration of all forms of communication in a global society.

Since 1991, Steven B. Sample has led USC in its dramatic ascent into the top tier of the nation's elite research universities. Early on he recognized Southern California's stature as the communication capital of the world, and the importance of interdisciplinary teaching and research in creating new ideas and technologies.

He found great support for these ideas from Ambassador Walter Annenberg, Wallis and her family. Their generous support and vision have helped make the Annenberg School the interdisciplinary catalyst it is today, and a school that solves real-world problems.

We at the Annenberg School are grateful to have President Sample and Wallis Annenberg as our champions.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the 10th President of the University of Southern California, Dr. Steven B. Sample.

Wallis, please remain on stage for just a moment as we would like to present you with a small token of our appreciation for your support and to commemorate today.

To help with this I would like Alvand Abdol-Salehi to come to the stage. Alvand is an undergraduate student in our broadcast journalism program and executive producer of Annenberg Television News.

Thank you, Alvand. One more thing, Wallis....I want to present you with a framed copy of the announcement we will run in the Sunday *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* that declares our resolution to lead the way in journalism as well as communication.

Thank you all for joining us today. Please enjoy your day.