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# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

# What is the “Culture Journey”?

Right now, at USC we are focusing on revitalizing our culture. For the first time in USC’s history, we are inviting the entire community to co-create USC’s values and subsequently bring those values to life. We are referring to this initiative as a *journey*, because transforming and improving our culture does not happen overnight, nor does it have a clearly defined end. It continues to build on shaping and improving our University-wide systems, people, and processes.

The journey has some important milestones that include everyone:

* July 2019 – October 2019: The journey starts with building **awareness**. The Culture Journey program team has been meeting with leaders and presenting across USC at faculty, staff, and student meetings. Materials are available on the USC Commitment to Change website to advance knowledge around the process and keep the community informed.
* October 2019: You will be invited to **share your voice** through a USC Values Poll – [click here for more information](#_What_is_the_1). The poll includes five questions focused on values: personal and USC-wide values you currently experience and your desired vision for the future.
* January 2020 – May 2020: The Values Poll is just the beginning of the journey. The next milestone will be the **Culture Sessions** – Town Halls and Discussion Sessions in early 2020 will provide an opportunity for the USC community to learn the results of the Values Poll and express to leaders their feedback on desired values and behaviors.
* June 2020 and Beyond: The Journey continues. Aligning on values and behaviors is only meaningful if it informs overall improvement of University-wide systems, processes, and our people. This part of the journey involves action planning at the leadership level and linking to our other critical pieces of culture that have been part of the discussion at USC for a few years: Wellness, Concerns, and Leadership Development.

# How did the Culture Journey get started?

The Culture Journey began with a group of passionate faculty, staff, and students who came together with the goal of bettering the USC experience for everyone. A brief history:

* In August 2017- December 2018, the Task Force on Workforce Standards and Employee Wellness consisting of faculty, staff, and students focused on understanding root issues behind concerns being raised in the media. Their final report assessed four areas of culture: leadership, concerns, wellness, and values (as well as some items that cut across units and schools).
* The focus on fostering wellness led to the formation of the President’s Culture Commission (the “PCC”) under Interim President Wanda Austin, and the creation of the Working Group on University Culture (the “Working Group”) to effectuate change as part of the overall strategy for culture cultivation and development.
* A second recommendation from the Task Force was to start the process of looking at the University’s core values, through a “Culture Values Assessment”. That CVA has evolved over time into the “Values Poll” that will launch in October.
* The Working Group has had a diverse group of 21 members of faculty and staff from the University Park Campus (“UPC”) and Health Sciences Campus (“HSC”), led by several Co-Chairs representing Faculty, Staff and Students, since January 2019. An initial area of focus has been contributing ideas around strategy, specifically related to the Values Poll (demographics questions), Communications and Engagement with the USC-Community, and Culture Facilitators and Culture Advocates who will be the “Culture Network” supporting the Culture Sessions (e.g. Town Halls and Discussion Sessions) in 2020.

# What is culture?

Culture consists of shared values, as well as the beliefs, actions and associated behaviors that support those values. Through sharing our voices by completing the Values Poll and participating in Culture Sessions, we will be able to identify and co-create the culture we want to build here at USC. We align our values to the appropriate behaviors we want to represent and begin the rewarding work of living the values we have identified together through 2020 and beyond.

# How can you capture the opinions of such a large community?

USC is working with an independent firm who will serve as a neutral guide on the Culture Journey (1-degree). They will help us capture the opinions of the entire USC community initially through:

* The Values Poll
* Culture Sessions (e.g. Town Halls and Discussion Sessions)

All 75,000 people in the USC Community will be invited to participate in the Values Poll and attend the Culture Sessions.

# Why are we doing this?

High trust environments are those where the organizational culture aligns with the values of its people. By asking the USC Community what is important to you, we can form the basis of a new culture at USC with authenticity.

An important part of this is to create clarity on the behaviors that demonstrate how we want to live these values – clarity on what we should and can expect from each other.

# Will the Culture Journey be used for research?

We are not submitting this project to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The initiative is not meant to serve as formal research study; it is an opportunity to gather input from the USC community on current and desired values. The Barrett methodology is grounded in applied research, and has been used across industries, including higher education. The data from the Values Poll and Culture Sessions will be used as a starting point for meaningful conversations around current and desired values and behaviors at USC.

# What is the Values Poll?

The Values Poll is a 15-minute, online poll that asks five crucial questions (English, Spanish).

1. Personal Values: Which 10 values most **reflect who you are**?
2. Current Culture: Which 10 values most reflect **your experience of your immediate environment** (school or unit)?
3. Current Culture: Which 10 values most reflect **your experience of USC as a whole**?
4. Desired Culture: Which 10 values do you believe **are essential for USC to achieve its highest potential**?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add? (open-ended)

# Why do we ask you about your personal values?

Understanding what matters to the people who are part of the Trojan community is a foundation for our culture project. That is why the first question on the Values Poll is about your personal values. Your personal values reflect what is important to you. They are a shorthand way of describing your motivations. Together with your beliefs, they are the causal factors that drive your decision-making.

When we come to work and our personal values clash with the culture we work in, it creates stress, confusion and disconnection. We are not asking people to change their personal values – what we want to do is find a pathway to a desired culture that is inclusive of the personal values of the people who spend their time inside our institution every day.

When it comes time to select our new values that represent the desired culture we all want to move towards we want to make sure that it aligns with the personal values of the people who will help us get there. Without this kind of alignment, it will be much harder to move to the desired culture.

# What is the purpose of the Values Poll?

The Values Poll results will serve as a starting point to enable deep, meaningful conversations around the culture at USC.

It will not be used to diagnose everything right or wrong with USC. The poll will not be the final word on our culture, but only a single facet of the conversation. We start with assessing our current and desired values.

Results will be shared openly to help the USC community shape USC’s desired values and create our behaviors to enhance USC’s culture.

# Who can take the Values Poll?

The Values Poll is for everyone at USC. Faculty, staff, and students in all departments and schools at USC are invited to participate. Your voice matters.

The more individuals from the USC Community who participate, the more accurate and authentic we can be in creating the vision for the future of USC. This university is made up of many diverse constituents. Everyone’s perspective matters. The Values Poll will be available in Spanish and English. Workstations will be available in select units for members of the community who may have limited access to a computer.

# Is the Values Poll anonymous?

Yes, individual responses and personal information will not be shared. Barrett Values Centre will generate a single-use link to be delivered to your inbox directly from USC Values Poll <uscvaluespoll@em.valuescentre.com> the entity hosting the survey and receiving the anonymous submissions. USC will not have access to your unique data. Barrett Values Centre will analyze and aggregate the data to produce reports for USC.

The Values Poll information will help us to start an open dialogue about where our culture is at. The reports will provide insight into themes in our current culture and will serve as a guidepost as we move into building the future of USC together.

# **What demographics questions will be on the Values Poll?**

(Please see Values Poll Fact Sheet for more information.)

* Role
* Unit
* Gender identity
* Race/ethnicity

# How will results be shared?

The high-level results will be shared through USC-wide communications, Town Halls, and Discussion Sessions beginning in December 2019 with overall Values Poll findings and invitation to Culture Sessions (Town Halls and Discussion Sessions).

# What is happening, when?

* An email invitation for the 2019 Values Poll will be sent out October 14th, and the poll will remain open until November 3rd.
* Results will be shared initially through a USC-wide email communication in December of 2019.
* Town Halls will be held beginning late January 2020 for the entire USC Community.
* Discussion Sessions will be held beginning in February 2020 and will continue through the end of the academic year.
* Feedback from the Culture Sessions will be consolidated on an ongoing basis through April 2020.
* We identify the culture we want to build through this school year and then begin the hard work of living the values we have identified together through 2020 and beyond.

# What are Culture Sessions?

Culture Sessions are a combination of Town Halls and Discussion Sessions designed to hear and discuss the overall results of the Values Poll.

Town Halls are forums to spread awareness of the USC Culture Journey and share results of the Values Poll with the USC community. The first Town Hall will be held in January 2020.

Discussion Sessions are a series of interactive discussions to share overall Values Poll results and discuss desired future-state USC values and behaviors. The feedback from all sessions will be coalesced by external experts for the purposes of creating an overarching set of values that are right for USC today.

Your feedback throughout the process will bring the results of the Values Poll to life by giving us insight into what behaviors you want to see associated with our new values. You can help us answer critical questions such as, “How do we want to live these values?” and “What can, and should, we expect from each other?”

# How many Culture Sessions will take place?

There will be eight Town Halls at the USC-wide level - faculty, staff, and students will be invited to attend. Each Town Hall can accommodate approximately 300-500 people, targeting up to 4,000 participants overall.There will be 160 Discussion Sessions total, with up to 4,000 participants overall. Approximately 100 Discussion Sessions are planned for schools/units. The number of Discussion Sessions will depend on the size of the school or unit. There will be 60 sessions focused on discussions around the USC-wide results. All Discussion Sessions will be capped at 25 participants. Targeted sessions are designed to enable action planning and provide input to values and behaviors.

# Who will be invited to the Town Halls and Discussion Sessions?

Town Halls are open to everyone in the USC community (including faculty, staff and students) however attendance will be limited in each session. Reservations will be made on a first-come-first-serve basis. Invitations will be widely distributed. Town Halls will be telecasted – allowing for unlimited participation. The audiences for Discussion Sessions will differ depending on the school or department. Up to 4,000 participants targeted for the eight Town Halls and 4,000 participants targeted for the 160 Discussion Sessions.

# What if I can’t attend the Culture Sessions in person?

There will be options for virtual Culture Sessions available for sign-up. We want your input, no matter where you are.

# Is there infrastructure is in place to sustain the Culture Journey?

Several working groups exist, such as the President’s Culture Commission (the “PCC”) and the Working Group on University Culture (the “Working Group”) to effectuate change as part of the overall strategy for culture cultivation and development. The members of the PCC and the Working Group are diverse and include members from Health Sciences Campus (“HSC”) and University Park Campus (“UPC”) and draw from faculty, staff, and students. An initial area of focus for these groups has been designing and leading the Culture Journey. The groups are also advancing work within four focus areas: Values, Leadership, Wellness, and Concerns.

# How can I get involved?

* **Spread the Word -** Please spread the word about the Culture Journey. The best way to drive participation in the Values Poll and Culture Sessions is by word of mouth.
* **Participate in the Values Poll and Culture Sessions -** The Values Poll will open on October 14th. Look for a link to the poll in your email! Opportunities to participate in Culture Sessions to discuss the results will follow.
* **Join the Culture Network -** (See Culture Network Fact Sheet for more information) or email **partnerforculturechange@usc.edu**to become a Partner! You will receive in-depth updates as we move through the process.

# What will change?

The input from the Values Poll and the Culture Sessions will enable alignment on sustainable values and behaviors over the long-term. Using the values as a guidepost, leadership can build strategy to support positive changes to processes and systems. High participation in the Values Poll and Culture Sessions will enable organizational changes that truly reflect the needs of our USC community.