



Bequests & Beneficiary Designations

What is a bequest? A bequest is a gift to USC made at the time of your passing, often through a will or living trust. Bequests also include gifts where USC is designated as a successor beneficiary of a financial or retirement account, or a life insurance policy.

Benefits and Considerations

- **Show your support now.** Establishing a bequest is a powerful way to demonstrate your support now—by planning for your and the University’s future.
- **Combine with current gifts.** Bequests are often combined with current gifts to increase the future impact. For example, you can establish a scholarship now, and add to it in the future through a bequest.
- **Revocable at any time.** Bequests are not payable until your death. You can amend or revoke your bequest at any time if your situation changes.
- **Membership in the Trojan Legacy Circle.** Making a bequest to USC entitles you to membership in this society, which honors those who have provided for a planned gift to the University through their estate plan or other deferred gifts.
- **Can USC count a bequest towards its goal in the current Campaign for USC?** Generally not. However, there are instances where a bequest may be counted when it’s part of an irrevocable legally binding pledge agreement.
- **Designated Purpose.** It is important to state the intended purpose of any gift. For example, a gift could be for scholarships, for a program or institute, or to support athletics. It is a good idea to share the purpose of your gift with the University in advance—to ensure your wishes are understood and can be carried out.
- **Unrestricted gifts.** A bequest might not be received by USC for many years. As a result, restrictions placed on the use of your gift should be as minimal as possible, providing USC with maximum flexibility as priorities and programs change over time. For this reason, you may want to consider making your bequest unrestricted—meaning it will be used at the discretion of the president or a school dean for the University or school’s highest priorities.
- **Endowment vs. current use.** Donors will often direct that their bequest be included in the University’s permanent endowment, which is a particularly effective way to leave a lasting legacy, since an endowment gift will support the purpose that is important to you in perpetuity. Alternatively, a bequest can provide that your gift be expended in full for the intended use, which is often referred to as a current use gift.

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How Do I Include USC in My Will or Living Trust?

- **Amendment to existing documents.** If you already have a will or living trust, you can easily amend it to add USC as a beneficiary. In fact, it's a good idea to review your estate planning documents periodically to ensure your wishes and beneficiaries are properly set forth.
- **Flexibility.** A bequest can provide for a gift of a specific dollar amount, a particular asset (such as real estate, securities, or tangible personal property), or a percentage of your net estate.
- **Bequest Language.** The following language may be used for making a gift to USC by will or living trust:

“I hereby give to the University of Southern California, located in Los Angeles, California:

the sum of \$ _____ [amount]

and/or

the following described property:

_____ [description]

and/or

_____ [percent] % of the residue of my estate.”

[For bequests to the University's permanent endowment, please add]

“This gift shall be added to USC's permanent endowment.”

How Do I Add USC as a Successor Beneficiary?

- **Retirement Plans.** Most retirement accounts (IRAs, 401(k), 403(b), etc.) provide that the owner can select beneficiaries to receive the plan assets remaining at the owner's death. To designate USC as a beneficiary, contact the account administrator to request the appropriate forms.
- **Tax advantages to gifting retirement accounts.** Retirement plan assets can be taxed at over 60% if left to your heirs (ordinary income plus estate tax)—yet these plan assets transfer tax free to USC.
- **Life Insurance.** The issuer of your policy can provide you with the appropriate form to designate USC as a beneficiary of the policy.
- **USC's Legal Name.** The legal name to be used when adding USC as a beneficiary is:
“University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.”
- **USC's federal tax I.D. number.** Some account administrators will require USC's tax ID number, which is: 95-1642394.

Please feel free to contact us:

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