

The Norman Lear CENTERTAINMENT

Studying and Shaping the Impact of Entertainment & Media on Society

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW PROGRAM FUNDED TO MEASURE MEDIA IMPACT AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center to house new global hub for media metrics research

LOS ANGELES, April 29 – How do we measure the impact of media and journalism on the world around us? In what ways does news engage diverse audiences? And when do stories have the power to connect individuals and inspire change?

An ambitious new project aimed at measuring the social impact of media is being launched by the **Norman Lear Center** at the **University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism**. The Lear Center Media Impact Project is supported by grants from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**. Announced today, the \$3.25 million in funding over the next two-and-a-half years will establish the Lear Center as a hub for best practices, innovation and thought leadership in media metrics.

Welcoming the support, USC Annenberg dean **Ernest L. Wilson III** said, "We're delighted that Gates and Knight have recognized the Lear Center as a leader, and the Annenberg School as a center of excellence, in measuring media engagement and impact."

The collaboration will help media organizations, journalists, and social change-makers build on the power of storytelling through data and impact measurement. Despite advances in big data, surprisingly primitive metrics are still commonly used to assess audience engagement with content and its effects on individual perceptions and behaviors. Page views, TV ratings, "likes" and retweets alone don't reveal how media influences people's awareness or actions. This is a challenge for organizations that hope to connect audiences with important social issues and support long-term change.

To address this problem, the Lear Center aims to develop a deeper understanding of media's influence on social trends and individual behavior. A unique team of researchers including social and behavioral scientists, journalists, analytics experts and other specialists will collaborate to test and create new ways to measure the impact of media. Content creators, distributors and media funders can ultimately apply these techniques to improve their work and strengthen engagement.

Lear Center director **Martin Kaplan** will act as the project's principal investigator along with Lear Center managing director and director of research **Johanna Blakley** as co-principal investigator. Key contributors will include Annenberg School of Journalism analytics expert **Dana Chinn**, as well as an open source tool analytic development team headed by **Carl Kesselman**, USC Viterbi Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering and a Fellow at the Information Sciences Institute.

The Lear Center is also recruiting project leaders, technical experts and members of a distinguished advisory board from across disciplines. In addition, partners in the private and nonprofit sectors will help advance the field globally. For more information, visit www.MedialImpactProject.org.

The Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center studying and shaping the impact of entertainment and media on society. From its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Lear Center builds bridges between faculty who study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. For more information, visit www.learcenter.org.

Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the **Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism** (annenberg.usc.edu) is a national leader in education and scholarship in the fields of communication, journalism, public diplomacy and public relations. With an enrollment of more than 2,200 students, USC Annenberg offers doctoral, graduate and undergraduate degree programs, as well as continuing development programs for working professionals across a broad scope of academic inquiry. The school's comprehensive curriculum emphasizes the core skills of leadership, innovation, service and entrepreneurship and draws upon the resources of a networked university located in the media capital of the world.

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. For information, visit www.gatesfoundation.org.

The **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org. Contact: Andrew Sherry, Vice President/Communications, (305) 908-2677, media@knightfoundation.org

Engineering Studies began at the University of Southern California in 1905. Nearly a century later, the **Viterbi School of Engineering** received a naming gift in 2004 from alumnus Andrew J. Viterbi, inventor of the Viterbi algorithm now key to cell phone technology and numerous data applications. Consistently ranked among the top graduate programs in the world, the school enrolls more than 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students, taught by 177 tenured and tenure-track faculty, with 60 endowed chairs and professorships. For more, visit viterbi.usc.edu.