I’m delighted to be joining you this afternoon.

I first want to personally thank all of you for the outstanding work you do in support of Rossier. Barbara Rossier would be proud of your results.

The guidance you provide Dean Gallagher is invaluable, and has strengthened Rossier’s mission: to educate, and to educate the educators.

You are the school’s eyes and ears out in the world, and its best ambassadors.

I also want to acknowledge Dean Gallagher for her leadership.

She, along with her entire faculty and staff, reinforce our commitment to education every single day.

Because of their work, and your involvement, USC Rossier is ranked the 10th best school of education in the country by U.S. News and World Report. That’s the highest ever.

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Our rise in rankings parallels our push for equity in education. That is no accident.

Rossier is the very definition of transformative education. *Who* we teach matters as much as *how* we teach; and *why* we teach matters as much as *where* we teach.

We want to elevate education, and to expand opportunity.

In 2009, a special centennial year for Rossier, then-Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said this: “Great teaching is about so much more than education; it is a daily fight for social justice.”

We see this in action at USC Hybrid High, the first of five charter schools designed and developed at Rossier.
The majority of these students become first-generation college students from underserved neighborhoods.

Since opening, Hybrid High has revolutionized learning by meeting the personalized needs of each child. The key is flexibility, and strong teacher involvement.

You’re aware of its success. For three years running, Hybrid High’s seniors have had a 100 percent graduation rate, and a 100 percent college acceptance rate.

Nearly half of Rossier’s own students are first generation, too.

That sends a message, loud and clear: USC believes everyone deserves a chance at a college education because it changes everything.

* * *

I know this first-hand.

My parents agreed on a lot of things, and academic achievement for their children was always close to the top.

Growing up in the 1960s in the Bronx, I saw few examples of academic success in my neighborhood.

Neither of my parents went to college, but I knew I needed to focus on my schoolwork.

Still, I had no idea where this was leading.

Two teachers changed that.

The first was Mr. Cohen, my seventh-grade math teacher.

One day he gave us a challenging math problem. I worked on it diligently, and noticed I was done well ahead of my classmates.

The next day he said something that gave me direction and confidence: “Wanda,” he said, “you’re good at this and don’t let anyone tell you that you’re not.”

That stuck with me.

The second teacher was Professor Rosenstein at Franklin and Marshall College.

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The second teacher was Professor Rosenstein at Franklin and Marshall College.
I was taking his calculus class. One day he stopped me on campus and said: “Wanda, you were not in my class today. Don’t ever let that happen again.”

He was right.

He reminded me what we all know: That the opportunity of a college education is the opportunity of a lifetime.

* * *

The challenge for us is to make sure every child has a Mr. Cohen, or a Professor Rosenstein, in her life.

Rossier is working hard to make that happen.

We’ve seen it with Hybrid High’s seniors.

At their first graduation ceremony in Bovard, their advisor gave them words to remember:

“You might not see it, but everyone here knows you by the light that you bring.”

* * *

That is what education can do…

That is opportunity fulfilled…

And with your help, USC Rossier will always lead the way.