

TROJAN WOMEN THROUGH THE DECADES

From the very beginning, USC has included women as students as well as faculty.

Thirty years before Congress gave women the right to vote, women made up a quarter of USC's faculty. A group photograph of the first USC faculty shows three women among the original dozen professors. One of the three students who made up the Class of **1884** – USC's first graduating class – was a woman.

In **1885**, Minnie C. Miltimore, was class valedictorian. She was also the first vice president of the Alumni Association of the College of Liberal Arts. Defying stereotypes, two of the seven women who graduated in the Class of **1887** didn't earn their degrees in the arts or humanities but in basic science. None of the men did.

In medicine, Elizabeth A. Follensbee, a professor of children's diseases, served on the faculty in the College of Physicians and Surgeons. As early as 1886 – possibly inspired by Follensbee's example – two women graduated from USC's medical school.

As early as 1909, women faculty taught at the College of Pharmacy, and three women graduated from the program in **1912**. Women also served as early faculty in the School of Dentistry, which graduated two female students in **1918**. One of them – **Vada Somerville** Watson – became the first black woman to be licensed to practice dentistry in California.

1914 graduate, Georgia Bullock – a widow with two children – became the state's first woman judge in 1923.

[Mabel Walker Willebrandt](#) (J.D. 1916, LL.M. 1917) – [U.S. Assistant Attorney General](#), 1921–1929, charged with enforcing Prohibition - prosecuting bootleggers and rumrunners + prosecuting tax cheats - and combining the two she helped bring down some of the nation's biggest gangsters. Featured in the National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement, of "The MOB Museum". She also championed prison reform, and was responsible for the first federal prison for women and established the first education programs and work programs in federal prison - under FDR - that continue today. □ In 1950, she served as counsel to the Screen Directors Guild during a labor hearing.^[3] She pioneered the fields of aviation and radio law and became an expert in federal regulations and taxes. She represented major industries, including Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the Screen Directors Guild of America, Aviation Corp. of America and California Fruit Industries, a major producer of table wine. She defended [Louis B. Mayer](#) before the IRS and represented celebrities such as [Jean Harlow](#), [Clark Gable](#), and [Jeanette MacDonald](#).^[8]

She was the first woman to chair a committee of the [American Bar Association](#), heading its committee on aeronautical law.^[3] She also got her pilot's license and promoted air travel with [Amelia Earhart](#), a fellow member of the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce.^[8] She also held several honorary doctorates.^[3]

Lillian Copeland (B.A. 1928, J.D. 1932) – Olympic champion, discus throw; first Trojan woman in Olympics. She has been called “the most successful female [discus thrower](#) in U.S. history” In 1928 Until [the Beijing Games](#), she was the only American woman to win the [discus throw](#) at a modern Olympiad. 1932 was a big year for her - she received her JD degree from USC and also took part in the Olympics at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum!

[Ethel Percy Andrus](#) (M.A. 1928, Ph.D. 1930) – founder of the [American Association of Retired Persons](#) (AARP)

The [Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center](#) is named after her at the [University of Southern California Leonard Davis School of Gerontology](#), the oldest and largest existing professional school of Gerontology.

Andrus founded a separate organization, the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) in 1947. She realized that retired teachers were living on very small [pensions](#), often without any [health insurance](#). She approached more than 30 companies to offer health insurance to retired teach

Phyllis Norton Cooper – ‘35, LLB ’38 She entered USC in 1932 at the age of 16 and graduated in three years in 1935 – the same year she married her husband, prominent attorney Grant B. Cooper. For many years thereafter, she focused on community charitable work and raising their five children. In the 1950s, Cooper began assisting her husband in defending several notorious clients. The couple defended Sirhan Sirhan, who was convicted in the 1968 assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, and Dr. R. Bernard Finch, who, along with his medical assistant, was accused of killing his wife. After two hung juries, Finch and his assistant were convicted in a third trial. In the 1970s, the couple lived in Hawaii for two years, during which time Cooper's husband served as special prosecutor in a corruption case against the mayor of Honolulu.. A dedicated Trojan, she began a three-year term as an alumni member of the USC Board of Trustees in 1966, then served as the first woman president of the USC Alumni Association for 1967-68 and won an Alumni Service Award in 1970. In 1976, she was elected to a second term on the USC Board of Trustees, serving as an associate trustee until 1986. In 1985, Cooper was among the first group of women admitted into Skull and Dagger and received the organization’s Arnold Eddy Volunteer Service Award a decade later. In 2006, she became the first woman inducted into the USC Half-Century Trojans Hall of Fame.

[Pat Nixon](#) (B.A. 1937) – [First Lady of the United States](#), 1969–1974

[Marilyn Horne](#) (B.M. 1953) – opera singer

[Yvonne Brathwaite Burke](#) (J.D. 1956) – former [Los Angeles County](#) Supervisor; former member of the United States House of Representatives

[Dorothy Wright Nelson](#) (LL.M. 1956) – She was a dean of USC’s Gould School of Law from 1969 to 1980 - and in the seventies she was the ONLY female dean of a law school in the United States. Judge of the [U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals](#) (1979–1995)

[Cindy Hensley McCain](#) (B.A. 1976, M.A. 1978) – wife of 2008 Republican presidential nominee [John McCain](#) and [Chairwoman](#) of [Hensley & Co.](#)

[Irene Hirano Inouye](#) (BA 1970, MPA 1973) – president [United States-Japan Council](#) and chair [Ford Foundation](#) Board of Trustees

□ [Sandra Finan](#) (1989) – [Brigadier General](#), [United States Air Force](#)