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From left: Randolph Hall, vice president of research; Edward Crandall, chair of the Keck School of Medicine Department of Medicine; Darcy Spicer, associate professor of clinical medicine and HSC chair of the IRB; Todd Dickey, senior vice president of administration; and Laura La Corte, associate senior vice president of compliance.

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Institutional Review Board chair Darcy Spicer receives ethics award

By Amy E. Hamaker

The USC Office of Compliance recently presented its second annual USC Ethical Leadership Award to Darcy V. Spicer, chairman of the USC Health Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The award, given on June 16, was in recognition of Spicer's leadership in his work with the Health Sciences Campus Institutional Review Board and the Human Subjects Research Protection Program. The IRB protects the rights and welfare of human research subjects in research studies conducted at USC and elsewhere by USC faculty, staff, graduate or undergraduate students, regardless of funding or type.

"We all are faced with difficult decisions every day where these principles can be compromised," said Laura LaCorte, associate senior vice president of compliance, during the presentation. "Those of us in the Compliance Office have observed that Darcy can be a wonderful advocate for faculty, but at the same time, he isn't shy about making decisions that he knows may be unpopular if he thinks it's the right thing to do."

"I've grown up here at USC in an environment where the emphasis has been to 'do the correct thing'—even if that's hard," says Spicer. "This philosophy is pervasive throughout the university, the hospitals and clinics where our research is conducted. Essentially every investigator with whom I've had contact wants to do things correctly; without the personal commitment of each investigator I don't think we could achieve such a high level [of compliance]."

The Office of Compliance began giving the USC Ethical Leadership Award last year to highlight the importance of ethical leadership. The award is given to a person who has demonstrated outstanding responsibility in following the principles of the office's code of leadership and the code of ethics program.

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