

# NKUA honors the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) and Andreas Dracopoulos

Greece's first and largest university, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), recognized the outstanding contributions of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) and its Co-President, Andreas Dracopoulos, by awarding SNF the title of Grand Benefactor of the University of Athens and by conferring upon Andreas Dracopoulos the title of doctor honoris causa of the Departments of Medicine and Nursing. The double ceremony took place on July 17, 2024, in NKUA's Great Hall.

The award ceremony opened with a speech from NKUA Rector **Gerasimos Siasos**. Hellenic Minister of Health **Adonis Georgiadis** then delivered a welcome address thanking the Foundation for its grants to the National Health System, which exceed €1 billion. This was followed by remarks on the life and work of the honoree, **Andreas Dracopoulos**, from medical school Dean **Nikolaos Arkadopoulos**, a reading by Department of Nursing President **Pavlos Myrianthefs** of the resolution to confer the degree, and the investiture of the honoree with the gown of the School of Health Sciences by the School's Dean, **Emmanouil Pikoulis**.

Subsequently, a video presented an overview of the grants made by SNF to the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, after which the title of Grand Benefactor of the University of Athens was awarded to SNF. The double ceremony concluded with a speech from the honoree, **Andreas Dracopoulos**, accepting the recognition with warm gratitude.

The following honored the event with their presence, among others: the former President of the Republic; Professor Emeritus **P. Pavlopoulos**; former Prime Ministers **A. Samaras** and **L. Papademos**; a representative of the President of the Government; Minister of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports **K. Pierrakakis**; a representative of the President of the Hellenic Parliament; Vice-President **I. Plakiotakis**; the Leader of the main opposition party, SYRIZA, **S. Kasselakis**; the Minister of National Economy and Finance **K. Hatzidakis**; the Minister of Health, **A. Georgiadis**; Development Minister **T. Theodorikakos**; the Minister of Labor and Social Security, **N. Kerameos**; the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs **G. Kotsiras**; the Deputy Minister of the Interior **V. Charalaboyianni**; Members of Parliament; a representative of His Beatitude Archbishop of Athens and All Greece; His Eminence Metropolitan **Alexios**, the President of the Academy of Athens **S. Krimigis**; representatives of the Heads of the armed forces and the Hellenic Police; former Rector and Honorary Professor of NKUA **G. Babiniotis**; Rector of NKUA **C. Kittas**; former NKUA Rector Emeritus Professor **T. Fortsakis**; and members of the Administrative Council, Vice Rectors, Deans, Presidents and members of the Senate of the University of Athens.

SNF is a philanthropic organization that makes grants to nonprofit organizations and programs worldwide, which over time deliver tangible and

positive results for society at large. **For more than twenty-five years, SNF has contributed to enhancing education and research at the University of Athens** through grants including for the repair of university buildings, the purchase of equipment to meet the educational needs of the University's clinics and laboratories, student participation in international competitions, the implementation of educational and training programs, postgraduate programs, a program to support scholarships for doctoral students, and more.

Of particular note are SNF's major grants as part of its Global Health Initiative (GHI) to Attikon University Hospital, the University Clinics at Evangelismos Hospital, Laiko General Hospital of Athens, Aiginiteio University Hospital, Ippokrateio General Hospital of Athens, the School of Dentistry, as well to the Department of Nursing to upgrade its educational and research infrastructure.

**SNF's enormous contribution to upgrading health services and the educational and research infrastructure at the University of Athens is an important part of the Foundation's overall support for the country, which has a considerable national footprint.**

The contribution of SNF's Co-President, **Andreas Dracopoulos**, has been crucial and catalytic in this work. Mr. Dracopoulos is a brilliant and prominent figure, counted among the Grand Benefactors of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He has demonstrated a strong commitment to philanthropic work, with numerous grant initiatives, mainly in the fields of education, arts, culture, social welfare, and health.

In his remarks, the Rector of the University of Athens, **Gerasimos Siasos**, mentioned SNF's major contributions to NKUA over the years, stressing that ***"for more than twenty-five consecutive years, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation has implemented numerous grants to support all academic fields at our university—health, science, and humanities—highlighting the vision of the Foundation and its Co-President, Mr. Dracopoulos, for public education at the highest level."***

He also specifically mentioned SNF's grantmaking in health, noting that ***"it represents the quintessence of Greek philanthropy and is one of the most outstanding examples of societal contribution."***

Welcoming **Andreas Dracopoulos** to the esteemed company of those holding an honorary doctorate from NKUA, Rector **Siasos** added, ***"The academic community of the Greece's first and largest University, NKUA, welcomes you to its ranks. Under your leadership, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation continues the tradition of our great national benefactors who contributed decisively to the first steps in the creation of the Greek state. Your personal contribution and that of the Foundation are a shining example of solidarity, philanthropy and faith for a better and more humane society for all."***

**Andreas Dracopoulos**, said the following in his remarks:

*"I stand here today with a special sense of honor, pride, and emotion. I am here representing my great-uncle, the late Stavros S. Niarchos, thanks to whom SNF has been, and continues to be, able to contribute to society as a whole over the years. I am here*

*representing all of my colleagues at SNF and our more than 3,000 grantees, with whom we have shared this common vision and this journey toward our own Ithaca; a journey that continues with the aim of contributing together and individually—to the extent of our individual abilities and capabilities—in order to make our world even a little bit better, with the greatest possible impact on the daily life of each of our fellow human beings, whoever they are, wherever they reside, wherever they come from—and wherever they are heading.*

*We are truly proud of our work over the past 28 years, since 1996 when our founder, Stavros S. Niarchos, passed away and SNF was born. We have been active in more than 130 countries around the world, where we have contributed over \$3.7 billion in the areas of Social Welfare, Health & Sports, Arts & Culture, and Education. At the same time, we have contributed, we have also benefited from countless hours of human collaboration, always with a focus on empowering humanity.*

*For many diverse and understandable reasons, Greece has remained at the center of our activities over the years, with almost 2,500 grants. Following the handover of the SNFCC to the people of Greece in 2017, we focused our attention even more on health. An effort—the Global Health Initiative (GHI)—that started from Evangelismos Hospital, evolved within and outside the borders, and is now concentrated on the three major new public hospitals (in Komotini, Thessaloniki, and Sparta), which will be delivered to the Greek public within the next two to three years, on outfitting them, and, perhaps most importantly, on training and education programs in nursing, trauma, hospital infections, and generally on an effort to strengthen human resources in the health sector. This effort is valued at over \$1 billion in financial terms, but first and foremost it is an effort that has respect for our fellow human beings as its starting point and whose mission is to increase access to quality health care for all, as well as to empower frontline health care professionals. At this point, I would like to thank our three advisors and close collaborators in the GHI: Drs. Charalambos Roussos, Spiros Pnevmatikos, and Panagiotis Koulouvaris, all of them members of the wider NKUA community.*

*Earlier, we watched the overview video on our Foundation's support to the University of Athens. Our support runs both long and deep, with our first grant dating back to 1997, 27 years ago, covering a wide range of areas and departments, from sciences and humanities to, of course, health sciences, totaling over €16 million. And, our support actively continues to this day, through the GHI, the Foundation's largest-ever initiative, which I mentioned earlier.*

*At this point, we would like to congratulate NKUA for the excellent news that we have just recently found out about, as according to the QS World University Ranking of June 2024, NKUA was awarded a Certificate of Recognition as the Most Improved University in the "Europe Award" category for the academic year 2024-2025. Furthermore, according to the University Impact Rankings, the University of Athens is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the world in "Quality Education." At the same time, the NKUA School of Medicine is ranked among the top 100 medical schools worldwide in the Shanghai Ranking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects in the field of Clinical Medicine. Our sincerest congratulations!*

*You may have noticed that the protagonists of the video were all young people. To a large extent, they are also the protagonists of our wider mission. Investing in a historically important university, such as the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, is fundamentally an investment in young people, in their spirits, their minds, their potential, their prospects, their future—and at the same time an investment in the future of the country. It is these young people who will be the educators of tomorrow who will teach the next generations, the doctors and nurses who will care for the sick, the economists, biologists, and professionals who will form the backbone of society. Therefore, we feel a particular sense of excitement but also of responsibility to contribute, as much as we can, to the important work of the University of Athens. And we hope that this remarkable educational institution, with the necessary support from all of us, living up to its history and fulfilling its mission, will continue to evolve and take constant steps forward.*

*One of the first people to ever receive an honorary degree from the University of Athens was US President and Nobel Laureate Woodrow Wilson, and I can't help but remember his words: "Our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually." 100 years later, his words remain more relevant than ever.*

*These are difficult times. There is a sense that our very own humanity is being commodified. Important decisions must be made while we are at a complex crossroads. In many cases worldwide, there is a lack of leadership and a lack of ethics. The challenges are difficult; our mental health is being damaged; apathy is plaguing us; sometimes the stress of everyday life overwhelms any hope that seems to exist. We are faced with a call for humanity and civic engagement. Each in our own way, we are all called upon to contribute and to work together for a better tomorrow, for all.*

*At this point, I would like to stress the importance of the elections that took place in Europe, where for the first time in a long time we have seen a very significant increase in participation. It is a very important moment, as there is no greater tool in democracy than our vote. Sometimes we take it for granted and forget its importance.*

*Only through a healthy society can extremes be avoided. We can no longer afford to wait. Apathy is not an option that can bring solutions.*

*In closing, I want to share with you two quotes that I try to live by every day. The first is from American psychiatrist and author Theodore Isaac Rubin, who said, "Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom." Rubin lived to be over 100, so he would know what wisdom is. Rubin lived to be over 100, so he would know what wisdom is. The second is from our own Emmanuel Kriaras, recipient of an honorary doctorate from NKUA in 1997, who said in an interview a few years before he died in 2014 at the age of 107 that "Love is the pursuit of the ideal, in all its manifestations," and that "Love is the antidote to death. It is perhaps life itself. You only live when you're in love." Especially those of you who are young and have your life ahead of you: never stop striving and living for your ideals, never stop being in love!*

*Thank you very much!"*

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**Note: This press release was translated by SNF from the Greek version released by NKUA.**