



Search for the Director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

THE SEARCH

The University of Southern California (USC) seeks an accomplished and visionary leader to serve as the next Director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center (Norris), an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center with a long tradition of excellence in cancer research, education, and community engagement. This is a pivotal opportunity for an extraordinary cancer leader to build on Norris's remarkable momentum and lead a high-performing center that earned an exceptional score and a rare seven-year merit extension in its most recent Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) renewal.

USC Norris is distinguished by its collaborative, transdisciplinary culture; its deep commitment to addressing the cancer burdens of its catchment area—including Los Angeles County, the largest and one of the most diverse counties in the nation—and its outstanding track record of impactful translational research. The Center is also widely recognized for its national and international reputation for excellence in cancer science. The next Director will inherit an exceptionally strong foundation: five vibrant research programs, six highly rated shared resources, and a robust clinical trials infrastructure that has demonstrated success in engaging diverse populations. Norris's members hold more than \$100 million in cancer-focused extramural funding, including significant NCI support, and have consistently produced high-impact, collaborative science that advances understanding of cancer biology, prevention, and treatment.

This is a unique moment to join the Keck School of Medicine of USC and Keck Medicine of USC, a health system in growth mode and a top-ranked academic medical center located in the heart of Los Angeles. USC's location offers distinctive opportunities to make a meaningful impact on cancer care and research across one of the most diverse urban populations in the United States. The next Director will lead efforts to reduce cancer disparities, address the significant impact of cancer in the catchment area, and advance innovative translational research that improves outcomes for patients locally, nationally, and globally. In addition to shaping the scientific direction of the Cancer Center, the Director will partner closely with the executive leadership of the Keck School of Medicine to execute an ambitious and institutionally prioritized plan to expand and strengthen USC's cancer programs across the research, clinical, and community domains. They will oversee research programs, shared resources, and the clinical trials enterprise, while working

collaboratively with health system leaders and clinical chairs to support the delivery of cutting-edge cancer care.

The successful candidate will be a visionary physician-scientist or scientist with a demonstrated record of impactful cancer research, an understanding of the complexities of NCI-designated Cancer Center operations, and the ability to inspire and align a diverse community of faculty, staff, trainees, and external partners. The Director will report to the Dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC and work closely with leadership across the Keck School and Keck Medicine of USC as well as other departments, institutes and schools. They will be expected to steward and prepare Norris for future CCSG renewals, including the next competitive submission in 2028, and to ensure the continued excellence of the Center's programs, infrastructure, and impact.

USC is a global research powerhouse, a leader in cancer discovery, and an anchor institution in Los Angeles. This is a singular opportunity to lead a world-class cancer center at a moment of rapid institutional momentum, in a city that is both a global crossroads and a living laboratory for cancer disparities research and community engagement. The next Director will have the opportunity to shape the future of cancer science at USC, driving innovations that improve cancer care and outcomes for all Angelenos.

THE KECK SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Keck School of Medicine of USC (KSOM) is one of the nation's premier medical schools, distinguished by its robust research enterprise, excellence in medical and graduate education, and deep commitment to health equity and community service. The School is home to 2,079 full-time faculty, 269 part-time faculty, over 2,000 voluntary faculty physicians, more than 1,200 residents and fellows across three major hospitals, 2,329 staff, and more than 3,000 students enrolled in a wide range of academic programs. These include a nationally regarded MD program, 30 graduate programs in the health sciences, dual-degree pathways such as MD/PhD, and a robust portfolio of postdoctoral, undergraduate, and continuing education offerings.

KSOM holds academic affiliations with leading Los Angeles institutions including Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) and Los Angeles General Medical Center (LA General). KSOM also benefits from its integration within a broader university-based medical system—Keck Medicine of USC—which includes the Keck Medical Center of USC (comprising Keck Hospital and the USC Norris Cancer Hospital), USC Arcadia Hospital, USC Verdugo Hills Hospital, and more than 40 outpatient clinics. In total, KSOM boasts over 450,000 square feet of research space across 19 buildings, supporting a wide array of biomedical research initiatives.

Strategic Vision and Institutional Growth

The Director of USC Norris will join KSOM at a time of continued institutional momentum. Under the leadership of Dean Carolyn Meltzer—an accomplished academic radiologist and national leader in faculty advancement and diversity—KSOM is advancing a bold strategic roadmap focused on discovery,

translational science, community engagement, and educational innovation. Appointed in 2022, Dean Meltzer previously served as Chair of Radiology and Imaging Sciences at Emory University and held key leadership roles in research, academic advancement, and culture and community engagement.

Following a completed \$7 billion university-wide campaign—one of the largest in U.S. higher education—USC has launched a \$3 billion-dollar fundraising campaign in support of the health sciences. As the university undergoes a leadership transition in 2025, with President Carol Folt concluding her term and new interim leadership in place, KSOM remains anchored by a strong and ambitious health enterprise strategy. The Health Affairs division, led by Dr. Steven Shapiro, continues to oversee the integration of clinical, research, and educational priorities across the academic health system, including schools of pharmacy, social work, dentistry, and gerontology.

KSOM is executing a forward-looking Strategic Roadmap (2025–2027) that aligns with USC’s Health Sciences 3.0 vision. Key initiatives include expanded support for cross-campus collaboration, industry partnerships, and commercialization through the USC MESH Academy. Recent examples of this innovation ecosystem include: a strong partnership across the Viterbi School of Engineering and KSOM with a joint center for stem cell engineering and multiple pilot grant programs, a partnership with StemCardia to advance regenerative cardiology, and a revamped primary care curriculum that integrates lifestyle medicine and prevention science. These efforts reflect KSOM’s commitment to pioneering research, entrepreneurial thinking, and patient-centered care.

The School’s creation of a Department of Cancer Biology further signals its investment in foundational cancer science and translational impact. The next Director of USC Norris will work closely with this department to catalyze discovery, build research teams, and accelerate the delivery of precision oncology solutions for diverse populations.

KECK MEDICINE OF USC

Keck Medicine of USC is the University of Southern California’s academic health system, recognized as one of the leading university-based medical enterprises in the Los Angeles area. It encompasses a comprehensive network of hospitals, outpatient clinics, and specialized care centers, delivering advanced, research-driven healthcare services to a diverse patient population across Southern California.

Clinical Network and Facilities

At the core of Keck Medicine is the Keck Medical Center of USC, comprising:

- **Keck Hospital of USC:** A 401-bed acute care hospital offering a wide range of specialized services, including organ transplantation, neurosurgery, and minimally invasive surgical procedures.
- **USC Norris Cancer Hospital:** A 60-bed facility dedicated to cancer care, closely integrated with the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

In addition to these flagship hospitals, Keck Medicine includes:

- **USC Verdugo Hills Hospital:** A community hospital providing comprehensive healthcare services to the Glendale area.
- **USC Arcadia Hospital:** Formerly Methodist Hospital of Southern California, this facility joined Keck Medicine in 2022, expanding the system's reach into the San Gabriel Valley.
- **More than 40 outpatient clinics:** These facilities extend Keck Medicine's services across Los Angeles, Orange, Kern, Tulare, and Ventura counties, offering accessible care in various specialties.

Keck Medicine is also expanding its reach through major new cancer care facilities beyond the Health Sciences Campus. In Pasadena, [a new state-of-the-art medical office building is slated to open in 2025](#), offering comprehensive oncology services—including infusion, medical oncology clinics, and radiation oncology—bringing cancer care closer to patients in the San Gabriel Valley.

In Newport Beach, Keck Medicine [recently opened the USC Norris Radiation Oncology and Imaging Center](#), a cutting-edge outpatient facility offering advanced radiation oncology services and cancer imaging, enhancing access for Orange County residents.

Academic Integration and Research Excellence

Keck Medicine is closely affiliated with the Keck School of Medicine of USC, fostering a synergistic environment where clinical care, research, and education intersect. This integration facilitates the translation of scientific discoveries into clinical applications, enhancing patient outcomes and advancing medical knowledge.

National Recognition and Rankings

Keck Medical Center of USC has consistently been recognized for its excellence in patient care. In the 2024-2025 U.S. News & World Report Best Hospitals rankings, it was listed among the top 30 hospitals nationwide and ranked within the top six in California. The medical center achieved national rankings in multiple specialties, including Cancer, Neurology & Neurosurgery, and Obstetrics & Gynecology, and received "High Performing" ratings in 15 common procedures and conditions.

Community Engagement and Impact

Committed to serving the diverse communities of Los Angeles, Keck Medicine actively engages in partnerships aimed at improving public health and increasing access to care. Collaborations with institutions like LA General and CHLA exemplify this commitment. These partnerships not only enhance healthcare delivery but also provide valuable training opportunities for medical students and residents, reinforcing Keck Medicine's role in cultivating the next generation of healthcare professionals.

THE USC NORRIS COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

The USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center (referred to hereafter as USC Norris, encompassing both the Cancer Center and its clinical arm, the Norris Cancer Hospital) is a cornerstone of cancer research, education, and community engagement at the University of Southern California. Designated as a Comprehensive Cancer Center by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) since 1973, USC Norris holds a long and distinguished record of achievement, having earned an exceptional score and a rare seven-year merit extension during its most recent Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) renewal. This recognition reflects USC Norris's outstanding leadership, the impact of its scientific programs, and its dedication to addressing cancer health disparities in one of the most diverse urban populations in the world.

Mission and Vision

USC Norris's mission is to reduce the burden of cancer through innovative, transdisciplinary research; to translate scientific discoveries into improved prevention, detection, and treatment strategies; and to address the unique cancer needs of Los Angeles County, the most populous and diverse county in the nation. Central to this mission is a commitment to health equity, with a strong focus on engaging the community, enhancing access to clinical trials, and addressing cancer disparities through research, education, and outreach.

Research Excellence

USC Norris is home to 187 full members who collectively generate more than \$100 million in annual cancer-related research funding, including \$39 million from the NCI. The Center is organized around five integrated and collaborative research programs:

- **Cancer Epidemiology:** Investigating genetic, environmental, and behavioral determinants of cancer risk and progression, with a particular focus on diverse populations.
- **Cancer Control Research:** Advancing prevention, early detection, survivorship, and health equity, with an emphasis on addressing cancer disparities in the catchment area.
- **Translational and Clinical Sciences:** Driving bench-to-bedside innovations, early-phase clinical trials, and novel therapeutics, including a robust portfolio of investigator-initiated trials.
- **Genomic and Epigenomic Regulation:** Unraveling the molecular and cellular mechanisms that underlie cancer development and progression.
- **Tumor Immunology & Microenvironment Program:** Exploring the interactions between cancer cells and their surrounding microenvironment to inform new therapeutic strategies.

These programs are supported by several NCI-funded Shared Resources—including Molecular Genomics, Translational Pathology, Flow Cytometry and Immune Monitoring, Liquid Biopsy, Population Research, Data Science, and the [Preclinical Models Shared Resource](#)—which provide cutting-edge technologies, services, and expertise to accelerate scientific discovery.

Clinical Trials and Community Impact

USC Norris plays a central role in USC's cancer clinical trials infrastructure, supporting the design, development, and oversight of clinical research across Keck Medicine of USC and affiliated hospitals. In the most recent funding cycle, USC Norris investigators enrolled over 3,600 patients in interventional trials, with more than 60% of participants representing minority populations—reflecting a deep commitment to inclusivity and community engagement. The Center's Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) program, rated exceptional by the NCI, serves as a vital bridge between the cancer center and the diverse communities of Los Angeles County, driving efforts to understand and address local cancer burdens, facilitate trial access, and build trust with underrepresented populations.

Facilities and Infrastructure

The physical footprint of USC Norris spans approximately 300,000 square feet of dedicated cancer research, clinical, and administrative space across the USC Health Sciences Campus. Key facilities include the USC Norris Cancer Hospital, a 60-bed inpatient facility that serves as the focal point for cancer care within the health system, and adjacent research towers housing laboratories, shared resources, clinical trials offices, and support services. Additional facilities—including the newly established Center for Cancer Drug Development and a state-of-the-art cGMP cell therapy facility—reflect USC's investment in expanding the capabilities of the Cancer Center.

Leadership and Strategic Direction

Under the leadership of Dr. Caryn Lerman, an internationally recognized cancer prevention scientist and member of the National Academy of Medicine, USC Norris has undergone significant organizational transformation. Dr. Lerman's tenure has been marked by a bold strategic vision: advancing cancer equity, accelerating discovery in high-priority areas such as immunotherapy, data science, and precision prevention, and enhancing the translation of research into novel therapies and diagnostics. Her leadership team includes associate directors for research programs, shared resources, clinical trials, data science, health equity, training and education, and community engagement—creating a collaborative and accountable structure aligned with the center's mission.

A Hub for Cancer Discovery and Impact

USC Norris is deeply embedded within USC's academic and clinical ecosystem, drawing on collaborations with the Keck School of Medicine, Viterbi School of Engineering, School of Pharmacy, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and other schools and institutes across the university. This multidisciplinary environment fosters innovation across the cancer continuum—from basic science to population health—and positions USC Norris as a hub for high-impact research, clinical excellence, and community partnership. Looking ahead, the next Director will inherit a vibrant and high-functioning center poised for continued growth and impact. With a firm foundation in place, Norris is well-positioned to advance the frontiers of cancer science, train the next generation of cancer researchers and clinicians, and improve outcomes for patients and communities across Los Angeles and beyond.

THE ROLE

The Director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center will serve as the senior leader responsible for advancing the Center's research mission, driving scientific excellence, and ensuring the Center's continued distinction as an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. Reporting to the Dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the Director will hold a faculty appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure and serve as a pivotal member of USC's academic and health enterprise leadership.

The Director will oversee all aspects of the Cancer Center's operations supported by the NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG), including the strategic direction and evaluation of research programs, shared resources, faculty development, community outreach, clinical trials, education and training, and administrative infrastructure. A primary responsibility will be to sustain and grow the Center's research excellence—driving innovation across scientific domains, advancing interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring USC Norris remains highly competitive for extramural funding, including the successful renewal of its CCSG in 2028.

The Director will collaborate closely with leaders across the Keck School, Keck Medicine, and other schools, departments, and institutes within the USC academic community to foster alignment and strong collaborations across research priorities and clinical care delivery. Working in partnership with leaders across the health system, the Director will help ensure that discoveries developed at Norris inform and enhance the care of patients across Keck Medicine's expansive network, driving innovation in clinical trials, early-phase therapeutics, and community-relevant cancer science. The Director will serve as a key voice in shaping the future of cancer research and care at USC, contributing to a shared vision for cutting-edge, equitable, and patient-centered oncology services.

Key responsibilities of the Director include:

- **Scientific Leadership:** Define and champion a bold, forward-looking research agenda that builds on Norris's recognized strengths in cancer disparities, immunotherapy, data science, and translational research. Support innovative team science initiatives and position Norris at the forefront of discovery and impact.
- **Strategic Planning and Program Development:** Lead the development and implementation of a strategic vision for the Center, identifying emerging opportunities in cancer science and ensuring alignment with NCI priorities, institutional goals, and community needs.
- **Faculty and Talent Development:** Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and outstanding cadre of faculty, fostering a culture of collaboration, excellence, and inclusion. Mentor early- and mid-career investigators and champion faculty success across all career stages.

- **Oversight of CCSG Components:** Ensure the quality, rigor, and performance of all CCSG-supported components, including five collaborative research programs, six shared resources, clinical trials infrastructure, community engagement, and education and training programs.
- **Education and Training:** Strengthen cancer-focused training and mentorship across the educational continuum, with a focus on building a diverse pipeline of future cancer researchers and leaders.
- **Community Engagement and Health Equity:** Deepen the Center's commitment to addressing cancer disparities and improving outcomes for the diverse populations of Los Angeles County. Advance bidirectional community engagement and foster research that is responsive to local cancer burdens and priorities.
- **Institutional Leadership and Collaboration:** Serve as a key advisor to the Dean of the Keck School of Medicine, engage with leaders across USC's schools and research institutes, and cultivate partnerships within the university, Keck Medicine of USC, and external organizations to support interdisciplinary cancer research and innovation.
- **Advocacy and Representation:** Represent USC Norris within national cancer research forums, at the NCI, and in broader academic and scientific communities, advocating for policies, partnerships, and resources that advance the Center's mission.

The next Director of USC Norris will join a high-performing Center with exceptional leadership, strong institutional support, and a clear trajectory of growth and impact. This is a singular opportunity to shape the future of one of the nation's premier cancer centers and to lead transformative efforts that advance equity, discovery, and innovation across the cancer continuum.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR THE NEXT DIRECTOR TO ACHIEVE

The next Director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center will step into a highly accomplished, forward-looking organization with a strong foundation for growth. As the Center charts its course toward the next CCSG renewal in 2028 and beyond, the Director will have the opportunity to lead Norris into its next era of impact and innovation while addressing a set of critical priorities:

Lead the preparation for the next CCSG renewal and ensure sustained NCI designation

USC Norris has earned an exceptional score and a seven-year merit extension on its most recent CCSG renewal—a rare and significant achievement. The next Director will be responsible for sustaining and strengthening the Center's core functions, scientific programs, and shared resources, while ensuring rigorous evaluation, continuous improvement, and alignment with evolving NCI priorities. Preparing for the 2028 CCSG renewal will require strategic vision, meticulous execution, and deep engagement across the Center's membership, leadership team, and institutional partners.

Advance and expand high-impact, interdisciplinary, and collaborative cancer research

The Director will have the opportunity to accelerate discovery across a broad range of cancer science, building on USC Norris's strengths in cancer disparities, immunotherapy, data science, and translational research. Fostering cross-program and cross-institutional collaborations—within USC and with external partners—will be critical to advancing team science, enhancing grant competitiveness, and maintaining a vibrant, innovative research portfolio. The newly established Department of Cancer Biology represents a key partner in this effort, offering opportunities to deepen basic science discoveries and their clinical translation.

Enhance and further strengthen faculty recruitment, development, and retention

The Director will play a pivotal role in recruiting and retaining outstanding cancer researchers across the basic, translational, clinical, and population sciences. Building a diverse and inclusive faculty community, supporting mentorship and career development, and creating pathways for emerging scientific leaders will be essential to USC Norris's long-term success.

Accelerate the cancer clinical trials enterprise and foster alignment with Keck Medicine

The Director will help shape the future of clinical trials at USC Norris, working collaboratively with Keck Medicine leaders to increase access to early-phase and investigator-initiated trials and ensure that scientific advances are translated into improved care for patients across USC's health system. This includes supporting infrastructure development, enhancing trial activation processes, and deepening community engagement in trial design and accrual.

Deepen Norris's commitment to health equity and community engagement

Los Angeles County is among the most diverse regions in the nation, with complex cancer burdens and persistent disparities. The Director will have the opportunity to build on USC Norris's exceptional track record in engaging underrepresented populations in clinical trials and community research, strengthening partnerships with local organizations, and ensuring that research priorities are informed by and responsive to the needs of the catchment area.

Maintain, diversify, and grow philanthropic and research funding

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Center's programs will require a proactive and diversified approach to funding. The next Director will be expected to pursue multi-PI and team science awards, program project grants, and strategic philanthropic investments. A robust and creative fundraising strategy—including engagement with donors beyond traditional cancer research pipelines—will be essential to advance the Center's mission and realize new opportunities in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Serve as a compelling representative of Norris within USC and on the national stage

The Director will serve as the chief advocate and champion for cancer research at USC, raising the Center's national profile, shaping its role within the university's academic and health enterprise, and contributing to national conversations on cancer research, policy, and practice. The Director will work closely with the Dean of the Keck School of Medicine, university leadership, and external partners to ensure that USC Norris remains a recognized leader in advancing cancer science and reducing the burden of cancer for all.

REQUIRED AND DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate for the role of Director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center will be an accomplished leader in cancer research, with a national or international reputation for excellence and a demonstrated ability to advance the frontiers of discovery, translation, and impact. While specific areas of scientific focus are flexible, the Director will bring the experience and vision necessary to guide a large, complex, and interdisciplinary NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Candidates should possess most, if not all, the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A distinguished record of scientific accomplishment in cancer research, demonstrated by sustained extramural funding (such as NIH/NCI R01, P50, P01, U-level, or equivalent awards) and impactful publications in leading journals.
- Demonstrated leadership experience within a cancer center, academic department, research institute, or similar entity, including oversight of complex scientific programs, faculty recruitment and mentorship, and program development.
- Deep understanding of the requirements, expectations, and opportunities associated with an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, including the Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) and the six essential characteristics defined by the NCI.
- Experience building and sustaining collaborative, interdisciplinary research programs that bridge basic, translational, clinical, and population sciences.
- Demonstrable engagement with and/or contributions to clinical service line strategies that generate significant demand and effectively meet the needs of a diverse metropolitan community.
- A proven commitment to advancing health equity in cancer research and care for all Angelenos.
- A track record of fostering community engagement, including efforts to address cancer disparities in underrepresented and underserved populations.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to engage diverse stakeholders across a complex academic health system and to serve as an effective advocate for the Cancer Center's mission.
- Eligibility for appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure in the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

While an MD, PhD, or MD/PhD is required, the search is open to candidates with backgrounds across the spectrum of cancer research disciplines, including basic science, translational research, clinical investigation, population science, and health equity.

Compensation

The anticipated compensation for this position is about \$850-950K annually and is commensurate with related experience and qualifications. Relocation assistance is available. USC offers an inspiring higher

education environment and excellent benefits, including medical, dental, vision, retirement, and paid time off. Learn more about USC Employee benefits at <https://employees.usc.edu/benefits-perks>.

Location

The University developed in stride with the dynamic city of Los Angeles, a global center for art, technology, culture, industry, and trade, and a vividly international city with one of the most diverse populations on the planet. Now the creative capital of the Pacific Rim, Los Angeles has never lost its frontier edge and constantly re-invents its physical fabric, its economy, and its society. USC is both in and of its city. It was shaped by a succession of visionaries who invested their time, insight, and financial resources to build one of the world's great universities in the heart of a consequential global mega-region.

USC contributes significantly to the region as one of its largest economic engines. The University is the largest private employer in the city of Los Angeles, providing nearly 27,000 jobs and creating non-university job opportunities for thousands of additional residents each year. USC generates \$4.9 billion annually in economic activity in the Los Angeles region and beyond, which does not include the direct spending or impacts of the USC hospitals. In addition, because of USC's long tradition of excellent professional education, USC alumni represent a large percentage of the business leaders and practicing professionals in the region.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES AND NOMINATIONS

USC has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, as well as application packets (CV and cover letter) should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/usc-norris-comprehensive-cancer-center/director>

Electronic submission of materials is required.

The Isaacson, Miller Search Team:

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www.imsearch.com