



Dean of the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California

THE SEARCH

The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) invites nominations and applications for an innovative and visionary leader to serve as Dean of the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management (“Bren”). Reporting to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, the Dean will be the chief academic and administrative officer of the Bren School, guiding a dynamic community of faculty, staff, and students dedicated to solving the world’s most pressing environmental challenges through stellar professional education, ground-breaking interdisciplinary collaboration and problem-solving, and distinguished research excellence.

UC Santa Barbara is a preeminent public research university and member of the American Association of Universities (AAU). Forbes Magazine ranked UC Santa Barbara as the #8 public university in the country in its 2024-2025 America’s Top Colleges list. Its 1,107 faculty members include eight Nobel Laureates, 56 American Academy of Arts and Sciences members, Guggenheim Fellows, MacArthur and Pulitzer Prize winners, and more than 30 members of the National Academy of Sciences. UCSB additionally ranks #4 among public universities in the highest percentage of faculty who are elected members of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE). The campus enrolls about 25,000 students and, with only five colleges and professional schools and 12 national centers and institutes, offers the benefits of a premier research university with a focus on and appreciation for a high-quality learning experience. In 2015, UCSB was designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution, the first AAU institution to receive this designation, and is also an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution. UCSB is also known for its natural beauty as the campus sits on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean and is bordered by the Santa Ynez Mountains.

Founded in 1994, the Bren School is recognized for its mission-driven and interdisciplinary approach to environmental problem-solving, blending science, policy, economics, and management to deliver actionable solutions and train the next generation of environmental innovators. Its programs prepare students to lead across various sectors, including government, industry, and nonprofit, while advancing cutting-edge research on areas such as climate change, biodiversity, energy and water resources,

environmental data science, law, and economics. One of UCSB's two professional schools, Bren is home to 30 interdisciplinary faculty, nearly 30 staff, and approximately 220 graduate students across two professional master's programs and a research-based Ph.D. program. Many faculty have connections with departments and programs in the College of Letters and Science, the College of Engineering, and the College of Creative Studies, as well as prominent centers and institutes.

The next Dean will join a school with a strong sense of purpose, collaborative culture, and timely mission. Bren's faculty are among the most accomplished in their fields, and its graduates are shaping environmental solutions worldwide. The Dean will be expected to bring strategic vision, entrepreneurial energy, and a deep commitment to the School's mission, ensuring that Bren continues to thrive as a global leader in interdisciplinary environmental education and research. With new leadership at UCSB and a rapidly evolving landscape for environmental research and graduate education, the next Dean will have the opportunity to develop and implement a bold vision for the School's future. Building on a strong foundation, the Dean will address several key challenges and opportunities:

- Define and execute a vision that celebrates and amplifies the mission of the Bren School
- Elevate and advocate for the School within and beyond the University
- Shape academic offerings to drive student engagement and enrollment
- Catalyze interdisciplinary research, collaborations, and partnerships both on and off campus that address the most pressing environmental problems
- Foster and sustain a collegial community and collaborative organizational culture
- Ensure the Bren School has the resources to fully achieve its aspirations

A list of desired qualifications and characteristics of the Dean can be found at the conclusion of this document. Background and key details related to the position are also included below.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

UC Santa Barbara was established in 1944 as the Santa Barbara College of the University of California. It is the third-oldest campus in the University of California System, after Berkeley and UCLA. In the ensuing decades, UCSB has expanded to become a premier research university and is one of only 71 research-intensive institutions in the U.S. and Canada elected to membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities. UCSB offers more than 200 majors, degrees, and credentials in three colleges and two professional schools: the [College of Letters & Science](#), the [College of Engineering](#), the [College of Creative Studies](#), the [Bren School of Environmental Science and Management](#), and the [Gevirtz Graduate School of Education](#).

In 2024-25, UCSB enrolled approximately 22,000 undergraduate students and close to 3,000 graduate students. UCSB is a Hispanic-Serving Institution and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution, and also has a large international student population, with 9 percent of undergraduate students and 41 percent of graduate students coming from different countries or regions. Across its three

undergraduate colleges and two professional schools, UCSB students have access to over 200 majors, degrees, and credentials, many of which are interdisciplinary in nature.

Research is fundamental to UC Santa Barbara's mission, with extramural funding totaling \$247.7 million for the fiscal year 2024-25, of which \$137.7 million came from direct federal, \$40.4 million from indirect federal, \$25.4 million from non-profit, and \$9.1 million from industry. In addition, UCSB research has resulted in more than 90 startup companies. The UCSB Office of Research helps catalyze the rich culture of research, innovation, and collaboration, providing support for strategic research initiatives, assisting faculty with submitting competitive proposals, providing support for research integrity, and overseeing some research centers and units, including seven natural reserves throughout the state. The campus is home to twelve national institutes and centers and more than 100 other research institutes and centers, where scholars from across disciplines work together to expand the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to society.

UCSB is distinguished for its strong emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and cross-disciplinary teaching and research, which are a hallmark of the campus. This collaboration is visible across academic programs and marks a key strength for UCSB, as it enables faculty and students to bring multiple perspectives and approaches to developing solutions to broad, globally significant issues.

In 2023, it was announced that UCSB would embark on a \$2B major capital campaign. Chancellor Dennis Assanis, who was appointed on September 1, 2025, is currently planning the next stages of this campaign. With Bren Development's support, UCSB launched an Environmental Solutions Strategic Initiative this Spring that is engaging many Bren faculty and faculty from across the University to identify areas where UCSB is a leader in environmental solutions to identify compelling opportunities for future impact to attract funding and philanthropic investment.

UCSB operates as one of ten campuses in the UC System, the world's largest and preeminent public university network. In addition to the Santa Barbara campus, the UC System comprises campuses in Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz. Additionally, the UC system provides contract management and oversight of the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab (LBNL), enabling unique collaborations between the UC campuses and opportunities for co-appointments for UC faculty.

To learn more about UCSB, please visit <http://www.ucsb.edu>.

Leadership

Dennis Assanis is the sixth Chancellor of the University of California, Santa Barbara, assuming this office on September 1, 2025. He previously served as the President of the University of Delaware from 2016 to 2025. Chancellor Assanis, an elected member of the National Academy of Engineering, is a distinguished educator with a wide range of academic leadership experience and a worldwide reputation as a scholar and expert in clean energy and power systems. Before joining the University of Delaware, Dr. Assanis

served as provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Stony Brook University and as vice president for Brookhaven National Laboratory Affairs. He previously taught and conducted research at the University of Michigan and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Since joining UCSB, Chancellor Assanis has been a transparent and communicative leader, especially around impending budget decisions due to reduced state funding and declines in federal research support.

David Marshall, Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature, has served as Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost at UC Santa Barbara since 2014. He served as Interim Chancellor from July 15, 2025, to August 31, 2025. EVCP Marshall served for sixteen years as Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts and was the first Michael Douglas Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts. From 2005 to 2012, he also was Executive Dean of the College of Letters and Science. Dr. Marshall previously was Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Yale University, where he taught from 1979 to 1997.

ABOUT THE BREN SCHOOL

In 1991, the Regents of the University of California approved a new graduate school of Environmental Science & Management at UC Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara is considered by many as the birthplace of modern environmental education, which emerged in response to a devastating oil spill in 1969. Following the spill, UCSB opened a new Environmental Studies undergraduate degree program, the first such program in the country. With growing public awareness of environmental issues and increased public understanding of the multifaceted nature of environmental problems, a transition to an interdisciplinary approach to solving these issues was adopted.

The undergraduate environmental studies program at UCSB is housed within the Division of Mathematical, Life, and Physical Sciences (MLPS). There are many partnerships between the environmental studies program and the Bren School, but the programs operate independently and under separate leadership. The campus has nationally recognized strengths in environmental studies in departments in every discipline, ranging from English and History to Economics and Political Science to Electrical Engineering and Chemical Engineering. Two Mellichamp Academic Initiative Endowed Chair clusters, one in Sustainability and one in Racial Environmental Justice, involve Bren faculty. The University is also home to an Interdepartmental PhD Emphasis in Environment and Society, available to PhD students across 15 departments. UCSB's Clean Energy Master Plan, a blueprint for eliminating almost all campus-generated carbon emissions within 20 years, was recently approved by the UC Office of the President.

In 1994, Jeff Dozier, professor of Earth Systems science, became the first dean of the new graduate school of Environmental Science & Management. The graduate school appointed its first faculty members in 1995, accepted the first 20 students in the Master of Environmental Science and Management (MESM) program in 1996 and the first PhD student enrolled in 1998. In 1997, Donald Bren invested in the graduate school of Environmental Science & Management to fund a new building, student fellowships, and faculty chair positions. The school was renamed as the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management. In

2010, the Bren School received a significant gift from the Michael J. Connell Memorial Trust, providing support in perpetuity for student fellowships and activities, instruction for courses and workshops, and seed funding for innovative research, among other initiatives. Since its founding, Bren's alumni network has grown to more than 2,000 graduates, working to solve environmental problems in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors across the US and in over 30 countries.

Today, Bren is a leading school of interdisciplinary environmental research, and is home to 18 full professors, 6 associate professors, 3 assistant professors, and 3 assistant teaching professors. [Bren faculty](#) are experts in their disciplines of environmental and natural resources research, collaborating across disciplines from the natural sciences, social sciences, and data science, as well as environmental economics, engineering, policy, and law. While many Bren faculty members are affiliated with other disciplinary departments across the University, nearly all of them have their primary affiliation within Bren. The Bren School faculty has an impressive record of support from sponsored awards, with a total of \$57,237,453 over the past six years, and an average subtotal of \$9,539,575 per year. The total number of awards to Bren faculty is 319 over the six-year period, with an average of 53 awards per year.

The Bren School is home to two professional master's programs, the [Master of Environmental Data Science](#) (MEDS) and [Master of Environmental Science and Management](#) (MESM), and a dynamic [PhD in Environmental Science and Management](#). One of the first of its kind, the one-year MEDS program teaches students to apply data science tools to environmental problem solving. The two-year MESM degree provides students with critical multidisciplinary skills and real-world experience tackling the most pressing environmental problems. Bren's PhD in Environmental Science and Management is a research-based doctoral program designed to develop the broad knowledge, analytical expertise, technical skills, and innovative thinking required to be a leading researcher. Every master's student chooses a specialization and is required to complete group project or capstone project with real-world clients; these projects provide students with unequalled training and experience in performing professional-level work that involves managing group dynamics, developing strategies, and applying technical expertise to solve complex multidisciplinary environmental problems. All programs offered at Bren are reflective of the trends within the study of environmental science and management, including an emphasis on data science, engaged research for policy impact, and environmental justice.

Originally organized around quantitative scholarship, the school's intellectual breadth enabled it to develop pioneering interdisciplinary approaches. As quantitative methods and interdisciplinary collaboration became standard across environmental programs, Bren has evolved into an institution that increasingly engages with stakeholders throughout the research process through the emergence of centers of excellence within the School. Examples of notable [research centers](#) include the [emLab](#) and the [National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis \(NCEAS\)](#). Today, the Bren School is intentionally organized into one faculty, without departments, allowing for increased interdisciplinary work. Other institutes and initiatives on campus include the [Institute for Energy Efficiency](#) and the [2035 Initiative](#).

[Bren Hall](#) is the physical center of the Bren School experience, embodying the school's commitment to environmental leadership and innovation. Since its opening in 2002, Bren Hall has earned national

recognition for sustainable design, becoming the first lab building in the U.S. to achieve four LEED® Platinum certifications, including for both new construction and ongoing operations and maintenance. It was recertified at the Platinum level for Operations and Maintenance in 2009 and 2017.

For more information about the Bren School, please visit: <https://bren.ucsb.edu/>

ROLE OF THE DEAN

Reporting to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, the Dean of the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management is responsible for all academic and operational areas across the School, including staff and faculty administration, development of academic programs, advancement of research, finances and budget, IT, marketing, career and alumni services, and other functions. The Dean serves as the chief advocate for the School on and off campus and is responsible for setting priorities and leading fundraising efforts in partnership with Bren's Development staff. The Dean will be a close collaborator with the Divisional Deans in the College of Letters & Science, the Deans of the College of Engineering, the College of Creative Studies, the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Affairs.

The administrative staff at the Bren School is divided into five units: Academic Programs, Financial Services and Operations, Information Systems, Career Development and Alumni Relations, and Development. The Dean will be supported by one Associate dean and one assistant dean, as well as one business officer, one executive director of career development and alumni relations, one assistant dean for development, and one IT director. The total annual School budget is approximately \$14 million.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

The Bren School stands at a defining moment in its evolution and in the future of the field. Founded on a bold vision of interdisciplinary collaboration to solve complex environmental challenges, the School has built a reputation for excellence in professional education, research, and real-world impact. However, many other institutions have sought to replicate the success of Bren. Using its strong foundation as a springboard for innovation, the School must navigate shifting landscapes in graduate education, research funding, and workforce demands, while sustaining its distinct identity as a professional school within a research-intensive university and remaining relevant for the future. This is a critical juncture for the next Dean to articulate a clear, forward-looking vision, foster cohesion among faculty and staff, and expand Bren's reach and influence both within and beyond the University, all while preserving and deepening the School's tight-knit, collaborative culture. Success will require entrepreneurial and strategic leadership, agility, and an approachable, student-centered presence that champions Bren's mission of preparing the next generation of environmental leaders and changemakers. To achieve this, the Dean will need to address the following key opportunities and challenges:

Define and execute a vision that celebrates and amplifies the mission of the Bren school

The Bren School is entering a pivotal chapter in its history. Long recognized for its interdisciplinary approach and commitment to solving environmental problems, the School now faces a rapidly evolving landscape shaped by technological disruption, climate urgency, increased competition, and shifting expectations in graduate education. This is a critical moment for the next Dean to build on Bren's existing strengths, leverage existing faculty, and articulate a bold, sustainable vision that propels the School forward. In consultation with leadership within Bren and the wider university, the Dean will articulate and implement a strategy that advances excellence in research and teaching while remaining responsive to external shifts in policies and funding. In this work, the Dean will bring strategic clarity, an innovative spirit, and a deep commitment to Bren's mission to solve environmental problems through training and research.

Elevate and advocate for the School within and beyond the University

The next Dean will play a critical role in positioning Bren as an indispensable partner within UCSB, building collaborative relationships across colleges and championing the School's unique identity. The Dean will galvanize support for academic partnerships, foster alignment around campus-wide goals, and contribute to the development of policies and practices. One potential area for deepening collaboration is with the University's undergraduate environmental studies program, though there are many more opportunities across the campus, given the interdisciplinary nature of Bren. Additionally, through advocating for Bren's distinct mission as a professional school, the Dean will ensure the School's voice is present in strategic conversations across campus and that Bren continues to be seen as a vital contributor to UCSB's academic and innovation ecosystem.

Externally, Dean will work to expand Bren's influence and reputation on a regional, national and global level. This requires a leader who can articulate the School's unique value proposition, open doors to new networks, and cultivate new partnerships. By doing so, the School will not only maintain its standing among peer institutions but set the pace for innovation in environmental education and problem-solving.

Shape academic offerings to drive student engagement and enrollment

Bren's academic programs have long been a hallmark of its success, but the School now faces an increasingly competitive landscape and shifting expectations from students and employers. Application numbers have recently fluctuated, and curriculum updates have not always kept pace with emerging fields and professional demands. This is a critical moment for the next Dean to collaborate with faculty on a comprehensive re-envisioning of Bren's academic offerings, including modernizing core curricula, integrating potential new focus areas, and ensuring programs remain rigorous, relevant, and distinctive. In this work, the Dean must be an agile leader and ensure the institution is responsive to new market developments, including developments around continuing and executive education. By aligning offerings

with market needs, the Dean will strengthen student engagement, attract top-tier applicants, and strengthen Bren's position as a leader in graduate environmental education.

Catalyze interdisciplinary research, collaborations, and partnerships both on and off campus that address the most pressing environmental problems

Bren is uniquely positioned to lead on complex environmental challenges through its interdisciplinary strengths and collaborative ethos. The next Dean will have the opportunity to build on this foundation by increasing connections and deepening collaborations with other departments, units, and centers across the University. Building upon the interdisciplinary ethos of Bren, the Dean will create and fortify structures that encourage faculty and students to work together on high-impact research themes spanning the natural sciences, data science, engineering, law, policy, economics, and business,

At the same time, Bren must harness partnerships beyond silos through engaging industry, NGOs, and government to accelerate real-world solutions. By fostering these collaborations and bridging disciplinary differences, the Dean will amplify Bren's impact and strengthen the School as a leader in solving environmental problems.

Foster and sustain a collegial community and cohesive organizational culture

Bren's close-knit culture is one of its greatest strengths. As such, the Dean must be highly visible and have an engaged presence, building authentic relationships through consistent and significant interactions and shared goals and values. For faculty, this means creating space and incentives for collaboration and ensuring faculty engagement in collective initiatives such as curriculum innovation. Supporting staff retention and professional growth will also be essential to sustaining a high-functioning work environment where all are equipped to contribute meaningfully and thrive in their roles. By modeling approachability and transparency, and by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction across roles, the Dean will sustain Bren's vibrant community while positioning it to thrive in a time of change.

Ensure the Bren School has the resources to fully achieve its aspirations

Bren's ability to deliver pioneering education and research depends on a strong and sustainable financial foundation. While the School benefits from significant amounts of sponsored research, there is significant opportunity to expand philanthropic support and secure unrestricted funds to build a more resilient financial model. The next Dean will play a pivotal role in securing resources that match Bren's ambitions through innovative fundraising strategies, the cultivation of new donor relationships, and securing partnerships that generate revenue and expand impact. By aligning financial planning with academic priorities and championing entrepreneurial approaches, the Dean will ensure Bren has the capacity to invest in its people, programs, and future.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

UCSB seeks an inspiring leader with an outstanding record of scholarship and strong management and leadership skills. In addition, they will possess a doctoral degree in a related field and a record of academic excellence that would qualify them for an appointment as a tenured full professor at the Bren School.

The successful candidate will have many, if not all, of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A distinguished teacher, scholar, and academic leader who brings a passion for academics, research, and teaching;
- An appreciation and understanding of the physical sciences, social sciences and humanities, the interdisciplinary nature of environmental management and policy work, and a commitment to collaborating with other academic units;
- Significant administrative experience with a track record of success in a complex institution;
- Intellectual leadership, with the wide-ranging interests required to understand, appreciate, and encourage the varied work within the School;
- An astute understanding of finances and the relationship between academic priorities and the budget and the ability to make thoughtful decisions around financial resources;
- An extensive track record in building sponsored research and supporting scholarly work, with deep knowledge of the internal and external mechanisms required to sustain and expand a top-tier research program;
- A demonstrated commitment to student success and the University of California's mission as a public university of promoting accessibility, excellence, and community;
- A demonstrated capacity for and interest in fundraising and generating new sources of revenue, including the ability to carry an inspiring message, cultivate key external constituencies, attract partners, raise funds, generate enthusiasm among alumni, and obtain commitments to support the School;
- A demonstrated track record of working with community partners at state, national, and international levels to support academic training and high-impact research, including with groups that have traditionally been neglected in the environmental management field;
- Outstanding communication and listening skills with the ability to articulate a vision, inspire others, attract partners, and generate enthusiasm;
- Strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence with the ability to connect with the members of the UCSB community and to work effectively across the campus and with external groups;
- A collaborative approach to leadership and a passion for advancing a unit in alignment with advancing the overall institution.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The budgeted annual salary range that the University reasonably expects to pay for this position is

\$250,000 – \$400,000; the official annual salary range for this position is \$199,700 - \$509,900. Salary offers are determined based on final candidate qualifications and experience.

Located 100 miles up the coast from Los Angeles, Santa Barbara is famous for its natural beauty, intellectual vitality, and thriving cultural scene. The city and its surrounding area provide boundless opportunities for outdoor activities including cycling, hiking, surfing, kayaking, swimming, and running. The Santa Barbara metropolitan area attracts visitors from around the world for its cultural reputation. With its expansive beaches, breathtaking vistas, and world-class hotels, restaurants, and wineries, Santa Barbara is consistently ranked among the best places to live in California and nationally. To learn more about Santa Barbara and the surrounding region, please see www.santabarbara.com.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-california-santa-barbara-bren-school-environmental-science-management/dean>.

Julie Filizetti, Jaime Morgen, Gabrielle Nayar
Isaacson, Miller

As a condition of employment, the finalist will be required to disclose if they are subject to any final administrative or judicial decisions within the last seven years determining that they committed any misconduct, are currently being investigated for misconduct, left a position during an investigation for alleged misconduct, or have filed an appeal with a previous employer.

- *“Misconduct” means any violation of the policies or laws governing conduct at the applicant’s previous place of employment, including, but not limited to, violations of policies or laws prohibiting sexual harassment, sexual assault, or other forms of harassment or discrimination, dishonesty or unethical conduct, as defined by the employer.*
- [UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)
- [UC Anti-Discrimination Policy for Employees, students and third parties](#)
- [APM - 035: Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination in Employment](#)

Additionally, you will be required to comply with the [University of California Policy on Vaccination Programs](#), as may be amended or revised from time to time. Federal, state, or local public health directives may impose additional requirements.

The University of California is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, or other protected status under state or federal law.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the University of California, Santa Barbara. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by UC Santa Barbara would supersede any conflicting information in this document.