



Search for the Dean, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA

THE SEARCH

The University of Southern California (USC), one of the world's leading private research universities, seeks a leader with an exceptional record as a scholar, social work practitioner, and administrative professional to serve as the next Dean of the [USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work](#). Founded with an emphasis on teaching moral responsibility to the greater community, the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is home to pioneering programs, cutting-edge interdisciplinary research, and a community that fosters creative solutions to society's most pressing issues. In the midst of one of the most impactful times in our nation's recent history, the Dean will have the opportunity to continue the School's upward trajectory and affirm the value of a social work education in the middle of a multicultural metropolis. In collaboration with a strong and experienced leadership team, faculty, and staff, the Dean will advance a vibrant academic community that is committed to innovation, strengthening the School's visibility and impact within the university, the community, and across the nation.

The USC Suzanne-Dworak School of Social Work offers a broad range of programs that address the root causes of human suffering to develop lasting solutions. From clinical practice and advocacy to policy and research, students engage with top scholars who consistently push the boundaries of their respective fields. Building upon the School's impressive momentum, the Dean will galvanize the community around a shared mission through transparent and inspiring leadership and a renewed optimism for the future. This opportunity represents a platform for an innovative leader deeply rooted in social work values and ethics to build upon a strong foundation and elevate the School's role in solving intractable social challenges through pioneering education programs, research, and clinical practice.

Founded by civic leaders in 1880 during California's rise to prominence, USC has long been a pioneering institution with discovery and exploration at its heart. Its aspirations and embrace were as expansive as the region it grew to represent. Since opening its doors, USC has pursued a path of breaking boundaries and transcending its own geography, which has put it on an impressive trajectory. Today, with a budget of \$7.4 billion, \$1.04 billion in sponsored research, and over \$8 billion in [economic impact](#) across the region and state annually, USC has established itself as an anchor institution in Los Angeles; a global center

for arts, technology, and international business; and a leading research university, distinguished by its unique, nimble, and inventive culture. With an added focus on student success, faculty development, and community engagement, the new Dean will align USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work with USC's broader strategic initiatives and increase efforts to increase the School's influence and impact.

This is a remarkable opportunity for an experienced and accomplished academic leader to build upon the strong foundation set by the interim Dean, expand the School's influence, and champion its remarkable breadth locally, nationally, and globally. To accomplish this, the Dean will address a set of key opportunities and priorities, listed below:

- *Establish a vision for the future that repositions USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work as a leader and advocate for the profession;*
- *Continue the legacy that upholds the value of innovative and integrated teaching, research, and practice;*
- *Bring a strategic approach to stewarding and growing resources in support of the School's aspirations;*
- *Ensure transparent, clear, and inclusive communication and decision-making;*
- *Further USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's visibility, reach, and impact in Los Angeles and beyond.*

A complete list of the desired qualifications and characteristics may be found at the conclusion of this document, which was produced with the support of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Founded in 1880, the University of Southern California is a leading private research institution located in the heart of one of the largest metropolises in the world. Over the span of its history, the University has pushed the frontiers of knowledge and achieved great advances in academic rigor and reputation, faculty prominence, the size and influence of its research portfolio, and the strength of its undergraduate and graduate education. The University was a co-founding institution of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, a consortium of the 45 leading research universities linking the Americas, Asia, and Australasia. It combines an international commitment with the dynamism offered by the second-largest metropolitan region in the United States with an over \$1 trillion economy, and the presence and contributions of one of the largest international student bodies of any American university ([over 12,000](#)).

With over 4,700 full-time faculty and more than 18,000 staff, USC supports approximately 47,000 students, 26,000 of whom pursue graduate degrees. The University provides \$464.3 million annually in financial aid ([over \\$800 million](#) when including all sources of aid). In 2024, USC admitted 9.8% of the 82,027 undergraduate applications they received, with 22% of the incoming first-year class being first-

generation college students. The University's diverse student body includes over 41% students of color, and over 27% International students, with the largest populations coming from China, India, and South Korea.

The University is home to 23 schools and academic units, bringing together world-class research and interdisciplinary educational offerings informed by global perspectives. Its distinguished faculty includes innovative artists, researchers, practitioners, scholars, clinicians, teachers, and mentors—among them Nobel laureates and recipients of prestigious national honors, such as the MacArthur “Genius” award, and winners of the National Medal of the Arts, the National Humanities Medal, the National Medal of Science, the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, among many other recognitions. Together, USC's faculty, schools, and academic units offer a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees that prepare students for success across diverse fields.

With an endowment of \$7.3 billion and an institutional budget of \$7.4 billion, USC is well-positioned to advance its impact and innovation. In 2023, USC achieved a [record-breaking \\$1.04 billion](#) in annual research expenditures, fueling critical studies in fields such as biotechnology, public health, biomedical engineering, cancer, and Alzheimer's disease. This achievement places USC as one of the top 13 private universities exceeding \$1 billion in research expenditures annually. Additionally, USC invests \$35 million annually in community initiatives, directly supporting 40,000 local residents through various programs and partnerships, including 31 Neighborhood Academic Initiative partners across both campuses.

A global university, USC has international offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, London, Mexico City, New Delhi, São Paulo, Taipei, and Seoul, as well as innumerable global partnerships, including with the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Bocconi University, Peking University, and the London School of Economics. While global in reach, USC is anchored by its University Park and Health Sciences campuses in Los Angeles. In 2023, USC announced the [opening of its new Capital Campus in Washington, D.C.](#), which has helped expand the university's influence and presence.

USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is one of five schools comprising USC Health Sciences. The other schools are:

- USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology
- USC Alfred E. Mann School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, including:
 - USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy
 - USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
- Keck School of Medicine of USC

There are countless opportunities for educational innovation and research collaboration across the Health Sciences Schools. The health enterprise provides an environment that promotes an inclusive and collaborative exchange of ideas across clinical care, research, education, and community service. USC

Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is poised for significant growth and high impact as it enters a new era of expansion in partnership with partner schools.

For more information about USC, visit: <https://www.usc.edu/>.

Leadership

In November 2024, [Dr. Carol Folt](#) announced her plan to retire from the University of Southern California at the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. Since taking office in 2019, President Folt has championed a transformative vision for USC, focusing on initiatives that prioritize student access and affordability, interdisciplinary innovation, sustainability, and community engagement. Her leadership in these initiatives has enhanced USC's reputation as a leader in research, education, and public service. She leaves USC with a strong foundation to further advance the university's mission. The Board of Trustees is searching for a transformative leader to succeed President Folt and continue building USC as a leading academic institution. General Counsel Beong-Soo Kim, who has been with the university since 2020, will serve as interim president beginning July 1, 2025.

[Steven Shapiro](#) was named the first senior vice president for health affairs on May 15, 2021. He oversees all health-related entities for USC which includes clinical care, education, and research represented by USC's academic health system, Keck Medicine of USC, as well as the USC health sciences schools. Dr. Shapiro works closely with USC's senior leadership and is a member of the USC Health System Board, the governing body over Keck Medicine, and all clinical care activities at USC. His priority is to accelerate health sciences innovation across the university by combining AI-driven technologies with transformative, compassionate patient care.

ABOUT THE USC SUZANNE DWORAK-PECK SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work was one of the first schools in the discipline to be fully accredited, and throughout its history, has continually provided innovative opportunities for specialized study, including online offerings and valuable real-world experience. Notably, the School was the first to combine elements of casework, group work, and community organization into an integrated model of social work practice, which is widely reflected in curricula nationwide. The School's mission champions the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through innovative teaching of evidence-based practice and practice-based skills, pioneering transformative research, and cultivating leadership for social change. The school fosters the education of professional social workers who are visionary game changers in addressing significant societal problems like homelessness, mental health, and poverty.

Suzanne Dworak-Peck's historic \$60 million gift in 2016 marked a transformative investment in the School's future, expanding its impact on a global scale. Social work pioneer Suzanne Dworak-Peck '65, MSW '67, cemented the School's standing as one of the world's most innovative institutions within the

discipline and strengthened its renowned educational and research programs. Over her decades-long career, Dworak-Peck has established herself as a leader devoted to advancing the profession. She has served as president of both the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the organization's California chapter. During her tenure, she strengthened NASW's role in international social work, particularly its relationship with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), an organization representing social workers in more than 100 countries. She also served as president of that organization and is currently its first and only ambassador. Her gift ensures that the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work will continue to stand as an innovator by which all others are measured.

The School's two campuses, University Park Campus and San Diego Academic Center, each with its own character, provide students and faculty with unique opportunities for research and study. The Montgomery Ross Fisher building, in the University Park Campus's north center, is the School's longtime home. It also houses the School's research institute, the Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services, the Trojan Guardian Scholars Center, and the Trauma Recovery Center (TRC@USC). Adjacent to the Montgomery Ross Fisher building is the 14,000-square-foot Social Work Center, built in 2003 to accommodate the growing needs of the School. The centerpiece of the newer facility is a 40-student "smart" classroom that maximizes wireless multimedia technology and video-conferencing capabilities, one of the most advanced on campus. The two buildings are connected by a spacious outdoor courtyard with wireless capacity and a cascading fountain. The San Diego Academic Center provides a convenient option for pursuing a master's degree close to home, offering access to quality education in a familiar setting.

Faculty, Staff, and Students

The School has consistently attracted well-respected scholars and researchers who not only expand the minds of students but also push the boundaries of their respective fields. Currently, the School boasts 18 tenured and two tenure track faculty, 71 non-tenure track faculty, 55 adjunct and part-time faculty, and 98 staff. Six professors in the School are recognized among the top two percent of scientists in the world for 2023 in a study by Elsevier and Stanford University. In 2023, Dworak-Peck enrolled 850 students in its graduate programs and 160 students in its doctoral programs. The undergraduate enrollment is 27 students in the minor in social work program, and it is projected that an additional 10 students will enroll in the new bachelor of social work program, which will equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for entry-level professional social work careers or further graduate-level education in social work. The student body reflects the diversity of Los Angeles and the communities served by the social work profession across the country.

Academic Programs

Undergraduate Programs

- Minor in Social Work
- Bachelor of Social Work (New)

Graduate Programs

- Master of Social Work

Doctoral Programs

- Doctor of Philosophy
- Doctorate of Social Work

Graduate Certificates

- Advanced Clinical Social Work Practice
- Aging and Health
- Child and Family Well-Being
- Ending Homelessness
- Interprofessional Education Caregiving
- LGBTQ+ Affirmative Care
- Social Inquiry for Community, Social and Environmental Justice
- Advanced Integrative Social Work and Nursing Practice
- Social Work Administration
- Social Work Practice in Addiction
- Telebehavioral Health Practice
- Visual Social Work
- Youth Justice
- Law, Social Justice and Diversity
- Trauma Informed Practices in Educational Settings

Practicum placements have been an integral part of the social work program at USC since its inception. USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has partnerships with some of the country's largest providers of social services. Social work students contribute nearly 900,000 hours of service through their practicum training each year, and many student internships lead to permanent job placements post-graduation.

Accreditation

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work was first accredited in 1922 by the Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Workers (later the American Association of Schools of Social Work), a precursor of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Since 1994, the School has been continuously reaffirmed for accreditation.

Programs are scheduled for reaffirmation of accreditation every eight years, at which time the community engages in a process of examining and analyzing where the program currently is and where it would like to go. The upcoming CSWE site visit for reaccreditation is in October 2025 and preparations are in place to ensure a productive visit.

Research

The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has a rich history of research with a portfolio of \$21 million. The multiple centers for research create transdisciplinary opportunities for graduate students and faculty to find advanced solutions to the most challenging social problems facing Los Angeles and the world. The research centers include:

- Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society
- Center for Homelessness, Housing, and Health Equity Research
- Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military Families
- Center for LGBTQ+ Health Equity
- Children’s Data Network
- Edward R. Roybal Institute on Aging
- Homelessness Policy Research Institute

ROLE OF THE DEAN

Reporting to the Senior Vice President for Health Affairs, the Dean will serve as the chief academic and administrative officer and oversee all aspects of its academic programs, research activities, fundraising, finances, outreach, and other operations. As the champion of the School, the Dean is responsible for maintaining the highest standards of research, teaching, and scholarship and fostering meaningful intersections between curricular and co-curricular activities. The Dean will provide visionary leadership to position the School at the forefront of the field as a leader in social impact. In doing so, the Dean will work closely with students, staff, faculty, university leadership, donors, alumni, additional partners, and key institutional leaders for the University. The Dean must inspire and galvanize the community around a unified vision to harness the collective expertise of the community to do good in the world and lead by example with empathy, respect, and transparency. The Dean manages an annual budget of approximately \$60 million. Reporting to the Dean is the current six-person senior leadership team comprised of the following:

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| • Associate Dean for Academic Affairs | • Associate Dean for Finance and Administration |
| • Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs | • Associate Dean for Research |
| • Associate Dean for Community and Clinical Programs | • Associate Dean for Organizational Culture and Well-Being |

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

The Dean will be responsible for continuing the momentum of the interim Dean’s success and charting a path forward that energizes and unites the community, meets the institution’s mission, and ensures that the School continues to deliver an exceptional educational experience. Given this overarching charge, the primary opportunities and priorities for the next Dean include the following:

Establish a vision for the future that repositions USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work as a leader and advocate for the profession

In recent years, the School has undergone profound shifts in size and scope. The next Dean will build on a strong intellectual foundation to develop and align a School-specific plan with the rest of the university.

Under the Dean's leadership, the School community must renew and update a vision for its future that identifies areas of growth and distinction; it should be an innovative force and catalyst for the field of social work and its potential to advance humanity. The Dean must be a strong advocate for the School, ensuring that it continues to function as a distinct body at the university. It is crucial that the Dean find important points of connection between the School, Health Sciences, and other units at USC to become a national leader in team-based learning to innovatively address community health issues.

Furthermore, the Dean will be a leader who understands the broader and dynamic landscape of social work education and who can protect social work's social justice mission in an era of sociopolitical, institutional, and economic pressures. As an integral part of the healthcare team in today's rapidly changing world, the School will prepare students with the skills and political acumen to address the complex factors that impact health and well-being.

Continue the legacy that upholds the value of innovative and integrated teaching, research, and practice

Students at USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work are primed to address the needs of a global society, promoting the welfare of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities through a framework of interprofessional collaboration, integrative practice, scientific inquiry, and an unwavering commitment to human rights and social justice. Given the School's position in an R-1 research-intensive university, the Dean must have a strong understanding of the research enterprise and the need for pre- and post-award administration that is responsive to trends in research administration and compliance. In addition, the Dean will bring a personal commitment to supporting meaningful integration of research and clinical practice, valuing both contributions equally. Additionally, the School is well-positioned to be at the forefront of utilizing technology and the power of artificial intelligence in the ever-changing field.

Bring a strategic approach to stewarding and growing resources in support of the School's aspirations

The Dean will be central in overseeing the School's resources and ensuring operational excellence to advance its academic mission and priorities. By developing a sustainable budget model and financial strategy that prioritizes the current and future areas needing support and investment, the Dean will be able to promote a healthy and sustainable future for both the School and the University. In addition to skillful and creative budgeting experience, the Dean will bring experience with appropriate investment strategies to enhance research capacity, support enrollment, and ensure a strong long-term financial future for the School. The Dean will additionally leverage a broad knowledge of funding sources and actively explore diverse revenue streams to expand opportunities that will enhance the School's financial foundation.

Philanthropy is key in this process, and the Dean will be central in securing the funds necessary to support the School's aspirations and ensuring that the School continues to be a top destination of choice for students and faculty. As such, the Dean will be an effective and strategic storyteller, cultivating relationships with alumni, local industries, philanthropic sources, and other key partners to generate excitement that will strengthen the School's financial position. In speaking with various stakeholders, the

Dean will articulate how the School's cutting-edge research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and forward-thinking approaches help address society's most pressing challenges.

Ensure transparent, clear, and inclusive communication and decision-making

As a visible and accessible leader, the Dean will emphasize open communication with USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck constituents to foster collaborative and innovative partnerships across the School and University. The USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work has undergone significant challenges over the past decade; today, the School is committed to continuing the outstanding work of the interim Dean in strengthening the culture, rejuvenating faculty and staff, and boosting morale. Under their leadership, the School has fostered an environment of collaboration, transparency, and innovation—principles that continue to guide its growth and vision. Promoting organic collaborations, informal interactions, and authentic dialogues, the next Dean will continue to foster an environment of collaboration, belonging, and joy, ensuring that faculty and staff feel supported, valued, and heard by both the Dean and each other. The next Dean will embody the commitment to rebuild trust, cohesion, and a strong sense of community internally and externally. Lastly, the Dean will uphold data-driven strategies to lead the School on matters related to academic programming, strategic hiring, budgeting, and institutional priorities.

Further USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's visibility, reach, and impact in Los Angeles and beyond

As the thought leader and the public face of the School, the Dean will build partnerships across diverse sectors to expand the School's visibility, reach, and influence within and beyond USC. Serving as an inspirational and respected ambassador of the School, the Dean will create meaningful collaborations with leaders and organizations at various levels. Through these partnerships, the Dean will identify mutually beneficial opportunities that amplify USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's contributions to pressing societal conversations, which will further position USC as a leader in addressing the challenges and opportunities of today's world.

The Dean will deepen the School's engagement with the community by fostering partnerships with local nonprofits, civic leaders, industry partners, and philanthropic organizations and collaborating with them to address some of LA's most pressing social challenges. This leader will underscore USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and USC's role as key players in the intellectual and cultural fabric of Los Angeles, reinforcing USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work's role as an active contributor to the city's growth and resilience.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be a social work practitioner, possess a terminal degree, and bring a distinguished record of scholarship and teaching appropriate for a tenured appointment as a full professor

within USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. They will also demonstrate a record of leadership and administrative experiences supporting and strengthening intersections of research and teaching. They will also bring an ability to think strategically about the future of higher education and how USC and the School can be innovative leaders. While no single candidate will possess all the ideal qualifications, the successful candidate will bring many of the following experiences, knowledge, and abilities important to the role:

- An outstanding scholar with a deep appreciation for and commitment to education, teaching excellence, experiential learning, demonstrating intellectual curiosity and commitment to all academic disciplines;
- Successful management experience in a complex organization within an academic setting, with a track record of effective collaboration with other academic units;
- A record of engaging, visible, and collaborative leadership, including the ability to foster successful organizational change;
- Demonstrated experience in financial planning and responsible stewardship of resources;
- Strong commitment to promoting research and scholarship excellence, with a record of increasing externally funded research;
- Respect for shared governance with active engagement, and a strong value for transparency in decision-making; demonstrated success in making decisions based on input from all constituencies;
- Commitment to retention, workplace culture, community outreach and engagement, and institutional programming;
- An exceptional communicator who can inspire internal and external constituencies to attract supporters and raise funds;
- Experience with fundraising, grant development, and/or the cultivation of external professional partnerships;
- Dedication to USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work mission with experience managing student enrollments; and
- Proven experience in managing staff to optimize employee and organizational productivity to meet evolving priorities, goals, and objectives.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The budgeted annual salary range that the University of Southern California reasonably expects to pay for the Dean of the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work is \$375,000 to \$425,000. This range takes into account a wide range of factors that are considered in making compensation decisions, including but not limited to experience, skills, knowledge, abilities, education, licensure and certifications, and other business and organizational needs. Salary offers are determined based on final candidate qualifications and experience.

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 constantly reinvents itself. 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 23,000 jobs and creating non-university job opportunities for thousands of additional residents each year. USC generates over \$8 billion annually in economic activity in the Los Angeles region alone, 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. More details about Los Angeles can be found [here](#).

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Electronic submission of materials is required, and inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/usc-social-work/dean>

David Bellshaw, Jaime Morgen, Alice Holland, Salem Adisu
Isaacson, Miller

USC 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, protected veteran status, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law or USC policy. USC observes affirmative action obligations consistent with state and federal law. USC will consider for employment all qualified applicants with criminal records in a manner consistent with applicable laws and regulations, including the Los Angeles County Fair Chance Ordinance for employers and the Fair Chance Initiative for Hiring Ordinance, and with due consideration for patient and student safety. We provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees with disabilities. Applicants with questions about access or requiring reasonable accommodation for any part of the application or hiring process should contact USC Human Resources by phone at (213) 821-8100 or by email at uschr@usc.edu. Inquiries will be treated as confidential to the extent permitted by law.