

CLARK UNIVERSITY



CHALLENGE CONVENTION. CHANGE OUR WORLD.

INAUGURAL D.J.A. SPENCER DEAN OF THE SCHOOL FOR CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT, AND SOCIETY
CLARK UNIVERSITY
Worcester, MA

THE SEARCH

Clark University, a nationally ranked, private liberal arts-based research university, seeks a visionary leader to serve as the inaugural D.J.A. Spencer Dean of the new School for Climate, Environment, and Society. In March of 2024, Clark received a founding gift of \$10 million to launch plans for the school, which is expected to open in the fall of 2025. The incoming dean will play a pivotal role in establishing a unique school that is positioned to be a leader in developing graduates, groundbreaking research, and outward engagement to address some of the world's most pressing challenges. The dean will forge partnerships across the university, inspiring a dedicated community of scholars to unite to magnify Clark's visibility, profile, and impact in addressing the causes and devastating impacts of climate change, the distress that environmental transformation places on society, and human-environment relationships. Clark is known for its profound engagement in the community, in Worcester and beyond, and the inaugural dean will be an external champion to advance Clark's contributions to practice and to communicate Clark's distinctive value proposition and impact to a broad external audience. The dean will position Clark as a leading and critical voice in helping to resolve the climate crisis and transform the ways that humans live within their surrounding environments.

Clark's size allows it to be innovative and nimble, and the tight-knit campus community provides the foundation for meaningful interdisciplinary collaborations. At the same time, Clark's distinctive educational mission of inquiry-meeting-action is particularly well suited to help students address the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the world. The new school initially will comprise three academic departments: Economics, Geography, and Sustainability and Social Justice. The department of Biology will also hold a special relationship to the school as a founding department, in which faculty with climate and environmental interests will be actively involved. In addition, faculty across Clark will be invited to participate in its programs and activities, and it is expected that most departments, such as those in the environmental humanities, will build strong connections given the breadth of issues involved. The school will also house the George Perkins Marsh Institute and the Center for Geospatial Analytics (formerly Clark Labs), providing further opportunities for coordinated research activities. The school will create a structure that enables Clark to innovate novel education and research programs that are responsive to global needs.

The inaugural dean will be a key member of university leadership, working collaboratively with the president and provost to advance a bold and ambitious vision for Clark. This launch of the School for

Climate, Environment, and Society is a major component of Clark's strategic framework *Clark Inspired* and is a featured aspect of the capital campaign. The university is also investing in growing its research and innovation enterprise, which complements goals for the new school. The inaugural dean will be responsible for raising additional philanthropy for the school and ensuring its relevance by establishing connections with relevant state and federal agencies, community partners, NGOs, and industry in ways that directly address climate and sustainability issues that impact our changing world.

ABOUT CLARK UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1887, Clark was one of the first all-graduate institutions in the United States. Today, the university is a highly ranked, student-centered institution that teaches approximately 2,329 undergraduate and 1,714 graduate students annually. Clark students learn to be imaginative, contributing citizens of the world and to advance the frontiers of knowledge and understanding through rigorous scholarship and creative effort. Clark allows students to participate in cutting-edge research, beginning as early as their first year. Clark's urban location and tradition of community partnerships place faculty and students in an ideal position to live the university's motto, "Challenge Convention. Change Our World."

Clark is increasingly recognized for scholarship, discovery, and inquiry that address social and human imperatives on a global scale. The university's 253 full-time and 181 part-time distinguished faculty members and 519 full-time and part-time staff support a rich array of undergraduate programs as well as nine doctoral programs and 30 master's degree programs, including a popular Accelerated BA/Master's Program, known as the "5th-year program," which has received national attention.

Clark has received many national and international distinctions, including recognition for its diversity and inclusion efforts, innovative practices, community engagement, and impact. The university has been named a top private institution for making an impact by Princeton Review. With an operating budget of \$160 million and an endowment approaching half a billion dollars, Clark's current financial position is strong, and the university's 50-acre urban campus includes approximately 1 million square feet of academic space, residence halls, and research and athletics facilities.

THE SCHOOL FOR CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT, AND SOCIETY

Clark is responding to an urgent call to action. There are no subjects more pressing, consequential, and complex than those at the intersection of climate, environment, and society. The school's initial plans were developed by several faculty-led committees, charged by Clark's president David Fithian, to identify ways in which Clark could make a distinctive impact. The school will build on Clark's long legacy of climate-related work in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and accelerate its progress on developing solutions for mitigation and adaptation. In bringing together the university's programs in Economics, Geography, and Sustainability and Social Justice, Clark is leveraging the long-standing scholarly excellence of three departments that have embraced interdisciplinary approaches to collaborative teaching, research, and learning. This will infuse the school with a problem-centered approach, draw on systems thinking, and integrate holistic consideration of equity, justice, and unintended consequences.

Clark anticipates the development of a new undergraduate major in Climate, Environment, and Society, expected to launch in the fall of 2025, and a new Master's program in Climate Solutions and Sustainability Transitions, among other offerings. These programs will draw on Clark's characteristic emphasis on translating learning into action and build on existing community partnerships in Worcester and elsewhere.

around the globe to support coursework, internships, student run start-ups, high-impact research projects, and activist engagement.

At the core of the school's identity are five interconnected fundamentals that transcend traditional departmental silos and reflect problem-focused integration of diverse perspectives:

- **Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Development:** How can we improve the quality of life of people worldwide?
- **Governance, Equity & Justice:** How can global, national, and local policies and institutions engage the most vulnerable communities so that they do not bear the most significant cost of our changing Earth system?
- **Urban Systems & Livelihoods:** How can we build green, resilient, and livable cities to ensure the flourishing of humans and nature in urban spaces?
- **Socioeconomic Systems & Sustainability Transitions:** What are the social and economic transformations necessary to slow climate change and adapt to a changing Earth system, and what is needed to promote widespread adoption of new perspectives and behaviors?
- **Earth Systems, Conservation & Ecosystem Services:** How are human actions endangering planetary systems, and what are the alternative pathways that conserve natural systems and sustain vital ecosystem services? How will biodiversity and ecosystems respond to climate forcing?

The university is currently in the leadership phase of a fundraising campaign wherein the School of Climate, Environment, and Society will be a key priority. The generous initial \$10 million gift from university trustee and philanthropist Vickie Riccardo and her two daughters will seed the initial start-up for the dean to finalize development of the school's blueprint and launch initial programs. These resources will be augmented by university fundraising support as a major institutional priority for philanthropy. The school is estimated to be a \$75 million to \$100 million initiative in total.

THE ROLE OF THE DEAN

This inaugural dean will play a pivotal leadership role in developing and advancing a shared mission, vision, and set of strategic goals for the school, serving as both the internal manager to launch the school and an outward-facing leader to develop its brand and reputation in the field. The dean will serve as a key point of contact in developing and maintaining external relationships with organizations and individuals to advance the school's mission, including serving as a lead fundraiser. The dean will foster collaborations inside and outside of Clark, creating and participating in climate-related networks, driving innovation, establishing and strengthening partnerships, and working with university units to raise external funds and publicize the new school.

In addition to the existing faculty and staff embedded in the three academic departments and two research institutes, it is expected that when fully developed, the dean will be supported by an associate dean to coordinate programmatic initiatives, a position to oversee development of research and external grants, an interdepartmental coordinator of academic programs, and a small administrative staff. Plans for additional faculty recruitments dedicated to Climate, Environment, and Society are underway. The ultimate size and scope of staffing, programming, and faculty recruitment will depend on progress towards achieving fundraising, external grant, and enrollment milestones.

The dean will also be responsible for overseeing the school's teaching, research, service, equity and justice, missions in collaboration with the participating academic units and an internal advisory committee; representing the school to internal and external constituents; and ensuring that the school is fiscally well managed. In addition, the dean will contribute to the university's senior leadership in the overall guidance of Clark. The right leader will help ensure excitement around this unique opportunity and will be an advocate for securing external funding and promoting collaborative research partnerships while championing interdisciplinary research excellence and innovation within the school.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Establish a comprehensive vision for a distinctive and forward-looking school

The inaugural dean will craft a distinct vision and provide strategic direction for university-wide research, education, and service that addresses climate change, environmental sustainability, social justice, and societal resilience. This vision will draw on Clark's existing areas of excellence, leverage its strength in interdisciplinary research and education, and harmonize with Clark's mission, goals, and values. The dean will articulate a compelling narrative and value proposition for the school that positions Clark to contribute to the national and international agenda on climate-related issues, and they will be a tireless advocate to enhance the visibility and reputation of the school, ensuring that Clark is seen as a destination for expertise and resources in this domain. The dean will work closely with Clark faculty to develop a shared vision that inspires the community to come together and create new structures and programs to elevate academic quality through contributions to education, research, and impact.

Lead external partnership development and engagement

To achieve its desired real-world impact, the school will have to look beyond the campus. The dean will bring an external orientation and cultivate strategic partnerships and collaborations with governmental agencies, NGOs, research institutions, industry leaders, and community organizations to create opportunities to discuss and develop solutions for complex environmental and societal challenges. The dean will also be an ambassador for Clark, serving as a thought leader and representing the university in relevant forums, conferences, panels, committees, and networks. The dean will also utilize personal and institutional networks to generate opportunities for faculty and staff to participate in activities that broaden Clark's research and engagement.

Promote enhanced opportunities for research and innovation

The dean will foster a culture of research excellence, innovation, and entrepreneurship within the school and among affiliated faculty by helping to identify specific questions, problems, or issues that Clark is well positioned to address, whether in science, technology development policy, business, or other arenas. The dean will support faculty and student research initiatives, identifying funding opportunities and promoting team formation to pursue collaborative opportunities. Overall growth of research expenditures related to climate, environment, and society is an important priority. The dean will champion interdisciplinary research and work to eliminate structural impediments and incentivize team research across campus. The knowledge generated through this new school is intended to reach academic and practice audiences, and the dean will support ways to disseminate Clark's work in traditional and innovative venues to maximize visibility and impact.

Launch distinctive, relevant, and appealing academic programs and oversee program enhancement

The dean will partner closely with faculty governance committees, program directors, department chairs, institute leaders, and faculty to oversee development of a dynamic set of academic programs, ensuring their relevance, rigor, and alignment with student and societal needs. This will include promoting interdisciplinary educational programs and innovative curriculum design and implementation. The dean will work with faculty and faculty governance committees to assess whether existing programs are overlapping or redundant, and sunset programs accordingly. The dean will practice shared governance and include all necessary university constituents to implement these objectives.

Recruit, develop, and retain excellent faculty

The dean will play a vital role in recruiting, retaining, developing, and evaluating a diverse faculty and staff, fostering a strong culture of inclusivity and belonging. The dean will promote a vibrant academic community that brings faculty together around shared interests and conceive programming that realizes the mission of the school. This may include hosting convenings and lectures for leading academic researchers in climate, environment, and society, and fellowships or guest lectures by leading practitioners, policymakers, and community partners, among others. The dean will oversee the school's staff structure and will identify necessary positions and recruit talent into critical roles.

Advance student success and engagement

Clark has established a school because it believes that educating and developing leaders is a vital component of impacting climatic, environmental, and societal challenges. As such, the dean will be a champion for student academic success, retention, and career placement within the school. Student interest in climate, environment, and society is high, and the dean will ensure that Clark's programs serve this demand, growing interest, enrollment, and engagement across the school. A major differentiator of Clark's programs will be rich experiential learning opportunities, relevant internship opportunities, support for student-run start-ups, activism engagement, and embedded, high-impact research experiences for students.

Secure the school's long-term financial sustainability

The dean serves as the fiscal steward of the school, and is responsible for management of the budget, allocating resources prudently and effectively to achieve institutional goals. The dean will identify opportunities for revenue generation from a diverse array of sources, including development of graduate and certificate programs. The dean will also work actively with Clark Advancement to promote the school to alumni and other prospective donors. To date, Clark has had relatively modest private foundation and industry support for work on climate and sustainability, and the dean will vigorously explore ways to connect Clark with relevant opportunities and funders in those spaces. Increased grant revenues from a variety of sources locally and federally are also expected to contribute to budget growth.

THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE

Clark seeks a proven leader with an excellent record of achievement. While no single candidate will have all the ideal qualifications, candidates should possess many of the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A visionary leader passionate about environmental stewardship, sustainability, and addressing pressing environmental and social challenges.
- A distinguished scholarly achievement record, ideally eligible for tenure upon review.
- Substantial experience in leadership roles, strategic planning, and advocacy in climate change, environmental sustainability, social justice, or related fields.
- Extensive experience in fundraising, especially private donors and industry sponsors.
- Demonstrated track record of successful partnership development, stakeholder engagement, and coalition-building at local, national, and international levels.
- Demonstrated record of success developing and managing large, externally funded research agendas in areas related to climate, environment, and society.
- Excellent communication, negotiation, and diplomacy skills, with the ability to engage effectively with diverse stakeholders and audiences.
- A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the ability to promote a supportive and inclusive learning and working environment.
- Proven ability to lead and inspire interdisciplinary teams, foster innovation, unify disparate units across differences, and drive positive change in complex and dynamic environments.
- Experience in financial management and resource allocation.
- Advanced degree (PhD or equivalent) in climate science, ecology, economics, environmental or natural resources, environmental studies, geography, international/community development, sustainability, or a related field.

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations, and applications (including resumes/CVs and letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be directed to the search firm in confidence:

John Muckle, Carrie Alexander, Ivy Couch, and Kira Hamilton
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/clark-university/inaugural-dja-spencer-dean-school-climate-environment-and-society>

Clark University embraces equal opportunity and affirmative action as core values: The university believes that cultivating an environment that embraces and promotes diversity is fundamental to the success of our students, its employees, and its community. This commitment applies to every aspect of education, services, and employment policies and practices at Clark. Clark's commitment to diversity informs its efforts in recruitment, hiring, and retention. All positions at Clark share in the responsibility for building a community that values diversity and the uniqueness of others by exhibiting integrity and respect in interacting with all members of the Clark community to create an atmosphere of fairness and belonging. Clark strongly encourages members from historically underrepresented communities, inclusive of all women, to apply.

APPENDIX: LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Clark and the Worcester Community

Clark University is located in the Main South neighborhood of Worcester, Massachusetts, about two miles from downtown Worcester and 40 miles west of Boston. Worcester is a dynamic, diverse city on the rise. The second-largest city in New England, with a population of over 205,000, Worcester is home to 10 institutions of higher learning including the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester State University, and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Worcester is increasingly recognized for its growing healthcare and biotechnology communities, for its thriving arts and cultural communities, and as a vibrant food hub with an abundance of new restaurants and craft breweries. In addition, the city has become the home for the Red Sox minor league baseball team, located in a new ballpark about a mile from campus.

For more than three decades, Clark has been an active partner with the Main South Community Development Corporation and the City of Worcester to develop and implement initiatives that have significantly improved the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhood. That relationship was formalized in 1995 when Clark became a primary partner in the broad, grassroots collaboration called the [University Park Partnership](#). This collaboration has produced countless initiatives in housing and building renovation, education, economic development, social and recreational programs, and community engagement. The trusting, collaborative relationships that have developed from these efforts are both powerful and mutually beneficial. Students, staff, and faculty work together to contribute in meaningful ways to society in partnership with their neighborhoods and other Worcester communities.

Clark also promotes engagement with the local community through its immersive learning experiences. Students from the Department of Sustainability and Social Justice have participated in competitions to create affordable housing development proposals. Supported by the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation's Director of Housing for Central and Western Massachusetts, students work in collaboration with developers and experts in the fields of community development finance, architectural design, and community engagement to generate innovative solutions to local housing challenges. The Collaborative for Youth and Community Justice (CYCJ) works with community partners to conduct action research on how best to meet community needs and assess the effectiveness of programs; provide professional education and training to youth and community outreach workers, emphasizing trauma-informed practices; facilitate dialogues to help amplify youth and community voices and increase collaborations among community groups; and engage in community capacity building through collaborative strategic planning. CYCJ participates in several action research projects, including the Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, Worcester ACTS, and the Youth Worker Training Institute.