

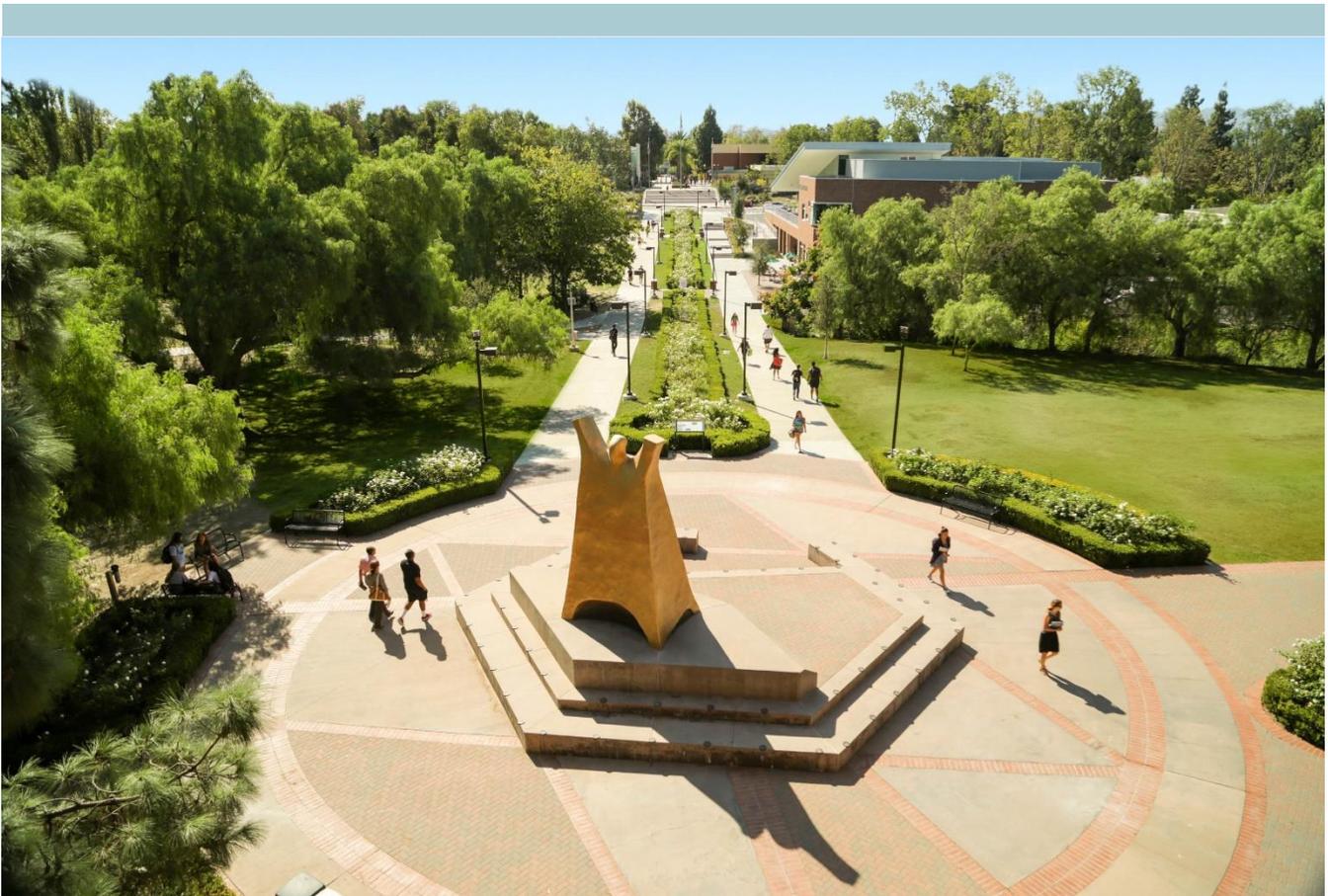
California Lutheran

UNIVERSITY

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Leadership Profile

Fall 2025



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

California Lutheran University (Cal Lutheran) seeks an experienced, inclusive, and collaborative leader to serve as its next Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Located in Thousand Oaks, California, founded in 1959, and formally recognized as a Hispanic-Serving Institution since 2016, Cal Lutheran is home to 2,297 undergraduate and 1,054 graduate students. Students come from 67 countries and represent a wide spectrum of faiths and spirituality. The University's dedicated, accomplished faculty works with small classes of students who are open-minded – about ideas, about people, and about faith – and are seeking to grow as individuals. Both in and out of the classroom, everyone at Cal Lutheran is committed to helping each student pursue their passions to discover their purpose. By following that purpose, they can transform their communities – and the world. Cal Lutheran is made up of six academic units which serve students across a range of academic departments and deliver personalized classroom experience that the University is known for.

As the largest unit at Cal Lutheran, the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) provides the historical and intellectual foundation of undergraduate, liberal arts education. The College of Arts and Sciences values the diverse experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of the University's academic community. The vision of the College is to cultivate a liberal arts learning environment that is student-centered, welcoming, and inclusive. The College encourages students, faculty, and staff to explore and expand their knowledge and to contribute their talents and abilities to fully engage their communities and the world with integrity. The mission of the College is to mentor students and equip them to make meaningful contributions on campus and beyond. The College's strong intellectual training for undergraduates is driven by dedicated faculty who innovate teaching to ignite students' critical thinking and creativity in courses that integrate self-discovery and learning. The College honors the Lutheran tradition in higher education in the liberal arts by educating the whole person in a complex and dynamic world, encouraging students to question the status quo, and engaging with culturally diverse perspectives.

The next Dean of the COAS will have a unique opportunity in leading the College into a new era of innovation and growth. The Dean will bring deep affinity for the liberal arts tradition and be expected to support faculty achievement, raise the profile and resources of the College to the benefit of faculty and students, elevate student success, build collaborations across campus units through relationships, and provide modern, transparent, and effective leadership for the College.

As a senior academic leader, the next Dean will serve as an effective advocate and partner for the College within the University and will act as the College's chief executive and intellectual leader. This leader will have a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging. The next Dean must possess superior academic credentials and a record of scholarly achievement that merits the rank of a tenured professor at Cal Lutheran. A demonstrated and progressive track record of administrative leadership is required. The next Dean should also demonstrate an ability to lead, envision, and innovate; to engage and unite constituents; to listen carefully and communicate persuasively; to build strong relationships and collaborate effectively across the University; to understand and support the needs of all disciplines; to secure external funding; to develop partnerships beyond the University; and to operate the College's administrative and budgetary functions with a high level of skill. In addition, a steadfast commitment to the mission of Cal Lutheran and the success of faculty, staff, and students flourishing in a dynamic university is essential.

For information regarding how to apply, submit nominations, or inquire about the role, please see the section "Procedure for Candidacy" at the end of this document.

Role of the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences reports to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and oversees the largest of Cal Lutheran's six academic units. This role involves providing leadership to 92 full-time faculty, seven staff members, and four associate deans who manage the divisions of Creative Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social & Behavioral Sciences. The College also includes the University Honors Program, First-Year Seminar program, and a new General Education program introduced in fall 2023.

The Dean ensures that the College's programs align with the University's mission and strategic plan. This involves fostering curricular and pedagogical innovation, and supporting the University's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging. The Dean builds and maintains dynamic partnerships with internal stakeholders and develops relationships externally as a public advocate for both the College and the University. The Dean is responsible for overseeing the College's finances and operations, supporting and evaluating faculty, and overseeing program assessments.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The successful Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences candidate will be an academic leader deeply rooted in the Lutheran "[rooted and open](#)" educational liberal arts tradition and will bring a deep affinity for this tradition as well as an adaptive orientation that reflects contemporary trends while simultaneously upholding the California Lutheran mission.

In addition, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will be expected to:

- **Support Faculty Achievement:** Through a deep collaboration with faculty across the disciplines, the next Dean will support excellence in faculty teaching, research, and creative endeavors, as well as their professional development more broadly. As agents of innovation in their respective disciplines and through vibrant interdisciplinary work, the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences look to their Dean to remove barriers and to offer support for their individual and collective success. The Dean's efforts will enable faculty to expand the spirit of creativity that infuses the curriculum.
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- **Raise the Profile and Resources of the College to the Benefit of Faculty and Students:** The Dean will be expected to have an external presence to support the visibility of the College throughout the region and beyond. The Dean will identify potential sources of alternative revenues that bring expanded resources for faculty research and creative activities, and for student support. Such resources will buoy the innovation of faculty and enable their development, and result in creative, external partnerships with both community colleges and partners in the non-profit and corporate sectors, to the betterment of faculty and students. In consultation with University Advancement, the Dean will cultivate relationships with donors, alumni, foundations, and community partners to develop opportunities for philanthropy.
 - **Elevate Student Success:** In the California Lutheran "[rooted and open](#)" spirit, the next Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will advance student success in all of its many dimensions. Both in curricular and co-curricular college programming, the Dean will be a model in supporting high impact practices leading to career preparation. Key to student success will be the Dean's enthusiastic advocacy for the Lutheran liberal arts educational mission, and their stalwart commitment to upholding spaces where all students are welcomed and supported in their identities and cultures.
 - **Build Collaborations Across Campus Units Through Relationships:** The next Dean of the College will work collaboratively with Student Affairs, Undergraduate Admissions, Alumni and Family Relations, Career Services, Athletics, the Center for Student Success, and other offices on campus to integrate efforts across these areas with the College. The Dean will be instrumental in paving the way for faculty and staff across campus to work together to provide academic advising, outreach to prospective students and alumni, and continue to develop the first-year experience.
 - **Provide Modern, Transparent, and Effective Leadership for the College:** The Dean will be expected to manage the College budget, curricular offerings, policy and processes, staff, and faculty effectively through a spirit of transparency and collaboration. At this time of enrollment pressures, and significant change within the

national landscape of higher education, the successful Dean will be a skilled manager of processes, policies, and people who develops trust and meaningful participation through shared governance. As a respected academic and skilled administrator, this dedicated Dean will inspire faculty and staff to do their best work, resulting in both a healthy college and a healthy community.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

California Lutheran University seeks in its next Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences a candidate with a distinguished record of academic and professional accomplishments, transparent leadership and innovation, and grounded in a commitment to inclusion and belonging for all. This leader will be responsible for fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment that prioritizes relationship-building, trust, and empowerment of faculty, staff, and students toward shared goals. The next Dean must have a terminal degree and an academic record suitable for tenure in one of the College's departments. Of critical importance is a passion for the community and students California Lutheran University serves.

Additionally, this individual should demonstrate the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A student-centered leader with deep commitment to student success and an understanding of California Lutheran University's mission as a Hispanic-Serving Institution.
- A demonstrated record of success in building and advocating for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community of faculty, staff, and students.
- Agility in managing change.
- Upholding values core to the Lutheran liberal arts tradition.
- Ability to think innovatively about the future of higher education and the role of the College within the broader university context.
- A commitment to serve as a strong advocate for the College and the liberal arts more generally.
- A track record of fundraising, and experiences in building effective partnerships and working relationships with external communities, that will translate into fundraising work for the support of students and faculty.
- Experience working with a broad and diverse set of stakeholders to establish a collective vision and demonstrated success implementing that vision.
- Visibility in higher education and disciplinary associations.
- Fair-mindedness, active listening, and a sincere commitment to alternative viewpoints, with an open-door policy.
- An inspirational, collaborative, ethical, transparent, and trusted leadership style that engages stakeholders, builds consensus, and achieves success by unifying efforts across disciplinary boundaries through consistent commitment to shared governance.
- A track record of data-informed, consultative, and inclusive decision-making.
- Commitment to a meaningful tenure at California Lutheran that results in measurable, positive impacts.
- Experience in budgeting, planning, personnel, promotion and tenure, and program reviews.

- Strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence that result in effective and enduring relationships within the College, across the University, and with external constituents.
- A strong history of supporting faculty in their teaching and research and promoting professional development in both faculty and staff across the full span of disciplines within the College.
- Intellectual curiosity, and both the capacity and commitment to understand, appreciate, and champion interests beyond one's own.



About California Lutheran University

Overview

California Lutheran University has seen remarkable growth since its founding in 1959. The University keeps pace with the changing needs of students while remaining true to its mission: to educate leaders for a global society who are strong in character and judgment, confident in their identity and vocation, and committed to service and justice. Their Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation demonstrates the University's commitment to living out its mission within the changing context of student demographics.

The 225-acre main campus in Thousand Oaks is home to a dynamic Liberal Arts and Sciences University with 3,351 undergraduate and graduate students who represent a diversity of faiths and cultures. 56% of Cal Lutheran students are from underrepresented groups, and 38% of first year and new transfers are first generation students. Cal Lutheran Faculty are 37% people of color.

Cal Lutheran offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs through the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Management, Graduate School of Education, Graduate School of Psychology, School for Professional and Continuing Studies, and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley. There are 44 majors and 45 minors offered in the traditional undergraduate program.

The Bachelor's Degree for Professionals program offers degrees in six majors. Graduate programs include doctorates in educational leadership, higher education leadership, clinical psychology, and theology, and master's degrees in education, psychology, business, economics, information technology, public policy and administration, and divinity.

Cal Lutheran is deeply involved in service to communities in Ventura County and beyond. Examples include affordable counseling services provided by psychology graduate students, the Autism and Communication Center, professional development for nonprofit leaders, economic forecasting, the summer Kingsmen Shakespeare Festival, a community swimming pool, and NPR and local news through KCLU Radio. The University's thriving arts programs promote cultural awareness and provide intellectual and educational benefits to the region.

Mission

The mission of the University is to educate leaders for a global society who are strong in character and judgment, confident in their identity and vocation, and committed to service and justice.

Accreditations

- Cal Lutheran is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- The Graduate School of Education is authorized by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to offer credentials.
- The Graduate School of Psychology's Doctor of Clinical Psychology program is accredited by the American Psychological Association.
- The School of Management is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

- Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary is accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools.

Affiliations

- Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities
- Council of Independent Colleges
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Excelencia in Education Network
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
- Hispanic-Serving Institution designation by the U.S. Department of Education
- National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
- Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, NCAA Division III

About the College of Arts and Sciences

As the largest academic unit at California Lutheran University, the College of Arts and Sciences provides the historical and intellectual foundation of undergraduate, liberal arts education. The College of Arts and Sciences values the diverse experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of Cal Lutheran's academic community.

They cultivate a liberal arts learning environment that is student-centered, welcoming, and inclusive. They encourage students, faculty, and staff to explore and expand knowledge and to contribute their talents and abilities to fully engage their communities and world with integrity.

COAS's mission is to mentor students and equip them to make meaningful contributions on campus and within larger communities. The College's strong intellectual training for undergraduates is driven by dedicated faculty who innovate teaching to ignite students' critical thinking and creativity in courses and independent research that integrate self-discovery and learning.

Students across all disciplines are able to participate in academic research and creative arts. Working independently or with faculty, they can make original contributions to their field of study through research programs and fellowships. Featured accomplishments include all types of scholarship: traditional lab research, creative works, quantitative analysis, and qualitative explorations.

The College of Arts and Sciences faculty are deeply committed to experiential learning, with undergraduate research opportunities available across almost every discipline. At any given time, approximately 50+ students are actively engaged in research, collaborating with faculty from the initial stages of research question generation to the presentation and publication stage. The faculty are not only active researchers but also deeply invested in creating research experiences for our students.

The COAS has a particularly strong summer research program, which is funded through private donations, foundation gifts, and grant money. It provides students with the opportunity to work closely with faculty mentors for eight weeks during the summer. These students also participate in professional development workshops to enhance their academic and career readiness.

Each year, students showcase their research at two major events: the Student Research Symposium in the fall, where they present summer research, and the all-campus Festival of Scholars in the spring, where they present research conducted during the academic year. Many students also present their findings at regional and national conferences and some students co-publish with faculty. Additionally, the McNair Scholars, Community Scholars for Black Lives (CSBL), and ASCENSO Hispanic Undergraduate Research Fellows programs support traditionally underrepresented students in pursuing research programs, furthering their academic careers.

Experiential learning is imbedded in each department and is supported by the “IDEAS” themed general education - **Inquire, Develop, Experience, Apply, Serve**.

Opportunities for experiential learning include internships, study abroad, travel seminars, field research, and community engagement.

The University Honors Program emphasizes teaching excellence in small seminar-style classes that feature innovative, interdisciplinary subjects and offer a high degree of intellectual creativity.

Faculty honor the Lutheran tradition in higher education in the liberal arts by educating the whole person in a complex and dynamic world, encouraging students to question the status quo, and engage with culturally diverse perspectives.



Related Links

- [View all majors, minors, and pre-professional programs](#)
- [IDEAS general education curriculum](#)
- [Hispanic-Serving Institution](#)
- [Faculty directory](#)
- [Academic Centers](#)
- [Office of Research](#)

Leadership

John Nunes, Ph.D., Interim President



Following one year as Interim President, the Board of Regents appointed Dr. John A. Nunes to serve as Cal Lutheran's ninth President on May 17, 2025. Dr. Nunes served since 2020 on the Academic Leaders Task Force on Campus Free Expression at the Bipartisan Policy Center. Many public and private universities have adopted the task force's recommendations about how to foster a campus culture of robust intellectual exchange during the current period of national polarization.

Nunes is a senior fellow at the Center for Religion, Culture, and Democracy and was ordained as a Lutheran minister in 1991. He was also President and CEO of Lutheran World Relief and held an endowed professorship at Valparaiso University.

He is the author of five books, including *Wittenberg Meets the World: Reimagining the Reformation from the Margins* (2017), with Alberto Garcia; and *Meant for More: In, With, and Under the Ordinary* (2020). Born in Montego Bay, Jamaica and raised in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Nunes holds degrees from Concordia College, Ann Arbor (BA), Concordia Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario (M.Div.), and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (Th.M. and Ph.D.).

Leanne Neilson, Psy.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs



Dr. Leanne Neilson has served as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at California Lutheran University since 2008. Previously, she served as Associate Provost overseeing graduate programs, accreditation, and assessment. She was a faculty member for 11 years at Cal Lutheran in the Department of Psychology.

Neilson is actively engaged in community service. She currently serves on the Board of the Thousand Oaks Alliance for the Arts and is a member of the United Way's Women United. She was on the Board of the United Way of Ventura County for six years, serving one year as Board Chair and was recognized with the United Way's Milton M. Teague award for Volunteer of the Year. Neilson served for five years on the Western

Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Substantive Change Committee, including two years as co-chair. In 2018, she was appointed to serve on the WASC Senior College and University Commission.

Neilson earned her bachelor's degree in organizational psychology, master's in psychology, and doctorate in clinical psychology, all from Pepperdine University. She is a licensed psychologist and worked for three years as a Staff Research Associate at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute (NPI) in the Clinical Research Center for Schizophrenia at Camarillo State Hospital.

Student Life

The division of Student Affairs supports the success of all Cal Lutheran students by fostering holistic development, enhancing well-being, promoting self-efficacy, and honoring the diversity and culture of the Cal Lutheran community to create a sense of belonging and enhance the student experience.

Students come from 40 states and 67 countries and represent a diversity of faiths and cultures. Of traditional undergraduate students, 57% live on campus in 15 [residence halls](#).

On-campus dining locations include the main dining hall at Ullman Commons, grab-and-go options from Ullman-To-Go, The Habit Burger Grill, Starbucks, and Jamba Juice.

In addition to providing a safe and secure environment for students to live and learn, we offer a number of on-campus support services including Health Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, and Wellness Resources.

From iCLU Radio to Knights Hockey to various professional societies, a wide range of interests, passions, and communities are represented by numerous student clubs and organizations. Cal Lutheran's commitment to serving their neighbors is equally represented through a variety of civic engagement, service, and leadership opportunities. Campus Ministry provides many ways to connect to spiritual life here—worship, retreats, service, and more. We welcome everyone in the community, no matter one's belief or non-belief.

Athletic Programs

Cal Lutheran's intercollegiate athletic teams compete in the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SCIAC) and the NCAA Division III.

Men's teams compete in baseball, basketball, cross-country, football, golf, soccer, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and water polo. Women's teams compete in basketball, cross-country, golf, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and water polo. Junior varsity teams compete in men's and women's basketball, men's and women's soccer, baseball, and women's volleyball.

During the 2023-2024 season, both Women's Soccer and Men's Volleyball became NCAA Division III national champions. [Read more about their achievements.](#)





Thousand Oaks, California

We are located in Thousand Oaks, California, which is a city of approximately 125,000 people, conveniently located 40 miles northwest of Los Angeles and 25 minutes from the Pacific Ocean.

Halfway between Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, Thousand Oaks is one of the prominent cities in Ventura County. It is consistently rated by the FBI as one of the safest cities in the entire United States with populations larger than 100,000. The city of Thousand Oaks lies within the Conejo Valley, a picturesque, mountain-rimmed plateau, 900 feet above sea level.

[Learn more about Thousand Oaks.](#)



Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting California Lutheran University in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by November 13, 2025.

California Lutheran University expects to pay in the range of \$200,000-\$225,000.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be directed to:

Melody Rose, Ph.D. and Ashlee Winters Musser

CalLutheranDeanCOAS@wittkieffer.com

Applicants must also create a job profile directly on California Lutheran's website [here](#). You are not required to submit your materials through this site.

California Lutheran University is committed to providing equal opportunity in employment for all persons, regardless of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, marital status, sex, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender, gender identity or expression, or any other basis protected by applicable law. No person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in any program, activity or facility of the University on the basis of these factors in a manner consistent with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, ordinances, orders and rules, and University's policies, procedures, and processes. Upon request, reasonable accommodations in the application process can be provided to individuals with qualifying disabilities. Please contact the Human Resources Department for further information or to request an accommodation.