



**USC** University of  
Southern California

## **Chief Information Officer**

### Leadership Profile

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## The Opportunity

The University of Southern California seeks a strategic and collaborative executive to serve as its next Chief Information Officer (CIO). The CIO will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of technology at one of the world's most prestigious universities. This is an exceptional opportunity to lead central technology operations at a private research institution with significant size, resources and breadth of scale.

The University of Southern California is one of the world's leading private research universities. An anchor institution in Los Angeles and a global center for the arts, technology, health and international business, USC's diverse curricular offerings provide extensive opportunities for interdisciplinary study and collaboration with leading researchers in highly advanced learning environments. USC is a constellation of schools, centers, and institutes where some of the brightest minds, working together in a dynamic and collaborative environment, are leading the way to the future of education and a healthier, more joyful and sustainable Los Angeles and world.

Reporting to the Senior Vice President, Finance and Chief Financial Officer, the CIO will provide the visionary and operational leadership to enable a forward-thinking, enterprise-focused IT organization that champions the strategic use of technology to further the mission of the University. This leader will be tasked with fully evaluating the central IT organization, including processes and structure, and creating a proactive, high service delivery environment. The incoming CIO will actively collaborate with schools and central units, cultivating robust relationships and tailoring central solutions to meet the unique needs of each academic and administrative area. Demonstrating a customer-centric approach, the CIO will prioritize driving efficiency, excellence, and innovation in alignment with the University's overarching goals.

The CIO will lead in developing an IT strategic plan for the organization that addresses the current and future needs of the University. They will also establish a governance structure that leads to effective prioritization of projects and allocation of resources. In addition, the CIO will support an ongoing learning management system upgrade and a future student information system replacement. The CIO will support the optimization of enterprise systems and the process and cultural transformation to leverage the systems effectively.

The ideal candidate will be a dynamic leader with extensive experience and a proven track record in IT strategic planning and execution within a complex and decentralized environment. The CIO should be seen as a service-oriented, collaborative partner capable of cultivating trust, credibility, and consensus among constituents across the campus. The successful candidate should be dedicated to assembling a highly engaged, diverse team that contributes effectively to the University's goals. As an innovative leader, the CIO must possess a global vision and stay abreast of emerging trends in digital technology supporting education and research. Effective listening and communication skills are essential, enabling the CIO to facilitate change and adeptly balance resources and priorities.

## Organization Overview

Founded by civic leaders at the dawn of the Western region's prominence, USC has always 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. It was poised to break boundaries and transcend geography, and since opening its doors in 1880, USC has been on an impressive trajectory. In a comprehensive new ranking, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Times Higher Education* both ranked USC 22nd in the United States among over 1,000 public and private universities. USC has established itself as a leading institution in the academy, distinguished for its unique, nimble, and inventive culture.

Over the span of its history, the University has 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. USC brings together world-class research and interdisciplinary educational offerings informed by a global perspective. It was a co-founding institution of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), a consortium of the 45 leading research universities linking the Americas, Asia, and Australia. It impressively combines an international commitment with the dynamism offered by the second largest metropolitan region in the United States with an over \$1 trillion economy.

### History and Trajectory

In the 1870s, Robert Maclay Widney, a respected judge, entrepreneur, and civic leader, first dreamed of establishing a university in the region. He knew the unlimited potential of Los Angeles could not be fulfilled until it had a great university to provide the intellectual capital and leadership on which a true world-class city depends.

Some 1,000 people – 10 percent of the population of Los Angeles – turned out on September 4, 1880, to witness the laying of the cornerstone of USC's first building. (Today, it stands at the campus entrance as the Widney Alumni House.) Just one month later, the University of Southern California opened its doors to 53 students and nine faculty. Two of those students were from Japan, in an early display of USC's global character. From its earliest days, the University was deeply committed to diversity; along with female faculty members, USC's first valedictorian was a woman.

During this era, the forerunners to today's schools of business, music, dentistry, education, engineering, fine arts, cinema, journalism, law, and pharmacy were all added to the University. USC's focus on professional education was critical to the region's quality of life and economic growth, producing a steady stream of leaders and professionals to serve the emerging city and its rapidly expanding population.

The deep loyalty of USC's alumni and its strong athletic tradition also date back to the University's earliest days. In 1885, the first University of Southern California Alumni Association was established, and in 1888, the University played – and won – its first football game. Twenty years

later, a *Los Angeles Times* sportswriter dubbed the University's spirited athletic teams the "Trojans," the title they carry to this day.

During World War II, USC became a site for military training programs. After the war, enrollment swelled with veterans pursuing degrees under the G.I. Bill. Before Pearl Harbor, USC had 6,000 full-time students. Just five months after the war, the student body numbered 11,800. By 1947-1948, the total number of USC students reached 24,000 – mostly former servicemen.

USC's growth continued at an impressive rate as the University entered the second half of the twentieth century. The Health Sciences Campus was added in the early 1950s. In 1961, the University announced a master plan that would double USC's endowment by the end of the decade, add 30 new buildings to the two campuses, and help the school gain election to the Association of American Universities. USC was admitted to the AAU in 1969.

Thirty years ago, USC was still largely a community school, with very modest selectivity and a heavy emphasis on professional programs. Beginning in the 1990s the University began to take advantage of its position as one of two comprehensive universities in Los Angeles. The University's new ambitions were cemented in the 1994 strategic plan, which sought to *"...enable USC to move over the next decade to a position of academic leadership among America's foremost private research universities."*

Since that time, USC has undergone an institutional ascent that is unparalleled in American higher education. Over the past 25 years, the University has solidified its status as one of the country's leading research universities, climbing from 44th to 28th in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings – an increase that is unprecedented for its rapidity and magnitude.

### Students and Student Life

In recent decades, the University has dedicated considerable energy and resources to strengthen undergraduate education. USC now stands among the most selective private universities in the nation, with 2023-24 the most selective year on record. Average standardized test scores for incoming freshmen (of those reporting) are in the 98th percentile, and the average unweighted GPA is 3.86. In the 2023-2024 academic year, USC had 21,000 undergraduate students and 26,100 graduate and professional students.

The University's geographic reach has also changed significantly. In 1990, 73 percent of the incoming freshmen were drawn from California. In contrast, the incoming class in 2023 drew 42 percent of its first-year students from California. Overall, the class hailed from 50 states, and over 2,050 different high schools, and 17 percent of the class were international students from 65 different countries.

USC has a historic commitment to diversity. In Fall 2023, the demographics of the student body were 19.9 percent Asian, 6.1 percent Black or African American, 15.9 percent Hispanic or Latinx, 23.3 percent white or Caucasian, 27.1 percent international, and 7.7 percent other. Additionally, 25 percent of students are the first in their family to attend college.

To help ensure the diversity of its student body, USC provides generous merit scholarships and institutional financial aid, with 22 percent of the undergraduate student body in 2023 having received merit scholarships. In addition, the University meets 100 percent of the financial need for those undergraduates who satisfy eligibility requirements. Nearly two thirds of USC undergraduate students receive some kind of financial assistance exceeding \$800M from all sources.

USC's success in attracting the highest-caliber undergraduate students is closely linked to its efforts to strengthen academics and provide a more traditional residential college experience. "Breadth with depth" has become a hallmark of undergraduate education at USC, which now offers more than 170 majors and minors. Programs to increase participation in research, to encourage exploration of divergent fields of study, and to expand opportunities for living or study abroad have been launched and strengthened in recent years alongside new programs that reward excellence in these endeavors. At the same time, increased focus on student advising and undergraduate retention has increased USC's six-year graduation rate from 58 percent in 1991 to 92 percent in 2022.

USC has transformed itself into a committed residential university. All freshmen have the opportunity to reside in one of fourteen residential colleges, led by Faculty in Residence. These colleges provide students with a rich social setting and cultural programming, creating a residential atmosphere that enriches and teaches.

In 2017, the University increased the number of students residing in USC-owned housing by nearly 40 percent with the completion of the expansive USC Village project. Combining academic, student housing, recreation, and retail space, this 1.25 million-square-foot, \$650 million development has further transformed the undergraduate residential college experience by providing a fully integrated living and learning community.

USC also has an abiding place in sports history. The University is home to 20 intercollegiate teams, many of which are highly ranked. Trojan teams have won more national championships (135) than all but two universities. USC student-athletes have received 58 NCAA Postgraduate Scholarships. In addition, USC has had 42 first team Academic All-Americans and four athletes who were Rhodes Scholars. USC's Olympians have won 711 places on Olympic teams, have taken home 144 gold medals, 91 silver and 72 bronze. In 11 different Olympics, USC's medal count at the summer Olympics would have positioned it among the top 12 competing nations. In 2028, Los Angeles will host the Summer Olympic Games, and some USC stadiums and facilities will be transformed into temporary Olympic facilities.

#### **Academic Distinction**

The USC faculty includes 1,181 tenured and 325 tenure-track faculty among 7,000 scholars, researchers, teachers, clinical educators, and mentors. USC's numerous decorated scholars include six Nobel Laureates, 40 National Academy of Engineering members, 17 National Academy of Sciences members, 18 National Academy of Medicine members, and 26 National Academy of Inventors members. The faculty also include 38 American Academy of Arts & Sciences fellows and 97 American Association for the Advancement of Science members, as well as many individual faculty with prestigious awards from Europe and Asia. USC has more than \$955 million in annual research expenditures and is routinely ranked among the top five in the nation among all universities in the size of its federally funded computer science research program. It has the largest graduate program in science, engineering, and health of all research universities. USC has

developed programs to integrate clinical care with research and education across the entire University. USC has also been a leader in the Association of Academic Health Centers' Aligned Institutional Mission Program.

### **International Reach**

Recognizing that great universities have international visibility and reach, USC has also built on its history of attracting international students by engaging with the global community and particular focus on the Pacific Rim. Today, USC enrolls approximately 13,000 international students and has a worldwide alumni network.

The University operates international offices in Beijing, Hong Kong, Mexico City, Mumbai, São Paulo, Shanghai, Seoul, and Taipei, in addition to offices in Sacramento, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C. These offices have become central to the USC identity, helping to recruit top students to the University, linking USC faculty to University partners abroad, and hosting active alumni groups who network for themselves and the University, and who are active contributors to the Trojan community.

USC's global presence is strengthened by its location in Los Angeles, an international center for the arts, technology, and business major gateway to the Pacific Rim. The University was a co-founding institution of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, a consortium of the 45 leading research universities around the Pacific Rim.

### **The Trojan Family**

In its best ideals, USC includes all its members in the bonds of the Trojan Family whether a student, faculty member, staff, or neighbor. The members of the USC community intend to build an extended family who value the rigorous search for truth, the high performance of academics and athletics, a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, a commitment to help the human condition, and support for each other. Now over 463,000 strong, the Trojan Family spans the United States and the globe.

The Trojan Family is sustained by the USC Alumni Association, whose mission is to support the overall advancement of the University of Southern California by engaging all alumni for life, building a culture of philanthropy among the Trojan Family, and being the representative voice for all USC alumni. The USC Alumni Association supports more than 100 affiliated alumni organizations, including regional, alumnae (women's), generational, affinity and school-based groups, and industry networks. These groups collectively distribute nearly \$4 million dollars annually in scholarships for USC students. In addition, the Association hosts hundreds of events and programs around the world and provides benefits and services to all USC alumni. The USC Alumni Association has a full-time staff, headed by the associate senior vice president for alumni relations, and is advised by the USC Alumni Association Board of Governors.



## Philanthropy

Much of USC's growth has hinged on the success of the highly organized advancement operation, which made history in 2011 with the "Campaign for USC," a \$6 billion campaign that raised just over \$7 billion – currently the second-largest fundraising campaign in higher education history, exceeded only by Harvard University.

USC's development has been guided by a series of successful visionary plans that have set the course for the University's future. As it turns to the future, this is a moment for reflection, renewal, and another ambitious strategic plan, which will inevitably influence the course of USC's philanthropy.

## Organization and Finance

The University of Southern California's Board of Trustees is the University's chief governing body. It has 34 voting members and is guided by an Executive Committee. In 2022, Suzanne Nora Johnson became Chair of the Board.

USC operates under a financial system of Responsibility Center Management and has a strong diversified portfolio of revenue and very considerable responsibility at the level of schools and deans. In FY22, the University budget was \$6.2 billion. Financial aid expenditures totaled \$725 million in FY22. As of June 30, 2022, the endowment stood at \$7.4 billion. 2021 was the University's strongest financial year, with a \$1.9 billion increase in net assets. The University preserves substantial annual cash flows at the central level for investment in collaboration with the 19 schools, frequently for interdisciplinary and cross-school initiatives.

Additional information is available [here](#).



## Position Summary

### Reporting Relationships

The CIO reports to the Senior Vice President, Finance and Chief Financial Officer and will oversee a team of approximately 400 IT professionals.

### Responsibilities

The successful Chief Information Officer candidate will:

- Oversee comprehensive information technology systems, ensuring that the most cost-effective applications and advanced computing services are available across the University.
- Direct operational processes and strategy development and delivery. Advise senior leadership of any issues and guide continuous improvements.
- Be responsible for creating more agile and innovative IT environments across the University. Provide vision, leadership and direction for managing technology operations. Design, develop, and implement resources and roadmaps, policies and procedures, and short and long-range objectives.
- Oversee organizational governance, structures, budgets, and staffing needed to accomplish goals and consistently meet business needs. Ensure projects are on schedule, within budget and completed. Responsible for establishing, maintaining and monitoring numerous metrics for performance and efficiency. Drive the development of advanced data analytics to bolster effective decision-making.
- Provide strategic and operational leadership for IT administration, infrastructure and security, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation. Identify user needs and direct teams to ensure IT solutions are designed to meet the specific and often changing needs of individual departments, schools and business units. Mentor staff and student workers.
- Leverage expertise in broad yet relevant areas to translate visions and strategies into clear priorities. Develop, coordinate, and participate in multi-faceted training, ensuring that all appropriate staff are knowledgeable about IT services and pertinent policies and standards. Prepare and deliver presentations as necessary.
- Stay current with new/emerging technology and policy developments, leveraging the latest industry knowledge to drive timely responses to regulatory changes and continuous improvements to best practices. Ensure senior leadership and relevant stakeholders (e.g., general counsel, risk management) are informed in a timely manner of pertinent changes that may affect operations.
- Promote an environment that fosters inclusive relationships and creates unbiased opportunities for contributions through ideas, words, and actions that uphold the USC Code of Ethics principles.

- Maintain strong relationships and communication channels with external information technology groups across campus. Ensure services are aligned with diverse needs of the university community.

## Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been identified as priorities for this position:

- Be perceived as an inspirational and collaborative leader who has credibility and integrity, is service-oriented, and contributes broadly as a subject-matter expert.
- Build strong, authentic relationships and trust with leadership, faculty, research, staff, and students, offering creative and innovative ideas for utilizing digital technology to meet the changing University demands and identify operational efficiencies. Identify opportunities to partner with Keck Medicine of USC, in particular, the CIO.
- Fully evaluate the existing technology environment and develop the vision and strategy to guide the future direction of IT in alignment with the University's mission and goals and that supports the specific needs of education and research.
- Perform an overall assessment of the information technology department, including resources, structure and staff. Identify opportunities to support a proactive, high-performing department that effectively serves the current and future needs of an evolving university. Enable a culture that energizes and supports staff and offers career growth and development opportunities to aid recruitment and retention.
- Assess current governance structures and recommend structural and process improvements to increase collaboration, transparency and efficiency. Ensure structure includes broad representation across the campus and enables effective prioritization of new technology investments and initiatives while assessing risks.
- Develop a plan for defining, delivering and communicating services offered by the central IT department with associated performance metrics. Establish clarity of roles and responsibilities of central IT working in concert with distributed IT units within administrative and academic departments. Ensure customer service and transparent communication are prioritized and continuously improved.
- Collaborate with the Chief Information Security Officer to continually support and advance the information security program.
- Provide the leadership to assist in developing the change management and adoption plan for a new learning management system and oversee the selection and future implementation of a new student information system. Ensure current enterprise applications are optimized.
- Identify opportunities to leverage emerging and next-generation technology, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, to improve operations across the university.
- Create a vision and roadmap for campus-wide data and analytics strategy. Collaborate with stakeholders across the institution to understand their data needs and develop solutions to meet those needs.

## Candidate Qualifications

### Education/Certification

- Bachelor's degree in business administration, computer science, information technology, engineering or other relevant fields.
- Master's degree preferred.

### Knowledge and Work Experience

- Significant senior-level IT experience that includes strategic planning, project management, budgeting, security, process transformation and innovation in a complex environment.
- Proven track record of producing operational and financial results and building a strong team culture within IT organizations and creating a user-focused environment of customer service and collegial support.
- A demonstrated grasp of the spectrum of information-technology systems and services; a keen sense of the emerging technologies that will shape education, research, and enterprise operations in coming years.
- Experience working in a decentralized IT environment.

### Leadership Skills and Competencies

- Extensive experience leading, motivating, building and managing teams.
- Exhibits a keen understanding of business operations and aligning strategies with organizational objectives.
- Proven reputation for discretion, integrity, sound judgment, and responsiveness.
- Experience promoting diversity and inclusion.
- Ability to quickly establish credibility by partnering effectively to define and deliver strategies, processes, data and programs supporting organizational goals.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills, able to tailor delivery to varied audiences.
- Experience with developing strong, trusting relationships internally and externally with vendors.
- Excellent critical thinking and organizational skills, and an exemplary attention to detail.
- High level of personal integrity; the ability to professionally handle confidential matters and show an appropriate level of judgment and maturity.
- Ability to influence and persuade without direct oversight and authority.

- Exhibits humility, kindness and courage in interactions with others.
- Lead and manage change effectively.
- Active listening skills and open to new ideas.
- Authentically rooted in doing the right thing.
- Proactive in developing relationships and being visible on campus.

## The Community

### Los Angeles, California

A place for bold dreams, creative expression and limitless possibilities, Los Angeles is a city defined by its people. LA is one of the most culturally diverse destinations in the world, with Angelenos from 140 countries who speak 224 different languages and the largest Latin-American and Asian-American populations of any US city. Los Angeles inspires visitors to immerse themselves in unique perspectives, unexpected moments, and open-hearted community. There's always something new to discover in the City of Angels whether you're a frequent visitor or a first timer, with an abundance of multi-faceted neighborhoods and hidden gems to explore. From world-class museums and championship sports teams to beautiful beaches and one-of-a-kind culinary experiences, Los Angeles invites you to join our vibrant, bustling community of dreamers and doers.

Today, metro Los Angeles is the nation's largest manufacturing area, home to one of its busiest ports, the distribution hub of the west coast and a gateway to Asia. LA is the entertainment capital of the world, with most of the country's major motion picture, television and recorded music operations based there. The city's humongous metropolitan area is the second largest in the country, with over 14,000,000 people spread over a land area the size of Maine. Thirty of LA's suburbs have populations of 80,000 or more.

Southern California's climate has often been described as "perfect" and with good reason. Most days are sunny and warm, with gentle ocean breezes in the summer. The humidity is low with little rain. In fact, there are no unpleasant seasons in Los Angeles.

The growth of the University of Southern California has paralleled the dynamic development of Los Angeles, a global hub for art, technology, culture, industry, and commerce. Positioned in a city renowned for its diverse population, USC has become an integral part of the Los Angeles' thriving creative scene. USC is deeply intertwined with the essence of the city, having been shaped by a series of visionaries who dedicated their time, insights, and financial resources to establish a world-class university in the heart of this influential metropolis.

## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include as separate documents: a) Resume and b) Cover Letter/Letter of Application.

WittKieffer is assisting University of Southern California in this search.

Application materials should be submitted through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal, [here](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to: Nick Giannas and Wendy Kerschner via email to [wkerschner@wittkieffer.com](mailto:wkerschner@wittkieffer.com)

The annual base salary range for this position spans from \$450,000 to \$600,000. Upon extending an offer of employment, the University of Southern California takes various factors into account, including the scope and responsibilities of the position, the candidate's work experience, education/training, key skills, internal peer equity, federal, state, and local laws, contractual stipulations, grant funding, and external market and organizational considerations.

**USC is an equal opportunity, affirmative action 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 will consider for employment all qualified applicants with criminal histories in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Los Angeles Fair Chance Initiative for Hiring ordinance. We provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees with disabilities.**

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