



***The University of Southern California School of Dramatic Arts seeks an outstanding Dean to promote artistic excellence in theatrical studies, strengthen the school financially and advance the school as the leading educational institution in preparing students for the future of the dramatic and performing arts.***

**POSITION TITLE:** Dean School of Dramatic Arts

**REPORTS TO:** Provost, University of Southern California

## **INTRODUCTION**

[The University of Southern California School of Dramatic Arts](#) (USC SDA) seeks a dynamic, inspiring, collaborative and progressive Dean who is passionate about the performing arts and the power of theatrical storytelling, to expand upon USC SDA's mission of preparing and empowering a diverse generation of artists, actors, writers, creators, industry professionals and entrepreneurs.

The Dean will assume the role during a time of great change, both nationally and internationally, will encourage and facilitate foundational education across multiple artistic and distribution platforms, support creative and intellectual risk-taking and champion the creation of transformative work by students and faculty. This Dean, a community builder and civic leader, will be committed to upholding the highest standards of ethics, inclusiveness, integrity, governance and professionalism. This leader is a believer in activating the power, potential and responsibility of the arts to make an impact for the social good on civil society by promoting artistic excellence and innovation. This Dean will have a committed role in the SDA's investment in the Los Angeles theatre and arts community, and beyond.

The Dean is an advocate for a broad range of theatrical storytelling across many platforms and will be energized by USC's commitment to the arts and SDA's mission, history, students, faculty and cooperative possibilities. The Dean will bring insights and abilities to fully leverage the interdisciplinary opportunities of USC's 6 other arts school and its position within a major research university.

USC SDA seeks to build a more diverse and inclusive communities – in academia and in the creative fields their students join. The location of the campus, literally in the center of the entertainment industry and in one of the country's most diverse cities, makes the School of Dramatic Arts distinctive among colleges and universities in the United States.

## **ABOUT USC SCHOOL OF DRAMATIC ARTS**

Top-ranked USC School of Dramatic Arts is positioned to be a leader in dramatic arts education. The School uniquely blends artistic training in a conservatory environment with outstanding faculty and the full academic experience found only within a major research university. The School bridges the classical foundations of the dramatic arts with its contemporary and future expressions. Through programs of the highest caliber, as well as initiatives that provide access to professional experience, students are prepared for leadership in every facet of dramatic arts.

Alumni have been honored with the most prestigious awards in the profession, including the Oscar, Tony, Emmy and Golden Globe. Students leave the school prepared to work, whether it is on stage, backstage, on film or television, or in other forms of media.

The School's active production program (more than 20 shows annually) utilizes four [theatre facilities](#). The School encourages students to gain professional experience and academic credit through internships and has created partnerships with many professional companies aided by the Career Center that offers students, and recent alumni a full suite of services including mentoring, coaching services for auditions and the production of self-tapes, career counseling, guidance and support for headshots, seminars with leading industry professionals, and audition opportunities.

The School attracts a wide range of guest speakers and lecturers, including some of the most distinguished talents from stage, screen and television such as Bryan Cranston, Kate Burton, Tony Kushner and Mark Hamill.

The School offers prestigious and highly competitive BFA programs in Acting for Stage Screen and New Media; Musical Theatre; Stage Management; Sound Design; Design; and Technical Direction. Additionally, a BA in Dramatic Arts offers flexibility for students who wish to double major or major in the School and minor elsewhere on campus. SDA's graduate programs in Acting and Dramatic Writing are both intensive, three-year programs taught by a faculty comprised of theatre professionals working at the highest level of the industry.

The School of Dramatic Arts currently has 625 students, enrolled in BFA, BA, MFA and Minor programs. Taught by a community of renowned and accomplished faculty committed to student success, SDA has trained artists, creators and makers who have been in the vanguard of cultural and entrepreneurial life.

SDA students and faculty distinctively benefit from being part of USC, one of the United States' great research universities, one of the 7 USC art schools, and benefit from the interdisciplinary opportunities that come with being part of USC.

Historically, the School has trained many successful artists and professionals among whom are Forest Whitaker, John Ritter, Kyra Sedgewick, Anthony Edwards, Tate Donovan, Levar Burton, Grant Heslov (Oscar winner for producing *Argo*), Danny Strong (writer of *Recount*, *Game Change*, *Empire* and *Lee Daniels' The Butler*, et. al.) and Peter Levine (Senior Partner at Creative Artists Agency). Our more recent alums are playing leads in various successful television series: Deborah Ann Woll, Patrick Adams, Troian Bellesario, Ryan Eggold, McKinley Belcher III and Beck Bennett; or recently in Broadway plays/musicals: *Stark Sands*, *Charl Brown*, *James Snyder* and *Kevin Mambo*. Additionally, writers such as Madhuri Shekar and Kirsia Rein are seeing their work on the regional stage and on television.

## **ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY**

[The University of Southern California](#) was founded in 1880 and currently enrolls over 46,000 students. USC is one of a select number of universities the United States depends upon for a steady stream of new knowledge, art and technology. USC's commitment to the arts, humanities and the community has a long history. The commitment to research has broad social impact, including operating an integrated academic medical center that serves a million patients a year. USC has an endowment of \$5.7 billion and receives annually close to \$900 million in sponsored research.

USC is comprised of the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and 20 graduate and professional schools. The University is known for its contribution to the arts, communication, media and public policy through its world-renowned, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, School of Architecture, School of Cinematic Arts, School of Dramatic Arts, Glorvya Kaufman School of Dance, Roski School of Art and Design, Thornton School of Music and Sol Price School of Public Policy. It is also known for the quality of its highly ranked professional programs in other schools, including the Marshall School of Business, Viterbi School of Engineering, Gould School of Law, Keck School of Medicine, Rossier School of Education and Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.

Los Angeles is one of the most internationally diverse cities in the country, and the University of Southern California has enrolled more international students over the past 15 years than any other university in the United States. USC plays an important role in making the creative capital, Los Angeles, a great center for the arts. The USC Fisher Museum of Art offers exhibitions ranging from contemporary works to antiquities, and the USC School of Cinematic Arts presents a variety of film screenings and other programs. The USC Thornton School of Music is the city's most active producer of live music performances and the USC School of Dramatic Arts produces a full schedule of performances. USC's Doheny Memorial Library hosts a rich array of lectures, readings, concerts and special exhibits. In accordance with USC's reciprocal approach of taking advantage of its location and contributing to the vitality of the creative community in Los Angeles, the University has created the USC International Artist Fellowship Program as the arts equivalent to The Rhodes Scholarship. The program offers graduate fellowships to young artists from the Pacific Rim, South Asia and Latin America for study in USC's world-famous arts schools in Architecture, Arts and Design, Cinematic Arts, Dance, Dramatic Arts and Music. The program reflects the shift in the world's focus on the Pacific Rim and strengthens USC's ties to the global arts community by creating a new international artist community in Los Angeles.

## **POSITION SCOPE**

The Dean will lead USC's School of Dramatic Arts to adopt a flexible and contemporary approach to education, research and practice in order to stay relevant and forge the next generation of artists in the field. While core principles rooted in tradition remain invaluable, ever newer applications of dramatic arts disciplines, on ever more original platforms, are the way of the present and the future, and the School must recognize, embrace, and explore these new methodologies.

The goal for USC's School of Dramatic Arts is to evolve its curricula and its culture to develop artist-creators who will connect, catalyze and collide the traditional theatrical arts and storytelling with the digital and entrepreneurial age and evolving social and political conversations. By developing students who can navigate and influence multiple dramatic arts platforms, from the traditional to the cutting edge, the School seeks to be a standard bearer in redefining what it means to train a dramatic artist for now and the future. The new dramatic artist must be rooted in the classics, yet be boldly future facing, proudly media-agnostic, recognizing no boundaries or borders between forms or disciplines.

The Dean reports to the Provost of USC and serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the School of Dramatic Arts. The Dean manages an approximate \$17 million budget, has 9 direct reports and approximately 35 full-time faculty, 55 part time faculty, 30 full time staff, and a student population of approximately 625.

The Dean provides inspired, consultative leadership and oversight for all aspects of the School, including academics, finance, marketing, revenue generation, planning, student affairs, enrollment, advancement, human resources and other key areas. The Dean works closely with the Provost, other members of the Provost's senior leadership team, the School's staff and department heads to ensure that the strategic direction and policies of the School are aligned with its mission and the greater mission of USC.

The Dean of SDA will commit to its own cultural development and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the pursuit of an identity that reflects the present and future of dramatic arts communities (local, national, international) and industries, with initiatives including: Community and Alumni relations, performances, summits, faculty and staff recruitment and training in cultural awareness, curricular development, continued and enhanced communications and engagement between the school and USC administration, faculty and student cohorts, industry and community-building.

The Dean has principal responsibility for the planning, development, implementation, assessment, and improvement of all programs and policies. With input from all stakeholders, the Dean articulates the School's vision, garners support from relevant constituencies, and passionately and persistently communicates that vision internally and externally. The Dean, with the Board of Councilors, Provost, and other applicable stakeholders, promotes shared governance and leads in ongoing strategic planning and continually reviews goals, objectives, and strategies for continuous institutional improvement. The successful candidate inspires and activates USC SDA's institutional, intellectual, creative, and community resources to ensure realization of the mission and vision throughout the institution, and with the enthusiastic support of the community at large.

**Recognizing the educational and financial challenges of the 21st century, the Dean will:**

Serve as a compelling spokesperson for SDA within USC and to the greater community. Build and leverage outside community, cultural, academic, media, business, civic, philanthropic, and alumni relationships to benefit the school. Ensure that SDA's brand promise and vision is articulated, and widely and effectively communicated. Support an impactful communications and marketing effort that leads to greater brand awareness and rankings.

- Expand the School's resources through philanthropy and sponsorships by taking a prominent role in the cultivation and solicitation of donors, as well as providing leadership to capital and other campaigns. Enhance and lead a robust ongoing and consistent development/advancement program and ensure a capital reserve to fund programs, endowment, scholarships, people and other resources.
- Be the chief advocate on behalf of the School to relevant institutions, organizations, media, and businesses and all other relevant global sources of influence. Attend and represent SDA at relevant conferences, events, and other appearances. Expand upon the School's circle of influence and global impact.
- Address and meet the challenges facing higher education and student employment opportunities while enhancing SDA's commitment to its educational tradition of dramatic arts education. Facilitate pedagogy at the nexuses of scholarship, creativity, and professional practice.

- Assist admissions in enhancing current outreach programs to attract potential students and help in refining admissions and financial aid guidelines.
- Be opportunistic in exploring partnerships, real estate opportunities, and other opportunities that will provide and enhance the school's stability and growth.
- Oversee the allocation of expenditure and resources. Improve, develop, and maintain processes and procedures to ensure best-in-class financial management, controls, and reporting, as well as operational efficiencies and oversight processes.
- Lead efforts to develop and implement a Working Strategic Plan.
- Support and develop the School's leadership team.
- Grow and strengthen SDA's diverse community and culture of inclusiveness.
- Continually and measurably elevate the stature and ranking of SDA's undergraduate and graduate programs, drive student enrollment, and financially strengthen SDA as it pursues its mission.
- Inspire and unite faculty, students, and administration behind a common vision and mission that includes the performing arts, making, and adaptation to current and future platforms. Continue to build strong bonds between disciplines at USC. Lead in the development of programs to strengthen the commitment of the school to benefiting the social good.
- Help attract and retain the highest quality faculty and staff. Encourage and build inter-disciplinary scholarship and other opportunities to expand interactions between programs, faculty, staff and other USC schools. Foster a culture of measurable academic excellence and sustain and bolster processes, systems, and metrics to ensure continuous academic improvement.

### **Ideal Experience**

The ideal candidate will have the following range of experiences and qualifications:

- Previous senior leadership and management responsibilities in an institution such as a media arts-focused university, college, or other media arts institution or academic institution known for innovation, quality education, and advancing practices across different artistic and communication disciplines, or leadership of a complex creative industries enterprise.
- A track record of successful fundraising and or revenue generation. Experience in developing and managing fiscal plans, financial models, and operating budgets.
- Experience or knowledge of the changing ecosystem of higher education, evolving academic standards in the context of accelerating change/accountability and a track record of measurably elevating the academic stature of institutions is desired.
- An understanding of and deep appreciation for the world inhabited by students, university faculty, staff, performers, communicators, designers, scholars, teachers, makers, artists of all stripes and practitioners; a record of achievement that is well-regarded in the field; experience working in collaboration with diverse teams of individuals representing different disciplines, needs, and perspectives; a demonstrated ability to forge mutually respectful relationships; and current or past experience as minimally a faculty member or with teaching experience is preferred.

- Experience and a track record of success in attracting, recruiting, developing, retaining and leading a diverse group of top talent who work in alignment with the overall mission of an institution or business, and an ability to shape an organization to attract top talent.
- An understanding of academic standards and shared governance, and a demonstrated ability to manage the operational and financial aspects of a school within the confines of a major research university, and an understanding of education program revenue and expense models would be a distinct advantage.
- The ability to work successfully with donors, business and community leaders, artists, educators, faculty, administrators, and boards to incite interest in and strengthen the institution; measurable and successful results in raising funds and in identifying, cultivating, and soliciting donors and other sources of revenue is required.
- An understanding of the tools required to encourage and collaboratively manage an enterprise, including development of strategic plans, identification and implementation of best practices, implementation of incentive and reward programs, an understanding of the impact that group and peer feedback has on teamwork and job satisfaction.
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills and the ability to manage by influence, including the means to address issues and manage crisis in non-confrontational, collegial, and non-polarizing ways.

### **Personal Characteristics**

The successful candidate should be:

- A leader. The Dean has gravitas and holds a room. Ever sensitive and empathetic to the needs of people with different backgrounds, ethnicities, interests, and aptitudes, with an infectious sense of mission, good humor, and a sense of perspective, this Dean is able to develop, drive, and decisively execute a vision and plans with the support of multiple constituencies.
- A listener comfortable receiving input from many sources and able to analyze and synthesize disparate information into sound, well-organized plans; a person able to garner necessary support and reshape ambiguous situations so that concrete and copacetic action can be taken; a leader with the demonstrated ability to develop and convert new opportunities into initiatives and/or offerings that strengthen the student experience and advance SDA's educational mission.
- A charismatic communicator able to impactfully deliver a message and build enthusiasm for the School of Dramatic Arts among internal and external constituencies; a person able to advance SDA's reputation among prospective students and global academic, professional, and cultural communities.
- A decisive individual with a belief in the mission of USC SDA, and a commitment to continuous, measurable improvements to SDA's fiscal health, its academic programs, faculty, staff, student achievement, infrastructure, and reputation.
- A person focused on improving the overall rating of the school as measured by third parties, and via respect accorded to USC SDA by experts in the field.

- An energetic “doer” with a willingness to work hands-on in developing and executing a variety of activities to strengthen SDA and support the work of faculty, staff, and other colleagues while always maintaining an intense focus on students, shared governance, advancing knowledge and innovation, diversity, and social justice.

University of Southern California is an Equal Opportunity Employer and committed to diversity in hiring.

For more information, applications or nominations please contact:

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