



*Search for the*

# Vice President for Marketing



UNIVERSITY OF  
South Carolina

# The Search

The [University of South Carolina](#) (USC or university) seeks a highly strategic, collaborative, and results-oriented marketing leader as its first vice president for marketing (VP) to position, elevate, and advance the university during a pivotal time of growth and momentum.

Recognized for its thriving academic and research excellence, the University of South Carolina has a distinguished history that proudly provides an inclusive, lively, and welcoming community experience. As the state's flagship institution, USC offers an unrivaled on-campus experience that has been sought by students, faculty, and academic researchers for more than 200 years. [Today](#), it serves over 36,000 students on the Columbia campus and approximately another 17,000 across the state, offering 350 degrees across many highly ranked academic programs. As a system, USC is an anchor in the region, awarding 40 percent of all higher education degrees and contributing more than [\\$6 billion in economic impact](#) for the state of South Carolina. It is an exciting time to join USC as it embarks on a new chapter under the leadership of its 30th president, [Dr. Michael Amiridis](#), who took the helm in 2022, with clearly defined priorities based on a [five-year tactical and strategic plan](#); an anticipated master plan for the university, including an ambitious, comprehensive capital campaign; and an experienced and expert executive leadership team eager to partner across the institution.

Reporting to President Amiridis, the vice president for marketing will serve as the chief marketing and branding officer for the University of South Carolina and will be tasked with crafting a cohesive marketing and branding platform based on the university's current accomplishments, strategic goals, and community values. This newly defined "North Star" will resonate as strongly

with external audiences (e.g., prospective students and families; peer institutions; state and local government; neighborhood communities) as it does with internal constituents (e.g., faculty, staff, and students; board members; alumni and donors).

This is an exceptional opportunity for a dynamic and creative marketing and branding executive to partner with a president and cabinet with clear, ambitious goals for the university. This new role was created to ensure that marketing efforts across the university are consistent while also allowing for distinct sub-brands and messages for academic and administrative units, as appropriate. As a member of the President's Cabinet and in close partnership with the office of university communications, the vice president will provide counsel to and support for the president and university leaders, elevating awareness and reputation using data-informed strategies and an innovative marketing and branding program. Through market research, analytics, and a deep understanding of an optimal constituent experience, USC's new marketing division will be charged with enhancing and protecting the university's reputation, visibility, and reach throughout the state, nationally, and globally. The vice president will lead a team of approximately 45 staff to oversee marketing, brand management, creative strategy and services, and digital and traditional marketing channels toward the university's strategic goals and priorities. The vice president will simultaneously influence and lead collaboration across a diverse set of colleges, units, and departments, many of which have their own marketing and/or communications teams. In maintaining and strengthening relationships with varied constituents, the role will establish strategically driven marketing and brand equity for the university and all of its constituent units.





The new vice president will have a clear record of accomplishment as an innovative and collaborative leader in a large, complex organization, with substantial experience in developing and implementing multi-faceted, integrated brands as well as marketing programs that position and elevate the perception of an entire institution with multiple audiences. This individual will possess keen strategic and planning skills, a thorough understanding of all traditional and digital media, and comprehensive knowledge of the marketing and branding process, from creative conception through fulfillment. Demonstrable leadership, vision, and managerial skills are key, as is a collaborative and collegial nature. The successful candidate would be intellectually curious and would be committed to active engagement in the campus and local communities.

The University of South Carolina has partnered with Jack Gorman and Elizabeth Neustaedter of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in conducting this search. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to Isaacson, Miller, as stated at the end of this position profile.





# University of South Carolina

Founded in 1801, the University of South Carolina (USC or university) is the flagship institution of the University of South Carolina System (system). The system is the leading educator for the state, serving 53,000 students across eight institutions. Committed to serving a diverse population of students with widely varying backgrounds, career goals, and aspirations, USC offers over 350 degrees at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and professional program levels, affording students the most comprehensive array of educational programs in the state. Graduate and undergraduate degree programs are offered in the following areas: [arts and sciences](#); [business](#); [education](#); [engineering and computing](#); [hospitality, retail and sport management](#); [information and communications](#); [music](#); [nursing](#); [public health](#); and [social work](#). Graduate programs are also available in [law](#), medicine ([Columbia](#) and [Greenville](#) campuses), and [pharmacy](#).

The flagship campus in Columbia is home to 16 colleges and schools and over 2,600 faculty, many of whom have earned significant recognition, placing the university in the top 5 percent of public universities in the nation for national faculty awards received. As a Carnegie-classified Tier I research (R1) institution, research grant awards were \$243.9 million in the 2023 fiscal year.

Fall enrollment in FY 2023 on the Columbia campus exceeds 36,000 (28,000 undergraduate and 8,000 graduate), with students who hail from all 50 states and more than 110 nations. Over the past 10 years,

undergraduate applications to the Columbia campus have more than doubled, admission has become increasingly competitive, and the size of the freshman class has grown by more than 45 percent. In fall 2023, USC received a record-breaking number of applicants and welcomed its largest class in the history of the institution. Chief among the university's selling points for undergraduates are its first-year experience, consistently ranked as the best in the country by US News & World Report, as well as its top-ranked [Honors College](#) and strong support for beyond-the-classroom experiences through its [National Fellowships and Scholar Programs](#).

The university has consistently ranked in the top 3 percent in the nation for the number of African American graduates by *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. Other USC rankings have topped US News & World Report lists, with the number-one spot for the Darla Moore School of Business' esteemed international MBA program, undergraduate international business major, and online nursing graduate program. The university has distinguished itself as having the nation's best first-year experience among public universities, according to US News & World Report, and it is rated a best value public college by Kiplinger's and Forbes. Ranked by the U.S. Department of Education in the top 10 percent for its public university graduation rates, USC boasts a six-year graduation rate of 77.7 percent (2023) and a first-year retention rate of 91 percent (2022).

## STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITIES

USC unveiled its strategic plan, *For South Carolina: A Path to Excellence*, in 2020. This broad and ambitious plan was thoughtfully crafted by USC faculty, staff, and students during a critical juncture in higher education. The nation was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and higher education institutions across the country were dealing with myriad challenges related to funding and maintaining operations, all while prioritizing the health and well-being of their community members.

Since President Amiridis' arrival in 2022, USC has sharpened its near-term strategic focus and engaged a series of Imagine Carolina listening sessions during the 2022-2023 academic year. [President Amiridis has focused the plan with three strategic priorities](#). Each priority reflects USC's

foundational values of Access and Transparency, Inclusive Excellence, and Service and Integrity, which are also at the core of USC's Carolinian Creed. Key areas of focus include:

- Reimagining the Student Experience & Advancing Post-Graduate Success
- Increasing Research and Scholarship to Drive Community & Economic Impact
- Transforming Service Delivery & Promoting Operational Excellence

Additional information is outlined in the full report [here](#).

## ATHLETICS

The University of South Carolina [Gamecocks](#) compete in 21 varsity sports, nearly all of which compete at the NCAA Division I level and in the Southeastern Conference. The Gamecocks have earned a [loyal fan base](#) and proudly tout 12 national titles. The university athletics programs offer one-of-a-kind academic opportunities for students preparing for careers in sports, medicine, entertainment, and communications.

## FINANCES

As one of the oldest public universities in the country, USC was the first state university to be supported continuously by annual state appropriations. For Fiscal Year 2023, the University of South Carolina's revenues were \$1.6 billion, including \$555 million from student tuition and fees, \$380 million in grants and contracts, and \$293 million in state and local appropriations. Operating expenses in the same period were \$1.5 billion. The economic position of the university remains robust as evidenced by consistent operating revenue growth, strong demand for enrollment, and stable, manageable changes in operating expenditures.

USC is preparing for a comprehensive capital campaign, which is anticipated to go public in 2025. The University of South Carolina Foundations' endowment is valued at \$952 million.







# Leadership

## **PRESIDENT MICHAEL AMIRIDIS**

Michael Amiridis became the 30th president of the University of South Carolina on July 1, 2022. Prior to coming to USC, he served as the chancellor of the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) for seven years.

During his tenure at Illinois, UIC saw six years of record campus enrollment, a 30 percent increase in research awards, an unprecedented renewal of its capital infrastructure, and a successful \$750 million capital campaign.

Before his move to Chicago, Amiridis spent more than two decades at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. He served as a chemical engineering professor, department chair, dean of the College of Engineering and Computing and, from 2009 to 2015, the university's executive vice president for academic affairs and provost. He earned numerous awards as a professor, including the University of South Carolina's Michael J. Mungo Undergraduate

and Graduate Teaching Awards and the Samuel Litman Distinguished Professor Award.

Amiridis earned his Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1991. As a researcher, he has published 110 peer-reviewed articles in archival journals and has received over \$22 million in external funding. He was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2012 and a fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineer in 2015.

Amiridis was born in Greece and was recognized in 2022 by Carnegie Corporation of New York as a Great Immigrant. He and his wife, Dr. Ero Aggelopoulou-Amiridis, have two children, both graduates of the University of South Carolina.

[Read more on President Amiridis here.](#)





## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees (Board) governs the University System, electing the [President of USC Columbia and the USC System](#); defining institutional missions; setting goals and policies; and reviewing and approving plans, degrees, budgets, fees, tuition, and requests for appropriations. Members of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees are defined by South Carolina [statute](#). The Board comprises three ex officio members (the Governor of

South Carolina, the State Superintendent of Education, and the President of the [Alumni Association](#)); 16 Trustees elected by the General Assembly to represent each of the state's judicial circuits; and one at-large Trustee (chosen by the Governor).

Learn more about the Board of Trustees [here](#).





## Vice President for Marketing

Reporting to President Amiridis, the vice president for marketing (VP) will serve as the architect of USC's branding and marketing infrastructure and craft a compelling "North Star" for the university that resonates with and engages internal and external audiences. In creating this role, the president underscores the criticality of marketing and branding in elevating the university's reputation and resources locally, nationally, and globally.

Serving as the chief marketing and branding officer, the vice president will create the vision for and lead the implementation of a proactive, innovative, and comprehensive marketing and branding strategy that highlights the university's academic strengths and research, demonstrates its commitment to an environment in which students are able to flourish, and fosters relationships with university constituents, both internally (e.g., prospective and current students and families, faculty and staff, employee groups, alumni, donors, university supporters, and affinity groups) and

externally (e.g., media, residential communities, peer institutions, associations, influencers, and thought leaders).

As a member of the president's cabinet, the vice president will work closely with peers in the Office of University Communications as well as leadership across the university to elevate and refine the university's marketing and branding efforts. To this end, the vice president will conduct a thorough review of USC's brand, audit current marketing efforts and materials to understand the current state of all programs, and identify opportunities to advance the university's reputation. Ultimately, the vice president will take the lead in framing a comprehensive marketing and branding strategy for USC that serves the needs of the overarching university and the specific colleges, schools, programs, and units. The vice president will have a direct supervisory role for approximately 45 staff (marketing, branding, digital strategy, and creative) and will lead by influence, serving as the university's primary brand strategist and ambassador.



## **THE FOLLOWING ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR MARKETING:**


- Conceive and implement an overarching strategic marketing and branding program that is innovative, progressive, and proactive, resulting in cohesive messaging and a brand identity that extends across all media and vehicles in ways that appropriately support and reflect the university's foundational values and strategic objectives.
- Collaborate closely with the offices of the president, foundations, enrollment, athletics, and communications, as well as any other administrative units that play a significant role in the public perception of the university. Ensure leaders are well supported in their work and that their external communications reinforce the brand and key strategic goals for the individual offices and the university as a whole.
- Establish a unified digital ecosystem that reflects the university's brand, creates a cohesive strategy across platforms, and emphasizes compliance with accessibility and user-experience standards.
- In conjunction with the Office of University Communications, convene, support, and inspire collaboration and coordination among marketing and communications professionals across the university. Build strong, collaborative, and collegial relationships with all unit-based marketing and/or communications teams, understanding their specific priorities and how those integrate with the university's marketing and branding platforms. Provide appropriate levels of support and service to those individuals and teams.
- Thoroughly evaluate current marketing and branding efforts across the university. In addition to leveraging existing data, strategically invest time and resources in market research, competitive landscape analysis, brand and marketing refinement, and creative execution. As appropriate, utilize internal and external counsel as well as agencies and service providers capable of supporting USC and its units across all platforms and vehicles.
- Build and manage an outstanding strategic marketing and branding program that can be considered best-in-class compared to its peers across higher education. Routinely evaluate the effectiveness and success of USC's positioning and brand vehicles with different internal and external audiences.
- Inspire and motivate staff through transparency and direction, placing staff members' work within the context of the university's strategic priorities and goals. Provide professional development opportunities as appropriate and encourage staff to set and reach personal growth targets.
- Have a leadership style that is open and empowers staff through active communication, delegation, and accountability. Manage expectations and resources to ensure that overall goals and activities are challenging and realistic.
- Foster an environment that rewards new ideas, creativity, and risk-taking; builds confidence; and encourages teamwork and collaboration within the office and across the university. Celebrate achievements and set clear expectations for future success.



## **THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR MARKETING WILL BRING MANY OF THE FOLLOWING PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES AND EXPERIENCES:**

- At least 10 years of experience leading, envisioning, and implementing a successful strategic marketing and branding program that can be leveraged across an enterprise with multiple constituencies and a wide variety of audiences.
- A record of success as an innovative and collaborative leader in a large, complex, mission-driven organization with numerous and distributed stakeholders, shared decision making, and often rapidly shifting priorities.
- Substantial experience evaluating the strengths of existing programs and institutional brands and identifying opportunities for improvement; an aptitude for using data and metrics in decision making and evaluating the success of new messages and campaigns; and an ability to inspire innovative solutions to scale across the university.
- Superior strategic skills and a strong grasp of industry best practices for all aspects of marketing, positioning, and messaging – including sophisticated and creative use of earned, owned, and paid channels; social media; analytics; and the relative strengths of traditional and digital media – to increase brand awareness and penetration.
- Exceptional knowledge of the latest digital and integrated marketing tools with experience in leveraging internal skill sets and assets as well as hiring and managing external media agencies.
- The ability to intuit the unspoken and perceive what others do not understand; exceptional diplomacy, discretion, and judgment, as well as political savvy.
- A desire to deeply engage in the local and university communities.
- Engaging and persuasive in written and oral communications, clearly able to serve as a professional and trusted representative of the university.
- Collaborative and collegial orientation, with eagerness and skill in engaging diverse stakeholders and building strong professional relationships; demonstrated experience serving as a resource to others and obtaining their input, thereby able to synthesize many ideas and produce work products that address a variety of goals and objectives.
- Experience managing and inspiring teams in a complex organization, leading by influence and unifying the work of marketing and/or communications professionals across the enterprise; the ability to encourage change and growth in both people and programs; the ability to be persuasive, persistent, and determined.
- A sharp eye for operational efficiency and optimal use of resources; deep understanding of budgets and proven success managing them.
- A deep appreciation for the history, achievements, and aspirations of the University of South Carolina and the ability to articulate the university's mission and purpose to widely diverse audiences.
- High degree of integrity, character, and emotional maturity, demonstrating respect for individuals at every level of an organization; humility, a sense of humor and life balance; an outgoing, optimistic personality.
- Bachelor's degree required.





Screening of complete applications will continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search, which can be found [here](#). Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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*The University of South Carolina does not discriminate in educational or employment opportunities on the basis of race, sex, gender, gender identity, transgender status, age, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, genetics, protected veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions*





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