Our Vision

USC will increase the capacity in Los Angeles to end homelessness by:

• Creating and sharing new tools

• Harnessing expertise of our schools and disciplines

• Engaging our students, faculty, staff, and alumni to help

Why USC?

USC’s deep roots in Los Angeles stretch back to its founding in 1880. As the city and county grapple with the persistent issue of homelessness, we believe that our university community of researchers, educators, students and staff can make meaningful contributions to this systemic problem.

Bringing together research and resources, we form a strong community with our partners, ready to help tackle one of the largest challenges facing our cities today.

Why Focus on Homelessness Now?

Homelessness in Los Angeles, once centered on Skid Row, now extends for over 100 miles throughout the county and beyond. Here, more than 53,000 people live without a shelter on any given night. Though the homeless population has declined modestly in 2018, the forces that drive homelessness have not diminished. The county needs more than a half-million affordable housing units and L.A. is among one of the country’s least affordable housing markets. The USC Initiative to Eliminate Homelessness works with community partners as well as with faculty, staff and students to leverage our research and programs to make a difference in the amelioration of this grave problem.

Homelessness By The Numbers for 2018*

- **53,195**
  Number of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County

- **9,000+**
  Number of people homeless for the first time due to loss of employment or other financial issues

- **.5M+**
  Number of affordable housing units needed (housing gap)
Message from the Director

Most residents of Los Angeles recognize the twin challenges of homelessness and housing insecurity as among the most compelling of our time and our place. USC is no different. We’ve seen homelessness around our campuses grow and housing costs reach staggering levels in Los Angeles. We want to help.

As a top-tier research institution, USC is well-positioned to work with its community partners to tackle these challenges through multidisciplinary research, programs and outreach. The USC Initiative to Eliminate Homelessness aims to harness the talents and expertise of each school and discipline. We are encouraging collaboration, coordination and education that raises the quality of life, access to shelter and the promise of a home to those who struggle today on the streets of Los Angeles County. Our focus is on creation of joint projects with linkages that make a difference. We have embarked on development of a pipeline for faculty, professionals and students to engage in homelessness-related research, teaching and service.

Since our founding in spring 2016, we’ve worked to define the university’s unique contribution in relation to significant efforts from government, nonprofit and business organizations across the region. Working with a steering committee of ten university deans, we’ve defined five strategic areas for our work and we’ve begun to leverage our programs and research for real word impact with our community partners. The following pages of this brochure will highlight a few of our achievements and successes for 2017-18.

We invite you to join us in the USC Initiative to Eliminate Homelessness.

Brenda Wiewel, LCSW
Director

Strategy 1

Student Wellness: Address Campus Food and Housing Insecurity

2017/18 Accomplishments

• Initiated a campus survey to collect data about the housing and food vulnerabilities of the USC student body
• Opened the first physical food pantry on campus
• Helped enroll eligible students into state CalFresh food assistance program
• Conducted outreach for students about available resources through student resource cards and a website
• Made fresh food more affordable with improved access to farmers market for EBT users and MarketMatch to double CalFresh dollars on produce

“With mounting debt and academic stress, no Trojan should go home hungry or to class malnourished. USC ought to be a school where we can thrive, not struggle to survive.”

Alec Vandenberg, Director of External Affairs for Undergraduate Student Government
Strategy 2:
Conduct and Disseminate Impactful Research and Innovation

2017/18 Accomplishments

- 400 people attended the 2018 USC summit on homelessness in Los Angeles to learn about the latest research and advances.
- Collected and analyzed data for the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2018 Homeless Count (USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work with USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics).
- Launched Homeless Policy Research Institute to generate and use research for informing and guiding Measure H investments (Led by USC Price School of Public Policy with support from the Hilton Foundation and United Way of Greater L.A.).
- Developed solutions for communication between first responders and homeless service providers (USC D-Health Lab).
- Pioneered approaches that link use of artificial intelligence with human social networks and applied it to an intervention for homeless youth (USC Center for Artificial Intelligence for Society).
- Designed a concept and prototype for mobile, interim housing (USC School of Architecture).
- Ongoing and new research projects in the fields of medicine, social work, economics, communications, education, and engineering.

“Highly informative and engaging. USC and partners are leading the long-term vision for ending homelessness.”
Participant, Research and Innovation Summit for Homelessness, April 20, 2018.
Strategy 4
Policy Advancement for Governance and Housing Development

2017/18 Accomplishments
- Helped develop educational curriculum for City of Los Angeles workforce to meet an element of their policy for a “no wrong door” approach
- Partnered with campus safety and local business districts to help them connect homeless individuals with services
- Student internship to study policies and create a toolkit to guide developers about new housing typologies
- Participated and attended local city and county policy meetings to represent the university
- Held a conference on housing innovation and explored policy innovations such as Social Impact Bonds (USC Price Center for Social Innovation)
- Developed an emerging business incubator for shelter solutions (USC Marshall School of Business)
- Helped to lead discussions with the real estate community (USC Lusk Center for Real Estate Center and USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work)

“We must be relentless, because, if we are going to end homelessness in our city once and for all, we need all hands on deck.”

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti

Strategy 3
Inspire and Train Students to Work on Homelessness

2017/18 Accomplishments
- 60 students completed 600 service hours through a special section of the undergraduate volunteer program called “Understanding Homelessness Through Service”
- Student training and research projects for 155 students who contributed over 6000 hours to work on homelessness
- New and expanded courses in English, Sociology, and Journalism (USC Dornsife, USC Annenberg)
- Expanded options for professional education internships and practicums in social work, law, public policy, urban planning, engineering, and public health
- Created set of specialized curricula materials on homelessness for use by faculty throughout the university
- Offered student training sites to work with adults living on Skid Row and expanded opportunities at sites for children living in poverty (Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC)
- Held annual student awareness week and ongoing activities such as volunteer work at local homeless service organizations (USC’s student-run Homelessness Action Council)
- Supported recruitment for jobs in the field of homeless services and housing (USC Career Center)
Strategy 5
Mobilize Dialogue and Engagement
Using the University’s “Big Voice”

2017/18 Accomplishments
• Gathered 50 top religious leaders for education and conversation on homelessness, yielding a joint statement and several educational resources for the Los Angeles faith community.
• Created art projects by faculty and students with themes of homelessness (USC Roski School of Art and Design).
• Directed student projects using film arts for social change, including collaboration on a music video about homelessness and planned a film project giving persons experiencing homelessness a voice (USC School of Cinematic Arts).

The USC Initiative for Eliminating Homelessness is guided by the USC Deans’ Steering Committee on Eliminating Homelessness. Its members include deans from the following schools:

Jim Burklo
Senior Associate Dean, USC Religious Life

John Clapp
Interim Dean, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

Milton Curry
Dean, USC School of Architecture

Karen Gallagher
Dean, USC Rossier School of Education

Jack Knott
Dean, USC Price School of Public Policy

Andrew Lakoff
Divisional Dean for Social Sciences, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Science

Laura Mosqueda
Dean, Keck School of Medicine of USC

Erica Muhl
USC Roski School of Art and Design

Catherine Quinlan
Dean, USC Libraries

Avishai Sadan
Dean, Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

*Homelessness by the numbers data from the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2018 Homeless Count*