PhD Program
Welcome

The University of Southern California School of Social Work doctoral program is considered one of the best in the United States for the quality of our students, the generosity of our financial assistance and our high rate of successful PhD candidates.

The cornerstone of our success is our dedicated faculty, who take pride in close collaboration with students in research and mentoring, as well as teaching. We help our doctoral students develop a portfolio of research and teaching experience that will prepare them fully for the challenges they face as the next generation of scholars and leaders of the profession.

The school attracts remarkably talented and motivated students, and provides them with a rich array of resources and an individualized course of study to advance their knowledge and skills. The school’s Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services currently receives more than $20 million annually in funded research from the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies. Our doctoral students regularly collaborate on the resulting projects in addition to pursuing their own funded research.

The excellence of our program draws students from many nations, so doctoral candidates also benefit from a diversity of ethnicities, experiences and viewpoints. No matter what your hometown or your scholarly interests, we offer a supportive and stimulating environment for future leaders in the field of social work.

Thank you for your interest in our school.

Marilyn Flynn, PhD
Dean, USC School of Social Work
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The school maintains two research labs exclusively for the use of doctoral students, including advanced technology for statistics.
Making the Decision

The USC School of Social Work established the first social work doctoral program in the western United States in 1953. Today we continue the tradition of admitting highly motivated, self-directed individuals interested in university research and teaching. Students pursue an in-depth, customized course of study in an atmosphere of careful mentoring and respect for scholarship.

Our doctoral curriculum is highly interdisciplinary with the intent of producing graduates who are capable of original research and passionate about advancing the profession’s knowledge base. Course work and independent study opportunities within the school and across the university offer intellectual grounding in comparative social science theories, advanced research methods and statistics, global issues, policy analysis and advocacy, and 21st century challenges to practice at the individual, family and group levels. The school gives special emphasis to evidence-based approaches and translational science.

Our program fosters early engagement in research and publication, together with a structured and sequential experience in classroom teaching. Unique developmental opportunities are offered to improve students’ presentation skills, networking with other universities and leadership potential. Our goal is to make students competitive for the best available positions in this country and elsewhere in this world.

“The school provided me with support in many ways even before I made the decision to come. My faculty mentor and the PhD chair invited me to campus, gave me a personal tour and sat down and talked with me about why USC was the best choice. The financial package was incredible, beyond anything else I had seen.”

GRETCHEN HEIDEMANN
PhD candidate

FACT
Our doctoral students receive ample hands-on learning opportunities, including roles on major research projects that often lead to publication in leading academic journals, teaching assignments, conference invitations and educational enhancement trips to meet scholars and deans.
Frances Nedjat-Haiem always knew she wanted her PhD, but it wasn’t until she spent three years as a medical social worker at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Los Angeles that she actively pursued it.

“Although social workers are always part of the medical team, I want to influence what doctors are doing in their work with patients. I want to make sure providers understand the importance of caring for patients’ psychological, social, cultural and emotional issues as well as their medical problems.”
CUSTOMIZING YOUR DEGREE

As a leading private research university, USC is actively engaged in a broad range of creative and scholarly activities, with more than 300 graduate programs. Social work PhD candidates take full advantage of the university’s rich and varied opportunities for interdisciplinary research and study, developing an individualized study plan with their faculty advisors by the end of their first year. This customized approach allows students to pursue their own scholarly interests. Students are encouraged to follow their own research trajectory, not just support their faculty mentors’ work.

All students develop a concentration in another discipline or problem area—such as homelessness, poverty or family violence—and take a minimum of three courses outside the School of Social Work. Most take many more. Our students most frequently enroll in courses in gerontology, sociology, psychology, preventive medicine, business, law, political science, geography or policy and planning.

NAVIGATING THE PROGRAM

The school maintains a full-time PhD program specialist to assist you with program requirements and troubleshoot university regulations. The extraordinary level of support from faculty and the program administration ensures one of the nation’s highest completion rates. In addition, the university maintains a graduate student in residence who serves as a resource and sounding board for students with questions or problems concerning teaching or research assistantships, or other matters concerning the successful pursuit of a graduate degree. The graduate student in residence for diversity outreach is another university-wide resource for under-represented students.

MAXIMIZING RESEARCH LEARNING

Our program is dedicated to inspiring students in the uses of science in solving human problems. “Science” is expressed in many organized forms and methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The school promotes research learning in many ways, beginning with required research collaborations with faculty in each of the first two years, which also aid in the preparation of publishable journal articles. Yearlong seminars are held periodically to help students successfully complete for federally sponsored dissertation grants. Formal training is provided in multiple research competencies, with emphasis on methods and statistics courses. Comparative research training is offered for international scholars, and research agreements with foreign institutions support data collection abroad.

PROGRAM MILESTONES

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<th>YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th>YEAR THREE</th>
<th>YEAR FOUR</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Meet faculty mentor</td>
<td>• Finish course requirements</td>
<td>• Explore thesis topics</td>
<td>• Work toward completing thesis</td>
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<td>• Complete 12 units per semester</td>
<td>• Shadow a faculty member</td>
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USC is a world-class university with a 3,200-member faculty in 17 schools distinguished for the impact of their research, offering students a wealth of resources for interdisciplinary study.
As an undergraduate at USC, Ann Reyes Robbins wanted to pursue a career in child welfare and was torn between applying to law school and obtaining an MSW. Initially, she chose the former, graduating from the University of Michigan Law School and then gaining experience in private practice and also as a law clerk and a magistrate with the Allen Superior Court Family Relations Division in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

“At the time, I thought having a law degree would allow me to have greater influence,” she says. “Law and social work are so intertwined in the area of child welfare. It’s essential to have a background in both to be an effective advocate in the field.”

She continues to pursue a multidisciplinary course of study, simultaneously earning graduate certificates in public policy and geographic information science. In addition to research projects with her advisors, Jacquelyn McCroskey and Lawrence Palinkas, she has had the opportunity to collaborate on a National Science Foundation-funded project on gang injunctions with faculty in psychology and public policy, and on a National Institutes of Health-funded project on truth induction in children with faculty from law and psychology. She also has been a teaching assistant and lecturer in the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

“The School of Social Work and the PhD program here have given me plenty of support to pursue my interests,” she says. “I’ve been able to have mentors at different levels and in different departments.”

She cites the diversity of the student body, the generous financial support and the location in Los Angeles as particular strengths of the school. The opportunity to work with McCroskey, who has helped spearhead all major reforms for children in Los Angeles for the past 20 years, was particularly appealing.

“I have always seen USC as a place where people think outside the box,” she says. “Cross collaboration is welcomed here.”
LEARNING TO PRESENT LIKE A PRO

Making convincing scholarly presentations and teaching effectively in front of a classroom are core aspects of success in academia and enhancing credibility. To assist students with these skills, Professor Ramon Salcido enlists veteran actors and faculty in the USC School of Theatre to conduct a series of workshops for social work PhD candidates.

“We felt the use of skills from theatre such as voice projection, great delivery and a void of nervousness would benefit our students tremendously. The highly experimental approach of the classes pushes students to take risks in their presentations.”

RAMON SALCIDO, PhD
Associate Professor
Learning From World-Class Faculty

Recognized for their leadership positions in the field, acclaimed for the breadth and depth of their research breakthroughs, and lauded for their commitment to local and international service, faculty members of the USC School of Social Work are equally devoted to their work as teachers. They serve as mentors and role models – particularly to PhD students, whom they treat as junior faculty and colleagues.

The school has more full-time faculty than at any other point in our history, and nearly all full professors hold endowed professorships. The 59 full-time faculty members bring with them a richly diverse background in terms of educational institutions attended, professional expertise, research interests, ethnicity and life experience. They frequently lecture, consult and conduct research across the country and around the world, lending their expertise to agencies, universities and nations seeking to implement meaningful change. PhD students typically have the opportunity to conduct research and receive mentoring from multiple members of the school’s accomplished faculty.

The USC School of Social Work has one of the three most highly funded social work faculties in the nation.
Alleviating Health Disparities

Kathleen Ell has spent her career focusing on research to reduce disparities in care for underserved populations. After earning a bachelor’s degree in social work, she became a social work assistant at a major hospital in St. Louis. “I was assigned to the basement wards, where low-income, predominantly African-American patients were housed,” she recalls. “The patients I came to know there and through home visits to poor communities made clear to me what I wanted to do.”

Today, Ell is principal investigator of four major randomized clinical trials, two of which are funded by the National Cancer Institute and two by the National Institute for Mental Health. Her current supported research totals $10 million. “A lot of research documents the disparities,” she says. “Far less research is done on what interventions might reduce those disparities. We’re looking at ways of empowering patients and families through education.”

One of her studies, published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, demonstrates that only 12 percent of low-income minority women suffering from depression associated with their cancer diagnosis were receiving antidepressants. “This is in stark contrast to a recent study in which 80 percent of middle- and upper-class white female cancer patients were receiving antidepressants,” she says.

The Ernest P. Larson Professor of Health, Ethnicity and Poverty, Ell also is spearheading the School of Social Work’s efforts to develop a major clinical and translational research institute in partnership with numerous schools on campus through a planning grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Ell previously launched the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research in Washington, D.C., serving as its first executive director while on leave from the university. “In my interactions with members of Congress, I know that when policymakers are asked for more funding, they want to know the data. They ask: ‘It works for whom, at what cost, under what circumstances?’” Because social work is a practice profession, it historically has done little intervention research. But Ell says, “It’s irresponsible and foolhardy not to focus on research. I’m a real believer in it.”

“`What I hear when I talk to doctoral students at other institutions is that they connect with a mentor and then do the mentor’s research. The professor is the author and the student is second. The attitude seems to be ‘They can do their own research when they get out.’ Here we [are encouraged] to do more.”

FRANCES NEDJAT-HAIEM
PhD candidate, who is conducting her own primary research and earned a pre-dissertation grant from the American Cancer Society
Penelope Trickett is one of the foremost experts on the developmental consequences of child abuse and neglect on children and adolescents. A developmental psychologist, she is conducting two longitudinal studies, including one on the psychobiological impact of familial sexual abuse on female adolescents that is now entering its third decade.

Co-author of *Violence Against Children in the Family and the Community* and *Child Abuse and Neglect*, she currently is working on how genotype, child maltreatment and the environment interact and influence the mental health of children from different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic groups.
USC SOCIAL WORK FACULTY

Maria Aranda (USC) – psychosocial care of adult and late-life psychiatric disorders, ethnic and racial diversity in delivery of mental health services, health and aging

Ron Avi Astor (Berkeley) – school violence, school mapping, children’s reasoning about justice

Concepcion Barrio (USC) – mental health services, interaction of ethnicity and effective clinical practice

John Bola (Berkeley) – mental health, psychosocial treatments

John Brekke (Wisconsin) – severe mental illness, domestic violence

Devon Brooks (Berkeley) – child welfare, transracial and gay/lesbian adoption and foster care placements, family preservation

Julie Cederbaum (Pennsylvania) – families and children, health, HIV, substance abuse

Iris Chi (UCLA) – elderly health, gerontology, China Program

Kathleen Ell (UCLA) – health disparities in low-income and minority populations, translational research, culturally tailored interventions

Kristin Ferguson (Texas) – homeless and street-living youth

Marilyn Flynn (Illinois) – application of technology, cross-cultural perspectives on service delivery, social program design, strategic planning

Michael Hurlburt (San Diego) – child welfare and child mental health, implementation of evidence-based parent training services, reducing disparities in service access

Bruce Jansson (Chicago) – politics of big-city health systems, policymaking and planning processes in social agencies, history and practice of social welfare policy

Maryalice Jordan-Marsh (UCLA) – health and health management, impact of the Internet on health care decisions

Seth Kurzban (Columbia) – severe and persistent mental illness, chronic homelessness, substance abuse

Helen Land (Pittsburgh) – interaction of culture, gender, stress, role strain, coping and spirituality on physical and mental well-being in vulnerable populations

Karen Lincoln (Michigan) – well-being of African-Americans across the life course

R. Paul Maiden (Maryland) – employee assistance programs, substance abuse, workplace legislation

Jacquelyn McCroskey (UCLA) – child welfare, financing and organization of services for children and families, utilization of results and performance measurement in social services

Ferol Mennen (Tulane) – children’s mental health, child abuse and neglect, post-traumatic stress disorders in children

Michalle Mor Barak (Berkeley) – work and life, diversity in the workplace

Lawrence Palinkas (UCSD) – medical anthropology, preventive medicine, immigrant health and global health, cross-cultural medicine, health disparities

Tyan Parker Dominguez (UCLA) – racial/ethnic disparities in infant mortality, pre-term delivery and low birth weight

Eric Rice (Stanford) – families and children, homeless adolescents, HIV, substance abuse

Ramon Salcido (UCLA) – community and cross-cultural research, Latino neighborhoods, mental health, racism

Janet Schneiderman (USC) – health and development of foster children, case management as a tool to increase adherence to health recommendations, multidisciplinary education and practice

Dorian Traube (Columbia) – mental health outcomes of urban adolescents, effects of HIV on urban children and adolescents

Penelope Trickett (New School for Social Research) – psychobiological impact of familial sexual abuse, domestic violence

Wynne Waugaman (Pittsburgh) – nurse anesthesia education, professional socialization

Suzanne Wenzel (Texas) – families and children, homelessness, HIV, substance abuse

Ann Marie Yamada (Hawaii) – ethnic diversity, psychosocial treatment of adult and late-life psychosis and aging, schizophrenia in middle-aged and older adults
Examining an Ailing Health System

After college in the mid-1960s, Bruce Jansson planned to take a year off and become a journalist. “The Vietnam War was hot and heavy then,” he says. “I chose graduate school instead of waiting to be drafted.” Social work appealed to his interest in social justice and equality.

Jansson worked in urban development planning and tenant organizing in the Midwest before finishing his doctorate. “I picketed city hall and got my life threatened by a slum landlord who was a member of the mafia,” he recalls.

Now the Margaret W. Driscoll/Louise M. Clevenger Professor of Social Policy and Administration, he joined the USC faculty in 1973, where he chairs the PhD program.

The principal focus of his research today is a massive study of the Los Angeles County public health system. He became interested in the topic in 1995 when the county was threatened with bankruptcy and closure of LAC+USC Medical Center. “I was amazed this could happen in a major city. Only a $364 million bailout by President Clinton allowed the system to remain intact in the short term,” he notes.

“The Los Angeles County health system is the definition of a system under siege,” he adds. “No county employee wants to use the system, and those who must use it often wait for eight or nine hours to be seen.”

Jansson’s project spans the Great Depression to the present, detailing a broad spectrum of political, economic and medical struggles. The project is part of a larger Urban Health Initiative that will compare L.A.’s system with other major metropolitan areas.

He plans a book, *Life and Death in Los Angeles*, and conference on the topic, and aims to build the most extensive archive of the evolution of a major metropolitan health care system in the United States.

“I have a great mentor in Dr. Jansson. He has no ego over ownership of intellectual property. I bounce ideas off of him and go do my own thing.”

DENNIS KAO
PhD candidate
Devon Brooks, associate professor and associate dean for faculty affairs, is an accomplished scholar in the fields of adoption and foster care. His work is but one example of faculty research making inroads in translational science.
Engaging in Evidence-Based Research

The USC School of Social Work maintains a dedicated research institute, the Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services, founded in 1982 and secured by a $5 million endowment. The center is organized as the hub of funded research activity at the school and facilitates the work of faculty representing social work, psychology, sociology, nursing, biostatistics, anthropology and other disciplines. The center supports more than $20 million in sponsored research, houses three academic journals and has a biostatistician in house to support faculty and student research.

“The Hamovitch Center is integrated into the core of the intellectual and educational mission of the school. The expanding research portfolio of the center has an explicit focus on complex societal issues that cannot be solved within a single disciplinary perspective. We have research collaborations crossing eight schools within USC, as well as with a wide range of U.S. and international universities. Our research network extends to more than 100 local human service agencies.”

HALUK SOYDAN, PhD
Director of the Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services

USC is the first social work school to provide leadership in an academic-community partnership to develop a clinical and translational research institute to speed scientific research findings into promising new treatments for patients.
Lawrence Palinkas’ interest in anthropology dates back to his days in high school during the Vietnam War when he was struck by the lack of understanding of other cultures.

“I chose anthropology because it gave me the opportunity to educate people about cultural differences,” he says. Upon completing his doctoral research on how Chinese immigrants adapted to living in the United States, he became specifically interested in medical anthropology. That led to post-doctoral work in epidemiology.

“My work always included mental health, so social work became a natural,” he says. “I like that I’m not preaching to the choir. I have the opportunity to train social workers about what I’ve learned about what culture is, how it affects behavior and why it’s important in working with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds.”

Before joining USC in 2005, he directed the Immigrant/Refugee Health Studies program in the School of Medicine at the University of California, San Diego, where he holds an adjunct appointment, teaching PhD students in public health about the relationship between chronic disease and mental health. He also holds joint appointments in the Keck School of Medicine at USC and the anthropology department.

“The USC School of Social Work is developing a strong focus on translational research, and it was an opportunity to bring my skills in qualitative research to the quantitative research they were doing.”

While he is consulting with NASA on identifying risk factors for long-duration space missions – based on his own extensive research in Antarctica – his current research interests center on community-based participatory research, including addressing health disparities in immigrant and under-served populations, and cross-cultural health services research.

“I work with community agencies to identify the community’s needs for services, then develop designs to meet those needs and train community members to participate,” he says. “I treat them as true collaborators rather than research subjects.”

“Dr. Palinkas is one of the best in the nation in qualitative research and mixed methods.”

DENNIS KAO
PhD candidate
As associate dean of research, John Brekke plays an active role in the school’s extensive funded research projects—which total some $20 million. His own research in schizophrenia and psychosocial rehabilitation service outcomes accounts for more than $6 million. Since 1989, he has been the principal investigator on five longitudinal studies funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and one funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Brekke teaches a yearlong grant-writing seminar, helping PhD students gain the skills to pursue funding for their own projects. In the course’s first two years, 22 students have applied for and received more than $436,000 in grant funding toward their doctorates.
Among USC’s 17 professional schools, excluding Health and Engineering, the School of Social Work accounts for nearly 30 percent of the university’s grant awards – a significant achievement given USC’s ranking among the top 10 private universities in federal research funding.

RECENT DISSERTATION TOPICS

- Functional Outcomes in Schizophrenia: A Biosocial Predictive Model Over Time
- Mental Health Service Use by Children and Youth in the Child Welfare System
- Spiritual Well-Being in Health-Related Quality of Life for Older Chronically Ill Adults
- Associations Among Maternal Sexual Abuse History, Adult Attachment Style and Child-Rearing
- Development and Use of Social Capital in the Psychosocial Adjustment of Chinese Migrant Children
- Low-income, Minority Cancer Patients Who Drop Out of Depression Treatment

WHERE PHD STUDENTS HAVE PRESENTED RESEARCH

- American Public Health Association
- Association of Oncology Social Work
- Council on Social Work Education
- European Conference on Developmental Psychology
- Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences
- Society for Research in Child Development
- Society for Social Work and Research
- Gerontological Society of America
- HIV/AIDS: The Social Work Response
- International Conference on Social Work in Health & Mental Health
- Society for Prevention Research

RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

RECENT FUNDED RESEARCH

- Multifaceted Depression Diabetes Program for Hispanics
  - $3.1 million over five years | Kathleen Ell
- Biosocial Factors in Rehabilitation for Schizophrenia
  - $2.8 million over five years | John Brekke
- Integrated Service System for Infants, Preschoolers and Families
  - $1.2 million over six years | Ferol Mennen
- Assessing Sociocultural Factors in Psychosocial Rehabilitation
  - $650,000 over three years | Ann Marie Yamada
- Preventing Medical Neglect of Children in Child Welfare
  - $622,000 over five years | Janet Schneiderman
- Culturally Based Family Intervention for Mexican Americans
  - $575,000 over three years | Concepcion Barrio

MAJOR FEDERAL RESEARCH PARTNERS

- National Cancer Institute
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
- National Institute of Drug Abuse
- National Institute of Mental Health
- National Science Foundation
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of Labor

FACT

Among USC’s 17 professional schools, excluding Health and Engineering, the School of Social Work accounts for nearly 30 percent of the university’s grant awards – a significant achievement given USC’s ranking among the top 10 private universities in federal research funding.
Professor Michalle Mor Barak (far left) hosts an end-of-the year celebration for first-year doctoral students. Guests dressed in traditional clothing and brought favorite ethnic dishes.
Joining a Multi-Cultural Community

In 1931, USC was the first institution on the West Coast to confer the doctoral degree on an African-American. A 2006 study published in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* ranked USC first among members of the American Association of Universities in the number of doctoral degrees conferred to African-American, Latino and Native-American students. The School of Social Work attracts a more diverse student body than most other top 10 doctoral social work programs, with an average of 38 percent students of color, compared with 29 percent for other leading schools. Nearly half of those in our PhD program are international students.

The social work PhD program is small and selective by design, not only to ensure a low student-faculty ratio and a pool of highly talented students, but also to foster a collegial atmosphere among cohorts and fellow PhD candidates. The school’s active Doctoral Students’ Association is fully vested in the decision-making process for the program and helps ensure student interests are heard and acted upon.

“The school is striking a balance among the diverse challenges in an academic environment by recruiting faculty with varying practice expertise, enhancing the recruitment of domestically diverse students and supporting international students. I came to USC to work with Dr. Devon Brooks, an authority on the intersections of child welfare and culture and to work in Los Angeles County, which has unparalleled diverse populations.”

JAYMIE LOTHRIIDGE
*PhD Candidate and Diversity Liaison for PhD Students*

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USC enrolls international students from 115 nations, more than any other university in the United States, according to the Institute of International Education.
A Policy of Working With Top Scholars

After managing the Immigrant Welfare Project at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center in Los Angeles, Dennis Kao had a wealth of experience in policy analysis and research before he even considered earning his PhD.

"With seven years between my MSW and the start of my PhD program, I gained perspective on the research I wanted to get into," says Kao, whose focus is on health care policy and immigration. "There was not much being done on poverty-related issues in the Asian-American population, and that got me thinking about a PhD."

One of the things that attracted him to USC was the opportunity to work with Professor Bruce Jansson, whom Kao describes as one of the leading academics in policy.

Kao has collaborated on National Institute of Health-funded research in the USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development, in addition to his work with faculty in the School of Social Work on other major grant-funded projects.

"The social work faculty provide a lot of mentorship and put a lot of emphasis on the development of our second-year plan," he says. "They really encourage us to go outside the school and initiate relationship-building."

Another asset of the school is its exceptionally strong statistical emphasis, he notes. "Other programs come here to take our courses. I've developed a strong statistical foundation."

He also is impressed with the school's willingness to support student travel for conferences and to meet with potential employers. "I've pretty much been able to go to any conference I've wanted," says Kao, who has presented at 12 conferences. "All five of my cohorts went to Korea to present. I wouldn't have imagined in my second year of the PhD program I'd be presenting in Korea.

Of his future prospects, he says: "I have a lot of options with the preparation I've received. USC is high on other universities' radar screens when they're looking to fill faculty positions."

"The school seemed really supportive of PhD students, not just financially but also academically and in how the program is set up, And USC’s location is geographically ideal."
A native of the People’s Republic of China, Yawen Li’s primary research interest is health and health access among older adults in China. Li helped her faculty advisor, Professor Iris Chi, initiate and organize the first Chinese Gerontological Study Interest Group at the annual scientific conference of the Gerontological Society of America. She also worked with Chi to develop a new course called Eastern Approaches to Successful Aging in China, which combines traditional pedagogy with experiential learning through intensive training on campus followed by an international field project.

“I was involved in the whole process, from conceptualization to syllabus design, course evaluation and publicity of the course to university-wide students,” says Li, who also served as project manager for the school’s China Program.
ENJOYING LIFE IN LOS ANGELES

While the PhD program can be rigorous and demanding, students often take time out to experience the finest in arts, culture and entertainment, including must-see attractions such as the Getty Museum, Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, Griffith Observatory, Disneyland and the Venice Beach boardwalk. Here, you can surf in the morning and snowboard in the afternoon. The region boasts 76 miles of coastline, borders four mountain ranges and is crisscrossed by thousands of miles of nature trails.

EXPLORING A VIBRANT URBAN LABORATORY

Home to one in four Californians and one in 32 Americans, Los Angeles has one of the most diverse populations in the world, attracting residents from more than 140 countries. This uniquely heterogeneous community offers a real opportunity to devise creative solutions to the often-difficult problems that arise in such a complex society and a chance to conduct life-changing research and develop models that can be used around the globe.
Anjanette Wells collaborated on major federally funded grants, exploring the effectiveness of socio-culturally tailored approaches to depression care for low-income minority women with cancer. The opportunity to work with Professor Kathleen Ell, who is the principal investigator on $10 million in funded research, was a major draw. Wells has co-authored articles in four peer-reviewed publications and has presented at 10 conferences.

“The faculty have been really supportive in helping me think through theoretical issues, giving me career advice, navigating the dissertation route, applying for grants and general writing advice,” said Wells, who accepted a tenure-track faculty position with the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis.
Nurturing Your Network

The USC School of Social Work has built a national network of mentors and recruiters from among our graduates. We host reunions that attract more than 50 PhD alumni and provide you with informal interaction with your predecessors in the program. The reunions typically feature panel discussions tailored for current PhD students on issues relevant to your job search for positions at top schools of social work.

You also will gain access to the worldwide network of nearly 198,000 living USC alumni in the Trojan Family. This USC extended family is a global network of thousands of alumni, students, faculty, staff, parents, donors and neighborhood partners. But the uniqueness of the Trojan Family isn’t its vast numbers. Rather, it’s the extraordinary closeness and solidarity found in a genuinely supportive community. To its members, the “Trojan Family” is more than a phrase: It represents a commitment to support that is lifelong and worldwide.

“USC opened up a lot of connections for me that have fostered my career and made possible the national policy work I do now.”

NANCY K. YOUNG
MSW ’89, PhD ’93
Director of Children and Family Futures, Inc.
During the past 10 years, she has worked as a consultant to more than 20 state and regional offices on prevention and treatment issues affecting families involved with welfare and child welfare.
In Perfect eHarmony With Parents

“If it weren’t for the time I spent at USC, where I learned from world-class scholars what it means to do serious research and then synthesize that knowledge in a way that can be used for intervention,” Tina Payne Bryson, PhD ’07, says, “I wouldn’t be qualified to do much of what I do every day.”

Today she is director of parenting education and development for the Mindsight Institute, teaching methods of understanding parenting relationships concerning the changing brain – while also finding time to write an online parenting advice column for eHarmony.

“As a result of all I learned in the social work program and all the people I was lucky enough to learn from, I’m now able to take important and groundbreaking information and translate it for parents who wouldn’t otherwise be exposed to it,” said Bryson, who studied childrearing theory, attachment science and interpersonal neurobiology.

While parents are given a lot of advice, she says they rarely are exposed to academic research. “What I’m trying to do – in my columns, in my speaking, on my website – is to take that research and offer it to parents in a way that’s accessible, relevant and applicable. I always say that I’m taking cutting-edge science and applying it to everyday parenting.”

In Perfect eHarmony With Parents

Making an Impact

Our PhD alumni frequently earn top honors in the profession, such as Diane Meadow, PhD ’82, who has received the Lifetime Achievement Award for excellence in teaching and outstanding service to individuals from the National Association of Social Workers.

Monika White, PhD ’80, president and CEO for the Center for Healthy Aging in Santa Monica, Calif., was selected as an “at-large delegate” to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging in Washington, D.C. The fifth such conference in history, attendees convene only once every 10 years to make recommendations to the president of the United States and Congress to help guide national aging policies for the next 10 years and beyond.

Sangmi Cho, PhD ’05, won an honorable mention in 2007 from the Society for Social Work and Research for her dissertation, “The Effects of Diversity on Organizational Behavior in a Perceived Homogenous Society: The Case Study for Korea.” She is now on faculty at a leading school of social work in Korea, after serving as an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee.

The Society for Social Work and Research awarded Maanse Hoe, PhD ’07, the 2008 Outstanding Social Work Doctoral Dissertation Award for his dissertation, “Longitudinal Relationships of Cognitive Deficits, Symptoms, and Social Functioning Outcomes in Community-based Psychosocial Rehabilitation Programs: Mechanisms of Longitudinal Change.” He is an assistant research professor at the USC School of Social Work, where he currently is exploring unobserved treatment response in sub-groups diagnosed with schizophrenia.
Employing Her Diversity of Interests

When Dnika Travis, PhD ’06, began the program, her faculty mentor Michâlle Mor Barak was planning a conference on global workforce diversity. The conference – held in Bellagio, Italy – led to her collaboration on a national award-winning book, *Managing Diversity*.

“I met the leading scholars in the world in organizational behavioral studies and was Dr. Mor Barak’s research assistant on the book,” says Travis, whose research interests include employee voice and engagement, leadership and organizational effectiveness, and diversity and inclusion in the workplace. “To see a project of that scope from beginning to end was incredibly rewarding. And I never thought as a first-year doctoral student I’d be able to go to a conference in Italy!”

Travis is now an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work, where she teaches a leadership course and serves as a faculty fellow in the university’s Center for Women’s and Gender Studies Faculty Development Program.

ELECTING TO PURSUE CHANGE IN HIS CITY

While completing his MSW, Victor Manalo, PhD ’01, interned at Kaiser Permanente Watts Counseling and Learning Center with the intention of becoming a therapist. Then the 1992 Los Angeles riots happened, completely changing his view on social work.

“Here was this mass expression of anger and frustration at the system that I didn’t understand but wanted to understand,” he says. “I wanted to make change at that level, and being a therapist wouldn’t have fulfilled that.”

After earning his PhD, Manalo ran for city council in Artesia, Calif., twice before being elected in 2007. He is also an assistant professor, teaching macro practice, policy analysis and community organization at California State University, Los Angeles.

“It’s important to be a model to my students, to be involved in the community,” he says.

He also brings that sense of empowerment to his constituents. “I hope to give the people I represent in the city the opportunity to be empowered, to be able to give input, to provide direction that will help them improve their lives,” Manalo says. “I want to get people involved.”
Associate Professor Ann Marie Yamada won an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Award for Excellence in Mentoring after being nominated by doctoral student Tam Dinh, who graduated in 2008.
Applying for Admission

Applicants to the PhD program should hold a master’s degree in social work or related field. Application materials must be received at the university by December 1 to receive priority. Completed applications will be accepted until January 1 but will be considered late and may not be reviewed for admission.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

• Completed USC application for admission
• Statement of purpose
• Résumé
• Transcripts
• Four letters of recommendation
• GRE scores
• TOEFL score (international applicants)
• Evidence of financial support (International applicants)
• School of Social Work information form
• One-page summary of career plans and goals
• Scholarly writing sample

Please refer to the school’s website at www.usc.edu/socialwork for specific instructions on how to apply.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Admitted doctoral students receive a package that includes a full tuition waiver, a generous stipend, health and dental insurance, and coverage of mandatory student fees. The school covers conference expenses for students making presentations and also funds educational enhancement trips to meet with deans and faculty of leading institutions. USC is among the most generous of all social work doctoral programs, with $200,000 in support for each student over the course of four years.

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