Search Profile

CHANCELLOR

UofSC
Aiken
CONTENTS

The Opportunity 3
The University of South Carolina Aiken 4
Points of Pride 5
The City of Aiken 6
The Role of the Chancellor 7
The Leadership Agenda for the Next Chancellor 8
Qualifications 9
Application and Nomination Processes 10
The University of South Carolina Aiken (UofSC Aiken) seeks a dynamic, innovative higher education leader to serve as its fifth chancellor. This is an outstanding opportunity for an inspiring executive leader with significant potential to shape and advance the future of higher education in the historic city of Aiken and the surrounding region of western South Carolina, known as the Central Savannah River Area. The new chancellor will be selected by the University of South Carolina President Robert Caslen and is expected to take office on July 1, 2021.

Building on the success of its previous strategic plan, UofSC Aiken is currently implementing key components of Leading Forward: Strategic Plan, 2018 – 2023. With an outstanding reputation as a COPLAC institution bolstered by innovative community connections, UofSC Aiken seeks to strengthen even further its work in these key focus areas:

- Academic excellence
- Engaged and successful students
- Mutually beneficial partnerships
- Effective resource management

The next chancellor will have a significant role in these focus areas and the critical new work surrounding the establishment of the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC) on the UofSC Aiken campus. The AMC will provide the Savannah River National Laboratory (one of just 17 national laboratories in the U.S.) the flexible space to collaborate with industry and academia on advanced manufacturing technology.
Building partnerships has been the cornerstone of the University of South Carolina Aiken since its inception in 1961 when citizens of Aiken rallied in a grassroots effort to demonstrate the need for a local institution of higher education. Through state legislation, the Aiken County Commission for Higher Education was formed, which continues to guide and advise on the university’s mission.

The University of South Carolina, the state’s flagship university founded in Columbia in 1801, first began offering courses in Aiken for students interested in transferring to complete their degrees in Columbia. UofSC Aiken became the fourth of eight campuses that would eventually comprise the UofSC system. For the first semester, 139 students were taught by three full-time faculty members at Banksia, a former winter-colony mansion in downtown Aiken.

When the student population grew, the university moved to its present site in 1972. One multipurpose building was constructed—later named the Robert E. Penland Administration Building. At the time, most assumed that this would be the only building ever needed for the campus; however, the university has grown to more than 20 buildings and athletics facilities.

As a natural next step, UofSC Aiken began to seek autonomy in the UofSC system so that students could start and complete their degrees in Aiken. In 1977, the university was independently and fully accredited as a senior college by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges (now SACSCOC) and granted its first baccalaureate degrees. Master’s degree programs were subsequently offered on campus beginning in 1994.

The institution began forming a limited number of sports teams as part of the NAIA in the 1960s. UofSC Aiken student-athletes adopted the Pacers as their mascot (based on Aiken's well-known status as an equestrian community). In 1990, UofSC Aiken achieved NCAA Division II status and became a charter member of the highly-competitive Peach Belt Conference. Pacer Athletics now fields ten varsity men’s and women’s sports teams, including the three-time national champion men’s golf team.

Today, UofSC Aiken is a comprehensive university that enrolled about 3,700 students (3,252 undergraduate) in Fall 2019. The university now offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees in more than 50 programs of study in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and professional disciplines. All programs are grounded in a strong, nationally recognized liberal arts and sciences curriculum.
Transformative teaching distinguishes UofSC Aiken through a commitment to high-impact learning practices, undergraduate research, small class sizes (14:1 student-faculty ratio), and individualized attention to students in and beyond the classroom. The university encourages excellence in research and creative pursuits. It prepares students for success by challenging them to think critically and creatively, to communicate effectively, to learn independently, and to acquire breadth and depth of interdisciplinary knowledge. UofSC Aiken thus delivers many of the offerings of a large university on a small, student-focused campus. Commitment to distinctive community partnerships is woven into the fabric of campus culture.

UofSC Aiken currently has 360 full-time and 184 part-time employees, including 161 full-time and 130 adjunct faculty. The university’s organizational structure has leaders of these areas reporting to the chancellor: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, University Advancement and External Relations, Administration and Finance, Athletics, and Information Technology. Governance structures include the Faculty Assembly (all faculty), the Staff Assembly (all staff), and the Leadership Assembly (representative leaders across the university). The FY2021 institutional budget of UofSC Aiken is $68.8M (all funds), and the endowment is currently valued at $32.3M (as of November 1, 2020).

UofSC Aiken is a diverse community that attracts students from South Carolina, the United States, and the world: At least 34% are first-generation students, and 40% are racial/ethnic minorities. The university is also proud of its service to non-traditional aged students (23%) and veteran and military students (14%). Among first-year first-time students, 97% receive some form of financial aid, and 49% are Pell-eligible.

A progressive hub for innovation, collaboration, and creativity, UofSC Aiken contributes to the community not only through its economic impact (estimated in 2016 to be more than $281 million annually) but also by enriching the region’s quality of life through various activities, including the visual and performing arts, intercollegiate athletics, continuing and distance education, educational outreach, and leadership.

**POINTS OF PRIDE**

- Ranking as the #1 Regional Comprehensive Public College in the South by *U.S. News & World Report*. This 2021 distinction marks UofSC Aiken’s 23rd consecutive ranking among the top three institutions in this category. The university has won the first-place ranking fifteen times.

- Membership in the distinctive Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). UofSC Aiken is one of only eight institutions in the Southeast (among a total of 28 across North America) with this designation. Only those colleges and universities with exceptional academic programs that build on strong liberal arts foundations are invited to join COPLAC.

- Successful regional reaccreditation from SACSCOC in 2011 (with reaffirmation review in December 2021). Distinctive programs recognized for specialized accreditation include engineering (ABET), business (AACSB), nursing (CCNE), and education (CAEP). The university achieved status as an All-Steinway School in 2019.

- The Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC), which will put science to work in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Energy and the Savannah River National Lab (SRNL). This $50M facility, now under construction on campus, will promote partnership among industry, academia, and government to implement and accelerate the future of technologies and produce an ecosystem for the future state of South Carolina workforce.
With a population of around 31,000, Aiken is the largest city and the county seat of Aiken County in western South Carolina. It is one of the Central Savannah River Area’s two largest cities with nearby Augusta, Georgia.

Aiken is ideally located, with convenient access to Fort Gordon, Augusta, and Columbia and a three-hour drive to Asheville, Charlotte, Atlanta, Charleston, or Savannah. The Atlantic beaches and mountains are also within easy driving distance. Aiken residents have the best of both worlds: They can enjoy vibrant city life without the complications, expense, and traffic of a large metropolitan area.

Points of Pride (continued)

- The DreamPort Cybersecurity Collaborative, which is a $15 million state-of-the-art hub proposed by the South Carolina National Guard. The DreamPort will build on the partnership between the university, the Savannah River National Laboratory, and the South Carolina National Guard.
- Recognition as a Best for Veterans institution (2020 Military Times) and a Military-Friendly Bronze institution.
- The Scholars Academy, an elite high school that opened in 2018 on the UofSC Aiken campus.
- The Gregg-Graniteville Library, which houses an extensive collection and electronic resources and serves as an official depository for federal and state documents and the Department of Energy’s public reading room collection.
- The Ruth Patrick Science Education Center on campus, a cooperative effort among the university, local businesses and industry, the South Carolina Department of Education, and schools in the Central Savannah River Area.
- Strong faculty committed to both teaching and research, with 83% of full-time faculty holding terminal degrees, 16 endowed chairs across the disciplines, and recognition as a leading institution for undergraduate student research.
- Designation as one of just 12 Teaching Fellows Institutions in South Carolina, offering a special scholarship to outstanding high school seniors who wish to pursue a degree in education and a career in South Carolina schools following graduation.

The City of Aiken

For residents, Aiken offers a combination of distinctive features:
- Affordable housing
- Award-winning schools
- Cost of living at 11% below the national average
- Diverse recreational opportunities in woodlands and parks
- Traditions related to equestrian businesses
- A progressive approach to business development
Since 1961, five leaders have navigated the university’s path: Directors Mr. Chris Sharp (1961-1962) and Mr. Bill Casper (1963-1983); and Chancellors Dr. Robert Alexander (1983-2000), Dr. Thomas Hallman (2000-2012), and Dr. Sandra Jordan (2012–present) have overseen the campus as it has grown from a commuter institution to a distinctive, residentially-based university.

The chancellor is the chief administrative officer of UofSC Aiken and has full authority to administer institutional affairs. The chancellor is accountable to the University of South Carolina System President and Board of Trustees for the execution of all laws, policies, rules, and regulations relating to the University of South Carolina system. In addition, the UofSC Aiken chancellor has the following responsibilities:

- Close coordination with the Aiken County Commission for Higher Education on all matters of institutional importance, including campus buildings and grounds and other advisory relationships;
- Oversight of institutional processes that impact the quality of academic and support programs;
- General supervision of all relationships between students and the various levels of campus administration;
- Financial management of the campus and its component parts;
- Top-level supervision of personnel administration;
- Management of the operation and maintenance of the physical plant, purchase of supplies and equipment, and maintenance of appropriate inventories and records of real and personal property under the jurisdiction of the campus;
- Oversight of intercollegiate athletics, auxiliary enterprises, and alumni activities;
- Development of productive corporate and community partnerships in Aiken and across the Central Savannah River Area; and
- Advancement of the institution through cultivation and stewardship of external public and private resources.
With the retirement of Chancellor Sandra Jordan in June 2021, the university is well-positioned to attract top candidates for continuing its outstanding work and leading its next chapter. Although the campus community has managed the COVID-19 situation well, the next chancellor will begin in the context of addressing the continuing impacts of the pandemic on the resources, practices, and culture of the institution. Additionally, the priorities for the next chancellor are likely to include the following:

- Moving UofSC Aiken from its reputation as a “hidden gem” to a position of greater visibility and reputation in South Carolina and beyond. The university’s 60th anniversary in 2021 marks an opportunity for celebrating and promoting UofSC Aiken.
- Overseeing and promoting two exciting new initiatives: The Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative and the proposed DreamPort Cybersecurity Collaborative.
- Articulating the value of the kind of education UofSC Aiken provides: New majors—such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and online MBA—that are grounded in a traditional liberal arts curriculum and enriched by individualized attention to student development outside the classroom.
- Advocating for and raising resources from public and private sources for capital, scholarship, operating, and other needs.
- Continuing implementation of the Leading Forward strategic plan, with its goals related to strengthening academic excellence, student engagement and success, mutually beneficial partnerships, and resource management.
- Building on and supporting the diversity of UofSC Aiken’s student body, including many students reflecting first-generation, military/veteran status, and under-represented racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
- Elevating the UofSC system to the next level through appreciation of the benefits of a robust university system, with senior leaders collaborating to ensure heightened accessibility, transferability, and excellence.
The next chancellor of UofSC Aiken should be someone with impeccable personal character who models and drives a culture of ethics, respect, integrity, and dependability. A successful candidate will demonstrate the following credentials and characteristics:

- An earned doctorate, preferred, or professional equivalent or other appropriate terminal degree from an accredited institution.
- A record of being a successful relationship advocate, who will build strong connections to the campus community, the Aiken County Commission for Higher Education, local business and industry, federal, state, and local legislators, the University of South Carolina leadership, and beyond.
- Knowledge of academic culture and the value of connecting twenty-first century academic majors with the liberal arts traditions emphasized in COPLAC institutions.
- Evidence of successful leadership experience, preferably in higher education or related fields, and at increasing levels of responsibility.
- A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the institution and a demonstrated record in recruiting—as well as retaining—students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups.
- Experience in fundraising, partnerships, and other important external activities.
- Financial acumen, including data-informed strategic planning/budgeting experience and alignment of resources with key objectives in a complex organization.
- Political savviness, with understanding and skill in working with a state system of higher education, K-12 education, and elected officials at all levels.
- Strong public speaking, listening, and writing skills that can build connection on campus and be used as a platform to increase institutional visibility and develop reciprocal community partnerships.
Academic Search is partnering with the University of South Carolina in this search. To schedule a confidential conversation about this opportunity, please contact Senior Consultants Dr. Ginny Horvath (ginny.horvath@academicsearch.org) or Ms. Kate Nolde (kate.nolde@academicsearch.org).

To apply, a candidate should submit these three documents electronically: 1) a detailed letter of interest addressing the leadership agenda and qualifications as outlined in this profile; 2) a full résumé/CV with relevant administrative responsibilities and accomplishments; and 3) a list of five professional references, including names, phone numbers, and email addresses, noting the candidate’s relationship to each reference. References will not be contacted until later in the search process and only with the candidate’s permission.

Please send materials in three Word attachments to USCAChancellor@academicsearch.org. Review of materials will begin immediately and continue until the appointment is made. For full consideration, please submit materials by FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Finalists for the position will participate in campus interviews that will include a public presentation.

Please submit confidential nominations by sending an email to USCAChancellor@academicsearch.org. Include the nominee’s full name, current title/position, institution/organization, and email address.

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.
ABOUT ACADEMIC SEARCH

Academic Search is assisting the University of South Carolina in this work. For more than four decades, Academic Search has offered executive search services to higher education institutions, associations, and related organizations. Academic Search was founded by higher education leaders on the principle that we provide the most value to partner institutions by combining best practices with our deep knowledge and experience. Our mission today is to enhance institutional capacity by providing outstanding executive recruitment services, executive coaching, and transition support, in partnership with our parent organization, the American Academic Leadership Institute. For more information, visit www.academicsearch.org.