

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

# DEAN, SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

LEADERSHIP PROFILE



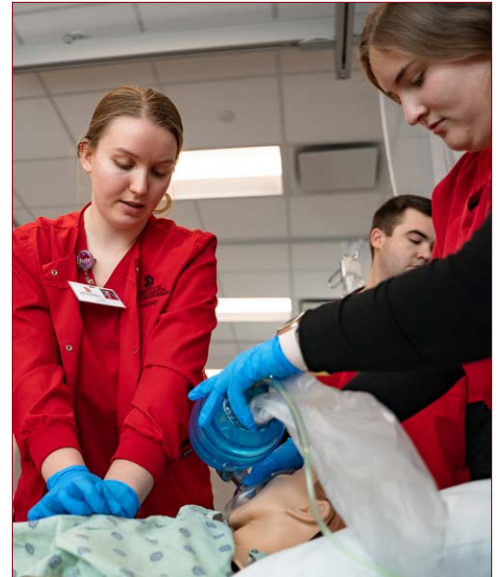
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**SOUTH DAKOTA**  
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

# THE OPPORTUNITY

The University of South Dakota (USD) is pleased to invite nominations and applications for the position of **Dean of the School of Health Sciences**. Reporting to Tim Ridgway, MD, Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean of the Sanford School of Medicine, the Dean of the School of Health Sciences is responsible for providing administrative leadership for the academic, research, and public service missions of the school. The School of Health Sciences incorporates many of the most popular and fastest growing programs at USD at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. Additionally, the School of Health Sciences is home to the Interprofessional Health Education Center, the Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment, and the South Dakota Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program.

Within the past few years, the School of Health Sciences has opened in Vermillion a three-story, 45,000 square-foot Center for Health Education offering modern classrooms, innovative technology, simulation centers, a new community dental hygiene clinic and more. Importantly, the School of Health Sciences functions actively in interprofessional and multidisciplinary health education at the University of South Dakota campus in Vermillion, the USD campus in Sioux Falls, and the USD Sanford School of Medicine.

The School of Health Sciences mission statement emphasizes quality learner centered education in the health and human services professions. Students have exceeded the national average of their board certification exams, and low student-to-faculty ratio clinical experiences have prepared students for employment in their chosen field.



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# University of South Dakota – An Introduction

On a 274-acre campus founded in 1862 on the banks of the Missouri River in Vermillion, South Dakota, the University of South Dakota is the state's flagship institution and designated liberal arts university. With a fall 2025 enrollment of 10,405 and employing around 400 faculty and 1,200 staff members, USD projects a strong commitment to student outcomes and success.

The Vermillion campus is home to state-of-the-art facilities, hundreds of academic programs, a vibrant arts scene, NCAA Division I athletic teams and countless opportunities to learn and grow. Vermillion is a vibrant community of artists, scholars, leaders and friends. The university and the city enjoy a close partnership, making this a welcoming and exciting place for anyone who calls USD or Vermillion home.



As South Dakota's largest city, Sioux Falls is consistently ranked among America's top places to live. With a metro area population of over 250,000, Sioux Falls offers a superb quality of life, benefiting from safe streets, excellent schools, low unemployment and no state income tax. With one of the Midwest's most dynamic and diverse business environments, Sioux Falls is home to industry-leading companies in agribusiness, financial services, health care and tourism.

# USD School of Health Sciences

[usd.edu/health](https://usd.edu/health)

## Overview

The School of Health Sciences serves as the region's premier, comprehensive school of health and human services preparing students for interprofessional, collaborative practice that meets the workforce needs of the region and innovatively advances health and human sciences professions. Students prepare for future challenges by completing rigorous curricula firmly grounded in high quality interprofessional education (IPE), which fosters whole body wellness utilizing an inclusive health care team. Faculty members develop and implement activities across professions by contributing to four collaborating domains—curricular, community service, scholarship and health care simulation—each of which captures an IPE component. School of Health Sciences' students exhibit professional, community-focused and client-centered behavior, becoming alumni who are leaders, mentors, practitioners and change agents.

The School of Health Sciences has gifted, professional faculty who provide a wide range of health and human service programs for both undergraduate and graduate students. Professors are engaged educators

who participate individually and collaboratively in research and creative scholarship to generate new knowledge and enhance teaching and learning. Their commitment to service addresses the health needs of the public.

The student experience is supportive, affirming and technologically rich with personal mentoring by other students, faculty and staff. Students embrace the virtues of professionalism and value their interprofessional experiences and opportunities. Moreover, students engage in myriad scholarship and community service activities, providing care to those in need, especially to those in rural medically underserved areas.

The School of Health Sciences is committed to a global outlook and welcomes those from all backgrounds, embodying the value of inclusivity in its curricula, programs, policies and facilities. Committed to partnering with all communities, the School of Health Sciences sees richness in partnerships with civic and business colleagues at the local, regional, national and international levels, all of which facilitate research and enhance students' educational opportunities.

In all its work, the School of Health Sciences promotes innovative, interprofessional education for professionals who will be serving the health and human care needs of the public.



## Our Philosophy

**Mission** – Develop exceptional practitioners, leaders, and scholars who advocate for and improve the well-being of all people, particularly those in rural and underserved communities. To meet the workforce needs of South Dakota, the region and beyond, we emphasize academic excellence, practical experience, and public service within an interprofessional, learner-centered, collaborative environment.

**Vision** – The University of South Dakota School of Health Sciences will provide accomplished, forward-thinking leadership in health professions education that advances a culture of skillful and compassionate care for all.

**Statement of Cultural Respect** – The University of South Dakota School of Health Sciences is committed to an environment that welcomes all individuals in classroom and clinical settings. We honor the richness of unique perspectives and interprofessional practice through valuing all lived experiences.



## Departments and Programs

### Department of Addiction Counseling and Prevention

The School of Health Sciences has been a leader in addiction counseling and prevention for approximately 50 years. Graduates consistently exceed the national average on board certification exams. Program experiences include inpatient and outpatient care facilities, detoxification, recovery, transitional and community and school prevention programs. A graduate degree (M.A.) and a graduate certificate are offered in Addiction Counseling & Prevention.

### Department of Dental Hygiene

As the state's only dental hygiene program, students are prepared for state-of-the-art health practice, having completed an outreach-based, prevention-focused, patient-centered, interprofessional educational foundation that focuses on whole body wellness. Students are prepared for the national dental hygiene board exam, which is required for licensure in any state. School of Health Sciences' students have had a 100% passage on this national exam since 2005.

### Department of Public Health & Health Sciences

Offers real world experience through service learning and hands-on practice. In the B.S. in Health Sciences program, students gain a strong foundation in health care, including knowledge of a variety of health care fields and development of skills that are essential for quality patient care. The Master of Public Health (MPH) is offered online in partnership with South Dakota State University. This program uses an interprofessional approach to address the five core areas of public health: biostatistics, epidemiology, health services administration, social and behavioral sciences and environmental health. The Doctor of Philosophy in Health Sciences (Ph.D.) is designed to prepare practicing health care professionals to assume leadership roles in academia, research and/or health and human services practice settings.

#### Other certificates and specializations include:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (M.S.)
- Public Health Graduate Certificate
- Child & Adult Advocacy Studies Graduate Certificate (CAAST)
- Clinical Research Coordinator Certificate
- Health Education Specialization
- Long-Term Care Management Graduate Certificate
- Radiologic Technology Specialization
- Clinical Studies Specialization



### Department of Medical Laboratory Science

This program offers the latest technology to diagnose and treat disease through a variety of laboratory tests. School of Health Sciences' students have had a 100% passage rate on the National Board Certification Exam since 2008. The department has educated students since its founding in 1947.

### Department of Nursing

USD's nursing department is the only program in the state that trains future nurses together with 10 health science disciplines and a medical school. Its students experience learning in teams made up of physicians, nurses and other health practitioners, an experience that has become increasingly important as nursing continues to expand and evolve. Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students have surpassed both the national and South Dakota National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) averages for passing the NCLEX exam on the first attempt. The BSN degree is offered in Vermillion and Sioux Falls. In addition to the BSN, graduate nursing degrees are offered in:

- Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP)
- Nursing Practice-Nursing Informatics and e-Health (MSN)
- Nursing Practice-Organizational and System Leadership (DNP)



### Department of Occupational Therapy

Students are provided with a holistic perspective that considers the physical, psychological and social needs of their clients and to understand the importance of adapting the environment to fit the person. The Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) degree is designed to prepare students to be occupational therapists with exceptional expertise, support research and create innovative services for communities and cultures in South Dakota.

### Department of Physical Therapy

The program offers faculty experts and small class sizes. Over the past few years, nearly 100% of students passed the National Physical Therapy Examination on their first attempt. Students have presented research at national conferences, assisted physical therapy faculty in treating Division I athletes, participated in one of 200-plus clinical education sites around the world, received personalized academic and career assistance from a core faculty adviser and learned from board-certified clinical specialists in sports, orthopedics, geriatrics and neurology. A graduate degree is offered in Physical Therapy (DPT).

### Department of Physician Assistant Studies

As the only physician assistant program in South Dakota, the USD Department of Physician Assistant Studies (M.S.) takes place in two areas—didactic and clinical—and emphasizes rural health care. The program also boasts a strong hands-on anatomy lab and robust clinical rotation network, as well as collaboration across health professions.

### Department of Social Work

USD is the only public university in the state to offer both bachelor's and master's degrees in social work. The full-time program allows students to become licensed clinical social workers. Undergraduate and graduate degrees are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.



## Centers and Institutes

### Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment

The center focuses on delivering education, outreach and research geared toward eliminating child sexual abuse and maltreatment throughout the state of South Dakota. The center trains mandatory reporters, helps victims and their families navigate the criminal justice system and provides data analysis to state agencies.

### Interprofessional Health Education Center

The center facilitates collaborative learning among students within the School of Health Sciences and the Sanford School of Medicine. Interprofessional education provides opportunities for students studying different health care professions to learn from and with each other. It trains health care professionals to work as a team and to help them develop an awareness of each other's roles and responsibilities.



## Facilities

In 2022, the School of Health Sciences moved into a new, state-of-the-art facility in Vermillion. The three-story, 45,000 square-foot Center for Health Education offers modern classrooms, innovative technology, simulation centers, a new community dental hygiene clinic and more.

## USD Leadership



**Sheila Gestring**  
**President**

Sheila Gestring became the 18th President of the University of South Dakota in 2018. She is a native South Dakotan and earned her Master of Business Administration degree from USD in 2014. She is the second woman and alumna to serve as president. Prior to becoming president, she served as chief financial officer on the USD finance staff. As a financial leader for USD, Gestring stabilized the university's financial position and developed innovative financing plans for new facilities. She also has been leader of the Onward—the Campaign for South Dakota capital campaign, which raised over \$250 million.



**Tim Ridgway**  
**Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean, Sanford School of Medicine**

Dr. Tim Ridgway is the 15th dean of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine and the vice president for Health Affairs. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Augustana University and Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of South Dakota School of Medicine. After completing a transitional residency at McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, he completed his internal medicine residency and gastroenterology fellowship at the Mayo Graduate School of Medicine in Rochester, Minnesota. Dr. Ridgway is a Fellow of the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy and a Master of the American College of Physicians. He has been a faculty member of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine since 1997.



**Kurt Hackemer**  
**Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost**

Kurt Hackemer, Ph.D., came to USD in 1996 and served previously as associate dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, associate vice president for Academic Affairs, as well as interim registrar, interim diversity officer, and interim vice president for Academic Affairs and provost. In addition, Hackemer served as chair of the Department of History and coordinator of the Native American Studies program from 2014 to 2018, and interim dean of the College of Arts & Sciences in 2017. He received his bachelor's degree in history at the University of Chicago, and master's and doctoral degrees from Texas A&M University.

## The Position

Reporting to Tim Ridgway, M.D., vice president for Health Affairs and dean of the Sanford School of Medicine, the dean of the School of Health Sciences will be responsible for the administrative leadership and oversight of the School of Health Sciences.

This position will be expected to focus on interprofessional and multidisciplinary health education concurrently at the University of South Dakota campus in Vermillion, the USD campus in Sioux Falls and the USD Sanford School of Medicine. The new dean also will be expected to champion the School of Health Sciences and work with the vice president for Health Affairs and others to present a unified force in health education and workforce development for South Dakota.



Moreover, the dean will advance the educational, research and public service missions; manage its fiscal and human resources; promote excellence among faculty, staff and students; and lay a vital role in fundraising and alumni relations. The dean also will promote and negotiate health care education to clinical and affiliated entities, as well as to community/state professionals and leaders, and will explore growth opportunities and manage budget and resource allocation. Importantly, the dean, in conjunction with faculty colleagues, will build and monitor strategic vision, guide academics and research, and, in all, will provide operational leadership to all aspects of the School of Health Sciences.

Finally, the dean works in strong collaboration with colleague deans across the University of South Dakota and provides leadership for myriad clinical affiliates throughout the state and region.

## Strategic Priorities

Over the coming years, the dean of the School of Health Sciences will address the following Strategic Priorities:

- **Articulating a vision and guiding development of the Strategic Plan**

It will be vital for the next dean to oversee the evolving strategic planning process to ensure that the School of Health Sciences continues to be an innovative leader in its programs and supports the University's overall strategic priorities. The dean must make certain that these efforts are transparent and, in the process, engage the faculty, staff, and students broadly in the new School of Health Sciences strategic plan to be developed during the 2026-27 academic year.

- **Building key external, interprofessional, and interdisciplinary partnerships**

The University of South Dakota offers a strong and dynamic foundation to promote partnerships of all kinds. The next dean will be a vital partner in communicating and promoting those efforts—internally and externally, particularly with its statewide health partners Sanford Health, Avera Health, Monument Health, Independent Health Solutions, and others. These efforts will be central to providing School of Health Sciences students with exceptional clinical and educational experiences both on- and off-campus.



- **Strengthening accreditation**

As the School of Health Sciences builds on its strong record in accreditation, it is expected that the accreditation review of the D.N.A.P. will occur during the 2026-27 academic year. Additionally, the Ph.D. in Health Sciences will undergo a program review the same year. Three more accreditation reviews are anticipated in 2027-28.

- **Enhancing research**

Encouraging a culture of scholarship, which will bring opportunities for external funding, will enhance the School of Health Profession's strengths. By making strategic hires who will bring with them the culture of discovery, the dean can play a key role in expanding the research enterprise for faculty and students alike.

- **Expanding philanthropic giving**

The next dean will play a key role in expanding and enhancing external support for the school. The need for fundraising will become an ever-increasing responsibility for the dean—exploring new relationships and nurturing past connections.

- **Ensuring the continuing fiscal health of the School of Health Sciences**

In an ever-changing environment for higher education, it will be necessary for the dean to continue to ensure fiscal stability for the school. The dean must be skilled at mission-driven, and data supported decision making, practical budget management, and prioritizing key needs and available resources effectively.

- **Enhancing the unique shared relationship between the School of Health Sciences and the USD Sanford School of Medicine**

Although the dean will be headquartered on the USD campus in Vermillion, there is a strong interprofessional relationship throughout its academic programs with the USD School of Medicine in Sioux Falls and throughout the state. The dean will be expected to spend quality time on all campuses, as well as with its partner clinics throughout the state of South Dakota. Additionally, plans are currently underway to move the medical school to a new location in Sioux Falls.

- **Continuing to build a School of distinction**

While the strength of the current faculty is evident, new and evolving programs will offer occasion for continued enhancement. The dean will seize opportunities to find the brightest and best to join the School of Health Sciences. Moreover, the dean will want to find ways to connect with the School of Health Sciences faculty, staff, and students on a regular basis. That level of communication and understanding is vital for the school's continuing growth in quality.

- **Continuing to meet the needs of its students—undergraduate and graduate**

In the constantly evolving world of healthcare and human services, the School of Health Sciences will continue to be at the forefront of educational innovation to allow its graduates to become fully prepared to future the needs of its clientele, as well as in the creation of new knowledge to benefit the profession at large.



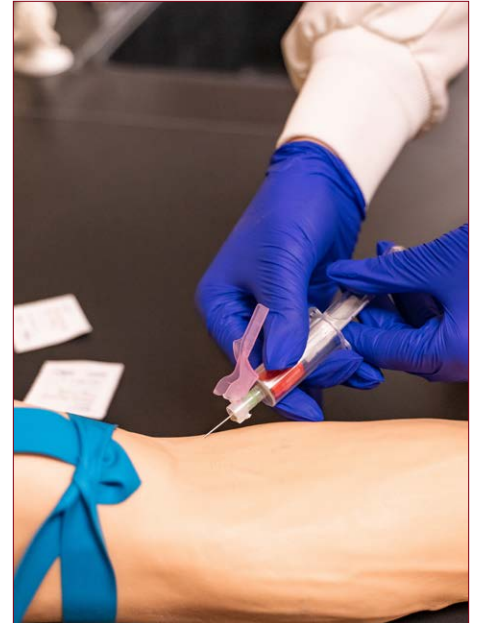
## Professional Qualifications (Required and Preferred) and Preferred Traits

### Required Qualifications

- An earned terminal degree (Ph.D. and/or M.D. preferred) and eligibility for board certification/licensure in a health or human services profession. Also, the next dean should possess the experience to qualify for faculty rank at the level of professor
- Nationally recognized achievement in clinical, educational, and/or research pursuits
- Demonstrated excellence in health care education, research, and service programs
- Demonstrated administrative leadership within an academic or similarly complex institution

### Preferred Qualifications

- Clinical experience within a rural health care or human services environment
- Evidence of a record of guiding, mentoring, and directing program chairs and faculty to support institutional and program missions
- Experience interacting and promoting health care education to community professionals and leaders
- Demonstrated effectiveness as a spokesperson for the School and University
- Evidence of participation in development, alumni relations, and philanthropic activities
- A strong record of providing a positive, supportive role for students, faculty, and staff, modeling exemplary ethical and professional behavior
- Experience in fostering a high-performing, collaborative team to advance interdisciplinarity, delegate authority, and ensure accountability



### Preferred Traits

- Ability to develop and communicate a long-term strategy and vision
- Ability to identify and respond to changing circumstances in health care professions
- Ability to articulate a unified vision and mission for the School of Health Sciences
- Ability to establish strong connections and clear communication with Sanford School of Medicine
- Ability to possess the financial experience and acumen to operate programs on a cost-effective and sustainable basis
- Ability to work within accreditation caps on student/faculty ratios and enrollment caps
- Ability to identify programs amenable to enrollment growth as well as formulate and implement plans for growth
- Ability to develop strong partnerships with alumni and corporate partners for philanthropic and other support
- Strong experience and understanding of both clinical and traditional academic operations and priorities
- Ability to establish close coordination between campuses in Vermillion and Sioux Falls and to foster a shared identity and purpose
- Ability to build connections among diverse stakeholders
- Understanding of delivery of healthcare services in rural communities

# Nominations and Applications

Representing AGB Search, Senior Executive Search Consultant Garry W. Owens and Principal Cody Futch will be assisting the University of South Dakota. Should prospective nominators or potential candidates have questions or wish to seek additional information, they are encouraged to email Dr. Owens ([garry.owens@agbsearch.com](mailto:garry.owens@agbsearch.com)), coordinator for this search, to arrange time for a confidential conversation prior to submitting materials.

## Applicants are requested to submit the following materials:

1. A letter of interest, which addresses specifically how the candidate's experiences and qualifications intersect with the University of South Dakota Dean, School of Health Sciences listed responsibilities, professional qualifications (required and preferred), expected experience, preferred traits, and Strategic Priorities as outlined in the Leadership Profile;
2. A current curriculum vitae;
3. And a list of five professional references with email addresses, telephone numbers and a brief explanation of your professional relationship. (References will not be contacted without prior authorization from the applicant.)

**For full consideration**, application materials should be submitted through the AGB Search portal system accessible [via this link](#) by **January 9, 2026**. Please direct any questions regarding the application process to [USDDeanSHS@agbsearch.com](mailto:USDDeanSHS@agbsearch.com). Nominations and expressions of interest are encouraged and should be directed to [USDDeanSHS@agbsearch.com](mailto:USDDeanSHS@agbsearch.com).

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