



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IACS Names New President

Educator and researcher unanimously selected to lead independent research center at USC

LOS ANGELES, June 2, 2023 — **Richard L. Wood, Ph.D.**, a renowned researcher and proven leader in higher education, has been named president of the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC, announced Michael P. Moreland, Chair of the IACS Board of Trustees.

Dr. Wood joins IACS and the University of Southern California from the University of New Mexico, where he taught for 27 years as a professor of sociology and served as the founding director of the Southwest Institute on Religion, Culture, and Society. He also served as the university's interim provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, and the senior vice provost for academic mission. In these positions, he oversaw the university's academic priorities, led initiatives to advance equity and academic excellence, and achieved major fundraising goals.

Selected unanimously by the IACS Board of Trustees after an international search, Dr. Wood succeeds Rev. Dorian Llywelyn, S.J., who stepped down from his role leading the Institute in December 2022 to accept a new assignment in higher education from the Society of Jesus. Dr. Wood begins his new position as IACS president on July 1, 2023.

“Dr. Wood brings to IACS an extensive record of high-level research and effective, collaborative leadership in higher education,” Moreland said. “He will lead our Institute into an exciting new season and strengthen its important mission of furthering innovative research, fostering dialogue and sparking ideas that can deepen our understanding and transform our world.”

Dr. Wood's research and writing focus on the areas of religion, faith-based community organizing and global sociology. At UNM, he taught courses on democracy and political culture, religion, Catholicism in Latin America, social theory, social movements, and community organizing.

Dr. Wood is the author of two award-winning books, both published by The University of Chicago Press: “A Shared Future: Faith-Based Organizing for Racial Equity and Ethical Democracy” and “Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America.” He has written dozens of articles for leading peer-reviewed academic journals, co-edits the Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics book series, and served as the principal investigator on four major federal-funded research projects.



His commentary has been featured in The New York Times, Washington Post, Associated Press, Albuquerque Journal and a variety of Catholic publications.

“I am honored for the opportunity to lead one of the nation’s leading Catholic research centers and be a part of a world-class university in the heart of Los Angeles,” Dr. Wood said. “In a world marked by increasing secularism, political intolerance and religious sectarianism, the Institute’s work has never been more critical.”

Dr. Wood will focus on broadening the reach of IACS by creating relationships with academics and institutions in the U.S. and across the globe. He will also prioritize deepening relationships with leaders at USC, in Los Angeles and throughout California. He plans to continue the Institute’s track record of publishing high-quality and meaningful scholarly work far into the future, while simultaneously linking that work to a broader audience.

Dr. Wood earned a doctorate in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, a master’s degree in theology from the Graduate Theological Union and a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the University of California, Davis.

An avid traveler, outdoor enthusiast and basketball player, he currently lives in New Mexico with his wife, Dana D. Bell, director of the Cradle to Career Policy Institute at UNM. They have two adult children, Ella and Adam.

About the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC:

The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies (IACS) is an independent global research center located at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. IACS supports scholars and artists, produces books, hosts academic conferences and cultural events, and furthers the intellectual work of the Catholic Church. IACS was founded on September 29, 1998 by Fr. James L. Heft, S.M., professor of religion and former chancellor at the University of Dayton.

Learn more at iacs.usc.edu