



Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Introduction

In 1919, the year that the [American Council of Learned Societies](#) (ACLS) was founded, the biggest challenge facing the academic humanities was securing a place in the research culture that had emerged only recently in US higher education. Today, with increased stratification and inequality within higher education and society broadly, ACLS sees the new challenge as assuring that the values and cultural power of the humanities remain a common wealth available to many, both domestically and abroad. Although the specific priorities may have shifted over time, for nearly a century ACLS has followed the mission of pursuing “the advancement of humanistic studies in all fields of learning in the humanities and the social sciences and the maintenance and strengthening of relations among the national societies devoted to such studies.” ACLS also sees the humanities and social sciences not merely as academic disciplines confined to schools and colleges, but as functioning components of society that affect the lives and well-being of the entire population, and thus the organization advocates for these fields both in and outside of academia.

ACLS seeks an enthusiastic and collaborative leader to help the organization take on these challenges by bringing intellectual creativity and a holistic perspective to the role of vice president and chief operating officer (VP/COO). The VP/COO will lead a talented staff and work in tandem with dedicated member societies and a dynamic president. S/he will help see ACLS into its second century and will aid in charting the organization’s future course, while strengthening both internal and external organizational partnerships.

About ACLS

Formed to represent the United States in the [International Union of Academies](#), ACLS includes representatives from the 13 learned societies that founded the organization and believed that a coalition of scholarly societies was the best possible combination of America’s democratic ethos and intellectual aspirations. Today, ACLS is a nonprofit federation of 75 scholarly organizations with a \$120M endowment and a \$26M operating budget. As the preeminent representative of American scholarship in the humanities and related social sciences, ACLS holds a core belief that knowledge is a public good. As such, ACLS strives to promote the circulation of humanistic knowledge throughout society. In addition to stewarding and representing its member organizations, ACLS fulfills this mission through granting fellowships in support of humanities and social science research and through far-reaching advocacy.

Strengthening Scholarly Societies

The [75 learned societies](#) that are members of ACLS are independent, not-for-profit, national and international organizations in the humanities and related social sciences. Each society is concerned with a distinct field of study, from African Studies to World History, but all are involved in the promotion of research, scholarly publication, and education. Societies publish work in their disciplines, hold conferences at which members present and discuss their research, and publish their own newsletters, magazines, and academic journals, most of which operate under the system of peer-review. The societies also function as the professional organization for their members, serving as a forum to discuss matters of interest to their constituents and set professional and scholarly standards.

The executive directors of the member societies meet together as the [Conference of Executive Officers](#) (CEO). These meetings, held since 1925, have the goals of promoting connections and collaboration between the members of various societies to discuss the activities of their organizations and to address the common issues faced by their societies by brainstorming useful approaches to work or solutions to problems. Recent conferences have hosted sessions on topics such as “Learned Societies and Public Controversies,” which focused on what executive directors could do to address the wide variety of topics brought to societies by individual members, and “Learned Societies and Evolving Definitions of Scholarship,” which considered new forms of scholarship that fall outside traditional evaluation protocols based on print books and articles.

Support for Scholarship

Awarding peer-reviewed fellowships is central to ACLS’s work. ACLS continues to be the leading private institution supporting scholars in the humanities and related social sciences at both the doctoral and postdoctoral levels. In the 2016-17 competition year, ACLS awarded over \$20M to 325 scholars worldwide. The humanities and related social sciences fields that are eligible to receive funding from ACLS include, but are not limited to: American studies; anthropology; archaeology; art history and architectural history; classics; economics; ethnic studies; film; gender studies; geography; history; languages and literatures; legal studies; linguistics; musicology; philosophy; political science; psychology; religious studies; rhetoric, communication, and media studies; science and technology studies; sociology; and theater, dance, and performance studies. Proposals in interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary fields are also considered. Across these fields, ACLS fellows and grantees are engaged in creating new knowledge that benefits our understanding of the world.

ACLS Fellowship and Grant programs, now 15 in total, cover the entire arc of the scholarly career, from advanced graduate study through emeritus professorships, and include independent scholars. Some programs focus on particular career stages such as dissertation research or the years immediately post-tenure; others, including the endowment-funded ACLS Fellowships, are broadly open. Programs may focus on particular methods, e.g., digital or collaborative research; particular subjects such as art history or studies of religion; or particular sectors such as community colleges or liberal arts colleges. All ACLS programs make awards on the basis of rigorous peer-review, a process that requires recruiting a significant cohort of expert reviewers each year.

Advocacy

Just over fifty years ago, ACLS co-sponsored the Commission on the Humanities, whose 1964 report helped convince Congress to create the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The report noted the importance of not seeing the humanities as solely academic in nature, but as a set of disciplines that contributes to society and affects lives. ACLS is committed to expanding the humanities’ presence and recognition outside of the classroom and advocates for continued governmental funding of organizations such as the NEH, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Historic Publications and Records Commission.

Through the [Mellon / ACLS Public Fellows Program](#), ACLS has placed more than 100 humanities PhDs in careers in government and nonprofit organizations, where their expertise can serve the public. In 2016, with the support of the [Henry Luce Foundation](#), ACLS launched the [Program in Religion, Journalism and International Affairs](#), designed to bring together scholars and journalists covering often fraught situations in international affairs. ACLS also advocates for the humanities by sponsoring reference works and innovations in scholarly communication and by representing humanistic scholarship in the United States and internationally.

Pioneering Work

ACLS has taken the lead on a number of initiatives central to the advancement of humanistic inquiry both in the United States and around the world. Specifically, ACLS has been a leader in developing new areas of study, adapting and advocating for the use of new technologies, addressing the challenges faced in scholarly publication, and connecting with the global community of scholarship.

New Fields of Study

By organizing committees of academically accomplished and innovative scholars, ACLS has been a leader in identifying new and promising fields of study. In fact, the development of area studies generally in the US owes much to the impetus provided by ACLS, which first conceptualized this idea through its early work in Far Eastern and Slavic studies and language training. The Council's ability to bring a wide variety of humanists and social scientists together in interdisciplinary work made it possible to launch area studies and sustain them over time. In the mid-twentieth century, ACLS partnered with the Social Science Research Council to organize and develop African, Asian, Latin American, Near and Middle Eastern, Russian/Soviet, and East and West European studies. ACLS also played roles in establishing the Committee on Research in Native American Languages, the Committee on Founding a Journal of Medieval Studies, the Committee on the History of Ideas, and the Committee on Negro Studies, among others. Many of the fields of study encouraged by ACLS have reshaped our understanding of the eras, peoples, and subjects they explore.

New Technologies

Since the introduction of computers and other new forms of information processing, ACLS has played a major role in helping scholars explore the impact of new technologies on their fields. As early as 1964, ACLS developed a program of grants and fellowships designed to encourage new and significant use of computers in humanistic research. This effort continues today through the [ACLS Digital Extension Grants](#), funded by [The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#). Funds are provided to enhance and extend the reach of established digital projects by, for example, diversifying content or developing systems to make content more broadly available. ACLS's support promotes inter-institutional collaborations, new forms and sites for training, new modes of engaging with projects, and new methods of making project content available.

Scholarly Publication

ACLS has a continuing interest in addressing challenges faced in scholarly publication. In the past, ACLS conducted surveys, advised scholars, and carefully evaluated aspects of the publication and dissemination of humanistic scholarship. As a result of this work, ACLS operated an Office of Scholarly Communication and Technology in Washington, DC until 1984. Created in 1999, the [ACLS Humanities E-Book](#) (HEB) is an online collection of more than 5,000 humanities books, including digitized versions of already-published titles and a select list of new, "born digital" titles. These titles are offered by ACLS in collaboration with [31 learned societies](#), over 100 contributing publishers, and the Michigan Publishing division of the University of Michigan Library. The result is a collection of works of major importance, recommended and reviewed by scholars, which remain vital and are frequently cited in the literature. ACLS has commissioned major scholarly reference works, including the [American National Biography](#), which is continuously renewed online and in print.

International

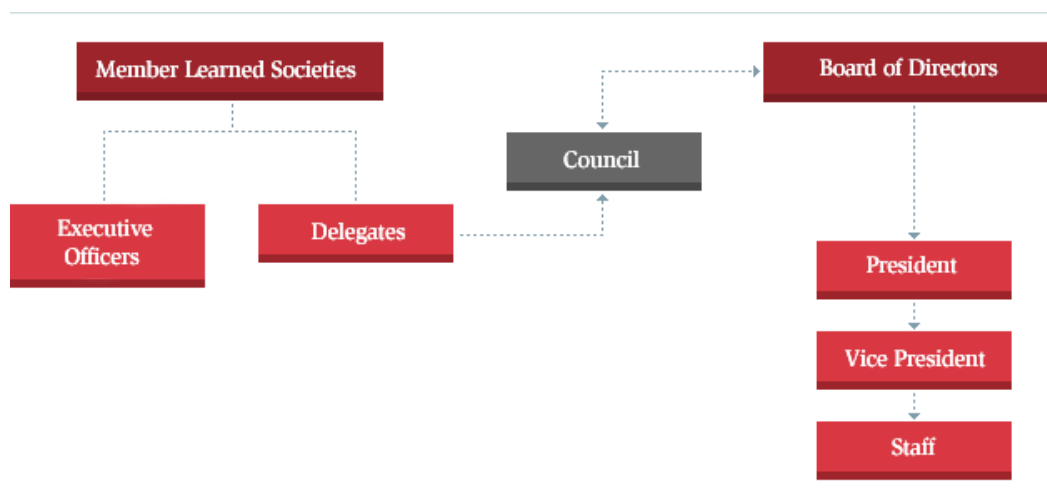
While continuing to represent the United States in the International Union of Academies, ACLS has been active in broader international scholarly exchange. ACLS helped found the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, the agency that administers the Senior Fulbright Program. In 1992, ACLS was asked by the United States Information Agency to reinstitute the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. In recent years, ACLS has extended its support of research to scholars in the former USSR through the [ACLS Humanities Program in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine](#) and in Africa through the [African Humanities Program](#). Additionally, ACLS has helped administer the global competitions of [The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies](#).

Structure and Governance

The [Board of Directors](#) is responsible for the control and management of the affairs and funds of the Council. The Council is defined in the ACLS Constitution as a Board of Directors of up to 20 elected members and one [Delegate](#) from each constituent society. Selected by their societies, ACLS Delegates serve four-year terms.

The Council holds an annual meeting, elects officers and members of the Board of Directors, provides general and fiscal oversight, and admits new members. Working with the president, the Board of Directors establishes overall direction and policy, allocates funds, oversees investments, and reports on all major decisions to the constituent societies.

The principal administrator from each of the constituent learned societies serves as a member of the Conference of Executive Officers. The CEO elects a seven-member [Executive Committee of the CEO](#), whose chair serves as an ex officio member of the Board of Directors. The Delegates also elect an Executive Committee, whose chair serves as an ex officio member of the Board of Directors.



The President

[Pauline Yu](#) has served as president of the American Council of Learned Societies since July 2003. A nationally recognized higher education leader, President Yu previously served as dean of humanities in the College of Letters and Science at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and as founding chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of California, Irvine. President Yu received her BA in history and literature from Harvard University, her MA and PhD in comparative literature from Stanford University, and is the author or editor of five books and dozens of articles on classical Chinese poetry, literary theory, comparative poetics, and issues in the humanities. President Yu has also received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was awarded the Modern Language Association's [William Riley Parker Prize](#) for the best *PMLA* article of 2007.

President Yu is a fellow of the [American Academy of Arts and Sciences](#) and member of the [American Philosophical Society](#) and [Committee of 100](#). She serves on the Board of Directors of the [Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange](#), The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, and [The Teagle Foundation](#). In addition, she is a trustee of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the [American Academy in Berlin](#), and the [National Humanities Center](#). She is also a member of the Governing Board of the [Heyman Center for the Humanities](#) at Columbia University and the Board of Governors of the [Hong Kong-America Center](#). President Yu holds five honorary degrees and is a senior research scholar at Columbia University. President Yu has announced her retirement for June 30, 2019.

The Next Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Reporting to the president, the vice president and chief operating officer (VP/COO) will direct and manage all ACLS programs, operations, and governance procedures. S/he will supervise program directors of Fellowships, Public Programs, International Programs, Philanthropy, the Humanities E-Book collection, Finance, and Web and Information Systems. Together with the president, the VP/COO represents ACLS to the academic community, policy makers, and the public, and will aid in strategic planning for ACLS's future directions. The VP/COO is charged with strengthening ACLS as a federation of member learned societies, developing and advancing constructive relations with current and potential foundation partners, and overseeing a budget of \$26 million.

Challenges and Opportunities

Building upon the Council's exceptional reputation, the vice president and chief operating officer will be well positioned to continue ACLS's work in the humanities and social sciences, taking advantage of and executing suitable responses to the following opportunities and challenges:

- **See ACLS through historic growth:** As the scope of ACLS's programming and outreach has expanded dramatically in recent years, the next VP/COO will have the opportunity to enhance internal operations and potentially rethink organizational structure to support the high caliber of work the Council is undertaking. The VP/COO will work to bring staff into closer collaboration and to increase communication organization-wide, as well as to ensure policies and procedures are codified.
- **Aid in charting ACLS's course for the next century:** The VP/COO will usher ACLS through a significant passage in the short term as the organization's centennial approaches in 2019 and will have the unique opportunity to influence the direction of humanities in higher education and beyond for the long term. S/he will aid the president and the board in finding and defining new possible avenues for ACLS's work, continuing to expand the scope of the organization's activities in both the academic world and the public sphere.
- **Enhance internal relationships with member societies:** Working closely with the directors of constituent learned societies, the VP/COO will seek to support their work by strengthening their operational capacities and mutual collaboration and by exploring synergies between society priorities and ACLS programming.
- **Manage and expand ACLS's relationships with funders and other external audiences:** In conjunction with the president, the VP/COO will assist with continuing strong, positive relationships with funders and potential funders. S/he will also bolster the president's work in broader external relationship building.

Qualifications and Personal Characteristics

The next vice president and chief operating officer will have a broad understanding of the humanities and related social sciences, deep administrative experience, and a commitment to programmatic excellence. Additionally, s/he will possess the following qualifications and characteristics:

- A PhD in the humanities or a related social science and an adeptness in working across scholarly fields;
- Experience with the foundation grant making processes and with the obligations of grant management;
- Familiarity with fellowship programs and the protocols of peer-review;
- Understanding of the changing domains of scholarly communication and digital scholarship;
- Experience leading, supervising, and managing staff and delegating responsibility, preferably in a college and/or university setting;

- First-hand knowledge of the academy;
- Financial acumen and extensive budget oversight experience;
- Outstanding writing abilities and a comfort with timely production of written work;
- Desire to support the president in all his/her responsibilities;
- A track record of leading change within an organization;
- Unwavering intellectual curiosity; and,
- An optimistic, collaborative, and energizing disposition, as well as a strong sense of humor.

For additional information, please visit ACLS's homepage at <https://www.acls.org>. Candidates should anticipate an early July 2018 start date. For best consideration, please send all nominations and applications electronically and in confidence to:

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ACLS is an equal opportunity employer.