MFA ART
STUDENT HANDBOOK

Updated July 31, 2018

University of Southern California
Roski School of Art and Design
Master of Fine Arts in Art Program
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roski.usc.edu/academic/mfa
roski.usc.edu/events
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MFA Art Program Contact Information

ADMINISTRATION

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**Director**
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**Facilities Technician**
*Oversees IFT building maintenance, keeps MFA Art tools library for check-out*
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WAH 104
GRADUATE STUDENTS

**MFA Art – 2019**

Alvarez, Oscar David
Cullors, Patrisse
Dorriz, Alexandre
Freilich, Jake
Montana, Star
Olivas, Noé
Van Brunschot, Rietje

Alvarez, Oscar David
Cullors, Patrisse
Dorriz, Alexandre
Freilich, Jake
Montana, Star
Olivas, Noé
Van Brunschot, Rietje

**MFA Art – 2020**

Beliso, Joshua
Ibarra, Dulce
Kauffmann, Casey
Lee, Paulson
McDonald, Alexis
Nawracaj, Johnny
Needle, Coleman
Rechsteiner, Marval

Beliso, Joshua
Ibarra, Dulce
Kauffmann, Casey
Lee, Paulson
McDonald, Alexis
Nawracaj, Johnny
Needle, Coleman
Rechsteiner, Marval
MFA in Studio Art Program Curriculum and Guidelines

OVERVIEW
The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art is a two-year professional degree in the practice and theory of art, preparing students to pursue careers as professional artists in the contemporary cultural landscape including exhibiting, teaching, community engagement, institutional leadership and related positions. The degree is administered by the Roski School of Art and Design in conjunction with the USC Graduate School and is considered a terminal degree for practicing artists.

There are many advantages of studying art at a major university, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary approaches to art, course offerings and cultural programming across the campus. Students may take electives outside of the Roski School starting the first semester and are encouraged to take advantage of not only art history and critical studies offerings, but graduate-level courses in other disciplines such as film, comparative literature, philosophy, gender studies, communications and the sciences, to name just a few. Additionally, USC sponsors readings, performances, and lectures, including the Visions and Voices Arts and Humanities Initiative series, and more intimate lectures and discussions hosted by various USC professional schools and affiliated organizations such as Roski Talks.

Admitted students join a University renowned for its contributions to leadership in a just and equitable society, one that values art as an essential component of civil society.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS
Admission is based on: a) successful completion of a bachelor’s degree program (or equivalent) at an accredited college, university or art school; b) submission of a portfolio that meets the requirements of the Roski School’s Admissions guidelines; c) an artist statement; d) three letters of recommendation; e) meeting the general admission requirements of the Roski School and the USC Graduate School. Details of application requirements are found at https://roski.usc.edu/admissions/mfa-admission and http://gradadm.usc.edu.*

*Students admitted on a conditional basis must fulfill certain requirements by the end of their first semester of enrollment before further enrollment is permitted.

CURRICULAR PATHWAYS AND REQUIREMENTS
MFA Art graduate students are assumed to be highly motivated people who, as working artists, are involved in the research and practice of art in an intensive manner, in or out of school, with or without the structure of supervision. USC offers a wide variety of faculty expertise and mentorship from which students can expect to develop and maintain a significant career trajectory.

The MFA Art program espouses a broad perspective on contemporary art that is non-medium specific, although students are encouraged and expected to understand and engage with the history and discourse of the media involved in their studio practices. Students can work with all members of the full-time faculty, regardless of medium, and are urged to invite members of the Roski full-time faculty for individual studio meetings in the interest of receiving diverse feedback. Studio visits with adjunct faculty may be arranged, but they must be pre-approved by the Dean.

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It is expected that the program will be completed within two years, with courses taken primarily in the fall and spring semesters, though summer electives may also be available. In order to maintain full-time status, a master’s student should be enrolled in 8 or more units per semester. The curriculum focuses on directed investigations of individual objectives in contemporary art practices. Designed to maximize the studio experience, the instructional model is also focused on critical dialogues through regular studio visits with faculty, guest artists, curators and scholars, as well as group critiques with student peers. Students also take courses with Roski’s renowned Critical Studies faculty that emphasize tracing intellectual and artistic histories, understanding the complexities of theories applied to the visual arts, and addressing global art practices. Program electives provide a broader platform for interrogation and experimentation, so students may explore complementary fields of research at one of the world’s leading research universities.

MFA ART CURRICULUM
The MFA Art requires a minimum of 52 units to be distributed as follows:

Practice (20)
- ART 515 Visiting Artist/Scholar Seminar – 2 units per semester, 4 units total
- ART 520 Individual Studies – 2 units per semester, 8 units total
- ART 535 Group Critique – 2 units per semester, 8 units total

Academic Courses (12)
- CRIT 510 History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions – 4 units
- CRIT 525 Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Practice – 4 units
- ART 530 Global Art Seminar: The Globalization of Art and Culture – 4 units

Electives (16 units)
- 400- or 500-level courses offered by the Roski School – 8 units
- 400-, 500-, or 600-level courses outside* of the Roski School – 8 units

Master’s Thesis (4 units)
- ART 594a, Master’s Thesis – 2 units
- ART 594b, Master’s Thesis – 2 units

*Select from 18 professional schools at USC and/or the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Science

MANDATORY ADVISEMENT
All MFA Art students must meet with their academic advisor before registering for classes each term. Whenever meeting with an advisor, a student should always bring a laptop or tablet to schedule classes while in the advisor’s office. The most productive meetings occur when students arrive prepared and have already reviewed course offerings via the USC Schedule of Classes website. Mandatory Advisement occurs during specific weeks. Students should consult the Advisement section of https://roski.usc.edu/resources/student for appropriate times. Students should also read and follow directions that their advisor emails to them. Mandatory Advisement meetings are arranged via email with the academic advisor. MFA Art students will not be able to register for classes until they meet with their advisor. Timely attendance of Mandatory Advisement meetings and timely registration are requisites for satisfactory progress.
MFA ART 2-YEAR/5-TERM SAMPLE COURSE SEQUENCE CHART
Students may use this chart as a guideline when registering each term, in order to meet all course requirements for the MFA Art program. However, other sequences may also be possible. The MFA Art Academic Advisor can assist with any questions about MFA Art degree requirements or course sequences by email, phone, or appointment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Course Code (Unit Value) Title</th>
<th>Total Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 Fall</td>
<td>ART 515 (2) Visiting Artist/Scholar Seminar, ART 520 (2) Individual Studies, ART 535 (2) Group Critique, CRIT 510 (4) History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions, 400-level or higher (2) non-Roski elective</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 Spring</td>
<td>ART 515 (2) Visiting Artist/Scholar Seminar, ART 520 (2) Individual Studies, ART 535 (2) Group Critique, CRIT 525 (4) Making &amp; Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis, 400-level or higher (4) non-Roski elective</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1 Summer</td>
<td>ART 530 (4) Global Art Seminar: The Globalization of Art and Culture, —, —, —, 400-level or higher (2) non-Roski Elective</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 Fall</td>
<td>—, ART 520 (2) Individual Studies, ART 535 (2) Group Critique, ART 594a (2) Master’s Thesis, 400-level or higher (4) Roski elective</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2 Spring</td>
<td>—, ART 520 (2) Individual Studies, ART 535 (2) Group Critique, ART 594b (2) Master’s Thesis, 400-level or higher (4) Roski elective</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACADEMIC COURSES

Visiting Artist and Scholar Seminar (ART 515)
A weekly forum of visiting artists, curators, writers and scholars in conjunction with Roski Talks. The lectures alternate with discussion sections. Students are expected to engage the visiting artist in discussion of the material presented. In addition to being exposed to a cross section of contemporary work in the field, students will observe and engage in the range of presentation methods and lecture styles used by recognized professionals.

Individual Studies (ART 520)
Students work with distinguished faculty and visiting artists and scholars through a series of private studio visits. Visits typically occur weekly in the MFA Art student’s studio, but may occur more or less frequently, as determined by individual student needs and faculty advisors. Meetings are intense discussions of the student’s ongoing work/practice: its substance, method and means of execution, critical intent and meaning, and relevance both to the individual student’s practice and to cultural production in general. Students are expected to process the varying points of view presented by the faculty and engage in both primary experimentation (the execution of artwork) and secondary research (theoretical and critical reading as well as viewing of work) in response to these suggestions. Students are in a constant state of challenge and the work is in a constant state of development. Over the course of the two years of the program, the
faculty-student dialogue facilitates the development of an individual practice. First-year students present the results of their semester’s work at the end of the semester review; and second-year students present their work and research in the form of the final exhibition and written thesis.

*Global Art Seminar: The Globalization of Art and Culture (ART 530)*
An examination of the emergence of the idea of “globalism” through the lens of art practice and theory.

*Group Critique (ART 535)*
Students gain insight and perspective through weekly meetings that investigate individual issues relative to current directions in a student’s practice. Analysis, conceptual development, and subjective observation is provided by student peers and faculty.

*History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions (CRIT 510)*
Provides a broad and deep overview of the history of “art” as a conceptual and practical category, emphasizing development of exhibition sites and engagement with the public sphere.

*Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis (CRIT 525)*
Provides students with a foundation in the history and theory of studio art and curatorial education and develops their teaching skills in these areas.

**STUDENT REVIEWS (MIDTERM AND FINAL)**
All first-year students participate in on-campus reviews of their work, held four times a year at the midterm and the close of the fall and spring semesters. These reviews provide a formal dialogue between student artists and faculty participants. Students present and discuss completed work as well as works-in-progress during each review.

**A. Midterm Reviews**
Midterm reviews are held during ART 535 Group Critique, halfway through each term and are attended by the core faculty. Midterm reviews will result in a brief written assessment of the student’s progress.

**B. Final Reviews**
Final reviews are normally held on the Friday of the last week of classes each semester and are included as part of the grade assessment for ART 520 Individual Studies. In addition to the MFA Art faculty, all members of the Roski School’s full-time faculty are invited to participate. During all reviews, MFA Art students are encouraged to have a fellow student or faculty member take notes capturing the dialogue.

**C. Review Assessments and Grades**
The purpose of the first-year reviews is to confirm that the student is making satisfactory progress toward their terminal degree, after which they may proceed to the thesis requirement in the second year. These assessments are included in the letter grade evaluation for ART 520 Individual Studies in the fall and spring for first-year MFA Art students. Students should refer to [http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=2388](http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=8&navoid=2388) for USC’s policy on maintaining satisfactory academic progress. Note that students must meet deadlines set by both Roski and the Graduate School to maintain satisfactory progress. Final Reviews at the end of the semester are not required for second-year MFA Art
students in satisfactory standing.

D. Relationship Between the Spring Final Review and Second-Year Funding
Funding for a student’s second year in the MFA Art Program is merit-based and competitive. Students must demonstrate they are making timely and satisfactory progress to the degree to be eligible to receive funding in the second year. Funding is at the discretion of the Director, as approved by the Dean. Again, students must meet deadlines set by both Roski and the Graduate School to maintain satisfactory progress.

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY
At the end of the second semester of the first-year students may be advanced to candidacy for the MFA Art degree by the Roski School of Art and Design faculty if:

1. They remain in satisfactory standing following the spring semester Final Review.

2. They have successfully completed twenty (20) units according to the curriculum above. 20 units represent the normal minimum for two semesters of full-time course work.

3. They have maintained 3.0 GPA.

MFA ART THESIS REQUIREMENTS
The primary requirements for the MFA Art thesis are participation in an MFA Art thesis graduate exhibition and a written thesis. The art thesis exhibition may be a solo or a group show. Required in conjunction with the exhibition is a formal review of the thesis exhibition with the student’s appointed thesis committee in the spring semester of the second year.

The written thesis is also carried out under the guidance of the thesis committee and the USC Graduate School. The written thesis is submitted by the end of March of the second year. For complete USC guidelines and standards see: http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/guidelines-for-submission/.

A. Thesis Committee
The thesis committee works closely with the individual candidate to complete the thesis requirements. The thesis committee consists of three members of the USC faculty. Two members must be drawn from the Roski School’s full-time faculty ranks currently teaching in either the MFA, MA, or BA/BFA programs, and holding an MFA, PhD, or their equivalent (extensive professional experience may serve in lieu of a terminal degree, upon the recommendation of the Director, and approval by the Dean). The third member must be a full-time USC faculty member from outside of the Roski School. One of the three thesis committee members is designated as the Chair by request of the candidate. The Chair provides leadership and guidance to the committee and helps to steer the process, but the student is responsible for meeting all deadlines, not the Chair. The thesis committee acts both as a committee of advisors prior to the final MFA Art exhibition and as a formal review committee for the graduate student’s written thesis. For full guidelines regarding faculty eligible to serve on thesis committees, see http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=1767#graduate_school_policies_and_requirements.
B. Formation of the Thesis Committee
The student forms their thesis committees upon advancement to candidacy at the end spring semester in the first year. The student contacts faculty individually and formalizes their committee by having the faculty sign the Appointment of Committee Form: [http://graduateschool.usc.edu/assets/doc/Appointment_Change_of_Committee_Form_Doctoral.pdf](http://graduateschool.usc.edu/assets/doc/Appointment_Change_of_Committee_Form_Doctoral.pdf). This form is then submitted to the MFA Art advisor, who will contact the Dean for her signature. All committee appointments are subject to approval by the Dean.

The student meets with the faculty on their thesis committee as part of ART 520 Individual Studies, beginning in the second year of study, and will hold regular meetings to discuss the drafts of the thesis with the faculty.

C. Final Thesis and the Final Thesis Review
The written thesis is expected to be 20–40 pages, inclusive of notes but not bibliography or illustrations. The final paper is due March 1st — with no exceptions or extensions. The topic should be relevant to and inform the student’s studio practice and relate to her/his/their work in the final thesis show. The thesis requires a specific form (see online submission below) and generally requires research and expository writing.

Following submission of the thesis, the student will meet in person with all committee members for the Final Thesis Review. This meeting serves as a forum for you to elaborate and/or clarify the content and ideas of the thesis. Committee members will also provide critical feedback.

D. Online Submission
After the Final Thesis Review, the thesis is submitted and processed online for review by the Thesis Editor. For more information see: [http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/](http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/)

In addition to formal approval of the written thesis by the thesis committee, the student must format and submit their thesis according to the guidelines of the USC Graduate School thesis editors. The USC Graduate School website, in addition to the MFA Art academic advisor and the Graduate School thesis editor, can provide guidance in how to properly format and submit the written thesis: [http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/guidelines-for-format-and-presentation/](http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/guidelines-for-format-and-presentation/)

Following approval, the student uploads the completed thesis to ProQuest.

**THESIS MILESTONES**
All students must adhere to milestones in the process of writing their MFA Art theses, an essential component for maintaining satisfactory progress. The required milestones are as follows:

**1st Milestone, Written Thesis**
Requirements: The student forms a thesis committee on the basis of an initial written thesis proposal.
*Due: Before* the last day of classes of the spring semester, typically around April 27th.
2\textsuperscript{nd} Milestone, Written Thesis
Requirements: The student expands the thesis proposal, indicating the scope of the research, and how it relates to her/his individual practice. Student meets with members of the committee jointly or separately to discuss the proposal. Revised/expanded proposal required. 
\textit{Due}: End of September, second academic year; meetings should take place fall semester, second academic year.

3\textsuperscript{rd} Milestone, Written Thesis
Requirements: Complete first draft of thesis is submitted to all committee members (student will have submitted earlier drafts to the Chair and will have made revisions based on the Chair’s recommendations). 
\textit{Due}: February 1\textsuperscript{st}, second academic year.

4\textsuperscript{th} Milestone, Final Paper
Requirements: Final thesis is submitted to all committee members. 
\textit{Due}: March 1\textsuperscript{st}, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline.

5\textsuperscript{th} Milestone, Final Thesis Review
Requirements: Final discussion and review of thesis with all committee members, via email or in person. 
\textit{Due}: End of March, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline, based on USC regulations.

6\textsuperscript{th} Milestone, Electronic Thesis Approval
Requirements: Committee to electronically approve the thesis via the USC Thesis Center 
\textit{Due}: Mid-April, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline. See http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/submission-deadlines/ for the exact deadline for your year.

7\textsuperscript{th} Milestone, MFA Art Thesis Exhibition
\textit{Due}: Mid-May, second academic year

8\textsuperscript{th} Milestone, Final Submission to USC
Requirements: Submission of thesis to USC Graduate School 
\textit{Due}: Mid-June, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline. See USC Graduate School Thesis/Dissertation Submission Deadlines for the exact deadline for your year.

\textbf{Conduct Inside and Outside the Classroom}

As a graduate student, you have the responsibility of conducting yourself, in all education activities, in a befitting manner, showing respect to faculty, staff, your student colleagues, and the surrounding community. Engagements in debate should be respectful and productive. We are here to enrich your intellectual curiosity and push your artistic growth.

A fair amount of conflict and friction is normal in a high-level learning environment, up to a point. Ideally, you should be aware that disagreements occur and that you should find constructive ways to deal with your emotions about them. Faculty are here to address conflicts within and beyond graduate classes, and not to rehash old conflicts. We want to ensure everyone
feels supported, and that the classroom is a space of openness and debate. While intellectual and creative disagreements occur, debate should remain respectful and productive, and feedback should come from a place of generosity.

In the classroom, learning to negotiate rather than escalate is a crucial part of learning to conduct yourself as a professional in your field. All comments and engagements in class and beyond must remain respectful and productive; if you need tips on how best to achieve this, talk to your faculty mentors for suggestions. Every effort should be made to resolve conflicts yourselves as individuals and should be addressed in-person, face-to-face. Texting or emailing about a perceived slight is not only ineffective, but counterproductive. If you have taken steps in an attempt to resolve a conflict on your own and been unsuccessful, take the time to meet with the instructor outside of class. Class time should be use for course material and not to discuss or vent about conflicts.

The syllabus for any given course is also a guideline as to the expectations for the type of work being done in the course, including in-class participation and assignments as part of the course. If you are unable to engage in the course material as denoted by the syllabus and directed by the instructor, your grade will reflect this.

If you feel an instructor is hostile or abusive, talk to the Director; if the Director is not helpful, or is the instructor of the course, you can talk to Dean of Roski; OR you can always go directly to USC Student Affairs for support and bypass Roski faculty.

We understand that students have a life outside of Roski and that at times, life takes a course of its own. If you experience difficulties that you feel are impeding your academics, please speak with head of the program or the assistant dean of student services.

We take your well-being, as well as your academic growth, seriously, and want all our students to thrive. While conflicts, at times, may not be avoided, they should be handled in a productive manner that does not take away time and energy from our mission to learn and expand our creative and intellectual practice. It is important to find ways to achieve these goals without disruption.

For more information on university resources to help off-set conflict, additional policies and procedures, please refer to the SCampus USC Student Handbook and Appendix E: University Resources – http://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/.

Lastly, students should make themselves aware of USC Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (USC SJACS) and of Section 13 – Academic Integrity Review: https://sjacs.usc.edu/students/academic-integrity/. Sanctioning Guidelines are provided in Appendix A: https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/files/2015/09/appendix_a.pdf Sanctions for second offenses will be more severe and generally will include suspension or expulsion.

**Roski Talks and MFA Art Visiting Lecturer Host Duties**

All Roski Talks lectures have been invited through the graduate program coordinator’s office. Depending upon who has been assigned to a visitor, the graduate program coordinator may ask
you to assist as a student host.

**HOST RESPONSIBILITIES**

As the host, you are the on-site point person to liaise with the guest speaker. While the graduate program coordinator will be the contact for the individual prior to their on-site visit, coordinating the visit schedule, including audio-visual check, dinner, studio schedule, and seminar visit, you are expected to be the “face” of the Roski School on the day(s) of the guest’s visit.

You will also assist in coordinating studio visits. The graduate program coordinator will initially set the schedule for all studio visits. You will be responsible for reminding your colleagues of their appointments and making sure the guest speakers makes each appointment, ensuring each student gets their allotted time for studio visits.

Typically, the lecture takes place on Tuesday and the seminar and studio visits take place Wednesday. On the day of their studio visits and seminar, meet the visitor in the parking lot; greet them and give them a quick tour of the building and a copy of their studio visit schedule. Show them your studio. Open your studio so that they have a place to relax and put their things down. Offer them refreshments; you can see what is available in the IFT administrative suite. Ensure that they get to each studio visit in a timely manner. Their schedule does allot guest time to take breaks. You will also make sure they are able to find the seminar room and have all the AV requirements assembled.

**MFA Art Audiovisual Equipment**

There are a select few items of audio visual equipment such as speakers, DVD players, and other items that can be checked out for a period of one week with the program coordinator. Photography equipment can be checked out at the Advanced Photography Lab next door. The equipment is governed by the Advanced Photography Lab policies.

**CHECKOUT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

1. Equipment may be checked out for periods of one week, with the exception of holidays, when students may be able to check out equipment for extended periods. Checkouts are processed through the program coordinator or one of the program coordinator’s work study assistants.

2. To guarantee availability, it is recommended that students reserve equipment in advance, either by emailing astorm@usc.edu or by visiting the program coordinator’s office. Students who wish to reserve must specify a checkout period.

3. Students must return equipment by noon on the due date. Students who wish to extend a checkout period must stop by the program coordinator’s office or email the day before and request an extension. If no other student has reserved the item, an extension will be granted.

4. More than two incidences of returning equipment late may result in loss of MFA Art AV equipment checkout privileges.
### Staff Directory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avetisyan, Hayk</td>
<td>IT Manager</td>
<td>11414</td>
<td>HAR 117</td>
<td><a href="mailto:havetisy@usc.edu">havetisy@usc.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beas, Chris</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:woodshop@usc.edu">woodshop@usc.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Karnazes, Alex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lizo, Jay</td>
<td>Sculpture Lab Technician</td>
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<td>WAH 108A</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lizo@usc.edu">lizo@usc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquez, Raym</td>
<td>Facilities Manager</td>
<td>19611</td>
<td>WAH 104</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rjm@usc.edu">rjm@usc.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morales, Juan</td>
<td>Facilities Technician</td>
<td>31764</td>
<td>IFT 119</td>
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