

Kim Beong-soo, vice president of law at USC, appointed interim president

Harvard graduate and federal prosecutor, 'I am considering the role of universities in current upheaval in U.S.'

The University of Southern California (USC), a prestigious private university on the west coast of the United States, has appointed Kim Beong-soo (52), a second-generation Korean immigrant and senior vice president and general counsel at USC, as its interim president. He will serve as interim president until a successor to current President Carol Folt, who is retiring in June, is selected. He is the first Korean to hold a high-ranking position at a private university in the United States.

Kim said that he is deeply concerned about the role of universities as U.S. research universities are currently in great turmoil with U.S. President Donald Trump's newly launched administration drastically cutting budgets.

"USC is a university that conducts research but also plays a diverse role in the fields of medicine, music and sports," Kim said. "I will think deeply about what kind of contributions USC can make to Los Angeles, California, the United States and the world in the future."

Kim has had an unusual career, having worked as a lawyer and a federal prosecutor and at Kaiser Permanente, the largest nonprofit health care organization in the United States, after graduating from Harvard Law School.

"I worked as a federal prosecutor, mainly dealing with white-collar crimes, and then while working at the law firm Jones Day, I received a job offer from Kaiser Permanente," he said. "I thought it would be meaningful to work at a health care organization with a large social impact, so I joined."

After being hired as vice president for legal affairs at USC in 2020, Kim played a key role in major issues at USC, such as resolving protests on campus. He expressed his joy at being given an important role at USC as a Korean American and expressed gratitude for the deep ties between Korea and USC.

"USC has a Korean Studies Institute, and many Koreans have been contributing. CEO Jaime Lee of Jamison Realty is a member of the USC Board of Directors," he said, adding that Korean immigrants play an important role not only at USC but also in LA and California.



Vice President Kim Beong-soo of the University of Southern California (USC)

"I am proud that Korea has creative capital, including K-pop and K-dramas, and is exporting it to the world," Kim said. "I am an old-timer, so I don't listen to K-pop, but I know that artists from Korea perform in LA."

Kim, who is an amateur cellist, held a small-scale performance at his home in Pasadena during the COVID-19 pandemic, which became a hot topic in the local community and was even featured in the LA Times.

"One weekend, when I couldn't meet people due to the lockdown, I went out and started playing the cello, and people started listening to me," he recalled. "As word spread, it became a regular performance, and after it was featured in the newspaper, more people came, and I played a total of 12 times."

Kim, who was born in the United States and often visited Korea with his parents during summer vacations when he was young, chose the ice cream (아이스크림) cart as the most memorable thing about Korea. He said that when coming to Korea, he mostly stayed at his grandfather's or maternal grandfather's houses and explained: "I still remember the ice cream I ate in the hot summer. I still remember the 'omok' game I played with my maternal grandfather." 장