

# ABBY FIFER MANDELL

📞 310.279.7491

✉️ abbyfifer@gmail.com

🌐 [linkedin.com/in/abbyfifermandell](https://www.linkedin.com/in/abbyfifermandell)



Award-winning educator, user researcher, university leader and design strategist devoted to entrepreneurial education. Seasoned venture coach and mentor. Experienced enterprise director, program developer, project manager, fundraiser and curriculum writer skilled in human-centered design, business strategy, higher education administration, and entrepreneurship.

## UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

### University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

*Producer, Aging is Now | Aging is the Future Symposium at the University of Southern California* 2023

- Co-founded first annual gathering of practitioners, researchers, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders to discuss, knowledge-share, and network regarding business opportunities in products, services and systems for the emerging market of older adults
- Convening featured a first look at a report on market opportunities gleaned from 5000+ user conversations with older adults (in progress)

*Executive Director, Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab at the Marshall School of Business* 2012 – 2022

- Managed all operations for The Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab (BSEL), a Center of Excellence at the Marshall School of Business and USC's hub for social impact entrepreneurship
- Partnered with the School's Advancement Team to source development opportunities, secure a naming gift, and raise a \$9M endowment
- Designed, implemented and supervised nearly 130 academic offerings, co-curricular programs, events, initiatives, and community partnerships on entrepreneurship each year that reached 1,500 undergraduate and graduate students annually
- Directed the Social Venture Coaching Competition, the largest annual start-up accelerator and prize (\$125K) at USC; coached on user-centered design, customer segmentation, value proposition, revenue models and pitching
- Developed annual plenary session on social business for 500 first-year and transfer undergraduate business students in the Learning about International Commerce (LINC) program at the Marshall School of Business
- Liaised with Provost and senior university officials to plan and execute fundraising, curricular initiatives, and student programming in social entrepreneurship
- Coached and mentored 100+ graduate, undergraduate and alumni entrepreneurs annually
- Managed oversight and reporting of seven departmental budgetary accounts and \$450,000 annual budget
- Founded 24-member advisory board to enhance fundraising efforts for the school
- Exceeded fundraising goals each year, securing gifts of up to \$1M each from individual and foundation donor
- Supervised seven direct reports; hired and onboarded new employees
- Represented the Lab to the greater Los Angeles, national, and international social enterprise and media community
- Cultivated cross-disciplinary partnerships with the Price School of Public Policy, Gould School of Law, School of Architecture, Viterbi School of Engineering, Dornsife College and other departments and initiatives at USC to increase student engagement in social entrepreneurship by 15-20% annually
- Launched new M.S. in Social Entrepreneurship degree, the first of its kind at a U.S. business school; spearheaded

changes to the recruitment and application review processes to mitigate implicit bias and significantly increase representation of first-generation scholars and students identifying as members of underrepresented minorities

- Hired, trained and supervised federal work study students and interns to fulfill crucial center roles
- Directed the Social Venture Coaching Competition, the largest annual start-up accelerator and prize (\$125K) at USC; coached on user-centered design, customer segmentation, value proposition, revenue models and pitching
- Founded the Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series; produced and moderated 80+ speaker events and panels for students and community
- Delivered new digital course content to students in Spring and Fall 2020 and Spring 2021
- Facilitated offerings for USC Summer Program for high schoolers in 2018, 2019 and 2023
- Spearheaded Clinton-Orfalea-Brittingham Fellowship Program to fund a total of 30 graduating students at the Clinton Foundation in NY; cultivated Brittingham Family Foundation to secure naming gift for the Lab

*Assistant Director, Marshall Society and Business Lab*

2010 – 2012

- Designed and launched interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in social entrepreneurship
- Secured grant funding for student programs totaling \$748,000

*Director of Education, Marshall Society and Business Lab*

2008 - 2010

- Designed and launched a portfolio of student programs and experiences for business students interested in social entrepreneurship, including the MBA Society and Business Fellows, Undergraduate Scholars Program, monthly lecture series, the MBA Summer Internship Subsidy, Global Business Brigades, and undergraduate internship program
- Served as point of contact for multiple social impact student organizations and consulting teams, independent study requests, and student organization grants

**American Jewish University, Los Angeles, CA**

*Director of Admissions, Fingerhut School of Education*

2006 - 2008

- Designed and executed orientation for incoming students
- Directed academic advising for enrolled students
- Increased enrollment in M.A.Ed. programs by 100% and increased database of prospective students by 400%
- Standardized 8 points of contact for prospective students, including campus visits and written correspondence
- Produced recruitment literature and video and initiated direct mail activities
- Provided regular and complete comparative reports on the status of recruitment and admissions efforts
- Created university-wide student learning outcomes and benchmarks for WASC accreditation
- Developed and monitored a consistent and transparent application process, including the preliminary screening of applicants; follow-up with promising candidates; assigning interviews and notifying applicants of decisions

*Associate Director of Admissions, Fingerhut School of Education*

2005 - 2006

- Responsible for all functions related to student recruitment and admissions to multiple programs and joint degrees
- Increased enrollment for pilot program in Experiential Education by 100%

**Duke University, Durham, NC**

*Graduate Assistant, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs*

Summer 2005

- Researched and reported on graduate student persistence rates and trends in undergraduate disciplinary offenses

**Brailsford & Dunlavey, Washington, D.C.**

*Analyst*

2002 - 2006

- Performed user research and recommended initiatives to increase student satisfaction and persistence, achieve university goals and increase revenue for client universities
- Designed student life programs for Duke University, Dartmouth College, The University of Vermont and University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Designed facilities for University of California Riverside, University of Missouri St. Louis, Shepherd College,

- Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Trinity Valley School, and Sun Valley, Idaho
- Researched and reported on trends in higher education and local economies to universities and municipalities
- Authored new model for assessing and improving student life campus programming

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

### University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

*Visiting Scholar, School of Medicine, Division of General, Geriatric, Palliative, and Hospital Medicine* *Fall 2024*

- Created individual and group opportunities for student and community engagement, including lectures, discussions and panels
- Engaged with students at Darden School of Business, School of Medicine, School of Nursing and Echols Scholars in group and individual settings to offer mentorship and subject matter expertise
- Contributed research and scholarship in support of user-centered design, entrepreneurship and innovation for older adults

### University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

*Senior Lecturer, Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at the Marshall School of Business*

*Social Innovation Design Lab* *2012 - present*

Upper division award-winning course consistently receives highest student evaluation scores in the department. Students apply user-centered design to co-create products and services with underinvested communities; course topics include field methods, problem and opportunity identification, ideation, prototyping, revenue models, distribution channels and go-to market strategy. Foci include farmworkers in California's Central Valley; adults diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes; older adults. Part of the business minor in Social Entrepreneurship

*Social Innovation Design* *2016 – 2023*

Human-centered design applied to social impact; topics include user research methods, problem and opportunity identification, ideation, prototyping, revenue models, distribution channels and go-to market strategy. Required course in the Master of Science in Social Entrepreneurship program.

*The Entrepreneurial Advisor: Problem Solving for Early-Stage Companies* *2022 - present*

Experiential course designed to develop skills in framing and solving complex problems in young companies. Required course for Master of Science in Entrepreneurship and Innovation degree participants.

*Problem Solving and Decision Making: An Integrative Approach* *Spring 2022, Spring 2025*

Students learn qualitative and quantitative research techniques and presentation skills to analyze and respond to a challenge that a real client is facing. Required course for first year MBA students.

### University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

*Lecturer, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences*

*MDA 300x: User-Centered Design* *Spring 2021*

Students learn field methods for gathering and contextualizing user data in order to develop innovative responses to challenges that face users/consumers/constituents in Los Angeles and around the world.

*CORE 499: Interdisciplinary Solutions for Homelessness* *Spring 2019*

Students explore root causes of homelessness in the United States through site visits and work collaboratively to explore novel business responses.

### American Jewish University, Los Angeles, CA

*Lecturer in Education, Fingerhut School of Education*

EDU 434: Teaching Internship I

*2006-2007*

Instructed graduate students in human development, classroom management, reflective practice and goal-setting

*Field Supervisor, Fingerhut School of Education*

2006 - 2010

Mentored graduate education students in field placements; guided mentees in problem-solving, trouble-shooting, and best practices

## AWARDS & HONORS

- USC Mentoring Award for Faculty Mentoring Undergraduate Students 2023
- Academy of Management Innovation in Entrepreneurship Pedagogy Award 2018
- USC Panhellenic Council Professor Appreciation Award 2015
- Wexner Heritage Program Fellow 2015

## PUBLICATIONS

- *Human-Centered Design for Social Innovation Toolkit*, 1<sup>st</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> ed., 2016-2023.
- *Design Strategy for Social Innovation Toolkit for Educators*. Art Center College of Design, Mar 2016.
- "Inventure: Building Credit Scoring Tools for the Base of the Pyramid." *Harvard Business Review*, Dec 2015.
- "Trends and Benchmarking Data for the Modern Union." *The Bulletin*, May 2005.
- "Should you restructure the business enterprise?" *University Business*, March 2004.
- "Restructuring University Business Enterprises." *College Services*, Dec 2003.
- "A focus on campus life: What type of programming is right for your campus?" *The Bulletin*, Nov 2003.

## RESEARCH AND RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

*Innovation for Older Adults*

2018 – present

- Facilitate ethnographic research to gather human-centered insights towards products and services that will improve the lives of older adults

*Innovation for Adults Diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes*

2014-2017

- Facilitated ethnographic research to gather human-centered insights towards products and services that improve the lives of residents of Pacoima, California recently diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes

*Innovation for Farmworkers and Their Families*

2012-2013

- Facilitated ethnographic research to gather human-centered insights towards products and services that improve the lives of farmworkers in the San Joaquin Valley

*12 E LLC, Los Angeles, CA*

2016 – present

- User researcher and social impact consultant
- Facilitate workshops and keynote presentations on field research methodologies, problem and opportunity identification, and prototyping products and systems for social change
- Advise NGOs, civic agencies, and corporations on design for impact; develop user insights; translate research into products, marketing and investment strategies and customer/client initiatives

## INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

- USC Commencement Marshal 2023
- Marshall School of Business Grade Appeal committee member, ad hoc 2023
- USC Peaks and Professors student organization faculty advisor 2023 – present
- Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies curriculum task force member 2023
- Viterbi School of Engineering Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (TIE) liaison 2022 – present
- Min Family Challenge faculty co-lead and venture coach 2022 - present

• Blackstone Launchpad Ideas Competition invited judge	2022
• Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies faculty recruiting committee member	2022-2023
• DES 432: Special Projects in Design invited critic	2022
• Iovine and Young Development Prize Competition invited judge	2021
• USC Wrigley Sustainability Prize coach	2021
• CE 486: Innovation in Engineering and Design for Global Crises invited critic	2021
• Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies DEI Task Force founding member	2020
• USC Good Neighbors Grant Program Lead Partner with Collective REMAKE	2020
• USC Good Neighbors Grant Program Lead Partner with Mercado La Paloma	2020
• USC American Heart Association student organization faculty advisor	2019 – present
• USC Peaks and Professors faculty trip lead	2018 – present
• USC PA Program Community Project Presentations invited critic	2017 – 2021
• USC Good Neighbors Campaign, Marshall School of Business Campaign Co-Chair	2017
• Design For America student organization faculty advisor	2016 – present
• Min Family Engineering Social Entrepreneurship Challenge coach	2016 – 2018
• Maseeh Entrepreneurship Prize Competition coach	2014 – 2016
• USC Sustainability Committee	2014 – 2016
• Marshall Outreach Volunteer Entrepreneurs (MOVE) student organization faculty advisor	2012 – 2016
• Design Matters at ArtCenter College of Design invited critic	2008 – 2013

## SELECT CONFERENCE & SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

- “Turning Points.” Emcee, *TEDxUVA Student Speakers Conference*, Nov 2024.
- “Design for All Ages: Equity and the Built Environment.” Moderator, *The Center at Belvedere*, Nov 2024.
- “Medicine and Society: The Reinvention of Old Age.” Producer, *The Center at Belvedere*, Nov 2024.
- “Defining Your Purpose.” Invited speaker, UVA Batten Scholars Lunch Discussion, Nov 2024.
- “Longevity? In this Economy?! A Conversation about Aging, Capitalism, and The Good Life.” Invited faculty, *UVA Echols Scholars Fireside Chat*, Oct 2024.
- “Customers at the Centre: From Insights to Innovation.” Keynote, *Scentre Group Ambition Forum*, Sept 2024.
- “Innovation for Older Adults.” Invited speaker, *Nerd Out with The Holding Co.*, Sept 2024.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy, Sept 2024.
- “Healthy Homes Workshop.” Facilitator, *Madison County NY Department of Public Health*, Sept 2024.
- “User-Centered Design and Innovation.” Faculty, *Executive Education for Scentre Group*, June 2024.
- “User-Centered Design for Educators.” *City Year Los Angeles*, Jan 2024
- Plenary Address, *USC Aging is Now | Aging is the Future Entrepreneurial Symposium*, Sept 2023.
- “Ethics, the Future, and Telling a Different Story About Aging.” Moderator, *USC Aging is Now | Aging is the Future Entrepreneurial Symposium*, Sept 2023.
- “Course Development for User-Centered Research and Design Innovation: A Hands-On Workshop for Educators.” *Annual Meeting of Academy of Management (AOM)*, Aug 2023.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy, April 2023.
- “User-Centered Field Methods for Student Leaders.” *USC Marshall School of Business Lloyd Greif Center for Entrepreneurial Studies*, Nov 2022.
- “MVP and Prototyping.” Faculty, *ATHENA Pitch Competition*, Nov 2022.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy, Nov 2022.
- “Human Centered Design for Executives.” Faculty, *Southern California Grantmakers Evolve Executive: Leading with Purpose Network*, Oct 2022.

- “The Rise of the Plant-Based Market: Impact and Opportunity.” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, April 2022.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” *Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy*, April 2022.
- “Design Thinking.” *Foundation for Jewish Camp*. March 2022.
- “Principles of User-Centered Design.” *First 5 LA training*, Jan 2022.
- “User-Centered Design.” *Civic Leadership seminar at Brentwood School*, Nov 2021.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” *Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy*, Nov 2021.
- “Business Thinking for Ethnographers.” *EPIC2021 Tutorial*, Oct 2021.
- “Social Enterprise and User-Centered Design.” *Ethiopian Diaspora Fellows training*. Fall 2021.
- “The Future of Investing is Impact Investing.” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, June 2021.
- “Designing a Network of Care with Children and Families at the Center.” *F5LA Aces Aware convening*, Apr 2021.
- “Founder Hour.” *USC OWNIT Women’s Leadership Summit*, Apr 2021
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” *Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy*, Apr 2021.
- “The High Cost of Low Prices: a conversation with three founders on disrupting the personal care industry.” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Apr 2021.
- “Design for Innovation: Problem-Solving with Human-Centered Design.” *Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism board retreat*, Jan 2021.
- “Systems, Equity and Technology of the Future: What can art, anthropology and space exploration teach us about inclusive design?” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Jan 2021.
- “Innovating through a Mindset of Abundance.” *Foundation for Jewish Camp*, Dec 2020.
- “Introduction to Human-Centered Design for Community Leaders,” Keynote, *URJ National Association for Temple Administrators Annual Conference*, Dec 2020.
- “Can creativity be taught?” *Moderator, Lunchtime with the Lab*, May 2020.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” *Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy*, Apr 2020.
- “Design for Social Impact: Problem-Solving with User-Centered Design.” *Southern California Grantmakers*, Jan 2020.
- “Designing Congregational Experiences,” *URJ Biennial*, Dec 2019.
- “Capitalism, Credit and Race.” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Nov 2019.
- “Messaging Your Mission: When What We Value Is Hard To Sell.” *Athena Women’s Entrepreneurship Summit*, Nov 2019.
- “Social Enterprise and User-Centered Design.” *Ethiopian Diaspora Fellows training*. Fall 2019.
- “Why is Toilet Paper More Compelling Than Democracy?” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Sep 2019.
- “Human-Centered Design for Public Administrators.” *Guest lecturer in the MPA program at the George Mason University Schar School of Government and Policy*, Mar 2019.
- “Media, Impact & Inclusion: What role can media play in social impact?” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Mar 2019.
- “Transforming Risk into Opportunity: Redesigning Palliative Care for the Underserved.” Keynote, *BU Institute for Health System Innovation & Policy Project TRIO Working Summit*, Nov 2018.
- “Purpose Driven Business.” *Athena Women’s Entrepreneurship Summit*, Nov 2018.
- “The Future of Food: How should we think about hunger, justice and environmental sustainability in a changing business world?” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Nov 2018.
- “Can technology make us saner? Mental health, society, and how radically affordable technologies can make

mental health treatment more scalable and successful.” Moderator, *Jacobson Family Sustainable Impact Lecture Series at the USC Marshall School of Business*, Sep 2018.

- “Thinking Like An Entrepreneur To Increase Your Social Impact.” *Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Council*, May 2018.
- “Human-Centered Design.” Board of Rabbis of Southern California’s High Holy Days conference, Sep 2017
- “Social Enterprise and User-Centered Design.” *Ethiopian Diaspora Fellows training*. Fall 2017.
- “The Business of Change.” *Working Californians Social Innovation Summit*, Apr 2016
- “Design Thinking Practicum.” *Ashoka U Exchange*, Mar 2016.
- “The Business of Change.” *Working Californians Social Innovation Summit*, Apr 2015
- “Design thinking for social innovation: A hands-on workshop for educators.” *VentureWell Open*, Mar 2015.
- “Social Innovation Panel Discussion.” *Pardee RAND Graduate School L.A. Policy Symposium*, 2014.
- “Theory and Practice in Social Innovation Education.” *Claremont McKenna College*, Feb 2014
- Conversation with Sir Ken Robinson, *Imaginase*, 2013.
- “Conversations on emerging issues in social entrepreneurship.” *Partnership for Change Conference at The National Norwegian Opera and Ballet, Oslo, Norway*, Mar 2011.

## GRANTS

- VentureWell Course and Program Award 2015
- VentureWell Course and Program Award 2012
- USC Office of the Provost Fund for Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching (FIUT) Award 2011

## LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Seismic Capital Advisory Board member 2024 – present
- EPIC 2020 – present
- Academy of Management; Innovation in Pedagogy Selection Committee Member 2019 – present
- Swipe Out Hunger Advisory Board member 2019 – 2023
- Green Dot United Parents and Students Advisory Board member 2017 – present
- QuestionBox Board of Directors member 2015 – 2018
- LimmudLA Conference Vice Chair and Volunteer Recruitment Chair 2007 – 2010

## CERTIFICATIONS

- VitalSmarts *Influencer* 2017
- IDEO U *Leading for Creativity* 2016
- USC Department of Human Resources *Coaching as Supervision* 2015

## EDUCATION

### University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

B.A. in Religious Studies

Student Council President • Lawn Resident

B.A. in American Studies

Raven Society • Omicron Delta Kappa • Echols Scholar

### American Jewish University, Los Angeles, CA

M.A. in Education

B.Lit. in Hebrew Letters