

Krisztina “Z” Holly
USC Vice Provost for Innovation
Executive Director, USC Stevens Institute for Innovation



Krisztina “Z” Holly is an innovation expert who lives, works and plays at the intersection of entrepreneurship, technology, design, and academia. As vice provost for innovation at the University of Southern California and executive director for the USC Stevens Institute for Innovation, she leads a team of 30 to spearhead programs that help faculty and students in all disciplines make impact with their ideas.

USC is pioneering a new interdisciplinary approach to innovation. The USC Stevens Institute for innovation is a university-wide resource in the office of the Provost that works with all of USC's College and 17 professional schools to help transfer the most exciting ideas to market -- whether as startups, nonprofits, new products, or licenses -- and to develop skills for lifelong innovators. She is also the curator for the first-ever independently organized TED event, the TEDx USC “Ideas Empowered” conference.

Holly previously served as the founding executive director of MIT's Deshpande Center for Technological Innovation. In the first three years, the Center provided \$5M in grants, engaged over 250 faculty and students and 100 investors and entrepreneurs, and spawned nine startup companies that have raised over \$100M in capital from top-tier venture capital firms. She helped develop two oversubscribed MIT courses in innovation and design.

Holly earned her master's and bachelor's degrees in mechanical engineering from MIT, with concentrations in design and optics. Her career as an innovator began at the MIT Media Lab, on the team that developed the world's first computer-generated, full-color reflection hologram. She also designed a robotic weld-seam-tracking system for the NASA space shuttle's main engine and created a head-eye robot for vision research at the MIT Artificial Intelligence laboratory.

In 1991, Holly began a career as a serial entrepreneur when she and two teammates founded Stylus Innovation and created the first Windows-based computer telephony development tool called Visual Voice. Stylus was acquired in 1996 by Artisoft, Inc. After two and a half years of documentary production in science and education at start-up RiverRun Media, Holly joined new search engine venture Direct Hit Technologies. After Direct Hit was acquired by Ask Jeeves in 2000, she stayed on and coordinated a company-wide initiative to convert its services model into an enterprise software product.

Holly is a frequent lecturer and has been contributing columnist to *BusinessWeek*, the *Huffington Post*, and *Mountain Bike* magazine. She has been active in many non-profit roles, serving as a frequent panelist, judge, and board member for organizations such as the National Science Foundation, *BusinessWeek*, the Lemelson/MIT prize program, MIT Enterprise Forum, the MIT \$100K entrepreneurship competition, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association.

Holly is an avid backcountry skier, mountain biker, and surfer. Whether she's traveling abroad or closer to her home in Los Angeles, she seeks out “authentic” food and adventure.

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