Stephen Bradforth earned his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley and carried out postdoctoral research at the University of Chicago. He joined the Department of Chemistry at the University of Southern California (USC) in 1996. He has served as department chair and is currently USC Dornsife Divisional Dean for Physical Sciences and Mathematics. As a physical chemist, his lab designs experiments to gain a deeper understanding of how the inter-connected motions of molecules impact chemical reactions in complex but frequently encountered environments – such as the aqueous milieu of cells or in functional molecular materials. His research applies ultrafast laser techniques to address contemporary scientific challenges from solar energy conversion, damage to DNA and cancer nanomedicine. In education, he has been active in recent national efforts, spearheaded by the Research Corporation for Scientific Advancement and the Association of American Universities, to reform undergraduate STEM education in research-intensive universities.

His honors include David and Lucile Packard Fellowship in Science and Engineering, a Cottrell Scholarship from the Research Corporation for Scientific Advancement; he is a Fellow of the American Physical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the Royal Society of Chemistry.