

Orientation and Testing Services 2010-11 Department Blueprint (end-of-year performance)

***Mission** – The Office of Orientation and Testing Services guides successful transitions, whether for new freshman and transfer students and their families who are entering the University of South Carolina, or for prospective and current students and the community at large who are seeking entry into certificate, professional, or graduate programs. We aim to increase awareness and understanding of the many tools and resources available to all of our constituents through providing educationally meaningful Orientation programs, running a fair and high-value testing environment for all candidates, and maintaining the highest ethical practices and quality for all Orientation and Testing programs.*

UNIT OVERVIEW

The Office of Orientation and Testing is headed by Director Harrison Greenlaw, who has served in his position for more than 25 years. Other full-time staff members include Emily Davis, Assistant Director; Jack Turner, Testing Coordinator; and Traci Dominick, Office Manager. The office also employs several undergraduate students, usually current or former Orientation Leaders, as office support staff during the week.

The office holds two E accounts and is funded via two revenue-generating sources: 1) Orientation programs in Summer, Spring, and Fall and 2) computerized or paper-based tests administered throughout the year. The testing component of the office has seen the most growth over the years, as it originally included only placement testing activity for entering students. In the late 1990s, we became an authorized computerized testing center through the Prometric company to deliver computer-based GMAT, GRE, PRAXIS I, and TOEFL exams. We also administered paper-based Miller Analogies Tests during the week as well as several weekend exams such as the MCAT, LSAT, GRE-Subject, PRAXIS II, and others. Currently, we administer computerized GRE, PRAXIS I and II, MCAT, and Miller Analogies Tests. In addition, we offer distance education proctored exam services and serve as a “closed” CLEP exam center (meaning those exams are only administered to USC students). Weekend exams are still given, but the frequency of those has declined as more exams move to a computerized format; with the exception of the MCAT, no efforts have been made to add these exams to our offerings, either because doing so would violate the terms of our Prometric agreement or because testing demand simply isn’t high enough to justify the requisite changes to our equipment, scheduling, staffing, training, or space allocation.

On the other hand, we are always cognizant of how we might increase our computerized testing revenue to support other office areas. Placement testing activity used to be covered by University A funds, but as this practice ended in 2009, responsibility for those placement tests has gradually shifted directly to the departments of Mathematics and Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. However, we maintain contact with those departments as Orientation remains the primary source of information about placement testing for new students, and their completion of those tests prior to attending Orientation is critical for a successful academic advisement session at Orientation.

CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT

Core functions of the Office of Orientation and Testing include:

- Providing **Orientation programs** at several points during the year for students who enter USC during various terms (Summer I or II, Summer Orientation for freshman and transfer students entering in the Fall, Parent Orientation in conjunction with Summer Orientation for the parents of those freshmen and transfers, August Orientation for all students entering in Fall who did not attend a Summer Orientation, November for transfer students entering in Spring, and January for transfers or freshmen entering in the Spring.)

As Admissions increases the entering class size each year, Orientation must be prepared to accommodate those groups at Orientation, either through increasing the size of each day's group or by increasing the number of days Orientation is offered. So far, we have done a little bit of both, increasing the number of Summer Orientation days by 4 (three for freshmen and one for transfers), adding the November Transfer Orientation session, and splitting the August and January transfer sessions across 2 days (one for Arts and Sciences only, one for all other majors). This has meant not only hiring more student staff, but paying that staff for more time. In addition, the lengthening of Summer Orientation has caused that program to spill over into the Summer II session, which adds complications to securing event space and academic advisor participation. Further, this time shift possibly affects our Orientation Leader candidate pool, since students are not able to participate in taking any summer courses while serving as an Orientation Leader.

Implementing Orientation programs takes significant collaboration with other Division units, most notably Undergraduate Admissions, University Housing, and the Registrar to provide complete and consistent "pre-enrollment" information to new students and their families in assisting them to establish their USC identities through VIP in order to complete all applications and deposits in a timely manner. University Technology Services is another important partner in this endeavor. Also, because academic advisement and course scheduling is such a large part of the Orientation process, and because of the math and foreign language placement tests that should be completed prior to Orientation, cooperation with and among the academic units is a huge key to the success of Orientation.

- Operating **computer-based testing** at a consistent level. Maintenance of the various computer equipment necessary to successfully function as a computerized testing center requires constant vigilance and prior planning, especially since we are not in direct control should that equipment malfunction or need replacement.

Departmental Goal 1 – Contribute to student recruitment and retention by offering comprehensive Orientation programs in Summer, Fall, and Spring.

Link – Division Goal No. 1: Teaching and Learning; Outcome A: Essential programs are effectively provided

Analysis of Goal Achievement: The Orientation Leader staff ably assisted the approximately 5360 students (4429 freshmen, 931 transfers) and 5175 parents registered for Summer Orientation programs; August Orientation welcomed an additional 467 students (127 freshmen, 340 transfers). New this year was an added session in November for transfer students accepted for the Spring semester, attended by 241 students. Although it was challenging to work around Orientation Leader class schedules and find academic space (as, unlike our other Orientation sessions, this program took place while classes were still in session) this greatly alleviated pressure on the January sessions, attended by 441 students (including 87 freshmen) over 3 days just prior to the start of classes.

In response to the growing student population as well as the increased demand by academic areas, this year's Orientation Leader staff has increased from 24 to 26 (22 new members and 4 returners from the previous staff). The applicant pool decreased slightly, from 144 to 134, but there were far fewer incomplete applications submitted, which may mean that early efforts to educate prospective candidates allowed them to make better decisions about self-selecting out of the process. During the spring training period, one student removed himself from the team, so now the staff numbers 25, including 13 males and 12 females with majors in every academic college/school except Social Work, Nursing, and Pharmacy. Staff training began on January 18 (delayed one week because of the weather) and concluded on April 19. Staff will reconvene on May 22 and participate in one week of "intensive training" before Summer Orientation 2011 officially begins on May 27. As our program cycle straddles the school year, results from Summer Orientation exit surveys will be recorded on the 2011-2012 departmental blueprint.

USC Orientation did NOT participate in the Student Voice national benchmarking study in the fall of 2010 because it was determined that last year's results did not yield any helpful information. However, this may be reconsidered in light of recent discussions of institution-wide strategic planning necessitating benchmarking data comparing both peers and best practices.

Initiative 1-a: Select and train an Orientation Leader staff that is representative of the total University population and who will be successful spokespersons for the University

Key Performance Indicators

1. Increase recruitment efforts to include social media and outreach to all academic areas, especially underrepresented majors

Link—Division Goal No. 6: Diversity

2. The Orientation Leader training program should include both factual knowledge as well as opportunity for reflection, assimilation, and integration

Link—Division Goal No. 3: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement; Outcome C: SA/AS programs and services facilitate scholarship of teaching, learning, and student development

Initiative 1-b: Ensure the most current and relevant campus information is being disseminated effectively and in the most appropriate manner

Link—Division Goal No. 2: Quality of Life; Outcome E: Facilities, programs, and services meet the needs and expectations of students and other constituents

Key Performance Indicators

1. Communicate with faculty and staff in academic units as well as administrative staff in other departments
2. Evaluation results are anticipated to demonstrate high satisfaction levels with Orientation programs.

Initiative 1-c: Provide parents and students with an early and easy explanation of tuition and fees

Key Performance Indicators

1. Provision of a clear and concise cost sheet at Orientation.
2. Bursar's Office is replacing old PowerPoint with a new Prezi to include video and voiceover so that the same information is presented each day in a consistent manner explaining costs and payment options
3. Orientation Leaders are trained regarding the best explanation of costs/fees.

Departmental Goal 2 – Offer an easily accessible, cost-effective Placement Testing program which benefits students by placing them into appropriate level coursework.

Link – Division Goal No. 1: Teaching & Learning

Analysis of Goal Achievement: Testing in French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish is offered for students prior to Orientation. The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures offers the test on a periodic basis throughout the Spring and Fall Semesters to allow currently enrolled students and students who miss testing at Orientation to test. Due to funding concerns, it is expected that regional campuses will continue to use the previous version of the test or create their own version(s) instead of converting to the test used at the Columbia campus.

The number of technical problems related to the Math Placement Test has been reduced, so that student scores are posted to the University mainframe in a timely manner. To date, there have only been two students of the entire testing population who have not had their scores update in the required timeframe. The success rate for the Math B (Algebra) test is 76%, while the success rate for the Math A (Precalculus) test exceeds 90%.

Initiative 2-a: Maintain and improve, if possible, the new CBT Foreign Language Placement Test.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Work with the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to improve access to and delivery of CBT Foreign Language Placement Tests to students during Orientation.
2. Support attempts to by the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to promote use of the new placement test at USC branch campuses.

Initiative 2-b: Continue offering the Math Placement Test in a high-quality manner.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Greater than ninety (90) percent of students taking the Math Placement Test will receive a score report immediately or via VIP within 24 hours.
2. Monitor course placement recommendations to ensure validity, so that no less than seventy-five (75) percent of students who follow placement recommendations complete the Math course they are placed into with a grade of C or better.

Departmental Goal 3 – Provide a high quality standardized testing program (Computer Based Testing and Paper Based Testing) to the University and community and ensure that students are aware of testing opportunities on campus.

Link – Division Goal No. 4: Service Excellence

Analysis of Goal Achievement: Testing fliers and updated schedules are provided to the Test Prep service when they are created, and replenished as necessary. With the release of the rGRE in August 2011, new information about GRE program will need to be disseminated. ETS is already preparing media resources for test centers, which will be utilized as possible in communicating programmatic changes to students, staff, and faculty. CLEP is increasingly visible on campus, and more students than ever are taking CLEP tests and submitting CLEP score reports to USC. All required materials for the NCTA certification have been submitted and USC is awaiting its official site visit.

Initiative 3-a: Improve awareness of Testing programs among faculty and staff on campus, beyond the Placement Testing program.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Work with Continuing Education – Non-Credit Programs to ensure that students who take their test preparation courses are aware of which tests are offered on campus, especially by providing Testing publications to the Test Prep office.
2. Promote the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) among campus faculty and staff by providing advisors with information regarding exams offered by USC Testing.
3. Promote the College Level Exam Program (CLEP) to undergraduate advisors to ensure awareness of the program among students. Work with financial aid to promote CLEP as a form of financial aid.

Initiative 3-b: Ensure that USC Testing continues to be a leader for best practices among college testing centers.

Link—Division Goal No. 5: Recognition and Visibility; Outcome A: SA/AS supports and encourages development toward campus and national visibility and expertise

Key Performance Indicators

1. Successful completion of the new National College Testing Association (NCTA) test center certification program by participating in the pilot study for said program.

Departmental Goal 4 – Provide excellent communication and timely information for Orientation and Testing clients as well as the University community

Link – Division Goal No. 4: Service Excellence; Outcome A:SA/AS develops and disseminates high-quality publications, professional development events, and resources on student transition, learning, and success to both internal and external constituents

Analysis of Goal Achievement: The ability to make simple text changes to the Orientation and Testing web site without having to go through Division IT has proven to be very valuable. The new University-wide template for web pages has not yet been implemented, but should provide further opportunity for clarity and ease of use. An office Facebook page is being tested, allowing another means to inform and connect with campus partners. We are currently working with UTS to evaluate the online registration form for Orientation, found on VIP. Online registration opened on February 24, one week earlier than last year's March 2 opening.

Initiative 4-a: Enhance web presence, effectiveness, and accessibility

Key Performance Indicators

1. Staff participation in webinars and other professional development opportunities to learn about site design
2. Regular review of web content and design
3. Track web usage/ search terms to determine areas of greatest interest and/or need for improvement