

Planning Blueprint 2010-2011  
Year-End Performance  
Pre-Professional Advising

## **Pre-Professional Advising**

### **Mission Statement**

*The Office of Pre-Professional advising provides guidance to pre-professional students through productive engagement in educational, service, and career development activities related to their chosen profession.*

### **Vision/Goal Statement**

*The Office of Pre-Professional Advising provides a service that supports preparation for competitive application to professional school. The office promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, and characteristics necessary for student success in a competitive admission process and career.*

### **Unit Overview**

The Office of Pre-Professional Advising (OPPA) is staffed by three full-time employees: director of the office, a student advisor/program coordinator, and an office manager. The majority of the funding for the office is A fund appropriations from the state (70%) and the remaining 30% is generated by revenue-producing activities.

The OPPA was created in 1996 by the Office of the Provost. Inquiries and complaints from students, parents and medical school personnel about the need for the service led to the establishment of a committee that researched the issue and made suggestions. The office was created as a result of the committee's suggestions. Initially staffed by two full-time employees, the office's growth and level of activities led to the hiring of a third employee, a student advisor/program coordinator. The number of students served has increased every year along with the number of services and activities.

So far this year, the office has been successful in meeting its mission and that of the University. The attendance at several important events has increased significantly by employing new marketing techniques, while the quality of the events has remained excellent, as reported by the attendees in event evaluations. The services and activities of the office, therefore, are benefitting more students and remaining high quality. One factor in this success is the hiring of a new advisor who has a background in public relations and marketing, but who also is an expert event-planner, and connects well with students. Success in achieving core functions are evidenced by the increased number of students served, positive evaluations from events, and constructive comments made by students.

The areas of improvement for the OPPA continue to be related to the office website. Although additions and updates have been made, the website lacks user-appeal and use of its potential in data collection, event registration, and student recognition. The most helpful component of the website is the "Ask an Advisor" option for visitors, which is frequently used to by students and parents, and allows the OPPA to get feedback about services and events. The office will benefit from the expertise of Student Affairs' Technology Services, whose work with the OPPA is slated to begin January 25, 2011.

## Contextual Statement

The core functions of the OPPA revolve around assisting USC students and alumni synthesize their experiences at USC and successfully compete for professional school acceptance. The OPPA helps students develop and cultivate the necessary activities and characteristics by:

- Advising appropriate educational preparation
- Providing activities that enhance students' values clarification related to career choice
- Assisting in identifying appropriate service, leadership, and observation activities to enhance students' undergraduate experience
- Guiding students to effectively highlight their achievements and experiences through reflection and self-inquiry.

The number of students served by the OPPA has consistently grown over the past years. Office visits have increased from 1800 in 2008-2009 to 2,600 in 2009-2010. So far this year, 2010-2011, the number of office visits is 1260. The OPPA is expecting numbers similar to last year. The large increase between 2009 and 2010 is due in part to better tracking methods of student visitors. Electronic advising has surged at the same time, with this year's count at 1770. These numbers reflect only the physical office visits and email advising. Student contacts, through other events and activities, and telephone calls are not included.

The majority of OPPA advisees are pre-med (65%), followed by pre-law (25 %) and pre-health (10%). The group that has increased most over the past three years is pre-law. The professional school application trends at USC typically follow the national trends regarding number of applicants from year to year. As the number of ABA approved law school applicants has grown slightly since 2009, so has the number of USC applicants. For medical and dental school applicants, the national and USC numbers remained relatively unchanged.

One situation that will positively affect the work of the OPPA is the replacement advisor hired in August, 2010. The new advisor's skills in marketing and event-planning will improve the office's visibility and the efficiency of programming and reaching students.

The OPPA worked closely with University 101 to develop a new course, "Synthesizing the Sciences," which helps pre-med students review for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT). The popularity of the course was well above expectations and the current course has surpassed the first (last spring semester) in the number of enrolled students. The course is also a welcome revenue-generator for the office. Additionally, the National Resource Center's study of the course's effectiveness yielded positive and significant results, which are discussed more thoroughly in the analysis of Goal # 3 regarding assessment.

One negative situation involves the significantly stricter policy at Palmetto Health regarding their doctors' accessibility for career observation. The OPPA can no longer send students directly to offices of doctors associated with Palmetto Health, as has been done in the past. Students must now complete paperwork for the Workforce Development office of the hospital system prior to the observation. This has created a hurdle in an otherwise uncomplicated system and has the potential to deter students from participating. The OPPA collaborated with University Technology Services to devise a system that would suit the needs of USC students and Palmetto

Health. The requests of Workforce Development were fulfilled in total, but students are experiencing difficulty in obtaining shadowing opportunities, still. This is further discussed in the analysis of Goal # 1.

## **Goal Statements and Analyses**

### **Department Goal No. 1 - Enhance pre-professional student engagement, academic success, personal growth, and career development and independence.**

**Analysis of Goal No. 1** – The initiatives in Goal No. 1 have been successful, involving far more student participation than in past years. Student participation in living and learning communities allows for the development of support networks, camaraderie, and integrative learning. The OPPA has worked with Housing for several years offering communities for pre-med and pre-law students. Discussions with housing representatives have resulted in changes for next year. The two pre-med communities will combine to form one large community and the pre-law community is being expanded in an attempt to capture more interest. It will become the Law, Justice and Politics Community and will be marketed to a larger audience.

The pre-med and pre-law orientations in August drew the largest crowds ever, with over 200 students at the pre-med orientation and 65 at the pre-law orientation. Class visits, drop-in hours, and the listserv are all on target to reach or exceed the KPI's.

Application workshops yielded 86 pre-med students, surpassing the KPI, and 22 pre-dental students, falling short of the KPI. This year, the OPPA offered fewer workshops in hopes of having more students attend each workshop, since they are time-intensive. The idea worked for pre-med applicants, but next year more pre-dental workshops will be offered.

The law school fair was another success, drawing representatives from over 50 law schools, 25 more than ever before. The past two years have seen reductions in travel, which translated in fewer law school representatives, but this year has proven different.

The MedView program has been reviewed and revised at the request of Palmetto Health's Workforce Development office. Extra paperwork and steps have been added to shadow in physicians' offices that are part of Palmetto Health. So far, this process has been frustrating and ineffective for students. They complain that the extra steps are problematic and that the staff at Workforce Development does not respond to the shadowing requests. All of Workforce Development's requests have been fulfilled by the OPPA and problems still exist. The MedView shadowing program has been one of the most successful and useful activities for pre-med and pre-health students, which makes these issues all the more trying.

The OPPA continues to work closely with local hospitals and the Free Medical Clinic (FMC) to place USC students in their volunteer programs. Representatives from four hospitals and the FMC have come to campus to share opportunities with students during the PACES camp and for pre-med community meetings.

In an effort to reach students early, OPPA staff has made presentations to many classes on campus: nine science classes, four political science classes, and three criminal justice classes, for a total of approximately 2,000 student contacts,

**Initiative - Coordinate pre-med and pre-law communities with Housing.**

- **KPI** – Explore the option of combining the pre-med upper-class and freshmen communities by.
- **KPI** – Explore the option of widening the audience for pre-law community to more students.
- **KPI** - Maintain monthly meetings of all communities.
- **KPI** - Demonstrate end-of-year student satisfaction rate of at least 80%.
- **KPI** - Each community will coordinate and host a large-scale event involving community professionals.

**Initiative - Provide orientation seminar for pre-professional freshmen.**

- **KPI** - Send email invitations to pre-med and pre-law students by July 15.
- **KPI** - Distribute orientation information on Scholars Day.
- **KPI** - Attendance of at least 80 pre-med and 40 pre-law students at respective orientations.
- **KPI** - Include presentations by medical school/law school faculty.
- **KPI** - Include presentations by representatives of appropriate student organizations.

**Initiative - Visit classes typically populated with pre-med and pre-law students and present to other interested groups.**

- **KPI** - Provide information about services to at least 1,000 students (live).
- **KPI** - Presentations at six science classes.
- **KPI** - Presentations at three political science/criminal justice classes.
- **KPI** - Provide information to Student Orientation and Testing for summer orientations.
- **KPI** – Present to other groups, on and off-campus, as requested.

**Initiative - Provide drop-in hours and maintain listserv to communicate with students.**

- **KPI** - 2,000 student office visits throughout academic year.

- **KPI** – Maintain pre-med listserv of 2,000 and pre-law of 500 students.
- **KPI** - Offer 20 hours of pre-veterinary advising by visiting vet.
- **KPI** – Maintain pre-dental listserv of 40 students.
- **KPI** – Maintain 80% satisfaction rating on StudentVoice OPPA satisfaction survey.

**Initiative - Advise and guide student groups.**

- **KPI** - Serve as advisor to Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA).
- **KPI** - Serve as liaison to Pre-Dental Club.
- **KPI** - Serve as liaison to Alpha Epsilon Delta (AED).
- **KPI** - Serve as advisor to Gamma Beta Phi.
- **KPI** - Serve as advisor to Association for Minority Pre-health Students (AMPS).

**Initiative - Provide assistance with the medical, dental, and law school application process.**

- **KPI** - Present medical school application workshop to 80 students.
- **KPI** - Present dental school application workshops to 30 students.
- **KPI** - Present law school application workshop to 30 students.
- **KPI** - Workshops will be evaluated and will maintain at least 80% student satisfaction rating of the students' increased understanding of the application process.
- **KPI** – Maintain 80% satisfaction rating on StudentVoice OPPA satisfaction survey.
- **KPI** - Provide information about how to write a personal statement to 150 students via website, live presentation, or office visit.
- **KPI** - Review personal statements of 100 students for content and interest and offer comments and suggestions.
- **KPI** - Perform mock interviews for 80 students and offer comments and/or suggestions for improvement.

**Initiative - Host pre-professional admissions representatives, to meet with USC students.**

- **KPI** - Host law school fair with at least 20 law school representatives.
- **KPI** – Coordinate informational events for students with admissions representatives.
- **KPI** - Attendance of at least 200 students at fairs.
- **KPI** - Collect written evaluations from program representatives regarding the value of their visit to campus.

- **KPI** – Make changes to fairs based on representative and student feedback.

**Initiative - Promote MedView shadowing program to students.**

- **KPI** - Send information to students via listserv and flyers four times during the academic year.
- **KPI** - 100 students will have shadowed physicians/dentists through the MedView program.
- **KPI** – Update and confirm physicians and dentists on list.
- **KPI** – Add HIPAA training video to OPPA website for students to view.

**Initiative – Add other health care professions to MedView shadowing program.**

- **KPI** – Add five physician assistants to the shadowing list.
- **KPI** – Add three physical therapists to the list.

**Initiative - Continue to work collaboratively with local hospitals and physicians' offices to provide community service and experiential learning opportunities for pre-medical students.**

- **KPI** - Meet with volunteer coordinators at local hospitals and the Free Medical Clinic.
- **KPI** – Educate students about community service opportunities through office publications and workshops.

**Department Goal No. 2 – Encourage students to engage in collaborative activities with other students, faculty, staff, and community members to enrich their learning environment.**

**Analysis of Goal No. 2** – Pre-Professional students must demonstrate their interest, motivation, and varied life experiences to admissions committees, while also confirming their own commitment to a chosen profession. By interacting with faculty, staff and other students in varied experiences, students can clarify their goals and gain from exposure to others' ideas, knowledge, cultures, attitudes, and beliefs. Faculty has been involved with both of the OPPA's orientations, presenting information and speaking casually with students post-orientation. The pre-law Meet and Greet held in October allowed 60 pre-law students the opportunity to hear from and discuss issues individually with five members of the Midlands legal and political community.

Pre-med and pre-law students have also interacted personally with directors of admissions from the USC School of Law, MUSC, and the USC School of Medicine when the directors visited campus.

The UNIV 401 course: Synthesizing the Sciences has increased in registration from 77 last year to 85 this year. The course was revised significantly using the course evaluations from last year. New instructors were hired, the registration process has been smoother, and the students have far fewer questions this year as the OPPA has incorporated all instructions for the students in the class syllabus. The other favorable result worth noting is a study done by the National Resource Center, examining the effectiveness of the Spring, 2010 MCAT review course. The results of the study are indicated in the analysis of Goal # 3 regarding assessment.

**Initiative - Encourage student/faculty interaction.**

- **KPI** – Have faculty present at orientations.
- **KPI** - Invite faculty to other social and academic events.
- **KPI** - Continue to refer students to Office of Undergraduate Research.
- **KPI** - Continue to refer qualified students to Office of Fellowships and Scholar Programs.

**Initiative - Continue to work with academic advisors and other campus programs.**

- **KPI** – Send informational letter or e-mail to science advisors.
- **KPI** - Send letter to academic departments outlining services of the office.
- **KPI** – Continue referring students appropriately to Career Center, Cross Campus Advising, and the Study Abroad office.

**Initiative – Offer a spring MCAT review course taught by USC science faculty in conjunction with University 101.**

- **KPI** – Faculty advisory committee will review and approve the content of the course and nominate instructors.
- **KPI** – Course will be planned and coordinated by December 1.
- **KPI** – 40 students will register for the course.
- **KPI** – The course will generate \$5,000 net profit for the OPPA.
- **KPI** – MCAT scores will be maintained and used for course effectiveness assessment, by the University 101 office and OPPA.
- **KPI** - Course will be revised based on student and faculty feedback.

### **Departmental Goal No 3 - Develop and practice methods of assessment that guide improvements and enhance student success and satisfaction.**

**Analysis of Goal No. 3** – Assessment has been valuable for the OPPA in regards to reviewing data and comments and revising programs accordingly. The Pre-medical Academic and Career Exploration Series (PACES) summer camp for incoming freshmen is designed to expose students to the medical field and the realities of preparing for medical school. In an assessment of their knowledge about preparation for medical school and the medical education process, the students were given a pre and post-test. The results of the two tests were compared and found to be extremely statistically significant in the students' knowledge between the pre and post tests, with a P value of .0001. The PACES camp helps prepare students for the rigorous preparation for medical school. More than that, the camp is regarded highly by the participants who gave comments such as, “would recommend it highly,” “feel more prepared,” “Sydney did an awesome job,” “this camp was great,” “gladly go again,” “glad I got to have this experience.” Based on feedback, the camp will be extended by one day next summer and will include more hands-on health care activities and career observation.

The other significant assessment complete this year was the National Resource Center's examination of the effectiveness of the Spring, 2010 MCAT review course. The results are as follows:

- Students who participated in U401 had significantly higher real MCAT scores compared to students who did not take U401.
- 77.1% of students who participated in the practice tests in U401 had significantly higher real MCAT test scores compared to the average of their practice tests.
- Students who took the MCAT prior to their enrollment in U401 increased their real MCAT score from 21.5 to 22.0, though the increase was non-significant. This suggests that students who have a greater propensity to score higher on the MCAT are more likely to enroll into U401. This hypothesis is supported by the significant discrepancy in real MCAT scores between students who enrolled in U401 and students who did not. This would suggest that the students who would benefit most from U401 might not be enrolling in the course.
- There was no significant pattern between SAT scores and MCAT scores.

#### **Initiative - Develop outcomes assessments for PACES camp and application workshops.**

- **KPI** - Administer a pre and post test assessing knowledge attainment of important preparation and application concepts for PACES students.
- **KPI** - Administer an outcomes survey at application workshops.

- **KPI** – Make changes to evaluated programs based on feedback attained.
- **KPI** – Review evaluations from law fair representatives and revise fair accordingly.

**Departmental Goal No. 4 – Provide excellent service for other essential activities.**

**Goal No. 4 Analysis** – The OPPA realizes the importance of prompt submission of supplemental records for applicants to professional school. This most often includes handling the letters of evaluation for students, then submitting them to their respective schools, confidentially. This process is streamlined and handled with great efficiency within two to five days of a request.

The May, 2011 APEX summer camp hosted 10 students, which is only half the number of students from 2010. The lower number of attendees might be related to the timing of the camp or the on-line registration, which are the only two factors different from last year. The camp will likely be offered only in June next year. The camp itself was a success, with student evaluations indicating a high level of helpfulness and satisfaction. Some of the comments on evaluations included, “I’m really glad I came to this camp. I feel much more prepared for the application process. Thank you for being so kind and helpful,” “Loved this camp. Really helped me realize some facts about med school,” “I am so glad I decided to come to this camp because it helped me to realize things about myself and the application process to medical school that will help me out so much.” The second APEX camp has not yet taken place.

The OPPA Parents Weekend Open House hosted 26 parents and family members of pre-professional students. This will be an annual event and an opportunity to keep parents informed.

**Initiative - Coordinate annual distribution of USC student s’ confidential letters of evaluation to professional schools.**

- **KPI** – Maintain confidential folders for students’ letters of evaluation for professional school application.
- **KPI** - Letters are sent to medical schools within five days of a request.
- **KPI** - Identify changes made to the procedures for letters of evaluation at the beginning of each application cycle.
- **KPI** – Determine the most cost-effective and efficient way to process letters of evaluation.
- **KPI** - Maintain letter folders for four years.

**Initiative - Coordinate APEX summer camp**

- **KPI** – Market camp to pre-med students nationwide.
- **KPI** – Host 20 students.
- **KPI** – Collaborate with USC School of Medicine, Palmetto Health, and USC Career Center to provide realistic experiences for students pursuing medical education.
- **KPI** - Assess participant satisfaction and maintain rating of 80%.
- **KPI** – Generate net profit of \$6,000.

**Initiative – Provide information to parents of students and prospective students about the services of the OPPA.**

- **KPI** – Host open house during Parents’ Week-end.
- **KPI** – Provide information about the services of the office to parents of prospective student visitors.

**Departmental Goal No. 5** - Assist in the recruitment of high-quality and diverse students to the University.

**Analysis of Goal No. 5** – The open houses and other recruitment events allow the OPPA to inform prospective students and parents about the unique services of the office. Representatives from the OPPA are always present at these functions and are well-received by visitors. The OPPA is frequently visited by prospective students sent by the Visitor Center and prospective student-athletes from the Athletic Department.

The PACES camp in July, 2010 was successful, as was indicated in the analysis of Goal #3, regarding assessment. There were 40 students in attendance.

**Initiative - Provide presentations/office presence upon request for Carolina Scholars, McNair Scholars, Junior Preview, and fall & spring open houses.**

- **KPI** - Present at all of the above as requested.
- **KPI** - Distribute office literature to prospective students and parents.

**Initiative - Collaborate with Visitors Center to meet with prospective students.**

- **KPI** - Track Number of students referred from Visitor Center.
- **KPI** - Accommodate 95% of meeting requests.

**Initiative - Offer Pre-medical Academic and Career Exploration Series (PACES) summer camp to incoming pre-med freshmen.**

- **KPI** - Conduct the camp for 40 students, summer 2009.
- **KPI** - Maintain student satisfaction rating of at least 80%.
- **KPI** - Demonstrate learning outcome attainment in 80% of students.
- **KPI** – Provide medical exposure to the participants.

**Initiative - Advise student organization Association of African American Pre-med Students.**

- **KPI**- Maintain membership in organization.
- **KPI** – Advertise organization at pre-med orientation.