

## Orientation and Testing Services 2009-10 Department Blueprint

**Mission** – *The Office of Orientation and Testing Services guides prospective and current students, entering freshman and transfer students and their families, and the community at large in awareness and understanding of the tools and resources to make successful transitions, whether into the University of South Carolina or into certificate, professional, or graduate programs by providing educationally meaningful Orientation programs as well as a fair and high-value testing environment to all candidates and maintaining the highest ethical practices and quality for all Orientation and Testing programs.*

**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*

### **I) Performance Analysis:**

We had another successful recruitment season for Orientation Leaders with 143 students applying for 20 positions. In addition, four Orientation Leaders from last year were selected to return as Team Leaders. These 24 undergraduates are currently attending weekly training sessions during the Spring semester and represent all academic areas except the Colleges of Social Work, Pharmacy, and Mass Communication and Information Science, including Opportunity Scholars Program (2), Capstone Scholars (6), and the Honors College (4). Data from the Student Voice benchmarking survey that was collected in October 2009 was considered in formulating specified learning outcomes for 2010 Summer Orientation, but those learning outcomes were not established nor communicated with student or parent participants. Staff attended both an Advisors' Network luncheon meeting as well as a meeting of the Assistant and Associate Deans' Council to discuss Orientation programs and needs, such as communication about incoming transfer students, expansion of the Orientation schedule, and the addition of a Transfer Orientation session in November for students entering in the Spring. Summer Orientation programs served 5360 students (4429 freshmen 931 transfers, including change of campus students) and 5111 parents (4711 parents of freshmen and 400 parents of transfers). This represents a 13.3 percent increase in student registration over last year and a 21% increase over 2005.

**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. Participation in Student Voice national benchmarking study
2. Communicate with faculty and staff in academic units as well as administrative staff in other departments

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

Key Performance Indicators

1. Possible combination or streamlining of Bursar/Financial Services and Financial Aid sessions at Summer Orientation

**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*

**II) Performance Analysis:**

The foreign language exams have been converted to computerized tests as balance between cost-effectiveness and security maintenance. Those tests were validated earlier this year and rolled out as expected in May in time for the Summer School and Summer Orientation programs. The math test is currently available and statistical targets are on track with the previous year. The previous year saw the addition of one question category to better approximate the knowledge base students are expected to have in their coursework. Final analysis will not be available until final grades are posted for the current semester, but we do not expect any significant change. If there is a disconnect between the expected results based on score on the test and actual results, we will re-evaluate and adjust the cut scores to reflect a shifting preparedness among our students.

**Initiative 2-a:** Evaluate the effectiveness of the current Foreign Language Placement Test program.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Work with College of Arts and Science to determine if the current Foreign Language Placement Test program is an efficient use of resources and, if not, propose other, more effective alternatives, including use of high school transcripts, online placement tests, SAT II scores, or some other method of evaluation.

2. If the current program is considered effective, work with Arts and Sciences to secure sources of funding for placement testing staff and materials in the absence of direct appropriations.

**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*

**III) Performance Analysis:**

We have strengthened relationships with Continuing Education by providing them with greater information on the examinations we offer at USC so that they can more adequately target their test preparation activities based on what students are taking at USC. It is expected that they will begin offering a PCAT and MAT course sometime in the future, and it is expected that Continuing Education will promote our test center to their workshop and test prep course attendees. In turn, while remaining within the confines of our conflict-of-interest requirements, we defer all inquiries regarding test prep to their attention.

We have submitted our accreditation packet to NCTA and have received our first request for further information; a response to that request is being drafted at present. It is expected that, following further review including (possibly) a site visit as determined by the committee (the requirement of site visits for test centers is still being formulated), we will be one of the first six institutions to receive accreditation. The Testing Coordinator has also been requested to participate in a panel discussion on the accreditation process at the next NCTA national meeting in Atlanta in September.

**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*

**IV) Performance Analysis:**

Staff has set aside a permanent standing weekly appointment to review and edit web content; permission has been secured from the SAAS webmaster to use editing software to make simple text changes directly which should reduce time lag and allow for quicker updates and posting of more timely announcements. Several new pages have been added to the web site to enhance student and parent understanding of the Orientation sign-up process as well as the structure and importance of the program itself. Information about placement testing is being updated as well, to reflect the changes in procedure for the foreign language exams and to include input from the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. A Gmail account has been established so that we can take advantage of the Google Analytics tool. Preliminary analysis suggests that the site is underused, but we expect traffic to increase once more students make the commitment to attend the University of South Carolina. All callers to the office inquiring about Orientation are referred to the website for further elaboration, which should also increase traffic.

**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