

STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA • 2020

essay



**A LEGACY
OF SERVICE**

+ Real Opportunities

+ Inspired

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SPRING 2020

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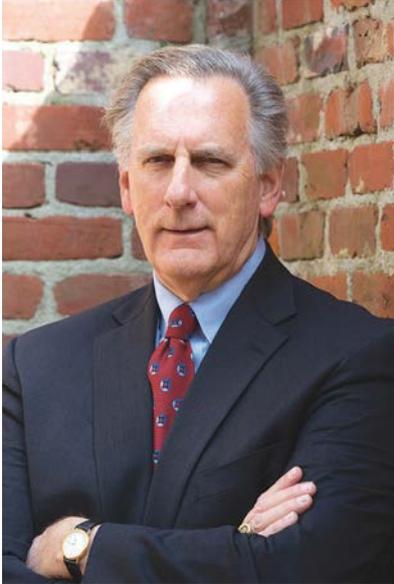
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DENNIS A. PRUITT

VICE PRESIDENT FOR
STUDENT AFFAIRS

VICE PROVOST

Throughout the last year, when I've spoken to groups within Student Affairs and Academic Support and across campus, I've shared with them my evolving list of "Worries and Wonders."

Because I sincerely care about South Carolina and our students, I worry. I worry about accommodating a growing student body and giving them the superb student experience we promise. I worry about providing enough coordinated support to enhance our students' success and well-being. I worry about whether we're adequately preparing for what the future holds: change, uncertainty and disruption.

As much as I worry, I'm a committed optimist. And I maintain my optimism by looking at our accomplishments — of which there are plenty — with wonder.

I marvel at the students who have overcome hardships and seized opportunities with a determination to achieve their own goals while also helping others. I admire the innovative, collaborative spirit of the staff members who find chances to serve our students in new ways that address their changing needs and preferences. I am grateful for the community that supports a safe, civil and inclusive environment for all who share space on our campus.

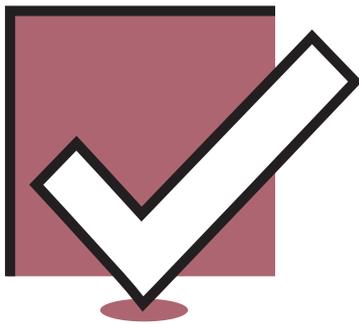
In the upcoming year, I'll continue to worry. But I'll also continue to be struck with wonder, admiration and gratitude for the many, many individuals who come together to make the University of South Carolina home to the best college student experience in the country.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis A. Pruitt". The signature is stylized and cursive.

CAROLINA ADVANTAGE

New program supports low-income, first-generation students

Last fall, 30 incoming first-year students were invited to the new Carolina Advantage Program, designed to improve access, affordability and achievement of low-income, first-generation students. Carolina Advantage provides support to students who met the criteria to participate in Gamecock Guarantee but couldn't because that program had already reached its maximum enrollment. Carolina Advantage students attend workshops and consultations that enhance their academic preparedness and financial decision-making, develop career goals and employability through engagement with the Career Center and get connected to campus resources that assist their efforts to adapt to and get involved in university life.



Winning by design

By Edgar Santana

Quackenbush Architects + Planners with Perkins + Will earned the American Institute of Architects South Carolina chapter Honor award for new construction for their work on the university's Center for Health and Well-Being. Honor is the highest design award conferred. The annual AIASC awards recognize the best architecture in the region with a focus on projects that exemplify vision, creativity and design innovation.

The Center for Health and Well-Being received high marks for interior and exterior design, intentional biophilic design elements, sustainability, creating a campus center around wellness and health and setting a high bar for student health centers nationwide.

"We are honored that this project received the highest award," says Deborah Beck, executive director of Student Health Services. "The Center for Health and Well-Being is more than simply a new innovative and inviting structure. It represents UofSC's commitment to student success. Our focus on health and well-being means we strive daily to ensure students succeed academically and develop lifelong healthy habits."

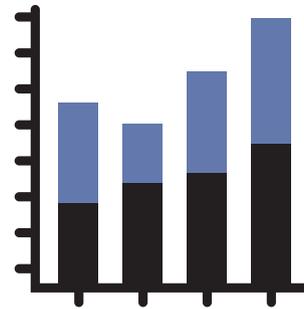
DRIVING SUCCESS

Silvia Patricia Rios Husain is the assistant vice president for student success, a new position in the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support at the University of South Carolina.

Beginning Jan. 13, 2020, Rios Husain partners with university and external stakeholders to advance the retention, timely graduation, career readiness and lifelong employability of our students and inform and enhance best practices in higher education student success. She provides strategic direction and oversight to the Career Center, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, the Student Success Center and University 101 Programs and guides the coordinated student success network.

Rios Husain has more than 20 years of experience in higher education, most recently serving as vice president for student affairs and enrollment management at Gaston College in North Carolina. Her robust experience with developing and redesigning processes and systems to better support student success makes her the ideal candidate for this role. In addition, Rios Husain's demonstrated record of community and employer engagement positions her to guide the development and expansion of partnerships within and beyond the university.

Rios Husain earned her doctoral degree from the University of Texas at Austin, her education specialist, master's and bachelor's degrees from the University of Florida and her associate degree from Miami Dade College.



SURVEY SAYS

Student responses prompt coordinated interventions

By Liz Carmon

For the second year, first-year University of South Carolina students participated in the UofSC and You First-Year Student Retention Survey, a feedback and intervention tool for retaining students. More than 6,000 first-year students received a unique link via email to take the brief survey, composed of 39 questions in four categories: academic behavior, adjustment, finances and community.

The survey was administered by EAB, and a coordinated network of campus offices took the lead on interventions, depending on students' responses to specific questions. Those offices also provided information about and made referrals to additional resources.

Thanks to a collaborative effort promoting the survey to students, the fall 2019 response rate was 68 percent. That allowed South Carolina to conduct individual interventions and have reliable aggregate data to use in better serving the entire student body and promoting their success.



By Megan Sexton

UofSC is No. 1 nationwide for first-year student experience

The University of South Carolina has the top first-year student experience among the nation's public universities, according to the 2019 *U.S. News & World Report* annual undergraduate rankings. The 2019 ranking is the first time in nearly 20 years that *U.S. News* has included a numerical ranking for first-year experience programs, an area where the university has been a national leader for more than 45 years.

"The University of South Carolina offers students an experience unmatched by any other institution in the country. Students here have the opportunity to learn and grow in ways that position them to be future leaders in their own communities and around the world," says President Bob Caslen.

Several programs contributed to the university's top ranking in first-year student experience. University 101, a first-year seminar started in 1972 to help students adjust to college life and learn about the university's offerings, sparked an international movement called the first-year experience, with South Carolina earning national recognition for its work with students, peer leaders and instructors. The Columbia campus also is home to the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, the internationally recognized expert for scholarship, policy and best practices for all postsecondary student transitions.

University 101 is now taught to about 80 percent of incoming freshmen, with classes capped at 19 students. Data show that students who take U101 return to school for their sophomore year and graduate from the university at higher rates than students who don't take the course as freshmen.

"How does Carolina feel so small and so personal when we are so large? University 101 is one of the primary drivers of that," says University 101 director Dan Friedman.

The university also received high marks in the *U.S. News* rankings for its living-learning communities, with South Carolina coming in at No. 8 among public universities. Every residence hall on campus is home to one or more learning communities, offering students the chance to pursue academic and personal interests, engage with their peers and interact with faculty members. The university has added to its strong roster of living-learning opportunities in recent years, including Galen Health Fellows for students interested in health sciences, Rhodos Fellows, a community for students who are pursuing careers in information, design and computing and who want to drive the future of digital technologies, and an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Community.

FIELD WORK



MEGAN GALLAGHER

Corporate sales, lead generation intern for Southwest Airlines, based in Dallas, Texas

Senior marketing and human relations management major Megan Gallagher spent her spring semester as corporate sales, lead generation intern for Southwest Airlines. Over the course of 15 weeks, she traveled to 15 states, Mexico and Costa Rica, increasing revenue by more than \$200,000 and adding nearly 9,000 travelers for the organization.

"If you like what you do, who you do it with and what you do it for, then you won't work a day in your life because you have found a passion. This is how I felt while working for Southwest," Gallagher says.

She now continues her work as one of 15 nationwide Southwest Airlines campus ambassadors, serving on the South Carolina campus.

STANDOUT STAFF

South Carolina's Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support staff members are among the most knowledgeable, talented and dedicated in the field. We're proud of the recognition they earn and the distinction they bring to the university.



DEBORAH BECK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

Selected by the American College Health Association as an ACHA Fellow



HILARY DYER BRANNON
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION AND EVENTS,
DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT LIFE

Won the Columbia Chamber Young Professional of the Year award



ASHLEY BYRD-WHITE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CAREER EDUCATION,
CAREER CENTER

Won the 2019 Spellman Johnson Rising Star Award from the National Association of Colleges and Employers



JENNIFER KEUP
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

Appointed by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities to the Powered by Publics advisory council



MARLA MAMRICK
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR RESEARCH AND PLANNING,
ENROLLMENT ANALYTICS

Won, with Phil Moore, the Institutional Research Leadership in Student Retention Award



DANA TALBERT
DIRECTOR, STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

Elected membership secretary for the National College Learning Center Association



PHIL MOORE
ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT RESEARCHER,
ENROLLMENT ANALYTICS

Won, with Marla Mamrick, the Institutional Research Leadership in Student Retention Award



PAULIA WILLIAMS
COLLEGE ADVISOR, TRIO PROGRAMS

Won the South Carolina and Georgia TRIO President's Award

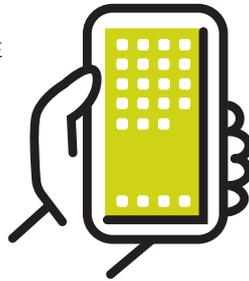


PRIZED PROGRAMS

Student affairs and academic support programs and initiatives are consistently recognized as state, regional and national models of excellence. These are our most recent awards.

AWESOME APP

South Carolina's Parent and Family Programs mobile app won the CASE District III Award of Excellence. Each year the awards recognize "superior accomplishments that have lasting impact, demonstrate the highest level of professionalism and deliver exceptional results."



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The University of South Carolina received the 2019 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine. The award recognizes U.S. colleges and universities that show a commitment to diversity and inclusion on campus.

DOING GOOD

The Salvation Army recognized South Carolina with its Doing the Most Good Award. The award celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Carolina Cares Drive, which includes participation in the Salvation Army's Stocking Stuffer Program.

FIRST FORWARD

South Carolina is in the inaugural cohort of First Forward Institutions recognized by NASPA's Center for First-Generation Student Success.

GREAT GROUP

Changing Carolina Peer Leaders won the NASPA Outstanding Peer Education Group 2018 award for their consistently excellent work in providing health education to the university's students.

INTERNATIONAL ACCOLADES

International House at Maxcy College's Carolina Global Scholars program won NASPA's 2019 Best Practices in International Education Award for International Programming.



MILITARY FRIENDLY

The University of South Carolina was named to the 2019-20 Military Friendly Schools list for the university's services to military and veteran students.



SUPER SIGNS

The Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center won a 2019 3rd-place Creative Excellence Award from the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association in the Large Scale Signage category.

TOP HONORS

The Center for Health and Well-Being won the Honor award, the highest award conferred by the American Institute of Architects South Carolina chapter.

STUDENT PROFILES

By Catherine Jobe, '20



HALEEMA ADLY

Haleema Adly, a freshman nursing major from Columbia, has used her life experiences to become an educator and advocate for multicultural people. She had the opportunity to share her perspective at South Carolina's #ThisIsUSC storytelling event, which highlights the diversity of the community.

I couldn't withhold information that others wanted to know; not only was that cheating others, but it would lead to a static world in which nothing changes because I am not allowing it to do so. I look at all of the people in my life who I think are amazing and really changed my own viewpoints, and they are all people who took action through speech and putting themselves out there for the world to see and hear.



ANNA BOOK

Anna Book, a senior public health major from Charleston, has found community at South Carolina by leading the Homecoming Commission as its president. She hopes her legacy continues to allow future Homecoming leaders to also challenge themselves to become a symbol of unity.

Homecoming is about bringing the community together to celebrate who we are. I was able to find people across campus who were invested in creating community and working hard to make four years here an experience to cherish forever. Looking back, every step of the way there was someone there to lift me up and encourage me to keep going. And now as a senior, I owe so much of my personal growth to the people in this department.

URIAH CHAPMAN



Uriah Chapman, a junior biological sciences and public health double major from Columbia, won a Magellan Guarantee Research Grant to study the disparities between police interactions with people of different races. He uses the results of his research to educate and challenge others to speak out against police brutality.

In ways extending far beyond extrajudicial issues, young men of color find themselves being exposed to very high levels of risk. To me, the sharing of this research with others means that there is hope for all of the young black boys that will grow up after me. Perhaps something in this project can incite reform in the way that police interact with minorities, and these future young men won't have to be taught to walk on eggshells with the people who are supposed to be protecting them.

JAMES "DAVIS" HAYMAN



James "Davis" Hayman, an international business and finance major from Johnson City, Tennessee, has created a platform to advocate for the disabled community. He hopes to increase representation, understanding and change through his lectures and his UofSC study abroad blog from Paris.

Most often when people hear the term 'diversity,' disability is not included. In fact, people with disabilities, who make up approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population, are often left out of many arenas, including modern media. Less than 2 percent of characters on TV in 2018 were disabled, and the discrepancy between these two statistics illustrates a large societal problem. In an effort to spread information and awareness for people with physical disabilities, I try to share my story wherever I can.

RYLEIGH WAITERS



Ryleigh Waiters, a senior University Ambassador and exercise science major from Lancaster, South Carolina, has turned giving back to the university into her passion. She has spent 400 hours volunteering with the organization as a university tour guide, as well as an additional 250 paid leadership hours.

While touring college campuses as a junior and senior in high school, I developed the desire to become a tour guide at whatever campus I ended up attending. I loved the enthusiasm and passion tour guides embodied for their schools, and my UofSC tour guide really sealed the deal for me. It has been strenuous at times, but overall the most rewarding experience. I am honored to serve a university that has provided me with the most limitless opportunities.

By Hilary Dyer Brannon
Photos by Kendall DeBerry, '20

A Legacy of Service

Established by the late Robert "Bobby" Dobson III ('60, '62 J.D.), the Dobson Volunteer Service Program has touched lives on campus and around the world for more than 20 years. Since funding its first student trip in 1999, the program has supported more than 1,300 student trips to 60 countries on five continents.



Born and raised in Greenville, Bobby Dobson came to the University of South Carolina in 1956, played varsity tennis and was an active member of Kappa Sigma Fraternity. After graduating from the School of Law in 1962, he returned to Greenville to work alongside his father in the family's law firm.

Leaving his legal practice shortly after the sudden loss of his daughter, Laura, in 1991, Dobson chose to devote his life to sharing his Christian faith through service and philanthropy. He created the Dobson Volunteer Service Program to encourage the spiritual and value development of students while providing assistance to individuals, families and communities in need. Dobson passed away in August 2019, leaving behind a legacy of spiritual growth, humanitarian aid and student development.

The only program of its kind at the university, the DVSP funds up to \$50,000 for student service trips every year. Students participating in service that includes a component of spiritual development can apply to the program to receive funding to cover up to 50 percent of the cost of travel, food and lodging.

"Without the DVSP, we literally could not have done the service and trips that we do," said the Rev. Tom Wall of the Methodist Student Network. "When students graduate, they often tell me that the service/mission trips they have been on have done more to aid them in their maturation and their personal and spiritual growth than almost anything else they have experienced in college."

Operationally managed by the Department of Student Life, the program finds a natural fit with the department's vision of providing opportunities for every student to define a unique involvement story that prepares them to lead and serve as engaged global citizens. Composed of university faculty and staff members and Dobson family members, the Dobson Volunteer Service Board meets multiple times each year to review applications and make funding decisions.

"I have had the honor of working with a number of wonderful people at UofSC over the past 20 years," said board member and Bobby Dobson's daughter-in-law, Shannon Dobson ('89, '93 M.A., '99 Ph.D.). "From the beginning, Jerry Brewer met with us every semester to expand the program and bring it to as many students as possible," she says. "Now, Anna Edwards is filling that role and is passionate and enthusiastic about providing this opportunity to students. In addition to their leadership, Janie Kerzan and her staff take care of the nuts and bolts of applications and finances."

"I believe that this program changes lives and grants students the opportunity to serve in communities that most desperately need it," says Edwards, associate vice president for Student Life. "I have had the opportunity to serve on the Dobson board for about two years. During past board meetings, Mr. Dobson

FAST FACTS

(compiled in March 2019)

60

COUNTRIES SERVED

5

CONTINENTS TOUCHED

198

**TRIPS TO A COUNTRY
OUTSIDE OF THE U.S.**

43

TRIPS WITHIN THE U.S.

1,280

APPROVED PARTICIPANTS



“I have been very blessed to work with great students who want to pay it forward as a result of being granted Dobson scholarships, and I have seen the ripple effect of the DVSP. My students and I were very blessed to have met Bobby, and his life of servitude lives on in those of us who have seen his servant heart.”

— Patrick Hickey

would identify a few students to meet with him to talk about their experiences or the impact the service had on them. It was very rewarding to hear the students reflect, specifically speaking to how they have changed as individuals because of the graciousness of Mr. Dobson's donations. The students were always very appreciative and often spoke to the fact that the opportunity would not have been possible without the Dobson Volunteer Service Program.”

The board is prepared to carry the program into the future, building upon the solid foundation created by its namesake and adding to an admirable record of assisting communities in need while simultaneously offering students financial support and educational opportunities outside the walls of a traditional classroom.

While trips must have a spiritual complement, they do not have to be tied to a particular religion.

Participants and program proposals come from a wide range of individuals, organizations and units on campus. The Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support has seen students, faith-based organizations and academic programs alike benefit from the DVSP.

“I have been leading medical service-learning trips for the Capstone Scholars Program for the past 10 years, and each year that I have done so I have encouraged my

students to apply for ‘the Dobson,’” says Patrick Hickey, faculty principal of the Capstone Scholars Program. “I have been able to see how valuable this scholarship is as it supports my students as they render care to underserved populations. For most students it is a humbling experience that changes them, and for most it helps to confirm for them their future path in life: helping those who cannot care for themselves.”

“Mr. Dobson wanted to make serving the broader community accessible to all students so that they could be changed by giving to others and other communities in need,” Edwards says. “One of the requirements of using Dobson funds for service is that students are required to reflect on their trip and consider the impact of their time not only on those they serve, but also on themselves.”

Requirements upon returning from a service trip include a written reflection and a minimum of 10 presentations to university students, civic and religious groups and local schools.

“I can't count how many times a student would tell us about people in far-flung nations without food or the necessities of life and how they were able to help at least on that day on that trip to give them hope and a sense that other people care about them,” Shannon Dobson says. “Many of their trips changed the trajectory of their career

plans and life philosophies of the students. Having them reorient their careers and lives to a purpose where serving others becomes a central part of their life goals regardless of their career intentions is worth the time and effort of this program.”

This deliberate contemplation and requisite outreach also lend to the special character of the DVSP. These requirements ensure the growth experienced does not stay within one person, but continues to be shared and multiplies in impact, which is at the core of the program’s mission.

“My hope for these students is that they learn that they can do something to make this world a better place,” Shannon Dobson says, “and that going to those places will help them learn what is needed.”





As told to Catherine Jobe, '20

INSPIRED

Junior Andee Poulos's battle with a life-threatening injury sparked an organization dedicated to helping families facing the same hardships.

Active. That's how I would describe my teenage self. Between softball and swimming, I was always busy with practices, games and meets. Unfortunately, everything changed for me one day when I was at swim practice. I couldn't pinpoint why I didn't feel exactly right at first, and then the headache and fatigue set in. I knew I needed to get out of the water, so I climbed out of the pool and called my mom to come get me. I walked outside, in wet swimwear, in the cold January air, but I didn't notice the temperature. I progressively got worse on the way home, and the 20-minute car ride ended up taking over an hour as I kept telling my mom to slow down and stop as the waves hit me. I eventually lost consciousness. I don't remember anything after that: the ambulance ride, the tests or the diagnosis.

What I have can have no symptoms but lives inside of you until it bursts. The condition is called an arteriovenous malformation, which is an abnormal connection between arteries and veins that ruptured in my brain, over a decade sooner than it typically occurs. I immediately needed brain surgery to remove it, leaving me in a coma for two weeks. The prognosis wasn't good for me as I wasn't expected to be able to walk or speak ever again.

There is a two-year lapse in my recovery that I have very few memories of. I was given another challenge as I returned to school two years later and had to become friends with the little siblings of my former classmates. However, I was just glad to be back in school and thankful to have my parents, and especially my little brother, support me through all of this.

My family was forced into a trauma — one that couldn't have been predicted — emotionally and monetarily. I was lucky to have a community behind me that wanted to help and support my family, despite their initial protests to accept the support. My parents agreed that they wanted to find an outlet that would allow the support our family was given to expand and give back to others who are dealing with the same type of trauma. This is how Andee's Army was formed. Andee's Army is an organization started to help families like mine who have had a child experience a brain or spinal cord injury. Andee's Army has a Patient Assistance Grant Program that is tailored to the unique recovery of each patient and includes occupational, physical and speech therapies, durable equipment, assistive technology, home health aid, basic home modifications as well as other specialized therapy and care.

My hope is that Andee's Army will continue to make a difference in the lives of those who need it. A trauma like this brings more expenses and challenges to a family than just the up-front medical costs. Ultimately, Andee's Army allowed me to get the therapy I needed to be who I am today, and I wish that for everyone else placed in my position.

For more information about Andee's Army and how to get involved, go to andeesarmy.org.

By Catherine Jobe, '20



Real Opportunities

The University of South Carolina strives to be an environment where all students can flourish and succeed, regardless of their backgrounds. *Essay* sat down over coffee to discuss the programs and support that South Carolina offers first-generation and low-income students with three champions of these inclusive efforts: **Althea Counts**, director of TRIO programs; **Joey Derrick**, director of student financial aid and scholarships; and **Dana Talbert**, director of the Student Success Center.

At the University of South Carolina, how do we define the terms “first-generation” and “low-income”?

AC Our campus defines first-generation students as students whose parents don't have a four-year college degree. So even if a parent has gone to a community college or has an associate degree, their child would still be considered a first-generation student.

JD A lot of times, for low-income students, we look at students who are Pell Grant-eligible as low-income, but what we're finding now is that it's really extending to our middle-income folks. If you look at how much college costs, they are struggling just as much as those students at the very bottom of the income bracket.

AC Although these things sometimes intersect, you can be low-income and not be first-generation, and you can be first-generation and not low-income. They don't always intersect.

How are these students' college experiences different from those of other students?

AC First-generation students are those whose parents haven't gone to college, so they don't always have a point of reference.

JD What we find is that college is hard anyway, but what low-income students have is an additional stressor in the fact that they are not sure if they can afford to be here. That's an additional high-level stressor that's always present, and so it has a tendency to dissuade them from attending college, or at the very least dissuade them from their studies.

AC If they're coming from S.C., in really rural areas, there's a higher probability that they didn't have access to AP courses to help prepare them for the challenges of college courses. So we provide them with support and smaller classes to show them that they can do this academically. If they are a low-income student, we try to provide them enough financial aid so they don't feel as if they have to work 40 hours a week, which would definitely distract them from their academics.

DT I think, too, that navigating campus can be very challenging when you're on a new campus with 30,000 students, and there's all of these different offices and you don't know where to go. So that can be very challenging when you're thinking about academics, you're thinking about financial factors on top of all that; not knowing who to go to for what can be tough.

JD And they don't want people to know they're struggling. They don't want to be seen as anything different, because they're not. They got in here on their own merits, and there isn't anything different about them.

How do your areas contribute to their success?

AC The Opportunity Scholars Program under the TRIO umbrella has been on campus since 1972, so it has had years of service provided to students, and our goal as a federally funded entity is to bring students in, provide support for them and see them graduate with a degree. Our funding is based on our percentages of students who graduate with a degree from the university. We do that through finance, academics and social support. We have program components in those areas to support those students.



“They don't want to be seen as anything different, because they're not. They got in here on their own merits, and there isn't anything different about them.”

Joey Derrick



“In order for students to persist and stay in school, they need more than just the financial support. Somebody once told me, ‘Access without support is not a real opportunity.’”

Althea Counts

DT We do a lot with the academics portion of their success. We partner directly with OSP to make sure certain courses have Supplemental Instruction leaders and additional tutoring opportunities for particularly challenging subjects and courses. We’ve also just launched this year math progress reports where we started working with the math faculty in certain courses that allow the instructors to provide us with information on if the students are at risk to fail the course or if there is an attendance issue, so we know how we can intervene with those students to make sure they are successful on campus. All of the OSP and Carolina Advantage students are also required to take a money management consultation to focus on the financial literacy piece.

JD For us, it’s not just finances, but it is a lot of it. We have a limited amount of aid that we can give out in scholarships and loans. We always try to make sure the neediest students get what they need in our programs. It doesn’t always cover the entire bill, but we do what we can to get them to where we need to be. And then for specific populations, like the Gamecock Guarantee, we have staff assigned to help them. We try to make sure we are always accessible and available to them and always have staff on hand to meet with them in person, over the phone or over email. We want to let them know that even if they start out OK, they can still come to us for help if things change.

You mentioned Carolina Advantage and Gamecock Guarantee. Tell me more about those programs.

JD It has been over 10 years now since we first made the Gamecock Guarantee program to help our lowest-income, first-generation

college students who were struggling here at UofSC. These students are at 150 percent or less of the poverty level and can be categorized as Pell Grant recipients, first-generation and S.C. residents. We identify about 720 of them every year, and we provide financial support for them, while Althea and her staff provide academic support for them, which I argue is more important than our work.

AC You can’t be here without the money, though! But yes, once the Gamecock Guarantee students are identified, they have to go into one of three programs: Opportunity Scholars, Honors College or Capstone Scholars. We have paired the financial award with program support because we find that we can give the money, but in order for students to persist and stay in school, they need more than just the financial support. Somebody once told me, “Access without support is not a real opportunity.” So you can grant all of the access, but if you’re not providing the support for them while there here, they’re probably not going to be able to graduate, and that’s our goal here. We offer support and, paired with Dana’s office, provide Supplemental Instruction, tutoring, financial literacy, mentoring and cultural event planning in the hopes to get them really integrated into the campus culture. We try to push them to do research and to study abroad, all of those things, so they know that they can do anything that a non-first-generation student can do. We actually had an overflow in numbers of people who qualified for Gamecock Guarantee, and Dana can talk about the program we made to accommodate them.

DT This year’s the first year we’ve offered the Carolina Advantage program because we had more students that qualified for the Gamecock Guarantee program than Althea’s program can handle. What those students received was a

little bit less of a scholarship to the university, but it is some additional support that we know would improve our retention efforts. So those students, 28 to be exact, started this fall, and, from orientation until now, we continue to meet with them as often as we can. We found that students who attended three or more student success consultations in our office were more successful than those who didn't, and all of our students are coming back this spring. We are continuing to support them throughout their four years.

Are there other campus support systems for first-generation and low-income students?

AC From housing to academics to social support, there is usually someone who can offer support from every office that can work with us to meet the needs of these students, and if there isn't a partnership already forged, people are usually pretty willing to work with us to make that happen.

JD There's been a movement in the last couple years where the faculty members are choosing to identify if they are first-generation on their door so students who are first-gen and may feel isolated and alone can realize their professor is a first-gen and will be more willing to talk to them. So that's a secondary tool to help them not feel like they are alone.

DT Each of the colleges has also reached out to us to make sure they are covering their bases on who they are collaborating with, and everyone knows that it is important to support and collaborate for these students with all the resources they have.

JD The university is also looking at every possible way to get more funding for these students from any possible source — from

internally, donors, the federal government and the state, all of those areas — to try and bring in more assistance for our students.

Anything else you want to add?

JD One of those questions I get asked from time to time that they probably don't like the answer I give them is, "How do we know who they are?" Well the answer is that you don't, and you shouldn't need to. That has nothing to do with their ability here at the university, and you shouldn't single them out or treat them any differently. They know to come to us when they need help, so you don't need to look for them.

AC I think we talk a lot about what their needs are, but these students come with a lot of strengths as well. When you talk about the things that could make them withdraw, instead I think of their grit and tenacity. These are students who are willing to work for this because they're used to that kind of background. Their families are very proud even if some don't know very much about the college process. I always see families so happy to grab that sticker from orientation that says "UofSC mom" or "UofSC dad" and wear it proudly. The students are very intelligent, and they are willing to work and learn.



"We continue to meet with them as often as we can. We found that students who attended three or more student success consultations in our office were more successful than those who didn't."

Dana Talbert



Ambra Hiott

Carly Zerr



CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION

A conversation with the Leadership and Service Center's Ambra Hiott, director, and Carly Zerr, leadership coach

A new focus on civic engagement is giving students the tools they need to shape their communities starting right here on campus.

What does civic engagement look like at South Carolina?

CZ: We use the term “active citizenship”—actively engaging in your community—and for us it’s nonpartisan. Just students involved in some aspect, regardless of level and regardless of party. We just want them to have active roles in their community.

How did it become a focus of the Leadership and Service Center?

AH: For years we had celebrated Constitution Day and run voter registration drives. But when it came to civic engagement, it stopped there. When we were looking at our mission and our purpose and what we uniquely deliver for students, we were able to hone in on student organizations, service and leadership programs pretty immediately because those are big buckets. But then we were looking at the other offerings that we gave to campus, and we have some of these voter registration and civic engagement initiatives that didn’t seem to naturally align with those buckets. But we also

saw a great opportunity to go deeper into civic engagement, particularly with service and leadership in action—preparing students to exercise that beyond their time here at Carolina. And so we identified civic engagement as the fourth big bucket, and it has the most room and potential for growth.

How has that growth begun?

AH: The most important thing to get this up and running was the creation of the peer leader group to help guide the work because in the LSC we believe that our programs should be driven by students, not by staff members. Particularly as we’re going into civic engagement, nonpartisan work, it’s important that students are

driving that agenda, not professional staff members. So we created the team, the Civic Leadership Education and Action Team — CLEAT for short.

CZ: Our three main goals that we were hoping to accomplish with them were to have programming that was student-led, nonpartisan and year-round.

AH: Year-round is important because we saw that we were just doing voter registration drives around elections. Around the midterms, things would pick up, and then things would go dormant and pick up again around the presidential elections, and then go dormant. But civic engagement truly is a year-round effort.

CZ: And even with voter registration, our data showed that there would be a spike in registrations, but not necessarily follow-through on voting. There would be excitement, but not necessarily the literacy about the process or any of the policies around voting.

We have maintained voter registration as a focus area but added a speaker series and deliberation programming. We always do a civility series with the members of Carolina Judicial Council to integrate the Carolinian Creed into active citizenship, and we've done Congress to Campus, including visits to classes and lunch-and-learns with our staff to talk about what it's like as professional staff members facilitating this work.

Our civility series included [South Carolina representative] Micah Caskey, [former South Carolina representative and current CNN political analyst]

Bakari Sellers and Josh Dawsey, an alumnus who's a reporter for *The Washington Post*.

AH: We've had some really cool speakers, but the priority is to make sure that perspectives are balanced across the political spectrum.

Is that hard?

CZ: Depending on where we are in the political cycle, members of one party or another are more likely to accept our invitations to speak. Even our student political organizations — we invite every one of them to participate in our events, but not every one of them comes, and that can look bad, like we didn't include everyone even though we tried to. It can create some anxiety among the staff — the perception that people have when we really are trying to include all perspectives.

What makes a student want to join the CLEAT peer group rather than a student organization for a political party or a particular issue?

CZ: The students I've talked to about this specifically, they're not sure what they believe in terms of political party affiliation. They know they care, and they know they want to be involved, and they know it's important, they just don't know necessarily where they should be putting their efforts. And so they put their effort into getting other people excited to care about something, and that's where they thrive. And that really mirrors our center. No matter what students are passionate about, we just want them to be passionate about something, and we want to give them the tools and resources and space to fulfill that.

Sometimes passion can turn to discord. What's the tone of conversation at South Carolina?

AH: I haven't been to any of our events that have gone off track or become uncivil. The way that we facilitate events, we acknowledge viewpoints and keep the conversation focused on the issue. It's our responsibility to model the behavior. If you're ever going to explore and learn this, ideally college is the place where you're exposed to different trains of thought and you're exposed to how to be civil while still having your perspective.

What's in store for the future?

AH: We're always assessing what we're doing. Every time we do something, how did it go? Is it meeting the mission? And as we continue to look at institutional initiatives like My UofSC Experience and Graduation With Leadership Distinction, for me, I look at how these programs feed into the university culture that we're building. I want to make sure that we're creating experiences for students that are meaningful and are guided by reflection and feedback.

CZ: We have a lot of foundational pieces to still develop with this being only the second year, so what I want to do is to strengthen what we have for another year or so and then potentially take new ideas from there. The benefit of working with students is that they're always creative, and they have great ideas, so we always leave room for things to bubble up that students are excited about.



Read & Repeat

\$4.25 MILLION

The Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships administered more than \$4.25 million in aid during 2017-18, a 22 percent increase over six years.

8,700

The largest pool of new students ever — including freshmen, transfer and residential bridge students — enrolled in fall 2019. Underrepresented minorities made up 24 percent of the new students, African American enrollment was up 7 percent, and nearly 17 percent of the freshman class was composed of first-generation college students. At 5,200, 2019's freshman class also included the largest number of in-state students ever.



1:1,200

At 1 to 1,200, the university's ratio of counselors to students is ranked as one of the best in the nation. Student Health Services further increased the availability of assistance by offering after-hours services by phone (through a vendor) and in-person services on Sundays during the fall and spring semesters.

\$7,000

An analysis of graduate survey data gathered between 2016 and 2018 shows that students who used the Career Center reported a significantly higher starting salary (nearly \$7,000 more) than those who didn't use the center's services.

2,408

The 2019 Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience was the largest ever, attracting 2,408 registrants from more than 600 institutions in 17 countries.

WHAT'S NEXT



RESILIENCY IN RESIDENCE

The Resiliency Project, which will launch in spring 2020, is designed to bolster a culture of care and holistic well-being for first-year students living in residence halls. It will include workshops, programs and communication campaigns designed to foster resiliency, including a focus on learning how to fail, increasing coping skills and building connections with other students.

NEW NAVIGATION TOOLS

EAB's Navigate student app, which will launch to all UofSC students in fall 2020, is an essential tool to aid in a student's path to college success. Customized to fit the student experience, the app will include a to-do list, calendar of events, list of campus resources and a feature for students to opt in to connect with peers to form study groups. Students will be able to use the app to schedule an appointment with advisors, tutors and other key campus offices. Through the app, students also will receive notification reminders of important upcoming deadlines.

SUPPORTING RECOVERY

A \$94,000 grant from the S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services will help to build support for students in recovery from alcohol and other addictions. The funding will support the Gamecock Recovery Program, an effort designed to find and support students in recovery, decrease stigma related to addiction and recovery and build a healthier campus environment for all students.



**I AM
MADE OF
TENACIOUS
AMBITION.**

Excelling in two majors while also engaging in campus activities is a tall order, but Manny Mata found the perfect place to turn his dreams into realities. When he's not studying criminal justice or mass communications, Mata participates in multiple student clubs and has written op-eds for *The Daily Gamecock*. He's even found time to give tours of the university — helping to lead tomorrow's students as they find their own paths.

I AM SOUTH CAROLINA.