

University of South Carolina Union

Act 629 – Summary Reports on Institutional Effectiveness
Fiscal Year 2002 – 2003

Introduction

This report includes: Procedures for Student Development, Alumni/Placement Surveys, and Policies and Procedures to Ensure that Academic Programs Support the Economic Development Needs in the State by Providing a Technologically Skilled Workforce.

Assessment of Procedures for Student Development

USC Union facilitates student growth and development in both academic and non-academic areas of thought and behavior, and these two areas are by no means mutually exclusive. For instance, our academic objectives include helping students to develop

- Awareness of personal values and motivations in one's self and in others,
- Awareness of the variety of values and mechanisms of social institutions, both Western and non-Western,
- Awareness of the cause and effect relationship between the actions of individuals and institutions and the consequences of those actions for local, regional, national, and global environments,
- Awareness of how to participate effectively in a variety of social institutions,
- Awareness of the ethical dilemmas that arise in a society based on science and technology,
- Awareness that learning is a life-long process based on personal initiative, active participation, and a belief in the value of inquiry,
- Awareness of personal potentials, limitations, and mental/physical development,
- Ability to be self-motivated, to form, articulate, and act upon reasoned decisions in personal, civic, and professional life,
- Ability to synthesize information, distinguish fact from opinion, offer and accept constructive criticism, apply both knowledge and skills to new situations, and draw reasoned conclusions based on complete and incomplete evidence.

Each of these objectives deals to some extent with non-academic, personal growth and development.

The faculty, staff, and students have also adopted "The Carolinian Creed," a code of behavior originally developed by USC Columbia. This code incorporates five behavioral goals, represented by the following statements:

- I will practice personal and academic integrity.
- I will respect the dignity of all persons.
- I will respect the rights and property of others.
- I will discourage bigotry, striving to learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions.
- I will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings and their need for conditions which support their work and development.

These goals in student growth and development are actively pursued in our regular classroom courses. Other student services that promote these goals include programs in academic advisement, counseling, career development, student government, student activities, student publications, and intramural and club athletics.

Indicators:

- Participation in service and other extracurricular activities
- Occurrence of uncivilized or otherwise destructive behavior
- Student self-reports
- Student Government Association discussion and activity
- Alumni self-reports
- Faculty and faculty committee reports and activity

Assessment Methods:

- Tabulation of participation data
- Tabulation of infraction and disciplinary data
- Student surveys
- Alumni surveys
- Faculty surveys

Further description of these assessment methods can be found in the USCU Assessment Plan at <http://www.sc.edu/union/inform/AssessmentPlan.htm>.

Assessment Results:**PARTICIPATION DATA**

Our Opportunity Scholars Program (OSP) is a federal TRIO program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. One component is a tutor/study lab that offers a variety of development services. The following list gives a picture of lab activity for 2002-03.

- Study - no computer - 50 students for 345 hours
- Tutoring - 63 students for 357 hours
- Use computer Academics - 75 students for 765 hours
- Use computers Career - 17 students for 13 hours
- Use computers Internet access - 53 students for 408 hours
- Use computers Transfer info - 8 students for 10 hours
- Computer instruction - 43 students for 275 hours

INFRACTION AND DISCIPLINARY DATA

USCU experiences a very low rate of student disciplinary complaints. In the last year, there have been no infractions, formal disciplinary actions, or crimes reported on campus.

In student surveys conducted between 1990 and 2000, we have asked about safety and discipline. In 1999-2000, students were very satisfied with the safety of the campus. On a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), students agreed that there was little vandalism or robbery (1.2, n=105), there was little sexual abuse (1.2), that students respected one another (1.4), that the atmosphere was friendly (1.4), and that student discipline was adequate (1.6).

STUDENT NEEDS

At USCU, few students are truly "traditional" students. Most are first-generation and part-time. Most have job and even family responsibilities. For instance in fall 2001, only 34% of the student body was full-time, the smallest proportion of all the Regional Campuses (range: 34% - 50%).

USCU students have strong local ties. Most continue their education nearby at USC Spartanburg or Spartanburg Technical College. In the fall of 1998 and fall of 2001, only 12 out of 72 (17%) changed campus or transferred as far away as USC Columbia, USC Aiken, or Clemson.

CIRP SURVEYS

During annual orientation sessions, entering students complete the freshman survey developed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA. We examined data from 1994 to 2002 and summarize some of the findings here.

This past year, only 30% (n=20) rated themselves above average in academic ability, and the percentages are even lower in specific academic areas, such as writing (25%), math (20%), and public speaking (15%). On the other hand, students feel they are stronger in the areas of creativity (50%), persistence (50%), cooperativeness (55%), understanding of others (60%), and drive to achieve (60%). Perhaps unfortunately in a county where drug use and teen pregnancy is high, this group also felt that they were above average in risk-taking (65%). These data suggest that USCU students do not form productive relationships. Only 55% reported that they at least occasionally studied with other students, where the national average on that item was 75%.

USCU students participate in cultural activities at a lower rate than the national average. Only 45% reported that they occasionally attended a public recital or concert, 30% visited an art gallery or museum, and only 15% often discussed religious questions.

A large majority of USCU students plan to continue their education beyond the associate degree. This year, 85% (n=14) planned to go on to a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate, where the national average is 76%. Last year, the figure for USCU was 84% (n=44), and the year before, it was 92% (n=30). The most probable major field of study was education (28%, n=18), professional including medicine and nursing (22%), and "other" including agriculture, communications, computer, engineering, forestry, and police (34%). The most important reasons for attending college were to get a better job (95%, n=20) and to make more money (90%), but a substantial number came to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas (65%) and to "learn more about things that interest me" (65%). 75% (n=20) thought that being honest in their relationships with others was one of their important traits (natl. average 67%). 35% said that searching for a mission or purpose in life was important to them (natl. 25%), and 30% said that appreciating the interconnectedness of everything was important to them (natl. 17%).

Extracurricular activities that might help students reach their goals include academic support or tutoring (56%, n=16), concerts/movies (50%), sporting/social events (50%), career exploration (47%), and personal counseling (44%).

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In various recent focus group discussions, students, faculty, and staff have repeatedly expressed the need for new academic programs and for more events and activities, lively activity, that might keep students on campus after their classes are over. As a first step, we simply need to use the facilities that we have more often and more effectively. Students suggested that the gym needs to be open more. One of the closed, private homes on campus might be opened for a snack bar and lounge, and the other could be opened as an art studio. The existing student lounge is a dead place. Students can have quiet study time in the library. In the lounge, we

need pool, foosball, ping-pong, video games, and more variety in the machine food service: sandwiches, cake, and pie. We can use the auditorium more. We need more cultural events, such as plays, concerts, and art displays. We need a drama club and a singers group that gets out into the community. We do blood drives; we should do more, such as recycling, a homework hotline for local school children, or kids' reading groups in the library. We need to work with USC so that USCU students have the same advantages as other students in the University. We should have access to all the library databases that are available in Columbia. All students should have access to subsidized sports tickets. We need more club and intramural sports on campus: golf, football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, wrestling, swimming, soccer, and track. Students need to be encouraged and stimulated to stay on campus and to participate in campus activities.

USCU STUDENT OBJECTIVES

The USCU Bulletin (<http://www.sc.edu/bulletin/Union/University.html>) lists 26 different academic and personal objectives that are an important part of a higher education. In 1997, '98 and '01, students were asked as a part of the standard course evaluation to check off those objectives that were an important part of that specific course. Students responded multiple times, depending on their schedules, but the total number of responses ranged from 71 (Understand both western and non-western cultures) to 540 (Listen more thoughtfully and attentively). Within that range, relatively high numbers indicate that students perceive a concentration of effort on those objectives.

Many students see that they are gaining more than facts in their classes. They are becoming more comfortable with cultural diversity (327 responses), they are exploring their own values and motivations (342), learning to use educational resources both inside and outside of the classroom (351), understanding that learning is a life-long process (354), developing self-confidence (366), learning to be more self-motivated (369), dealing better with new situations (375), growing as a person (414), and learning to plan ahead and organize better (447).

WITHDRAWAL SURVEY

Since fall 1997, Admissions has been asking those students who come into that office to withdraw, change campus, or to get a request for transcript form to complete a Withdrawal Survey. By far, the majority of students leaving USCU do so because they have gotten all we have to offer, and they need to transfer to continue their education. In 2001-02, 81% were transferring to another college and only 4% were permanently withdrawing (n=54). Twenty reported that they had achieved their academic goals, and 27 reported that the courses they needed were not available (totals 87%). On average, these students are very satisfied with the academic program, faculty, advisors, academic support, and administrative support, with survey scores ranging between 3.4 and 3.7, on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied).

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

During the regular course evaluation survey, fall 2002, students were asked the following question: "Now, think about your out-of-class experiences at USCU. In various programs from Orientation, Student Affairs, SGA, OSP, and other extracurricular opportunities, we are trying to encourage personal development. We focus on such areas as leadership, volunteer or service opportunities, career exploration, social and spiritual support, sports, and the arts. Do you feel that you have developed or matured in a personal way? What are we doing particularly well, and where do we need to improve?"

Certainly, the most common comment was that everything is great (105 out of 230 comments made), and almost twice as many comments were praise as were suggestions for improvement (144 vs. 75). The most common requests were for more courses or sections (15), more sports (11), activities (7), and parking (4). Examples of praise include: "I would not change anything!!!" "You offer a great support system." "I have matured a lot since high school." "I am learning to think and make my own decisions." "I think I have matured personally and a lot here at USC Union. The activities at USCU are great and very interesting." and "Yes, Mrs. Denman has made me become more open-minded, and to think about things more carefully."

ALUMNI SURVEY RESULTS

During spring 2003, we surveyed our 1999-2000 graduates (47 mailed 2-10-03, 5 not deliverable, 14 returned = 33% response rate). In areas related to student development: a majority of the respondents are continuing their education (86%), are involved in professional or service organizations (71%), engage in volunteer activity (80%), and support or participate in the arts (86%). Furthermore, a similar majority felt that USCU had influenced their participation in these activities (71 – 87%). 79% have voted in at least a few elections, since leaving USCU.

DISTINGUISHED TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINATION

Each year, students, faculty, and staff nominate faculty members to be considered for selection as USCU's Distinguished Teacher of the Year. This year, Mr. Thomas Simpson, instructor in mathematics, was selected for the award, but taking a campus-wide view, 29 instructors were eligible for nomination, and 20 (69%) were nominated at least once. We are pleased to find that a majority of the faculty have this kind of impact on so many students. Specific comments related to personal growth, made on nomination forms, are posted at http://www.sc.edu/union/faculty_info/toy03.htm.

Use of Assessment Results:

The one program that has the greatest impact on our students is a student support service, called the Opportunity Scholars Program (OSP), a federal TRIO program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It serves 150 students each year and has an impact on the entire student body. OSP assesses each student's needs and designs an individualized program to help meet those needs. OSP helps with freshman orientation. It organizes mentoring for freshmen by second-year students drawn from the Student Government Association, from honors students, and from previous OSP participants. New this year is a Peer/Mentor/Tutor program that is broader and more assertive than the tutor program of the past. PMTs call students and actively try to form relationships. They go beyond academic support and provide emotional and motivational support as well. This interaction provides a growth opportunity for the tutor, as well as for the OSP participants themselves. It is well recognized that the best way to learn a concept well is to teach it to another.

OSP provides a place where study groups can form. Computer workstations are available that offer academic support, such as PLATO testing and drill, career exploration, such as SCOIS software and access to the USC Career Center, and transfer information in the form of links to all SC four-year colleges. Games are even available, encouraging the development of increased computer literacy and group cohesion among students.

OSP has sponsored or encouraged student participation in many cultural activities, such as plays, operettas, movies, concerts, folklore, speeches, workshops, and visits to other colleges, museums, and the state zoo. Some of the topics include academic expectations, career

exploration, employer expectations, personal and social skills, time management, leadership skills, and teamwork.

OSP has helped sponsor Black History and Women's History events on campus. Strong role models, including state legislators, have spoken with our students. We have tried to provide a historical perspective for current issues, to encourage everyone to participate in public life, and to emphasize that one can overcome adversity, that hard work does lead to success.

OSP organized an evening coffeehouse get-together with study, games, and karaoke entertainment. The overarching goal is to provide settings and mechanisms for students to form relationships with each other, with faculty and staff, and with the institution as a whole. If students feel an attachment to USCU and to one another, if they feel that USCU is a special place and they are privileged members, then they will be more receptive to all the opportunities available here.

Intramural basketball was successful this year, and we plan to add indoor soccer, tennis, and flag football. Recreational relationships can grow into more productive learning and growth kinds of relationships. We instituted a series of faculty roundtables, where students join a professor for lunch. Students learn something of the history of that professor and see something of his or her human side.

We are planning some overnight trips that will combine a cultural activity with a visit to a local college. For instance, students might tour some of the historical sites of Charleston and visit the Medical University of SC. So often, students will be interested in a field such as physical therapy, but they will be discouraged by the fact that the program is not available in Union or Spartanburg. We need to push their horizons back and broaden their world. Another plan is for a leadership roundtable that would bring OSP PMTs, SGA leaders, and classroom and club leaders together with other interested students. We are developing an organization tentatively called the University/Student Connection, Upsilon Sigma Chi (USC), which will provide a more structured environment for student activities and service opportunities. These students would be ambassadors for USCU. We would like to develop a point system or co-curricular "transcript" to provide motivation and formal recognition. Again, USC is trying to increase the ways in which students can interact and form relationships and so learn and grow in the process.

Our advisement and academic intervention programs help students be more successful. Each semester, faculty evaluate student performance prior to midterm and give advice on how at-risk students can improve. This information is shared with each student's advisor and with OSP counselors, who then talk with the students and offer advice and help.

Every semester, the faculty experiment with new ways to help students to examine their own opinions, values, and beliefs and to understand why they feel the way they do. Students explore the value of learning and become able to use a variety of educational resources, to self-motivate, to adjust to new situations, to be organized and self confident, and to collaborate well with others. Some of the specific activities now in use include group discussion in class, group presentation to the class, group projects out of class, journal writing, and a one-minute-paper at the end of class. In some research projects, faculty require that students choose topics that are personally meaningful to them. Students interview professionals in fields in which they may be interested. Outside speakers are brought in to help students explore important issues, such as drug abuse, including alcohol and nicotine; sexual issues, such as harassment, rape, and STDs; nutrition; student/faculty relations; personality type and learning styles; and career exploration. Students attend the annual book fair in Columbia. One professor requires students to report on a cultural event they have participated in during the semester. This has to be some activity they've never experienced before - an opera, a different sort of restaurant, a play, etc. Another uses the

Columbia State newspaper in an effort to help students become aware of their larger environment. A psychology program, entitled HELP (Human Empathy Learning Program) requires students to use volunteer activity as a means to gain insight into psychological processes, and an English literacy program puts students into elementary schools to help with reading and writing.

Our Student Government Association also provides many leadership, helping, and growth kinds of opportunities to our students. Each year, several students attend a leadership conference in Columbia, where they study organizing, motivation, and budgeting. Each semester, the SGA holds a planning retreat, where the calendar and budget are established. SGA officers and senators meet with the USC President and Board of Trustees and describe their plans for the coming year. This year, the SGA organized food drives, blood drives, and fund raising events, such as bake sales, to help provide student scholarships. Faculty encourage involvement in these activities; for instance biology students can earn "participation credit" for donating blood. We are planning to mirror more of the activities that take place in Columbia, such as Carolinian Creed Week, Clemson/Carolina rivalry events, and blood drives, so that our students can indeed feel that they are a part of USC.

Our work/study financial aid program puts at least 15% of its funds into community service positions, such as the Red Cross and the Adult Education Program. Our Baptist Student Union engages in Bible study and raises funds for mission work. An outdoors Hiking Club takes students into the mountains, and some have come back, saying in great wonderment, "I have never done anything like that before," and "Wait 'til I tell my Grandma; she will not believe where I've been." We are working to organize a Minority Student Group, a Phi Theta Kappa honors society, and a student newspaper. Again, the overall theme behind these efforts is to strengthen students' organizational, planning, and leadership skills, and to broaden their horizons and their views of the world.

In the past, we have avoided development kinds of events during the last week of classes. On a small campus, it is sometimes difficult to organize activities at a time when many end-of-semester obligations compete for staff time, and we haven't wanted to distract students from their studies for final exams, but we have begun to realize that certain activities could be both appropriate to the time and doable with available resources. We have talked about get-togethers for the purpose of kicking off the end-of-semester studying: cheerleading, let's-go-get-'em, "ace that exam" parties; "a keep your LIFE scholarship" motivator; meet your study buddy and get started with pizza; mass student, tutor, and faculty question-and-answer sessions; a study skills refresher; and even just a quick break and relax party.

Finally, we need a designated student activities director. We would like to hire a graduate student from the Columbia or Spartanburg campus to help us with activities-related development efforts. Subsequently, we plan to hire a full-time recruiter/student services specialist. We also need a grant writer to help us fund these efforts. Realistically, we do not expect to have the funds to hire in any of these positions this year, but the needs are there.

Policies and Procedures to Ensure that Academic Programs Support the Economic Development Needs in the State by Providing a Technologically Skilled Workforce

The primary mission of USC Union is to provide students with the first two years of a university education, preparing them to go on to a baccalaureate degree granting institution. In the process of earning a baccalaureate degree, many students earn an associate degree, and USC offers the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science. Within these two degrees, faculty help students acquire skills and knowledge in the following areas: communication, mathematics,

literature and the arts, society and the individual, science and technology, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. One of the goals in the science and technology section of USC Union's General Education Assessment Plan is that students should have the ability to use computers across the curriculum for self-instruction, for collection and retrieval of data, and for word processing, modeling, simulation, and problem solving. Indicators of success include: student performance at USCU; student performance in upper-level courses; especially on the Spartanburg or Columbia campuses; student feedback, faculty feedback and alumni feedback. Assessment methods include: transcript analysis and tracking; grade distribution and GPA data; student evaluation of their courses; faculty evaluation of their teaching; class visitation by peers; student surveys; faculty surveys; alumni surveys; and focus group discussion.