USC sophomores in context
National studies show that many students experience a “sophomore slump” when they return to campus for the second year. Sophomores report feeling disconnected from their campuses and frustrated with larger, more difficult classes. The Sophomore Experience Survey, a national assessment administered at USC in spring 2014, compared Carolina sophomores with their counterparts nationwide. In the survey, USC sophomores’ responses were:

- above national average sense of community
- below national average faculty-student interaction
- above national average student involvement
- below national average engaged learning

79.6% of the fall 2009 cohort returned for their third year in fall 2011. As the retention rate has risen, the third-year return rate has followed suit.

Top concerns
In surveys and focus groups, USC sophomores reported their greatest concerns were:
- succeeding in more difficult courses
- changing majors and staying on track
- handling the commute from off-campus housing
- managing time and finances

As the number of freshmen has increased, the availability of campus housing for sophomores has declined. In 2014-15, just 7% of campus residents were sophomores, down from 22% 10 years ago.

Generally, students who didn’t return for their third year were nine hours — just three classes — shy of the 60-hour mark that designates junior class standing.

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The Sophomore Initiative

Launched in 2004, the Sophomore Initiative’s goals are:

• to make sophomores aware of available resources
• to help sophomores feel connected to USC
• to support students’ academic success and their relationships with their academic advisers
• to assist sophomores in finding meaning and purpose through their majors and careers
• to encourage sophomores to engage in high-impact practices through USC Connect and to explore Graduation with Leadership Distinction
• to help faculty and staff understand the special needs of sophomore students and how to best assist them.

Sophomore September

Sophomore September is a month-long series of events designed to support sophomores in targeted areas. Events include:

**How to Date Your Major**
6 p.m. Sept. 22
location TBA

**Career Fest & S.E.T. Fair**
12 - 4 p.m. Sept. 22
Columbia Convention Center

**Choose Your Own Adventure with Undergraduate Research**
3 p.m. Sept. 23
Gambrell Room 150, PC lab

**Mutual Expectations Workshop on Academic Advising**
11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Sept. 29
Capstone Campus Room

**Engagement Speed Circuit**
5:30 - 7 p.m. Sept. 30
Capstone Campus Room

Details on these and many other events are online at [sc.edu/studentengagement/tsis.html](http://sc.edu/studentengagement/tsis.html)

More

Faculty can do

Recommend that sophomores take advantage of USC’s stress management and other health and wellness programs.

Mentor a sophomore in an undergraduate research project.

Refer students to the Student Success Center and University Advising Center.

Encourage students to get started with the USC Connect Graduation with Leadership Distinction program.

Urge sophomores to plan for internships, peer leadership positions and study abroad programs.

Email Kimberly Dressler at dresslek@mailbox.sc.edu if you have questions or ideas.