Dear Colleagues and Friends of USC Connect,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to USC Connect: A Story of Success. We dedicate this e-publication to all who have collaborated to enhance undergraduate education at the University of South Carolina through the integration of learning within and beyond the classroom.

USC Connect is a story of faculty, staff, and students coming together across USC Columbia, Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union. It is a story about defining and clarifying a broad concept, integrative learning, through a concrete goal, Graduation with Leadership Distinction (GLD). It is a story that brings together teaching and learning, program development, and student success. It is the story of the impact of a shared mission across academic and student affairs and all units of the university supporting undergraduate education.

Do you wonder if USC Connect has really made a difference? Hear first-hand from graduate Ore Oluwole (class of 2016) on what it meant for him to reflect on, connect, and apply his experiences within and beyond the classroom. By this May, there will be over 1,000 GLD graduates (2014-2017) with similar stories to tell. Read about the “ripple effects” of faculty work with USC Connect on teaching, grant work, and engagement in the broader university culture from Dr. Charles (Charlie) Pierce, Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Consider the powerful story told by Laura Carnes, Director of Student Engagement and Success at USC-Lancaster, who shares what USC Connect has meant for campus relationships and the upward mobility of graduates from our Palmetto College Campuses.

We are proud of and thankful for all those who have supported the work of USC Connect since its inception. We still have much to do, but this is a great time to pause and reflect on how far we have come. If you see a glimpse of your story in these pages, please know that we appreciate all you have done to help us build a culture of integrative learning at USC. If this is a new story to you, we welcome your collaboration in the future . . . we are on to USC Connect 2.0.

On behalf of the hundreds of active participants in USC Connect since 2011, enjoy looking back on and taking stock of our journey.

Very sincerely,

Irma J. Van Scoy
Executive Director
USCCONNECT & Carolina Core received the 2014 Association for General and Liberal Studies Exemplary Program Processes Award in Co-Curricular General Education Learning. The award recognizes USC’s success in building on the nine learning outcomes of the Carolina Core by adding a tenth dimension: Student learning through beyond the classroom experiences. The ALGS award recognizes innovative and systematic efforts to use co-curricular activities to accomplish goals of general education and highlights programs that can be used as a practical model for other institutions.

USCCONNECT was selected as the Bronze Award Winner for the NASPA 2016 Excellence Award for Civic Learning, Democratic Engagement, Service-Learning, Community Service, and Related Category. The award recognizes USCCONNECT’s impact on student learning, cross-campus collaboration, originality and sustainability. While USCCONNECT is housed in the Office of the Provost, its close collaboration with the Division of Student Affairs was key to this recognition.

In conjunction with the Study Abroad Office, USCCONNECT received the Innovation in Alumni Engagement Award from GoAbroad.com for Graduation with Leadership Distinction in Global Learning. The award acknowledges universities who are pioneers in offering productive re-entry programming for students who have participated in study abroad experiences.

Since the addition of USCCONNECT/GLD to Discovery Day, undergraduate presentations have tripled to over 700 for 2017.
Reflecting on my GLD Experience.
By Ore Oluwole

As a graduate of the University of South Carolina, I am proud of what I accomplished during my four years.

The experience is richer because I completed and earned Graduation with Leadership Distinction (GLD).

Global Learning graduates have taken off to 20 countries!

Going through GLD let me reflect on the classes and experiences that challenged and shaped me into the person I am today.

Senior year I thought I had everything all together before enrolling in GLD. I planned to have two pathways in Global Learning and Professional and Civic Engagement and thought I knew exactly how I was going to piece everything together.

From enrolling in the University 401 class, I came to the realization that I didn’t have the complete picture outlined. So I simplified and evaluated what the key classes and experiences were that led me on a specific path. From doing that I found that even though I had experiences in Professional and Civic Engagement, the pathway for me was Global Learning.

This was the start of slowly putting the puzzle together.

I chose a pathway in Global Learning from living and working at the International House at Maxcy College and studying abroad in Germany and Australia. As a public relations major, I had classes that prepared me for the endeavors abroad when it came to writing, mass communications and multimedia.

Through GLD, I connected how each experience built upon another.

It took several brainstorming sessions, worksheets, presentations, written drafts, one-on-ones and class discussions to finally put everything together. That was the value of taking the University 401 class because I had frequent guidance along the way.

The connections were some of the most rewarding aspects. For instance, writing was one of my strengths and having classes that challenged my writing and knowledge of global media was beneficial when I studied abroad both times because I got experience in social media, journalism, blogging, international affairs and multimedia. I blended my love of writing with my interest in global learning.

After studying abroad, I used those experiences at the International House at Maxcy to revitalize the residence hall’s communications tactics to improve global learning and engagement. If I was not enrolled in GLD, I would have just listed my mass communications experiences on a resume but by being in the program, I connected each experience to one another to build upon the work in and outside of the classroom that attributed to my chosen pathway. That’s the part of GLD that challenged me the most but was also the most rewarding in the end.

Achieving Graduation with Leadership Distinction was more than just an honor, but a validation of why I chose the University of South Carolina and all the opportunities available along the way. Everything paid off because now I can always go to my e-portfolio to reflect on some of the most important within and beyond the classroom experiences at USC but can also show a more holistic, adventurous and personal side of myself that a resume cannot.
USC CONNECT
Over the Years.

2011

Approved!
USC CONNECT approved by the SACS as USC’s quality enhancement plan.

2012

Making Connections
USC CONNECT holds the FIRST annual Get Connected Fair to orient students to integrative learning.

2011

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2012

USC CONNECT holds the FIRST annual Get Connected Fair to orient students to integrative learning.

2013

Grants!
The First Integrative Learning Grants are awarded to faculty.

2014

Award Winning
 Winners of the 2014 Association for General and Liberal Studies Exemplary Program Award

USC CONNECT’s Beyond the Classroom Database goes LIVE on our website!

2015

University 401
14 sections of University 401 established as a support course for students completing GLD.

So Many Graduates!
Over 200 GLD Graduates including students from Palmetto College Campuses.

New Pathway!
Diversity and Social Advocacy approved as GLD’s fifth pathway!

2016

Discover USC
Discover USC includes 715 undergraduate presentations (tripled from 2011).

Awards Galore
Winners of the Innovation in Alumni engagement Award from GoAbroad, in partnership with the Study Abroad Office!

2017

By the Thousands
The 1,000th GLD Graduate crosses the stage!

Discover USC
Discover USC includes 715 undergraduate presentations (tripled from 2011).

Awards Galore
Winners of the Innovation in Alumni engagement Award from GoAbroad, in partnership with the Study Abroad Office!

2013

Faculty Senate approves USC CONNECT Over the Years.

2014

First Graduates!
First students to earn Graduation with Leadership Distinction in May 2014.

Award Winning
Winners of the 2014 Association for General and Liberal Studies Exemplary Program Award

USC CONNECT and GLD highlighted in New Student Orientation.

2016

Discover USC
Discover USC includes 715 undergraduate presentations (tripled from 2011).

Awards Galore
Winners of the Innovation in Alumni engagement Award from GoAbroad, in partnership with the Study Abroad Office!

2017

Discover USC
Discover USC includes 715 undergraduate presentations (tripled from 2011).

Awards Galore
Winners of the Innovation in Alumni engagement Award from GoAbroad, in partnership with the Study Abroad Office!

2018

Another Award
Bronze Award Winner

2016 Excellence Award

Recommended for Beyond the Classroom Engagement by Major available online.
I have long been a staunch believer in student learning through co-curricular engagement. While I have shared these values with many students over the years, I did not fully understand how to help students integrate their learning until building collaborative relationships with USC Connect. Partnering with USC Connect has given me a much deeper education in and appreciation for the concepts of integrative learning. Now, I have firsthand experience in how USC Connect is designed on the premise of collaboration across student affairs and academic affairs, with a focus on the integration of student learning through a network of within-the-classroom (WTC) and beyond-the-classroom (BTC) experiences.

One of the most tangible examples of integrative learning is Graduation with Leadership Distinction (GLD), a signature institutional program developed within USC Connect. This program supports students in making self-discovers through integrative learning. GLD offers students with a clear process, and ultimate recognition, for the successful completion of meaningful achievements along a chosen path. What I appreciate about GLD is that it identifies multiple options for students to pursue, such as professional and civic engagement and research, which are two of the paths that align well with engineering student interests. In fact, the GLD Research program is an essential component of a current NSF NUE (Nanotechnology Undergraduate Education) grant award for which I am a co-investigator.

GLD is purposefully rigorous. Students must demonstrate integrative learning through specific and relevant WTC assignments, significant time spent on BTC activities, public presentation, and perhaps the most challenging requirement, an e-portfolio. The reflective insight that the e-portfolio brings to life the linkages that each student creates in his/her own assessment of learning. It truly captures the essence of what we mean when we state that higher education must develop more and better critical thinkers.

Through USC Connect, I have firsthand knowledge of how GLD impacts students. Last year, I served as a small-group advisor to help guide individual students through the process of writing an e-portfolio. In addition, I was trained for and served as an independent e-portfolio evaluator, providing informative feedback for students to elevate and enhance their e-portfolio. This process of supporting and reviewing student reflections has had ripple effects, especially with how I approach teaching and learning in my classroom. Reflective writing assignments are now linked with engineering problem solving, which has become a staple in the Introduction to Civil Engineering course that I teach for first-year and transfer students. This semester, I am developing and implementing an integrative learning module for this course, with the support of an internal grant from our Center for Teaching Excellence and USC Connect.

In my view, USC Connect is our institutional driver of an educational culture shift. This belief was cemented this past summer while participating on the USC team that attended the AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and the Departments. Our goal for this intensive workshop was to develop a five-year strategic plan that builds on the tremendous momentum with USC Connect. While working with administrative leaders and other faculty members from across our campus, it became clear to me that USC Connect and its signature GLD program is an embedded and highly visible part of the culture at USC. I am proud to be a small part of this transformative movement on integrative learning, and I look forward to seeing what comes next.

Faculty Fellows are an integral part of the USC Connect team. Fellows serve as advocates for integrative learning and provide faculty perspectives and recommendations to USC Connect. They support students in developing Graduation with Leadership Distinction e-portfolios and explore the application of integrative learning strategies to their own programs. Faculty Fellows collaborate with USC Connect and one another to assess student learning and pursue scholarship opportunities including national presentations and publications.
opportunities for real world experience and leadership development, and assist in retaining students within the university. However, these experiences are often unassociated with academic work and faculty members sometimes worry that over involvement may lead to procrastination, lower academic performance, and attrition.

The concept of integrative learning, achieved through USC Connect, has finally provided a gateway for student affairs and academic affairs professionals to have conversations about meaningful learning that may occur both within and beyond the classroom: Learning that is holistically connected, and learning that is grounded in active experimentation and reflection requiring both coursework and co-curricular experiences.

The Palmetto College Campus student experience is grounded in open admissions policies which allow greater access to higher education among the nontraditional student population—including first generation college students. These students often come from areas of the state that are economically and educationally underserved. They are drawn to higher education due to the promise of social mobility and economic progress. Motivating Palmetto College Campus students toward academic success can be complex, but research has pointed to student drive for achievement as a strong motivational factor along their path to academic succession. This indicator is even higher for first generation college students.

GLD offers a pathway for Palmetto College Campus students to tap into an intrinsic need for achievement. Taken a step further, accomplishing GLD builds qualities related to self-esteem and self-efficacy. These are qualities Palmetto College Campus students may initially need assistance in developing and qualities that will serve these students well as they persist through the higher education environment. One of the strongest motivators for first generation students is their need for achievement, and GLD allows them to achieve in challenging, yet supportive ways that ultimately influence their futures both within and beyond the university atmosphere. It is, truly, one of the most impactful experiences offered to Palmetto College Campus students.

USC Connect and GLD have reinvigorated me both professionally and personally as I am now able to connect with academic and student affairs colleagues in unique, purposeful, and substantial ways, and watch as students achieve greatness in capacities they had never imagined.

High Impact Practices (e.g. internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, capstone seminars) and Integrative Learning are at the center of national conversations on high quality undergraduate education.

Stories of success have been dominated by small, liberal arts colleges. USC CONNECT is leading the way to demonstrate integrative learning at a comprehensive research university.

National Leadership Roles
Reinvention Collaborative’s Network for Curricular and Co-Curricular Engagement and Integrative Learning
American College Personnel Association Commission on Assessment and Evaluation
QEP Lead Evaluators for SACSCOC
Invited presentations at numerous conferences

Featured
USC CONNECT was featured in The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most a book by Peter Felten, John N. Gardner, Charles C. Schroeder, Leo M. Lambert, and Betsy O. Barefoot

Consultations
Over a dozen universities such as UCLA, Indiana University (IUPUI), Wake Forest, University of Central Florida, and University of Texas El Paso have contacted us for further information on our work.

Since 2011, 1,000+ faculty & staff have attended Integrative Learning events & workshops (many co-sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence).

USC CONNECT has awarded 53 Integrative Learning Grants to faculty, totaling $170,443.25

Universities have struggled, for some time, to address the dichotomy that exists between student and academic affairs. Student affairs staff believe student involvement in co-curricular activities enhance the collegiate experience, provide valuable opportunities for real world experience and leadership development, and assist in retaining students within the university. However, these experiences are often unassociated with academic work and faculty members sometimes worry that over involvement may lead to procrastination, lower academic performance, and attrition.

The concept of integrative learning, achieved through USC Connect, has finally provided a gateway for student affairs and academic affairs professionals to have conversations about meaningful learning that may occur both within and beyond the classroom: Learning that is holistically connected, and learning that is grounded in active experimentation and reflection requiring both coursework and co-curricular experiences.

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The very nature of USC Connect and Graduation with Leadership Distinction (GLD), with integrative learning as the core, is not just “another” accomplishment for Palmetto College Campus students. USC Connect and GLD represent a style of teaching and learning that can truly galvanize Palmetto College Campus students toward either transferring to another institution or earning a degree.

GLD offers a pathway for Palmetto College Campus students to tap into an intrinsic need for achievement.

Taken a step further, accomplishing GLD builds qualities related to self-esteem and self-efficacy. These are qualities Palmetto College Campus students may initially need assistance in developing and qualities that will serve these students well as they persist through the higher education environment. One of the strongest motivators for first generation students is their need for achievement, and GLD allows them to achieve in challenging, yet supportive ways that ultimately influence their futures both within and beyond the university atmosphere. It is, truly, one of the most impactful experiences offered to Palmetto College Campus students.

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By Laura Carnes
Director of Student Engagement and Success, USC Lancaster

The National Conversation

COMING TOGETHER to lift up our students

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The National Conversation

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Beyond The Classroom
Connecting Students to Purposeful Learning

Check out how students can get connected at USC!

USCCONNECT Opportunity Database
Currently over 800 opportunities listed

USCCONNECT Recommendations by Major
72 Programs Represented and Growing

USCCONNECT Calendar
New in 2016

Send them to us!

100%
of survey respondents said that GLD Advisors were able to answer their questions.

With appreciation to all those sharing information in these systems so students can connect with meaningful experiences aligned with their areas of interest.

USCCONNECT is a campus-wide initiative.

We celebrate the many offices and individuals who support and encourage student engagement and learning within and beyond the classroom. YOU are USCCONNECT! There are too many to list everyone, and we thank you ALL, but here are some of the many entities that make USCCONNECT happen:

Our Pathway Partners
- Career Center
- Leadership and Service Center and the Office of Service-Learning & Community Engagement
- Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
- Offices of Study Abroad and International Student Services
- Office of Undergraduate Research

Faculty, staff, advisors, and administrators supporting student engagement and integrative learning in the Offices of the President and Provost; the Division of Student Affairs, and all Colleges/Schools/Departments.

All those helping develop and orient others to USCCONNECT: Admissions, Communications, New Student Orientation, UNIV 101 Programs, University Technology Services, USCCONNECT Advisory Council, USCCONNECT Student Advisory Council

YOU are connecting students with experiences, challenging students’ to integrate and articulate learning, and helping students apply learning to leadership.

Thank you!
USC CONNECT

The University of South Carolina’s comprehensive initiative to enhance undergraduate education and build a culture of integrative learning.

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