USC Palmetto College
Strategic Plan 2024-2029

April 19, 2024

Accessible. Affordable. Flexible.

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina PALMETTO COLLEGE

Presented to the **University of South Carolina Board of Trustees**
by **Palmetto College Chancellor Susan Elkins**

Palmetto College Structure

A System Approach…

**Regional
Palmetto College Campuses**
Two-Year Institutions

Lancaster

Salkehatchie

Sumter

Union

Palmetto College
Columbia

**Bachelor's
Degree Completion Programs**
Four-Year Institutions

Columbia

Aiken

Beaufort

Upstate

Strategic Priorities: Palmetto College Campuses

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
LANCASTER

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
SALKEHATCHIE

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
SUMTER

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
UNION

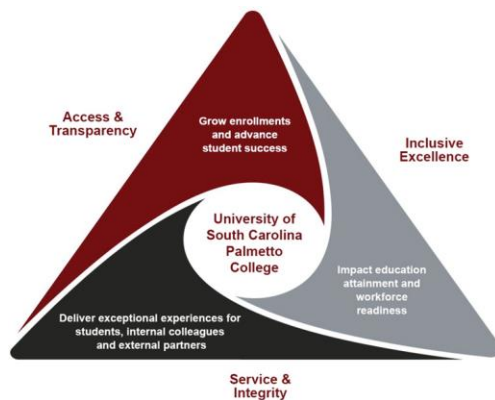UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
PALMETTO COLLEGE
Columbia

UNIVERSITY OF
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PALMETTO COLLEGE

Introduction

▪ The leadership of the University of South Carolina, including USC Palmetto College, stands by and values the priorities included in the *For South Carolina*: *A Path to Excellence*, as reflected in the University of South Carolina Strategic Plan (2023-2028).

▪ USC Palmetto College will continue to further our important work in those areas in alignment with the USC plan due to our status as branch campuses of USC Columbia and joint accreditation by SACSCOC.

▪ "Each Priority reflects our foundational values of Access and Transparency, Inclusive Excellence, and Service and Integrity, which are also the core of our Carolinian Creed" for USC, including our Palmetto College Campuses.

Access & Transparency — **Grow enrollments and advance student success** — **Inclusive Excellence** — University of South Carolina Palmetto College — **Impact education attainment and workforce readiness** — **Deliver exceptional experiences for students, internal colleagues and external partners** — **Service & Integrity**

Deliver Exceptional Experiences for Students, Internal Colleagues and External Partners

We serve students, faculty and staff colleagues, and internal and external partners with world-class experiences by focusing on continuous process improvement, efficiency and effectiveness, and service excellence.

Initiatives
- Optimize services and processes
- Promote organizational and financial health
- Enhance giving/fundraising efforts across PC Campuses

Grow Enrollments and Advance Student Success

We transform lives by providing high quality accessible, affordable, and flexible USC degrees to South Carolinians across the state and beyond, leading to a successful USC student experience.

Initiatives
- Drive enrollment growth
- Promote teaching excellence
- Foster staff development
- Drive student success
- Empower diverse students, staff, and faculty

Impact Education Attainment and Workforce Readiness

We impact South Carolinians and South Carolina communities by providing workforce ready graduates, focusing on high-demand community needs which also impacts economic growth in the Palmetto State.

Initiatives
- Impact our communities
- Increase transfer and pipeline partnerships
- Expand workforce-focused credentials

UNIVERSITY OF **South Carolina** PALMETTO COLLEGE

Grow enrollments and advance student success

Goals

1.1 Drive enrollment growth

1.2 Promote teaching and research excellence

1.3 Foster staff development

1.4 Drive student success

1.5 Empower diverse students, staff, and faculty

Goals		Key Action Items
1.1	Drive enrollment growth.	**1.1.1 Expand on-campus and online program offerings to meet demand and regional need.** Metric: # of On-Campus Program, Online Programs, Total Enrollment (Overall)
		1.1.2 Develop a reverse Transfer Program. Metric: # of Revenue Transfer Programs
		1.1.3 Establish recruitment campaigns focused on growing enrollment in key student types (e.g. transfers, military affiliated, working adults) while maintaining a balance across the categories (e.g. first-time freshmen and dual enrollments.) Metric: # of Campaigns to Address Enrollment by Student type and Enrollment by Student Category
		1.1.4 Reduce friction in enrollment processes via mapping the process and identifying pain points for students or inconsistent practices and developing updates to these areas. Metric: Enrollment Process Map / Usage of CRM and related tools / IT Support
		1.1.5 Provide flyers and other branding materials for comprehensive and research university partners and PC staff to distribute at college fairs and other events. Metric: Recruitment Materials Created and Updated
1.2	Promote teaching and research excellence.	**1.2.1 Increase resources for faculty conference attendance and research initiatives.** Metric: Funding for Faculty Conferences and Research / Professional Development and Mentorship
		1.2.2 Improve tracking of research on PC Campuses for both reporting and recruitment purposes. Metric: Tracking Method Created
		1.2.3 Showcase faculty research and innovative teaching methods, especially in recruiting conversations, e.g., video storytelling, podcasts and publications. Metric: New Venues for Showcasing Research and Teaching
		1.2.4 Explore sources and apply for funding for research support. Metric: Total Amount of Research Expenditures
1.3	Foster staff development.	**1.3.1 Increase training and support of recruitment and admissions teams and share leading practices across PC Campuses, such as hiring Spanish-speaking recruiters and identification of partnerships.** Metric: Increase Faculty, Staff, and Administration Professional Development Support, Help and Well-Being, and Representation
		1.3.2. Review staff professional development policies and access to funding. Metrics: Increased Staff and Administrative Professional Development Support / Representation

Priority 1

Grow enrollments and advance student success

Goals
1.1 Drive enrollment growth

1.2 Promote teaching and research excellence

1.3 Foster staff development

1.4 Drive student success

1.5 Empower diverse students, staff, and faculty

Goals		Key Action Items
1.4	**Drive student success.**	**1.4.1 Appoint retention task force to increase focus on retention strategies.** **Metric**: Increasing a Student Success Rate
		1.4.2 Expand student support services after uncovering gaps in consistency of service across the system, especially in advising, tutoring, and career readiness.* **Metric**: # of Student Support Services for health and well-being / # if users of student support services
		1.4.3 Identify curricula that needs to be enhanced with current skills needs as identified via labor market research and partnerships with employers. **Metric**: Update Curricula / Expanded Offerings
		1.4.4 Promote opportunities for student engagement in high impact practices. Co-Curriculum: Students with Recorded Engagement** / Co-Curriculum: Students with Recorded Engagement*
1.5	**Empower diverse students, staff, and faculty.**	**1.5.1 Expand methods to improve students' sense of belonging.** **Metric**: # of Students Participating in Campus Organizations
		1.5.2 Grow athletic program offerings at campuses.* **Metric**: # Athletic Programs
		1.5.3 Explore options for increasing housing options, especially for international athletes. **Metric**: # of Housing Options
		1.5.4 Provide more opportunities for students to engage with faculty research. **Metric**: # of Students Engaged with Faculty Research
		1.5.5 Develop complementary organizations for staff and faculty, such as Staff Senate, PC Faculty Senate. **Metric**: Increase Faculty, Staff, and Administration Professional Development Support, Help and Well-Being, and Representation
		1.5.6 Encourage collaboration between staff and faculty at different campuses and use co-curricular development in recruitment storytelling for both faculty and students. **Metric**: Recruitment Materials Created
		1.5.7 Actively recruit and enroll underrepresented minorities. **Metric**: # of Underrepresented Minorities (URM)
		1.5.8 Recruit faculty, staff, and students to decrease the % gap for overall URM/AA. **Metric**: Diversity % Gap Amongst Faculty, Staff, and UG Students – Overall URM
		1.5.9 Recruit faculty, staff, and students to decrease the % gap for overall BIPOC. **Metric**: Diversity % Gap Amongst Faculty, Staff, and UG Students – BIPOC
		1.5.10 Retain a diverse student body by using biennial survey feedback. **Metric**: CCSSE Discussion with Diverse Others: First-Year Students

Priority 2

Deliver world-class experiences for students, internal colleagues and external partners

Goals

2.1 Optimize services and processes

2.2 Promote organizational and financial health

2.3 Enhance giving and fundraising efforts across PC Campuses

Goals		Key Action Items
2.1	Optimize services and processes.	**2.1.1 Allocate more resources to technology infrastructure after establishing an updated priority list of software, systems and hardware that need attention.** **Metric**: Enrollment Process Map / Usage of CRM and Related Tools / IT Support
		2.1.2 Work with Columbia stakeholders to uncover ways to streamline processes for capital improvement projects across PC Campuses. **Metric:** Process is Streamlined and Continuously Monitored for Improvement
2.2	Promote organizational and financial health.	**2.2.1 Ensure Balanced Budgets and Appropriate Fund Balances.** **Metric:** Balanced Budgets and Appropriate Fund Balances
		2.2.2 Communicate more frequently and with more transparency regarding administrative decision making and the many ways in which we are balancing our budgets and operating with financial health. **Metric**: # of Communications Regarding Balanced Budgets and Appropriate Fund Balances
2.3	Enhance giving and fundraising efforts across PC Campuses.	**2.3.1 Expand philanthropic efforts in order to increase dollars raised.** **Metric**: Dollar Raised / Production (Philanthropic) / Dollars Raised
		2.3.2 Develop additional fundraising opportunities, events and partnerships. **Metric**: # of Solicitations, Donor Visits, Top 10 Prospects who have Donated, Top 10 Prospects who have been Visited

Impact education attainment and workforce readiness

Goals

3.1 Impact our communities

3.2 Increase transfer and pipeline partnerships

3.3 Expand workforce focused credentials

Goals		Key Action Items
3.1	Impact our communities.	**3.1.1 Grow community connections through initiatives like the iCarolina Labs and making PC Campus facilities available to local organizations.** **Metric**: # of Community Connections / Faculty Staff Community Service and # Community Members on Campuses
		3.1.2 More widely communicate academic success & community service (e.g. report on involvement of athletes, student body in community service projects; profiles of those who graduate with distinction due to their service work). **Metric**: # of Communications Related to Academic Success & Community Service
3.2	Increase transfer and pipeline partnerships.	**3.2.1 Improve transferability. Remove barriers to in-system transfers**. **Metric**: # of Improvements in Transfer Process
		3.2.2 Maintain healthy number of dual enrollment relationships with local high schools. **Metric**: # of Recruitment Campaigns for Enrollment by Student Type and Category
3.3	Expand workforce focused credentials.	**3.3.1 Expand offerings that benefit workforce skills needs in each community.** **Metric**: Expanded Offerings / Update Curricula to Align with Workforce Needs
		3.3.2 Increase partnerships with local employers and industry, including training and workforce development opportunities for employees. **Metric**: # of New Partnerships

Metrics By Division (Presidential Metrics in Garnet*) : (Chancellor Metrics in Blue**)

Academic Affairs

1. **Overall Palmetto College Enrollment** / **New Freshman Class Size***
2. Enrollment Process Map / Usage of CRM and Related Tools / IT Support
3. # of Reverse Transfer Programs
4. # of New Partnerships
5. Expanded Offerings / Update Curricula to Align with Workforce Needs
6. # of Improvements in Transfer Process
7. **Overall Student Success Rate** / **Overall 6-year Graduation Rate of New Freshman***

Student Affairs & Academic Support

8. **Co-Curriculum: Students with Recorded Engagement** / **Co-Curriculum: Students with Recorded Engagement***
9. # of Support Services for Health and Well-being of Students / # of Users of Services
10. # of Athletic Programs
11. # of Housing Options
12. Methods to Improve Students' Sense of Belonging, Health, and Well-being

Research & Scholarship

13. Total Amount of Research Expenditures** / Total Amount of Research Expenditures*
14. New Venues for Showcasing Research, Scholarship, and Teaching
15. Total Faculty Scholarly Activity / Tracking Method Created
16. Amount of Funding for Faculty Conferences and Research / Professional Development and Mentorship
17. # of Students Engaged with Faculty Research

Metrics By Division (Presidential Metrics in Garnet*) : (Chancellor Metrics in Blue)**

|	
Access, Opportunity & Engagement	18. # of Underrepresented Minorities (URM) 19. Diversity % Gap Amongst Faculty, Staff, and Students – Overall URM 20. Diversity % Gap Amongst Faculty, Staff, and Students – BIPOC 21. CCSSE Discussion with Diverse Others: First-Year Students
Communications and Marketing	22. Recruitment Materials Created and Updated 23. # of Community Connections / Faculty Staff Community Service and Community Members on Campuses 22. # of Communications Related to Success and Service 23. # of Recruitment Campaigns for Enrollment by Student Type and Category
Admin & Finance	26. **Balanced Budgets / Appropriate Fund Balances** / **FInance Operating Margin (USC System)*** 27. Optimize all Administrative Processes Including Capital Projects Improvement Processes, Increased Faculty, Staff, and Administration Professional Development Support, Health and Well-Being, and Representation
Development	28. **Dollars Raised/Production **(Philanthropic) / Dollars Raised*** 29. # of Solicitations, Donor Visits, Top 10 Prospects who have Donated, Top 10 Prospects who have been Visited

Strategic Priorities: Palmetto College Online / Partnership Programs
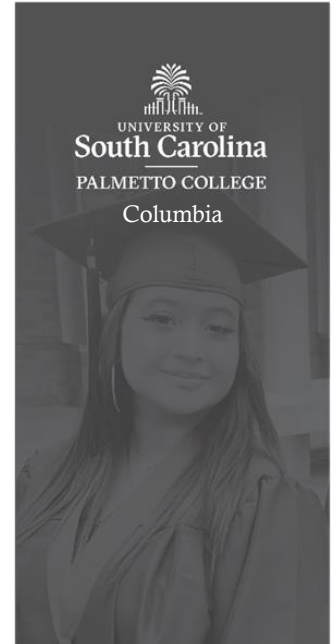
Introduction

▪ **PC Online/Partnership Programs' strategic priorities for the coming five years fall into nine categories, ranging from marketing to academic offerings to retention. Goals, action items and metrics for each of them form the foundation of a reimagined PC Online.**

▪ **This work is done in conjunction with the USC System Strategic Plan along with the strategic plan of the partner institutions.**

Strategic Priorities Fall into Nine Categories

1 — Update Budget Model

2 — Enhance Marketing

3 — Optimize Enrollment & Recruitment

4 — Address Affordability

5 — Increase Student Support

6 — Improve Retention

7 — Foster Faculty/Staff Development

8 — Optimize Technology

9 — Expand Academic Offerings

Goals		Key Action Items
1.1	Update business plan/budget model.	**1.1.1 Determine the revenue share splits for tuition and appropriations to the PC Campuses and comprehensive universities.** **Metric:** New budget model developed to include revenue share splits for tuition and appropriations
		1.1.2 Increase the transparency and predictability for the funding to the PC Online partners. **Metric:** Develop annual budgets with partner institutions in conjunction with routine deadlines each fiscal year and communicate with regularly with stakeholders
1.2	Increase PC's working capital.	**1.2.1 Review timing of revenue and appropriation funds to determine how to best increase the working capital available for PC Online.** **Metric:** Timing reviewed, updated, and communicated with all stakeholders annually
		1.2.2 Coordinate advertising spending and marketing endeavors with effective recruitment cycles to impact enrollment funnel behavior. **Metric:** Advertising spending and marketing endeavors are coordinated with recruitment cycles
		1.2.3 Increase the spending on marketing and infrastructure in proportion to increases in enrollment. **Metric:** Spending on marketing and infrastructure is increased as enrollment increases

Priority 1

Update Budget Model

Goals

1.1 Update business plan/budget model

1.2 Increase PC's working capital

Priority 2
Enhance Marketing

Goals
2.1 Improve brand clarity for individual institutions

2.2 Creative comprehensive and consistent communication plans

2.3 Develop annual marketing plans

2.4 Work to improve inbound traffic via SEO

2.5 Expand digital marketing tactics and targets

2.6 Create a data-informed enrollment management culture with improved analytic reporting

2.7 Develop a library of multi-media creative assets

2.8 Restructure Marketing and Communications team

Goals		Key Action Items
2.1	Improve brand clarity for individual institutions while also acknowledging the partnership with Palmetto College.	**2.1.1 Update email communications for 1) post-inquiry follow-up and 2) application start/finish thank you messaging to include a statement regarding the institution is "A Palmetto College Partner" so that the name of the institution is listed first, is clear and well-branded, and also that the affiliation with Palmetto College is present.** Metric: Updated email and text communication plans to include appropriate branding and partnership information.
2.2	Create comprehensive and consistent communication plans regarding enrollment process.	**2.2.1 Map all student journeys from inquiry through enrollment and identify gaps in communications or instances where the multiple layers of branding may cause confusion for students. Examples:** • Clarify the financial aid relationship for BOL/BLS students whose geographic location dictates the 2-year Palmetto College campus that is responsible for financial aid management for that student. • Ensure procedural emails are clear with next steps at each stage and create a cadence of touchpoints that don't leave long gaps in contact times regardless of time of year. Metric: Update student communication plans for clarity of campus, brand, and next steps for each stage of the admissions and enrollment funnel.
2.3	Develop annual marketing plans that include recruitment activity timelines, special events and in-market cycles for digital advertising.	**2.3.1 Develop a central marketing and recruitment annual roadmap with an internal informational component so strategies are communicated to all PC Online recruiters and key stakeholders, as well as supplying necessary materials.** Metric: Develop and implement a new marketing plan, review data report out and update frequently based on new trends.
		2.3.2 Provide flyers and other branding materials for comprehensive and research university partners and PC staff to distribute at college fairs and other events. Metric: Create and update new marketing material to distribute

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Priority 2
Enhance Marketing

Goals

2.1 Improve brand clarity for individual institutions

2.2 Creative comprehensive and consistent communication plans

2.3 Develop annual marketing plans

2.4 Work to improve inbound traffic via SEO

2.5 Expand digital marketing tactics and targets

2.6 Create a data-informed enrollment management culture with improved analytic reporting

2.7 Develop a library of multi-media creative assets

2.8 Restructure Marketing and Communications team

Goals		Key Action Items
2.4	Ensure online programs are easy to find through web searches by consistently working to improve inbound traffic via organic search engine optimization (SEO).	**2.4.1 Introduce ongoing content generation efforts that are based on keyword research to increase the search engine optimization of the website, which will increase inbound traffic to the site.** **Metric:** Review and update web SEO based on current trends and data
		2.4.2 Implement lead generation focused tactics (including ad platform settings) that prioritize both web visits and form completions. **Metric:** Create new digital strategies to target and geo fence specific target markets
		2.4.3 Build a separate PC-specific landing page that is easily found via web search, rather than remaining an embedded page on USC Columbia's website. **Metric:** New and updated landing pages based on degree clusters with new inquiry forms to track lead generation
2.5	Expand digital marketing tactics and targets.	**2.5.1 Fund digital advertising at levels that allow an always-on schedule, rotating through various media channels.** **Metric:** Expand digital marketing campaigns to include target markets
		2.5.2 Create audience-specific campaigns (e.g. military focused campaigns) and launch a state-wide degree completion campaign. Each audience-specific campaign needs refreshed creative and several versions that can be tested for performance. **Metric:** New digital strategies and campaigns to target and geo fence specific target markets
2.6	Create a data-informed enrollment management culture with improved advertising and enrollment analytics reporting practices.	**2.6.1 Build a dashboard to capture advertising performance metrics, inquiry data, website performance metrics, and enrollment trends in the same dashboard in order to track and visualize the full enrollment funnel.** **Metric:** New dashboard creation to capture new digital media metrics and website performance
		2.6.2 Develop a perpetual survey methodology that garners consistent feedback from applicants, students and graduates at key stages through admissions and enrollment cycles, first semester completed, graduate outcomes, etc. **Metric:** Perpetual survey instrument developed to gain input for data driven decisions

Enhance Marketing

Goals

2.1 Improve brand clarity for individual institutions

2.2 Creative comprehensive and consistent communication plans

2.3 Develop annual marketing plans

2.4 Work to improve inbound traffic via SEO

2.5 Expand digital marketing tactics and targets

2.6 Create a data-informed enrollment management culture with improved analytic reporting

2.7 Develop a library of multi-media creative assets

2.8 Restructure Marketing and Communications team

Goals		Key Action Items
2.7	Develop a library of multi-media creative assets to use in advertising and publications.	**2.7.1 Invest in new and additional photo/video equipment necessary to increase the creative assets available for use in both recruitment and retention endeavors in emails, printed materials, digital advertising and videos that feature real students, alumni and faculty in various stages of their careers and education journeys. Make resources available to contract with photographers/videographers when needed.** **Metric:** Purchased new photo and video equipment to maximize and improve marketing, recruitment, and student success
		2.7.2 Develop a year-round strategy for events at which photos and videos can be captured in order to plan resources for capturing assets. **Metric:** Year-round strategy for photo and video collection to improve marketing, recruitment, and student success
2.8	Restructure Marketing and Communications team.	**2.8.1 Split the functions of executive communications and marketing directorship into two roles and hire an additional FTE to fill the marketing director role.** **Metric:** Divide marketing and communications into separate roles and hire an FTE director of marketing
		2.8.2 Hire additional marketing staff to support in-house, recruitment-focused materials and content, and to manage relationships with marketing freelancers/contractors. **Metric:** Created and hired a digital media coordinator and review other necessary marketing positions to support strategic plan goals

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Optimize Enrollment and Recruitment

Goals

3.1 Increase student support

3.2 Update reporting lines for the Admissions team

3.3 Streamline the application process

Goals		Key Action Items
3.1	**Increase the support that PC Central staff are able to give future students and develop more clear handoff points between PC Central and each institution to reduce confusion for the student.**	**3.1.1 Grant the PC Online Admissions Recruiters additional access to necessary systems at the comprehensive institutions for better ability to help students.** **Metric:** Enhance data sharing to provide recruiters with additional information needed to improve the recruitment/admissions and enrollment process
		3.1.2 Designate PC Online Admissions Recruiters as the primary contact for students throughout the application process. **Metric:** Identify PC recruiters as primary contacts throughout the admissions process by creating new communications plans per recruiter, and inquiry assignment
		3.1.3 Explore enhanced chat service options for online programs. **Metric:** Identify and implement new chat service
3.2	**Update reporting lines for PC Online Admissions team**	**3.2.1 Move the PC Online Admissions Recruiters to a reporting structure that is connected to the PC Online Director of Recruitment.** **Metric:** Transition PC Recruiters to report to the PC Director of Recruitment at PC Central
3.3	**Streamline the application process to PC Online programs.**	**3.3.1 Create an online application pathway that runs across all the USC institutions and eliminate associated application fees.** **Metric:** Create a new PC online application pathway to support all online students in one system
		3.3.2 Reconfigure the enrollment process to avoid delays in acceptance because of long wait times associated with transcript pre-evaluation. **Metric:** Improved enrollment process to avoid delays in acceptance
		3.3.3 Provide a provisional acceptance within 24-48 hours, with formal acceptance contingent on a formal review of the student's materials. **Metric:** Expedited process for provisional acceptance

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Priority 4

Address Affordability

Goals

4.1 Achieve tuition parity by setting an appropriate e-rate or an out-of-state tuition rate

4.2 Establish opportunities for scholarships

Goals		Key Action Items
4.1	Achieve tuition parity by setting an appropriate e-rate or an out-of-state tuition rate equal to in-state tuition.	**4.1.1 Conduct an analysis to evaluate the feasibility of implementing tuition waivers for all out-of-state students or revising the out-of-state tuition pricing structure.** **Metric:** Analysis conducted and changes to tuition waivers made as feasible
		4.1.2 Monitor the yield and retention rate of out-of-state students over time. A higher yield and retention rate would indicate that the tuition adjustments are positively impacting the enrollment and satisfaction of out-of-state students. **Metric:** Yield and retention rate of out-of-state students monitored and changes made to out-of-state tuition prices made as appropriate
4.2	Establish opportunities for scholarships that will recognize students' hard work and increase their propensity to yield.	**4.2.1 Maximize enrollment yield through comprehensive yield analysis and effective scholarship strategy implementation.** **Metric:** Regular yield analysis conducted and new scholarship strategy created based on results
		4.2.2 Ensure scholarship sponsorship opportunities are explored for online programs from among alumni, corporations, foundations, and other potential donors. Develop relationships and partnerships with these entities to secure funding for new scholarships. **Metric:** Scholarship sponsorship opportunities are explored regularly and maximized for effectiveness
		4.2.3 Review the allocation of scholarship funds annually across different categories, ensuring alignment with Palmetto College's strategic objectives and target student populations. **Metric:** Annual review of allocation of scholarship are completed and any necessary realignment made

Increase Student Support

Goals

5.1 Expand student support systems.

5.2 Expand coaching (career, success, enrollment) and academic advising efforts

Goals		Key Action Items
5.1	Expand student support systems.	**5.1.1 Develop a centralized after-hours call center for student support.** **Metric:** After hours call center partnership or internal development and implementation
		5.1.2 Refresh new online student orientation. **Metric:** Online student orientation module refreshed and updated regularly
		5.1.3 Develop new online student portal environment in CRM, or develop a separate app for students to utilize for information about their program, institutions and services. This could include exploring chat service options for current students. **Metric:** Online student portal, app, and chat service developed and implemented
		5.1.4 Reach out to inactive students and regularly send out communications to students with referrals to Palmetto College resources. **Metric:** Create and regularly update new student communications plans with in the CRM to better support student needs
5.2	Expand coaching (career, success, enrollment) and academic advising efforts for PC Online students.*	**5.2.1 Implement CRM updates that allow the system to be used by internal team for student success and retention efforts, e.g. for success coaches to use in student communications outreach.** **Metric:** Enhance data sharing from Banner to the CRM to increase student success and retention
		5.2.2 Hire additional student success coaches, career counselors and a transfer success coach. **Metric:** Additional coaches and counselors hired, trained, and regularly updated on new information
		5.2.3 Collaborate with partner institutions' academic divisions to ensure the ratio of academic advisors to students is adequate for a renewed focus on success and retention; also work to balance professional staff advisors and faculty advisors. **Metric:** Regular collaboration with partner institutions' to ensure appropriate number of advisors and success and retention personnel

Improve Retention Rate

Goals

6.1 Ensure students feel included and supported

6.2 Develop data-informed and data-triggered interventions

6.3 Increase support for non-traditional students

6.4 Launch a formal reverse transfer process

Goals		Key Action Items
6.1	Ensure PC Online students feel included in and supported by the campus at which they are enrolled.	**6.1.1 Increase community-building events for PC Online students at the partner institution at which they are enrolled and encourage faculty involvement.** **Metric:** Efforts established for community building in online students
		6.1.2 Explore mental health and well-being support service additions. **Metric:** Health and well-being efforts explored and implemented where feasible for online students
6.2	Develop data-informed and data-triggered interventions.	**6.2.1 Identify the data available that can provide insights and the individuals who can use the information to make personalized outreach efforts to students.** **Metric:** Regularly identify available data to improve outreach to students
		6.2.2 Implement early warning systems for students at risk of stopping out or not enrolling in a subsequent semester. Explore CRM capabilities for this. **Metric:** Early warning systems for at risk students implemented
6.3	Increase support for non-traditional student populations.	**6.3.1 Enhance the efficiency of the credit transfer process among same-system institutions.** **Metric:** Credit transfer process enhanced and regularly updated
		6.3.2 Utilize the PC Campuses and their online courses to assist students in completing their first 60 credit hours for the PC Online degree. **Metric:** PC Campuses engaged to assist students in completing credit hours for online degree
		6.3.3 Explore tutoring services for online students. **Metric:** Tutoring services explored and implemented where feasible
6.4	Launch a formal reverse transfer process.	**6.4.1 Formalize policy and processes for reverse transfer and award an associate degree to students have completed the necessary requirements.** **Metric:** Reverse transfer policies and processes established and implemented as necessary

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Entering Our Second Decade of Service
Established 2013

Foster Faculty & Staff Development

Goals

7.1 Increase support for faculty

7.2 Increase support capabilities for all staff

7.3 Increase resources and support for staff development opportunities

Goals		Key Action Items
7.1	Increase support for faculty teaching PC Online students.	**7.1.1 Provide specific trainings and technical support for faculty who were not originally hired to teach online courses or who wish to upskill.** **Metric:** Regular training, development, and technical support for faculty and staff implemented
		7.1.2 Support faculty in the development of online courses and give them resources to improve the quality of classes being delivered via: ▪ **Online teaching mentorship program** ▪ **Online teaching badge program** ▪ **Adoption of a commonly accepted quality rubric for online courses, and** ▪ **Additional course design staff made available to faculty developing online courses (which would include support for additional multi-media asset creation).** **Metric:** Support for online teaching developed and offered regularly
		7.1.3 Clearly define professional development opportunities for faculty teaching online courses. **Metric:** Information regarding professional developed for online teaching organized and share regularly
		7.1.4 Develop a faculty recognition awards program for online teaching (to mirror the existing awards cycle for face-to-face instructors). **Metric:** Award recognition program for online teaching developed implemented
7.2	Increase support capabilities of PC Central for all staff.	**7.2.1 Monitor staffing needs within PC Central and the partner institutions to ensure processes are smooth and outreach is consistent to students.** **Metric:** Regular monitoring of staffing needs and adjustments as necessary
7.3	Increase resources and support for staff development opportunities.	**7.3.1 Clearly define professional development opportunities for all staff.** **Metric:** Professional development opportunities identified and communicated regularly

Priority 8

Optimize Technology

Goals

8.1 Enhance campus technology infrastructure

8.2 Enhance technical support services for remote students

Goals		Key Action Items
8.1	Enhance campus technology infrastructure and support to provide seamless access for online students to classes being taught primarily in person.	**8.1.1 Measure network uptime and availability to ensure stable connectivity for online students.** **Metric:** Network uptime and availability measured and stabilized
		8.1.2 Monitor network bandwidth usage and upgrade capacity as needed to ensure sufficient bandwidth to support simultaneous online learning for all enrolled students. **Metric:** Bandwidth usage is monitored and upgraded as needed
		8.1.3 Evaluate the availability and accessibility of digital resources (lecture recordings, course materials, etc.) to support online students. Ensure all relevant course materials are available online for remote access. **Metric:** Digital resources for online learning are regularly evaluated and assessed for availability
8.2	Enhance technical support services for remote students.	**8.2.1 Establish a tech support hotline, chat support, and/or ticket system to assist online students who may be encountering technical difficulties. Determine hours of service after surveying students.** **Metric:** Support hotline, chat support, and/or ticket system are established and supported
		8.2.2 Measure the average time taken to respond to and resolve technical support requests from online students. **Metric:** Response time measured and appropriate enhancements implemented
		8.2.3 Enable students to visit the campus as needed to seek in-person technology support. **Metric:** Regularly communicate availability of on-campus to assist online students as necessary

Priority 9

Expand Academic Options

Goals

9.1 Conduct market research

9.2 Diversify and broaden academic offerings

Goals		Key Action Items
9.1	Conduct market research to assess the viability and relevance of current and proposed academic offerings.	**9.1.1 Create a central service to conduct an annual analysis of labor market trends, job projections, and emerging industries to identify potential areas of academic growth and relevance. Institute a committee to ensure that current and proposed offerings align with market research.** **Metric:** Central serviced to access viability and proposed academic offerings is created and maintained
		9.1.2 Engage with employers to gather insights on labor market needs. Provide short-term, regionally relevant HyFlex offerings to address labor shortages in specific sectors. **Metric:** Employer engagement is established to capture labor market needs and other insights
		9.1.3 Conduct periodic scans of courses for industry relevance and learner preference by considering curricular updates tied to workforce and skills demands, course length and starts, and course title conventions. **Metric:** Periodic scan of courses for industry relevance performed and decisions made accordingly
9.2	Diversify and broaden the type of academic offerings across comprehensive universities.	**9.2.1 Expand into administration of full four-year bachelor's degrees through PC Online.** **Metric:** Full four year bachelor degrees explored and launched as feasible
		9.2.2 Utilize PC Central to provide support and services for graduate programs offered by partner institutions. **Metric:** PC Central support provided for future programs
		9.2.3 Develop an advisory board that creates a "new program recommendation" process whereby new online offerings are passed through the advisory board's process. This could include discussions about cross-institution collaboration on competing degree programs. **Metric:** Advisory board developed and launched

One system.
Many Opportunities.
For All South Carolinians.
On-Campus. Online.
University of South Carolina Palmetto College.
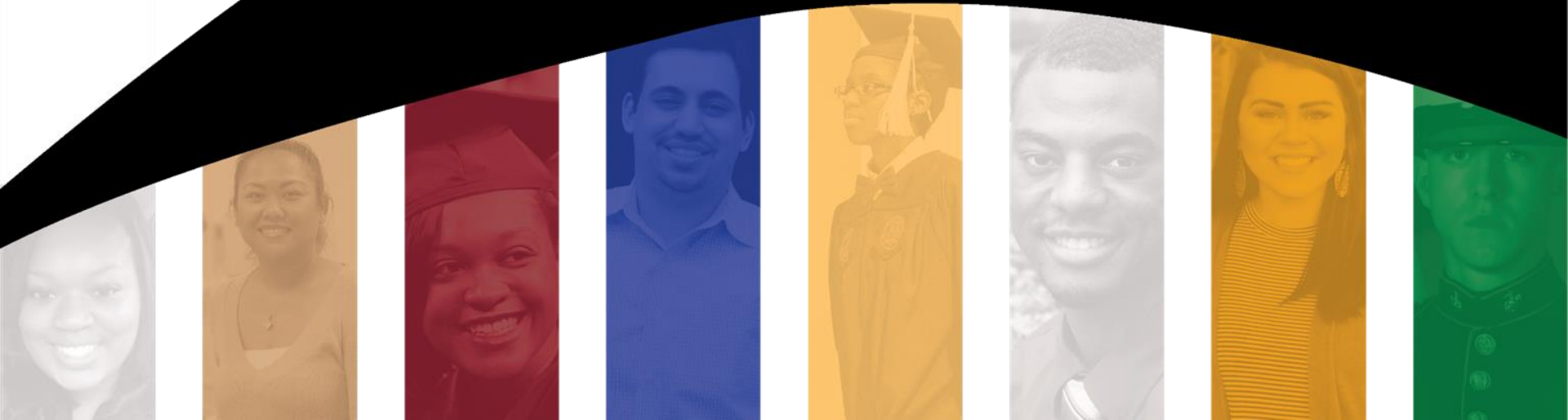
Thank you!!!

APPENDIX A

All Appendix Information Compiled by
Kennedy & Company

Input from Stakeholders Across All Campuses

Collaborative input underscored our effort to create the next strategic plan for Palmetto College. Our Kennedy & Company partners met with **more than 100 stakeholders.** Their teams visited our campuses in 2023 across several visits, including April 19-20 and 26-28, May 10-12, June 6-7, and September 25. We **surveyed the Palmetto College Board of Visitors, our faculty and staff,** and had online students participate in a focus group as part of the ImagineCarolina exercise. We held **visioning workshops, reviewed draft documents together and had eight working sessions** across PCIT, Deans Council, and the Executive Committee.

USC UPSTATE
USC UNION
USC LANCASTER
USC SUMTER
UOFSC COLUMBIA
USC AIKEN
USC SALKEHATCHIE
USC BEAUFORT

Discovery Interviews Led by K&Co (pt. 1 of 2)

Kennedy & Company conducted interviews with key stakeholders across all partner institutions.

Partial List of Stakeholders Included in Interviews & Focus Groups

PC Central + PC Columbia
- Amy Crotzer, PC Online Recruiter
- Bob Dyer, IT Director
- Bridget Blackwell, Financial Aid Director
- Christine Sixta-Rinehart, Director of Academic Program Assessment (Palmetto College, USC Union)
- David Hunter, Senior Fellow / Instructor
- Jean Carrano, Faculty Senate/Academic Affairs Coordinator
- John Catalano, Associate Provost for Palmetto College
- Laura Humphrey, Academic Program Director
- Lillian Sims, Assistant Director of Financial Aid
- Matilda Ferguson, Online Recruiter, Extended University
- Ralph Summer, Business Manager
- Ron Cox, Dean
- Steve Lowe, Director of BLS/BOL
- Susan Elkins, Chancellor
- Terrance Gilmore, Director of Recruitment
- Victoria Hollins, HR Director

Union
- Ada Kitchens, Dual Enrollment Coordinator
- Andrew Pisano, Chair, Faculty Organization
- Bobby Holcombe, Financial Aid Director
- Brad Greer, Admissions Director
- Keith Ballington, Director of Operations
- Lynn Edwards, Nursing Administrator
- Maggie Aziz, Associate Dean
- Michael Sumner, Palmetto College Coordinator
- Michele Lee, Budget/Finance Director
- Randy Lowell, Dean

Lancaster
- Anthony Brockington, Director of Community Outreach & Indian Land Coordinator
- Asheley Schreyer, Director of Student Success and Retention
- Bridgett Plexico, Internship Coordinator
- Buddy Faile, Admissions Director
- Dana Lawrence, Faculty Organization Chair
- Dominique Waller, Dual Enrollment Coordinator
- Kanisha Rollings, Senior Admissions Counselor
- Kenneth Cole, Director of Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs, USC Lancaster
- Nick Jones, PC Admissions Counselor
- Shana Dry, Director of Public Information & Interim Director of Advancement
- Todd Lekan, Associate Dean
- Tracey Mobley Chavous, HR Director
- Walter Collins, (Then) Dean

Discovery Interviews Led by K&Co (pt. 2 of 2)

Kennedy & Company conducted interviews with key stakeholders across all partner institutions.

Partial List of Stakeholders Included in Interviews & Focus Groups

Sumter
- Adrielle Cooper, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
- Bernard Washington, PC Admissions Representative
- Brad Rogers, IT Helpdesk Director
- Brian Smith, IT Director
- Damien Picariello, Faculty Organization Chair
- Eric Reisenauer, Executive Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs
- Jernitha Smith, Financial Aid Director
- Kajal Ghoshroy, Division Chair, Math, Science, Econ
- Keith Britton, Admissions Director
- Lara Painter, Dual Enrollment Director
- Lisa Rosdail, TRIO Director
- Marchetta Williams, HR Director
- Michael Sonntag, Dean
- Michele Reese, DEI Chair
- Ray McManus, Division Chair Arts & Letters, HSE

Salkehatchie
- April Cone, Dean
- Brandon Wright, Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Student Success
- Georgeann Williams, Financial Aid Director
- Sarah Miller, Academic Dean

Aiken
- Cam Reagin, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration
- Dan Heimmermann, Chancellor
- Ellis Reeves, Director of Online Learning and Support

Beaufort
- Al Panu, Chancellor
- Kim Dudas, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Academic Innovation
- Lori Vargo, Director of eLearning

Upstate
- Bennie L. Harris, Chancellor
- Celena Kusch, Director of Online Programs

Other
- Michael Amiridis, University of South Carolina System President

Focus Groups
- Board of Visitors
- Dean's Council
- Palmetto College Executive Council
- Palmetto College Online Working Group

Insights that Inform the New PC Campuses Strategic Plan

Palmetto College Campus Profiles

Messaging across the four two-year campuses share several common elements, such as an emphasis on dual enrollment, specialized support for first-generation college students, and welcoming the surrounding community with events, recreation space, clubs, and activities.

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina — SALKEHATCHIE

Headcount, Fall 2021: 817
Total FTE, Fall 2021: 533
% Distance Education Only: 25%
% Some Distance Education: 53%
In-State: 81% | **Enrolled Outside US:** 8%
Students of Color: 47% | **Women:** 59%

- Emphasizes ties to rural lowcountry community, affordable tuition, and ease of transfer to other universities
- Athletics portfolio includes baseball, softball, men's and women's soccer, and men's and women's basketball, and volleyball
- Opportunities Scholars Program helps first-generation students adjust to life during college
- Emphasizes on-site nursing and elementary education bachelor's degree and 2+2 partnership with USC Aiken in Industrial Process Engineering

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina — UNION

Headcount, Fall 2021: 1,407
Total FTE, Fall 2021: 849
% Distance Education Only: 19%
% Some Distance Education: 40%
In-State: 89% | **Enrolled Outside US:** 5%
Students of Color: 41% | **Women:** 61%

- Emphasizes bachelor's degrees offered in partnership with other USC schools
- Ranked #2 Best Community College in SC by *Niche*
- Designated as a military-friendly school
- Nettles building offers students space for community recreation and borrowing outdoor equipment
- Dual enrollment opportunities allow high school students to start earning college credit

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina — SUMTER

Headcount, Fall 2021: 1,218
Total FTE, Fall 2021: 732
% Distance Education Only: 13%
% Some Distance Education: 48%
In-State: 92% | **Enrolled Outside US:** 0%
Students of Color: 31% | **Women:** 54%

- Strong emphasis on dual enrollment opportunities for high school students
- *"Smaller classes, personal attention, and affordable tuition"*
- Athletics portfolio includes soccer, baseball, softball, golf, volleyball, eSports, and rifle
- Specialized support for first-generation students and students with disabilities
- Student organizations host film and literary festivals

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina — LANCASTER

Headcount, Fall 2021: 1,729
Total FTE, Fall 2021: 1,143
% Distance Education Only: 13%
% Some Distance Education: 41%
In-State: 95% | **Enrolled Outside US:** 1%
Students of Color: 32% | **Women:** 59%

- Network of iCarolina Learning Labs provides high-speed internet to underserved communities
- Oldest of the four PC campuses
- Most students are first-generation students from rural areas across the central Piedmont
- Emphasis on developing community ties, including a YMCA, the Native American Studies Center, and dozens of clubs and organizations

PC Campuses SWOT

Strengths

- Student-centered experience
- Teaching focus
- Affordability/Value
- Quality of faculty
- Strong connections with local communities
- Campus size
- Accessibility across the state
- Robust dual enrollment connections

Weaknesses

- Brand confusion
- Under-resourced faculty & staff
- On-campus student experience – student life, housing, dining, athletics
- Student, staff, & faculty retention
- Aging facilities
- Marketing and recruitment advertising
- Website constraints

Opportunities

- Expansion of program offerings to align with market demand
- Dual enrollment, direct enrollment, military feeders
- Recruitment of traditional students
- Partnerships with industry and businesses to provide experiential learning and job placements

Threats

- Inability to respond to market demand for program offerings
- Competition with technical colleges and other USC institutions
- Reliance on dual enrollment
- Knowledge & efficiency gaps with turnover
- USC system constraints on hiring, budget, technology

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina PALMETTO COLLEGE

Palmetto College Faces External & Internal Competition

As the share of enrollments has decreased throughout South Carolina, Palmetto College has faced fierce external competition from tech colleges and internal competition from within the USC system.

Shrinking Pie

- The overall pie is shrinking; across the country, fewer students are choosing to pursue a college degree and a demographic cliff of college-aged students is fast approaching.

- USC Columbia's policy change to test-optional allowed them to accept more students who might have otherwise attended a USC comprehensive university. In turn, the comprehensives have opened their doors to students who might have otherwise attended a Palmetto College Campus.

Tech Colleges

- Tech colleges are the biggest competitors and, because of their strong political ties to the state legislature, go so far as to prevent Palmetto College Campuses from offering certain degree programs.

- Governor Henry McMaster committed $25 million in July 2022 to cover the cost of tuition and fees for students enrolled in a technical college in the South Carolina technical college system, luring away students who might have otherwise chosen to attend a Palmetto College Campus.

Internal Competition

- There is competition for students among Palmetto College Campuses and between Palmetto College Online and the universities in the USC system.

- USC Columbia College of Arts & Sciences introduced an addendum which prohibits their students from taking courses at Palmetto College Fort Jackson, resulting in a significant shortfall in tuition for Fort Jackson.

- Some campuses have overlapping service areas, meaning that they are competing for dual enrollment contracts.

UNIVERSITY OF
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PALMETTO COLLEGE

Entering Our Second Decade of Service
Established 2013

Survey Overview

A survey was deployed to the faculty and staff at the PC Campuses to gain an understanding of the current state of Palmetto College, as well as the top priorities for personnel in the next five years.

Survey Launch: May 3, 2023

Anonymous Data Collection

Survey Close: May 15, 2023

Total Respondents: 108
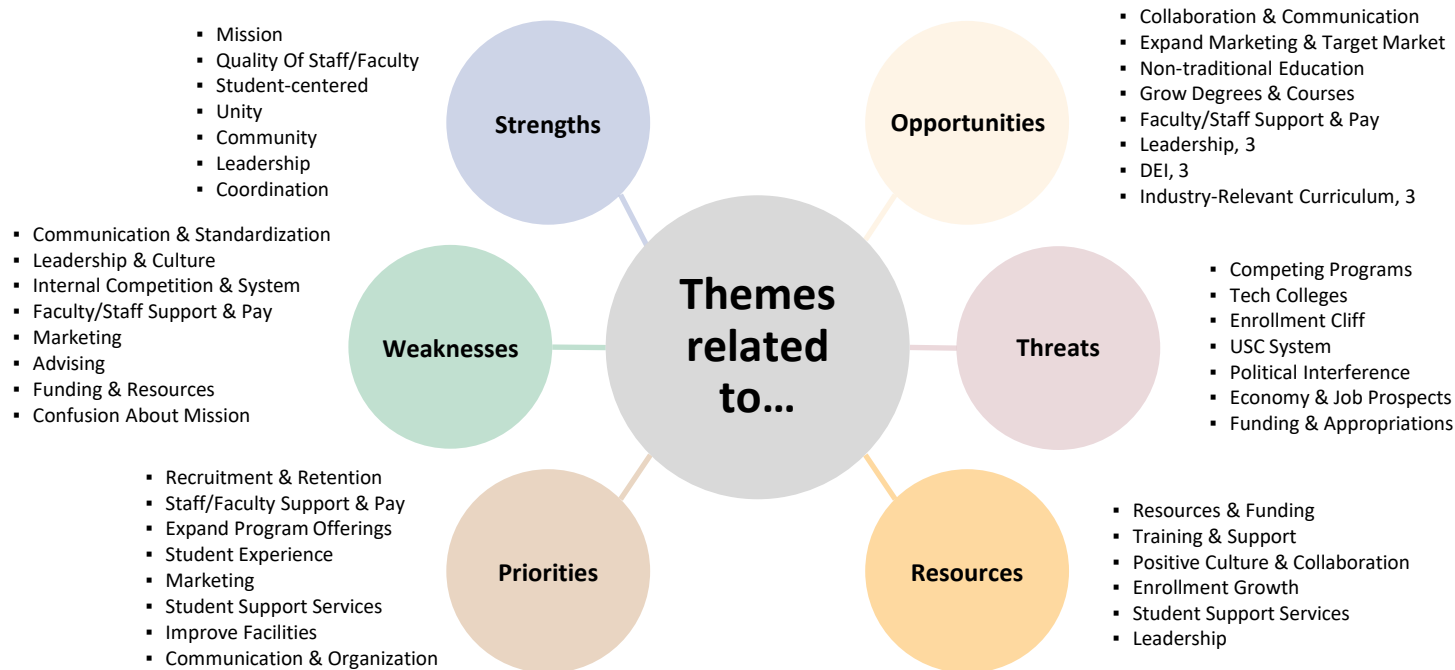
Contact lists were provided by Jason Darby and Bob Dyer, and emails were co-signed by Chancellor Susan Elkins.

## 362 Open-Ended Responses Provided by Respondents

86% of all respondents took time to respond to free-response items, with 67% of them answering four or more open-ended survey items. These qualitative responses were coded into primary themes (noted below).

Strengths
- Mission
- Quality Of Staff/Faculty
- Student-centered
- Unity
- Community
- Leadership
- Coordination

Opportunities
- Collaboration & Communication
- Expand Marketing & Target Market
- Non-traditional Education
- Grow Degrees & Courses
- Faculty/Staff Support & Pay
- Leadership, 3
- DEI, 3
- Industry-Relevant Curriculum, 3

Weaknesses
- Communication & Standardization
- Leadership & Culture
- Internal Competition & System
- Faculty/Staff Support & Pay
- Marketing
- Advising
- Funding & Resources
- Confusion About Mission

Threats
- Competing Programs
- Tech Colleges
- Enrollment Cliff
- USC System
- Political Interference
- Economy & Job Prospects
- Funding & Appropriations

Priorities
- Recruitment & Retention
- Staff/Faculty Support & Pay
- Expand Program Offerings
- Student Experience
- Marketing
- Student Support Services
- Improve Facilities
- Communication & Organization

Resources
- Resources & Funding
- Training & Support
- Positive Culture & Collaboration
- Enrollment Growth
- Student Support Services
- Leadership

Themes related to...

UNIVERSITY OF **South Carolina** PALMETTO COLLEGE

Entering Our Second Decade of Service
Established 2013

Recruitment is Top Priority for PC Faculty & Staff

The top priority among faculty and staff is student recruitment and retention, which stakeholders say is critical to the sustainability of the Palmetto College Campuses and Palmetto College as a whole.

*Thinking about the next five years, what should be Palmetto College's top three **priorities**?*
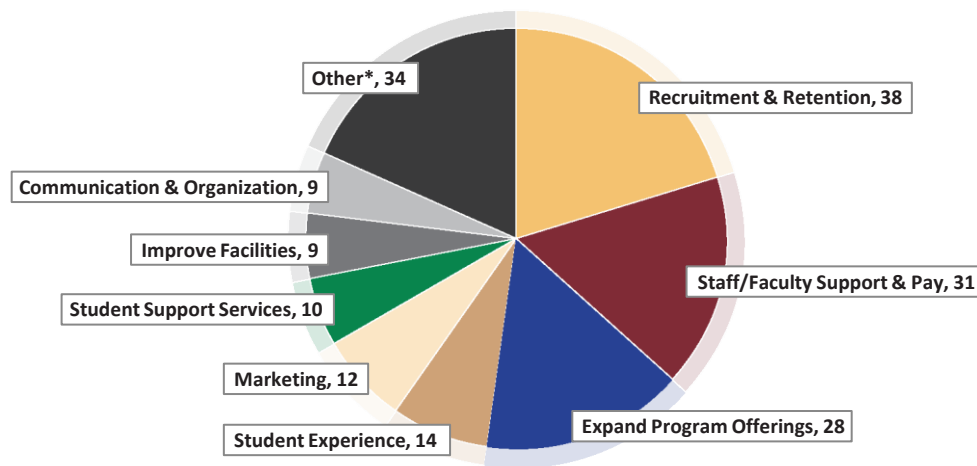
Staff and faculty are eager to **expand program offerings**, and many suggested the addition of online courses, certificate programs, 2-year programs, graduate education, corporate education programs, and more.


Other*, 34
Recruitment & Retention, 38
Communication & Organization, 9
Improve Facilities, 9
Student Support Services, 10
Staff/Faculty Support & Pay, 31
Marketing, 12
Student Experience, 14
Expand Program Offerings, 28

*Other priorities –
Accountable Administration, 7
Industry-Relevant Education, 5
DEI, 5
Secure Funding, 3
Higher academic standards, 3
Affordability, 2
Expand Athletics, 2
Community Partnerships, 2
Grow Scholarships, 1
Embrace AI, 1
Mitigate Internal Competition, 1
Research, 1

Dedication to Mission is a Strength at Palmetto College

67% of stakeholders responded to a free-response question inquiring about the strengths of Palmetto College. Mission was the most listed strength, followed by student-centered, unity, and the quality of faculty and staff.

What would you consider to be Palmetto College's greatest internal **strengths**?
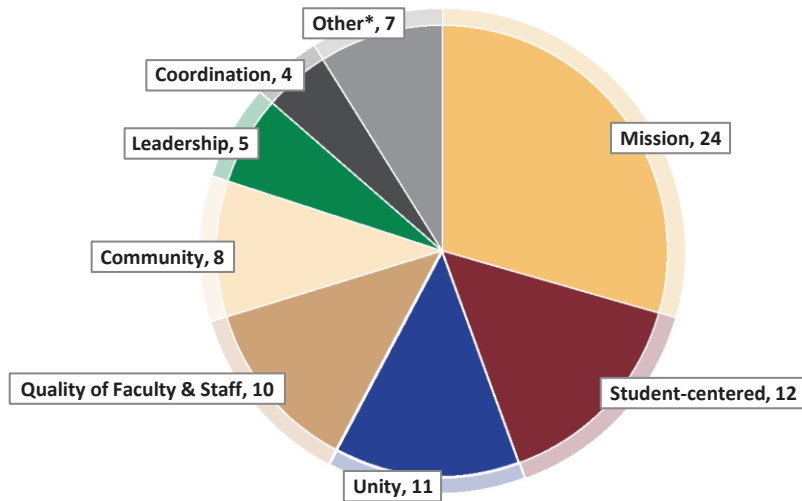
The most frequently cited strength documented by both faculty and staff members was **dedication to the mission** of providing local students with affordable, accessible higher education.

*Other strengths –
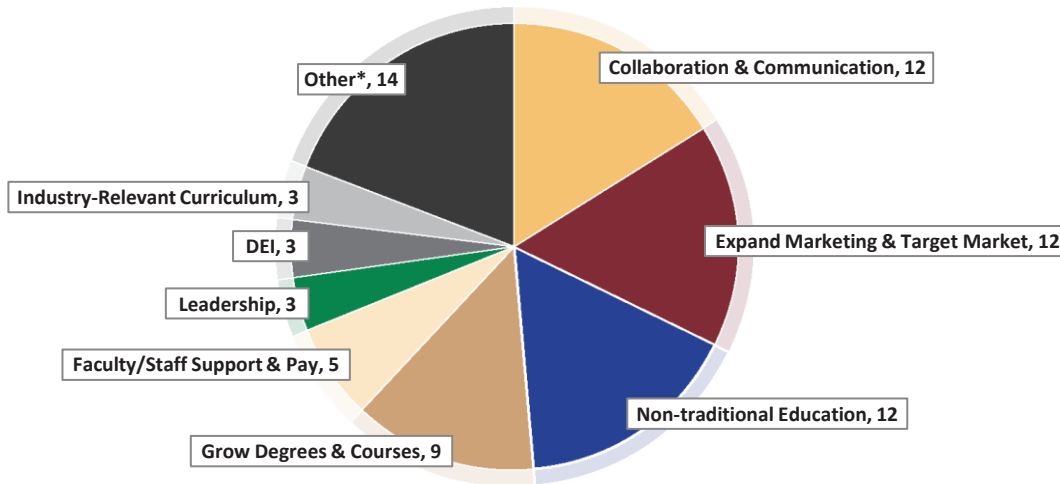Diversity, 2
Size, 1
Enrollment & Success Rates, 1
Funding, 1
USC System, 1
Academics, 1

Pie chart labels:
- Mission, 24
- Student-centered, 12
- Unity, 11
- Quality of Faculty & Staff, 10
- Community, 8
- Leadership, 5
- Coordination, 4
- Other*, 7

Ample Opportunities for Collaboration & Growth

58% of stakeholders responded to a free response question inquiring about areas of opportunity for Palmetto College. Potential growth areas include collaboration and communication across campuses, expanded marketing, and a bigger focus on non-traditional education.

*What would you consider to be areas of **opportunity** for Palmetto College?*

Other*, 14
Collaboration & Communication, 12
Expand Marketing & Target Market, 12
Non-traditional Education, 12
Grow Degrees & Courses, 9
Faculty/Staff Support & Pay, 5
Leadership, 3
DEI, 3
Industry-Relevant Curriculum, 3

Many stakeholders see an opportunity to **broaden Palmetto College's target market** by doing targeted recruiting of out-of-state, non-traditional, and military students.
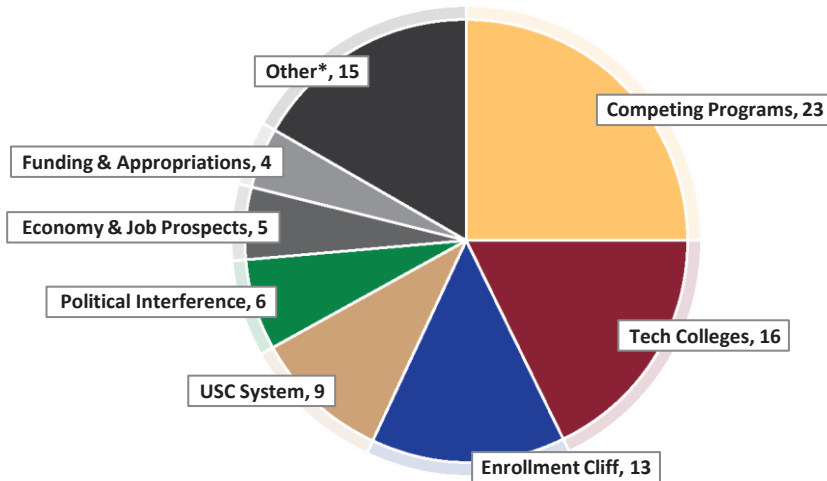
*Other opportunities –
Examine budget, 2
Improve processes, 2
Dual enrollment, 2
Strengthen foundation, 2
Facilities, 2
Student Support, 2
Examine Palmetto Pathways, 1
Clarify Mission, 1

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina
PALMETTO COLLEGE

External Competition is Pervasive Threat to PC

56% of stakeholders reported an external threat that is facing Palmetto College; over half of these respondents pointed to competition outside and within the system, and many others mentioned alarming demographic, political, and economic trends.

*What are the external **threats** facing Palmetto College?*

- Competing Programs, 23
- Tech Colleges, 16
- Enrollment Cliff, 13
- USC System, 9
- Political Interference, 6
- Economy & Job Prospects, 5
- Funding & Appropriations, 4
- Other*, 15

The most frequently mentioned external threats were competing programs and tech colleges, which faculty and staff say can offer a **larger array of programs** and have a **more affordable tuition rate**.

*Other threats –
AI & Technology, 3
Lack of Confidence in Higher Ed, 3
Dual Enrollment, 2
Student Preparedness, 2
Gun Violence, 1

Campuses Want to Offer Relevant Academic Programs

Staff and faculty at the Palmetto College campuses and PC Online emphasized the need to be able to provide flexible and relevant academic offerings that align with market demands in their region.

Flexible, Relevant Programs
03
When new demands emerge in the local sector, Palmetto College Campuses want to have the flexibility to offer courses that address them promptly and effectively.

Program Growth
01
Stakeholders want to grow their 2-year associate degree offerings and have expressed interest in offering more upper division courses that more closely align with common 4-year degree programs.
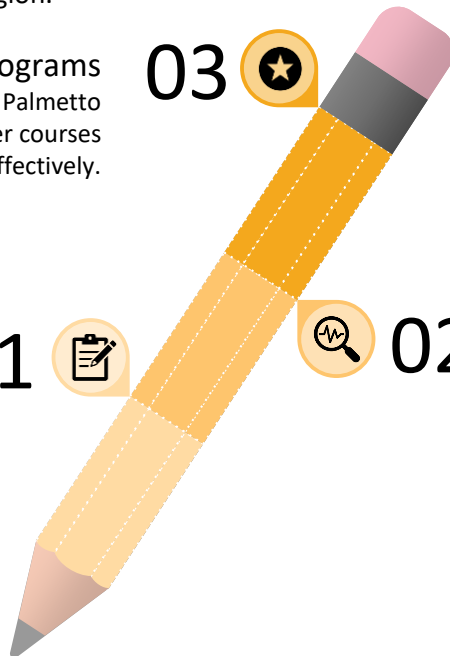
Market Research
02
Stakeholders have expressed a desire for Palmetto College to assess the market to determine whether current or new program offerings meet regional market needs.
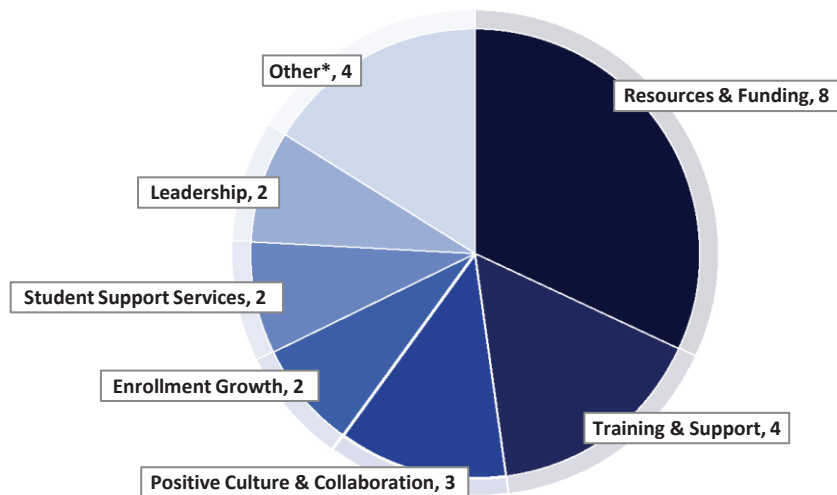
Faculty Lacking Adequate Resources & Funding

40% of faculty members indicated that they were lacking means to teach effectively. Most frequently, faculty said that they need more resources and funding, followed by training and support from Palmetto College administration.

What do you need to teach effectively that you are currently lacking?

Over a third of faculty members expressed that they need resources and funding to effectively teach. Of those respondents, half identified the need for **updates and upkeep in technology resources**.

*Other faculty needs –
Pay equity, 1
Clear standards, 1
Review of online course efficacy, 1
Review of promotion structure, 1

Other*, 4
Resources & Funding, 8
Leadership, 2
Student Support Services, 2
Enrollment Growth, 2
Positive Culture & Collaboration, 3
Training & Support, 4

PC Campus Physical Plant Upgrades Urgently Needed

Staff at the Palmetto College Campuses reported that maintenance and repairs are badly needed, capital projects have longer than normal timelines, housing has been requested but is not permitted, and the technological infrastructure needs to be enhanced.
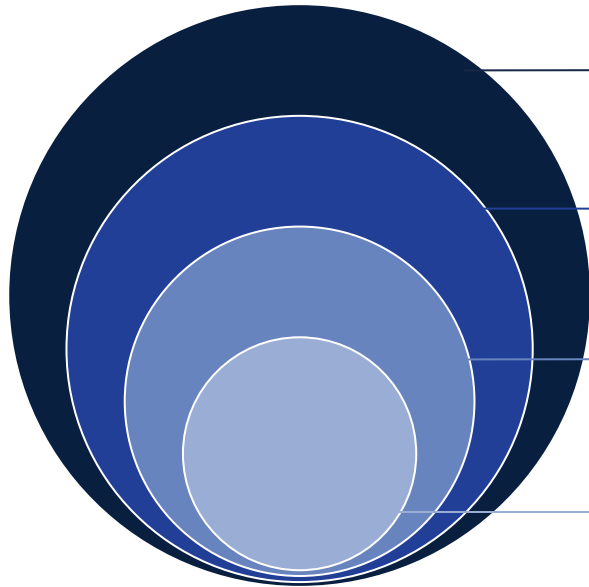
Maintenance & Repairs:
There is a lack of preventative maintenance; buildings need urgent upgrades and repairs.

Capital Project Delays:
Capital projects are managed by USC facilities; Palmetto College Campuses say that there are significant delays when working with system project managers.

Housing:
Most of the Palmetto College Campuses would like additional housing options, both for athletes and other students. PC Campuses are not allowed to run their own housing and all housing are privately contracted.

Technological Infrastructure:
Palmetto Online and Palmetto College stakeholders stress the need for improvements in instructional technology.
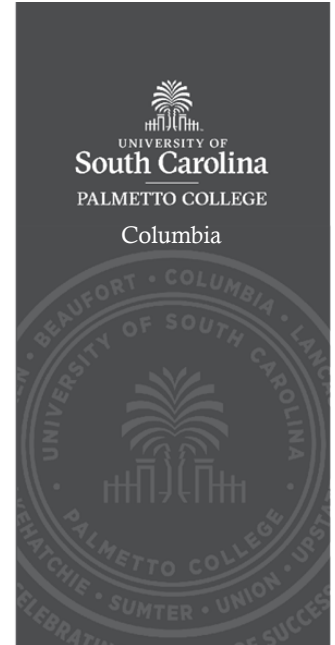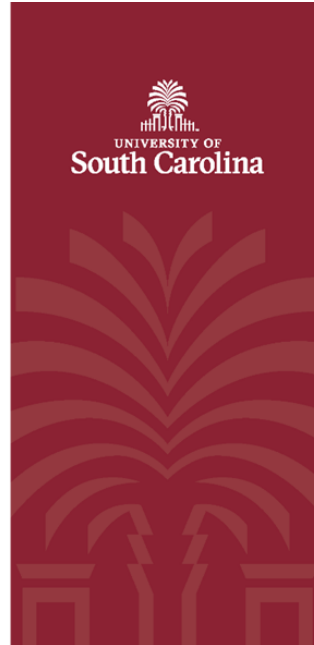
APPENDIX B

All Appendix Information Compiled by
Kennedy & Company

Insights that Inform the New PC Online / Partnership Programs Plan

USC Research & Comprehensive Institution Profiles

In contrast to schools in the peer institution set, differentiators are difficult to find on the Universities' home page and require prospective students to dig for specific highlights. USC Beaufort has a visually-attractive top-ten list for why students should consider attending.

Aiken — UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Undergraduate: 3,101
Graduate: 768
Online Completions: 50%
Campus Residency: 22% | **In-State:** 88%
Students of Color: 40%
International: 1.9%

- Center for Research Excellence gives undergraduate students the opportunity to conduct original research in collaboration with faculty
- Offers leadership courses as well as student groups such as the Pacesetters who act as mentors during new student orientation
- Longstanding equestrian tradition including dressage and polo
- 2021 Best College for Veterans

USCB — UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA BEAUFORT

Undergraduate: 2,023
Graduate: 14
Online Completions: 26%
Campus Residency: N/A| **In-State:** N/A
Students of Color: 40%
International: 1.8%

- Limited class sizes guarantee personal attention
- Proximity to the coast allows students to relax at the beach in their down time
- Claims to be the most affordable four-year university in South Carolina
- Emphasizes internships and experiential learning opportunities such as filming statewide television shows
- Undergraduate research in marine biology, psychology, public health, and more

UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina

Undergraduate: 26,864
Graduate: 8,607
Online Completions: 13%
Campus Residency: 31% | **In-State:** 63%
Students of Color: 26%
International: 2%

- Emphasizes presence of research opportunities but less focus on UG
- Searchable database of faculty expertise
- Provides visual walkthroughs and price comparisons of 25 different student living options
- Markets wide variety of intramural and club sports plus student wellness activities
- Showcases Gamecocks' athletics highlights
- Columbia is "a thriving metropolis, just the right size"

UPSTATE University of South Carolina

Undergraduate: 4,949
Graduate: 456
Online Completions: 35
Campus Residency: 12% | **In-State:** N/A
Students of Color: 52%
International: 1.4%

- *Sparse website compared to other System schools*
- More than 30K alumni living and working within the region
- Showcases peaceful campus setting in the Blue Ridge Mountains
- Nearly a dozen pre-professional programs to choose from in addition to traditional majors
- Offers virtual housing tours and blueprints of dorm rooms to prospective students
- Student/faculty ratio of 15:1

Palmetto College Selection of Strategic Priorities

Expanding and improving the service set from PC Online for its many partners is underpinning the selection of strategic priorities in this process. By combining the information gathered through the phases of work, we arrive at a set of priorities on which to base the strategic plan.
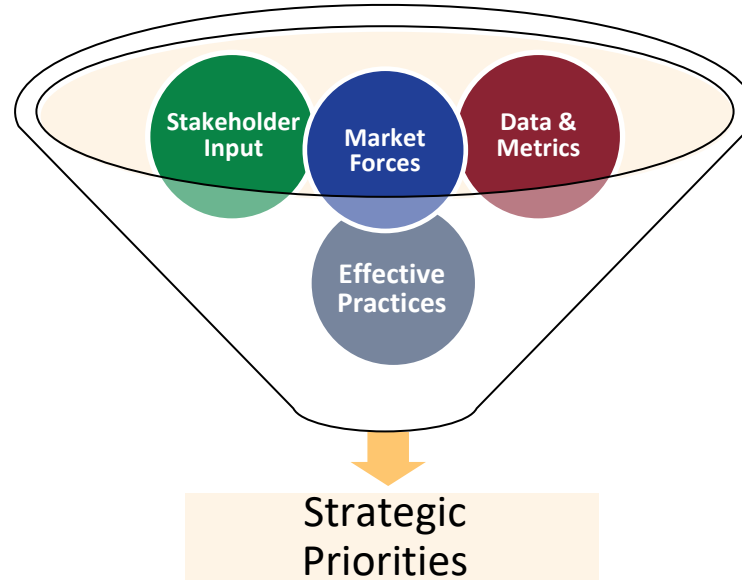
Common Challenges & Areas of Improvement Uncovered

Interviews, surveys and focus groups across PC Online stakeholders during the strategic planning process have resulted in multiple common challenges rising to the top of the list of concerns.

Strategic priority categories emerge:

Marketing & Communication

Enrollment Process

Budget Model
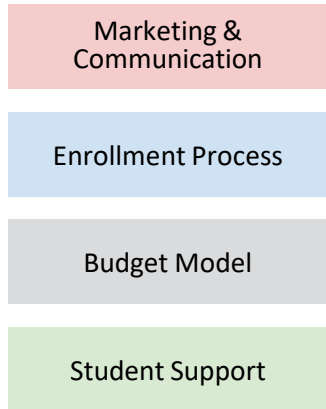
Student Support

Summary of shared challenges:

▪ Lapses in communication create roadblocks to enrolling and supporting students.

▪ The budget model is a mystery to leaders, faculty, and staff in all areas of PC Online, and stakeholders broadly feel information is difficult to get.

▪ There is not enough marketing to support the growing portfolio. The brand needs clarification for all audiences, both internal and external.

▪ The enrollment process can be confusing—for both students and staff—due to unclear delineation of roles and responsibilities between PC Central and the partner institutions.

▪ Support structures and resources for faculty and staff are lacking in some areas, both in communication and availability.

Patterns begin to emerge that help choose the strategic priorities that will bring the most impact to PC Online.

PC Online SWOT: Derived From Project Insights

Strengths

- Mission-oriented
- Student-centered experience
- Affordability/value
- Quality of faculty and staff
- Transfer process from Palmetto College Campuses

Weaknesses

- Enrollment & retention
- Lack of clear brand identity
- Under-resourced faculty & staff
- Online student experience
- Marketing/website
- Internal communications
- Inconsistent technology/data management
- Lack of standardization of operations and processes across institutions

Opportunities

- Grow program offerings and increase flexibility and modality options for non-traditional students
- Maintain alumni network and track alumni outcomes
- Expand marketing and target market
- Industry partnerships
- Military connections
- Align curriculum with market demands

Threats

- 2-year colleges and tech schools resistant to presence from Palmetto recruiters
- Competing online programs that can offer lower tuition and more degree options
- Legislative climate for higher ed/ liberal arts
- USC system constraints on hiring, budget, technology

PC Online Should Focus on Improving These Aspects

By capitalizing on the existing Palmetto College Online infrastructure, expanding some services, and improving in key areas, PC Online will be better positioned to facilitate enrollment growth in online offerings across all USC institutions.

The transformation of PC Online into the preferred hub for online programming requires a holistic approach that goes beyond isolated improvements. It is crucial to address the structure, services, and practices comprehensively in order to support the growth of online programming.

Budget Model	Online Tuition (e-Rate)	Course & Program Design
Marketing & Brand Awareness	Coaching & Retention	Academic Offering Expansion
Recruitment Operations	Student & Career Services Help Desk	
CRM Technology Ecosphere Access & Reporting	Faculty Training	

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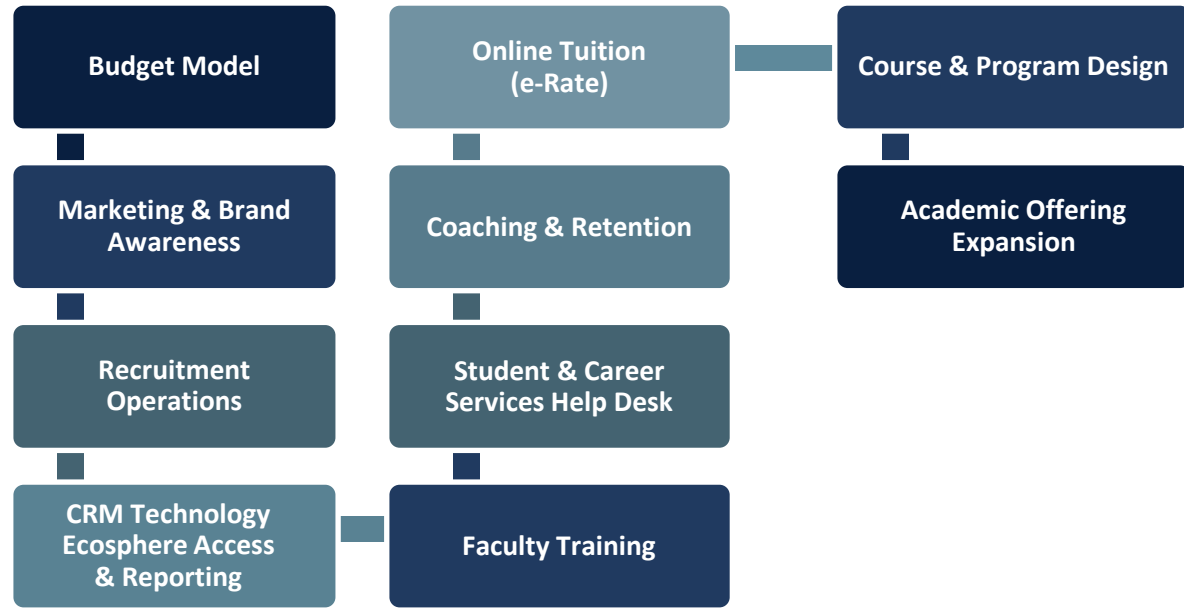
BOV View Flexible & Innovative Programs as Opportunity

A May 2023 survey of PC's Board of Visitors tallied nine responses. A majority of respondents have been on the board for more than four years, which meant participants had meaningful and valuable insights to share.

Q1 — *What would you consider to be Palmetto College's greatest internal strengths?*

- Leadership, 4
- Faculty/staff, 3
- Accessibility/flexibility, 3
- Supportive community, 2
- Coordination across campuses, 1

Q2 — *What would you consider to be areas of opportunity for Palmetto College?*

- Flexible/hybrid programs, 2
- Innovative programs, 2
- Connect with online students, 1
- Connect with alumni, 1
- Streamline application process, 1
- Lower tuition cost, 1
- Community outreach, 1
- Funding and support, 1

Q3 — *What would you consider to be Palmetto College's greatest internal weaknesses?*

- Internal support, 1
- Application process, 1
- Lack of funding, 1

Q4 — *What are the external threats facing Palmetto College?*

- Competition, 4
- Enrollment cliff, 1
- Internal processes, 2

BOV Members
Q1 8 responses, Q2 8 responses, Q3 3 responses, Q4 5 responses

BOV Members Have Range of Priorities

When asked about their top priorities for the next three years, the Board of Visitors emphasized a range of areas, including affordability, growing program offerings, streamlining internal processes, marketing, and enrollment & retention.

Q5 — *Thinking about the next five years, what should be Palmetto College's top three priorities?*

- Continuing affordability, 3

- Expand program offerings, 3
- Relevant curriculum, 1
- Input from industry partners, 1

- Streamline internal processes, 2
- Secure funding, 2

- Marketing/branding, 1
- Community outreach, 1

- Expand dual enrollment, 1
- Military/veteran students, 1
- Enrollment/ retention, 1
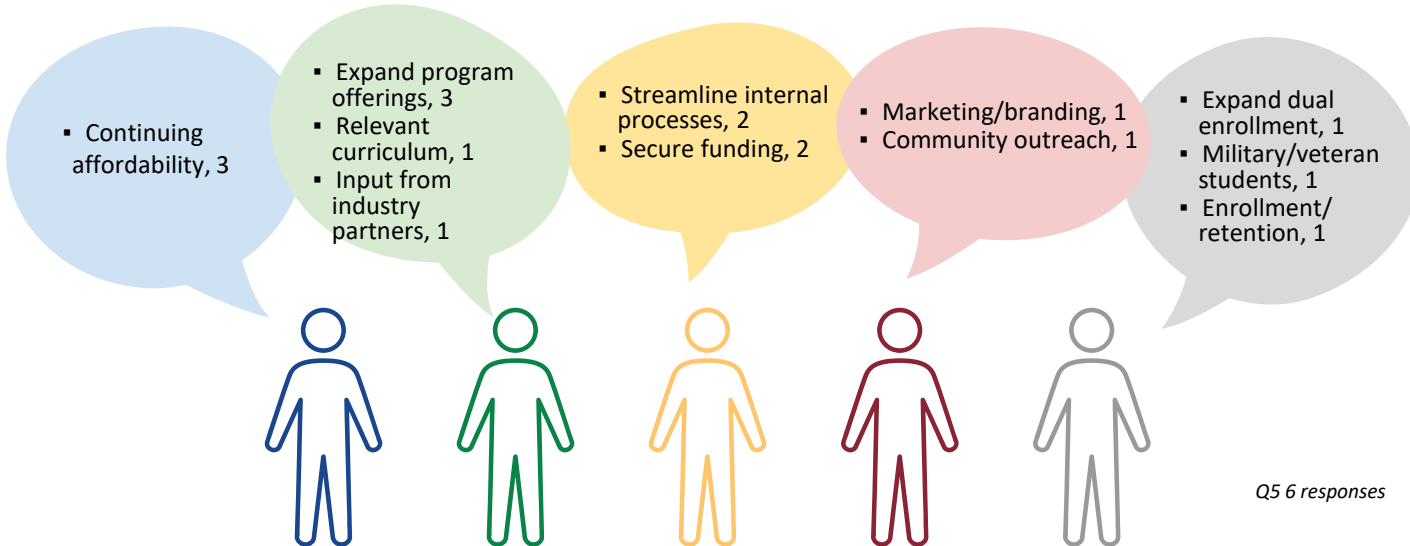
Q5 6 responses

Campuses Frustrated by Complex System Dynamics

Stakeholders in Palmetto Central, Palmetto College Campuses, and Palmetto Online claim that the system lacks consistency and communication, encourages competitiveness among campuses, and allows Columbia to make decisions sometimes to the detriment of other schools/campuses.

Communication
Important changes in processes or programs are not effectively disseminated to relevant parties at the campus level from leadership at Columbia and the Palmetto College administration.

Competition
Stakeholders want to ensure that schools and universities can effectively differentiate their program offerings in order to reduce internal competition.

Consistency
Stakeholders expressed a desire to standardize processes in recruiting and operations across the Palmetto College campuses. Stakeholders also want to see uniform residency and transferability policies enacted to relieve the burden on students from repeating paperwork and processes within the same USC System.

Columbia
Stakeholders at the Palmetto College Campuses do not feel supported by the flagship– staff feel that USC Columbia is not mindful of cannibalizing Palmetto College offerings and is not efficient in providing shared services.

Labor Market & Education Attainment

Job Market Flourishing in South Carolina, But…

Although the number of jobs in SC substantially outpaced the national growth rate over the past five years, residents' annual earnings are also much lower than the national average. A tremendous opportunity exists, however, in that there are more jobs seeking employees with bachelor's degrees than residents who have earned them.

Between 2017 and 2022, the number of jobs in South Carolina increased by 5%.

This change is over twice the pace of the *national* growth rate of 2.4%.

3% of the labor force within South Carolina is unemployed; 48% of this population is between the ages of 25 and 44.

As of December 2022, the number of white residents and Black residents who were unemployed were nearly equal—33K and 35K, respectively.

Although the state job market has flourished in the past five years, **the median household income is $55K, $10K below the national median household income.**

The largest industries in South Carolina are in **local government, retail, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and health care.** As of December 2022, there was a 3% difference between the total state jobs requiring a bachelor's degree (23%) and the total population with a bachelor's degree as their highest educational attainment (19%)

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32% of SC Job Postings Request Bachelor's at Minimum

Of the 320K unique job postings listed within the state of South Carolina over the past year that specify a minimum level of education, 32% list a bachelor's degree while 52% list a high-school diploma and 12% list an associate's degree. Only 5% of state jobs require a master's or higher.

Percentage of Regional Jobs Requiring Specific Level of Education

- High School or vocational training
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Unspecified

Pie chart: 28%, 11%, 25%, 7%, 2%, 45%
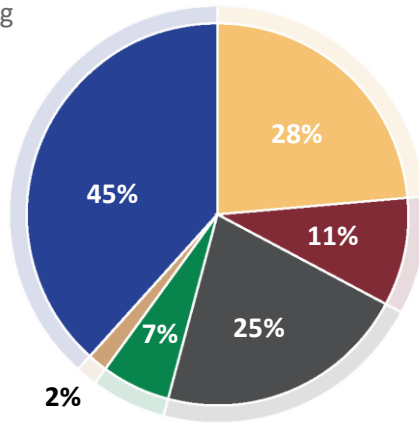
Nearly 585K jobs were posted in-state over the past year, but only 320K specified an education level.

Of the 165K unique job postings that request or require a bachelor's degree or higher, 38% target candidates with three years of work experience or less, so it is beneficial to give students work experience while completing their bachelor's.

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Bachelor's Nearly A Regional Requirement for IT or Business

Based on regional job postings over the previous year, certain sectors such as management, IT, and finance are overwhelmingly more likely to require a bachelor's degree, while healthcare has the highest demand for an associate's degree.

Regional Job Postings by Occupational Category, October 2021 – September 2022

■ Postings Requiring an Associate's Degree ■ Postings Requiring a Bachelor's Degree ■ Postings Requiring a Master's Degree or Higher

Percent Postings with a Bachelor's Degree

Occupational Category	Percent
Management	64.9%
Healthcare Practitioners	36.3%
Computer & Mathematical	69.9%
Business & Financial Operations	74.3%
Sales & Related	68.9%
Architecture & Engineering	66.0%
Office & Administrative Support	56.6%
Educational Instruction & Library	45.5%
Community & Social Service	42.8%
Healthcare Support	26.5%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	42.6%
Life, Physical & Social Science	51.4%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports	69.5%
Media Production	52.3%
Transportation & Material Moving	55.6%

Note: Region defined as within the state of South Carolina

Percent postings with a Bachelor's Degree above 50% are highlighted in green

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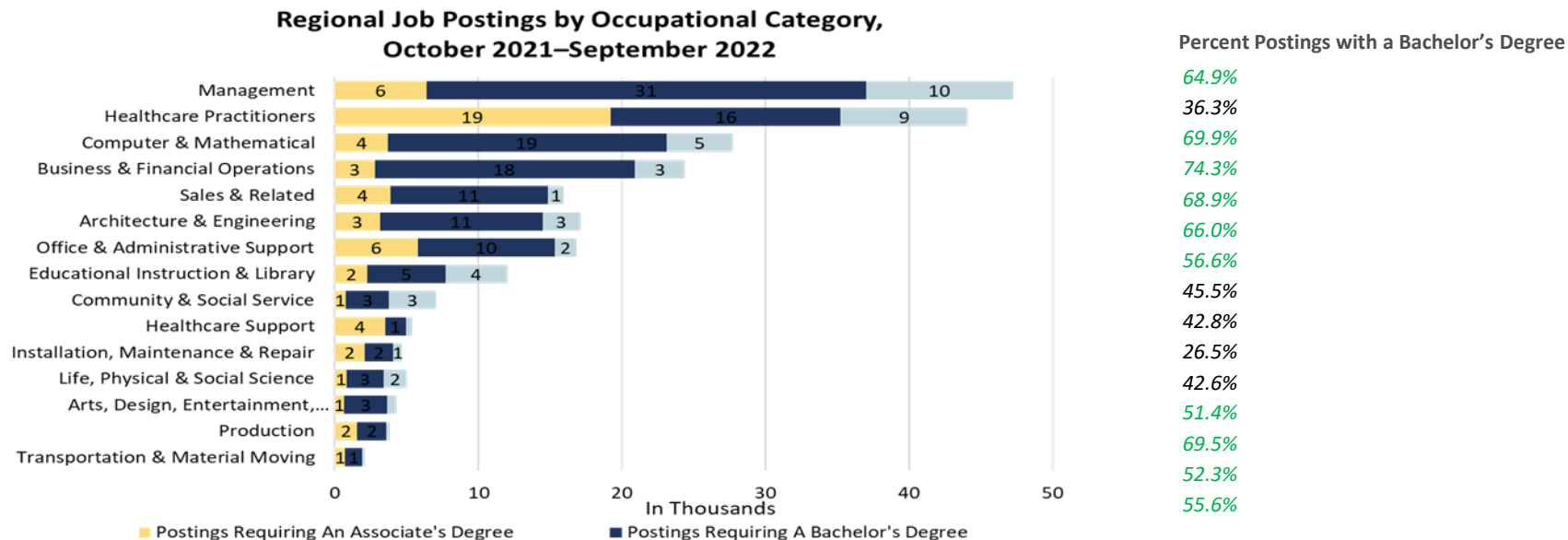**Regional Job Postings by Occupational Category, October 2021–September 2022**

Occupational Category	Associate's	Bachelor's	Other
Management	6	31	10
Healthcare Practitioners	19	16	9
Computer & Mathematical	4	19	5
Business & Financial Operations	3	18	3
Sales & Related	4	11	1
Architecture & Engineering	3	11	3
Office & Administrative Support	6	10	2
Educational Instruction & Library	2	5	4
Community & Social Service	1	3	3
Healthcare Support	4	1	
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	2	2	1
Life, Physical & Social Science	1	3	2
Arts, Design, Entertainment,…	1	3	
Production	2	2	
Transportation & Material Moving	1	1	

In Thousands

- Postings Requiring An Associate's Degree
- Postings Requiring A Bachelor's Degree

Percent Postings with a Bachelor's Degree

- *64.9%*
- *36.3%*
- *69.9%*
- *74.3%*
- *68.9%*
- *66.0%*
- *56.6%*
- *45.5%*
- *42.8%*
- *26.5%*
- *42.6%*
- *51.4%*
- *69.5%*
- *52.3%*
- *55.6%*

Source: Lightcast   Note: Region defined as within the state of South Carolina   Percent postings with a Bachelor's Degree above 50% are highlighted in green

Few in Palmetto College's "Back Yard" Have Bachelor's

As Palmetto College considers future academic offerings and prospective student populations, it is worth noting that only 19% of South Carolinians held a bachelor's degree or higher as of 2022. South Carolina is also unique for having an unusually high number of military veterans.

Only 11.5% of South Carolinians have a graduate degree or higher.

Racial diversity within both 50 and 150 miles of Aiken is about average for areas of similar size across the US.

South Carolina has a much higher population of veterans than the national average for areas of comparable size—360K vs. 276K, respectively

There are an average number of both retirees (age 55 or older) and millennials (ages 25-39) in South Carolina as compared to areas of similar size across the US.
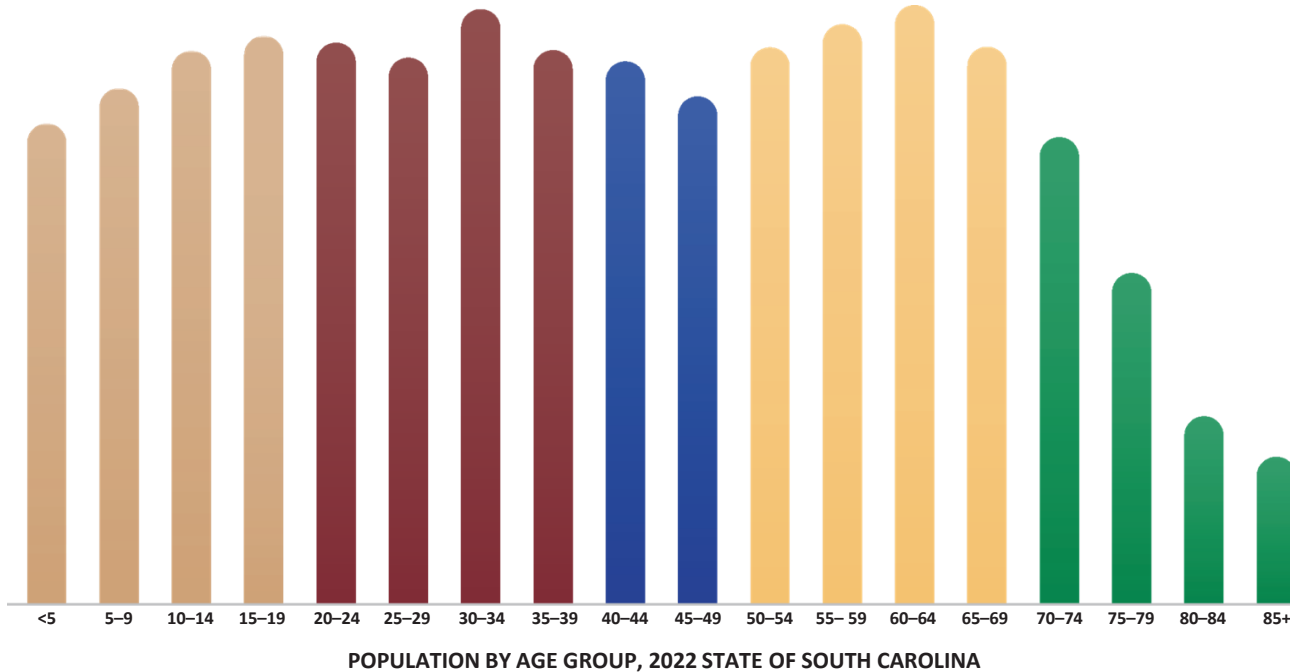
In 2021 there were 60,506 academic awards conferred within the state of South Carolina. **47% were Bachelor's degrees**.

Associate's degrees accounted for 16.8% of awards conferred; master's degrees were slightly rarer at only 11.6% of the total.

19% of South Carolina residents over age 25 have a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education— 1.8% below the national average.

Offering Different Types of Degrees Increases Target Market

Only 6% of South Carolina's population are of traditional undergraduate age, while more than 50% of the population falls into age ranges associated with non-traditional student status or continuing education.

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2022 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Age groups on x-axis: <5, 5–9, 10–14, 15–19, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35–39, 40–44, 45–49, 50–54, 55–59, 60–64, 65–69, 70–74, 75–79, 80–84, 85+

6% of the state population fits the age of high school students or recent graduates

25% of the population corresponds with the age range of non-traditional UG students or potential graduate students

26% of the population corresponds with the age range of potential continuing education students

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Gaps & Opportunities in Academic Offerings

When examining degree completions within the state of South Carolina, several academic fields with few completions but high two-year growth are immediately visible. There is no unifying trend for these programs; they are scattered across a variety of fields.

High Potential Areas: Associate's Degrees

CIP Name (4-Digit)	Completions (2021)	Percent Growth (2019-2021)
Electromechanical Technologies	324	63%
Dental Support Services	119	19%
Computer Sciences, other	91	32%
Computer & IT Administration	48	1500%
Construction Engineering Technology	35	84%
Civil Engineering Technologies	34	113%
Environmental Management & Policy	13	63%
Specialized Sales & Merchandising	8	167%
Visual & Performing Arts, general	7	133%
Religious Studies	5	400%
Sports, Kinesiology & Physical Fitness	3	200%
Religious Education	3	200%

High Potential Areas: Bachelor's Degrees

CIP Name (4-Digit)	Completions (2021)	Percent Growth (2019-2021)
Business/Commerce, general	345	127%
General Sales & Merchandising	175	35%
Philosophy	85	35%
Architecture	82	39%
Human Development/Family Studies	150	85%
Criminology	117	113%
Ethnic Minority & Gender Studies	57	84%
Education, general	55	41%
Communication Disorders Sciences	51	82%
Clinical & Counseling Psychology	32	113%
Statistics	29	81%
Sustainability Studies	28	133%

Several recently-popular associate's degrees deal with environmental policy and engineering technology, which could be developed in conjunction with USC's existing undergraduate programming in industrial process engineering.

Online Students Closer to Home But Overall Pie Is Shrinking

A 2022 survey conducted by Wiley Education Services found that while COVID-19 briefly made learners temporarily open to schools slightly farther away, online learning remains localized; the majority of students still prefer a university less than 50 miles from where they live.

The most important factors for choosing an online program are **field of study** (cited by 82% of learners), **tuition and fees** (74%), and **time to completion** (72%).

79% of students prefer programs that are 100% online as opposed to hybrid programs with a required on-campus component.

60% of students said that if the program they wanted was not available online at their top school, they would find the program online at a different school

48% of online students live less than 50 miles from campus. **12%** live between 50-100 miles away, and just **8%** live 101-250 miles away.*

Fewer learners today are open to a university more than 50 miles from home than compared to 2012.

The presence of learners driven online by COVID-19 marks an interesting shift in the landscape of online higher education:

33% of students reported they had never considered a fully online program prior to the pandemic and were eager to return to in-person learning

The total population of learners over age 24 shrank 5.8% between spring 2021 and spring 2022, across all modalities of higher education

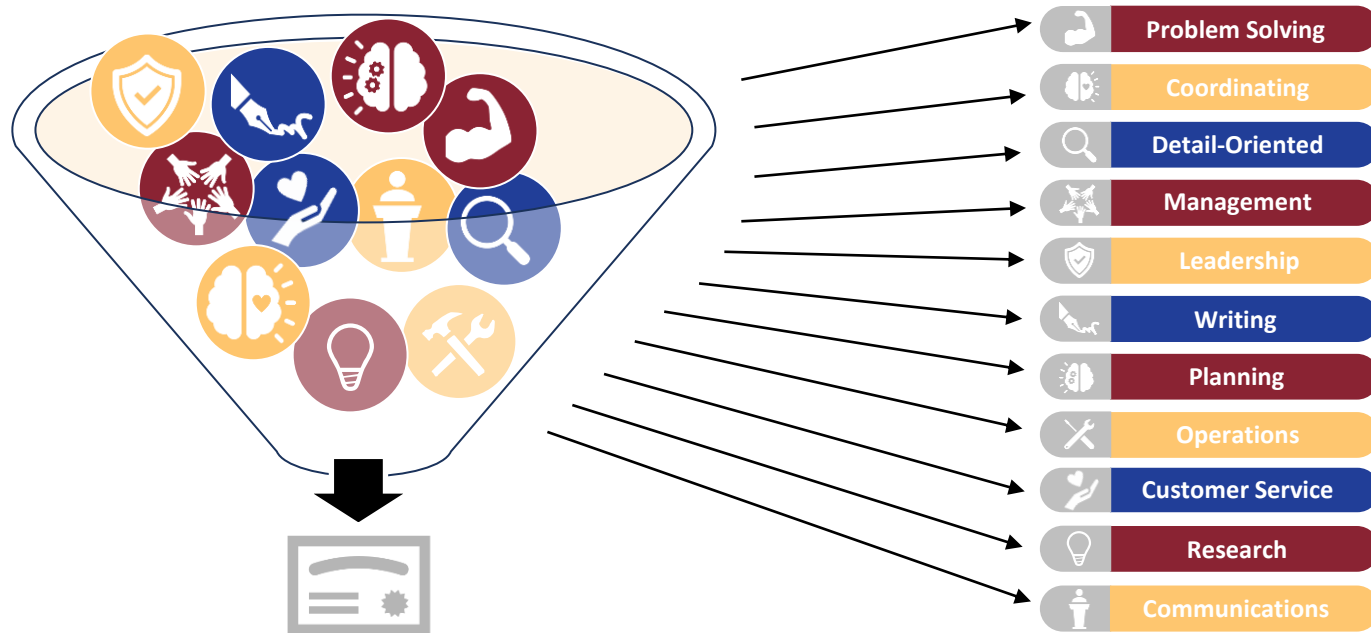**The online pie is shrinking, and tuition discounts are at an all-time high of 54.5%**

Consider Top Core Skills When Shaping Content Delivery

"Hot and Cold Skills" also calculates which soft skills saw the most frequent mentions in state job posts; Palmetto College should consider how best to incorporate these social, creative, and critical thinking skills into its current and future academic offerings.

Problem Solving
Coordinating
Detail-Oriented
Management
Leadership
Writing
Planning
Operations
Customer Service
Research
Communications

# Palmetto College Alumni Remain in South Carolina

Palmetto College alumni remain close to home, with 62% of online alumni profiles based in South Carolina and 13% based in Sumter. Marketing and event planning are the two most-commonly listed hard skills, appearing across 16% and 11% of profiles respectively.

Top Regional Employers
Out of 1.4K unique profiles...

- University of South Carolina (41)
- US Air Force (20)
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina (10)
- Walmart (9)
- Wells Fargo (9)
- Founders Federal Credit Union (8)
- Sumter School District (7)
- US Army (6)
- Medical University of South Carolina (5)
- Duke Energy (5)
- US Department of Veterans' Affairs (5)
- Prisma Health (5)
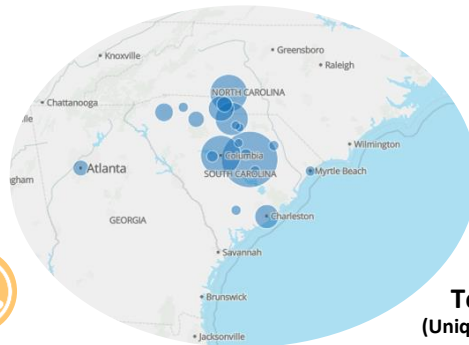
Top Cities
(Unique profiles)

Top Listed Skills

Operations Management

Event Planning

Inventory Management

Marketing   Accounting

Process Improvement

Data Entry   Auditing

Community Outreach

Palmetto College alumni students were most likely to have also attended USC Columbia (32% of profiles) or USC Aiken Technical College (5%)