



## Executive Summary

Focus Carolina Steering Committee was convened initially to populate the five individual goals committees. It was composed of the five chairs of the individual goals committee, with the Chair of the Faculty Senate serving as Chair of the Steering Committee. Thus, Focus Carolina has been faculty led as per the charge of the Provost and Vice President for Planning, Ted Moore. The committee chairs expressed a desire to stay in communication throughout the process in order to better integrate the activities of the individual committees, and to avoid the development of initiatives in opposing directions by different committees.

The reader of this final set of initiatives will recognize that the initiatives that are being recommended by the five committees overlap significantly. These areas of overlap are not so much redundant as they are independent recognition of areas where there lies great potential for advancing the mission of the University, coming from committees operating under different charges and with respect to different elements of importance (e.g. research, teaching, service, etc.). Plans of action could be written to address initiatives in a multivalent manner that combines these different perspectives if possible.

The University will make the greatest forward progress if all of our activities are aligned with each other. This is not only true with respect to an integrated approach to advancing the five goal areas of Focus Carolina, but also should include other major initiatives such as the General Education revisions, and Diversity Task Force recommendations. In some sense these activities might be seen as independent, but they should more rightly be viewed as arising from the same voice.

Great care was taken by the Steering Committee to engage the fullest possible range of perspectives within the University Faculty by appointing committee members in as balanced a manner as possible, and members of each of the five committees were charged to set aside their own vested interests to act in the best interests of the university as a whole, and to engage the perspectives of students, staff, alumni, and all other members of the Carolina community openly and fairly, and we believe they did so wholeheartedly. All five committees took to heart the recommendations and suggestions of the Deans and the Diversity Task Force that were provided as well as the input received from two faculty forum events.

Finally, we note that several common themes arose independently within the different committees, and these seem to represent basic needs for the University to address if we are to achieve the level of greatness we desire. They include:

- Interdisciplinarity and the dissolving of barriers to collaboration
- Improved communication and the development of a deeper sense of community
- Diversity and advancement of an environment that welcomes a fuller range of perspectives
- Promoting a Culture of Excellence in which all within the scholarly community aspire to greatness

With a mind to achieving greatness as a University, we present these five sets of initiatives, recognizing that many will represent a tremendous challenge in the view of current resource availability.

We present for consideration suggestions related to the Vision statement after careful vetting within our committees. These will, of course need to follow the required format of the CHE, but would like to offer them as suggestions for consideration.

**Mission:**

The University of South Carolina is a comprehensive public system of eight campuses, each of which contributes in unique ways to the overall mission of the University. The overall mission is:

- (1) to provide its students with the highest-quality education, and the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for success and responsible citizenship in a complex and changing world;
- (2) to pursue excellence in research, scholarship and artistic creation to insure the highest value of the education received by its students and to apply research, scholarship and artistic creation to improve the quality of life;
- (3) to foster a campus environment that promotes diversity and welcomes faculty, staff and a student body of all races, creeds, and culture as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy; and
- (4) to provide excellent service to its communities, state, nation, and the world.

The relative emphasis of research and service varies among the constituent institutions, depending on their respective campus-specific missions.

The Focus Carolina Steering Committee was constituted as follows:

- Robert Thunell – Research, Scholarship, & Creative Achievement
- TS Sudarshan – Teaching & Learning
- Allan Brett – Service Excellence
- Paula Feldman – Quality of Life in the University Community
- Susan Cutter – Recognition & Visibility
- Bob Best – Chair



## Teaching and Learning Initiatives

This document is the result of a semester of work by a dedicated committee of faculty, staff and students. Their task: suggest bold and innovative ideas to improve quality in the areas of teaching and student learning at the University. The result is a set of six initiatives, covering a range of topics from student recruitment to program assessment. Initiative 1 addresses student quality and diversity. Initiative 2 seeks to broaden academic support for students. Initiative 3 addresses removing institutional impediments to innovative and interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Initiative 4 seeks to create a culture of student centered learning. Initiative 5 addresses the needs of faculty to improve teaching on the campus. Finally, Initiative 6 focuses on the need to establish and/or improve assessment methods for the purposes of improving programs.

### Goal statement:

To improve the quality of academic programs at all levels, develop and nurture a faculty devoted to teaching excellence, and enhance the richness of the student experience in and beyond the classroom so the teaching and learning environment of the University of South Carolina equals or surpasses that of comprehensive state university systems deemed peer aspirants.

**Committee Members:** Profs. Tena B. Crews, Helen Doeringhaus, Brant Hellwig, JoAnne Herman, Julie Hubbert, Jed Lyons, Manoj Malhotra, Allen Miller, Paul Solomon, T. S. Sudarshan (Chair), Briana Timmerman, Irma Van Scoy, Susan Weir, and Ms. Tonya Jasinski, Ms. Ashley Wood, and Mr. David London.

### Major initiatives:

1. **Recruit and retain a high quality and diverse student body.**
  - Increase the number of McNair and/or Carolina Scholars
  - Increase the undergraduate admission standards for the Columbia campus. Explore non-conventional metrics for assessing potential students, recognizing there is no single metric for quality
  - Provide support for programs specifically designed to recruit and retain US students from underrepresented populations
  - Invest resources in an Honors/Capstone specific recruiter
  - Facilitate targeted recruitment of academically talented international students.
2. **Enhance student academic and social support services beyond the classroom via centralized advising, small group mentoring, supplemental instruction programs, and support of distance education.**
  - Implement and support quality centralized advising services to help students develop a

comprehensive educational plan that combines curricular planning with beyond the classroom experiences, experiential learning, leadership, and service. This initiative will facilitate informed decision making and timely degree completion

- Establish faculty to individual student or small group mentoring programs across the curricula to facilitate opportunities beyond the classroom for students to help them meaningfully apply knowledge, skills, and aptitudes. Provide appropriate resources, incentives, and rewards for faculty mentorship activities
- Expand **academic support services** including, but not limited to supplemental instruction, tutoring, early intervention, the Writing Center, and programs for special population
- Enhance support for **distance education**

**3. Foster innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching (e.g. use of IT, enhancement of learning beyond the classroom, and co-taught and cross-listed courses) by providing necessary resources and support**

- Increase access to information technology both in the classroom and out, while developing more holistic methods of instruction, to insure effective teaching
- Develop formal structures that encourage collaborative teaching between faculty at USC and other institutions. Create a course load structure to foster interdisciplinary and collaborative teaching that ensures such teaching is both valued and given full credit in tenure and promotion
- Develop an administrative framework that promotes cross-listing of courses and encourages curricular innovation and improved use of resources. Devise accounting methods to incentivize departments and Colleges to participate in cross-listing

**4. Create a culture of student centered learning.**

- Sponsor faculty workshops on student centered learning
- Showcase faculty who practice student centered learning on the USC website
- Revise the required Provost teacher evaluation questions to measure teaching behaviors that exemplify student centered learning
- Give a teaching award for faculty who practice student centered learning
- Add a presentation on student centered learning to new faculty orientation
- Include a statement about student centered learning in the USC mission statement under teaching

**5. Elevate the importance of quality teaching and mentoring within the University by improving classroom conditions, valuing teaching in hiring and compensation decisions, and providing faculty with support to improve their teaching skills or to develop new courses.**

- Lower faculty-to-student ratios
- Place more emphasis on teaching in hiring decisions, and incentivize quality teaching
- Provide resource and financial support to faculty with a need or desire to improve their teaching skills or to develop new courses or innovative teaching strategies

**6. Create and implement assessment systems for all programs that inform program improvement.**

- Initiate a study into the current status of assessment processes at the University
- Create a faculty committee to work with the Office of Assessment and Compliance (OAC) to

establish a framework for a University-wide program assessment process which meets the following objectives:

- Programs should have published educational objectives consistent with the mission of the institution and the needs of the program's various constituencies
- Programs should have measures that assess student performance that are clearly aligned with program and course objectives
- Programs should have meaningful assessment results that demonstrate the degree to which graduates have attained the program's educational objectives
- Strengths and areas for improvement in overall student performance should be clearly identified, providing objective information to be considered in course/program development and improvement
- Program assessment systems should be continually improved with a goal of providing better evaluation data to both faculty and students
- Increase support for the Office of Assessment and Compliance as needed to assist units in establishing discipline-appropriate assessment processes and enhance assessment expertise and support in administrative positions
- Provide professional development for those responsible for providing leadership in relation to program assessment (Deans, Associate Deans, and Department Chairs)
- Integrate the use of assessment data to meet other primary needs through:
  - Exploration of the utilization of assessment data in grants, funded research, or other scholarship
  - Integration of assessment work or results into faculty evaluation processes (annual review and tenure and promotion)



## Research, Scholarship and Creative Achievement Initiatives

### **Goal statement:**

The University of South Carolina, through its dedication to excellence in research, scholarship and creative achievement, will be recognized as one of the nation's premiere public university systems. Our advances in these areas will enhance the quality of life and improve the economic well-being of the citizens of South Carolina.

**Committee Members:** Rose Booze, William Brown, Thomas Crocker, Lacy Ford, Jill Frank, Richard Goodwin, Ryan Goodwin, Diane Johnson, Venkat Lakshmi, Cliff Leaman, Russell Pate, Ken Reifsnider, Meredith Ross, Virginia Scotchie, Subhash Sharma, Michael Sutton, Robert Thunell (Chair), Ran Wei, Deborah Wells, Michael D. Wyatt

### **Major Initiatives:**

Advancing our status as a top tier research university requires that USC continually reevaluate its research strengths and identify areas where it can be a leader both nationally and internationally. To facilitate this, the following recommendations are presented.

- 1. Develop and maintain a standing Presidential Advisory Council comprised of USC's most qualified, active and externally visible faculty from across the University. This committee will:**
  - Make recommendations to the University administration for improvements in the quality of our educational and research programs that will lead to greater recognition and standing amongst our peer and aspirant universities.
  - Identify future areas of emphasis that will lead to long-term institutional support for the sponsored research, scholarship and creative achievement activities at the University.
  
- 2. Develop programs to attract, develop and retain faculty. These include:**
  - Create a carefully regulated, proposal-driven hiring initiative, administered by the Provost's Office to develop and strengthen targeted areas of research excellence. This initiative will seek to build and fortify areas of excellence both within departments and among departments. Proposals will be evaluated and ranked by a University-wide faculty committee, and will include a confidential evaluation process of the importance of the proposal from the chairs of all involved departments.
  - Develop a program to identify our most highly regarded faculty and provide them with the additional resources needed to pursue innovative ideas. Such support will strengthen the commitment of our best faculty to our institution and improve faculty retention.
  - Establish a "Humanities Center" to foster cross-disciplinary research, scholarship, and collaboration on targeted issues of contemporary interest to scholars among the humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences.

- Establish new University awards that are given annually for excellence in “creative achievement” (i.e., Russell Award for Creative Achievement and Educational Foundation Award for Creative Achievement).
  - Provide faculty with the administrative resources and seed money needed to organize small to medium size conferences at USC on an annual basis.
- 3. Enhance the quality of graduate programs, as well as the quality of life for graduate students that perform the research, scholarship and creative activities.**
- Graduate assistant stipends, tuition abatements, and health insurance for all graduate assistants must be competitive with those at other comprehensive research universities. This issue must be addressed for our institution to be competitive and advance its standing among peer institutions.
  - Encourage the creation of novel interdisciplinary or integrative doctoral degree programs.
- 4. Provide resources and commit to developing the reputation, status, and visibility of the professional schools. For example:**
- The scope of the School of Medicine should to be expanded. Currently, the USC School of Medicine is among the smallest in the nation in terms of faculty. This small size limits its ability to compete for extramural funding and carry out research that would be specifically beneficial to the people of South Carolina. Building the research capacity of the School of Medicine would greatly enhance our standing amongst our peer institutions.
- 5. Improve the University’s administrative, technological and physical research infrastructure system so that it is comparable with that at other comprehensive research universities. For example:**
- Equipment and facilities that are broadly used in research and educational programs should be centrally managed and operated as multi-user facilities.
  - Provide appropriate administrative support for the development of an intellectual property structure for efforts to grow University-industry collaborative research activities.
- 6. Re-examine the University’s current budget model and implement changes that will direct more resources to research, scholarship and creative achievement.**



## Service Excellence Initiatives

### **Goal statement:**

The University of South Carolina is committed to improving quality-of-life beyond the university by engaging the educational and research expertise of faculty, staff, and students, and by promoting community service. Although service at all levels – local, national, and global – is embraced, service to local and state communities is emphasized in particular. Provision of community service is accomplished and recognized through formal curricular service learning and through extracurricular activity.

**Committee membership:** Arlene Andrews, Allan Brett (Chair), Robert Brookshire, Erik Collins, Kwame Dawes, Kim Connolly, Reed Curtis, Bert Ely, Bruce Field, Andrew Gaeckle, Jimmie Gahagan, Andrew Gowan, Molly Gilbride, Thomas Limehouse, Chris Plyler, Robert Rolfe, Virginia Weathers

### **Four Important Themes Discussed by the Committee:**

1. USC already has a substantial track-record in service learning (a teaching method that combines community service with academic instruction) and extra-curricular community service. However, in order to move to “the next level” in service excellence, USC needs a centralized mechanism to facilitate interdisciplinary service learning and community engagement. Instead of a central office, the university currently has a loosely knit group of formal and informal offices and committees – with overlapping missions and membership – that address various aspects of service learning and community engagement. Notably, a previous group – a “Service Learning Task Force” appointed by the Provost in 2006-2007 – recommended the creation of a centralized Office for Service Learning, but that recommendation was never implemented.
2. Committee members expressed concern about perceptions of service in the promotion and tenure process. A widely shared view is that service is undervalued in this process. Well-meaning mentors advise junior faculty to avoid potentially labor-intensive service activities that might interfere with research and publication, which are considered the most important pathways to promotion.
3. The Committee believes that intense interest in interdisciplinary collaboration exists at USC. Service learning provides a natural potential vehicle for such collaboration, because societal issues addressed in service learning typically have multiple dimensions that may be approached more comprehensively from multiple academic perspectives.
4. Service excellence initiatives should foster intercultural understanding and should promote the development of productive relationships with diverse communities.

## Major Initiatives:

### **1. USC should establish a Center that coordinates both service learning and community service more generally (perhaps called “Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement”). Among other things, a Center would:**

- Serve as a “clearing house” that would facilitate service learning and community service by bringing students, faculty, and staff into contact with outside people, institutions, and agencies that can provide service learning and community service opportunities
- Enhance interdisciplinary collaboration at USC by bringing together units (both academic and non-academic) with overlapping or complementary interests in service activities
- Provide guidance – in conjunction with the Center for Teaching Excellence – to inexperienced faculty and students who wish to implement service learning courses
- Promote community service opportunities for “unaffiliated” students (i.e., those who are not members of student organizations that typically organize community service activities, such as fraternities, sororities, religious organizations, etc.)
- Facilitate research associated with service learning and community service
- Coordinate and expand existing university-wide service activities such as the annual Martin Luther King day of service, and develop new projects of this type

To function effectively, a Center would require at least several full-time staff. Currently, entities at USC that are involved with service learning and/or community service include the Community Service Programs office, the Office of Student Engagement, the Service Learning Initiative, and the Community Engagement Task Force; in addition, some academic units (e.g., the Honors College) have their own offices devoted to service learning or community service. Exactly how these entities would be folded into the new Center requires further discussion; nevertheless, bringing most or all of them under a single organizational umbrella should be economical, both figuratively and literally. The Service Excellence Committee has compiled a list of public and private universities that have such centers.

### **2. University leadership should send a clear message to academic units that service excellence is valued in tenure and promotion.**

- The committee acknowledges difficulties here: Criteria differ among academic units, and weighting the value of service activities can be problematic. An important first step is for the USC administration to articulate a position that exemplary service – especially service that makes a demonstrable impact on the community and involves students – will be given significant weight in the promotion process. Whenever possible, faculty members should find creative ways to integrate service activities with research, publication, and other scholarly activity

### **3. University representatives (at the highest level) should expand outreach to representatives of local and state government (at the highest level) and other community leaders to help identify service needs for which the university’s academic expertise would be valuable.**

- High-level contacts will lend credibility to the university’s commitment to service excellence, and might help the university identify the highest-priority service needs as defined by the community. This initiative is meant to supplement (and not displace) typical “lower-level” contacts between the university and non-university communities; indeed, people working at the “grass-roots” level frequently have the most astute perceptions about community needs

**4. The university should identify one or several thematic areas that could serve as targets for interdisciplinary service learning and community service.**

- Examples of thematic areas could include at-risk youth, the elderly, the homeless, literacy, and the environment/sustainability. The task of choosing one or more thematic areas would best be delegated to the proposed Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement, which would be in the best position to match university-wide expertise with community needs. For example, suppose that lowering the high-school dropout rate was a target within the theme of at-risk youth; a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach – involving many Schools and Colleges – might include mentoring, tutoring, inspiring girls to consider math and science careers, interventions to reduce health risks (e.g., pregnancy, drug abuse), support for homeless children, and teaching civic engagement. An environment/sustainability theme could involve numerous departments in Arts and Sciences, as well as Engineering, Law, Business, Public Health, and Mass Communications. Interdisciplinary involvement would heighten possibilities for creative thinking and innovative research in these thematic areas

**5. The university should establish a “lifelong learning institute” in Columbia.**

- Here we refer to an organized program that offers informal courses, lectures, field trips, and other educational activities to older adults (or in some cases, to anyone in the community), at a nominal fee. Such programs currently exist at USC Beaufort and USC Aiken. USC Columbia does offer some educational programs to the public on an *ad hoc* basis (e.g., the English Department’s “Caught in the Creative Act” lecture series); an institute would organize and expand such offerings. Having a highly visible “lifelong learning institute” is an effective way to strengthen bonds between the university and residents of greater Columbia. The Bernard Osher Foundation has provided grants to fund lifelong learning institutes at 120 colleges and universities, including Clemson, Furman, Coastal Carolina, and USC Beaufort

**6. The university should seek external funding to support service activities (including the proposed Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement).**

- One potential source of funding is donations facilitated by the Development Office. Some potential donors might be more inclined to donate to community-service-related projects than to other kinds of university projects; such people might view donations to support service activities as simultaneously giving to the university and making a more traditional charitable donation
- Another potential source is the new “Edward Kennedy Serve America Act,” signed into law on April 21, 2009. As of this date, funds have not yet been allocated for specific programs, but some provisions of this act are targeted to universities. The school dropout crisis, health care, and energy are specifically mentioned as target areas for which public service opportunities will be created with federal funding. Service learning is mentioned prominently in the legislation. The university administration should immediately assign someone to keep track of funding opportunities made available by this legislation; eventually, the proposed Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement would assume that responsibility



## Quality of Life in the University Community Initiatives

### Statement of Diversity:

The QOLUC Committee convened a subcommittee to construct a diversity statement that captures more of the fullness of what diversity has come to mean within the Academy, and agreed upon the following:

*The University of South Carolina is committed to creating a campus environment that fosters diversity in its many forms. In a globalized world, inclusion of a wide range of perspectives brings into play a fuller spectrum of ideas, knowledge, wisdom and opinion that can advance understanding, innovation, and creativity. To that end, the University welcomes faculty, staff, and students of all races, creeds, and cultures, and encourages intellectual work both within and across disciplines.*

### Goal statement:

The multi-campus system will be a destination of choice for high-achieving faculty, students and staff who value, benefit from, and contribute to a rich and rewarding learning and working environment where civility, ethics, and collaboration create an inclusive culture of fairness and respect, facilitating for all Carolinians the highest levels of intellectual and personal achievement.

Achievement of this goal will be evidenced by the recruitment and retention of the highest quality faculty, students, and staff; their advancement of the University's mission; and by enrichment of the communities where Carolinians live and work.

**Committee membership:** Elise Ahyi, Jonathan Antonio, James Augustine, Drucilla Barker, Robert Best, Elizabeth Bilderback, Christine Curtis, Paula Feldman (Chair), Jennifer Jablonski, Kristen Kennedy, Shirley Mills, Stephanie Mitchem, Eboni Nelson, Charles Rawls, Laura Walls, Jennifer Zapatka

### Major Initiatives:

#### 1. Compensation

- By an overwhelming margin, surveys of USC faculty, staff, and graduate assistants consistently identify compensation as the leading quality of life issue that needs to be addressed. Accordingly, we propose that the President establish salary and compensation goals for faculty and staff that will place USC between the 60th and 75th percentiles (i.e., above the mean) relative to our most appropriate peer and peer-aspirant institutions. We also propose that effective strategies be devised to address salary equity and salary compression issues in a way that equitably recognizes the contributions and loyalty of longstanding, productive faculty and staff. In a similar vein, we propose that the President establish goals for graduate stipends that will place our graduate stipends between the 60th and 75th percentiles relative to the graduate

programs of our most appropriate peer and peer-aspirant institutions. A process should be put in place to monitor yearly that we have met our compensation goals and, if not, to devise strategies to allow us to do so.

## **2. Physical Environment/ Deferred Maintenance and Safety**

- Faculty, staff and students identify their physical environment as important to their sense of well-being and ability to work effectively and live safely. The President should immediately establish a plan, to begin in 2011, with a budget and a yearly timetable, to address both short-term and long-term deferred maintenance and safety issues in existing buildings, including classrooms, to be complete by the year 2030. The President should also put into place a policy of addressing future maintenance of all new construction at the time the construction is approved. A process should be put in place to monitor and assess yearly that we have met our goals and, if not, to devise strategies to allow us to do so.

## **3. Benefits**

- In our recent *Quality of Life* surveys of USC faculty and staff, the second most cited quality of life issue that needs to be addressed is that of future benefits. In particular, both the faculty and the staff listed tuition waivers for spouse/domestic partner and dependents, preventive health care, and vision care as the three categories of benefits they would most like to see made available at USC. In addition, surveys indicate the need for a system-wide family leave policy (including, but not limited to: birth, adoption, elder care, illness of self or family members) for faculty, staff and graduate students, as well as domestic partner benefits. We recommend that graduate students be provided with full health care benefits. Accordingly, we propose that the President develop an action plan to enhance these categories of benefits for our faculty, staff and graduate students over the next five years.

## **4. Fostering a Culture of Excellence**

- The University of South Carolina should foster a culture of excellence where faculty, staff, and students feel respected, engaged, informed, and valued and have a voice in decision-making. In addition, all members of the USC community should be held to high standards of performance and accountability. To that end we recommend that within the next one to two years the President take the following actions:
  - establish a Staff Senate to allow staff to have a voice in university governance;
  - coordinate a unified system of student advisement and develop, as well, a Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, which will better communicate to students and the university community the processes by which complaints and grievances may be addressed;
  - establish an Office of Internal Communications that would: make internal communications more effective and streamlined; give Deans, Department heads, and governance bodies more resources to encourage internal recognition and appreciation of the efforts and accomplishments of faculty, staff and students; establish a system-wide, interactive web calendar and an updated, user-friendly, web-based directory of faculty, staff, and students; and immediately address campus and system-wide deficiencies in technology and infrastructure that have a deleterious impact on efficiencies, costs, and internal communication

## **5. Diversity**

- The Quality of Life Committee recommends that the President:

- increase the level of faculty, staff and student diversity. [Diversity includes, but is not limited to, historically underrepresented groups—African Americans and women.]
- determine and implement best practices for recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students at USC Columbia and the USC system;
- set affirmative action goals by division, college, and school rather than at the university level;
- assess the success towards meeting these goals on a quarterly basis;
- make every effort to hire, promote and retain diverse university officers at all levels of central administration and with a particular emphasis on the Presidential cabinet;
- create an inclusive learning and working environment that empowers underrepresented groups and recognizes their contributions by initiating and supporting programs of professional mentorship, and
- hold those in authority, including the university president, provost, vice provosts/presidents, deans, directors, chairs, and search committees, accountable for increasing diversity through recruitment and retention by assessing progress on a regular basis and modifying the plan if need be, to increase its effectiveness

#### **6. Continuing Quality of Life Assessment**

- The President should establish an on-going task force to assess quality of life on all campuses of the University of South Carolina. This Quality of Life Task Force should develop a survey instrument to assess all aspects of quality of life at USC for faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni. The Quality of Life Task Force should determine how to strengthen the positive areas and improve the areas that need attention. Based on the recommendations of the Quality of Life Task Force, the President should develop and implement an action plan to strengthen and improve quality of life. The President should reassess quality of life at USC every three to four years to determine the effects of the measures taken and additional measures that are needed



## Recognition and Visibility Initiatives

The Recognition and Visibility Subcommittee framed its recommendations based on three premises. First, the perception of the University of South Carolina is inextricably linked to the perception of the state of South Carolina. Second, the role of the public research university is different from other state-supported institutions of higher education. Third, many faculty, staff, and students on the University of South Carolina's main campus in Columbia do not fully recognize the caliber of scholarship, creative endeavors, teaching, and accomplishments of students, staff, or faculty right here on campus. The committee recommends three broad initiatives that are designed to not only improve the recognition and visibility of scholarship and creative endeavors, teaching excellence, and accomplishments of students, but to translate these achievements to constituencies within the university, to the state's residents and governing bodies, and to national and international audiences.

### **Goal statement:**

Accomplishments of students, faculty, staff and alumni will be showcased and publicized such that the campuses are recognized for excellence and leadership in education, research, scholarship, creative endeavors, athletics, and public service, consistent with their respective missions.

**Committee membership:** Andy Allen, Michael Angel, William Bearden, Christopher Berg, Thorne Compton, Susan Cutter (Chair), Thomas Hilbish, Andreas Krammer, Craig Kridel, Chris Myers, Dennis Pruitt, Ali Rizvi, Edward Munn Sanchez, Gary Snyder

### **Major Initiatives:**

#### **1. Promote excellence with the University**

While many faculty have national and international reputations, as a community of scholars only a few of our faculty have received the peer-recognition that accrues to the very best in the nation through elections to such prestigious bodies as the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, or the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Initiatives to enhance efforts to improve the excellence of faculty so that in the future they would be competitive for such national and international honors include:

- Establish an Office of Faculty Excellence and Recognition (OFER) at the VP for Academic Affairs level that would:
  - help identify our most talented and highly regarded faculty and provide resources to them to pursue scholarship and creative endeavors; 2) assist chairs and deans in nominations of faculty for prestigious and nationally recognized meritorious awards
  - Establish an Office for National Peer Recognition (ONPR) at the VP for Academic Affairs level that takes a university-wide leadership role to increase the national ranking and external visibility of the University. This office would advise on infrastructure investments, organizational changes, and areas for publicity that would enhance external visibility and recognition of academic programs, and

- disseminate information internally to all academic units on best practices for publicizing their accomplishments to external audiences
- Create a Multidisciplinary Research and Scholarship Council (MRSC) to advise the Provost and VP for Research in supporting and sustaining multi-disciplinary scholarship and creative activity. The MRSC would provide university-wide recommendations on reducing impediments trans-discipline research and scholarship such as infrastructure, organizational change, and faculty responsibilities and rewards

At the same time improvements in the visibility and recognition of students is equally important and could be achieved more efficiently by creating an Office of Student Excellence and Recognition (OSER) that would coordinate the important, yet diverse efforts of existing student-oriented offices focused on raising the visibility and quality of our student body.

## **2. Improve recognition of student achievements, scholarship and creative endeavors, and teaching excellence to statewide, regional, national and international audiences**

This could be accomplished using a variety of different mechanisms. The more innovative suggestions include:

- establish and fund the Provost’s Annual Symposium Series (PASS), which would screen competitive and thematic proposals from across campus to bring nationally and internationally recognized scholars and artists to campus for lectures, research symposium, master classes, and performances;
- develop and fund targeted advertising for faculty, undergraduate and graduate programs, and student recruitment to top-level disciplinary and interdisciplinary publications;
- reward faculty for exemplary service to scholarly societies governing bodies at the regional, national, and international level

## **3. Translate Achievement to external audiences**

In addition to enhanced publicity efforts and the modernization of the University’s homepage including an interactive master calendar, initiatives such as the following would serve to communicate our academic and student achievements to local, regional and national audiences:

- Implement a Carolina Distinguished Lecture Series, “Carolina’s Best” that would feature a public lecture and podcast
- Establish a centralized Lectures for the Public list of speakers and topics
- Develop the “Imagine South Carolina without the University” campaign showing a series of maps of different occupations (doctors, teachers) in the state and then the same map with University alumni removed