



2025

IMPACT REPORT



New Student Orientation
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



RIGHT WHERE THEY BELONG.

The Office of New Student Orientation at the University of South Carolina has a long-standing history of putting the students and families we serve first. Through our nationally-recognized programs, we aim to leave a lasting impact on all those who engage with us.

As part of Enrollment Management under the Office of the Provost, our primary function is New Student Orientation. This is the period when incoming students and their families receive the resources, information and guidance needed to successfully transition into the university environment. Our portfolio extends to include specialized Orientation programs, semesterly transition programs, campus partnerships and year-long student leadership programs.

We are proud to be considered as a part of the nation's #1 first-year experience at a public institution, and appreciate the work we are able to accomplish alongside our colleagues included in this recognition. Our goal has always been and will continue to be helping students and families find the place where they belong at South Carolina. Our programs are intentionally and carefully crafted to not only fit the needs of this current generation of college students, but to evolve for future generations.

The following impact report highlights the aforementioned programs, staff, trends and influence had by the Office of New Student Orientation. It also reflects the current state of our department. Data points have been collected from programming assessment administered by our office and can be found throughout this report.



CONTENTS

Overview	4
Student Leadership	5
Student Leader Outcomes	6
Orientation Programs	8
Success Data	10
Partnerships	16
Community Service	18
Professional Involvement	20
State of New Student Orientation	22
Contact Us	23



OVERVIEW OF THE OFFICE OF NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

The Office of New Student Orientation functions within the subdivision of Enrollment Management in the Office of the Provost.

Mission

The Office of New Student Orientation engages incoming students and their supporters in meaningful experiences that facilitate the successful transition to and through the University of South Carolina.

Vision

The Office of New Student Orientation strives to create a supportive environment that encourages student exploration, an inclusive community and personal success.

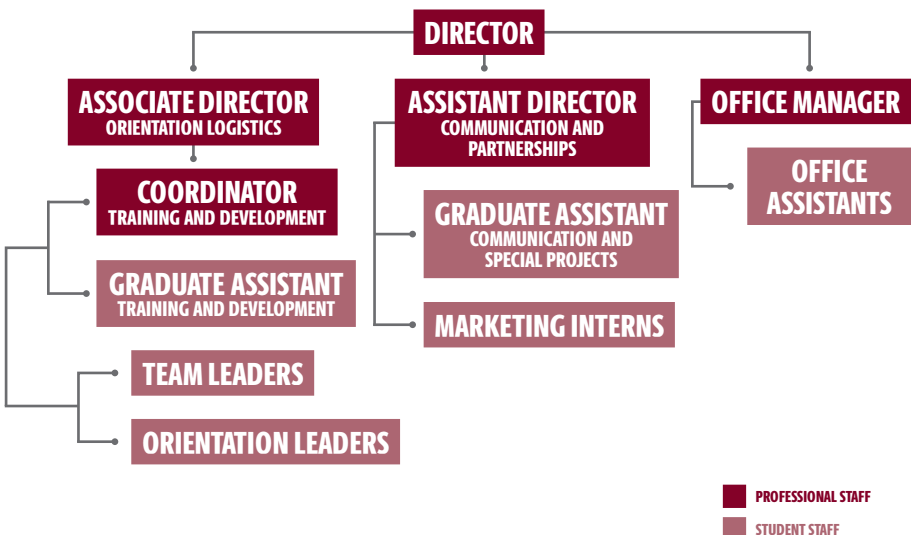
Motto

Right where you belong

Values

Discovery • Community • Innovation • Tradition • Support

Organizational Chart



STUDENT LEADERSHIP

The Office of New Student Orientation provides student leadership and professional development opportunities to current students serving in Orientation Leader and Team Leader positions. Outside of these roles, students may also work with our office as Office Assistants or Marketing Interns.



Orientation Leaders

We recruit 40 students to work as Orientation Leaders, who are integral members of our team. They guide and support incoming students and families as they transition to campus. They are official ambassadors for the university who work to share the values, expectations, resources and spirit of the Gamecock community. Along the way they make friendships, discover their leadership potential, network across campus and kick-off the nation's #1 first-year experience at any public institution.

Before they can welcome students, they spend the spring semester attending weekly leadership trainings, participating in team retreats and attending student-focused conferences. Our goal is to provide our Orientation Leaders with professional development opportunities that not only prepare them for a summer on our team, but for any future career or educational endeavors. Our catchphrase for this team is ***one summer changes everything***, reiterating the long lasting professional impact of being an Orientation Leader.



Team Leaders

Once a student has completed their year as an Orientation Leader, they have the opportunity to become a Team Leader. These students serve as peer leaders and mentors to our Orientation Leaders. As opposed to working directly with incoming students, our Team Leaders work with families and supporters and run day-of logistics during Orientation. This portion of our team is traditionally comprised of six individuals.

They spend the fall and spring semester attending and leading trainings and retreats, Orientation Leader trainings and student-focused conferences. Our goal is to build on what they learned the previous year and introduce new perspectives on peer leadership.





STUDENT LEADER OUTCOMES

The following data reflects student responses after serving as Orientation Leaders in 2025.

100%

of Orientation Leaders agree that they reflected on their identities and values and how they relate to their leadership and affect their experiences with others.

100%

of Orientation Leaders agree that they enhanced their interpersonal communication skills, including public speaking, active listening, customer service and crisis/conflict management.

93%

of Orientation Leaders agree that they developed skills like critical thinking and problem solving.

Commonly Shared Skills Gained

- confidence
- public speaking
- relationship building

5

Capstone
Scholars

1

former Palmetto
Pathway Student

2

Transfer
Students

4

Out of
State Students

3.46

Average
Overall GPA



19

First-Generation
College Students

5

in Fraternity
and Sorority Life

3

in the
Honors College

3

TRIO Opportunity
Scholars



ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

We provide a total of 28 orientation and transition programs for freshman students, transfer students, families and supporters. Additionally, we modify our program to meet the needs of those belonging to specialized academic populations. Our philosophy is that New Student Orientation is not just a one-time event, but an ongoing process. We host events and partner with other offices on campus to support students throughout their first-year at South Carolina.

Freshman Orientation

Freshman Orientation follows a two-day, overnight program model. Students are given the option to attend sessions during the months of May - July. They engage with a variety of campus partners, attend multiple small group sessions led by Orientation Leaders, speak with their academic college, learn about the commonalities of the first-year experience and get advised and registered for classes. This is our office's largest program, hosting up to 20 sessions each summer with roughly 400-450 students in attendance on each date. The cost of this program is \$250/student.

Transfer Orientation

Transfer Orientation follows a one-day program model. Students are given the option to attend sessions during the months of May - July. Modified from our freshman program, transfer students engage with a variety of campus partners, attend one small group session, speak with their academic college and get advised and registered for classes. We use this program model for sessions held in January for students admitted in the spring, May for students admitted in the summer and August for late arrival fall students. This is our office's second largest program, hosting five sessions each summer with roughly 250-300 students in attendance each date. The cost of this program is \$130/student.

Special Populations

We offer specialized Orientation programming for the following student groups:

- *South Carolina Honors College*
- *Capstone Scholars*
- *TRIO Opportunity Scholars*
- *Palmetto Pathway*
- *Gamecock Gateway*
- *CarolinaLIFE*
- *Student athletes*
- *Veterans, dependents and active-duty military*

We collaborate with stakeholders to integrate opportunities to connect into both freshman and transfer programs.

HIGHLIGHT

History and Traditions

Get ready to sandstorm! Our freshman program kicks off with an engaging presentation given by our Team Leaders. They guide attendees through notable moments in our institution's history and close out with a few staple traditions.



Family and Supporter Orientation

We recognize the important role of families and supporters during each program. We invite them to attend New Student Orientation with their student and participate in various breakout presentations. We connect them with the *Office of Parent and Family Programs*, family-focused resources and engage them in conversations surrounding how to navigate South Carolina so they can best support their student. The cost of this program is \$115/freshman supporter and \$50/transfer supporter.

New Student Orientation Learning Outcomes

- Establish a connection with one or more students.
- Establish a connection with one or more faculty or staff members.
- Identify at least one opportunity to get involved on campus.
- Identify at least one resource to help students to transition to USC.
- Recognize USC history, traditions and values.
- Engage in dialogue around the Carolinian Creed.
- Successfully navigate the course registration process.

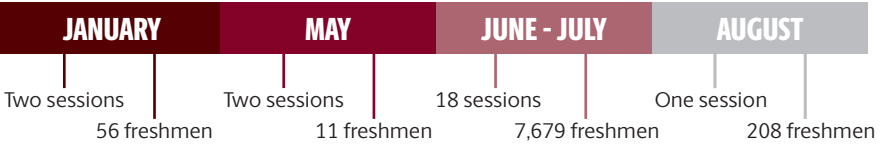
Family and Supporter Orientation Learning Outcomes

- Recognize common trends and transitional needs of USC students.
- Distinguish campus resources to support student success and sense of belonging.
- Implement effective and appropriate family support strategies.
- Recognize USC history, traditions and values.
- Establish a connection with one or more fellow USC family members.



FRESHMAN STUDENT DATA

The following data reflects freshman student responses after attending New Student Orientation in 2025.



Feelings of excitement and confidence regarding enrolling at USC increased from **60% to 80%** after attending Freshman Orientation.

Feelings of nervousness and being overwhelmed about enrolling at USC decreased from **39% to 19%** after attending Freshman Orientation.

89% **2025**

93% **2024**

Freshmen who stated the Orientation Leaders enhanced their experience.



2025 **94%**

2024 **92%**

Freshmen who made at least one friend/connection during their experience.

94% **95%**

2024 **2025**

Freshmen who increased their knowledge of university academic requirements as a result of attending Orientation.

89%

Freshmen who individually connected with a campus resource and/or office during Orientation.

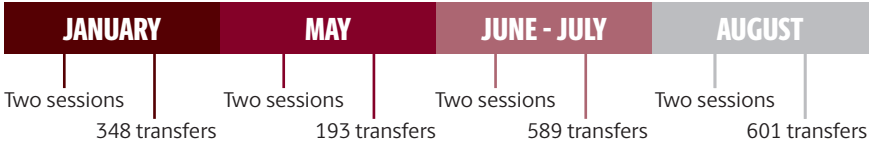
93% **95%**

2024 **2025**

Freshmen who felt prepared to begin classes at the University of South Carolina as a result of attending Orientation.

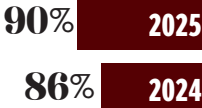
TRANSFER STUDENT DATA

The following data reflects transfer student responses after attending New Student Orientation in 2025.



Feelings of excitement and confidence regarding enrolling at USC increased from **68% to 73%** after attending Transfer Orientation.

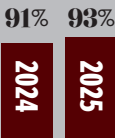
Feelings of nervousness and being overwhelmed about enrolling at USC decreased from **30% to 23%** after attending Transfer Orientation.



Transfers who stated the Orientation Leaders enhanced their experience.



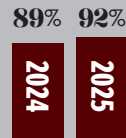
Transfers who made at least one friend/connection during their experience.



Transfers who increased their knowledge of university academic requirements as a result of attending Orientation.



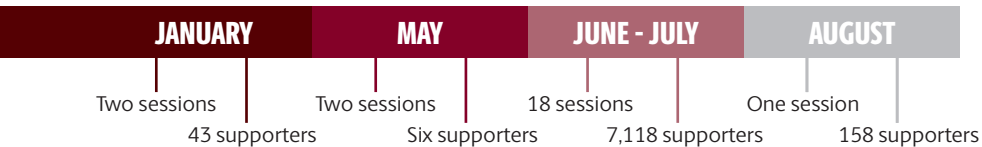
Transfers who individually connected with a campus resource and/or office during Orientation.



Transfers who felt prepared to begin classes at the University of South Carolina as a result of attending Orientation.

FRESHMAN SUPPORTER DATA

The following data reflects freshman family and supporter responses after attending New Student Orientation in 2025.



Feelings of excitement and confidence regarding their student enrolling at USC increased from **69% to 80%** after attending Orientation.

Feelings of nervousness and overwhelm regarding their student enrolling at USC decreased from **29% to 14%** after attending Orientation.



91% **2025**
86% **2024**

Freshman families who felt the Partners in Transition presentation was helpful.

2025 **89%**
2024 **89%**

Freshman families who felt the Student Point of View Panel was helpful.

94% **94%**
2024 **2025**

Freshman families who would recommend attending Orientation to future South Carolina families.

90%

Freshman families who individually connected with a campus resource and/or office during Orientation.

95% **96%**
2024 **2025**

Freshman families who feel confident in their student's decision to attend USC after attending Orientation.

TRANSFER SUPPORTER DATA

The following data reflects transfer family and supporter responses after attending New Student Orientation in 2025.



Feelings of excitement and confidence regarding enrolling at USC increased from **80% to 88%** after attending New Student Orientation.

Feelings of nervousness and overwhelm regarding enrolling at USC decreased from **18% to 9%** after attending New Student Orientation.

89% **2025**

90% **2024**



2025 **91%**

2024 **92%**

Transfer families who felt the Partners in Transition presentation was helpful.

Transfer families who felt the Student Point of View Panel was helpful.

95% **92%**

2024 **2025**

88%

95% **93%**

2024 **2025**

Transfer families who would recommend attending Orientation to future South Carolina families.

Transfer families who individually connected with a campus resource and/or office during Orientation.

Transfer families who feel confident in their student's decision to attend USC after attending Orientation.

COMMUNICATIONS DATA

The following data reflects responses after completing Cocky Transitions, as well as responses related to receiving information from our office.

Cocky Transitions, Online Pre-Orientation Modules

94%

Students felt more welcomed and reassured in their decision to attend USC.

96%

Students felt more aware of services and resources available to them.

94%

Students that felt that Cocky Transitions helped them better understand university policies and procedures.

92%

Students that felt that Cocky Transitions was a great first step in a successful college experience.



FRESHMAN

89%

Students that were satisfied with the amount of communication.

93%

Families and supporters that were satisfied with the amount of communication.

TRANSFER

91%

Students that were satisfied with the amount of communication.

95%

Families and supporters that were satisfied with the amount of communication.



CAMPUS PARTNERSHIPS

It is our philosophy that New Student Orientation is a campus-wide effort that could not occur without the contributions made by both on- and off-campus partnerships. We seek to maintain working relationships with campus departments and local businesses that enhance the Orientation experience for our staff, students and families. Our goal is to expose Orientation attendees to the myriad of opportunities available during their tenure at the university and to living in South Carolina's capital city. Partnerships can either be programmatic or in the form of monetary sponsorships, contributing directly to the execution of New Student Orientation. From working with Carolina Food Co. on dining menus; University Housing for overnight programming; or having Barefoot Campus Outfitters provide all incoming students with t-shirts, we are thankful for the ways our partners show up for our team, incoming students and the University of South Carolina as a whole.

ON-CAMPUS PARTNERS

97%

On-campus partners who benefited from having a partnership with our office.

95%

On-campus partners who plan to continue working with us.

95%

On-campus partners who would recommend to colleagues to seek out partnership opportunities with our office.

OFF-CAMPUS PARTNERS

100%

Off-campus partners who benefited from having a partnership with our office.

100%

Off-campus partners who plan to continue working with us.

100%

Off-campus partners who would recommend to colleagues to seek out partnership opportunities with our office.

HIGHLIGHT

Pre-Orientation Academic Advising

The University Advising Center, Undergraduate Admissions and the Office of New Student Orientation launched a pilot program focusing on Pre-Orientation Academic Advising in the summer of 2025. Students in four colleges participated in advising prior to their Orientation session, which allowed for longer, more intentional advising appointments.



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Caring for those within our campus community is at the core of what the University of South Carolina values. Because of this, our staff encourages students to begin giving back to this community during New Student Orientation. Students, families and supporters are invited to make donations to the Gamecock CommUnity Shop during their session.

THANK YOU FOR DONATING!

7,500

Donations collected in 2023

7,400

Donations collected in 2024

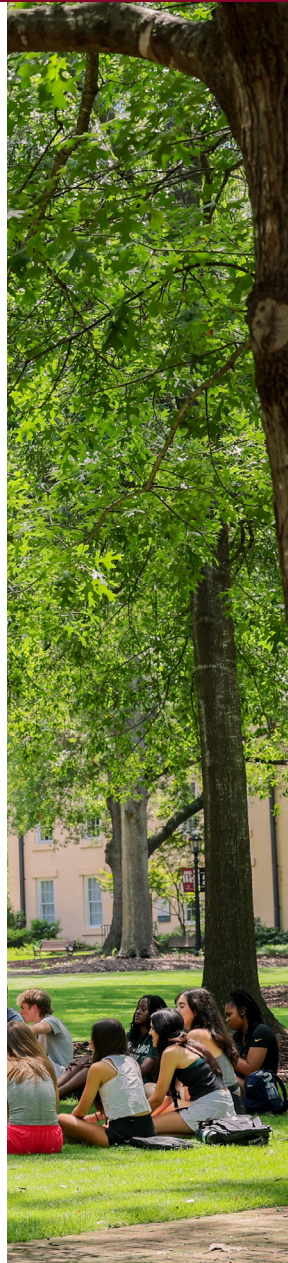
12,000

Donations collected in 2025



DONATE

Let's keep the support going!



YEAR IN REVIEW

In addition to Orientation sessions throughout the year, the Office of New Student Orientation hosted First Day Photos, assisted with events like First Night Carolina, Russell House's 70th Birthday and various initiatives celebrating National Transfer Student Week and First-Gen College Celebration Week.

12,000+ DONATIONS FOR THE GAMECOCK COMMUNITY SHOP	9,668 T-SHIRTS DISTRIBUTED	32 ORIENTATION LEADERS
465 Questions answered DURING THE POV PANEL		6 PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS
9,685 STUDENTS	18,000+ Attendees	8,393 SUPPORTERS
481 small groups	Partners IN THE ORIENTATION PARTNERS PROGRAM 59	365 MAJOR CHANGES

New Office Location

In April 2025, the Office of New Student Orientation relocated to the basement level of the Russell House University Union. Conveniently situated near the Underground, ONSO has adjusted well to the new space and enjoys seeing more day-to-day foot traffic from general students and our student leaders alike! Find us in Russell House 005, across from Postal Services.

INVOLVEMENT & SERVICE

ALISON LEACH HUGHES

Professional Organizations

NODA - The Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education
AHEPPP: Family Engagement in Higher Education
Alpha Chi Omega Fraternity

Committees and Positions

NODA President-Elect
SROW 2025 Conference Committee, Graduate Student Experience
USC Transfer Student Advisory Council
USCPD Safety Council
USC Fall Opening Committee
University 101 Instructor
Alpha Lambda Delta, Co-Advisor

Presentations

Five Proven Principles of Online Orientation

JARED LOGAN

Professional Organizations

NODA - The Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education
Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity

Awards

2025 Region VI Outstanding OTR Professional

Committees and Positions

2025 NODA Annual Conference Planning Committee, Attendee Experience
SROW 2025 Conference Committee, Educational Programming
Pi Kappa Phi Individual & Chapter Conduct Committee
Pi Kappa Phi Chapter Advisor
USC First-Gen Celebration Week Committee
USC Transfer Student Advisory Council
University 101 Instructor
Alpha Lambda Delta, Co-Advisor

Presentations

Everybody Talks: Centering Language in Your Practice

KAYLEY SAFLEY

Professional Organizations

Delta Gamma Fraternity

NODA - The Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education

Junior League of Columbia

Awards

Two Thumbs Up Award at USC

Committees and Positions

Delta Gamma Alumni Advisory Board

GOLD Council Young Alumni Board for The University of Southern Mississippi

NODA Leadership and Development Committee

U101 Campus Partner Presentation Review Committee

University 101 Instructor

Presentations

Still Finding My Way: Life, Loss, and Learning NODA Talk

Leave It Better: Integrating Service Initiatives into Orientation

KATIE HODAPP

Professional Organizations

NODA - The Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education

Student Personnel Association (SPA)

Pi Beta Phi Fraternity

Awards

James B. Campbell - Charles H. Witten Fellowship - USC College of Education Scholarship

Dennis A. Pruitt Fellowship - USC College of Education Scholarship

Graduate Student Case Study - Best Overall

Committees and Positions

University 101 Instructor

USC First-Gen Celebration Week Committee

SROW 2025 Conference Committee, Undergraduate Experience

Presentations

Dance it Out: Dance Floor Theory in Orientation



STATE OF ORIENTATION AT SOUTH CAROLINA

At the end of Orientation each year, we take the opportunity to pause and reflect--not just on what we've done, but on why it matters. Our mission has always been clear: to welcome new students and their families and supporters into the Carolina community in a way that builds confidence, facilitates connection and ensures belonging. But with each incoming class, our mission takes on a new meaning. Students' needs evolve, the university grows and we must adapt to continue achieving our purpose.

This year, I am especially proud of the Office of New Student Orientation team, from professional staff to student leaders. We faced quite a bit of transition ourselves as we relocated offices, said goodbye to valued team members and welcomed new ones, and piloted two new programs and initiatives. We did this amid record attendance at USC, as well as major construction projects in the Russell House University Union. I have no doubt our success is attributed to the work we do and the way we are able to respond to change and transition, regardless of the type.

We launched Cocky Transitions, our highly anticipated pre-orientation modules this summer. Students overwhelmingly responded to the modules and we're excited for further enhancements in the year ahead. We also partnered with the University Advising Center and Undergraduate Admissions to pilot Pre-Orientation Academic Advising. This collaboration encouraged us to think creatively about what could be, while still preserving the impact we know Orientation traditionally had.

As we head into the next year, though we appreciated the reminder of how it feels to navigate transition, we look forward to a little more consistency and the opportunity to grow and improve. Our focus for the upcoming year will be to expand on the successes of the 2025 season, while increasing opportunities for belonging and connection.

Orientation is and always will be the beginning. The place where information turns into understanding, strangers become friends, and hopes turn into plans. It's our privilege to help make that beginning a meaningful one, year after year. And we are forever thankful for your contributions to each new beginning. Thanks for all you do!



Alison Leach Hughes

Director, New Student Orientation

CONTACT US

If you have any questions regarding the Office of New Student Orientation or information presented in this impact report, please contact us via email or phone.

Office of New Student Orientation
Russell House University Union
1400 Greene Street, Suite 005
Columbia, SC 29208

sc.edu/orientation
orientation@sc.edu
803.777.2780

 @uofsc_onso

 @uofsc_onso

 /UofSCOrientation





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