ADVANCING TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS BEYOND A CURRICULAR FOCUS THROUGH THE CAROLINA EXPERIENCE

2026 SC Transfer Excellence Convening

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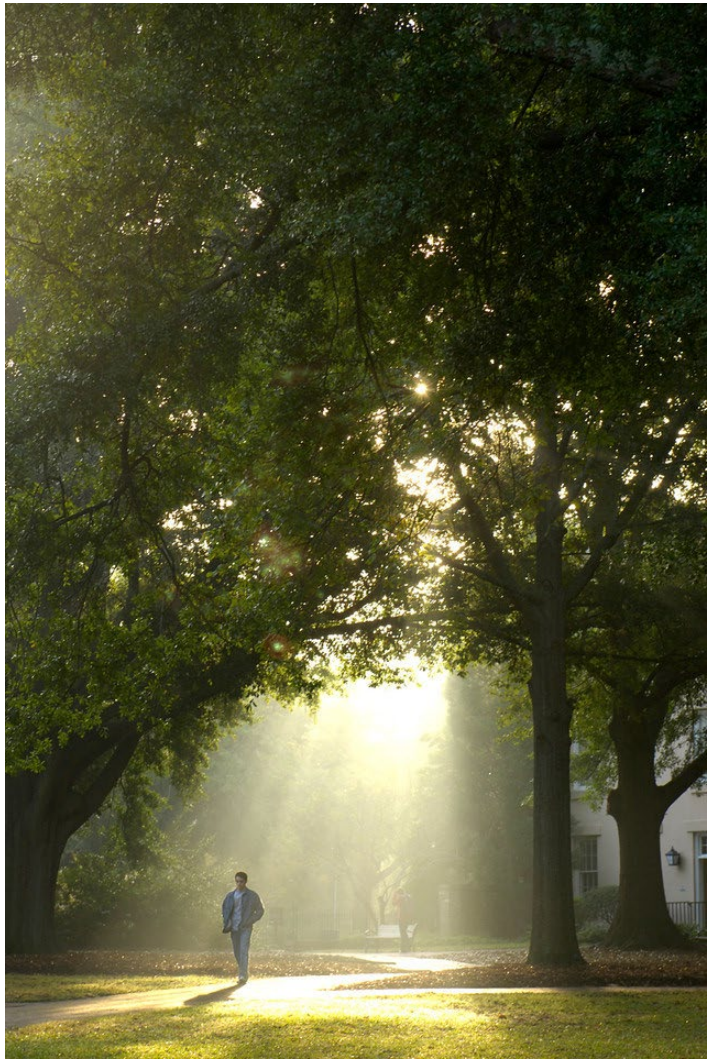
LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants will be able to summarize the transfer student experience at the University of South Carolina gathered through six years of focus groups and a new survey.
- Participants will be able to describe the support offered for transfer students at the University of South Carolina.
- Participants will be able to identify actionable practices they can adapt to support the transfer student population at their own institutions.

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ABOUT USC

- Founded in 1801
- 4-year public institution located in state capital (Columbia, SC)
- Flagship institution for the state
- Approximately 40,000 students on the Columbia campus
- 350 programs across 14 colleges and schools
- Top-tier designation from Carnegie Foundation for both research and community engagement
- #1 First-Year Experience program in the country



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DEFINITION FOR TODAY

- Transferred from a non-USC school or change of campus from another USC campus
- Re-admits BACK after transferring somewhere else
- Includes participants in first-year bridge programs
- Does NOT include dual enrollment students in high school

BY THE NUMBERS

- On average: Close to 1,700 each fall, 300-500 each spring.
- Like many other higher education institutions, USC is starting to see increases in student-athlete transfer portal counts



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LOOK AT USC TRANSFER STUDENTS (HISTORICALLY)

- **Top sending colleges**
  - Midlands Technical College
  - Trident Technical College
  - Greenville Technical College
  - York Technical College
  - College of Charleston
  - Coastal Carolina University
  - Clemson University
  - Horry-Georgetown Technical College
  - Central Carolina Technical College
  - Winthrop University
- **Top 5 Academic Colleges of Entry**
  - McCausland College of Arts and Sciences
  - College Hosp Retail Sport Mgmt
  - Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing
  - College of Information & Communications
  - NJ Arnold Sch of Public Health

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TRANSFER STUDENT NOTES



- Potential Characteristics:
  - Transferring from two-year OR four-year campus
  - Served in the military or having taken time off
  - Traditional college student age, could be older
  - Student athletes and the transfer portal
  - Fully online students (Palmetto Programs)
  - Bridge students- Gamecock Gateway, Palmetto Pathways
- More than any other students, transfer students have an “efficiency mindset”
- Bottom line: Not a monolith experience. Advice is to get to know them!

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TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS- SINCE 2022

Questions Asked Each Spring
Tell me about your first year or first semester at the University of South Carolina?
How does the University of South Carolina differ from the school you transferred from?
How was it similar?
Describe your academic experience during your time here at the University of South Carolina.
Describe your social interaction and experience during your transfer year.
How would you characterize your interaction with the University or University staff during your time here?
Could the University have better supported you before, during, and after you transferred?
What surprised you about transferring to USC?
What advice would you give to students who are transferring to the University of South Carolina?
Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

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TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

General Adjustment/ Navigation Process- Pace, Scale, and Systems

- “It’s a much bigger campus… eventually once you start getting into that rhythm, you’re basically all good.”
- “It was a lot to get used to Blackboard and figure all that out on my own.”
- “Give yourself more time than you think you need… it takes a lot longer to walk than you think.”
- “The classes were really fast… you have to get through a lot in a short time.”
- “USC tends to focus a little bit more on larger projects… so I had to get used to that.”

TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

Social Integration Requires More Effort

- “It would have been cool as a transfer student… it seemed like there were a lot of opportunities for incoming freshmen… But as a transfer student, I kind of felt like the odd one out where it was like okay, you’re here, but you’re not a freshman… so like go to class, you’ve been to class before.”
- “You do have to put extra effort into upkeeping relationships… in such a big environment like USC, if you’re not seeing people every day, you have to actually make effort to see them.”
- “I feel like had I not had that disability… I would have some genuine stuff there.”
- “You have to put yourself out there.”

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TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

Non-Traditional Students and Disabled Students Note Barriers

- “I’m 30… and that kind of turns into a barrier for me as far as social things and especially long-term social connections.”
- “I kind of felt like the odd one out where it was like… okay, you’re here, but you’re not a freshman.”
- “It’s kind of hard to make close relationships… because I don’t really feel like I have a college student mindset.”
- “I feel like had I not had that disability… I would have some genuine stuff there.”

TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

USC Faculty and Resources Provide Great Opportunity

- “Research… that is something that is not at Midlands Tech. That’s something that I didn’t realize I was going to get into, let alone absolutely enjoy.”
- “I really like the faculty here… I feel pretty supported academically.”
- “Even coming from a smaller institution, I haven’t had any issues approaching faculty.”
- “This place really pushes you to get outside of your shell and experience things you wouldn’t otherwise.”
- “If there is something here that you really want, push for it. Keep pushing.”

TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

Financial and Housing Barriers are VERY Real

- “Scholarship and grant opportunities for transfer students… we do not have the same scholarship and funding opportunities that true freshmen do.”
- “I’m coming from OC Tech with a 4.0 GPA… and it ultimately does not seem to matter in terms of any sort of financial assistance.”
- “I just flat out can’t afford housing here and I have not found a way to change that.”
- “That grant exists, but there is no mention of it on the website… I only knew about it through luck.”
- “There should be scholarships for housing… but if there are, I couldn’t find any.”

TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

Advising Gaps and Course Equivalency Challenges

- “If someone on the phone could have just told me what to take at my other university, I could have stayed more on top of it.”
- “At first, I did not like my advisor… because I felt like he definitely did not give me as much structure. I wanted someone to tell me exactly what to do for the next four years.”
- “Do your own research and then come into advising already knowing what questions you’re going to ask.”
- “I had enough credits to be a senior, but because I switched programs, I had to take extra classes.”

TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

High Expectations for Independence at USC

- “There’s a lot more focus on independence here.”
- “There was a learning curve to get used to everything because it’s a little bit different.”
- “There’s a lot more focus on independence here… making sure you know how to control your schedule, your course load, your work.”

TRANSFER FOCUS GROUPS

They are NOT freshmen and do not mistake them for one!

- “It felt like those things were there for freshmen.”
- “Once I was here, after orientation, it was just kind of like a free-for-all… it felt like those things were there for freshmen.”
- “It would have been cool if someone had reached out… not because this is your first time with a college experience, but this is also your first time here.”

INAUGURAL TRANSFER SURVEY

- Launched on March 22, 2026
- Was sent to any student who transferred to USC between August 2024 and January 2026
- About 90 questions. Mostly likert scale style that explores satisfaction, frequency of use, and other items.
- 5 open response questions
- Incentive: drawing for gift cards. Also, typically they have something they want to talk about.
- 353 students completed survey

TRANSFER SURVEY RESULTS- QUICK VIEW

- 47% of respondents transferred to USC this past fall (Fall 2025)
- 79% are in state residents/ 21% out of state
- 45% 18-20 years old, 37% 21-23 years old, 18% 24 or older
- 95% report being full-time students
- 5% are veterans
- 66% plan to go on to get an advanced degree

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TRANSFER SURVEY RESULTS- QUICK VIEW

- 76% are satisfied/very satisfied with their academic experience
- 73% are satisfied/very satisfied with their overall experience at USC
- 84% are sure/very sure that they are in the right major
- 88% agree/strongly agree that their support system encourages them to complete their degree
- 72% agree/ strongly agree that they will reach their educational goals

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TRANSFER SURVEY RESULTS- QUICK VIEW

- Questions related to finance:
  - 69% feel more scholarships available specifically for transfer students would help in their success
  - How much difficulty have you had in pay for school expenses
    - Great to amount of difficulty- 26%
    - Some difficulty- 24%
    - A little to no difficulty- 50%
  - I am confident that the amount of money I am paying will be worth it in the long run
    - Strongly Disagree/ Disagree- 18%
    - Neutral- 36%
    - Agree/ Strongly Agree- 45%
  - The amount of money you personally pay to attend school here
    - Very Dissatisfied/ Dissatisfied- 36%
    - Neutral- 38%
    - Satisfied/Very Satisfied- 26%

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THE CAROLINA EXPERIENCE

As a cross-coordinating office, Carolina Experience is designed to support student collegiate transitions throughout the entirety of the USC college experience contributing to successful progression and graduation goals.

Emphasis on transfer, sophomore, junior, and senior student experiences



- Office Launched in February 2024
- Initiated Website and Offerings in Fall 2024
- Follow on IG: UofSC_CarolinaExperience
- Visit www.sc.edu/carolinaexperience

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ONE ON ONE PEER LEADER SUPPORT



- Every undergraduate student past their first year, including all transfer students, have been assigned a Carolina Experience Peer Leader (CEPL).
- All CEPLs assigned to transfer students were once transfer students themselves
- Support shows in Navigate “Student Success Team” listing
- Students can make a one-on-one Transfer Success Consultation.

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CAROLINA EXPERIENCE PEER LEADERS

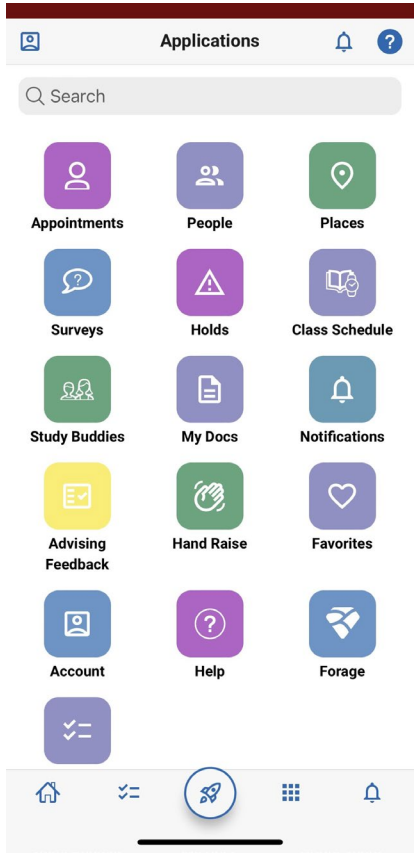
- 17 hired and trained for the current academic year
- Variety of academic colleges/majors, transfer, and off-campus students
- Every undergraduate student past the first year is assigned a CEPL



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COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

- Monthly email for the first semester
  - Occasional emails after first semester
- Robust website- detailed FAQ section, referrals to campus partners
- Cocky Transfer Guide GPT
- Navigate 360 app



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ASSOCIATED STUDENT GROUPS

- **Association of Transfer Students (ATS)**
  - Open to all students who transferred to USC
  - $20 lifetime dues

- **Tau Sigma Transfer Honor Society**
  - One time only invite
  - 3.5 or higher GPA at first semester at USC
  - $55 lifetime dues
  - Scholarship opportunities



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TRANSFER SUCCESS PROGRAMMING



- Fall Transfer Welcome
  - 1 kick-off day before classes and then a handful of events before Labor Day
- National Transfer Student Week
  - One week in October
  - Mix of socials, workshops, and table events
- Transfer Winter Welcome (January)
  - Spread out throughout January

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TRANSFER MENTOR PROGRAM

- Application based (but all accepted)
- Paired with a CEPL
- Welcome gathering first week of class
- Small group GroupMe
- Monthly one on one meeting with CEPL
- Monthly social gatherings
- Walk to Tigerburn together in November (major USC tradition)



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ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM CX



- Transfer Student Checklist and Roadmap for Success document
- Center for Teaching Excellence certificate program
- Membership on campus Transfer Student Advisory Council from Provost's office
- Partnership with athletics department

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ADDITIONAL CAMPUS SUPPORT

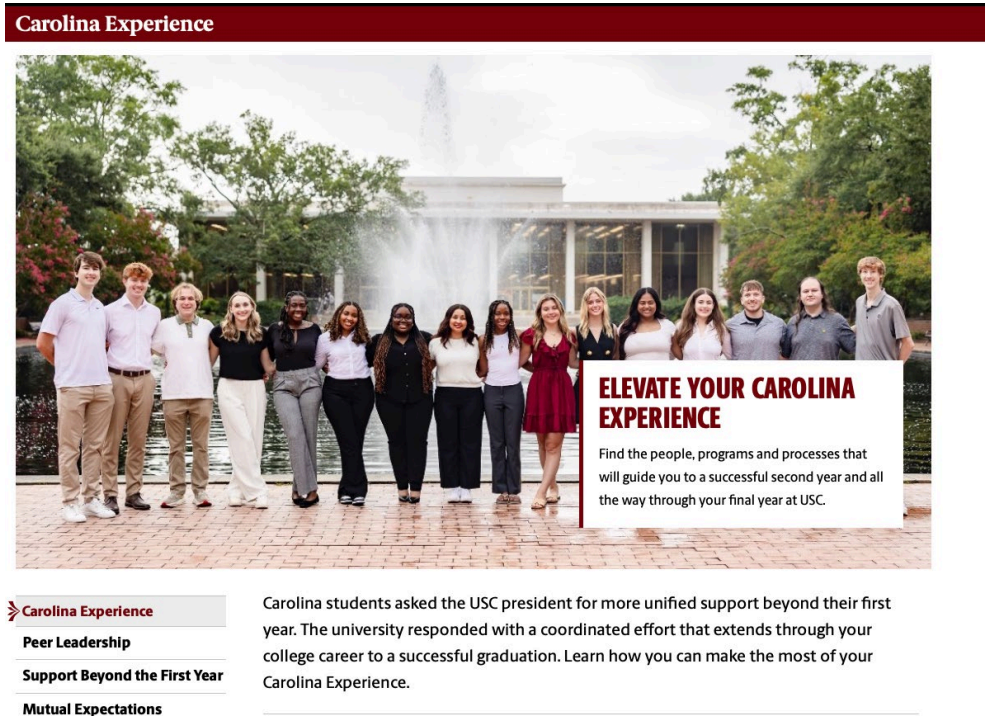


- Undergraduate admissions has an entire transfer team
  - Focus on recruitment through the admissions phase and into campus technologies
- New Student Orientation hosts one-day orientations focused on transfer students
  - Carolina Experience addresses families during opening session
- The University Advising Center has a team dedicated to transfer students
  - Focus on advisement and correct course transfer equivalencies
- University U102 course for transfer students
- SSC opens Gamecock School Supplies early for new transfer students and manages the Gamecock Gateway program

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FINDING THE CAROLINA EXPERIENCE

- Follow on Instagram @ UofSC_CarolinaExperience
- www.sc.edu/carolinaexperience



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QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION?

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Carolina Experience

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