

FR 4.1 - Student Achievement

The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.

Compliance Finding: In Compliance

Narrative:

The University of South Carolina Beaufort (USC Beaufort) evaluates success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institutional mission [i]: “USC Beaufort offers baccalaureate degrees that respond to regional needs, draw upon regional strengths, and prepare graduates to participate successfully in communities here and around the globe.” Evaluation is based on admission of qualified students, course completion rates, degrees awarded by major, state licensing exams, and job placement rates.

Admission of Qualified Students

USC Beaufort is working to prepare graduates for success by refining admissions standards to admit better qualified students, implementing comprehensive academic advising once students are admitted, delivering quality academic programs, and providing student support resources such as the newly created Center for Instructional Technology and Academic Resources. Freshmen admissions standards have increased from Fall 2005, when a minimum SAT score of 750 or ACT score of 15 and an overall high school grade point average of 2.0 were required, to Fall 2008, when applicants must now have an SAT score of 800 or ACT score of 17 and a weighted core grade point average of 2.0. USC Beaufort has developed and submitted to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (SCCHE) a six-point plan for strengthening admissions standards which also includes limiting the number of students accepted who are missing college preparatory classes or have taken the technical preparatory class instead [ii]. The percentage of students admitted meeting all high school prerequisites as defined by SCCHE (meaning that the student took all required college preparatory classes) has grown from 57.9% in Fall 2004 to 81.7% in Fall 2006, even while experiencing a dramatic growth in applicants [iii].

In an effort to provide academic guidance and support following admission, students are assigned either a faculty or staff academic advisor upon acceptance to USC Beaufort. Students who have declared an intended major are assigned a faculty academic advisor within that department. Students who are undeclared are assigned a freshman advisor. Students are expected to meet their advisor at least once a semester to plan a course of study for the following semester. Students admitted as probationary are required to meet with the advisor more often. With the admissions standards and help from advisors, our one-year retention rates have been 48.2% and 54.9% for the 2005 and 2006 cohorts respectively [iv]. Additional academic support services are now available to students with the establishment of the Center for Information Technology and Academic Services [v], which provides students with the technologies they will need in a technology rich environment in both work and life, as well as helping them to master effective ways of learning in the different disciplines through tutoring services, technology workshops, a writing center, and academic skills workshops.

Course Completion Rates

Course completion rates are monitored through grade distributions, which are produced in an electronic format at the end of every semester. Grade distributions are available to all academic units through the Registrar's Office. Each teaching faculty member monitors student success for individual classes, while the Department Chairs monitor grade distributions within their departments.

Persistence and graduation rates are compiled by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (IER) and published on the Web [vi]. Graduation rates of first-time full-time freshmen are reported annually to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and are based on first-time full-time college students entering USC Beaufort and graduating within 150% of degree completion time from USC Beaufort only. Associate degree programs are two-year degrees, so students are allowed three years to finish.

Considered out of context, USC Beaufort's graduation rates are extremely low. However, this statistic is measured during a time when USC Beaufort was transitioning from a regional campus to a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution. These rates are monitored by the academic departments and the Enrollment Management Team. Because USC Beaufort is in a transitional phase, the first-time full-time freshmen cohorts through 2003 are based on associate-degree-seeking students only. However, with the addition of baccalaureate degrees, many students who began as freshmen prior to 2004 have transferred into four-year majors to pursue baccalaureate degrees instead of associate degrees. As a result, the actual number of students in the associate-degree-seeking cohorts is quite low. USC Beaufort does not yet have graduation rates based on the first baccalaureate-degree-seeking cohort, which began in 2004. USC Beaufort recognizes graduation rates as an area of vital importance to be improved through enrollment management, increased admission standards, and better academic advising.

Degrees Awarded by Major

The Institutional Effectiveness and Research (IER) Office tracks degrees awarded by major, and this information is available in the USC Beaufort Factbook [vii] and distributed campus wide. Since 2004, over 300 baccalaureate degrees have been awarded. Since 2004, the most popular majors for graduates have been Early Childhood Education (68 graduates), Business (59 graduates), and Liberal Studies (48 graduates). All of these programs are strongly responsive respond to regional needs, as mandated by the USC Beaufort Mission.

State Licensing Exams

Early Childhood Education is the only degree program currently required to report state licensing exam scores. Every year, USC Beaufort submits an Institutional Effectiveness Report to the SCCHE. Included is the Professional Examinations Table in which Praxis Series II scores are reported. Passing the Praxis II specialty area test is required of all early childhood education candidates before they can complete their internship. The Education department monitors course progression and test scores. As noted in the 2006 Institutional Effectiveness Report to SCCHE [viii], USC Beaufort had a 100% pass rate on the Praxis scores, and for 2007 [ix], a 90.9% pass rate; the reduction was the result one student out of eleven not passing the Praxis II on their first attempt. Students who do not pass the Praxis II on the first attempt are offered assistance or encouraged to audit courses in the areas identified as weak areas by the test.

Job Placement Rates

Every second year, the annual IE report to SCCHE also includes an alumni survey. USC Beaufort collects data for this survey which include employment status, employment sector, relationship between major and job, job characteristics, pursuit of graduate or professional degrees, and community involvement. Response rates tend to be low, but with the addition of an Assistant Director of Development in fall 2006 who can help facilitate contacts with alumni, response rates on alumni surveys should increase. In Fall 2007, USC Beaufort established a new Office of Career and Disability Services. This office helps students explore majors and careers and obtain internship experiences. These services will help students obtain fulltime employment upon graduation.

In addition, every Spring a graduating student survey is administered to graduation applicants and data are gathered concerning current and post-graduation employment. This information is shared with the Academic Council (which includes all department chairs) and some departments include these employers on program advisory boards. Although the survey is done in the Spring, it includes the previous Fall graduates and future Summer graduation applicants. Of the 92 respondents to the Spring 2007 graduating student survey [x], 36% indicated they were currently employed, 9% were currently employed and seeking other employment, 35% were seeking employment, and 19% were not seeking employment. Almost three-fourths (74%) of those not seeking employment planned to continue their education. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of those seeking employment said they had received an offer but not made a decision to accept that offer.

USC Beaufort also annually submits an associate degree program evaluation to SCCHE. This report includes the number of associate degree graduates for the past three academic years, current Fall headcount and FTE enrollment, the number of graduates from the most recent academic year who are employed in a related field, and the number who are continuing their education. The most recent report, submitted in the summer of 2007 [xi], showed that out of 39 associate degree graduates in 2005-2006, three were employed in their field and 17 were continuing their education. This was just over 50 percent.

Supporting Documentation

- [i USC Beaufort Mission](#)
- [ii USC Beaufort Six Point Plan to SCCHE](#)
- [iii SC CHE Admissions Standard Report 2006-2007](#)
- [iv USC Beaufort Retention Rates](#)
- [v Center for Instructional Technology and Academic Resources](#)
- [vi USCB Beaufort -- Persistence and Graduation Rates](#)
- [vii USC Beaufort Factbook -- Degrees Awarded](#)
- [viii 2006 Institutional Effectiveness Report to SCCHE](#)
- [ix 2007 Institutional Effectiveness Report to SCCHE](#)
- [x Spring 2007 Graduating Student Survey](#)
- [xi 2007 Associate Degree Program Evaluation to SCCHE](#)