Academic Experience
Strategic Plan
Academic Experience

- First-Year Experience
- New Student Programs
- Orientation
- Academic Advising & Planning
- Center for Student Learning
- Undergraduate Academic Services
- Student Retention
- Center for Excellence in Peer Education
- REACH
- ROAR
The Office for the Academic Experience strives to provide College of Charleston students with educationally purposeful activities which promote intellectual development, lead to deeper engagement in academic life, and support student success both in and out of the classroom.
Envisioned Future

• By 2020, the College of Charleston is widely recognized as having a vibrant campus life that begins in the classroom but extends outward to engage our students in a number of endeavors which bring about a high level of academic and social integration and success.
Envisioned Future

- **First Year Experience:** Our entering students are engaged in an academic First-Year Experience program that is well-known, emulated, and admired around the country. Some of our FYE endeavors involve study abroad, with an early focus on language training and on acquiring an international perspective. Some of our FYE endeavors also combine living and learning opportunities that take advantage of our residence halls as integral learning assets.

- **Residential Colleges:** Our dynamic and energetic faculty have the opportunity to serve as Faculty Fellows for residential colleges within the residence halls and our students thrive on this increased contact with caring and involved faculty.

- **Global and Local:** College of Charleston serves a growing population of international students who come to our campus for our degree programs or to participate in joint programs with international partner institutions. We provide enhanced academic support services for these international students as well as for an increased population of well-qualified minority and first generation college students.

- **Center for Excellence in Peer Education:** College of Charleston is also well known for training students to be effective peer educators in a variety of roles. Our Center for Excellence in Peer Education has an established reputation for teaching students to help other students learn, whether it be as tutors, peer facilitators, resident assistants, or success coaches, among many options. Our graduates are noted for having had these leadership experiences in peer education.

- **General Education:** Our graduates are also known for having completed a coherent and integrated general education curriculum that provides a menu of opportunities for high-impact experiential education, including a strong focus on civic engagement.

- **Finish in Four:** Our highly regarded “Finish in Four” program helps students expedite their college career without sacrificing quality or engaging experiences. It assures that College of Charleston is a good fit for every student.
Envisioned Future

- Students continue to choose the College of Charleston and to thrive on our beautiful urban campus because of our assurance that they can have an outstanding personalized and transformative educational experience both in and out of our classrooms.
I. To become a more intentional and dynamic “learning campus” by more fully utilizing and building upon our existing “learning assets.”

II. To promote student engagement in transformative learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.

III. To assure student success in ways that challenge all students to overcome obstacles in order to do their best work.
Current Reality

Many of the seeds of the future that we envision for the Academic Experience at the College of Charleston have been planted, but they will take fertile ground to grow and flourish. Many element of the “learning campus” exist but are inadequately connected and developed. For instance, we have peer education going on all over campus but we have not taken advantage of the synergy that we could create by bringing these programs under one umbrella. Similarly, we too narrowly confine learning to something that takes place only in the classroom and we tend to see those classrooms in the most traditional light. We need to expand our definition of learning so that we value it and promote it in a number of settings – the city, the neighborhoods that surround us, the playing fields, the residence halls, the dining halls, etc. In the twenty-first century, there is simply too much for our students to learn for “instruction” to be confined to twelve or fifteen hour units each semester.
Goal I. *Learning Campus*

Strategy A. Develop a Center for Excellence in Peer Education in partnership with the School of Education, Health and Human Performances

- **Link** together existing programs (Peer Facilitators, R.A.’s, Orientation Interns, New Student Program Interns, Supplemental Instructor Leader, Tutors, Career Advisors, Peer Counselors, etc.)
- **Increase** the metacognitive learning experience of these students
- **Create** a new category of peer educators, the “Learning Assistants” to play a role, closely guided by faculty, in classroom instruction and management
- **Enhance** and expand the current peer facilitator course offered by the School of Education, Health and Human Performance so that it becomes useful training for all peer educators
- **Create** a graduate course in the School of Education, Health and Human Performance and collaborate with the Citadel’s new Student Affairs and College Counseling masters program
- **Build** a new Center for Excellence in Peer Education in the current location of the New Student Programs building that will have classroom and office space for peer education activities, office space for New Student Programs and additional needed office space and classrooms
Goal I. Learning Campus

Strategy B. Partner with Student Affairs to develop Residential College programs, including Faculty Fellows

- Use our residence halls more intentionally as learning assets
- Remodel a residence hall to become a Residential College, adding appropriate classroom and faculty living spaces
- Provide apartments for Faculty Fellows who will live in the Residential College as active participants in the life of the residence hall and the life of the classroom
- Draw on Residential College expertise among our current faculty and particularly our HSS dean
- Focus on developing a Residential College through the mechanism of the current First-Year Experience, with a combination of First-Year Seminars and Learning Communities
- Concentrate on developing Residential College programming in four important areas: “Civic Engagement;” “Math and Science;” “Living for Well-Being;” and “Global Studies”
Goal I. *Learning Campus*

**Strategy C.** Create a campus-wide theme and programming each year that could be developed in the following ways:

- Develop the theme from the common reading program
- Involve the Charleston community and College of Charleston parents
- Use Family Weekend as the “kick-off” for an appearance by the common reading author
- Have presentations, performances, events, and speeches throughout the year that links to the theme
- Use the campus-wide theme to tie together interdisciplinary approaches and reiterative patterns of learning
- Culminate with a graduation speaker who shapes his/her message around the campus-wide theme
Goal II. Student Engagement in Transformative Learning Experiences

Strategy A. Add coherence to General Education by implementing and supporting high-impact educational experiences (active, engaged, collaborative) as graduation requirements

- Require both a First-Year Experience and a Capstone course for every student
- Require all students to choose at least three high-impact educational experiences from a menu of the following:
  - Study Abroad
  - Internships
  - Civic Engagement Activities
  - Peer Educator
  - Undergraduate Research
Goal II. *Student Engagement in Transformative Learning Experiences*

**Strategy B.** Enhance the First-Year Experience to ensure that it becomes one of College of Charleston’s premier nationally recognized programs

- Partner with the School of Languages, Cultures and World Affairs, the School of Business, and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences to offer FYE study abroad experiences
- Partner with Residence Life to create vibrant Residential Colleges
- Partner with the Graduate School and others to use Dixie Plantation as a resource for FYE student and faculty experiences
- Fully utilize the potential for the FYE program to contribute to faculty development through conference presentation grants, course development stipends and assessment research funding
Goal II. *Student Engagement in Transformative Learning Experiences*

**Strategy C.** Enhance the academic elements of civic engagement for our students in such a way that it takes full advantage of our unique location as an urban university in the heart of a city with many needs

- Appoint an Academic Affairs Civic Engagement coordinator to work in partnership with the Student Affairs Civic Engagement office
- Increase the number and quality of service-learning courses that focus on community engagement
- Partner with the School of Science and Math to create an interdisciplinary civic engagement minor focused on community based research, and extend partnerships to create appropriate minors in other Schools
- Use FYE as a platform for introducing students to civic engagement so that they will work in this area for all four years
- Work with the Bonner Foundation, the City of Charleston and local agencies to increase the opportunities for community based research
- Partner with the Development Office to take advantage of many fund-raising opportunities surrounding civic engagement efforts
Goal III. **Student Success**

**Strategy A.** Academic support services for international students who will be coming to our campus for degree programs will become a necessity as this population grows

- Provide a comprehensive Orientation experience for international students
- Add an English as a Second Language lab to the Center for Student Learning
- Provide “peer guides” and “success coaches” for international students
- Provide a designated academic advisor who specializes in international students
- Create living-learning opportunities for international students
Goal III. Student Success

Strategy B. Academic support services and programs are a necessity for expanding our commitment to under-represented students

- Partner with Admissions to expand bridge programs with community colleges, focusing on recruiting first-generation and under-represented transfer students and providing programming that will acclimate them to our campus and assure their success here
- Utilize the National Student Exchange to promote student exchanges between College of Charleston and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), both to increase the minority presence on our campus and to give our students the opportunity to experience a historically black campus for a semester
- *Apply for and receive a five-year Student Support Services TRIO grant for $1.1 million to support financial aid and programming for low-income first-generation and disabled students
Goal III. Student Success

Strategy C. Increase academic support services for all students

- Create a “Finish in Four” program that will encourage students to take necessary steps to attain their degrees in a timely manner
- *Partner with Admissions and Institutional Research to create a strong retention probability model; recruit the students we can retain and retain students through successful interventions
- Use recruitment and retention benchmarks appropriately to increase retention and graduation rates by 2020: 87% of incoming freshmen will be retained to sophomore year (currently 80.2%); 64% of students will graduate in four years (currently 55.8%); 70% of students will graduate in six years (currently 61.2%)
- Successful faculty produce successful students: recreate and revitalize the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning, adding a First Year Academy for new faculty and Faculty Fellowships for faculty to do ‘internships’ in offices like Academic Planning and Advising. Merge Teaching, Learning and Technology with CETL
Organizational capacities required to achieve our goals:

“Only Connect” as E.M. Forester famously said. We need organizational leadership from every part of the campus to come together around common learning goals. We need to eliminate territoriality and internal competition and duplication. When we make strong connections with each other we show our students how to make vital connections in their learning experiences. “More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways.”