



The Graduate School Blueprint for Academic Excellence AY2024-25

At the Graduate School of the University of South Carolina, our commitment is unwavering: to enrich the graduate student experience and uphold academic excellence and integrity. In alignment with our role on campus and guided by our mission and vision, the goals set forth for the academic years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 are crafted to enhance the overall graduate student journey. Through these goals, we are dedicated to improving the graduate student experience, reducing time to degree, and increasing completion rates, all while providing exemplary administrative services and fostering a community that values academic integrity and success.

Goal 1: Improve graduate student success through data analytics and optimized support systems

Goal 2: Enhance the graduate student experience through comprehensive services and professional development

Goal 3: Lead the graduate admissions, student progression, and graduation processes

Goal 4: Amplify the impact and visibility of graduate education

AY2024-25 Achievements:

- Anticipated total processing of *12,000 applications* for Fall 2025 (not including Summer and Spring); processed over 4,000 application decisions thus far.
- Processed 617 applications for graduation for Fall 2024 (compared to 637 y-o-y).
- Implemented weekly admissions report to increase transparency of the application funnel and admissions trends year-over-year.
- Spearheaded the development and execution of the inaugural 2024 Graduate Student Expo, creating an immersive experience that connected new and current graduate students with essential campus resources, facilitated engaging workshops, and unveiled diverse opportunities to enrich their academic and professional journeys.
- Developed and disseminated the Graduate Education College Profiles highlighting admissions, enrollment, time-to-degree, and completion reports by college and shared with Deans, graduate directors, and the AAGDC.
- Developed and disseminated the 2024 Graduate Student Needs Assessment findings as well as the 2024 Admitted Applicant Survey.
- Through the Graduate Admissions Systems Optimization Task Force, conducted stakeholder workshops, surveys, and interviews to identify graduate admissions landscape; formulated enrollment management system recommendations in culminated report.
- Supported the incorporation of the Duolingo language score system into admissions processing and reduction of manual integrations.
- Coordinated the 3MT Competition alongside a series of targeted professional development workshops, resulting in enhanced presentation skills, boosted career competencies, and a measurable increase in participant engagement and readiness.



- Instituted the Dissertation Writing Academy including a pilot online Writing Academy for online students (May 2025), assisting ABD doctoral students towards dissertation completion.
- Analyzed admissions data to identify programs with a 50% exception rate via AARs, implemented a standardized menu of exception types for graduate directors, and initiated faculty discussions to revise admission requirements.
- Expanded communication efforts to graduate students, including the development of a New Student Checklist and the Graduate and Professional Student Newsletter led by USC Communications.

AY2025-26 Goals:

- Develop and launch an introductory course for new graduate students that fosters professional development, academic excellence, and community belonging—directly addressing the key needs identified in the needs assessment and through campus partner insights.
- Successfully transition to a centralized graduate enrollment management system that integrates data, streamlines admissions/enrollment workflows, and enhances the user experience for both applicants, students, and staff—driving operational efficiency and improved decision-making.
- Elevate the Graduate Student Expo 2025 by expanding programming and engagement strategies—introducing interactive sessions, enhanced resource connectivity, and targeted professional development workshops—to foster stronger academic and community integration for all graduate students.
- Increase applicant submission rates and applicant yield through enhanced digital marketing strategies, streamlined application processes, and other novel mechanisms.
- Reduce decision notification time through increased awareness of the admissions pipeline, communication campaigns, and other approaches.
- Expand training and support for program representatives to understand and better leverage the Prospect and Admit CRM and application systems to augment talent recruitment efforts.
- Launch a graduate faculty needs survey to better understand knowledge gaps and faculty perceptions of graduate education; results to inform graduate faculty development programming.
- Continue data strategy efforts to increase awareness of ongoing student enrollment, career outcome, and funding trends.
- Create and distribute a Graduate Student Handbook.
- Improve available information and ease of access on our website for dissertation formatting, degree completion, mentorship, and awareness of ongoing student resources.
- Coordinate the Graduate Education Summit 2026.
- Continue efforts to provide leadership with organizations like the SC Graduate Deans Association, the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools, and to contribute to professional conferences and publications as opportunities arise.
- Expand brand visibility to include graduate student profiles on our website and other strategic efforts to highlight the quality of graduate education at USC.