



OFFICE OF ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina



EVOLVING FOR EXCELLENCE

Would you drive your car for 150,000 miles without any maintenance? Of course not.

Now think about the processes in your unit. How many of those processes have been in place for years — or maybe decades?

It's time for a tune-up, not because anything is broken, but because the world around us has changed. Enrollment has grown. Customer expectations have shifted. Faculty and staff roles have evolved. Technology has advanced. Funding models have fluctuated. Community needs have expanded. You get the idea.

Over the past year, we've seen that units willing to pause and take a fresh look at their processes and service delivery — through the eyes of their customers, employees and partners — are seeing real gains. They're providing better services, saving time that can be reallocated to higher-value work and building lasting collaborations with partners. Ironically, the busiest units are often the ones most committed to thoughtful analysis — because they know the payoff is worth it.

Our office, now in just its third year, is following that same path. We've listened to feedback and adapted — expanding front-end guidance for improvement projects, creating user-friendly resources for common challenges and refining our foundational workshop to help teams hit the ground running with an improvement project. And we'll keep learning and evolving.

So schedule that tune-up. We're here to help! Your passengers, your fellow travelers and everyone counting on you to arrive safely and successfully will thank you.

Stacey Bradley

University Organizational Excellence Officer



AT A GLANCE

This Year

- Fifteen new improvement leaders began facilitating meaningful change in their units.
- Our office-led learning sessions trained 236 individual participants.
- More than 50 departments on four USC campuses invested in improvement through projects and learning sessions guided by the Office of Organizational Excellence.
- Three new self-service resources — for facilitating group sessions, gathering feedback and setting strategic priorities — were added to our toolbox at sc.edu/excellence.
- Our office, through 11 collaborations, connected with colleagues at Coastal Carolina, Penn State, Princeton, Rutgers, Texas A&M, UC San Diego, Maine, Maryland, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte and Virginia.

Since 2023

- Students and faculty and staff members — 1,594 of them — have provided feedback incorporated in improvement projects.
- Improvement projects have saved 13,500 hours; those hours can be repurposed for higher-value work.



PROJECTS

Planning IT purchases

To improve how IT purchases are planned across the university, a team set out to create a more collaborative, consultative and coordinated process — one that starts well before a purchase request is submitted. Powered by 11 members representing six different areas, the team has designed a more proactive approach that will help units move quickly to find existing solutions that can effectively meet their needs.

One key improvement was implemented in March 2025 when the Division of Information Technology launched a searchable contracts database. Developed in-house, the tool brings together IT contract data from across the USC system, making it easier for users to find and leverage available resources.

Next up: a new workflow is set to launch in August 2025. Integrated into a user-friendly portal, the tool will guide users through IT purchase planning step by step. It will ensure thoughtful decision-making that supports business needs while meeting budget, policy and security requirements.

“ The improvement process made a tremendous difference. We moved from individual ideas to real progress and consensus faster than I expected. Having a skilled facilitator kept us focused and helped us get traction right away. ”

— **Liz Shirkey**, executive director of IT service and customer engagement, project team co-leader

Student-Athlete Eligibility Certification Process

To support student-athletes and go beyond simply “checking the box,” USC launched a project to improve its athletic certification process. A team from athletics, the registrar's office and the University Advising Center developed an action set to enhance efficiency while ensuring compliance with NCAA, SEC and university standards.

With the streamlined process, about 60-70 percent of certification forms will be available for processing three weeks sooner, enabling certification officials and advisers to process forms before peak workload each semester as they help students stay on track with their classes and majors. In addition, more than 100 work hours per semester were saved by reducing process steps and manual work.

Quality of Teaching Committee

The Quality of Teaching Committee, formed in May 2024 by Provost Donna Arnett, was established to define and promote high-quality teaching at USC. The Office of Organizational Excellence provided support, facilitating working sessions and guiding information gathering and research. The committee submitted their final report in December 2024, and the Center for Teaching Excellence has developed an educational module for new faculty members.

Meal Plan Change Process

After noting an annual surge in phone calls at the start of the spring semester, Business Affairs and Contract Management launched a project to improve the meal plan change process. The project team analyzed the reasons for the calls, identified inefficiencies and has begun implementing key changes. By reducing the process steps, clarifying instructions and automating reporting, the team projects a 45 percent reduction in overall call volume and reduced administrative workload.

Parking Ticket Appeal Process

An improvement project team has cut the parking ticket appeal wait time by 95 percent — from up to five months down to just a few days. Parking and Transportation and Student Government cosponsored a project to improve the appeal process, which was struggling to keep pace with the university's growth and customer expectations. When fully implemented, changes will reduce process time, ensure fairness and improve sustainability, making the process adaptable to future growth.



IMPROVEMENT LEADER PROGRAM

Strengthening our in-house skills for improvement

USC has 15 newly minted improvement leaders. They're the second group to complete the USC Improvement Leader Program, which blends practical learning with the immediate use of improvement concepts, methods and tools.

Over the course of six months, the group participated in seven practical learning sessions led by the Office of Organizational Excellence. Each participant facilitated an improvement project in their work area and presented the results of their improvements at the end.

For more about the program — including how to apply for the next cohort and to see the slides and recorded project presentations — visit sc.edu/excellence.

“ I really enjoyed the hands-on learning and getting to try out the different tools and resources available. It helped solidify not only how to utilize those tools, but also how to facilitate them. ”

— 2024-25 improvement leader

PARTICIPANTS

Brie Dunn, *associate dean for assessment, College of Pharmacy*

Dana Woodward, *associate director of academic affairs communications, Communications and Marketing*

Dustin Roberts, *associate director for administration, University 101 Programs*

Ellery Brewbaker, *assistant director for civil rights and Title IX, Office of Civil Rights and Title IX*

Gina Spence, *program advisor and data coordinator, Center for Integrative and Experiential Learning*

Holly Gentry, *assistant director of operations, The Graduate School*

J. Daniel Jenkins, *associate dean and director of graduate studies, School of Music*

Katie Davison, *senior RGP/TL classification and compensation analyst, Division of Human Resources*

Kelly DeShazo, *student services program coordinator, Graduation and Retention Network*

Kendall Anderson Jr., *administrative coordinator, College of Nursing*

Lauren Brown, *director of professional development, Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support*

Leroy Sims, *superintendent, Custodial Services, Facilities*

Lydia Ravindran, *benefits business analyst, Division of Human Resources*

Shannon Lackey, *grants manager, McCausland College of Arts and Sciences*

Travis Weatherford, *business manager, Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering*

TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Improvement Foundations Workshop

The Improvement Foundations Workshop is a hands-on session where teams launch real improvement projects right away. Designed for groups who share work areas or processes, the workshop blends practical instruction with immediate action. Participants learn proven improvement tools and apply them during the session to one or two pre-identified priorities. Content is tailored to focus on either process improvement or resource optimization. The session is designed to be in person, covering about three hours. Participants achieve significant headway and leave with a clear path to complete their projects and achieve meaningful results.

Email excellence@sc.edu to request the Improvement Foundations Workshop for your team.

Resource Rich

Drawing on our experiences this year, the Office of Organizational Excellence has developed a series of resources to address recurring needs we observed across campus. These tools — including guides for facilitating group work, gathering stakeholder feedback and setting strategic priorities — are designed to provide efficient and effective support for common challenges.

Facilitation Tools and Techniques gives you practical guidance to help groups get more done in less time. There are 21 tools in all — spelled out with step-by-step instructions and examples. Are you guiding a group that's analyzing a problem? Or generating ideas? Or organizing activities to ensure a coordinated plan? The right tool can make all the difference, and you'll find just the right one in this toolkit.

Gathering Stakeholder Feedback helps you glean meaningful insights from your customers and other stakeholders. From defining your goal to choosing the right method to asking the right questions, this resource is your guide for gathering valuable information effectively and efficiently.

Setting Strategic Priorities Toolkit could be considered a strategic planning resource, but it's more about strategic doing. Through a series of questions and discussion prompts, this resource will help you quickly sift through competing priorities to reveal what's most important for your organization so that you can get to work taking informed action.



These resources can be found in our toolkit at sc.edu/excellence, along with:

- Tips for fewer, faster, better meetings.
- Videos and online tools for process mapping.
- Templates for planning your improvement project.
- 10 ideas for improving processes starting now.

ADVISORY GROUP

Guiding organizational excellence

The Advisory Group for Organizational Excellence is composed of academic and administrative leaders from across the university. Together, they ensure that the organizational excellence initiative is collaborative, coordinated and powered by different perspectives.

Members, 2024-25

Caroline Agardy, *vice president for human resources*

Jeannette Andrews, *dean and Helen Gurley Wolford Professor, College of Nursing*

Brice Bible, *vice president for information technology and chief information officer*

Stacey Bradley, *university organizational excellence officer*

Kelly Epting, *associate vice president for finance and budget*

Julius Fridriksson, *vice president for research*

Hossein Haj-Hariri, *dean, Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing*

Mandy Kibler, *associate vice president for administration and finance, university controller*

Shannon Means, *vice provost for strategy and innovation*

Joel Samuels, *dean, McCausland College of Arts and Sciences*

J. Rex Tolliver, *vice president for student affairs and academic support*

Julian Williams, *vice president for access, civil rights and community engagement*

OUR SERVICES

The Office of Organizational Excellence is a partner and resource in your work to improve and innovate. **We offer services in four primary areas:**

Improvement Guidance

- Whether you have a broad idea or an exact focus for improvement, we'll bring insightful questions, best practices and lots of experience to help you determine the best way forward.



Project Facilitation

- We facilitate major improvement projects, guiding your team from start to finish to keep you on track and moving toward project goals.

Operational Strategy

- We provide guidance and facilitation to help your organization make complex strategic decisions, establish clear priorities and develop informed action plans.

Knowledge and Skill Building

- When you want to build capacity within your unit, we offer the hands-on Improvement Foundations Workshop, the annual Improvement Leader Program and an online toolbox filled with tips, templates and other resources.

CONTACT US

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sc.edu/excellence

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“ The committee was very well organized, successful in collecting feedback from a diverse group and identifying common themes and principles. It felt like a lot of careful thought had gone into designing the sessions to ensure they were as productive as possible. ”

— Faculty participant, *Quality of Teaching Committee*

STAY IN THE LOOP WITH OUR NEWSLETTER!

Sent four times a year, the organizational excellence newsletter will keep you up to date regarding improvement projects, improvement leaders, newly posted tools, practical tips, announcements and more. Subscribe at sc.edu/excellence.