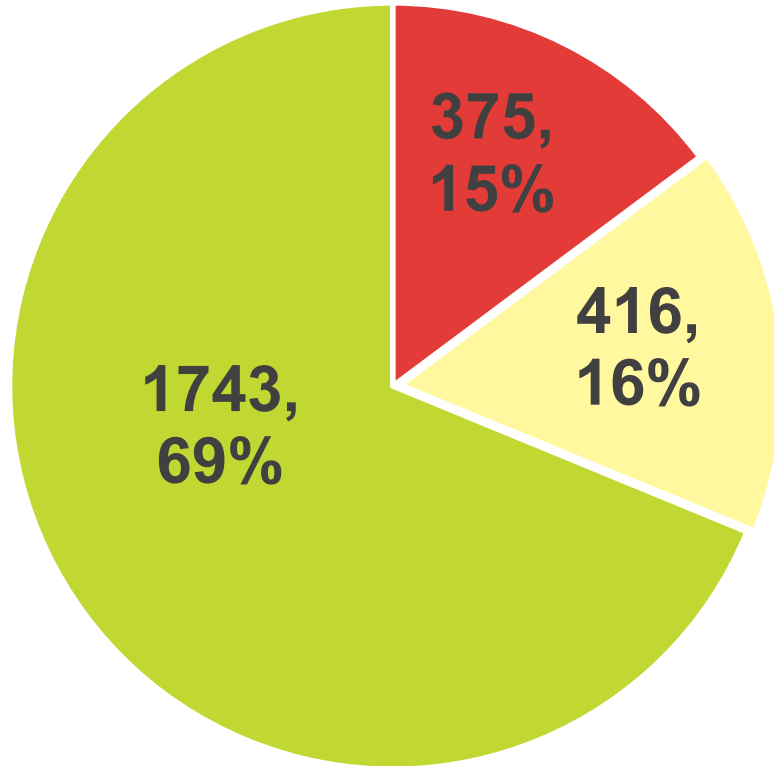# EXCEPTIONS DEFINED

- **Exception:** Student is admitted despite not fully meeting one or more standard requirements. (e.g., GPA, test scores, prerequisites, etc.)

- Departments submit the **Program Recommendation** to the Graduate School. There are 2 people in the Graduate School who review if it includes an exception. Graduate School staff process the **Admission Decision.**

- **Admission is based on a holistic review** that considers other strengths, such as experience, recommendations, or academic potential.

- Students admitted with exceptions **may need to meet conditions after enrolling**, like maintaining a certain GPA or completing specific courses.

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PURPOSE

Programs using Exceptions in Fall 2024

375, 15% — International Exceptions
416, 16% — Domestic Exceptions
1743, 69% — Regular Admit Decisions

- International Exceptions
- Domestic Exceptions
- Regular Admit Decisions

- Many "admit with exceptions" cases are being submitted
- The project analyzes exception patterns and justifications
- Insights will find ways to better guide departments to improve application requirements
- Goal: reduce exceptions, improve efficiency, and speed up admissions processing

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PEOPLE INVOLVED

- Project Sponsor - Dean Ann Vail
- Team Members – Angelina Sylvian, Dale Moore, Garrick Queen
- Subject Matter Experts – Libby Cross

- Input from Associate Deans and with Graduate Directors

- Who will benefit – Department Staff and Graduate Directors submitting AARs, Graduate School staff, applicants

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PROJECT PATH

Gathered input from:

Graduate Directors and Deans and on what standards can be used, what types of material is needed for application review, if application minimums can be updated in the Bulletin

Graduate School staff to gain perspective on how exception review can be streamlined

Analyzed exceptions submitted for the 24/25 academic year to determine what types of exceptions are submitted

Determined categories of exceptions currently being submitted

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KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- **Updates to ADMIT** to include categories of exceptions
  - Will clarify departments' intentions when they submit AAR with exceptions – and minimize the time for Graduate School staff to review exceptions submitted

- **Ability to easily create reports** to show exception volume by categories including:
  - College or department
  - Type of exception

- **Next-round improvement actions**:
  - Drill down further on what "minimums" are acceptable
  - Determine when exceptions should have clear, specific conditions for admitted students to complete within their first term
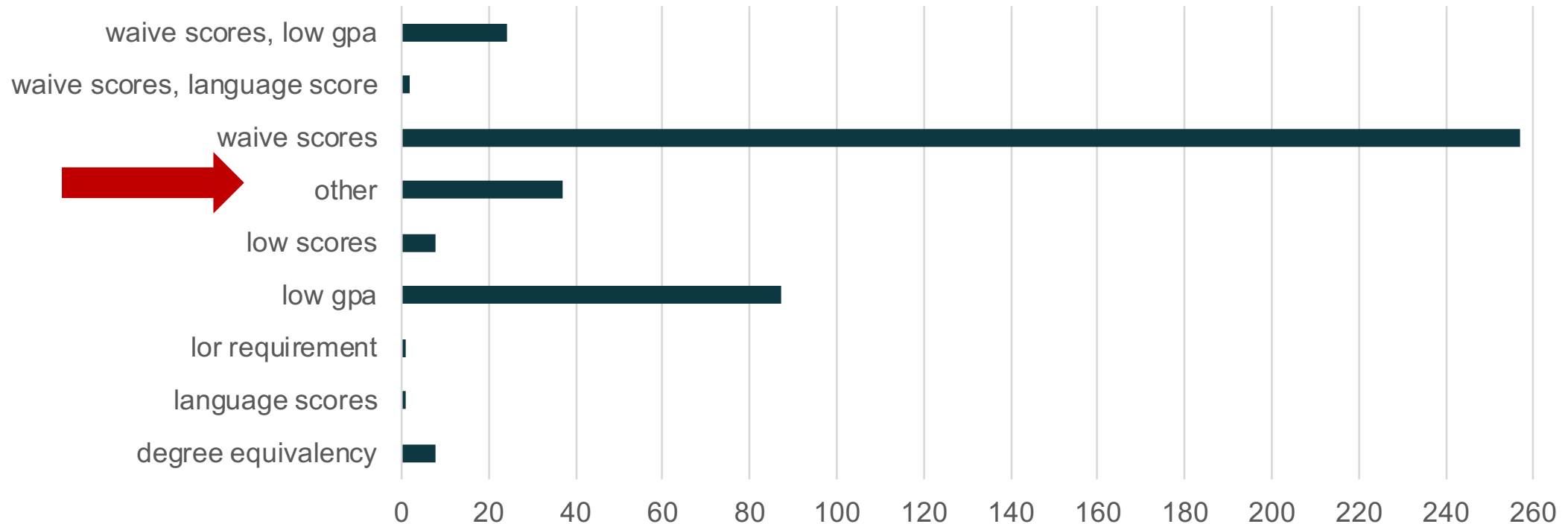
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EXCEPTION CATEGORIES – BEFORE

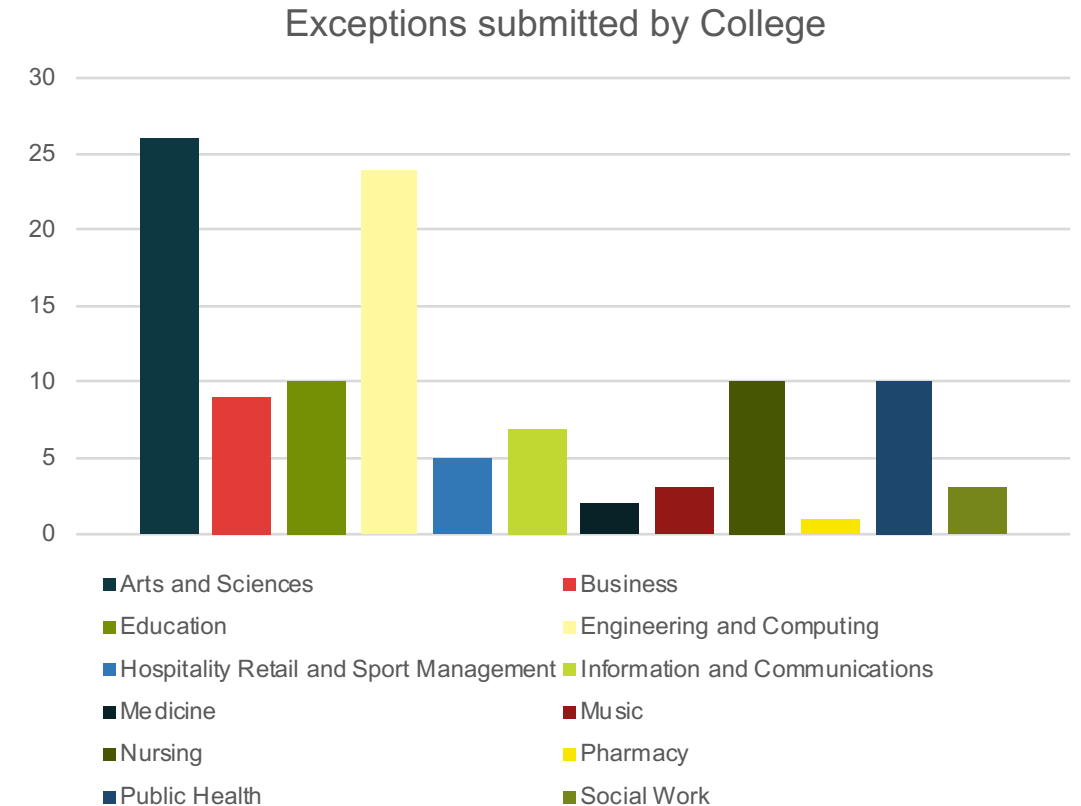Initial Categories
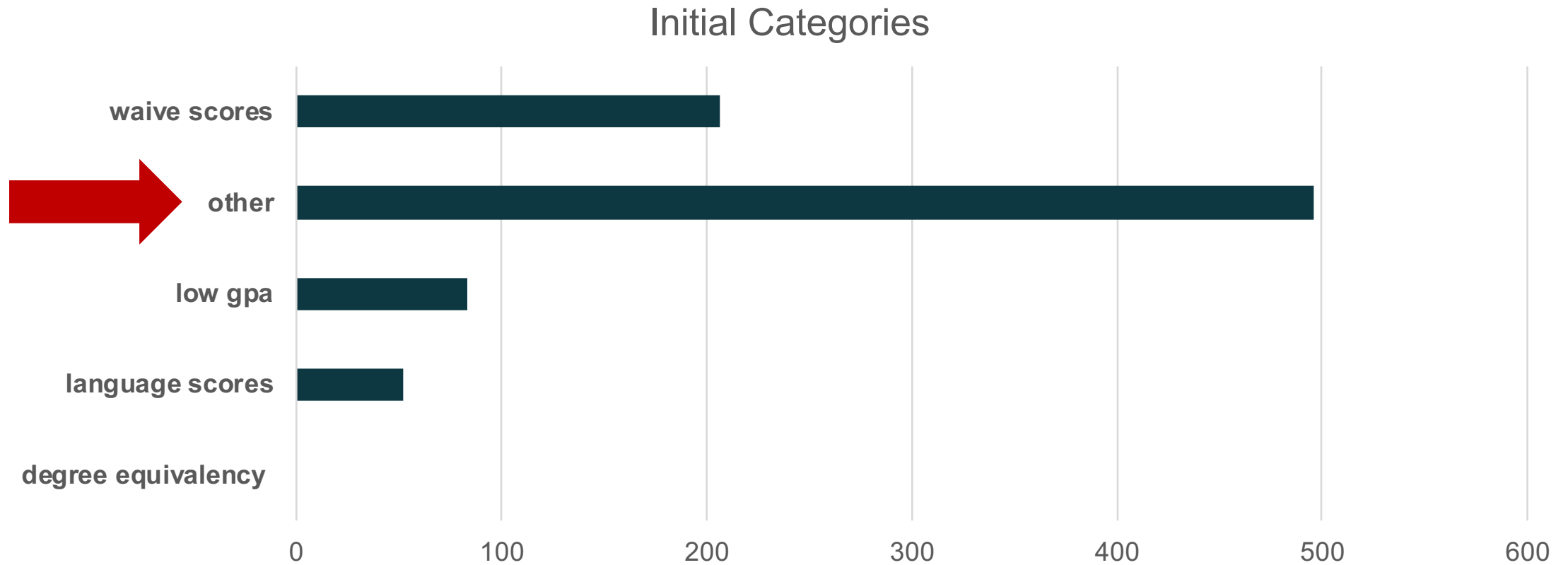
EXCEPTION CATEGORIES – AFTER

Count by Category

NEXT STEPS

- Present data to departments to determine what requirements can be updated in the Bulletin – to be more transparent for applicants

- Better define certain categories to sharpen analysis – and spot possible improvement opportunities

- Identify actions to make exception review more consistent

- Standardize the justification that is needed for exceptions – and the conditions that are warranted to ensure success in the student's first semester

Exceptions submitted by College

- Arts and Sciences
- Business
- Education
- Engineering and Computing
- Hospitality Retail and Sport Management
- Information and Communications
- Medicine
- Music
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Public Health
- Social Work

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EXPECTED RESULTS

- **Increased transparency** – encourages departments to update application requirements in the Bulletin

- **Reduced processing time** – categorizing the exception type will benefit Graduate Directors as well as Graduate School staff reviewing AARs

- **Standardized terminology** – allows for better data analysis and increases consistency

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REFLECTIONS

Improvement is not linear! We knew there was a need to analyze the exception process, but the "how" was not as clear.

This is not the end. There are many actions that can be worked on going forward to continue to streamline this part of the admissions cycle.

It takes buy-in from people across campus. The result will be a better experience when applying to Graduate School at USC.

THANK YOU!

Holly Gentry

Assistant Director of Operations, Graduate School

moorehr@mailbox.sc.edu

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