

Academic Blueprint System – Academic Year 2025-2026

University of South Carolina Union

Outcomes for AY 2024-2025. USC Union is a regional Palmetto College campus. As such, we follow the Palmetto College goals listed below. USC Union metrics are addressed annually in the South Carolina State Agency Accountability Report (last submitted: September 2024).

Enrollment.

Enrollment saw growth in several areas between Fall 2023 and Fall 2024. Freshman applications for Fall 2024 were up by 25%, signaling strong interest in our programs Continuing students increased by 18, and freshman enrollment rose by 5, while concurrent students saw a slight decrease of 2. Although transfer and readmit students declined, overall enrollment remained stable at 1,350 students, just slightly below the previous Fall (-3). Spring 2025 marked a record high in enrollment at 1,300 students, up from 1,247 the previous year, reflecting continued growth. With new initiatives like the recently established transfer pathways with USC Upstate in education, with USC Columbia in HTMT, and new athletic teams like Women's Soccer, along with expanding dual enrollment partnerships, we anticipate continued enrollment growth in the coming years.

Student Retention and Success.

Overall, our student success metrics show positive trends. The retention rate for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 was 67.3%, a significant increase from 56.6% the previous year. This is the highest retention rate recorded in the past decade, as reported by SCCHE, and it also represents the highest rate among the four PC campuses. Additionally, we are tied for 1st place among the 16 South Carolina technical colleges and the four PC campuses. The 150% success rate for first-time, full-time undergraduates in the Fall 2020 cohort was 71.9%, up from 70.8% the previous year. This places us second in the state among the 16 technical colleges and four PC campuses. The 150% graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduates in the Fall 2020 cohort was 37.5%, an increase from 30.6% the previous year. This represents the highest graduation rate we've achieved in the past ten years, making us the top performer at PC and #3 among the 16 technical colleges and four PC campuses.

There are 16 students enrolled in the upper-level BSN program, two students are expected to graduate with Leadership Distinction, six students were awarded PURE grants, two students are enrolled in the Early College Program (in partnership with Union County High School), and nine students are enrolled or have completed an internship class (in partnership with the SC Afterschool Alliance). To expand opportunities for students, we have begun preparing for the first cohort of early college students from Clinton High School for Fall 2025. Additionally, we launched our 2+2 partnership with USC Upstate for early childhood, elementary, and middle-level education, with one student expected to graduate this year. We also established transfer pathways with the HTMT department at USC Columbia in SPTE, Hospitality, Retailing, Tourism, and Services Management. To further encourage students to remain in the system after graduating from USC Union, we are working with the McNair Institute to establish a pathway to allow our students the ability to complete all the requirements for the entrepreneurship minor at USC Union before transferring to Columbia (the minor would be awarded upon transferring and completing bachelor's degree requirements at USC Columbia). To support our students, the campus has awarded \$4,132,983 in federal, state, local, and campus aid to help with the cost of attendance, including \$184,412 in academic and athletic scholarships. In the fall of 2024, the Student Academic Success Center saw over 1,000 visits from students who utilized its resources. We've also maintained a low student-to-faculty ratio of 17:1. Additionally, we have partnerships with three psychological service providers, offering in-person and telehealth mental health resources for our faculty, staff, and students. Recently, we hired a Financial Aid Counselor, Education Coordinator, Student Activities Coordinator, and Quality Assurance Technician.

Faculty.

In the Fall of 2024, we hired four new full-time faculty: an Assistant Professor of English, an Assistant Professor of Sociology, an Instructor of Fine Arts, and an Instructor of Mathematics. We currently have four ongoing searches for new faculty positions to begin Fall 2025 in the fields of BIOL, POLI, PSYC, and POLI. One faculty member has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure. One faculty member has been promoted to the rank of Full Professor. Additionally, one faculty member has applied for promotion to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure, and two are undergoing Third Year Review. Funding for professional travel was increased to \$40,000 from \$30,500. Four faculty members were awarded PURE grants. The Union faculty published 30 items, presented at 31 conferences, and produced 23 creative works. Union faculty continue to hold leadership roles in Palmetto College governance including, PC Faculty Senate Chair, PC Faculty Senate Faculty Welfare Co-Chair, PC Faculty Senate Right and Responsibilities Chair, the Provost's PC Advisory Committee, PC Faculty Senate Academic Advisory Committee, PC Chancellor's Executive Committee, and the System Faculty Leadership Council.

Commitment to Service.

USC Union maintains its close connections with the Union community and is represented on several organizations and boards including, Live Healthy Union, Union County Carnegie Library Advisory Board, Union County Historical Society, Union County Partners Board, Union County Council, Workforce Development Board, Union County Development Board, Rotary Club of Union, Rotary Club of Clinton, and City of Union Strategic Planning Committee. Our faculty are also heavily involved in service activities for the campus, PC/USC system, and community. USC Union houses many public resources, including three iCarolina Community Learning Labs (Union, Laurens, Clinton). We are connected to the community through internships that our students take on as part of work-study

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assignments or as part of internship classes. Our campus hosts public events like the art and poetry shows as part of our Black History Month Program, the Latin American Film Festival, the Upcountry Literary Festival, and Fresh Check Day. Our sports teams play their home games in Union and Jonesville and occupy much of the privately run student housing options around campus. Students pursuing their BSN complete clinicals within our service area and beyond.

Organizational and Financial Health.

The campus maintains a healthy financial standing, striving to uphold a reserve equivalent to three months' worth of its carryforward balance. The FY24 ending fund balance was \$1,341,650. This year, we made improvements to campus infrastructure and continue to work on ongoing projects to enhance campus facilities. The Main Building renovation is still in progress, with updates including new HVAC, elevator, carpeting, paint, lighting, restrooms, and some reconfiguration of offices and classrooms. The Softball field renovation is also underway, with completion expected in March 2025. The Truluck Gym roof replacement and exterior painting have been completed, and a new flooring and lighting project is in progress. Upgrades are also being made to the Jonesville athletic facilities, both in the gym and in preparation for improvements at the baseball field. At the Laurens Location in Clinton, new classroom furniture has been added to accommodate larger class sizes, along with a new weight room, student success room, and various aesthetic upgrades. Additional projects at that location include fire suppression system upgrades, kitchen renovations to support a new HTMT partnership, bathroom updates, and upgrades to bass fishing and golf facilities. A new mural was completed on the exterior of the storage building next to Truluck Gym, and that building is in the early stages of renovation to become an art classroom facility. Furthermore, a large charter bus and multiple campus vehicles have been acquired for use by employees and athletic teams.

Goals for AY 2025-2026 – Priorities reflect USC Palmetto College Strategic Plan (2024-2029)

Priority 1: Grow enrollments and advance student success.

1.1 Drive enrollment growth

Maintain and increase overall headcount and FTE.

Maintain and increase the fall-to-fall retention rates for first-time, full-time degree-seeking students.

1.2 Promote teaching and research excellence

Maintain and increase opportunities for faculty and students to showcase their scholarly and creative works to the campus community.

Maintain and increase the number of full-time faculty by hiring in high-need areas.

1.3 Foster staff development

Maintain and increase the number of full-time staff by hiring in high-need areas.

1.4 Drive student success

Maintain and increase the success rate for first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates.

Maintain and increase the number of students graduating with Leadership Distinction.

1.5 Empower diverse students, staff, and faculty

Maintain and increase the number of campus events dedicated to fostering a diverse and inclusive campus climate.

Priority 2: Deliver world-class experiences for students, internal colleagues, and external partners

2.1 Optimize services and processes

Maintain and increase the number of capital improvement projects to enhance campus infrastructure.

2.2 Promote organizational and financial health

Maintain a reserve fund carry-forward balance of \$1,500,000.

2.3 Enhance giving and fundraising efforts across PC campuses

Maintain and increase the number of fundraising opportunities and events.

Priority 3: Impact education attainment and workforce readiness

3.1 Impact our community

Maintain and increase the number of public events hosted by the campus.

Create and engage the Union community in continuing education/professional development opportunities through iCarolina labs and Ed2go.

3.2 Increase transfer and pipeline partnerships

Maintain or increase the number of dual enrollment relationships with high schools.

Maintain and increase interest in Early College programs.

Maintain and increase the number of students pursuing baccalaureate degrees at USC Union via Palmetto College (BOL/BLS), pre-nursing students interested in the BSN program via USC Aiken, and education majors via USC Upstate.

3.3 Expand workforce-focused credentials

Maintain and increase partnerships with the community and local employers and industry.