
Is This Your First Day?

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Abstract

A thorough on-boarding process is crucial to employee engagement and retention. Since we all have already been “the new person on their first day”, why not capture all the things you wish you knew and cover them? At USC Upstate, we offer a New Employee Portal, which includes everything you could want to know at the time you are most hungry for information – just when you are applying and getting accepted for the job. Hiring managers are provided with a checklist of everything they need to be doing to get ready for their new staff, which includes:

- informing them of their HR meeting*
- telling them where to park*
- ordering their name tag*
- setting up their email/phone/accesses with IT*
- providing the link for the New Employee Portal*
- and other details*

On the first day, new staff visit the HR office for their paperwork and benefits meeting, and then they get a special one-on-one orientation session designed for their particular incoming knowledge of campus and community and their specific role on campus.

Then once a semester, the group of new staff meet together on three successive Fridays to tour campus hot spots and points of pride as well as meet face to face all the Deans and members of the Cabinet.

On the third meeting, participants are given a survey that asks what could have gone better in their first few days. Always searching for ways to improve the process, we analyze their comments to see what tweaks need to be made to conversations in the first few days.

New Staff Tours are intended to:

- assist new employees in uncovering information and corners of the campus that most employees miss because of our inclination to stay within our silos.*
- give each new employee what they need to hit the ground running and become productive contributors to our mission and goals.*
- encourage cross-departmental friendships that might never have begun, creating camaraderie and all the benefits thereof, including our goal – an engaged employee.*

USC Upstate

USC Upstate is a metropolitan university located in the upstate of South Carolina, which started in 1967 in response to the community's need for trained nurses. We began with 177 nursing students and have grown to almost 6,000 students in over 40 majors. Our beautiful 330 acre main campus, our George Dean Johnson School of Business and Economics in downtown Spartanburg, and our Greenville locations at University Center and the newest River Street location for Urban Development all are home to over 750 employees.

Is this your first day?

The issue is how we bring on those employees. Do they feel like we were expecting them on their first day? Do they know where to park and whether or not to bring their lunch? And how long does it take for that new person to become functional in their new position? Not all hiring managers are familiar with the process. Consider a new department chair who is hiring an administrative assistant. Neither would know what needs to be done for a new person. And every new employee doesn't have colleagues who are close in proximity to ask questions of. This could lead to an awkward beginning and an uncomfortable fit.

So it became clear that in order to reduce our regrettable attrition rate, we should spend more time on the front end making sure our employees are introduced properly to their new home. They should know that we are glad they are here to share their knowledge and experience with us, help us to fulfill our mission of student success, improving processes and making connections along the way. And how much more rich of an experience it could be if you are armed with points of pride you are anxious to share in conversation. And what a

difference that can make in the community, when employees are so happy to work here and so knowledgeable and proud of what we offer. This is the true value of a thorough on-boarding experience.

Design

To develop our process, we had parameters that were Chancellor-driven. And that is a good success predictor, because participation of the presenters and their encouragement of new employees to participate is assured if it comes from the top through Cabinet. It was very important to the Chancellor that new staff meet all the members of Cabinet in their offices. He wanted them to see what was on the walls, and to see what their accomplishments and hobbies are. This gives a more personal side to the C suite. He also wanted personal interaction with each of the Deans. Special points of pride across the campuses were to be highlighted. And the number of meetings was important. This is not accomplished in one long-winded training day, but in a series of three meetings. By the time you have met a colleague three times, it is highly likely that you will remember their name and what they do. This is how we break down silos and improve processes.

From these guidelines, three presentations were developed including everything necessary and splitting it up in a way that made sense for our campus: The Beginning, which gives the history of the university and tours the original quad; The Reason We're Here – Students! takes us to see where they learn, work out, eat, live, do laundry; and Spartan Pride shows us special areas of our main campus and then we go downtown to the George. By the

time we are done, we have covered every building and outdoor area on our 330 acres. And on the way downtown, important landmarks (such as Regional Medical Center, Wade's Restaurant, and Starbucks) and neighboring businesses (like Milliken Research) are pointed out for those who are new to the area.

Implementation

The next step after getting on the Chancellor's calendar was contacting the Deans and Cabinet members we would be visiting to get on their calendars. Notifying the employees is done on their first day at their one-on-one orientation meeting, so they know on day one to put those dates on their calendar and make arrangements to be there. Reserving the spaces necessary and planning the luncheon comes next and is done with and approved by our Special Events coordinator. We also reserve the Spartan shuttle bus to take us from building to building and downtown. A certificate signed by the Chancellor is given to those who attend all three tours. And a finale luncheon is a thank you to all the folks we visited as well as a second chance for the new staff to speak with the Cabinet and Deans about how the first few weeks have gone.

I have a bag of tricks along with me in case a presenter falls through or someone is unusually brief. We do a role play showing how much more entertaining your conversations are about your new job after having gone through our orientation tours.

Conversation with friend

I heard you have a new job. How many students do they have out there now?

So why did they change the name from USC Spartanburg to USC Upstate?

Answer Before Orientation

I don't know. I just started

I'm not sure. I haven't heard anyone say.

Answer After Orientation

Yes, and I'm so excited! There are almost 6000 students now and 1000 live on campus. We started with only 177 nursing students almost 50 years ago.

The name was changed in 2004 to reflect the University's metropolitan mission. As the I-85 corridor brought in more and more businesses, we wanted to show we are responsive to the needs of the entire upstate, not just one city.

We also designed a word puzzle using USC Upstate terms that we learned in case we have a 5 or 10 minute break in the action.

1. Quad building that houses Athletics and Math & Computer Science
2. You borrow books there
3. Our mascot
4. USC Spartanburg changed to USC _____ in 2004

Y	T	Y	R	E
E	R	R	A	T
G	A	P	B	A
D	O	I	S	T
H	L	U	P	S

And we often show a YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CL75GuIMcdk> of our School of Business students dancing to Pharrell Williams' "Happy" that always brings the house down, especially when the Dean is spotted!

Each participant is asked to evaluate his own on-boarding experience and tell what things could have gone more smoothly. We analyze that information and make adjustments as necessary. Everyone is given a gift bag with some university bookstore items – coffee mug, pen, etc. And everyone is sent a one year anniversary card applauding their contribution to the campus. This particular contact is an opening for any questions or problems that might be going on, and feedback from the contact is a good barometer of engagement.

The Tours

The Beginning

Who they met

- Chancellor
- Senior Vice Chancellor
- VC Admin & Business Affairs
- VC Metropolitan Studies, Planning
- Dean of the Library
- Dean, CAS
- Athletics Director
- Director of Client Services, IT

What they learned

- History
- Mission and Values
- Buildings around the quad
- Connection to the community through Metropolitan Studies
- Administrative & Business Affairs by the numbers
- The latest offering by the Shoestring Players
- What's showing in the Harley Art Gallery
- Spartan Nation - how to be involved, teams, renovations
- How IT can help you

What they saw

- Stockwell Administration Building
- Monumental Art
- Tukey Theater
- Library
- HPAC
- College of Arts and Sciences
- Media Building
- Hodge
- IT Help Desk

For all three tours, name tags are provided for anyone who doesn't have a University name tag. And in many of the offices we go in, the host will ask everyone's name and what department they are from or how long they have been on campus. In addition to learning each other's names, this reinforces that everyone in every job is dedicated to our mission in some way.

Arrangements have been made for sight-impaired employees by having an assistant with him. We accommodated a Spanish-speaking new employee by having her bi-lingual supervisor attend with her. And we have made arrangements for employees with limited mobility by pointing out alternative routes and providing shuttles.

The Reason We're Here – Students!

Who they met

- VC Enrollment
- Dean, School of Nursing
- Dean, School of Education
- Director of Wellness
- Director of HRL
- VC Student Affairs and Dean of Students
- Director of Dining Services

What they learned

- Freshman demographics
- Simulation used as learning tool
- School of Ed overview, points of excellence
- Wellness opportunities
- How Housing and Residential Life Works
- Health Services offerings for faculty/staff
- Student Life's programs
- Navigating the Dining Hall

What they saw

- HEC Classrooms
- Nursing Simulation Lab
- Wellness Center gym, weight room, track, pool
- Rampey
- Residential Halls and Housing Office
- Dean of Students office
- Student Life
- Counseling Services
- Disabilities Services
- Dining Hall
- Quiet Room

Spartan Pride

Who they met

- Asst. VC Communications
- Director of Development & Foundation
- Director of Annual Giving
- Chief Klay Peterson
- Dean, School of Business

What they learned

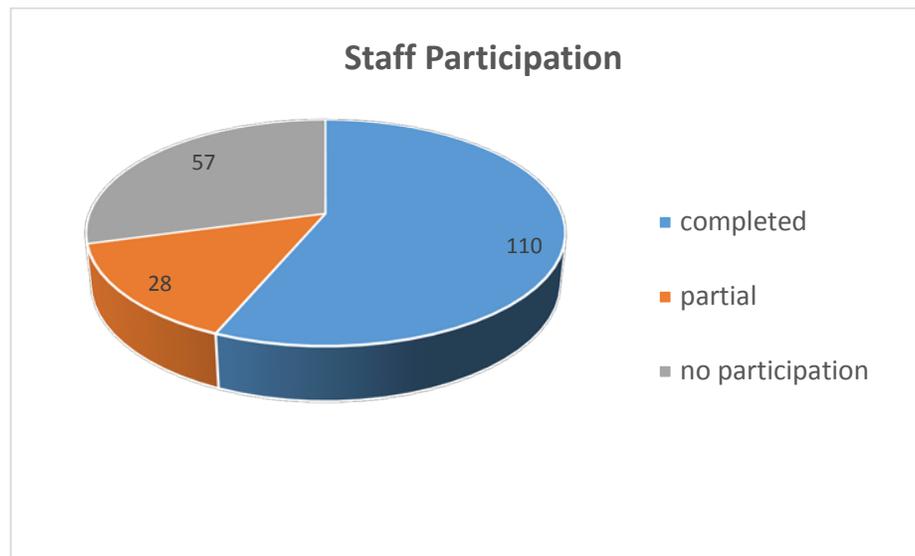
- Communications policies
- How Advancement ties in with our mission
- UPD - how they work, what's inside, what they do
- Where to go when hurt at work
- History of the George

What they saw

- Katie Hicks Art Bldg.
- Arboretum
- Smith Farmhouse
- UPD/Ropes
- Shipping & Receiving Facilities
- URC
- Athletic Complex
- Palmetto Trail/Disc
- Rotary Peace Park
- Health Services
- The George

Participation

There have been 207 eligible employees since we started in Fall 2013. Certificates of completion for all three trainings have been given to 110 new employees. The chart shows 28 partially completed the training, which means they lack one or two of the tours to complete. 57 employees did not participate at all.



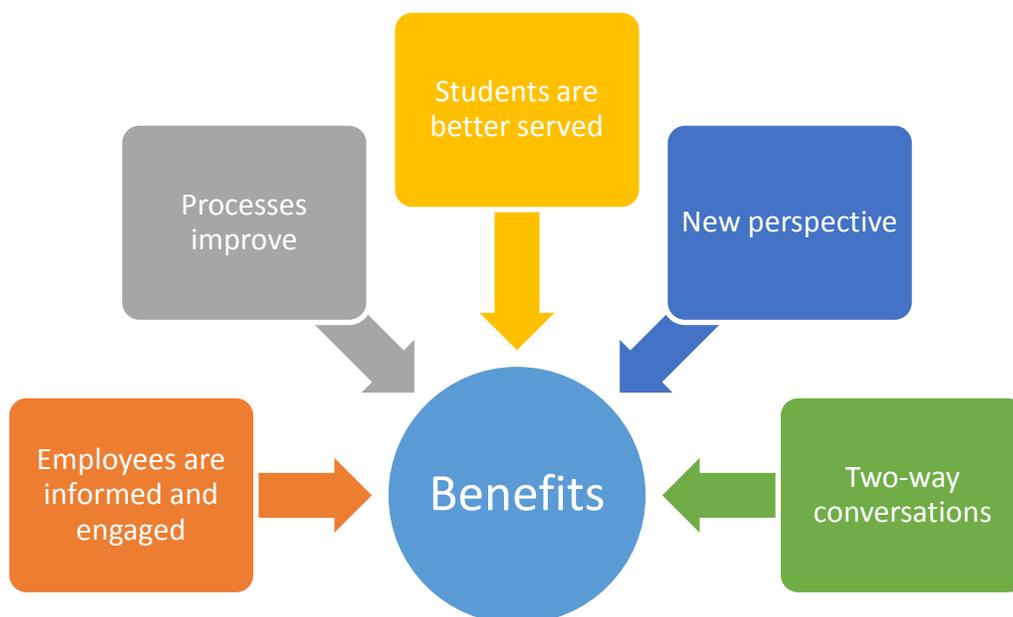
The 207 eligible employees who did participate came from a variety of departments, including:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Academic Affairs – UCG | History, Philosophy, and American Studies |
| ACHIEVE | Housing & Residential Life |
| Admissions | Information & Technology |
| Advancement | International Studies |
| Athletics | Institutional Effectiveness |
| Business - UCG | Library |
| CAS – UCG | Math & Computer Sciences |
| Communications | Palmetto College |
| Counseling Services | School of Education |
| Disability Services | School of Nursing |
| Distance Ed | Sociology, Criminal Justice, and Women's Studies |
| Facilities | Student Account Services |
| Financial Aid | |
| Health Services | |

Tour	Number of Participants
The Beginning	127
The Reason We're Here – Students!	119
Spartan Pride	125
Total	371 trainings

Benefits

Students are better served by employees who are informed and engaged. Processes improve when employees know other people on campus and what they do and when walls are reached through. Two-way conversations between senior administration and new employees gives everyone a new perspective. Positive outcomes can be seen in the notable comments below.



Evaluations

Evaluations are completed on the last day of the tours. Every person who has filled out an evaluation has reported that they had made some good connections with others during their time together and they felt more at home at USC Upstate as a result of their participation.

Favorite stops are the Nursing Simulation Lab, Athletics, the George, and the Wellness Center.

Notable comments include:

“Other staff in my department did not know about some of the things I learned during the tours.”

“Great service to new employees!”

“Now everyone knows what I do.”

“I feel like I have made a lot of friends.”

“This was incredible. Thank you!”

“I was pleasantly surprised at how much more at home I feel here. I feel cared about and valued. I am motivated and want to do everything I can to be an asset.”

“I feel like I am truly a part of a family now.”