

**Blueprint for Service Excellence  
Office of General Counsel  
Fiscal Year 2012 - 2013**

**I. Executive Summary**

The Office of General Counsel is responsible for all institutional legal advice.

The Office has five main functions:

1. Legal advice and counsel, which includes but is not limited to providing legal advice and opinions to University officials, faculty and staff on all University campuses; contract drafting, negotiation and review; interpreting federal, state and local laws and regulations; policy review and development; and general legal assistance to and education of the campus community.
2. Representation and litigation support, which includes but is not limited to handling internal and external administrative and regulatory matters and grievances, and gathering factual information in the development and furtherance of the University's position in judicial and administrative forums.
3. Official repository for all University contracts; maintain the University contract database.
4. Serve as clearinghouse to gather and provide public documents in response to requests for documents made pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.
5. Serve all units of the University through preventive counseling before legal problems arise in order to prevent or minimize legal liability.

**II. Vision Statement**

The Office of General Counsel is recognized as integral to the University's strategic operations and as a premier legal office that provides leadership to the University and facilitates the accomplishment of the University's goals.

**III. Mission Statement**

The Office of General Counsel provides, manages and coordinates all legal services for the University of South Carolina in a collegial, positive and professional manner. We are committed to rendering high quality and responsive legal advice to facilitate the achievement of the University of South Carolina's mission in teaching, research and service.

#### **IV. Overarching Goals**

The Office has 5 overarching goals:

1. University officials, administrators, faculty and staff will have enlightened understanding of the legal implications of their actions.
2. University employees will transact business consistent, whenever legally possible, with their stated objectives, with appropriate and reasonable allocation of business and legal risk, and in compliance with federal, state and local laws and regulations.
3. University will be zealously and competently defended in judicial and administrative proceedings.
4. University's legal liabilities attendant to its activities will be analyzed and minimized.
5. University will have concise, clear and easily accessible policies and procedures.

#### **V. Specific Goals for Fiscal Year 2012-2013**

**Goal 1:** Establish and communicate to the campus community a uniform process for responding in a timely manner to requests for documents made pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act or lawfully issued subpoena.

1. Initiative 1: Increase the size of the legal staff by one full-time attorney designated to respond to requests for documents made pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act or lawfully issued subpoena.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Secure authorization from the Office of Human Resources for additional full-time personnel slot.
- Secure authorization from Office of Attorney General to hire additional full-time attorney.
- Secure funding for the position, as needed.
- Secure office location for additional attorney.

- Develop position description and advertise for attorney.
  - Conduct screening, interviewing and selection of attorney.
2. Initiative 2: Work with Office of Communications and Athletics Department Sports Information Office to develop policies and practices for consistent and timely responses to requests for documents made pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Develop a policy articulating each party's responsibility for responding to South Carolina Freedom of Information Act requests.
  - Communicate to the campus community the appropriate action upon receipt of a request for documents.
3. Initiative 3: Develop policies and practices for charging and collecting costs and expenses allowed by the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Conduct a study of costs and expenses charged by State agencies in South Carolina for responding to requests for documents pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.
- Work with Office of Communications and Athletics Department Sports Information Office to ensure consistent application of University approved costs and expenses.
- Monitor the assessment and collection of allowable costs and expenses.

**Goal 2:** Streamline processes for responding efficiently and expeditiously to requests for legal assistance by officials, administrators, faculty and staff on all University campuses.

1. Initiative 1: Reorganize work flow and assign an attorney to be the primary point of contact for each senior campus, for the regional campuses, and for the athletics department.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Communicate attorney assignments to units in question.

- Seek feedback from senior and regional campuses on ways in which the Office of General Counsel can better serve their need for legal services.
  - Seek feedback from units in question on the responsiveness of assigned attorneys and on ways in which assigned attorneys can better serve the needs of the unit.
  - Monitor requests for assistance received by the Office of General Counsel to determine if additional assignments of primary attorney responsibility are needed.
2. Initiative 2: Investigate options for increasing accessibility of University contracts by University departments.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Engage University Information Technology and outside vendors to determine if University contracts can be scanned and made available to University departments in a secure and cost effective manner.

**Goal 3:** Provide University officials, administrators, faculty and staff with ready access to University counsel and significant University policies and procedures.

1. Initiative 1: Create an Office of General Counsel webpage to provide general information about the office and its operation, University resources, and links to relevant University policies.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Research Office of General Counsel webpages at peer institutions.
- Engage webpage designers in University Technology Services.
- Arrange for completion and implementation of webpage by June 30, 2013.

**Goal 4:** Upon approval of the President and funding by the Board of Trustees, assist in providing a mechanism for USC students to receive ready access to legal advice and assistance with defined, non-University-related legal issues.

1. Initiative 1: Assist the Division of Student Affairs and student government leadership in establishing an Office of Student Legal Services.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Obtain approval of the South Carolina Attorney General for hire of University-compensated attorney.
- Draft/review Request for Proposal for competitive solicitation of attorney to perform legal services.
- Draft/review job description or Special Employment Agreement outlining the scope of services to be provided.

**Goal 5:** Establish and disseminate to the campus community clearly defined policies and procedures for handling and investigating student claims of discrimination.

1. Initiative 1: In consultation with the University Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, implement the terms of the Consent Agreement executed with the U. S. Department of Justice Consent Agreement regarding student claims of discrimination.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Draft/finalize student anti-discrimination policies and procedures for investigating student claims of discrimination.
- Develop education/training materials.
- Establish and implement comprehensive and systematic training of University administrators, faculty, staff and students regarding the proper handling of student claims of discrimination.