

**Blueprint for Service Excellence
Office of General Counsel
Fiscal Year 2011 - 2012**

Executive Summary

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

The Office has four 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 all units of the University through preventive counseling before legal problems arise in order to prevent or minimize legal liability.

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.

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.

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 will be reduced and minimized.
5. University will have concise, clear and easily accessible policies and procedures.

Specific Goals for Fiscal Year 2011-2012

Goal 1: Increase the size of the legal support staff to a level commensurate with that at peer institutions.

Initiative 1: Complete infrastructure renovations and reconfiguration of Office of General Counsel suite to accommodate additional legal staff.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Secure budget support for expansion.
- Engage designers through Office of Facilities to plan physical space layout.
- Arrange for completion of reconfiguration to accommodate effective date of employment for attorneys to be hired.

Initiative 2: Hire two additional attorneys.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Develop position descriptions and advertise for two attorneys.
- Conduct screening, interviewing and selection of two attorneys.

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

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 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.

Initiative 2: Upgrade the University contract database to ensure accurate record-keeping and accessibility of documents and information.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Engage software designers through University Technology Services.
- Arrange for completion and implementation of software database, including conversion and transfer of existing contract database by July 31, 2011.
- Train Office of General Counsel and Board of Trustees staff on use the contract database.

Goal 3: 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 and lawfully issued subpoenas.

Initiative 1: Reorganize work flow and assign an attorney primary responsibility for coordinating responses, including gathering and reviewing documents, and charging and collecting allowable costs and expenses.

Action Steps/Indicators of Success:

- Communicate to the campus community the appropriate action upon receipt of a request for documents.

- Coordinate with the Office of Communications responses media requests for public documents.
- Monitor the assessment and collection of allowable costs and expenses.

Goal 4: Provide University officials, administrators, faculty and staff with ready access to University counsel and significant University policies and procedures.

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, 2012.