

ELEVATE UPSTATE

ATHLETIC STRATEGIC PLAN



Part of the USC Upstate
Greater 2030 Strategic Plan





OUR MISSION:

To provide a transformative and holistic student-athlete experience, fostering a relentless pursuit of excellence in academics, athletics, and community engagement. We are dedicated to developing, empowering, and preparing the next generation of leaders.

OUR VISION:

To elevate Upstate Athletics into the premiere Division I athletic department.

A heartfelt thank you to the staff, faculty, students, and stakeholders whose dedication and collaboration were instrumental in shaping **Elevate Upstate**, the strategic plan for USC Upstate Athletics. Your collective efforts helped define the vision, mission, values, and strategic direction that will guide our department into the future.

We extend special appreciation to the Athletics Strategic Planning Committee, which began this important work in April 2024:

Don Bent
Executive in Residence

Dr. Jeffrey Stinson
Dean of the George Dean Johnson, Jr. College of Business and Economics

Dr. Stephen Bismarck
Interim Associate Dean in the College of Education, Human Performance, and Health

Donette Stewart
Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management

Jane Brown
Risk Management & Compliance Coordinator

Dr. Scott Tanner
Assistant Professor, Biology & Faculty Athletics Representative

Dr. Jeannie Chapman
Dean of College of Science and Technology

Dr. Susannah Waldrop
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success

RJ Gimbl
Vice Chancellor for University Advancement & Executive Director of the USC Upstate Foundation

Darius Wilkins
Financial Aid Specialist

Dr. Scott Meek
Associate Professor, Psychology

Jim Shecter
General Manager, Dining Services



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Spartan Priorities

to further the University's strategic priorities and address the needs of—and challenges faced by—our students and the workforce.

Spartan Distinct

Academic Success & Career Development

Spartan Recruit

Student-Athlete Experience

Spartan Success

Competitive Excellence

Spartan Partners

Resource Development & Financial Management

Spartan Future

Brand Engagement & Collaboration



Andrew Aun | Men's Track & Field
Major: Entrepreneurship



Dear **Spartan Family**,

It is with great pride and excitement that USC Upstate Athletics unveils **Elevate Upstate** — our new Strategic Plan for Spartan Athletics. This comprehensive roadmap was shaped over several months through thoughtful collaboration and invaluable input from university leadership, faculty and staff, coaches, alumni, donors, community leaders, and, most importantly, our student-athletes.

We are deeply grateful to all who contributed to crafting this shared vision. **Elevate Upstate** is more than a strategic plan; it is the foundation for our department's continued growth and a vital component of the University's broader **Greater 2030** initiative. It will serve as both a compass and catalyst for our efforts over the next five years.

Designed to meet the evolving challenges and opportunities within college athletics, this plan focuses on clear, ambitious goals rooted in our core values: service, accessibility, integrity, collaboration, and excellence. By holding fast to these principles, we are positioning Spartan Athletics to achieve new levels of success — both on and off the field.

As we embark on this journey together, I want to thank you in advance for your continued support and partnership. Our goals are bold, but our belief in the power of this community is even stronger. Together, we will invest in our programs, enhance the student-athlete experience, and elevate USC Upstate to a place of national prominence in Division I athletics.

A special thank you to Dr. Harris and the university community for your steadfast support of this vision. With your partnership, we will truly **Elevate Upstate**.

Go Spartans!

Matt Martin

Vice Chancellor & Director of Intercollegiate Athletics





CELEBRATING OUR

SOUTH CHAMPIONS

SOUTH
2024 SOFTBALL | W. SOCCER
2025 SOFTBALL
BASEBALL | MEN'S GOLF



1

Spartan Distinct Academic Success & Career Development

USC Upstate is committed to delivering outstanding support for student-athletes, empowering them to excel academically while also promoting leadership growth, career readiness, and a lifelong passion for learning.

OUTCOMES

USC Upstate Athletics will exceed standard academic metrics of NCAA Division I.

USC Upstate Athletics will be the industry model in driving post-graduate placement and success for its student-athletes.

USC Upstate student-athletes will receive a holistic experience, with a focus on developing world-class, career-ready professionals equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

STRATEGIES

1. Develop and implement a plan to increase personnel dedicated to student-athlete academic success.
2. Invest in innovative technologies to streamline academic service.
3. Expand tutoring services and study hall opportunities to ensure student-athletes have proper access to necessary resources for academic success.
4. 100% of USC Upstate student-athletes will secure post-graduate opportunities prior to graduation (career placement, graduate school, internship, etc.).
5. Develop a four-year track for specialized leadership, life skills, networking, and career pathway programming for student-athletes.

KEY METRICS

- o Academic Progress Rate (APR) of at least 985 annually
- o Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of at least 90% annually
- o Maintain student-athlete GPA of at least 3.30 annually



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Spartan Recruit Student-Athlete Experience

USC Upstate is dedicated to the holistic development of Spartan student-athletes, offering an exceptional experience during their time in Spartanburg. We are focused on providing unparalleled support to foster growth in all aspects—academic, physical, mental, and social—ensuring our student-athletes thrive throughout their journey at USC Upstate.

OUTCOMES

Provide student-athletes with the foremost health & wellness services while fostering an environment that promotes their physical, mental, emotional, social, financial, and cultural well-being.

Develop Upstate Athletics into the premier Big South Conference institution for athletic performance and support services.

USC Upstate student-athletes will compete and train in world class facilities.

STRATEGIES

1. Maintain the highest quality of sports medicine, sport performance, nutritional services, sports psychology and mental health support for our student-athletes.
2. Establish Student-Athlete Mental Health & Counseling Center.
3. Build and implement an infrastructure for empowering student-athlete feedback and communication with athletics leadership.
4. Increase sport performance personnel, technology, and resources.
5. Deepen nutritional programming and educational services for student-athletes.
6. Develop an Athletics Facilities Master Plan, focusing on the following projects:
 - Student-Athlete Academic Success Center
 - New Track & Field Complex
 - New Convocation Center / Basketball Arena
 - New Baseball/Softball Team Complex
 - Harley Park Video Board
 - **Upgrades to:**
 - GB Hodge Center
 - Sport Performance Center
 - University County Soccer Stadium
 - Golf Team Facility
 - Athletic Training Spaces



3

Spartan Success Competitive Excellence

USC Upstate is committed to fostering a championship culture, focused on providing the proper resources and opportunities to compete for Big South Championships and qualify for NCAA Championships. We embrace championship behavior, demonstrating integrity, discipline, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to excellence in all we do — in competition, academics, and the community.

OUTCOMES

USC Upstate will position itself amongst the top tier of the Big South Conference, consistently competing for championships and postseason opportunities across all of its varsity intercollegiate programs.

STRATEGIES

1. Place USC Upstate in the Top 3 of the Big South Conference Sasser Cup.
2. Maximize Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) and other additional opportunities to benefit student-athletes in adherence to all NCAA Division I rules.
3. Position all teams with the necessary resources and support to finish in the Top 3 of the Big South Conference standings annually, and regularly compete for Big South Championships and postseason opportunities.

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DIVISION I TEAMS
BASEBALL | SOCCER | TRACK & FIELD
CROSS COUNTRY | GOLF | BASKETBALL
VOLLEYBALL | SOFTBALL



4

Spartan Partners Resource Development & Financial Management

USC Upstate is dedicated to achieving financial excellence through sustainable revenue growth, effective budget management, and strategic partnerships grounded in transparency and trust. We aim to cultivate and enhance revenue streams and partnerships that drive championship-level success both on and off the field, while collaborating closely with our stakeholders to ensure responsible stewardship of our resources.

OUTCOMES

Build sustainable external revenue opportunities and partnerships to continue to expand USC Upstate's athletic aspirations as a Big South and Division I leader.

Utilize roster management to aid enrollment growth while continuing to create more opportunities for both current and future USC Upstate students.

Upstate Athletics will be the model for sustainable and transparent financial management.

STRATEGIES

1. Develop the Upstate Athletic Fund (UAF) into a leading philanthropic organization amongst Upstate alumni, donors, and the Spartanburg community, with a focus on driving fundraising revenue and membership in order to continue to compete at the highest levels and bolster USC Upstate's regional and national reputation.
2. Develop Spartan Sports Properties (SSP), USC Upstate's corporate partnerships program, to grow sponsorship revenues and build alignment amongst partner brands with the advertising and promotional opportunities available at USC Upstate.
3. Increase licensing revenue through strategic partnerships, retail development, marketing initiatives, and brand growth.
4. Continue to evaluate NCAA sport sponsorship opportunities, while adhering to Title IX compliance and best practices.
5. Develop and maintain a comprehensive budget management plan to ensure financial stability.



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Spartan Future Brand Engagement & Collaboration

USC Upstate is dedicated to enhancing the Spartan brand by expanding its visibility and fostering connections with alumni, fans, supporters, and prospective students through a range of digital platforms and memorable experiences. Our goal is to cultivate meaningful relationships with key stakeholders across USC Upstate, Spartanburg, and the broader Upstate region, promoting a strong sense of pride and school spirit through dynamic engagement, accessibility, and community collaboration.

OUTCOMES

Spartan Athletics will be leaders in supporting USC Upstate's deep tradition of service to the Spartanburg community and region.

Spartan Athletics strives to lead in campus collaboration - supporting, partnering, and participating in ongoing campus events

and engagement opportunities across all departments.

Spartan Athletics will be an industry leader in digital and social media engagement, enriching the campus experience for prospective students, current students, alumni, fans, and donors.

STRATEGIES

1. Increase opportunities for engagement, interaction, and service across the city of Spartanburg and throughout the Upstate.
2. Strengthen the campus participation among student-athletes, coaches, and staff in ongoing campus initiatives, events, and leadership opportunities.
3. Develop a digital media plan for engagement across social media, website, and email marketing platforms designed to increase engagement, expand brand visibility, and grow the Spartan fan base.
4. Activate the Upstate Spartan brand by aligning with strategic community partners to support and expand annual community events to increase visibility and engagement.
5. Develop strong collaboration with Student Government Association and Student Affairs to utilize athletics to assist with campus life and student experience.



Pride | Teamwork | 110% effort 24/7

At USC Upstate, athletics is more than competition—it's the pursuit of something greater. It's about showing up for each other, for our community, and for the future we're building together. Every practice, every game, every classroom moment is part of a larger purpose: to shape leaders who carry grit, purpose, and pride into everything they do. This is where character is tested, confidence is forged, and excellence becomes habit.

We don't just compete—we rise.
We don't just wear the jersey—we carry the mission.
We are the Spartan Army.
We Reach Greater Heights.

USC Upstate Athletics | uscupstatespartans.com

Maddie Drerup | Softball
Major: Exercise &
Sport Science



UPSTATE
University of South Carolina