



# Back from the Brink

## Bringing Graduate Admissions into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

L. Katharine Harrington,  
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid  
Susan Grogan Ikerd,  
Associate Dean and Director of Graduate Admission  
University of Southern California



# Graduate Education at USC

- **17 Academic Units**
  - College
  - Professional Schools
  - Arts Schools
- **90 departments and 400 programs**
- **25,000 applications annually**
  - 8,000 applications from +100 countries
- **Application deadlines ranging from mid-November to mid-July**



# Graduate Admission at USC

- **Decentralized (school based) graduate recruitment and admission**
- **Limited central staff**
- **SEVIS personnel shared with undergraduate admission**
- **Provost mandate to “get the train back on the tracks”**



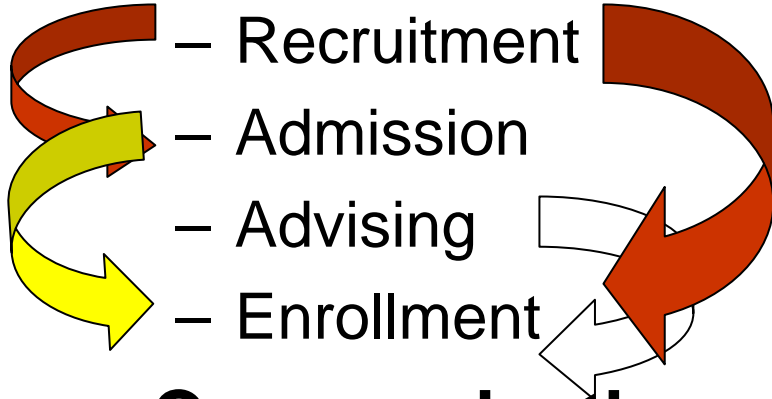
# The Challenge

**Create an Integrated Graduate Admission  
and Enrollment Function**



# SEM as the Solution

- **Systems thinking for enrollment management**



- **Communicating with prospective students**
- **Setting service expectations**
- **Most importantly: who is the customer?**



# The Solution (Phase 1)

- **Commit to the basics!**
  - Hire and train additional evaluators
  - Hire an experienced SEVIS coordinator
  - Assess and adjust work flow to accommodate varied application deadlines
- **Reach out to key influencers in schools and College**
- **Eliminate gate keeping**
- **Service, service, service**



# The Solution (Phase 2)

- **Add value**
  - Redesigned graduate admission website
  - Quarterly workshops for all graduate advisors and admissions staff
  - Extranet for easy communication between graduate staff across all campuses
- **Build strategic capabilities**
  - Apply Yourself online graduate admission system
  - Coordinate international recruitment
  - Develop resources for improving minority recruitment
  - Communication management to early prospects



# The Solution (Ongoing)

- **Support new initiatives**
- **Expand international outreach and recruitment**
- **Provide on-going training and support for AY/student information system interface**
- **Expert resource**
  - **Bologna Accord**
  - **Language assessment**
  - **Other**



# Report Card on Year 1

- **Implemented E-communication plan to facilitate speedier file completion**
- **Adjusted file review to meet departmental admission review cycles**
- **I-20 delivery time to student is now two weeks after admission: GUARANTEED!**
- **Completed Fall 2006 file review in June rather than September!**
- **Created school and department based operational plans for Fall 2007**