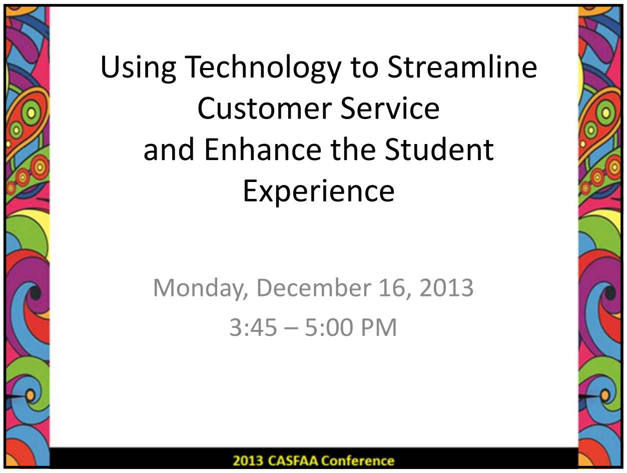
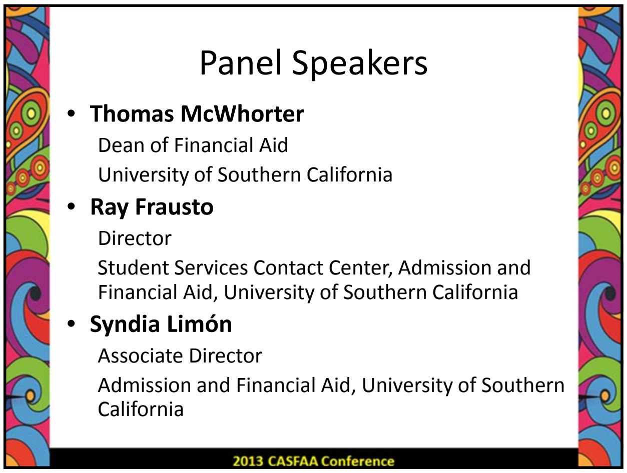


Using Technology to Streamline Customer Service and Enhance the Student Experience

Monday, December 16, 2013

3:45 – 5:00 PM

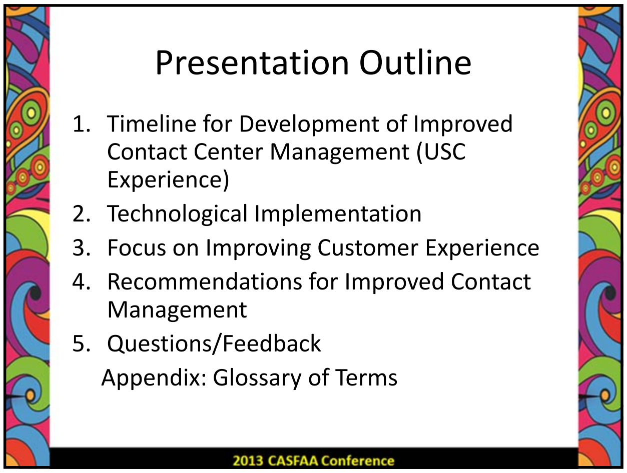
2013 CASFAA Conference



Panel Speakers

- **Thomas McWhorter**
  Dean of Financial Aid
  University of Southern California
- **Ray Frausto**
  Director
  Student Services Contact Center, Admission and Financial Aid, University of Southern California
- **Syndia Limón**
  Associate Director
  Admission and Financial Aid, University of Southern California

2013 CASFAA Conference

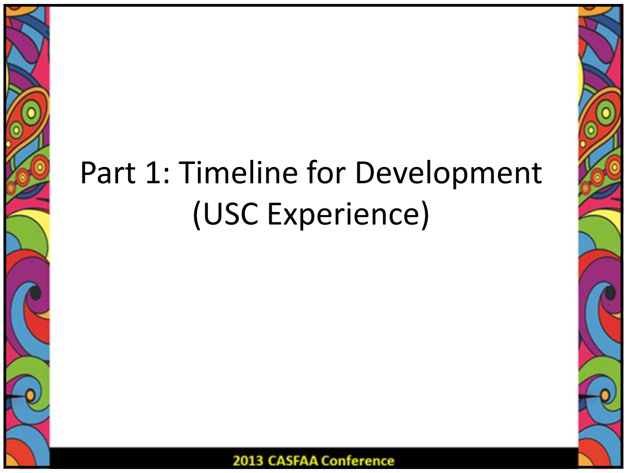


Presentation Outline

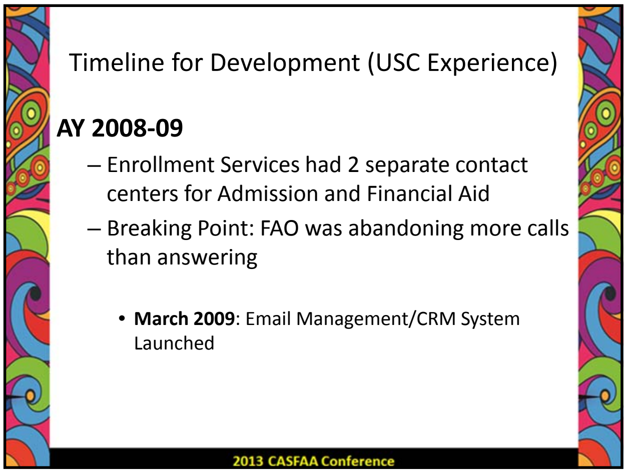
1. Timeline for Development of Improved Contact Center Management (USC Experience)
2. Technological Implementation
3. Focus on Improving Customer Experience
4. Recommendations for Improved Contact Management
5. Questions/Feedback

Appendix: Glossary of Terms

2013 CASFAA Conference



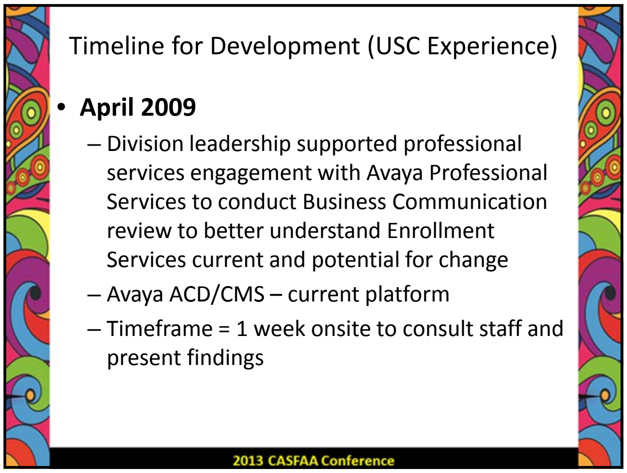
Part 1: Timeline for Development (USC Experience)



Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

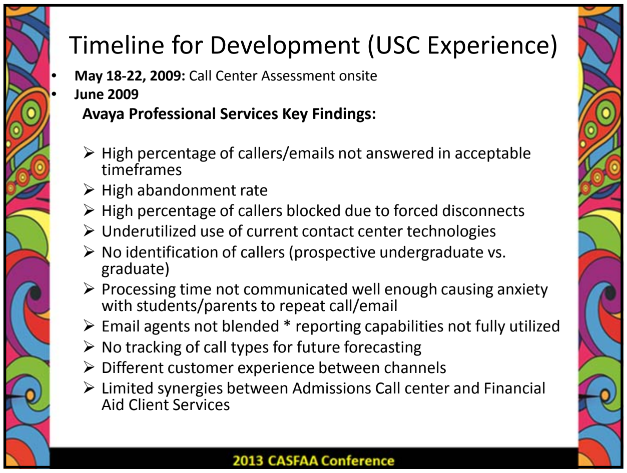
AY 2008-09

- Enrollment Services had 2 separate contact centers for Admission and Financial Aid
- Breaking Point: FAO was abandoning more calls than answering
  - **March 2009**: Email Management/CRM System Launched



Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **April 2009**
  - Division leadership supported professional services engagement with Avaya Professional Services to conduct Business Communication review to better understand Enrollment Services current and potential for change
  - Avaya ACD/CMS – current platform
  - Timeframe = 1 week onsite to consult staff and present findings



Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **May 18-22, 2009:** Call Center Assessment onsite
- **June 2009**

  Avaya Professional Services Key Findings:

  - ➢ High percentage of callers/emails not answered in acceptable timeframes
  - ➢ High abandonment rate
  - ➢ High percentage of callers blocked due to forced disconnects
  - ➢ Underutilized use of current contact center technologies
  - ➢ No identification of callers (prospective undergraduate vs. graduate)
  - ➢ Processing time not communicated well enough causing anxiety with students/parents to repeat call/email
  - ➢ Email agents not blended * reporting capabilities not fully utilized
  - ➢ No tracking of call types for future forecasting
  - ➢ Different customer experience between channels
  - ➢ Limited synergies between Admissions Call center and Financial Aid Client Services

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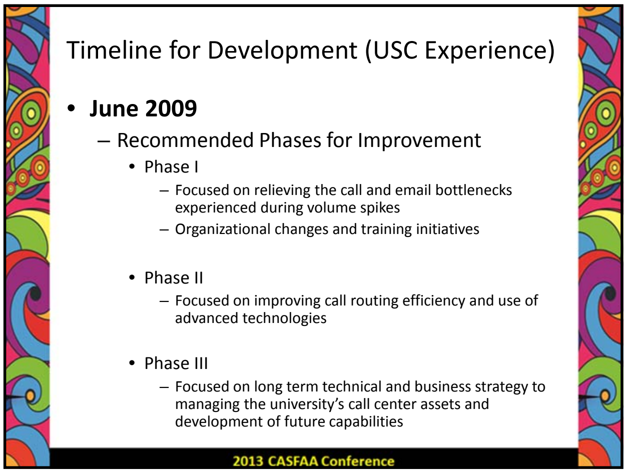

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **June 2009**
  - Recommended Phases for Improvement
    - Phase I
      - Focused on relieving the call and email bottlenecks experienced during volume spikes
      - Organizational changes and training initiatives
    - Phase II
      - Focused on improving call routing efficiency and use of advanced technologies
    - Phase III
      - Focused on long term technical and business strategy to managing the university's call center assets and development of future capabilities

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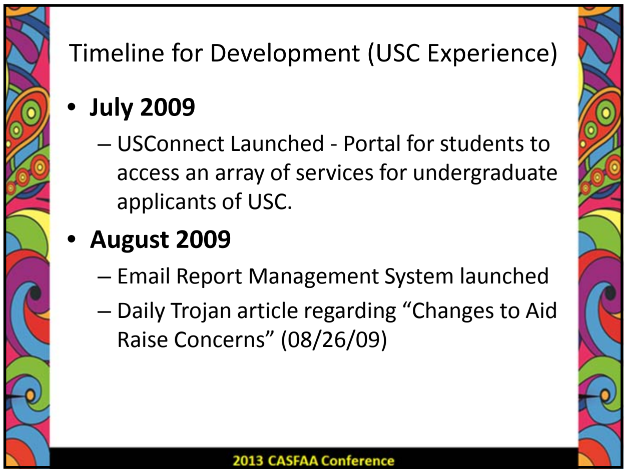

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **July 2009**
  - USConnect Launched - Portal for students to access an array of services for undergraduate applicants of USC.
- **August 2009**
  - Email Report Management System launched
  - Daily Trojan article regarding "Changes to Aid Raise Concerns" (08/26/09)

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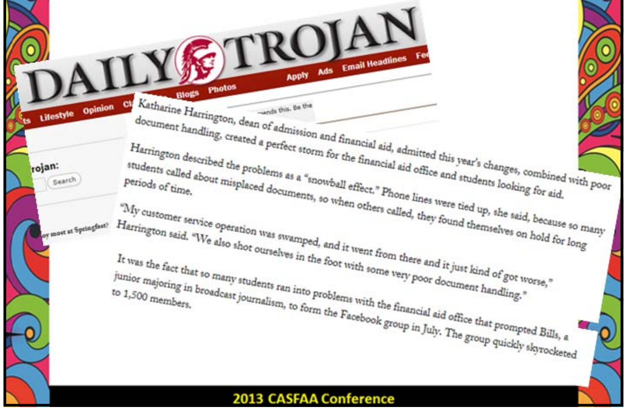
Timeline for Development (USC Experience)


DAILY TROJAN
Lifestyle
Opinion
Blogs
Photos
Apply
Ads
Email Headlines
Search

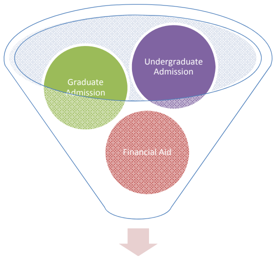
Katharine Harrington, dean of admission and financial aid, admitted this year's changes, combined with poor document handling, created a perfect storm for the financial aid office and students looking for aid.

Harrington described the problems as a "snowball effect." Phone lines were tied up, she said, because so many students called about misplaced documents, so when others called, they found themselves on hold for long periods of time.

"My customer service operation was swamped, and it went from there and it just kind of got worse," Harrington said. "We also shot ourselves in the foot with some very poor document handling."

It was the fact that so many students ran into problems with the financial aid office that prompted Bills, a junior majoring in broadcast journalism, to form the Facebook group in July. The group quickly skyrocketed to 1,500 members.

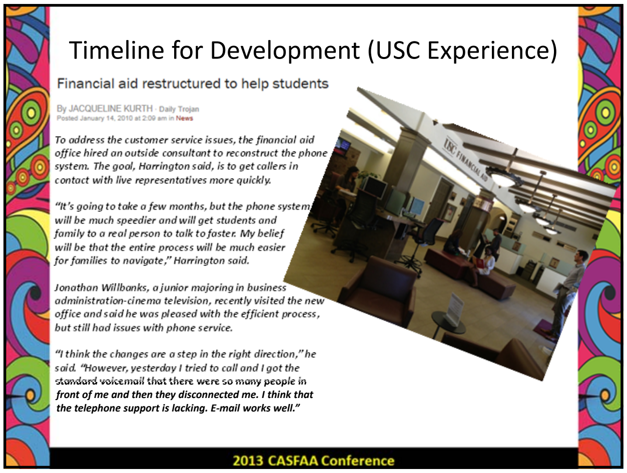
Timeline for Development (USC Experience)



Student Services Contact Center

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **October 2009**: SSCC hires new management staff
- **December 2009**
  - NemoQ Lobby Management System Launched
  - New SSCC Combined Admission and Financial Aid Office Launched in JHH 111
- **January 2010**
  - Daily Trojan article regarding "Financial Aid restructured to help students" (01/14/10)



Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

Financial aid restructured to help students

By JACQUELINE KURTH · Daily Trojan
Posted January 14, 2010 at 2:09 am in News

To address the customer service issues, the financial aid office hired an outside consultant to reconstruct the phone system. The goal, Harrington said, is to get callers in contact with live representatives more quickly.

"It's going to take a few months, but the phone system will be much speedier and will get students and family to a real person to talk to faster. My belief will be that the entire process will be much easier for families to navigate," Harrington said.

Jonathan Willbanks, a junior majoring in business administration-cinema television, recently visited the new office and said he was pleased with the efficient process, but still had issues with phone service.

"I think the changes are a step in the right direction," he said. "However, yesterday I tried to call and I got the ~~standard voicemail that there were so many people in~~ ***front of me and then they disconnected me. I think that the telephone support is lacking. E-mail works well."***

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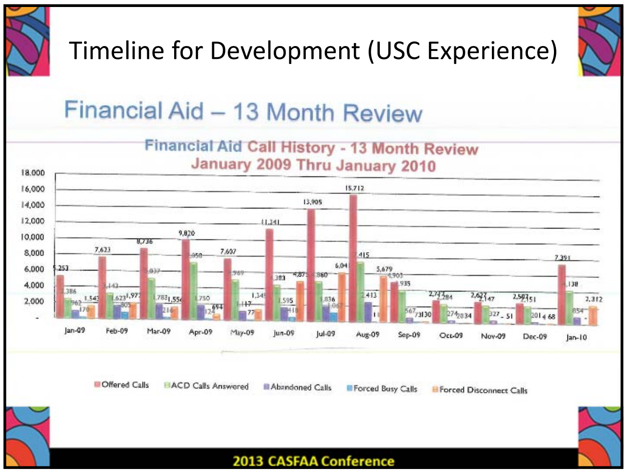

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

Financial Aid – 13 Month Review

Financial Aid Call History - 13 Month Review
January 2009 Thru January 2010

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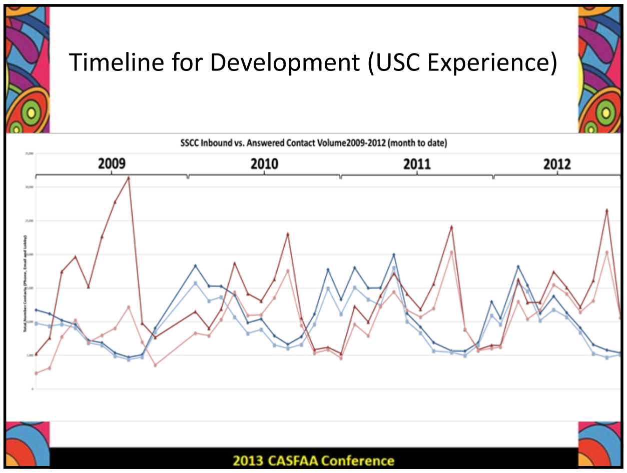

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

SSCC Inbound vs. Answered Contact Volume2009-2012 (month to date)

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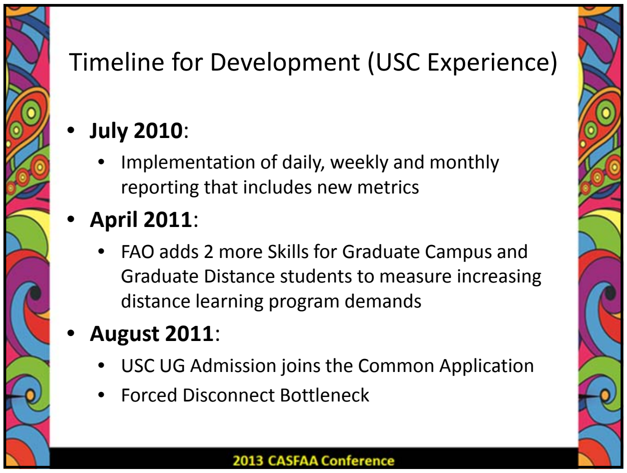

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **July 2010**:
  - Implementation of daily, weekly and monthly reporting that includes new metrics
- **April 2011**:
  - FAO adds 2 more Skills for Graduate Campus and Graduate Distance students to measure increasing distance learning program demands
- **August 2011**:
  - USC UG Admission joins the Common Application
  - Forced Disconnect Bottleneck

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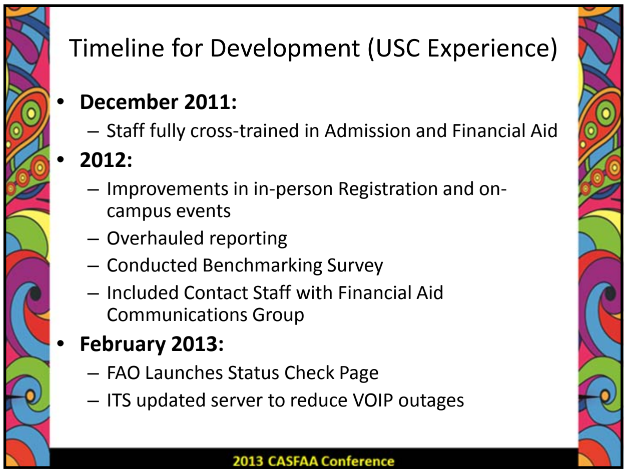

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **December 2011:**
  - Staff fully cross-trained in Admission and Financial Aid
- **2012:**
  - Improvements in in-person Registration and on-campus events
  - Overhauled reporting
  - Conducted Benchmarking Survey
  - Included Contact Staff with Financial Aid Communications Group
- **February 2013:**
  - FAO Launches Status Check Page
  - ITS updated server to reduce VOIP outages

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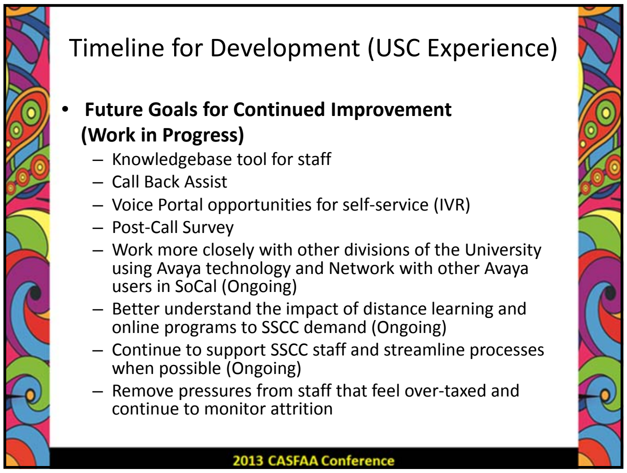

Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **Future Goals for Continued Improvement (Work in Progress)**
  - Knowledgebase tool for staff
  - Call Back Assist
  - Voice Portal opportunities for self-service (IVR)
  - Post-Call Survey
  - Work more closely with other divisions of the University using Avaya technology and Network with other Avaya users in SoCal (Ongoing)
  - Better understand the impact of distance learning and online programs to SSCC demand (Ongoing)
  - Continue to support SSCC staff and streamline processes when possible (Ongoing)
  - Remove pressures from staff that feel over-taxed and continue to monitor attrition

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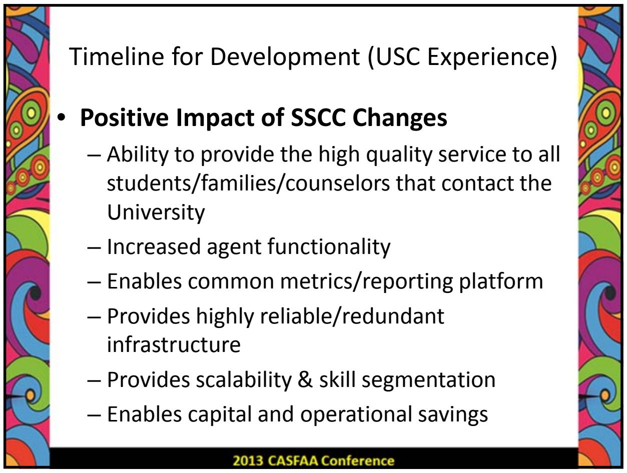
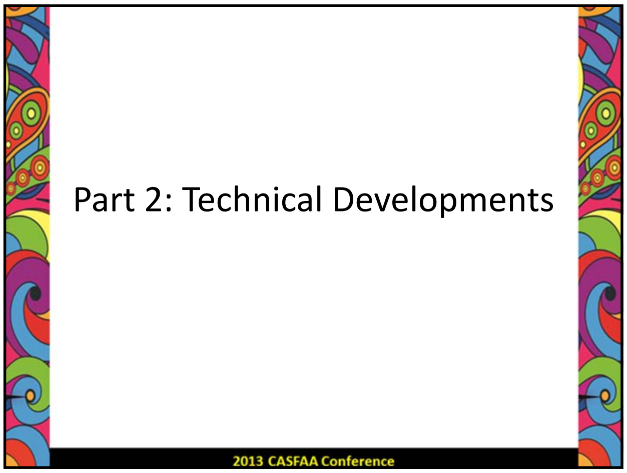
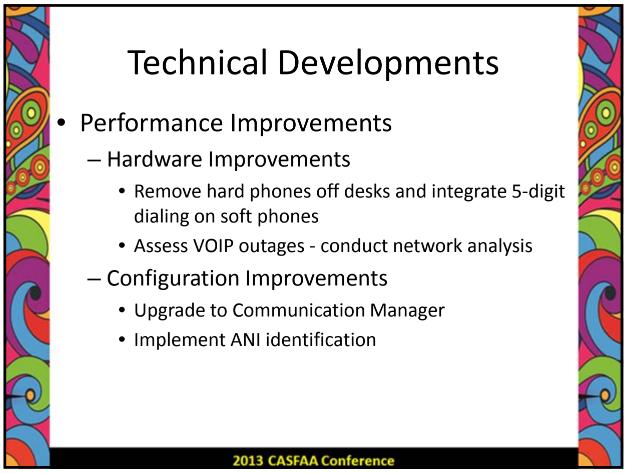


Timeline for Development (USC Experience)

- **Positive Impact of SSCC Changes**
  - Ability to provide the high quality service to all students/families/counselors that contact the University
  - Increased agent functionality
  - Enables common metrics/reporting platform
  - Provides highly reliable/redundant infrastructure
  - Provides scalability & skill segmentation
  - Enables capital and operational savings



Part 2: Technical Developments

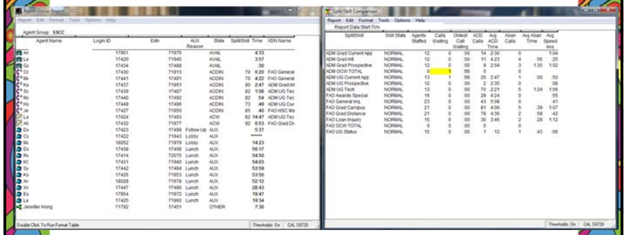


Technical Developments

- Performance Improvements
  - Hardware Improvements
    - Remove hard phones off desks and integrate 5-digit dialing on soft phones
    - Assess VOIP outages - conduct network analysis
  - Configuration Improvements
    - Upgrade to Communication Manager
    - Implement ANI identification

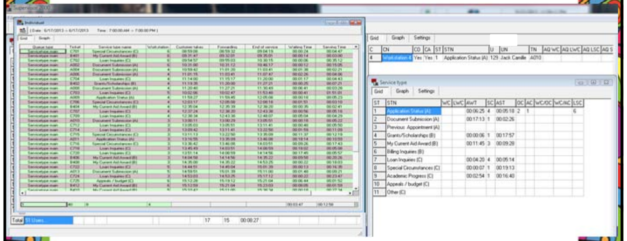
Technical Developments

- AVAYA CMS 2000



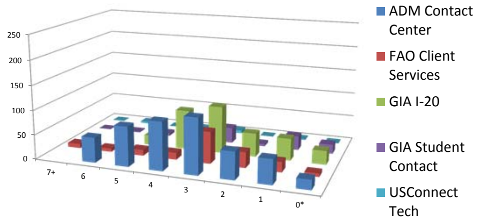
Technical Developments

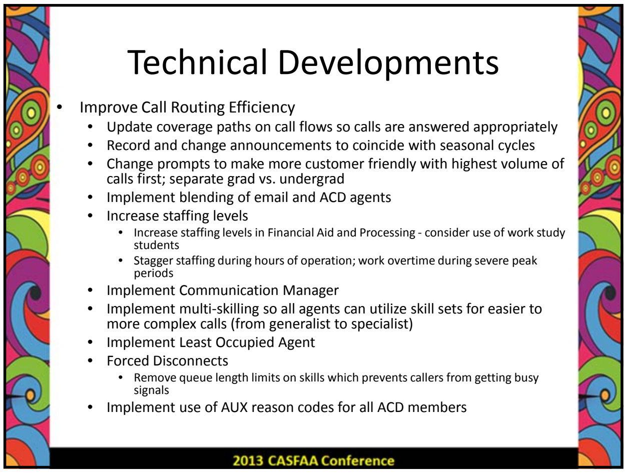
- NEMO-Q Statistics



Technical Developments

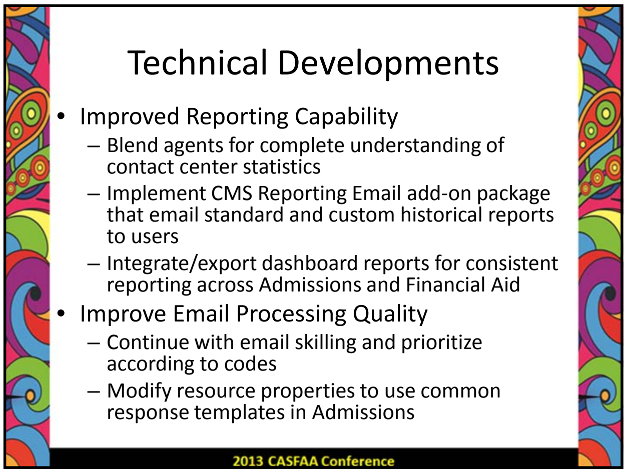
- Email Management/CRM





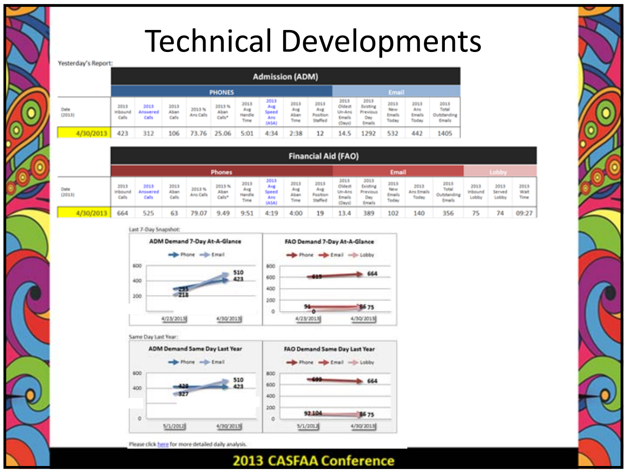
Technical Developments

- Improve Call Routing Efficiency
  - Update coverage paths on call flows so calls are answered appropriately
  - Record and change announcements to coincide with seasonal cycles
  - Change prompts to make more customer friendly with highest volume of calls first; separate grad vs. undergrad
  - Implement blending of email and ACD agents
  - Increase staffing levels
    - Increase staffing levels in Financial Aid and Processing - consider use of work study students
    - Stagger staffing during hours of operation; work overtime during severe peak periods
  - Implement Communication Manager
  - Implement multi-skilling so all agents can utilize skill sets for easier to more complex calls (from generalist to specialist)
  - Implement Least Occupied Agent
  - Forced Disconnects
    - Remove queue length limits on skills which prevents callers from getting busy signals
  - Implement use of AUX reason codes for all ACD members



Technical Developments

- Improved Reporting Capability
  - Blend agents for complete understanding of contact center statistics
  - Implement CMS Reporting Email add-on package that email standard and custom historical reports to users
  - Integrate/export dashboard reports for consistent reporting across Admissions and Financial Aid
- Improve Email Processing Quality
  - Continue with email skilling and prioritize according to codes
  - Modify resource properties to use common response templates in Admissions



Technical Developments

Yesterday's Report:

	Admission (ADM)													
	PHONES									Email				
Date (2013)	2013 Inbound Calls	2013 Answered Calls	2013 Aban Calls	2013 % Ans Calls	2013 % Aban Calls*	2013 Avg Handle Time	2013 Avg Speed Ans (ASA)	2013 Avg Aban Time	2013 Avg Position Staffed	2013 Oldest Un-Ans Emails (Days)	2013 Existing Previous Day Emails	2013 New Emails Today	2013 Ans Emails Today	2013 Total Outstanding Emails
4/30/2013	423	312	106	73.76	25.06	5:01	4:34	2:38	12	14.5	1292	532	442	1405

	Financial Aid (FAO)																
	Phones									Email					Lobby		
Date (2013)	2013 Inbound Calls	2013 Answered Calls	2013 Aban Calls	2013 % Ans Calls	2013 % Aban Calls*	2013 Avg Handle Time	2013 Avg Speed Ans (ASA)	2013 Avg Aban Time	2013 Avg Position Staffed	2013 Oldest Un-Ans Emails (Days)	2013 Existing Previous Day Emails	2013 New Emails Today	2013 Ans Emails Today	2013 Total Outstanding Emails	2013 Inbound Lobby	2013 Served Lobby	2013 Wait Time
4/30/2013	664	525	63	79.07	9.49	9:51	4:19	4:00	19	13.4	389	102	140	356	75	74	09:27

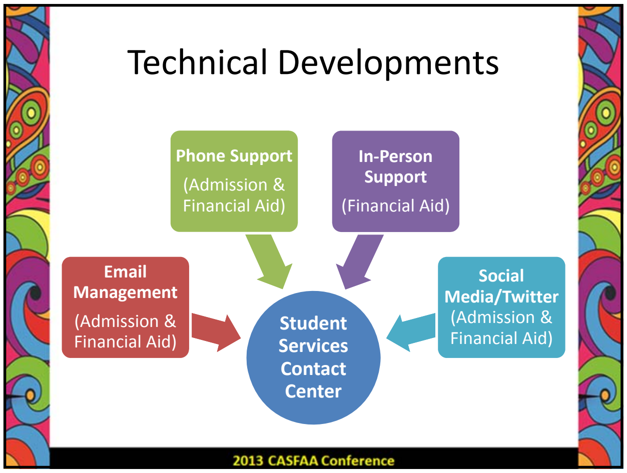
Last 7-Day Snapshot:

ADM Demand 7-Day At-A-Glance
Phone
Email
600
400
200
510
423
295
218
4/23/2013
4/30/2013
FAO Demand 7-Day At-A-Glance
Phone
Email
Lobby
800
600
400
200
0
615
664
91
0
86
75
4/23/2013
4/30/2013

Same Day Last Year:

ADM Demand Same Day Last Year
Phone
Email
600
400
0
428
327
510
423
5/1/2012
4/30/2013
FAO Demand Same Day Last Year
Phone
Email
Lobby
800
600
400
200
0
699
664
92
104
86
75
5/1/2012
4/30/2013

Please click here for more detailed daily analysis.



Technical Developments

Phone Support
(Admission & Financial Aid)

In-Person Support
(Financial Aid)

Email Management
(Admission & Financial Aid)

Student Services Contact Center

Social Media/Twitter
(Admission & Financial Aid)

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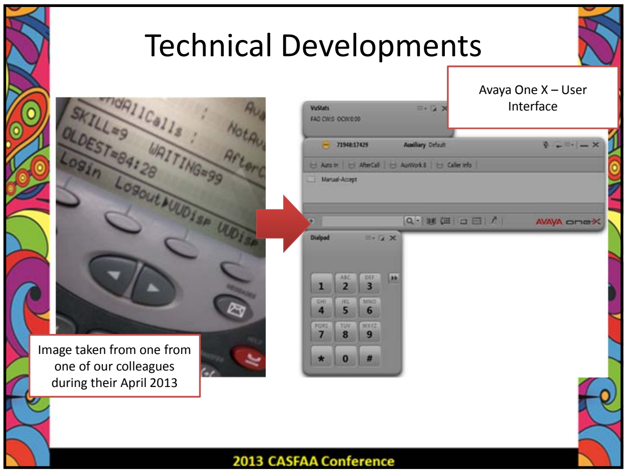


Technical Developments

Avaya One X – User Interface

Image taken from one from one of our colleagues during their April 2013

SKILL=9
OLDEST=04:28
WAITING=99
Login
Logout
AVAYA one-X
Dialpad

2013 CASFAA Conference

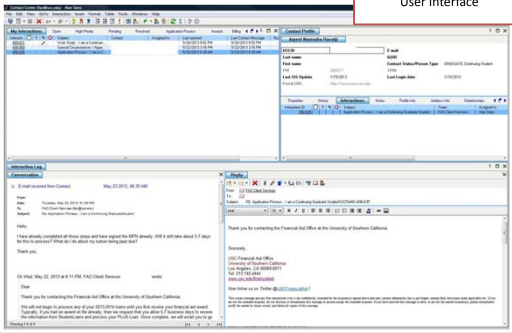
Technical Developments

- Back Office Remodel

2013 CASFAA Conference

Technical Developments

Email Management / CRM
User Interface


Interaction Log
Conversation

E-mail received from Contact May 23 2013, 06:30 AM

Hello,

I have already completed all those steps and have signed the MPN already. Will it still take about 5-7 days for this to process? What do I do about my tuition being past due?

Thank you.

On Wed, May 22, 2013 at 6:11 PM, FAO Client Services wrote:

Dear

Thank you for contacting the Financial Aid Office at the University of Southern California.

We will not begin to process any of your 2013-2014 loans until you first receive your financial aid award. Typically, if you had an award on file already, then we request that you allow 5-7 business days to receive the information from StudentLoans and process your PLUS Loan. Once complete, we will email you to go

Reply

Thank you for contacting the Financial Aid Office at the University of Southern California.

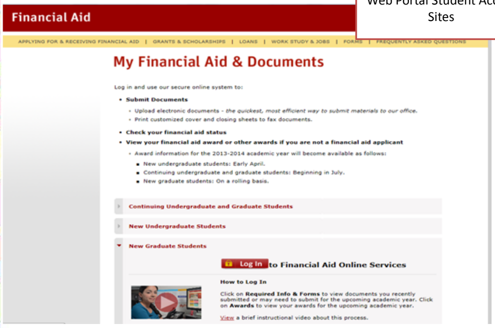
Sincerely,

USC Financial Aid Office
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0911
Tel: 213.740.4444
www.usc.edu/financialaid

Now follow us on Twitter @USCFinancialAid!

Technical Developments

Web Portal Student Access Sites


Financial Aid
APPLYING FOR & RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID | GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS | LOANS | WORK STUDY & JOBS | FORMS | FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

My Financial Aid & Documents

Log in and use our secure online system to:

- **Submit Documents**
  - Upload electronic documents - *the quickest, most efficient way to submit materials to our office.*
  - Print customized cover and closing sheets to fax documents.
- **Check your financial aid status**
- **View your financial aid award or other awards if you are not a financial aid applicant**
  - Award information for the 2013-2014 academic year will become available as follows:
    - New undergraduate students: Early April.
    - Continuing undergraduate and graduate students: Beginning in July.
    - New graduate students: On a rolling basis.

Continuing Undergraduate and Graduate Students

New Undergraduate Students

New Graduate Students

Log In to Financial Aid Online Services

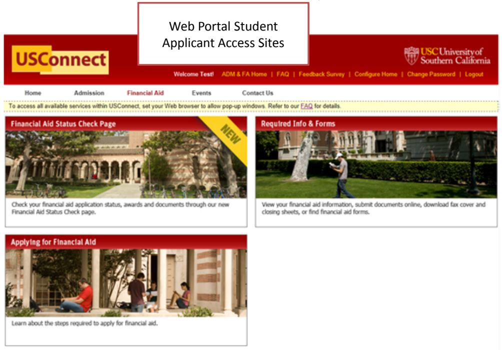
How to Log In

Click on **Required Info & Forms** to view documents you recently submitted or may need to submit for the upcoming academic year. Click on **Awards** to view your awards for the upcoming academic year.

View a brief instructional video about this process.

Technical Developments

Web Portal Student Applicant Access Sites


USConnect
USC University of Southern California
Welcome Test! ADM & FA Home | FAQ | Feedback Survey | Configure Home | Change Password | Logout
Home
Admission
Financial Aid
Events
Contact Us
Financial Aid Status Check Page
NEW
Required Info & Forms
Applying for Financial Aid

To access all available services within USConnect, set your Web browser to allow pop-up windows. Refer to our FAQ for details.

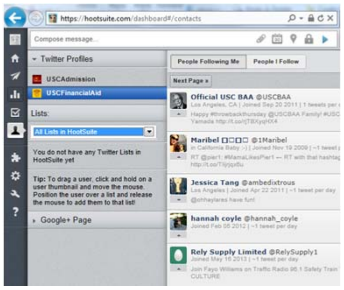
Check your financial aid application status, awards and documents through our new Financial Aid Status Check page.

View your financial aid information, submit documents online, download fax cover and closing sheets, or find financial aid forms.

Learn about the steps required to apply for financial aid.

Technical Developments

- Twitter Communication Management (Daily)



You do not have any Twitter Lists in HootSuite yet

Tip: To drag a user, click and hold on a user thumbnail and move the mouse. Position the user over a list and release the mouse to add them to that list!

Official USC BAA @USCBAA
Los Angeles, CA | Joined Sep 20 2011 | 1 tweets per
Happy #throwbackthursday @USCBAA Family! #USC
Yamada http://t.co/rjTBXyqHX4

Maribel □□□□ @1Maribel
in California Baby :-) | Joined Nov 19 2009 | ~1 tweet
RT @pier1: #MamaLikesPier1 — RT with that hashtag
http://t.co/TIjyjqx6u

Jessica Tang @ambedixtrous
Los Angeles | Joined Apr 22 2011 | ~1 tweet per day
@ohhaylares have fun!

hannah coyle @hannah_coyle
Joined Feb 05 2012 | ~1 tweet per day

Rely Supply Limited @RelySupply1
Joined May 16 2013 | ~1 tweet per day
Join Fayo Williams on Traffic Radio 96.1 Safety Train
CULTURE

Part 3: Focus on Improving Customer Experience

Focus on Customer Experience

- Communication Plan
  - Understand inputs/outputs of communication for cause and effect and volume assessment
  - Communicate timeline & forecasted volume based on peak periods - put reminders on agent desktop
  - Processing times need to be communicated over & over in all contact channels and the same consistent message - create quality assurance role to check that all web sites and communications are in sync.
- Key Metric Measurements
  - Create and standardize on key metric measurements for Financial Aid & Admissions
- Student Communication
  - Manage student expectations with processing times; explain anxiety on what is happening during processing times;
  - Educate students on where things are on website
  - Move to all online applications only
- Parent Communication
  - Parent notification of deadlines; how to get the most out of on-line services and where things are located
  - Educate parents on fax cover page for tax returns & print instructions on cover sheet & expectations of what happens next

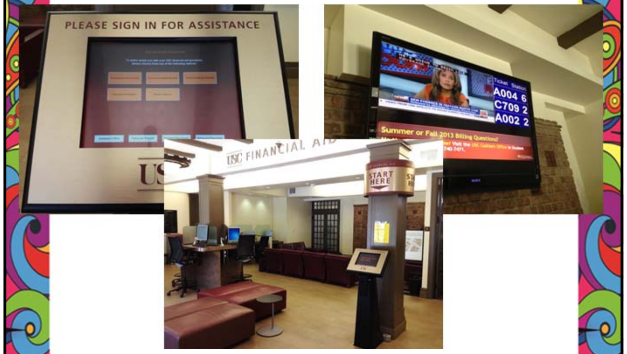
Focus on Customer Experience

- Management Focus
  - Managers listen to calls to understand customer and employee viewpoint
- Centralized ITS Technology Standards
  - Understand technologies used across university and standardize on products & services
  - Create IT Strategy Roadmap; forecast new technologies
  - Create web single log-on for all university applications
  - Educate contact center lines of business on technologies available (example Workforce Management tools)

Focus on Customer Experience

- Training
  - Contact Center Training
    - CMS Training for Supervisors & ITS
    - Hold Vector Training for ITS
  - Email Reporting
    - Train on email segmentation statistics
  - Customer Service Training
    - Train on how to deal with difficult people; customer service soft skills
    - Identify resource in FAO to document and conduct continuous training.
  - Generalist Training
  - Generalist training for all agents

Focus on Customer Experience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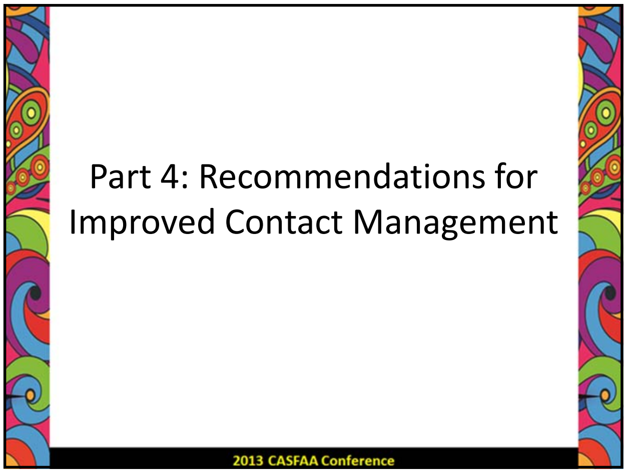
Summer or Fall 2013 Billing Questions?



Part 4: Recommendations for Improved Contact Management

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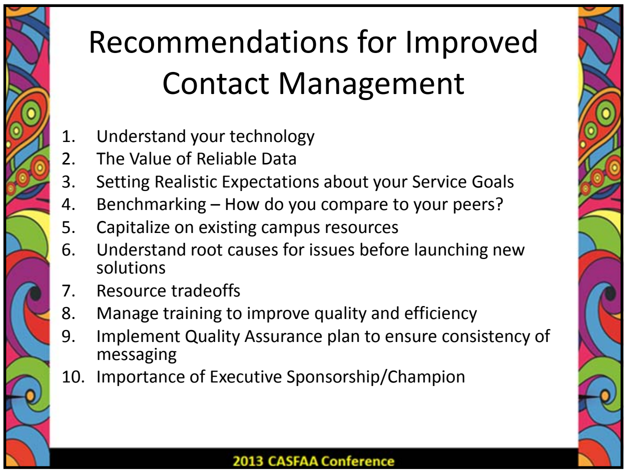

Recommendations for Improved Contact Management

1. Understand your technology
2. The Value of Reliable Data
3. Setting Realistic Expectations about your Service Goals
4. Benchmarking – How do you compare to your peers?
5. Capitalize on existing campus resources
6. Understand root causes for issues before launching new solutions
7. Resource tradeoffs
8. Manage training to improve quality and efficiency
9. Implement Quality Assurance plan to ensure consistency of messaging
10. Importance of Executive Sponsorship/Champion

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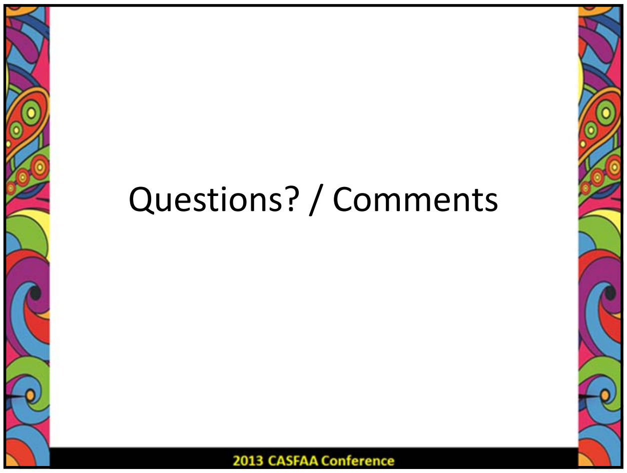

Questions? / Comments

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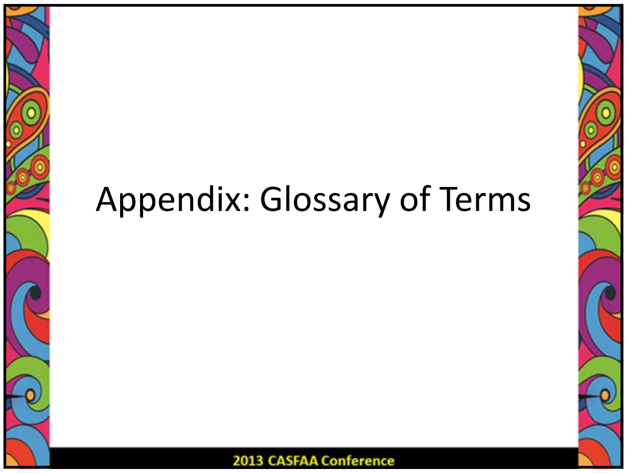

Appendix: Glossary of Terms

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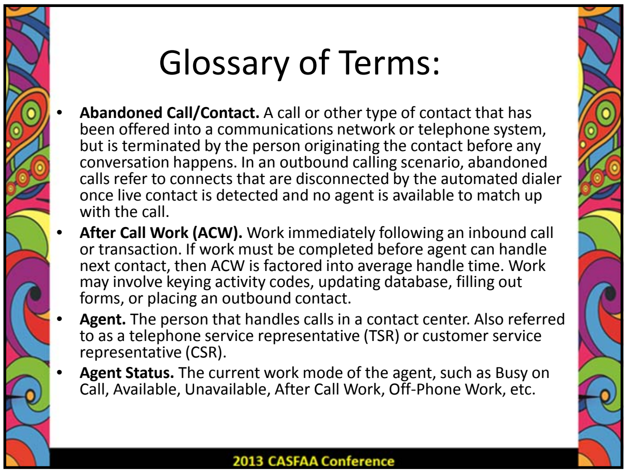

Glossary of Terms:

- **Abandoned Call/Contact.** A call or other type of contact that has been offered into a communications network or telephone system, but is terminated by the person originating the contact before any conversation happens. In an outbound calling scenario, abandoned calls refer to connects that are disconnected by the automated dialer once live contact is detected and no agent is available to match up with the call.
- **After Call Work (ACW).** Work immediately following an inbound call or transaction. If work must be completed before agent can handle next contact, then ACW is factored into average handle time. Work may involve keying activity codes, updating database, filling out forms, or placing an outbound contact.
- **Agent.** The person that handles calls in a contact center. Also referred to as a telephone service representative (TSR) or customer service representative (CSR).
- **Agent Status.** The current work mode of the agent, such as Busy on Call, Available, Unavailable, After Call Work, Off-Phone Work, etc.

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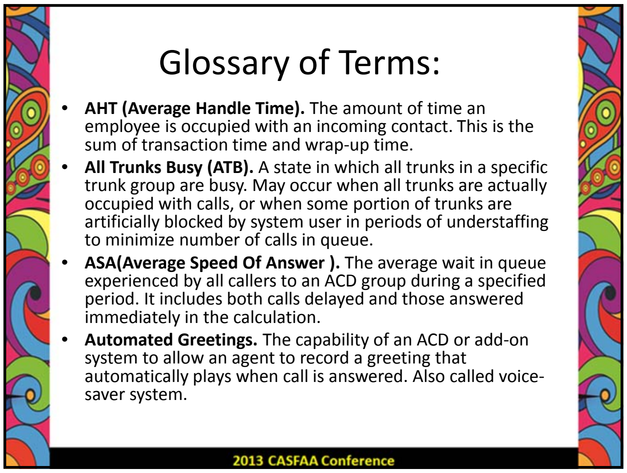

Glossary of Terms:

- **AHT (Average Handle Time).** The amount of time an employee is occupied with an incoming contact. This is the sum of transaction time and wrap-up time.
- **All Trunks Busy (ATB).** A state in which all trunks in a specific trunk group are busy. May occur when all trunks are actually occupied with calls, or when some portion of trunks are artificially blocked by system user in periods of understaffing to minimize number of calls in queue.
- **ASA(Average Speed Of Answer).** The average wait in queue experienced by all callers to an ACD group during a specified period. It includes both calls delayed and those answered immediately in the calculation.
- **Automated Greetings.** The capability of an ACD or add-on system to allow an agent to record a greeting that automatically plays when call is answered. Also called voice-saver system.

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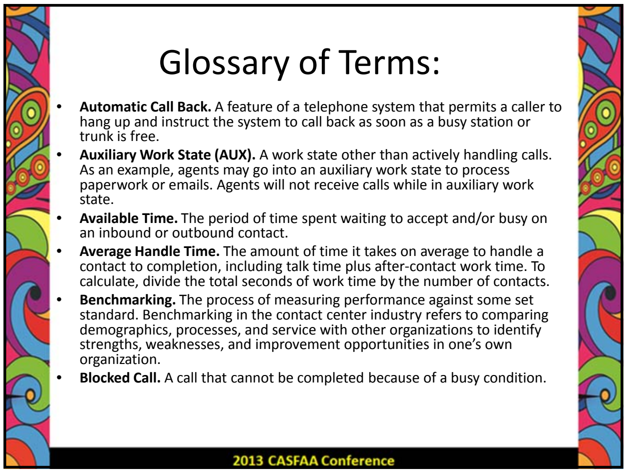

Glossary of Terms:

- **Automatic Call Back.** A feature of a telephone system that permits a caller to hang up and instruct the system to call back as soon as a busy station or trunk is free.
- **Auxiliary Work State (AUX).** A work state other than actively handling calls. As an example, agents may go into an auxiliary work state to process paperwork or emails. Agents will not receive calls while in auxiliary work state.
- **Available Time.** The period of time spent waiting to accept and/or busy on an inbound or outbound contact.
- **Average Handle Time.** The amount of time it takes on average to handle a contact to completion, including talk time plus after-contact work time. To calculate, divide the total seconds of work time by the number of contacts.
- **Benchmarking.** The process of measuring performance against some set standard. Benchmarking in the contact center industry refers to comparing demographics, processes, and service with other organizations to identify strengths, weaknesses, and improvement opportunities in one's own organization.
- **Blocked Call.** A call that cannot be completed because of a busy condition.

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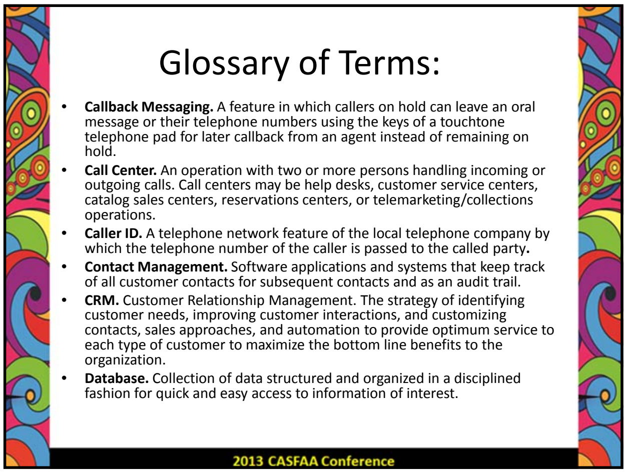

Glossary of Terms:

- **Callback Messaging.** A feature in which callers on hold can leave an oral message or their telephone numbers using the keys of a touchtone telephone pad for later callback from an agent instead of remaining on hold.
- **Call Center.** An operation with two or more persons handling incoming or outgoing calls. Call centers may be help desks, customer service centers, catalog sales centers, reservations centers, or telemarketing/collections operations.
- **Caller ID.** A telephone network feature of the local telephone company by which the telephone number of the caller is passed to the called party**.**
- **Contact Management.** Software applications and systems that keep track of all customer contacts for subsequent contacts and as an audit trail.
- **CRM.** Customer Relationship Management. The strategy of identifying customer needs, improving customer interactions, and customizing contacts, sales approaches, and automation to provide optimum service to each type of customer to maximize the bottom line benefits to the organization.
- **Database.** Collection of data structured and organized in a disciplined fashion for quick and easy access to information of interest.

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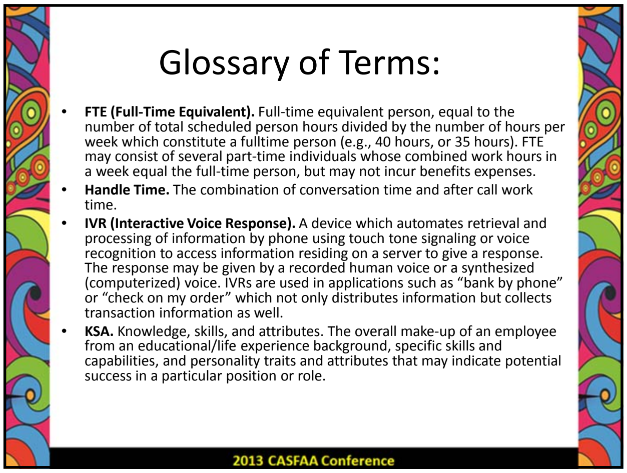

Glossary of Terms:

- **FTE (Full-Time Equivalent).** Full-time equivalent person, equal to the number of total scheduled person hours divided by the number of hours per week which constitute a fulltime person (e.g., 40 hours, or 35 hours). FTE may consist of several part-time individuals whose combined work hours in a week equal the full-time person, but may not incur benefits expenses.
- **Handle Time.** The combination of conversation time and after call work time.
- **IVR (Interactive Voice Response).** A device which automates retrieval and processing of information by phone using touch tone signaling or voice recognition to access information residing on a server to give a response. The response may be given by a recorded human voice or a synthesized (computerized) voice. IVRs are used in applications such as "bank by phone" or "check on my order" which not only distributes information but collects transaction information as well.
- **KSA.** Knowledge, skills, and attributes. The overall make-up of an employee from an educational/life experience background, specific skills and capabilities, and personality traits and attributes that may indicate potential success in a particular position or role.

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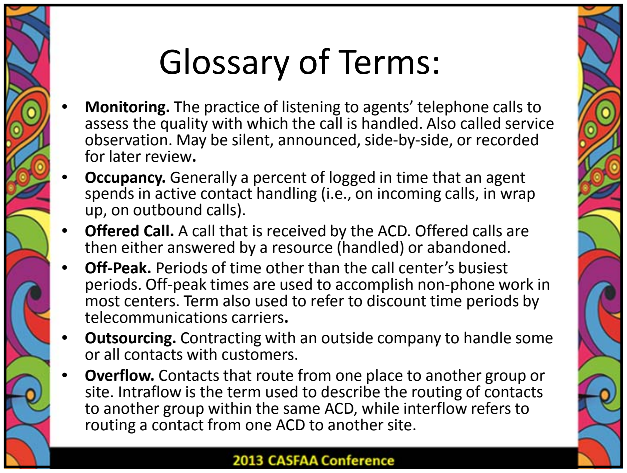

Glossary of Terms:

- **Monitoring.** The practice of listening to agents' telephone calls to assess the quality with which the call is handled. Also called service observation. May be silent, announced, side-by-side, or recorded for later review**.**
- **Occupancy.** Generally a percent of logged in time that an agent spends in active contact handling (i.e., on incoming calls, in wrap up, on outbound calls).
- **Offered Call.** A call that is received by the ACD. Offered calls are then either answered by a resource (handled) or abandoned.
- **Off-Peak.** Periods of time other than the call center's busiest periods. Off-peak times are used to accomplish non-phone work in most centers. Term also used to refer to discount time periods by telecommunications carriers**.**
- **Outsourcing.** Contracting with an outside company to handle some or all contacts with customers.
- **Overflow.** Contacts that route from one place to another group or site. Intraflow is the term used to describe the routing of contacts to another group within the same ACD, while interflow refers to routing a contact from one ACD to another site.

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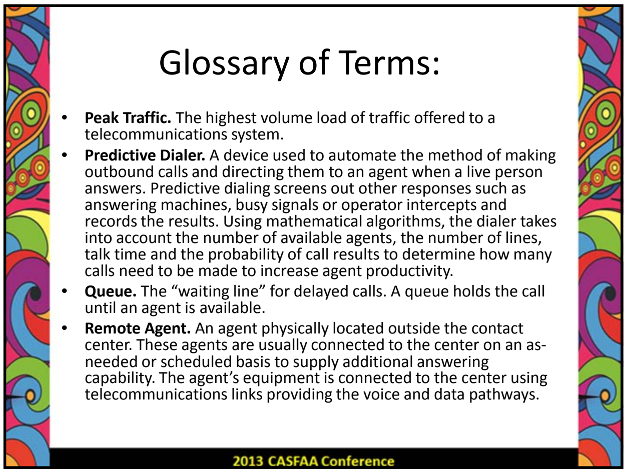

Glossary of Terms:

- **Peak Traffic.** The highest volume load of traffic offered to a telecommunications system.
- **Predictive Dialer.** A device used to automate the method of making outbound calls and directing them to an agent when a live person answers. Predictive dialing screens out other responses such as answering machines, busy signals or operator intercepts and records the results. Using mathematical algorithms, the dialer takes into account the number of available agents, the number of lines, talk time and the probability of call results to determine how many calls need to be made to increase agent productivity.
- **Queue.** The "waiting line" for delayed calls. A queue holds the call until an agent is available.
- **Remote Agent.** An agent physically located outside the contact center. These agents are usually connected to the center on an as-needed or scheduled basis to supply additional answering capability. The agent's equipment is connected to the center using telecommunications links providing the voice and data pathways.

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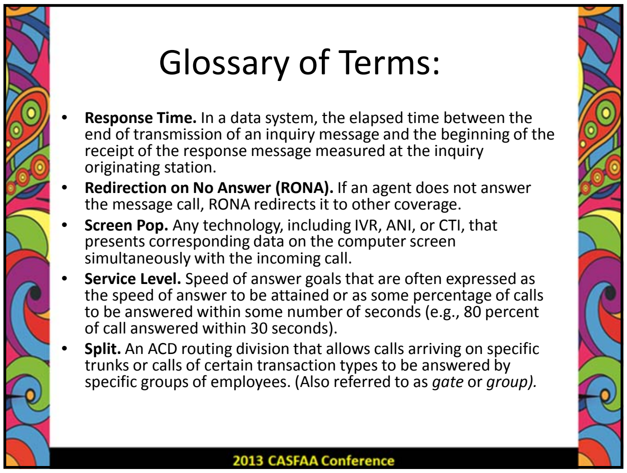

Glossary of Terms:

- **Response Time.** In a data system, the elapsed time between the end of transmission of an inquiry message and the beginning of the receipt of the response message measured at the inquiry originating station.
- **Redirection on No Answer (RONA).** If an agent does not answer the message call, RONA redirects it to other coverage.
- **Screen Pop.** Any technology, including IVR, ANI, or CTI, that presents corresponding data on the computer screen simultaneously with the incoming call.
- **Service Level.** Speed of answer goals that are often expressed as the speed of answer to be attained or as some percentage of calls to be answered within some number of seconds (e.g., 80 percent of call answered within 30 seconds).
- **Split.** An ACD routing division that allows calls arriving on specific trunks or calls of certain transaction types to be answered by specific groups of employees. (Also referred to as *gate* or *group).*

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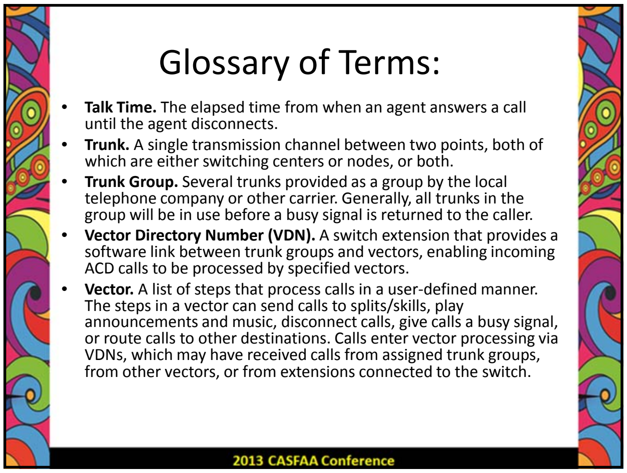

Glossary of Terms:

- **Talk Time.** The elapsed time from when an agent answers a call until the agent disconnects.
- **Trunk.** A single transmission channel between two points, both of which are either switching centers or nodes, or both.
- **Trunk Group.** Several trunks provided as a group by the local telephone company or other carrier. Generally, all trunks in the group will be in use before a busy signal is returned to the caller.
- **Vector Directory Number (VDN).** A switch extension that provides a software link between trunk groups and vectors, enabling incoming ACD calls to be processed by specified vectors.
- **Vector.** A list of steps that process calls in a user-defined manner. The steps in a vector can send calls to splits/skills, play announcements and music, disconnect calls, give calls a busy signal, or route calls to other destinations. Calls enter vector processing via VDNs, which may have received calls from assigned trunk groups, from other vectors, or from extensions connected to the switch.

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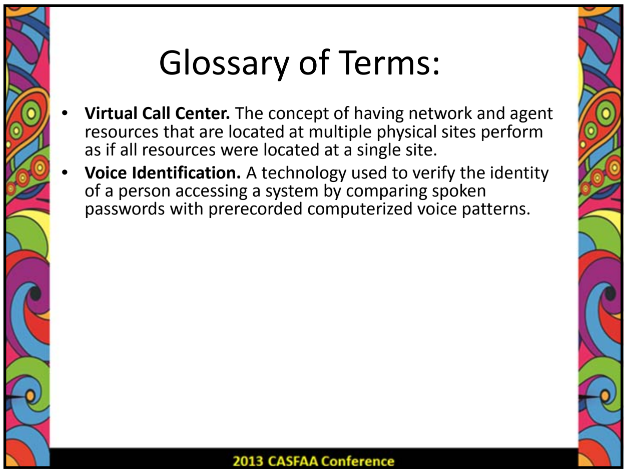

Glossary of Terms:

- **Virtual Call Center.** The concept of having network and agent resources that are located at multiple physical sites perform as if all resources were located at a single site.
- **Voice Identification.** A technology used to verify the identity of a person accessing a system by comparing spoken passwords with prerecorded computerized voice patterns.

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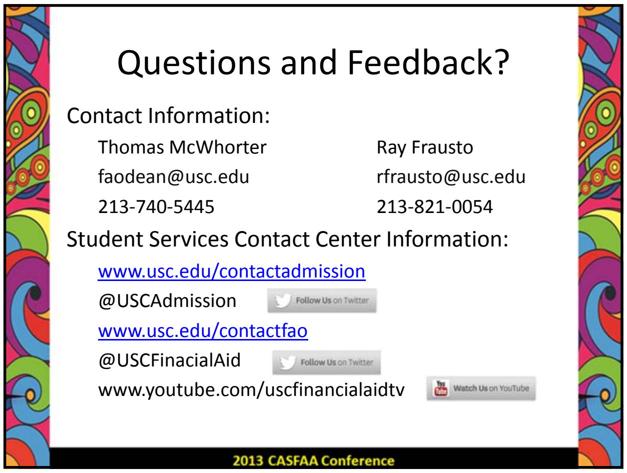

Questions and Feedback?

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