

President's Report | 2025-2026

Our Golden Era



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA
FLAGSHIP OF THE GULF COAST.



Capitalizing on Our Progress

AS WE VISITED THIS PAST YEAR with alumni and prospective students across the state and nation, one thing became more and more clear. Day-to-day encounters across our beautiful campus have confirmed it:

The excitement that we feel for the University of South Alabama is real. Taking a look at the numbers further validates that feeling. Three straight years of growing enrollment. Increasing retention of those freshmen into their sophomore and junior years. Interest in on-campus living surging so rapidly that we’ve purchased two apartment complexes in the past two years and nearly doubled the number of student housing beds in the past five years, just to keep up with the demand.

Our region has recognized the leadership role we have taken in healthcare and economic development. USA Health continues to bring lifesaving new technologies to our academic healthcare system. It has proactively stepped in to address crucial rural healthcare needs. Our groundbreaking agreement to bring Airbus to USA Technology and Research Park highlights the tremendous potential of partnering with our neighbors in the business world.

To the students we recruit, we make bold promises about the virtues of The USA Way and the value of their education as a first-class ticket to a brighter future. For our community, we embrace our role as the educational, economic and cultural engine of the Gulf Coast.

We make commitments, and we deliver on those commitments. We can do so because of the support we receive. We launched Where Bold Begins, the largest comprehensive campaign in University history, as a difference-making investment in medical innovation, economic vitality and human potential.

Our supporters have shared that bold vision. By the launch of the initiative’s public phase in April 2026, we had already raised \$360 million of the \$400 million goal. And we are not stopping. The drive continues, because the excitement, and the urgency, are real.

We believe. Our students believe. Our community partners believe. Our alumni and other supporters believe. We welcome all aboard the Flagship of the Gulf Coast. Come sail with us into the future.

Jo Bonner

Jo Bonner

Raising the Bar for Excellence

WE LAUNCHED OUR AMBITIOUS WHERE BOLD

BEGINS CAMPAIGN this past year with confidence, knowing that the University of South Alabama already has a proven record of turning ambition into action.

In fall 2025, we enrolled our largest first-year freshman class to date. Those new Jaguars boasted an average high school GPA of 3.75, tying for the highest ever. The Honors College added 126 first-year students, also tying a record. Our student-athletes set an all-time Athletics Department mark for GPA in fall 2025, then bettered it in spring 2026.

Metric after metric, from the number of Goldwater Scholars to the pass rates for healthcare graduates on professional licensing exams to the academic research citation statistics for our faculty members, tells the same story: Students come to South because they know they will receive a great education.

Other threads also run through this annual report, including recognition by outside entities of our accomplishments, strong community and campus engagement, and continued expansion of services by USA Health.

Four of the report's five segments echo the strategic pillars of Where Bold Begins, the \$400 million comprehensive campaign that we officially launched in April: Academic Excellence, Research and Discovery, Student Opportunity and Success, and Health, Healing and Human Impact.

The fifth segment, Advancement and Stewardship, reflects how our alumni and friends are helping us continue to promote learning, health and discovery. We are grateful to have achieved a fourth straight year of record-breaking fundraising, with \$47.5 million in gifts and pledges from nearly 5,000 donors, including more than 1,500 who gave to us for the first time.

Some of that support fuels our drive to achieve Carnegie R1 status as one of the elite research institutions in the nation. Researchers across the University of South Alabama, including at USA Health, are advancing knowledge and saving lives — in many cases specifically benefiting our own Gulf Coast region.

South students, faculty and staff are smart, ambitious and eager to make the world better. This report highlights just how effectively and creatively they turn that drive into action.

Andi M. Kent

Andi M. Kent, Ph.D.





Academic Excellence

Academic excellence is driven by momentum and relentless student achievement.

The University of South Alabama set benchmarks for first-year freshmen while upholding excellence across disciplines. With prestigious Goldwater honors, outstanding healthcare exam pass rates and record student-athlete GPAs, South proves that expanding access goes hand in hand with academic quality.

14,285

FALL 2025 ENROLLMENT

2,137

FIRST-YEAR FRESHMEN,
A RECORD



“There is truly something special happening here at South, and we’re proud to see more and more students choosing to be a part of it.”

—DR. ANDI KENT

SOUTH AMONG U.S. NEWS’ BEST

ONCE AGAIN, the University of South Alabama has earned recognition in the influential annual higher education rankings from U.S. News & World Report, with honors spanning its global reputation, academic programs and online education.

During the 2025–2026 academic year, South earned multiple honors:

- Named among U.S. News’ Best Global Universities for research excellence and academic reputation.
- Ranked among the nation’s top public universities in the 2026 Best Colleges rankings.
- Earned recognition for three online programs, including the No. 8 online family nurse practitioner program.

Since 1983, U.S. News & World Report has evaluated colleges and universities across the nation. The 2026 rankings assessed more than 1,700 of the roughly 4,000 U.S. institutions.

RECORD FIRST-TIME FRESHMAN CLASS FUELS ENROLLMENT GROWTH

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA welcomed its largest freshman class in history in fall 2025 and recorded its third straight year of enrollment growth. In all, 14,285 students enrolled.

“A third consecutive year of enrollment growth is a testament to our dedicated faculty and staff, who have worked so hard to make the University of South Alabama a top choice for students,” said University President Jo Bonner.

“When we travel throughout the state and along the Gulf Coast, the reception from high school students is truly humbling. They see the unique opportunities and vibrant community we offer, and they’re excited to join a university that’s experiencing such incredible momentum.”

The growth was driven largely by a rise in undergraduate enrollment, with an incoming first-year class of 2,137 students. Over the past three years, new freshman enrollment at South has grown by more than 30%. The fall 2025 incoming class also demonstrated strong academic achievement, bringing a record-tying high school GPA average of 3.75 and an average ACT score of 23.1.

“I am thrilled with not only our increase in enrollment but also the academic accomplishments of our incoming students,” said Dr. Andi Kent, executive vice president and provost. “There is truly something special happening here at South, and we’re proud to see more and more students choosing to be a part of it.”

Several colleges saw significant enrollment growth. Graduate programs in the Mitchell College of Business experienced a 49% surge, while the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences grew by 27%. Notable undergraduate increases also occurred in the Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions (+15%) and the College of Engineering (+9%). The Honors College welcomed 126 first-year students, tying the record for its largest-ever incoming class.

Student retention also continues to be a bright spot, with increasing numbers of students returning for their second and third years. In fall 2025, second-year retention tied a 10-year high, and third-year retention reached a 10-year peak.





Milestone Moment

THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES reached a major milestone during 2025 fall Commencement. It awarded 113 undergraduate, 31 master’s and 14 doctoral degrees, pushing the College’s all-time total past 25,000.

The College followed that achievement by kicking off a yearlong celebration in summer 2026, leading up to its 60th anniversary and honoring six decades of impact.

Since its founding in 1967, the College has prepared graduates to lead and strengthen communities across the Gulf Coast and beyond. As the celebration builds toward Feb. 1, 2027 — the 60th anniversary date — support is being rallied to build the College a new home, thoughtfully designed to create collaborative environments for the next generations of educators and leaders, in the heart of campus.

NEW ACADEMIC PATHS

SOUTH CONTINUES TO EXPAND ITS ACADEMIC OFFERINGS, introducing new programs and concentrations to meet the needs of students and the workforce. New additions include:

College of Arts and Sciences

- Master of Science in Applied Statistics (Fall 2025)

College of Education and Professional Studies

- Doctor of Education in Teacher Education (Fall 2026)
- Events Marketing and Management concentration and Global Leadership concentration added to Bachelor of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management (Fall 2026)

Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions

- Master of Public Health (Fall 2026)

Mitchell College of Business

- Bachelor of Science in Real Estate (Fall 2025)
- Bachelor of Science in Professional Sales (Fall 2025)
- Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship (Fall 2025)



FIN 200

NEWLY REQUIRED PERSONAL FINANCE COURSE, MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



EXCELLENCE ACROSS HEALTHCARE EXAMS

Whiddon College of Medicine:

- 91% first-time pass rate on the Step 1 United States Medical Licensing Examination.
- 100% first-time pass rate on the Step 2 United States Medical Licensing Examination.
- 98% residency match for the Class of 2026 (36% within the state of Alabama).

Covey College of Allied Health Professions:

- 100% overall licensure/certification pass rates in audiology, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, physician assistant studies and emergency medical sciences.
- 97.4% overall pass rate on the National Physical Therapy Examination.

College of Nursing:

- 94.4% pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses for the 2025 calendar year.

MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS KEEPS GROWING

IN FALL 2025, the Mitchell College of Business doctoral program in business administration welcomed its largest cohort yet — 25 students. It was also the year’s largest Ph.D. cohort across the University. The College has produced more Ph.D. graduates than any other at South since 2019, including a College record of 20 graduates in 2025.

The College’s Master of Business Administration is also gaining popularity, with the program enrolling its largest cohort since 2015 in the 2025–2026 academic year. This growth was part of a 49% increase in graduate enrollment across the college’s MBA, Master of Accounting and Ph.D. programs.

HEALTHCARE STUDENTS

at the University of South Alabama demonstrated widespread excellence across a variety of metrics during the 2025–2026 academic year, providing outside validation for the high quality of the University’s education.

Across the College of Nursing, the Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions and the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine, students scored outstanding pass rates on their professional licensure and certification examinations. Medical students also achieved exceptional residency placement outcomes.

High Scoring

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA STUDENT-ATHLETES posted the strongest academic performance in department history during the 2025-2026 academic year, breaking records in both semesters.

In fall 2025, the Athletics department turned in a term GPA of 3.265, the highest in program history at the time. Individually, 274 student-athletes — 74% of the total — posted a 3.0 or better, also a department record.

One semester later, in spring 2026, student-athletes broke their own record with a term GPA of 3.2659. In all, for the 2025-2026 academic year, they averaged a term GPA of 3.2656.

Additionally, in both the fall 2025 and spring 2026 semesters, 16 of South's 17 teams recorded a term GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Spring 2026 brought another major milestone: the highest cumulative GPA in program history across the department, 3.305, reflecting sustained academic performance over student-athletes' full careers at South.

Student-athletes are supported by the Office of Student-Athlete Academic Services, which offers both group tutoring and course-specific tutoring to help student-athletes understand course material and develop effective study strategies. Athletics counselors serve as secondary academic advisers while also acting as learning specialists and mentors, helping student-athletes navigate the demands of college, build essential academic skills and stay on track toward graduation.



150+

STUDENT-ATHLETES ON
SUN BELT CONFERENCE
ACADEMIC HONOR ROLL



LEADING IN MILITARY- FRIENDLY EDUCATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA continues to earn recognition for its strong support of military service members, veterans and their families, reflecting the continued efforts of South's Office of Military Services, established in 2024.

- South ranked second nationwide among high research activity institutions as a Military Friendly School and first as a Military Spouse Friendly School, based on the annual Military Friendly survey by VIQTORY.
- The University placed 86th out of 357 schools in Military Times' 2025 Best for Vets rankings, one of only two Alabama universities in the top 100.
- In September 2026, U.S. Veterans Magazine recognized South as a Top Yellow Ribbon School.



South Setting Gold Standard

IN 2026, for the second year in a row, three students from the University of South Alabama were awarded prestigious Goldwater Scholarships.

Junior biology major Anya Powell researches how light pollution shapes the behavior of Atlantic ghost crabs along the Gulf Coast. Bailey Baxter, a junior Honors College biomedical sciences/chemistry major, designs small-molecule inhibitors for an enzyme overexpressed in certain cancers. Junior biomedical sciences major and Honors College student Cambridge Cooper integrates engineering and medicine to develop practical, scientifically sound clinical instruments.

The Goldwater Scholarship is one of the most respected honors for undergraduate researchers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It provides scholars up to \$7,500 annually toward tuition, room and board, books, and fees, covering up to two years for sophomores and one year for juniors.

Only 11 students statewide and 454 nationwide received a Goldwater Scholarship in 2026, selected from 1,485 sophomores and juniors nominated by 482 academic institutions. South tied for the most recipients in Alabama. Baxter, Powell and Cooper's selections brought the University's all-time number of Goldwater Scholars to 21.

Student opportunity and success start with a campus built for connection and engagement.

The University of South Alabama has met demand for student housing by acquiring and renovating adjacent apartment complexes. Across campus, momentum continues to build through multisport athletics success, milestones in sorority recruitment and inclusion, rising study-abroad participation and a dedicated new home for the Jaguar Marching Band. These rich experiences create an inviting campus environment backed by a nationally recognized retention program that helps students thrive beyond their freshman year.





A New Home for the Jaguar Marching Band

THE NEWLY OPENED

Geri and Gordon Moulton Jaguar Marching Band Complex has band members marching tall. “Think of what happens when you put on a new outfit,” Dr. Robert Abend, assistant professor of music and associate director of bands, said at the March dedication. “It doesn’t just change your appearance; it changes the way you act, and it changes the way you feel. Students will walk into this building for the first time, for the last time and many times in between with a new sense of work ethic, professionalism, pride and so much more. There is an elevated sense of pride, and we can feel it.”

The \$13 million facility spans nearly 25,000 square feet. It includes drumline and color guard studios, a full-ensemble rehearsal hall, administrative offices, dressing rooms, a music library and expanded storage space for props, uniforms, instruments and equipment. A full-size, illuminated practice field emulates the Abraham A. Mitchell Field at Hancock Whitney Stadium and offers student-musicians a realistic game-day rehearsal environment. Funded by state resources and contributions from the band, alumni and University friends, including a transformational gift from Geri Moulton, whose late husband

“Students will walk into this building with a new sense of work ethic, professionalism, pride and so much more.”

—DR. ROBERT ABEND

was USA’s second president, the complex will allow the Jaguar Marching Band to expand from 275 members to more than 350. It is South’s largest student group. Nathan Sansom, a music education major from Gulf Shores, Alabama, is one of three drum majors for the 2026-2027 academic year. “I’m excited to see what type of recruiting we can do with a full year in this new facility,” he said. “I see growth in the future of the JMB not just in numbers but in performance quality and community engagement, and I am excited to see where the future takes us.”

MORE PARTNERS, MORE IMPACT

THE UNIVERSITY of South Alabama broadened opportunities for student service-learning by adding 26 new agencies to its volunteering community partner network during the past year, including local nonprofits, municipal offices and healthcare organizations. Increased student, faculty and staff engagement followed the network’s growth. Community service time tracked through the South Serves online volunteer portal rose 22% to more than 32,000 hours. In the year ending in May 2026, active platform users also increased by almost 2,400 to over 4,500, signaling more widespread participation in service opportunities. The Office of Community Engagement also strengthened student career readiness. The Campus to Career program provided 38 students with study sessions, job shadowing opportunities and other activities designed to prepare them for the workplace, and awarded 40 scholarships totaling \$66,750. The office engaged 49 additional students in experiential learning activities and facilitated employer site visits with Signature Aviation, AltaPointe Health and Rebuilding Together of South Alabama.



Welcome to SouthPaw Village

IN RESPONSE TO GROWING undergraduate enrollment and record demand for student housing, the University of South Alabama purchased the Central House on Stadium apartment complex for \$40 million. The 384-unit complex at 175 Stadium Drive, now called SouthPaw Village, is managed by USA Housing. Upgrades will include complete interior makeovers, a 24/7 JagMart at the clubhouse, a pool renovation with South branding and a pedestrian bridge connecting the complex to the University’s intramural fields. The purchase increases the University’s fall 2026 total of student housing beds to nearly 4,000 — up 15% from the year before and nearly double from just five years ago. The acquisition of SouthPaw Village is the second apartment complex purchase by the University in as many years. USA purchased Traditions at South on Old Shell Road, across from the Student Recreation Center, in 2024 and immediately began extensive renovations. From 2021 to 2025, the University invested more than \$12.4 million in housing improvements, with another \$30 million expected for upgrades in the next couple of years. USA Housing operates residence halls and campus apartments across seven residential communities.



3,000 STUDENTS LIVING ON CAMPUS, MOST EVER



SOUTH ATHLETICS
CLAIMS LEAGUE-BEST
17TH VIC BUBAS CUP

SOUTH ALABAMA ATHLETICS captured the 2025–2026 Vic Bubas Cup all-sports championship trophy, extending its dominance in the Sun Belt Conference with a 17th title. It was South’s second win in four years and seventh in the past 12. The Jaguars have held the cup more than any other team since the conference’s inception in 1976. The trophy is named after the conference’s first commissioner. South Alabama’s Sun Belt softball championship anchored the season — backed by top-three finishes in seven other programs: women’s soccer, men’s basketball, women’s golf, men’s golf, baseball, men’s indoor track and field, and women’s outdoor track and field.

4 SPRING 2026
NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIPS

for South cheer and dance teams, in small jazz dance, rally dance, partner stunt and all girl group stunt



A Historic Bid

BY JOINING PHI MU, Marion McLaughlin made history as the first student from the PASSAGE USA program to pledge a Greek organization. PASSAGE — Preparing All Students Socially and Academically for Gainful Employment — is a nondegree program in the University of South Alabama’s College of Education and Professional Studies that provides students with intellectual disabilities a full college experience while equipping them with the skills needed for full-time employment. Three of McLaughlin’s peer mentors in the program, Caroline Lopez, Kate Lilley and Millie Andrews, were also her new Phi Mu sisters.

McLaughlin’s decision to go through sorority recruitment set in motion months of collaboration between the PASSAGE USA staff and the University’s College Panhellenic Council. Together, they worked to ensure a recruitment process rooted in inclusion, while maintaining the same process and opportunities given to every other student.

32%
ONE-YEAR
INCREASE
in Panhellenic recruitment, 2025



GONE INTERNATIONAL

STUDY-ABROAD PARTICIPATION IS RISING at the University of South Alabama as more students seek global credentials to pair with their degrees. More than 300 students enrolled in programs that collectively involved travel to 29 countries between fall 2025 and summer 2026. Italy and the United Kingdom were the top two destinations. It was only the third time that USA study-abroad enrollment surpassed 300. The University’s Office of International Education provides significant financial support to study-abroad students, investing more than \$100,000 each academic year to make such experiences more accessible. The University also welcomes students from abroad: currently 267 students from 57 nations. India and Bangladesh send the most international students.

SOUTH WINS STUDENT
RETENTION AWARD

SOUTH KNOWS a student’s first year isn’t the only one that matters. The University’s commitment to helping students thrive beyond freshman year has earned national recognition, with the Second Year Experience program receiving the 2025 John N. Gardner Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition Award. Presented annually by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, the award recognizes outstanding initiatives to help undergraduate students navigate significant transitions. South’s Second Year Experience program helps students build momentum during their sophomore year through career-readiness preparation, academic coaching, campus events and leadership opportunities.



Sun Belt
Champions

WITH A 3-2 VICTORY over Texas State in the Sun Belt Tournament championship game on May 9, 2026, in Lafayette, Louisiana, South’s softball team captured its latest conference title — 11 years to the day after its previous Sun Belt championship win. The victory gave the Jags their fourth tournament title in program history in their sixth title game appearance. Entering the tournament ranked fifth, the Jags knocked off fourth-seeded Southern Miss, top-seeded Louisiana-Monroe and third-seeded Texas State on their way to the championship. South pitcher Ryley Harrison, from Fairhope, Alabama, was named Sun Belt Tournament Most Outstanding Player.



Research and Discovery

Research and discovery are transforming our region and our world.

As the University of South Alabama finalizes its Discovery 2030 road map and aims for achieving top-tier Carnegie R1 research university status, it is already showing it belongs, with faculty listed among the world's top 2% of researchers and a partnership with Airbus aimed at unleashing the vast potential of USA Technology and Research Park.



AIRBUS PREPARES FOR CAMPUS LANDING

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA leaders are laying the groundwork for a transformative Airbus presence within the University’s Technology and Research Park, establishing a direct employment connection for the next generation of aerospace innovators.

The partnership between South and one of the world’s leading aerospace companies was announced in October 2025. Airbus plans to relocate its Mobile-based U.S. Engineering Center to campus from Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, where the company assembles the A220 and A320 families of aircraft.

For the University, the partnership aligns academic programs with the expertise of a global aerospace leader, allowing graduates to enter the workforce with

“We want to harness the power of partnership with the University of South Alabama to conduct industry benchmarking, support curriculum development and research efforts and create internships to give students critical working experience while providing Airbus amazing talent for us to hire from over time.”

—ROBIN HAYES, AIRBUS IN NORTH AMERICA CHAIRMAN AND CEO

practical, in-demand skills. It creates new opportunities for faculty research and funding and establishes an internship pipeline that provides students with hands-on industry experience before graduation.

An Airbus presence is expected to strengthen USA Technology and Research Park’s profile as a center for advanced learning and engineering, potentially attracting further industry partners and investment to the University and the region.

To help shape the collaboration, a delegation of University leaders traveled to Kansas in April 2026 to study the operational framework of a successful collaboration between Airbus and Wichita State University’s Innovation Campus, which has been running since December 2016.



Research Driving South

SCHOLARS AND RESEARCHERS

at South are vital to fulfilling the University’s mission of conducting research that addresses both local and global challenges.

- **Dr. Kaushik Venkiteshwaran**, assistant professor of civil, coastal and environmental engineering in the College of Engineering, was awarded a \$2 million Environmental Protection Agency grant to develop a novel spray adhesive adsorbent that converts agricultural waste into filters capable of capturing and potentially reusing nutrient pollutants from agricultural runoff.
- A team of cancer researchers led by **Dr. Chandrani Sarkar** was awarded a four-year, \$946,000 American Cancer Society grant to investigate how immune cells called macrophages are regulated in colon cancer. The work could lead to new treatment strategies for one of the most lethal cancers. Sarkar, a cancer researcher at the Mitchell Cancer Institute and assistant professor of pathology at the Whiddon College of Medicine, has also been awarded a two-year, \$616,000 Department of Defense grant to lead research into a link between obesity and colorectal cancer progression.
- **Dr. Michael R. Elliott**, associate professor of microbiology and immunology at the Whiddon College of Medicine, received a two-year, \$431,147 National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

grant to help patients with cancer and autoimmune diseases avoid inflammatory reactions to antibody-based therapies.

- **Dr. Kimberly Zlomke**, professor of psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences, was awarded a three-year, \$1.35 million Health Resources and Services Administration grant for the South Alabama HOPES project, which will test whether screening of patients who visit healthcare providers for other reasons can lead to early identification and treatment of mental health and substance use problems.
- At the Whiddon College of Medicine, **Dr. Allyson Shea**, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, and **Dr. Jonathon Audia** (both pictured above), professor of microbiology and immunology, received a two-year, \$429,000 National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases grant to investigate whether amyloid-beta, a protein associated with Alzheimer’s disease, contributes to kidney damage during urinary tract infections.
- **Dr. Sara Davis**, assistant professor of maternal/child nursing in the College of Nursing, received a \$373,560, three-year mentored career development award from the National Institute of Nursing Research to develop community-based interventions aimed at reducing barriers to managing Type 1 childhood diabetes, working with young patients as well as parents and caregivers.

Researchers Get Plaudits, Grants

726

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

published between June 2025 and May 2026

DR. PHILIP CARR, DR. TODD ANDEL, DR. GLEN BORCHERT AND DR. AISHWARYA PRAKASH, who have collectively brought more than \$43 million in research funding to the University of South Alabama, were honored at the University’s fourth annual Research and Technology Showcase.

The Office of Research and Economic Development hosted the showcase in October 2025. The office also awarded grants to four other faculty members.

The work of Carr, Anandel, Borchert and Prakash, which spans archaeology, cyber defense, the human genome and cellular repair, reflects the breadth of research happening at South.

- **Carr**, Chief Calvin McGhee Endowed Professor of Native American Studies and professor of anthropology in the College of Arts and Sciences, specializes in the technological and cultural history of the Gulf Coast, especially Indigenous migration, oral history and artifact analysis. His research has attracted more than \$20 million in funding, and he has published more than 40 peer-reviewed papers, 50 technical reports and several books.
- **Anandel**, professor of computer science and dean of the School of Computing, is a retired U.S. Air Force major with more than 20 years of experience in cyber defense and more than 80 publications. He develops reconfigurable computer chip systems to protect against hardware-level threats and has secured more than \$11.5 million in funding.

- **Borchert**, professor of pharmacology in the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine, researches how small RNA molecules and unique DNA structures regulate gene expression. He has received more than \$6.3 million in funding, authored more than 50 studies, and mentored 34 graduate and undergraduate students.
- **Prakash** (pictured above), associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the College of Medicine, studies how cells repair DNA damage. She has secured more than \$5 million in funding, published more than 30 papers and delivered more than 40 invited talks.

The Office of Research and Development’s annual Research and Scholarly Development Grants are intended to foster collaboration and help researchers prepare proposals for external funding. In 2026, three faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences and one from the College of Education and Professional Studies were each awarded \$25,000.

- **Dr. Jordan Albright**, assistant professor of psychology, is developing a lab-based method to study minority stress related to autism stigma.
- **Dr. Nathan Chasen**, assistant professor of biology, is studying proteins secreted by the parasite that causes Chagas’ disease to better understand how it survives inside human cells.
- **Dr. Jonathan Pérez**, associate professor of biology, is researching how urbanization affects ghost crabs genetically and physiologically.
- **Dr. Matthew Barenie**, assistant professor of health, kinesiology and sport, is examining whether combining time-restricted eating with intermittent energy restriction can help people stick to diets.

THE ROAD TO CARNEGIE R1

THE UNIVERSITY of South Alabama announced in fall 2025 that it aimed to achieve Carnegie R1 status, targeting a research tier occupied by only 187 elite institutions in the nation. Today, USA is proving it belongs.

Powered by \$50 million-plus in annual research spending and growing doctoral programs, the University is preparing to unveil its Discovery 2030 strategic road map — driving South’s next era of discovery and innovation.

As one of Alabama’s youngest universities, South currently holds the prestigious Carnegie R2 designation, validating it as a high research activity doctoral university. Achieving Carnegie R1 status, held by just 7% of four-year, degree-granting institutions, would indicate “very high” research activity and awarding of research doctoral degrees.

Since the summer of 2025, the Office of Research and Economic Development has engaged the campus community in Discovery 2030 strategic planning and data gathering. The initiative has included town halls, surveys, meetings and focus groups designed to chart a path to a thriving research culture.

Already, a big step has been taken to improve the efficiency and customer service of research administration with the launch of SPARC (Sponsored Projects Assistance, Resources and Concierge), a new research service that centralizes proposal preparation and eases administrative burden on faculty and college research administrators. Staffed by three new hires and accompanied by an extensive training program offered to all research administrators at the University, the program will be rolled out to all colleges in the coming year.

Enhancing South’s research and doctoral education for the betterment of the region and beyond isn’t just a goal — it’s fuel that is powering the University’s advancement as the Flagship of the Gulf Coast.



TOP RESEARCHER

DR. RICHARD MENDER’S

research on improving the delivery of care for complex spine surgery has informed national best practices, earning him a spot among the nation’s top medical researchers.

Menger serves as chief of complex spine surgery and vice chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at USA Health, and associate professor of neurosurgery at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine. He was named a 2025 Healthcare Research All-Star by Avant-garde Health, a distinction that places him in the top 5% of U.S. neurosurgeons and spine specialists for published research.

Faculty Listed among World's Top 2% Scientists

NEARLY A DOZEN University of South Alabama faculty were named to Stanford University's 2025 World's Top 2% Scientists List, a benchmark for academic research excellence. The annual ranking identifies the top 2% of researchers across a range of disciplines, based on composite citation impact. The University of South Alabama honorees are:

- **Dr. Joe F. Hair**, distinguished professor of marketing, Mitchell College of Business.
- **Dr. Matt Howard**, professor and interim chair of marketing, supply chain management and analytics, Mitchell College of Business.
- **Dr. Burke Johnson**, professor emeritus, College of Education and Professional Studies.
- **Dr. Sharon Fruh**, professor and associate dean, College of Nursing.
- **Dr. John W. Foster**, professor emeritus, Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine.
- **Dr. Mikhail Alexeyev** (pictured below, left), professor of physiology and cell biology, Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine.
- **Dr. Guillermo Herrera**, professor and Locke Eminent Scholar Chair of Pathology, Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine.
- **Dr. Troy Stevens**, professor and Lenoir Louise Locke Chair of Physiology and Cell Biology, Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine.
- **Dr. Stephen Schaffer**, professor emeritus, Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine.
- **Dr. James H. Davis Jr.**, professor of chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences.
- **Dr. Kenneth Heck**, professor emeritus, Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences.



Under One Roof

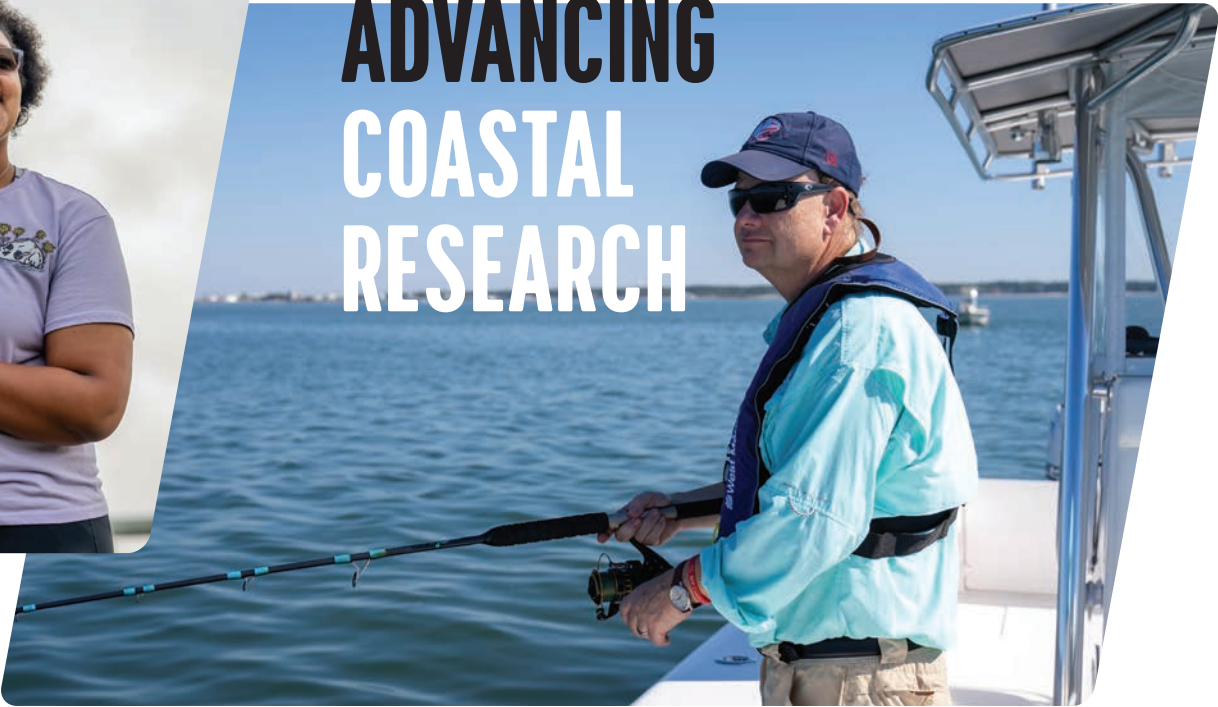
A RECENTLY COMPLETED \$384,000 renovation in the Science Laboratory Building brought meteorology faculty, the South Alabama Mesonet, the Alabama Power USA Coastal Weather Research Center and the meteorology broadcast studio together under one roof.

The renovated space includes a computer lab for meteorology classes, four faculty offices, and a lab and office for South Alabama Mesonet staff, who operate the University's network of ground-based weather monitoring stations. Previously, parts of the program had been housed in the Earth and Life Sciences Building.

Bringing these resources together gives students easier access to faculty and facilities while encouraging collaboration in research, forecasting and student internships.

Meanwhile, the Mesonet is expanding. A \$3 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is funding 20 additional monitoring stations, expanding the network to 46 stations across Alabama to help save lives and bolster the economy.

ADVANCING COASTAL RESEARCH

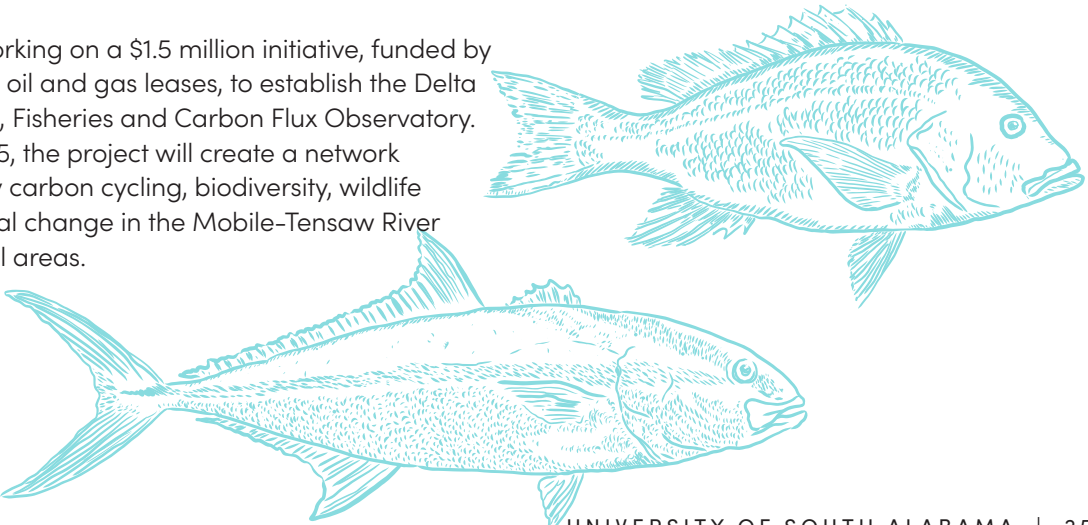


THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, the fastest-growing program of its kind in the nation, is leading research efforts to better understand and manage coastal ecosystems. Backed by \$28 million in state and federal funding, the research extends far beyond the Gulf Coast, yielding discoveries with global applications.

On one major project, Dr. Sean Powers (pictured above), the school's director, is leading a \$5 million study of cobia and Atlantic tripletail populations, announced by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission in January 2026. Using advanced fish-tracking technology and a large-scale tagging program, a multistate research team will study fish movements, population dynamics and the impacts of the increasing recreational fishing pressure on those species to help improve fisheries management.

Another major effort, the Greater Amberjack Count, concluded in June 2026. The multi-institutional research project, led by South and supported by \$10 million in federal funding, has provided new insights into greater amberjack movement and population structure across the Gulf and South Atlantic — findings that will help improve fisheries assessments and conservation strategies.

The Stokes School is also working on a \$1.5 million initiative, funded by shared revenue from offshore oil and gas leases, to establish the Delta and Coastal Alabama Wildlife, Fisheries and Carbon Flux Observatory. Announced in September 2025, the project will create a network of monitoring stations to study carbon cycling, biodiversity, wildlife movements and environmental change in the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta and surrounding coastal areas.



Powers Honored with Alabama Conservationist Award

DR. SEAN POWERS, professor and director of the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, was named Alabama's 2025 Fisheries Conservationist of the Year by the Alabama Wildlife Federation.

He received the honor at the organization's annual Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards ceremony. The awards recognize outstanding contributions to conserving Alabama's wildlife, natural resources and ecosystems.

Powers, a South faculty member for 24 years, has secured more than \$50 million in outside funding and published over 170 scientific articles. The Stokes School partners on conservation projects with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as well as local governments, private companies, community foundations and conservation organizations.

Health, healing and human impact form the core of the University's relationship with the upper Gulf Coast community that it serves through the region's only academic health system.

Committed to introducing groundbreaking medical technologies, tirelessly researching new treatments and bringing healthcare to underserved rural areas, USA Health truly is transforming medicine.



Health, Healing and Human Impact

Lifesaving Care, Close to Home

CRITICALLY ILL PATIENTS

in southwest Alabama can now receive lifesaving extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, therapy close to home, thanks to a new program by USA Health Providence Hospital. This advanced therapy offers temporary heart and lung support for patients suffering from severe cardiac or respiratory failure.

USA Health is filling a critical gap. Previously, no healthcare providers in Mobile or Baldwin counties offered ECMO services, forcing patients to look to Birmingham or out-of-state medical centers for treatment — if they were even able to travel.

ECMO has already proven so valuable that the program is on target to treat four times the expected number of patients in its first year.

To support the launch, the Providence Foundation hosted its inaugural Home & Garden Show in March 2026. The four-day event, which raised more money than previous Providence Hospital fundraisers, featured over 40 national and international antiques dealers and attracted visitors from 18 states.

The show is set to return in 2027 under a new name: the Antiques & Garden Show of the Gulf Coast.



REVOLUTIONARY LIVER CANCER TREATMENT

USA HEALTH has become the first health system in Alabama — and one of fewer than 100 nationwide — to offer a groundbreaking noninvasive treatment for liver cancer. The Edison histotripsy system uses high-intensity ultrasound pulses to destroy liver tumors without incisions, needles or extended recovery times.

The inaugural procedure using the system took place on Aug. 20, 2025, at USA Health University Hospital, where surgical oncologist Dr. Natalie Bath led a multidisciplinary team of physicians and nurses in breaking down a tumor on a patient’s liver. Bath used an ultrasound machine connected to a mobile robotic arm to precisely target the tumor.

“This treatment is noninvasive, which allows for a quick and easy recovery for the patient,” said Bath. “Also, patients can continue with other therapies, such as chemotherapy, without interruption.”

Philanthropic support from the USA Foundation made acquiring the system possible.



“The University of South Alabama has shaped me, challenged me and given me a mission larger than myself.”

— DR. NATALIE FOX

FOX NAMED CEO OF USA HEALTH

WHEN DR. NATALIE FOX was named chief executive officer of USA Health in October 2025, it marked a natural next step in a journey that began more than a decade ago.

A three-time graduate of the University of South Alabama who started her healthcare career as a nurse in 2011, Fox brings a deep, hands-on understanding of the health system to her role leading its 7,200 employees.

“The University of South Alabama has shaped me, challenged me and given me a mission larger than myself,” Fox said. “I am deeply honored to serve as USA Health’s CEO for the opportunity to give back to the place that has given me so much. My commitment is to lead with purpose and a clear sense of responsibility to our employees, our patients and our region.”

Over her 14 years with USA Health, Fox has held a variety of roles, including leadership of projects to improve population health and expand patient access. Promoted in 2023 to chief physician enterprise officer, she managed the strategy and operations for more than 700 physicians, advanced practice providers, residents and fellows. She served as interim USA Health CEO before her permanent appointment.

Fox’s journey at USA began as a student. Now, she encourages today’s young people to follow her lead. She serves on the board of the Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences, a new residential high school in Demopolis that’s helping to build the workforce that will power the future of medicine.



Care Access Expands

OVER THE PAST YEAR, USA Health has continued to expand care access and capabilities in our region. Highlights include:

- A new inpatient hospice unit at Providence Hospital, in partnership with Saad Healthcare, adding an end-of-life care option to existing home hospice services.
- The expansion of cardiology access via the acquisition of the five-physician Mobile Heart Specialists.
- A new nonsurgical osteoarthritis treatment, low-dose radiotherapy, at the Mitchell Cancer Institute for patients who don’t respond to medication or physical therapy.
- The successful execution of the first 3D-printed cervical spine implant surgery within a six-state area, advancing a technology previously limited to lower-back procedures.
- The expansion of Cub Crew, Children’s & Women’s Hospital’s specialized-care air and ground transport service for critically ill or injured children, including newborns.



PERSING RETURNS TO LEAD MITCHELL CANCER INSTITUTE

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ONCOLOGIST and hematologist Dr. Brian Persing started his new role as director of the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute on May 12, 2026. He oversees clinical, research and strategic initiatives while continuing to care for patients.

From 2020 to 2024, Persing was division chair of hematology and oncology at the institute and interim program director for the medical oncology fellowship at the University of South Alabama Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine. He is triple-board-certified in internal medicine, hematology and oncology, with a clinical specialty in lung cancer.

As a Fellow of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, he has served in multiple leadership roles, including chair of the society’s State Affiliate Council, board member, treasurer and advocacy representative. In his advocacy role, he testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

Persing earned his medical degree from the University of South Dakota School of Medicine and completed his residency and fellowship in hematology and oncology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

Nationally Recognized Care

USA HEALTH continues to set the standard for high-quality care across the region, earning national recognition for excellence.

In 2025, the Fanny Meisler Trauma Center at USA Health University Hospital was verified as a Level I trauma center by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, making it one of only two ACS-verified trauma centers in Alabama. (The Alabama Department of Public Health also designates the hospital as a Level I trauma center.)

The American College of Surgeons ranks adult trauma centers across three levels, with Level I reserved for facilities offering the most comprehensive care. According to the College of Surgeons, patients treated at ACS-verified trauma centers have a lower risk of death and better quality of life compared with patients at nonverified centers.

Also, USA Health Providence Hospital received the American Heart Association’s 2025 Get With the Guidelines–Stroke Silver Plus quality award, recognizing its commitment to treating stroke patients according to the latest research-based guidelines. The silver award recognizes hospitals that show compliance with seven treatment measures in at least 85% of eligible patients for at least 12 consecutive months.



TRAINING WITH PURPOSE

FOLLOWING A NEARLY two-year hiatus, the University of South Alabama Student-Run Free Clinic reopened in April 2026. The initiative brings back a vital medical resource for Mobile’s most vulnerable populations while providing hands-on learning opportunities for future healthcare professionals.

Operating out of the Salvation Army building in downtown Mobile, the clinic brings together South students from across health professions — including aspiring physicians, physician assistants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists and nurses — to collaborate on patient care.

For patients, each visit begins with a comprehensive intake. Students collect medical histories and perform physical exams, then present cases to a supervising physician to develop a care plan.

Nurses Launch to Rural, Underserved Areas

A MAJOR FEDERAL INVESTMENT is allowing the College of Nursing to expand its commitment to underserved communities. The College received a \$3.9 million Health Resources and Services Administration grant in January 2026 to establish the Long-Term and Acute Care Training to Promote Undergraduate Nurses’ Clinical Practice in Rural and Underserved Community Health Settings (LAUNCH) program.

Rural communities face a shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses in long-term and acute care settings. The LAUNCH program will give nursing students advanced training to care for patients in those areas. The College will also recruit preceptors to serve as mentors, guiding the next generation of nurses through the realities of rural care.

WILLIAMS HOGUE JOINS MODERN HEALTHCARE 40 UNDER 40 CLASS

DR. ASHLEY WILLIAMS HOGUE, trauma, acute care and burn surgeon at USA Health, was named to Modern Healthcare magazine’s 2026 40 Under 40 list, which recognizes emerging healthcare leaders under 40 years old.

Williams Hogue directs USA Health’s Center for Healthy Communities, where she leads violence-prevention and health-equity initiatives, including a \$1 million gun violence prevention program and Project Inspire, a mentorship program for justice-involved youth.

Williams Hogue’s work has earned national recognition, including selection as one of six Future Trauma Leaders by the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma and a spot at a 2024 White House meeting on gun violence prevention. She was named to a list of Alabama Women Who Shape the State in 2025 and inducted in 2026 into the USA chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, which recognizes individuals who exemplify compassionate, patient-centered care.



WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE BUILDING NEARS COMPLETION

CONSTRUCTION OF THE University of South Alabama Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine underwent significant progress from summer to summer, 2025-2026.

Structural steel framing, exterior walls, elevated decks, roofing and windows were all completed. On the inside, workers are installing flooring, drywall, ceilings and air conditioning.

Faculty and students are expected to move into the 295,000-foot-building in 2027. It will round out a medical education hub on campus that includes the College of Nursing, the Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions and the Health Simulation Building.

The new medical education and research facility is a core priority of South's Where Bold Begins campaign and has been made possible because of support from the city of Mobile, Mobile County, the state of Alabama, federal appropriations, the USA Foundation and private donors.



La Rochelle Named Whiddon College of Medicine Dean

DR. JEFFREY S. LA ROCHELLE officially assumed the role of dean for the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama on May 4, 2026. His appointment followed a nationwide search, placing him in leadership at a crucial moment as the College anticipates the opening of its new 295,000-square-foot facility in early 2027.

An internal medicine physician, La Rochelle is a retired U.S. Air Force colonel with 25 years of service. Throughout his career, he has advocated for humanism in medicine, emphasizing the responsibility of medical schools to train physicians who are both clinically skilled and grounded in service.

La Rochelle joined the University of South Alabama from the University of Central Florida, where he most recently served as associate dean of academic affairs and professor of medicine. He earned his Doctor of Medicine and Master of Public Health from Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, following undergraduate studies in microbiology and English at the University of Florida.



Brickwork crept up the front of the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine building in August 2026 (top). Photos at left show how construction progressed from July 2025 to December 2025 to June 2026.



Advancement and Stewardship

Advancement and stewardship are leaping forward with Where Bold Begins, the University of South Alabama's largest-ever comprehensive campaign.

The \$400 million initiative — already at 90% of its goal — and a fourth straight year of record fundraising demonstrate South's commitment to growth, innovation and service to the region. With the wind in its sails, the Flagship of the Gulf Coast charts its course for a bolder, brighter future.

OUR BOLDEST CAMPAIGN YET

TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES that the coming decades promise, the Flagship of the Gulf Coast has chosen, as always, to go bold. Rising to meet the moment, the University of South Alabama launched Where Bold Begins, a \$400 million comprehensive campaign that is the largest in University history.

The campaign, unveiled at the Student Center on April 23, 2026, supports academic excellence, research and discovery, student opportunity and success, and health, healing and human impact across the University of South Alabama and its health system.

“Progress begins when someone chooses to be bold,” President Jo Bonner said at the celebratory launch. “An investment in the University of South Alabama is a direct investment in human potential, medical innovation and the economic vitality of our region and the world for generations to come.”

Donors have enthusiastically embraced the vision. At the launch, which opened the campaign’s public phase, the University announced that it had already raised \$360 million toward its goal.



4th
STRAIGHT
RECORD-BREAKING
FUNDRAISING YEAR

\$47.5+
million raised
(GIFTS AND PLEDGES)

7,732
GIFTS

4,947
DONORS

1,531
FIRST-TIME GIFTS

FY25

“Progress begins when someone chooses to be bold.”

— PRESIDENT JO BONNER

Key funding priorities include:

- Student scholarships and faculty support.
- Investments in research and graduate education.
- A new home for the College of Education and Professional Studies closer to the heart of campus.
- The nearly completed new Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine building.
- The rapidly growing Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences.
- Expanded international engagement, including study abroad opportunities.
- The new Geri and Gordon Moulton Jaguar Marching Band Complex.
- Enhancement of the student-athlete experience.
- Growth and innovation at USA Health.
- Expansion of educational opportunities and state-of-the-art facilities for the military community.

University of South Alabama Trustees Meredith Mitchell Hamilton and Jimmy Shumock co-chair Where Bold Begins. Trustees Arlene Mitchell, Dr. Steven Stokes and Jim Yance serve as honorary chairs. Leadership committee members are Board of Trustees Chair Pro Tempore Alexis Atkins, Shadia Anderson, Kate Bourgeois, Neil Christopher, Stephen Clements, Mike Condon, Clyde Higgs, Dr. Laurie Owen, Ronnie Stallworth, Doug Whitmore and Dr. Mike Wojciechowski.

Where Bold Begins is South’s first capital campaign since the five-year Upward & Onward, which concluded in 2020 after exceeding its \$150 million goal by nearly \$12 million.



Recognizing Alumni, Friends

DURING THE 21ST ANNUAL Distinguished Alumni and Service Awards ceremony, the University of South Alabama National Alumni Association celebrated an accomplished cohort of alumni, former faculty and community leaders. Held on March 5, 2026, at the MacQueen Alumni Center, the event recognized:

- **Roddy Lee McKinney II**, who received the Distinguished Alumni Award.
- **Dr. Patricia Ann Sanders '77**, who received the Distinguished Alumni Award.
- **Carol S. Statter '94 and James L. Statter '72**, who received the Distinguished Service Award.
- **Elliot B. Maisel**, who received the V. Gordon Moulton Distinguished Service Award.
- **Dr. Alvin J. Williams**, who received the William J. "Happy" Fulford Inspirational Achievement Award.
- **The Hargrove Foundation**, which received the Community Partner Award.



LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

ALUMNI Dr. Laurie Owen '80 and Dr. Michael Wojciechowski '78, MBA '81, returned to their alma mater during a President's Cabinet session in April 2026 to share lessons on entrepreneurial leadership and career adaptability.

With 35 years in biomedical research, Owen has guided multimillion-dollar initiatives at the University of California, Riverside; the University of California, San Diego; and USA Health. She highlighted her transition from academic research leadership to biotech, emphasizing the value of taking risks and embracing change.

Wojciechowski has 45 years of experience in real estate and tech, having developed 60,000 multifamily units and raised over \$3 billion in investor funds. A senior lecturer at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, he suggested building expertise in a niche area to create career opportunities.

Good Times for Good Causes

OVER THE PAST YEAR, the University of South Alabama and its affiliated foundations hosted a dynamic lineup of annual fundraising events. Together, they raised more than a half million dollars to support USA Health's patient care, research, education and strategic priorities.

- **Providence Charity Golf Classic:** Golf tournament benefiting Camp Bluebird and the region's first extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) program at USA Health Providence Hospital.
- **GO Run 5K Race and 1-Mile Fun Run:** Race to raise funds for gynecologic cancer research at the Mitchell Cancer Institute.
- **Pull for Pulmonary Charity Clay Shoot:** Clay shoot event that supports pulmonary patient care at Providence Hospital.
- **A Night Honoring Healers (now Partners in Healing):** USA Health's signature gala, honoring the stories and dedication of care team members and raising funds to support the health system's mission.
- **Doc Rock:** Battle-of-the-bands competition showcasing bands affiliated with USA Health, raising funds to support research and critical clinical needs across the health system.
- **Home & Garden Show (now Antiques & Garden Show of the Gulf Coast):** A new signature fundraiser hosted by the Providence Foundation to raise funds for the ECMO life support program at Providence Hospital.
- **Local Goodness:** Farm-to-table fundraising event supporting a new interventional radiology suite at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital.



Homepage Makeover

A REDESIGNED SOUTHALABAMA.EDU homepage is giving prospective students, current students, and faculty and staff a more intuitive way to experience the University of South Alabama online.

Underscoring the site's importance: Nine out of 10 students use college websites to research schools, making them one of the most important recruiting tools, according to the national higher education enrollment, student success and fundraising firm RNL.

Created by the Office of Marketing and Communications in partnership with Web Services, the new design and navigation were shaped by data, research and stakeholder feedback. The website initiative has now moved into its next phase, which includes redesigning the college and administrative sites.



A New Leader for Jaguar Athletics

WHEN ATHLETICS DIRECTOR Dr. Joel Erdmann retired in May 2026, the University of South Alabama turned to someone who knew the department from the inside out — Dr. Daniel McCarthy, who joined South in 2008 and had served as deputy athletic director since 2017.

With a deep understanding of the University, its student-athletes and the values that define the Jaguars, McCarthy represents both continuity and a new chapter for Jaguar Athletics. “This is truly the honor of a lifetime,” he said, “and I couldn’t be more grateful for the opportunity.”

“When we looked at the future of Jaguar Athletics, it became abundantly clear that the best person to lead us forward was already a member of the University of South Alabama family,” said President Jo Bonner. “The feedback we received from stakeholders confirmed that Dr. McCarthy’s dedication to our University and his exceptional impact at South make him uniquely qualified for this role.”

Erdmann, the longest-tenured athletic director in the Sun Belt Conference at the time of his retirement, had led the department since July 2009. He took the job just two months before South Alabama football kicked off its inaugural season.

During his nearly 17 years as athletic director, Erdmann transformed South Alabama Athletics. Under his leadership, the Jaguars consistently competed at a championship level while fostering a culture rooted in excellence and integrity.

South Alabama Athletics was awarded the Vic Bubas Cup for all-sports excellence in Erdmann’s final year and six other times during his tenure, including four consecutive years from 2014 through 2018. The Jaguars compiled 42 Sun Belt Conference championships and made 53 National Collegiate Athletic Association postseason appearances with Erdmann at the helm.



USA BY THE BAY

THE UNIVERSITY of South Alabama’s Baldwin County campus was renamed USA by the Bay in April 2026, reflecting its location and the beauty of its surroundings. Established in 1984, the Fairhope campus moved to the site of the former St. James Episcopal Church in 1992.

Programs include college classes plus professional development opportunities, continuing education sessions and degree completion courses. The campus auditorium provides a venue for the USA by the Bay Speaker Series and the Fairhope Film Festival.

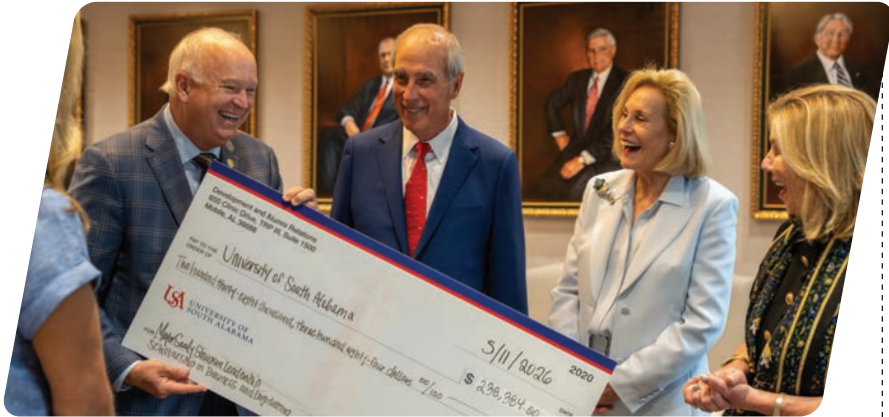
Recent investments in the campus include upgraded restrooms and improved access. Additional enhancements are planned, including renovations to the auditorium.

The University of South Alabama has a growing presence in Baldwin County, where more students choose South than any other university. South’s investment there also includes the USA Health Mapp Family Campus (home to Baldwin Family Medicine, USA Health specialty care providers and an ambulatory surgery center), the Mitchell Cancer Institute-Fairhope, and an OG-GYN and pediatrics clinic. Together, these services expand access to high-quality care in one of Alabama’s fastest-growing regions.



2025-26 Board of Trustees

RONNIE STALLWORTH ’03 (pictured back row, center) became the newest member of the University of South Alabama Board of Trustees with his 2026 appointment by Gov. Kay Ivey, confirmed by the Alabama Senate. While his at-large board seat is new, his relationship with his alma mater spans more than two decades, including serving as 2024-2026 president of the USA National Alumni Association. Joining him on the Board of Trustees are Chair Pro Tempore Alexis Atkins ’97, Vice Chair Lenus Perkins ’91, Secretary Ronald Graham ’90, Chandra Brown Stewart ’99, Dr. Scott Charlton ’94, Dr. Steven Furr ’76, ’81, Luis Gonzalez, Meredith Hamilton ’95, Robert Jenkins III ’74, Arlene Mitchell, Jimmy Shumock ’80, Dr. Steve Stokes ’80, Judge Mike Windom ’83 and Jim Yancey ’70.



Scholarship Honors Former Mayor

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA has established the Mayor Sandy Stimpson Leadership Scholarship in Business and Engineering, honoring Mobile’s 108th mayor for his years of commitment to developing future leaders.

The Mobile Chamber Foundation and friends of Stimpson and his wife, Jean, raised \$243,784 to support the scholarship. The Stimpsons presented the check to the University in May 2026, alongside Mobile Chamber President and CEO Bradley Byrne. Stimpson served from 2013 to 2025.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

307 N. University Blvd. | AD 130
Mobile, AL 36688
SouthAlabama.edu

