

President's Report
2023-2024



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA

FLAGSHIP OF THE GULF COAST.





PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As we were wrapping up our 60th anniversary year this past spring, it was only appropriate to celebrate our six decades of promoting discovery, health and learning. This, alone, is a significant milestone, and our annual report highlights some of the many accomplishments for which we can all be proud.

Even more important, however, is to look ahead and focus on what we are building, both figuratively and literally, for the next decade and beyond. Being a university with humble, yet ambitious beginnings, it is always important to look forward as we chart our course.

Without question, we continue to spread the word that a degree from the University of South Alabama is a first-class ticket to a brighter future. Shortly after I arrived as president in January 2022, my new Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr. Andi Kent, and I began hitting the road with our fantastic enrollment team to recruit more students. And we decided to go big ... traveling all over the region on our brand-new Jaguar Athletics buses to bring students from 30 different high schools to visit South's beautiful 1,200-acre campus.

The response to our first year of Jag Days tours was overwhelmingly positive, and the effort appears to be paying off — fall 2023 enrollment grew for the first time in seven years, with first-year enrollment up 19%.

This past year, we added even more schools to our Jag Days tours and doubled down on our visits to schools too far away to bring students to campus. We've found that the next best thing is to take our campus on the road, and these visits are just one of the many ways we're reaching new audiences. Dr. Kent and I have led nearly 100 engagements predominantly through high school visits, coupled with events for families and luncheons for high school counselors, throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Georgia in this past year alone.

Make no mistake; everyone at the University — from our students to our incredible faculty and staff — is playing an important role and helping to make a difference. Even more bus tours and campus visits are being planned for the fall of 2024 and spring of 2025, including visits to schools in Louisiana and throughout the Midwest.

Two questions challenge and motivate us each and every day: How many more new Jaguars will learn what makes this place so special? And how many

more lives and families can we transform with a degree from the University of South Alabama?

Our role in healthcare on the Gulf Coast is unique, and we continue to expand access to academic medicine in response to our communities' healthcare needs. In October 2023, Providence Hospital and its clinics joined the USA Health family in an acquisition that was one of the most significant healthcare developments in our region. Additionally, a new Pediatric Emergency Center at Children's & Women's Hospital provided a much needed update and expansion, and the opening of the Baldwin County Surgery Center at the Mapp Family Campus in Fairhope means residents in one of Alabama's fastest growing counties won't have to travel far from home for many medical procedures.

What does the future hold? Look no farther than to the north end of campus, where we broke ground in December on America's newest college of medicine building. When completed in a few years, the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine will provide world-class instruction and lab space that matches the high quality of our education and research.

We also will continue to advance knowledge and open worlds of possibilities for our students. The donation by the University of South Alabama Foundation of more than a quarter mile of Dauphin Island beachfront provides tremendous research opportunities, especially for the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences. In addition, new graduate research programs have been added to our academic offerings, and a brand-new 3D printing lab opened in December, providing a boon for both our researchers and local industry.

As one of our region's largest employers, the University of South Alabama is constantly striving to be the best we can be, all while pursuing new opportunities that lead to exploration and innovation that will propel our region forward.

We've accomplished so much in our six-plus decades. This past year shows how much more we can achieve when we transform challenges into opportunities as we endeavor forward as the Flagship of the Gulf Coast.

Jo Bonner



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST'S LETTER

There's no better time to be a Jaguar.

I can say that with confidence after having earned two degrees from the University of South Alabama – a proud graduate! – and having worked at the University for two decades. We've been building South into what it is today, and this past year has seen a flurry of activity that prepares us for future success.

We've certainly focused on recruiting in the last few years, increasing our first-year enrollment by 19% this past fall. But enrolling new Jaguars, while critically important, is just the start. We want to make sure we're doing everything we can to help our students graduate on time.

I'm particularly proud of the steady climb in our graduation rates and the work we've done to ease the transition from high school to college. Retention of our first-year students from fall 2022 to fall 2023 was our second-highest ever, and retention from fall 2023 to spring 2024 neared 92%.

This December, we are on target to reach 100,000 graduates, a milestone but only the beginning. We are always grateful to have our alumni back on campus. We thank them, as well as our other supporters, for their generous gifts – a record \$41.5 million in fiscal 2023.

This past year allowed us to build a strong academic leadership team with five new deans: Dr. Todd Andel, School of Computing; Dr. Angela Barlow, College of Education and Professional Studies; Dr. Michael Capella, Mitchell College of Business; Dr. Susan Gordon-Hickey, Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions; and Dr. Doug Marshall, Honors College, all began their roles since spring 2023.

I want to acknowledge the undeniable special synergy we enjoy because nearly 45% of our students major in a healthcare-related field and we own a health system. And I want to salute the School of Computing for focusing on multifaceted technological solutions, the Mitchell College of Business and its intense emphasis on programmatic expansion, the exponential research growth in Engineering and Arts and Sciences, the attention paid to STEM education in the College of Education and Professional Studies, and the record number of new students admitted by the Honors College.

With more students choosing South – our total enrollment also grew in 2023–24 – we had more students than ever living on campus. We not only filled our own residence halls, but we also had to rent nearby apartment units to meet the demand. This is a good problem to have!

Welcoming more students means we must meet not only their academic needs, but also their expectations when it comes to campus life. This year, we opened a new ROTC building and will soon break ground on a new Jaguar Marching Band facility.

During Homecoming week, SGA President Amya Douglas and I helped cut the ribbon on Miss Pawla's Grill to give our students a new late-night dining option, and later in the year Jag Mart opened in Azalea Hall, offering 24/7 access to food and provisions for our students living on campus.

Next year will bring even bigger changes: For the first time, the Fresh Food Co., our main dining hall, is getting a significant makeover with expanded options. The campus bookstore is also being renovated and will be a must-see for both students and alumni.

While we remain student-focused, we also continue to support our faculty and staff. This year we revived the Leadership South professional development program that brings together faculty and staff from the University and USA Health to learn more about South's role in our city, region and state. We also continued the recently developed Leadership Fellows program that offers participants an opportunity to split their time with an office or department outside their own. In addition to benefiting our fellows, it also injects fresh energy and new ideas into the areas where they work.

At South, we know that to help our students progress toward their degrees, we need to make continual progress as a University, both inside and outside the classroom. As this report indicates, we accept that challenge with enthusiasm. Without a doubt, it is only the beginning – we are committed to continuing the forward momentum of the Flagship of the Gulf Coast.

Ardi M. Kent





ACADEMIC AFFAIRS Recruiting, Enrolling, Retaining

Two billboards along the interstate — “More Students are choosing South” and “A Spot for You” — help tell the story of a remarkable year in the areas of student recruitment and student retention. These efforts continue to pay off with overall enrollment increasing for the first time in seven years, first-year enrollment growing by 19% and the six-year graduation rate ticking up 5 percentage points.

In all, total enrollment from fall 2022 to fall 2023 rose by more than 300 to 13,768 students, with gains in many of the University’s colleges and schools. Both the Honors College and the School of Computing recorded their largest freshman classes.

Enrollment in the new Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, part of the College of Arts and Sciences, has grown from 50 graduate students to 221 students since it began offering undergraduate majors in 2022.

The College of Nursing enrolled the most ever first-year students in the traditional Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, a result, in part, of a strategic shift to offset national enrollment challenges in graduate nursing programs.

Overall, healthcare disciplines remain a popular choice for students, as demand remains strong for graduates in medicine, nursing and allied health. The biomedical sciences program has one of the University’s most sought-after majors, and ground was broken in December for the new Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine, which will allow for the education and training of larger medical classes.

Both the College of Nursing and the Whiddon College of Medicine celebrated 50th anniversary years.

In all, students enrolled at South from all 67 Alabama counties, all 50 states and 53 countries.

Three faculty members, Dr. Ermanno Affuso, Dr. Philip Habel and Dr. Christina Wassenaar, received Fulbright Scholar Program awards for the 2023–24 academic year for research travels to the Slovak Republic, Poland and the Republic of North Macedonia, respectively. Another two professors, Dr. Lesley Gregoricka and Dr. Matthew Pettway, were selected in 2024 for the next academic year.

The University selected its first dual environmental fellow and writer-in-residence, Ben Raines. Dr. Charlotte Pence, director of the Stokes Center for Creative Writing, was named the first Poet Laureate for Mobile.

The University continued to add academic programs to respond to student and industry needs. Seven new degree offerings were added in 2023–24, including doctoral programs in the College of Education and Professional Studies and the Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions.

Highlighting the work in student retention, South’s Academic Advising and Transfer Services office won the 2024 Advising Innovation Award from the National Academic Advising Association.



PAT CAPPS COVEY COLLEGE OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS

In partnership with the Whiddon College of Medicine, the Department of Biomedical Sciences received a \$16 million federal grant to pay full tuition for 10 master's students from disadvantaged backgrounds each year for five years. The partnership is designed to create more primary care physicians in Alabama.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Renovation of 15,925 square feet of space off Aubrey Green Drive gave ROTC cadets a new home. Army and Air Force ROTC each have their own offices, classroom and kitchen. They share an auditorium, a workout room, locker rooms, a computer lab/lounge and a 4,800-square-foot covered outside area for physical training and events.



STOKES SCHOOL OF MARINE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

The anticipated interdisciplinary Environment and Society graduate program will result in six additional Ph.D. degrees per year and the hiring of four additional faculty members. Faculty and staff benefited from renovation of an additional 13,250 square feet of research and office space beyond the 17,200 square feet that was recently refurbished.



MITCHELL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Creation of an online MBA program and an online undergraduate accounting program will allow the college to significantly expand its geographic reach and increase enrollment. The college revamped first-year course schedules to improve academic success.

SCHOOL OF COMPUTING

The National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security designated the School of Computing as a Center of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity Research. The school also received a \$5.4 million Department of Defense contract to support protective cyber technologies. The project, which involves machine learning and artificial intelligence, broadens student career opportunities.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

The college hosted approximately 300 area high school students on visits, featuring some on Sincerely South, the college podcast. Faculty also visited potential undergraduate and graduate students off-site and virtually.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

In calendar year 2023, the college had \$6.6 million in research expenditures, more than a 50% increase from 2022 and a total increase of 210% over five years. The percentage of grant-funded full-time graduate students increased from 51% to 61%. Chemical engineering sophomore Paul Nguyen was named a 2024 Goldwater Scholar.

HONORS COLLEGE

With a record number of entering freshmen, the Honors College resumed its pre-COVID-19 field-trip tradition with an April bus excursion, along with physics professors and students, to Hector, Arkansas, to view the solar eclipse. The college also fielded at least one team in every intramural sport, and the number of student-led and college-led events exploded in both number and participation rates.



FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

The Class of 2024 entered the Whiddon College of Medicine at the height of the pandemic, with early milestones marked by masks and social distancing. During Match Day in March, 74 students gathered at the USA Mitchell Center to find out where they would be completing their residencies. Twelve students were matched with USA Health, while the others will undergo training in 21 different states across the country.

COLLEGE OF NURSING

Thanks to a \$3.4 million four-year federal grant, in spring 2024 the college launched a program for licensed practical nurses and licensed vocational nurses to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. A \$2.5 million federal grant went to the RISE ANEW program to train critically needed primary care nurse practitioners for underserved populations.

GRADUATE SCHOOL

To support the growth of the University's research profile, the Graduate School has increased the number of Ph.D. graduates by 13% and 23% over the past two years. Dean Harold Pardue is finishing his two-year term as chair of the Alabama Council of Graduate Deans.

ENROLLMENT SERVICES

Jag Days bus tours gave VIP tours of campus to students from 36 high schools, a 20% increase from the prior year. From spring 2023 through spring 2024, we've had more than 25,000 potential Jaguars and their families visited our campus. Colleges and schools are being engaged in bimonthly student-level reporting to facilitate outreach to newly admitted students and encourage their enrollment.



GLOBAL USA

Four faculty completed trips — to China, India, Dominican Republic and Greece — as part of the Faculty Ambassadors Program, which supports faculty traveling abroad in promoting partnerships. Two more trips are planned: one covering several cities in India and the other in the UK. Presentations to prospective students

and universities set up by Global USA have led to collaborations between schools including scholarly activities.

INNOVATION IN LEARNING CENTER

The Innovation in Learning Center supports faculty through workshops, mini-courses, learning communities and consultations. Across our various programs in 2023-24, more than 300 faculty participated in professional development activities. In addition, the 2024 South Alabama Conference on Teaching and Learning, a signature program of the ILC, drew more than 75 presentations (the highest recorded) and 250 registrants from more than 25 universities. The popular Thank-A-Teacher program results were indicative of strong student-faculty relationships at South — 331 different instructors received 468 letters in Fall 2023, and in Spring 2024, 290 faculty members received 516 notes.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

For the 2022 cohort, 76% of first-year students returned for their second year, tying South's second-highest one-year retention rate. The 2023 class is tracking positively; nearly 92% returned for the spring term, South's second-highest fall-to-spring retention rate. The reorganization of Career Development resulted in a significant increase in student engagement and expanded collaboration with colleges and departments.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

JagWorks@USA is the University's institutional repository for research and scholarly output. During spring semester 2024, JagWorks had 25,035 full-text downloads, 438 media streams and 207 new submissions, bringing the total works in the IR to 4,699. During this time, USA scholarship was read by 451 institutions across 112 countries.

USA SIMULATION PROGRAM

The Simulation Building has become a significant recruiting tool for health/medical students. Prospective recruits are frequent visitors to the building, which is especially popular during USA Days and on Jag Days bus tours. Additionally, the recent completion of the third floor expands the opportunities for our students in medicine, nursing and allied health professions to refine their skills.

BY THE NUMBERS

ENROLLMENT
(FALL 2023)

13,768

2.27%
INCREASE
YEAR OVER YEAR

NEARLY

2,500

STUDENTS LIVING
ON CAMPUS

FIRST-YEAR
ENROLLMENT UP

19%

UP
AND
UP

AVERAGE GPA
OF ENTERING
FRESHMEN

3.74

FIRST-YEAR RETENTION

91.37%

From
Fall to
Spring

COLLEGE OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES
ENROLLMENT UP

9%



LARGEST
FRESHMAN
CLASS

SCHOOL OF COMPUTING
ENROLLMENT UP

8%

TRANSFER
ENROLLMENT UP

8%

COLLEGE OF NURSING
UNDERGRADUATE
ENROLLMENT UP

7%

HONORS COLLEGE
FRESHMEN CLASS UP

28%

LARGEST IN
UNIVERSITY
HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL
ENROLLMENT UP

5%



The College Tour That Comes to You

When the University of South Alabama busses high school students to campus, the goal is twofold: to spark interest in studying there, yes, but also to build excitement about higher education in general.

“We think there’s a value in demystifying what a college education is all about,” said University of South Alabama President Josiah Bonner. “There are articles ... about, ‘Is a college education still valuable? Does it still bring value for the expense that it costs?’ And one way we believe in helping to answer that question is to allow students to see for themselves that they could find their place on a college campus like ours.”

The new recruitment tactic, known as “Jag Days” in a nod to the college’s jaguar mascot, involves Bonner and Executive Vice President and Provost Andrea Kent traveling to high schools up to 90 miles from campus, greeting students and administrators, and riding back to USA with a group of students in tow. The visitors then tour the campus, speak with a panel of current students — often alumni of their high school — and, of course, eat a free lunch in the college’s expansive cafeteria.

Although it’s difficult to accommodate what every student in the group wants to see, the itinerary for each Jag Day varies according to conversations with the principals of the targeted high schools, who tell Bonner and Kent what their students might be most interested in experiencing. A Jag Day might include visits to different academic buildings, chats with faculty and glimpses into the recreation center and dorm rooms.

When a group from the Alabama School of Math and Science, a public boarding school with a focus on STEM disciplines located not far from USA, toured the university, both its principal and USA administrators agreed the students would enjoy seeing the Honors College.

The principal, John Hoyle, said that that was a high point of the tour for his students — as was the face time they got with Bonner himself while on the bus to USA.

“They liked touring the Honors College,” said Hoyle. “Students at my school are very highly motivated, gifted; they go on to be doctors, engineers, college professors, so ... it gave them a good sense of, if they went to South Alabama, what it would be like.”

Personalization and Accessibility

With many higher ed institutions struggling to maintain enrollment, personalized recruitment tactics are becoming increasingly popular, according to Jill Orcutt, the head of the consulting arm of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. Research has shown that generic, rote presentations are less likely to leave an impression on students, she said, stressing that universities can derive the most value from an event like Jag Day if they are able to figure out ahead of time what students want to see and learn about.

Bussing students to campus can also greatly improve access. Not all students are able to go on college visits, due to transportation limitations or conflicting work, school or other obligations. (Jag Day visits take place during the school day, like any other high school field trip.)

“It’s an opportunity to expose students who might not have an opportunity to visit a campus,” said Orcutt. “The data shows students who tour campus are more likely to not only apply and enroll but consider higher education as an opportunity.”

Hoyle stressed that even though Alabama School of Math and Science is only about 20 minutes from USA, it was valuable for his students, who come from a range of backgrounds and locales across the state, to have the unique opportunity of riding to campus on a bus, accompanied by the college president and provost.

“Access is really important to us. It levels the playing field. Wealthy kids, their parents can pick them up and go anywhere. They can drive anywhere, they can fly anywhere,” he said. “We have brilliant kids and they deserve access to college campuses.”

This article was edited for length. For the complete story, read it online.



STUDENT AFFAIRS Campus Community Thrives

With a growing student body, including a record number of students living on campus — some 2,500 — the Division of Student Affairs keeps busy. The division is responsible for everything from housing, dining, student health, recreation and wellness to Jaguar Productions, the Student Activities Board and Greek life.

To accommodate all those residents, the University expanded housing options by creating a short-term lease with a private apartment complex. Retention efforts begin the moment a student first steps on campus. Naturally, Student Affairs plays a key role in the Week of Welcome experiences that greet new Jaguars.

Last fall, during the 60th Anniversary celebration, students spelled out USA for a drone photo at Hancock Whitney Stadium as a kickoff to a movie night. At the Winter Week of Welcome in January, Jaguar Productions presented its first annual Winter Wonderland: There's Snow Place Like Home! carnival at the Student Center — the hub of campus life.

South's status as a JED Campus accentuates our commitment to student health, including

mental health. The JED organization partners with universities across the country to help prevent suicides. In a student-proposed initiative, we organized the inaugural South Alabama Against Eating Disorders Walk. The Student Health Center achieved five-year renewal of its national accreditation. The Office of Veterans Affairs received a \$220,000 mental health grant from the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.

Concerts, sports contests, lectures, social gatherings and other events give students lots of on-campus opportunities to relax, socialize and learn something — sometimes all at once. Jaguar Athletics, Greek organizations and academic departments sponsor many of these activities. Student Affairs always looks for opportunities to make the events calendar even richer.

This past year, for example, in addition to helping organize such staples as Homecoming activities and the annual Soul Food Luncheon, the division brought alumna and reigning Miss Alabama Brianna Burrell back to campus for a congratulatory visit.



FOCUS ON WELLNESS Student Government Association President Amya Douglas and University President Jo Bonner gave rides on campus in a customized six-wheel Jeep to promote South's status as Alabama's first JED Campus and spread the word that students have access to free counseling.



GOOD TASTE The openings of Miss Pawla's Grill and Jag Mart increased the number and quality of on-campus meal options. Miss Pawla's offers late-night dining. Jag Mart supplies 24-hour automated convenience store shopping in the residential area, the first service of its kind in the state. Food truck days have also proven popular.



ENGAGEMENT Student organization numbers rebounded to pre-COVID-19 levels, with more than 250 registered student organizations for the academic year. Student Affairs sponsored the third annual Jaguar Senior Medallion Society Ceremony, recognizing 24 of the best and brightest Class of 2024 graduating seniors. And the division continues to collaborate with the Graduate Student Association, the voice for graduate students.





DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS Records and Milestones

With a third straight year of record fundraising and the National Alumni Association celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Division of Development and Alumni Relations continues to build a solid foundation of support for the University.

The division has taken on new roles and responsibilities, including oversight of the Providence Foundation and the launch of the USA By the Bay Speaker Series at the Baldwin County Campus in Fairhope. That and the Irving Silver and Frances Grodsky Silver Endowed Presidential Lecture series, both free and open to the public, have shown excellent attendance and community engagement.

To enhance scholarship values and thus increase student retention, the minimum endowment level was raised from \$10,000 to \$25,000, effective Oct. 1, 2023. In fiscal 2023, endowments received 1,456 gifts totaling \$4.35 million.

By December 2024, South will have 100,000 alumni. The USA National Alumni Association has achieved record membership and finished paying the debt on the MacQueen Alumni Center. More than 600 people attended the fall 2023 Alumni Reunion Weekend. More than 10,000 people attended

University and community events at the MacQueen Center in the past year.

The Division of Development and Alumni Relations fosters support through donor and alumni events in other cities, from Atlanta to Washington to Los Angeles. It also coordinates all activities for the President's Cabinet, including headliner events featuring former U.S. Senate Majority Leaders Tom Daschle, D-South Dakota, and Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, held in October 2023, and Pulitzer Prize winning author Rick Bragg, in March 2024.

The division oversaw several major USA Health fundraising events in the past year. It helped raise more than \$14 million for the new Pediatric Emergency Center at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. After the recent acquisition of Providence Hospital and its clinics, the University entered into a management services agreement to oversee all staff and operations of the Providence Foundation, which has endowments totaling \$9.6 million. The 31st Annual Festival of Flowers was held in downtown Mobile at Cathedral Square, raising \$98,000 to support USA Health Providence Hospital.



RECORD FUNDRAISING, AGAIN Thanks to great teamwork, the third consecutive record-breaking fundraising year resulted in \$41.5 million in gifts and pledges during fiscal 2023. That followed totals of \$40.2 million in fiscal 2022 and \$26.1 million in fiscal 2021. Early indications for fiscal 2024 are encouraging.



WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE The campaign to raise funds for the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine is off to a great start. Recently, the City of Mobile pledged \$10 million for the new facility, and Mobile County kicked in another \$5 million. This is in addition to the \$50 million earmark from Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, a \$60 million appropriation from U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby and a \$30 million gift from the University of South Alabama Foundation.



HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY The National Alumni Association kicked off its 50th anniversary year with a birthday party, a block party, the annual Distinguished Alumni and Service Awards gala and alumni/donor events in seven cities across the country. In its half-century, it has grown to an organization that provides more than \$100,000 annually in South scholarships.



BY THE NUMBERS

TOTAL ALUMNI
99,672

(INCLUDES SUMMER 2024 CANDIDATES)

\$41.5

MILLION
IN GIFTS
DURING FY23



66%

OF THE
PRESIDENT'S CABINET
ARE ALSO ALUMNI

LIVING LABORATORY

USA Foundation Donates Bayfront Property to South

The University of South Alabama Foundation donated more than a quarter mile of bayfront to the University, opening additional access for teaching and research.

The property is on Dauphin Island's Aloe Bay, 35 miles south of the University of South Alabama campus. The Foundation valued the gift, which includes sandy beachfront, marsh and submerged land, at \$1.92 million.

"It's a perfect living laboratory," said USA Foundation Managing Director Maxey J. Roberts. "The Foundation board believes that this will assist and advance the research for, specifically, the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, but also programs in the College of Engineering as engineering looks at coastline restoration and protection."

The Foundation has owned the land for approximately 35 years with the intention of eventually giving it to the University.

"It's going to have an immediate impact on our ability to teach our students," said University of South Alabama President Jo Bonner. "It's really a gift that ties into the mission of the University, with our role in serving the community in doing research and in teaching."

The Town of Dauphin Island intends to dredge the Aloe Bay channel to a developed area just south of

the Dauphin Island bridge. The dredged sand will be used to extend the beach area of the property up to 150 feet into the bay, back to its historical shoreline.

"We're really appreciative of the USA Foundation having the vision to pass this land on to the University," said Dr. Sean Powers, director of the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences. "Our plan for this piece of property after the restoration is to hold as much of it as possible in a preserve. It will really be the island's first preserve right on the water's edge."

The Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Education and research facilities are located both on campus in Mobile and at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, of which the University is a consortium member.

On the donated land, Powers said, the uplands will be restored to their natural salt marsh state while oyster reefs will be installed just off the shoreline. Sand will be placed beyond the reefs, offering a double layer of protection for the shoreline. The shallow-water environment allows students a safe area to work.

"We're grateful that we have a Foundation whose sole interest is in advancing the University of South Alabama," Bonner said. "It's a great partnership, and the best is yet to come."



FREDERICK P. WHIDDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

An Investment in the Future of Healthcare



Construction is underway on a new, 250,000-square-foot Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine building that will allow the University of South Alabama to graduate more physicians and enhance research and innovation. Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and other supporters attended a December groundbreaking on South's campus.

The more than \$230 million project will round out a medical education hub on campus that includes the College of Nursing, the Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions, the Health Simulation Building and the Charles M. Baugh Biomedical Library. When the new building opens, more than 500,000 square feet of campus facilities will be dedicated to healthcare education and research.

"This facility will offer our future students the most advanced learning and research opportunities anywhere in the country," said USA President Jo Bonner. "It will transform medicine to the unique needs of our community while educating and training the next generation of providers."

The new Whiddon College of Medicine building will provide state-of-the-art laboratory spaces that will create flexibility and efficiency for

research today and in the future. It will also allow for expanding the class size of first-year medical students from 80 to 100, with the capability of increasing to 120 in the future, at the same time the nation faces a projected shortage of healthcare providers.

"This is an investment in the future of healthcare to meet the needs of Alabamians," said Dr. John Marymont, dean of the Whiddon College of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs. "By national metrics, this medical school produces high-quality physicians that stay in the state, helping meet the needs in primary care as well as in rural and underserved areas at an affordable cost."

The Whiddon College of Medicine is one of 158 accredited M.D.-granting institutions in the United States, and one of only two in the state. Whiddon College of Medicine graduates rank in the 82nd percentile nationally for physicians practicing in primary care; the 78th percentile for physicians practicing in-state; the 74th percentile for physicians practicing in rural areas; and the 98th percentile for physicians practicing in underserved areas.

USA HEALTH Advancing Medicine Along the Gulf Coast

USA Health has made significant progress on projects to address the growing healthcare needs of the people in our region. The addition of Providence Hospital and its medical offices expanded our number of locations from 29 to more than 40.

At University Hospital, five new, high-tech operating rooms were unveiled in November 2023. The more than 15,000-square-foot expansion features four state-of-the-art operating rooms and a hybrid operating suite that incorporates advanced imaging to guide cardiovascular procedures and facilitate complex trauma surgeries. The expansion also added a 12-bed post-anesthesia care unit for patients recovering from surgery.

The Pediatric Emergency Center at Children's & Women's Hospital achieved 100% compliance with the Emergency Medical Services for Children Program's National Pediatric Readiness Project. The assessment tool empowers emergency departments to improve their capability to provide high-quality care for children, also known as being "pediatric ready."

Providence Hospital has plans to bring the first extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, program to the area. It is an advanced life support technique used for patients with life-threatening heart and/or lung problems.

In fall 2023, providers began seeing patients at the West Mobile Medical Office Building near the

University campus. The building is home to Mobile Diagnostic Center and USA Health specialty care. Providers are expected to record some 66,000 patient visits annually in the new facility.

USA Health continues to expand services in the rural health space. Beginning with a management agreement with Monroe County Hospital two years ago, USA Health has grown its relationships with other Alabama hospitals within a 100-mile radius. In fall 2023, USA Health formed the Southwest Alabama Rural Hospital Collaborative with 10 rural hospitals to share ideas, cost-saving measures, grant opportunities and USA Health's intellectual capital in order to enhance the sustainability of rural hospitals and serve residents in those communities.

The health system also continues to put in place additional security protocols following two cyberattacks. Both appeared to involve foreign agents and affected hospital systems nationwide. The second specifically targeted legacy Ascension infrastructure that is being phased out, limiting involvement locally to Providence.

USA Health continues to meet the growing needs of our community by melding clinical care, research and healthcare education to provide the most advanced medical care in the region.

PROVIDENCE BY THE NUMBERS

1854

YEAR FOUNDED

1,750

EMPLOYEES

14

CLINICS

4

TOWERS

1

RANKING FOR
MOST BEAUTIFUL
HOSPITAL BY
SOLIANT





PROVIDENCE ACQUISITION Providence Hospital and its employees and clinics joined the USA Health family in October 2023. Its acquisition added a 349-bed hospital, eight clinics on the hospital campus and six family practice sites in west and north Mobile and Moss Point, Mississippi. Nearly 1,800 Providence associates, physicians and other providers are now part of USA Health. New colleagues were welcomed with a pep rally picnic, featuring members of the Jaguar Marching Band, South cheerleaders and SouthPaw.



CARE FOR CHILDREN An expanded Pediatric Emergency Center at Children's & Women's Hospital opened its doors in March 2024. The facility is more than double the size of the former emergency department and has more than 30 treatment areas, including 25 private treatment rooms. The center provides more space for parents and caregivers to be with their children and offers sensory strategies to help calm and support patients during their emergency visit.



GROWTH IN BALDWIN To meet the complete needs of patients in one of Alabama's fastest-growing counties, the Baldwin County Surgery Center at the Mapp Family Campus opened in August 2023. The 24,000-square-foot ambulatory surgery center features six operating rooms and two spaces for procedures. Surgical specialists in pediatrics, orthopaedics, urology, general surgery, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, podiatry, ear nose and throat, and more will care for patients at the center.



RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Where Innovation and Entrepreneurship Meet

The Office of Research and Economic Development provides one of the University's primary means of connecting with the local and regional business community as well as significant funding for the University itself.

In fiscal 2023, the office helped develop and submitted 491 grant and contract proposals resulting in 326 awards. One award went to the Office of Research Compliance and Assurance to host a national conference on campus May 20-21, 2024. The Future of Research Integrity Conference focused on the use of artificial intelligence and its impact on research integrity.

Internal funding programs now in their 10th year provide valuable investments in research and faculty development. Nearly a quarter of award recipients have received external funding for their research, totaling nearly \$50 million.

The Office of Commercialization and Industry Collaboration executed one license option and two exclusive licensing agreements involving

University intellectual property, bringing the current number of licenses to 13 and increasing licensing revenues. It supported the launch and/or funding of three University-associated startup companies this year and assisted with the Innovation Corps program funded by the National Science Foundation.

The office is developing guidelines for faculty and other employees on how to create a university startup business and apply for Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer federal grants. South's proposal editing service also continues to support faculty grant-writing efforts.

A national search is underway to replace longtime Vice President for Research and Economic Development Lynne Chronister, who is retiring after 18 years of dedicated service to the University. In addition to serving as associate vice president for research, Dr. Michael Chambers was named Chief Economic Development Officer for the University in April 2024.



TARGETING MICROPLASTICS The University received a \$1.9 million grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, administered by the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, to establish the Gulf Coast Center for Addressing Microplastics Pollution. Dr. Shenghua Wu, assistant professor of civil, coastal and environmental engineering, leads a multidisciplinary team of South researchers. They will collaborate with 10 wastewater treatment facilities in three Gulf Coast states.



BIOTECHNOLOGY FOR HEALTH Dr. Jon Rayner, associate professor and director of the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases, earned a \$125,000 Innovate Alabama grant for a South Alabama Biotechnology Research Center. The center will promote discovery and development of new technologies to improve human health on the Gulf Coast and globally. Innovate Alabama is a public-private partnership that encourages entrepreneurship, technology and innovation.



PARDON OUR PROGRESS Design and engineering work was completed on the Science Laboratory Building (the former College of Engineering building) to enhance research space on campus. Construction will begin this summer on the \$14.5 million project, comprising 23,000 square feet of space, and will take about a year. Also in the building, a new Laboratory for Additive Manufacturing opened in December that features small 3D printers for rapid prototyping and larger ones for making finished products.



ATHLETICS Cheering on the Jags

For the sixth time in nine years, South Alabama in June 2023 took home the Vic Bubas Cup, given to the Sun Belt Conference's all-sports champion. Winning the trophy kicked off another successful year for Jaguar Athletics.

Two new head coaches were hired: Chris Hennessey took over the Jaguar soccer team in December, after the team finished the regular season undefeated for the first time in program history, and Major Applewhite was named the new leader of the Jaguar football team in January, following the team's first-ever bowl win. The football team boasted back-to-back winning seasons in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Head Track and Field Coach Paul Brueske was named SBC Coach of the year, with his men's outdoor track and field team winning the second Sun Belt Conference team championship in program history. Thrower Francois Prinsloo was named SBC Performer of the Year and qualified for the 2024 Summer Olympics.

The Jaguar softball and volleyball teams both earned NCAA postseason appearances after strong regular season play.

In addition to their success on the field (and court), South Alabama athletes excelled off the field. South

ranked third in the nation in total community service hours by a Division 1 athletic department in a recent Helper Helper community engagement report; men's basketball ranked first in the nation among men's teams, and our softball team ranked third among women's teams. Overall, from July 2023 through May 2024, all student-athletes and staff members – a total of 521 people – contributed more than 11,164 hours of community service, averaging more than 21 hours per person.

Our teams drew strong support from the Jaguar fan base as well, with student attendance of more than 32,374 at football games and record sales of group tickets. Softball, baseball and women's basketball all sold the most or second-most season tickets ever.

Jaguar Sports Properties reported 90 sponsors generating \$1.8 million, and the Jaguar Athletic Fund generated \$1.44 million for the general fund and \$306,761 in restricted accounts.

JagNation TV/ESPN+ Productions continued to grow as a means of promoting Jaguar Athletics and strengthening ties with students, alumni and the community. The 100 broadcasts in the most recent reporting period drew 327,423 viewers.



WINNING TEAMS South won its first football bowl game ever, defeating Eastern Michigan 59-10 in the 68 Ventures Bowl. During the regular season, the Jags beat Oklahoma State (ranked 16th in both major polls at year's end) 33-7 in Stillwater. The men's track and field team clinched the second Sun Belt Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championship title in program history. The softball and volleyball teams also earned NCAA postseason appearances.



INDIVIDUAL HONORS Hannah Maddux became the first South Alabama player to be drafted (by the Vegas Thrill) into the newly formed Pro Volleyball Federation. Teagan Flanagan (men's cross country) was Sun Belt Conference champion and Men's Runner of the Year. Hugo Thyr (men's golf) won his second straight conference individual title. Pole vaulter Kyle Rademeyer participated in the summer 2023 World Games. Francois Prinsloo (men's track and field) in the discus qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics.



ACADEMIC SUCCESS In the fall semester, athletes in 14 of the 15 sport programs earned a collective term GPA of 3.0 or higher, the most ever. The same number scored cumulative GPAs of 3.0 or higher by the end of the spring term. In both semesters, nearly 40% of student-athletes made the Dean's List. The department's graduation success rate is 91%, with seven programs scoring 100%, reflecting our commitment to student success and retention.



DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Promoting Excellence for All

The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement supported faculty, staff and students with more than 1,000 interactions including events, meetings and activities.

The National First-Generation College Celebration featured, as examples of resilience and success, faculty and staff who were first-generation college students in their families. A representative from the LinkedIn professional social media network presented tips and gave each participant a free LinkedIn Premium account. In partnership with the Title IX Office, the division supported the creation of a lactation room. The division also collaborated with the Office of Research and Economic Development to support faculty education on grant opportunities.

South faculty, staff and students recorded a community service impact value of more than \$1 million. More than 1,800 volunteers served 106 campus and community partners with 438 volunteer needs. The University welcomed 22 new campus and

community partners for its South Serves program, bringing the total to 270.

More than 300 members of the South family volunteered a total of 1,378 hours with Project Homeless Connect. Represented were 15 student organizations, nine colleges and schools, and 17 campus departments. The University supported more than 500 community members who struggle with homelessness.

The division worked with the Office of Governmental Relations to facilitate campus meetings about the new Alabama law centered on state funds for diversity, equity and inclusion programs. Plans are underway – working with both governmental relations and the University’s general counsel – to make the necessary changes to conform with the new state law before it goes into effect on Oct. 1, 2024. It also supported the submission of the NCAA-required Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Review Framework for athletics.



GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Record Funding and More

The Office of Governmental Relations recorded another record year for funding during the 2023 Alabama legislative session, providing just over \$51 million for the University and USA Health.

The 2024 session is anticipated to yield just over \$41 million in new dollars. On the federal level, the University is set to receive approximately \$11.25 million in funding in fiscal 2024, including \$5 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for rural wastewater treatment research in Alabama's Black Belt and an implementation project.

In addition, with the support of Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and Commissioner Chris Blankenship of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, \$1.23 million in GOMESA funding was acquired for the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences.

Governmental Relations helped secure \$15 million in total from the City of Mobile and Mobile County for the new Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine building.

For USA Health, the office secured funding from the Mobile County Commission for ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) life-support

machines at USA Health Providence Hospital and an additional \$1.25 million from the state for a backup generator for USA Health University Hospital. In the fall of 2023, the office worked with contacts in Washington to protect \$2 million secured for a new MRI machine at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital.

Governmental Relations is involved in more than attracting funding to support USA's mission. The office plays a role in student life as well.

In September, Governmental Relations helped bring the Alabama Supreme Court to campus for oral arguments, and in February, assisted with the Mobile County Probate Court's mock election on campus. Combined, the two events reached a total of more than 1,000 students.

The office coordinated an initiative to place additional SouthPaw statues on campus and around Mobile. It also relaunched Leadership South, (see photo below), a leadership development program for rising USA leaders. In February 2024, Nick Lawkis, the office's executive director, was elevated to vice president for governmental relations.



FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Creativity and Collaboration

The Division of Finance and Administration was reorganized last June, creating three new officers – a chief financial officer, a chief administrative officer and a chief facilities management officer – all of whom are charged with responsibilities for keeping the University, as an enterprise, running smoothly. The division handles operational and financial systems that support virtually all aspects of both the University and USA Health.

Many initiatives go beyond a traditional job description. For instance, students worked with the Finance Office on international tax treaty documentation as required by the Internal Revenue Service. Additionally, Facilities employees worked with the Student Government Association on a number of campus ventures, including a new JagTran app to make using the JagTrans more efficient. Facilities employees also engaged with PASSAGE USA students, teaching them important life skills, as well as worked with engineering students to gain real-world experience inviting them to sit in on design and construction meetings.

The Jag Pantry, which reports to the Budget Office, had more than a thousand visits during the past year. USA One Stop processed 264 requests for emergency financial aid and assisted 69 students

with emergency funding totaling more than \$50,000. Financial Aid also launched a website providing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) information and updates.

Human Resources and the Payroll Office collaborated with USA Health to onboard nearly 1,800 new employees following the October 2023 acquisition of Providence Hospital and its clinics. The University also hired a new police chief, Darren J. Baxley, who until recently had been deputy chief of police at the University of Florida. Chief Baxley will begin work in June 2024.

The Office of Scholarship Services created a scholarship module for freshmen and sophomores and plans to add junior-level students this fall. These and other efforts helped increase scholarship applications from the previous year.

Human Resources and Facilities Management collaborated to foster community engagement and help introduce potential Jaguars to campus by hosting high school students for a job shadow day with staff members in various departments.

A new automated employee benefit enrollment process made it easier for employees to select benefits and enroll.



IMPROVING CAMPUS Since June 2023, Facilities Management has overseen a total of 292 projects on the main campus and USA Health. Of these, 117 were capital projects with budgets over \$50,000. Notable projects include construction of the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine and the Pediatric Emergency Center at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital, renovation of ROTC's new building off Aubrey Green Drive, and renovations of the campus bookstore and the Fresh Food Co. dining hall.



TICKET TO RIDE The on-campus transportation system, JagTran, saw its ridership more than double with the introduction of a new tracking app called ETA Spot, which shows locations of JagTran buses. JagTran served 145,033 riders from January through April this year compared to 66,510 riders during the same period last year.



PROVIDENCE WELCOME During the Providence Health System acquisition, many administrative units coordinated to create, market and implement the USA Providence Welcome Award, a scholarship for Providence employees not yet eligible for South's employee educational discount. For the fall 2024 term, 44 Providence employees received scholarships.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS Getting the Message Out

The University of South Alabama has an amazing story to tell. As a comprehensive research university that owns its own academic health system, USA relies on storytellers and image makers to spread the news of South's transformational impact through education, healthcare and research.

While the demise of longtime media outlets and the rise of new modes of communications have altered the media landscape, the Office of Marketing and Communications is constantly retooling its approaches and taking advantage of new technologies to expand its reach.

For instance, a news story in May about a newly discovered great white shark off the coast of Alabama, named Miss Pawla by the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, generated international media hits and interest. Likewise, expanded billboard usage throughout the state and region, in addition to targeted digital signage at baggage claim areas in five busy airports during the Thanksgiving and Christmas travel seasons, goes a long way toward assisting in student recruitment and retention.

The Marketing and Communications team helped earn national coverage in Inside Higher Ed magazine and other outlets of our Jag Days

recruitment bus trips. In addition, the office's work, in collaboration with the USA National Alumni Association, on a successful redesign of South Magazine has won praise from both alumni and supporters throughout Jag Nation.

The first revamped issue focused on South's 60th Anniversary. The second issue using the new format highlights some of the many traditions that have helped to make USA such a special place.

Following a redesign of the Daily Digest, the office this past year launched the weekly South Today e-newsletter for students and employees to focus attention on internal communications.

After more than seven years of "We are South," the office launched a brand refresh to help tell our story better. The process began with a survey of thousands of stakeholders to learn what people think of the University today. This effort will continue with developing new brand language and other creative materials as the new brand launches in the months ahead.

Part of the fun – and challenge – that goes with an exciting new chapter of growth, opportunity and impact is telling South's story. Each of us has a role in disseminating the message, which we can sum up in two simple words: Go Jags!





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