

**The University of South Alabama**

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**The Gulf Coast's Education Leader**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE SELF-STUDY REPORT**

### **History of the Institution**

The University of South Alabama (USA) was chartered by act of the Alabama Legislature in May 1963, and a Board of Trustees appointed by the governor elected Dr. Frederick P. Whiddon president. USA graduated its first class in June 1967 and was initially accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in December 1968. Accreditation was reaffirmed by SACS in 1983 and 1993. Student enrollment increased steadily, and an extensive physical plant was constructed to meet the higher-education demands of the growing Gulf Coast region.

Today, USA includes a 1,200 acre main campus on University Boulevard in west Mobile, the USA Springhill campus on Springhill Avenue, and the Brookley Center on Old Bay Front Road. The teaching hospitals of the University include the USA Medical Center on Fillingim Street, the USA Children's and Women's Hospital located on Center Street, and the USA Knollwood Park Hospital located on Girby Road. Also included is the USA Baldwin County Campus located in Fairhope, Alabama, which was approved by SACS in 1986. USA is the only major institution of higher learning on the north central Gulf Coast.

Because the other major universities in Alabama are located over 200 miles distant, USA is strategically located to serve a population of more than a million citizens within a 100 mile radius. The University serves as a comprehensive, urban, coeducational public institution of

higher education offering bachelor's, master's, and five doctoral degrees to students throughout the region and many foreign countries. Its fully implemented PhD programs are in the areas of basic medical sciences, marine sciences, communication sciences and disorders, and instructional design and development. The University's Medical College has offered the Doctor of Medicine degree since 1973.

USA is classified by SACS as a Level VI institution, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classifies USA as a "Doctoral/Research-Intensive" university. Its current enrollment exceeds 12,000 students, of which 2,441 are graduate students. To serve these students, USA employs 879 full- and part-time faculty and a workforce of 5,800 citizens from the surrounding area.

University of South Alabama students compare favorably with students nationally. The composite mean ACT score for freshmen in 2000 was 22.3 compared to 21.0 for the nation. The retention rate for freshmen at USA is 66%. Forty-nine percent of new freshmen are selected from the top 25% of their high school class. Ninety-eight percent of the student body is drawn from Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and foreign countries. To support these students, USA provides \$44 million in financial aid to students annually.

USA is organized into nine colleges and schools, fifty-nine departments, and ninety-nine fields of study. Its professional schools are accredited by their respective professional associations, and the University prides itself on its success as a research institution with a growing national reputation. During 2001, the institution was awarded over \$35 million in extramurally-funded grants of which \$21,800,000 is for support of its varied research programs.

The University of South Alabama is noted for its achievements in the areas of health, marine sciences and engineering research, extensive use of educational technology, and rapidly

developing distance-learning programs. Instruction in academic courses is provided primarily by faculty; very few graduate students teach academic courses. USA is also noted for its exceptionally high success rate on licensure and certification examinations in nursing, allied health, accounting, and education. One reason for the high student success rates is USA's average class size of 20 students that permits maximum attention to the needs of the individual student. USA has graduated more than 47,000 people into the work force, including 1,500 medical doctors; 8,400 teachers and school administrators; 4,500 nurses; 2,600 engineers; 1,700 accountants; and 1,200 computer science professionals. Through its hospitals and clinics, USA serves more than 250,000 people per year, about one-third of whom have no insurance and otherwise might go without health care.

In summary, the University of South Alabama is an educationally mature institution fulfilling a mission emphasizing commitments to teaching, research, service, health care, and health care education. The following self-study report documents the varied ways in which USA accomplishes this mission.

### **Purposes of the Self-Study Report**

As outlined in the institutional self-study's statement of goals, the primary purpose of the self-study is to improve the institution's educational programs and provide a basis for future planning. The self-study was initiated by evaluating all institutional programs according to SACS criteria and the institution's own strategic plan. The self-study report documents the extent to which USA meets, partially meets, or fails to meet those criteria, and provides recommendations for fully achieving all standards.

USA has benefited from its three previous accreditation self-studies and fully expects that the current self-study will be equally productive. The recommendations offered by the principal committees and the SACS reaffirmation committee will serve as a basis for short- and long-range

planning and budgeting.

### **Institutional Issues**

There are five main issues of significance on which USA is currently focusing. These issues were identified as being of central importance to USA by the University Long-Range Planning Committee. The Committee is composed of members of the University Board of Trustees, alumni, administration, faculty members, students, and the community. The issues are as follows:

1. Building the University's academic quality and improving the learning environment of all campuses. Objectives include improving and expanding libraries, classrooms and laboratories; providing new and challenging opportunities for faculty development and research; pursuing innovation in course and program delivery through electronic technology; developing innovative degree programs that are relevant to the State's needs and that make efficient use of the University's resources; and continuing to improve opportunities for faculty-student interaction.
2. Improving the quality of student life and the overall campus atmosphere. Objectives include increasing the number and amount of scholarships; improving student retention and graduation rates; enhancing the sense of campus community while encouraging diversity; and building an environment that rewards outstanding students and nurtures in the average student the inspiration to excel.
3. Reinforcing and improving the public image of the institution. Objectives include publicizing the University's impact on the community's economy, culture, and health; promoting involvement of faculty, students, and staff in organizations and projects that communicate the University's commitment to the community; improving communication with alumni and expanding opportunities for alumni participation in

- campus events and programs; and pursuing partnerships with business, civic organizations, and government agencies to better our state and community.
4. Improving public and private financial support for the University. Objectives include working with the local legislative delegation to bring South Alabama's per-student appropriations to adequate and equitable levels; involving the University community, friends, alumni, and constituents in advocating South Alabama's contributions to the community and need for support; improving philanthropic support for University scholarships, faculty development, facilities, and equipment; reviewing and improving the internal allocation of resources among programs and services; continuing to improve the University's ability to attract extramural support for research and public service programs; and encouraging appropriate and adequate support of University plans and programs by the USA Foundation.
  
  5. Improvement of planning and assessment processes. Objectives include continuing and improving the process of academic program review and long-range planning; continuing to develop student outcomes assessment and program evaluation measures in all academic programs; developing a plan for implementing new academic degree programs that build on the University's strengths and existing resources and that are responsive to the needs of the institution's constituencies; reviewing budget priorities and allocation of funds among academic programs to ensure the availability of resources required for new programs and services; developing a comprehensive, long-range parking and traffic management plan that preserves and enhances the campus atmosphere and that integrates future campus development with city planning; updating and expanding the University's Facilities Master Plan to reflect program plans, enhance access to student services, and eliminate barriers to persons with disabilities; and planning for the process of reaffirmation of the University's

accreditation by SACS in 2002-2003.

### **The Self-Study Process**

The self-study was initiated by the University President and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs with the selection of the directors and an eleven-member Steering Committee during the spring of 2000. A twelfth member was added in the spring of 2001. A self-study office was opened, and approximately one hundred faculty members and administrators were appointed to Principal Committees. An editor and editorial committee were named and an eight-member Executive Committee was formed. A total of one hundred and twenty-one USA personnel were eventually committed to the self-study. The President and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs inaugurated the self-study with a meeting of the self-study leadership in March, and Dr. Tom Benberg from SACS/COC conducted the Kick-Off in June 2000. Reviews and documentation of SACS/COC criteria were conducted during the summer and fall of 2000, and these continued through the spring and summer of 2001. Questionnaires were distributed to students, faculty, and administration, and institutional documents were collected. An extensive department self-study was completed by all fifty-nine academic departments by February 2001. A special area of focus was strategic planning and goal setting. All departments in the institution reviewed their departmental mission statement and goals. Multiple methods of measuring the extent to which the goals were achieved were devised or revised, and documentation of ways in which the resultant data were utilized to improvise programs was provided. This departmental effectiveness review has now become an annual process and the documents are maintained in the Self-Study Office.

During this time, the self-study director served as an observer on a SACS Visiting Committee, attended each SACS annual meeting, was selected for inclusion in the COC Evaluator Registry, and participated in training sessions for new evaluators at the SACS/COC Annual Meeting in

December 2000. The self-study director also attended the SACS Regional Accreditation Review Project Meeting in New Orleans in October 2000 and served as a Visiting Committee evaluator on a substantive change committee in 2001. USA has continually demonstrated its commitment to the SACS/COC accreditation process through the active service of faculty and administrators as Visiting Committee evaluators and chairs.

The *Self-Study Report* was prepared during the fall of 2001 and, after an institution-wide review, was revised, printed and will be sent to SACS in the spring of 2002. While the SACS criteria reports were being prepared by the Principal Committees and reviewed by the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee worked on the recommendations suggested by the Principal Committees. Review, implementation, and correction of the recommendations continued through spring 2002. The *Addendum to the Self-Study Report*, a follow-up report to the self-study, was prepared during the summer of 2002 and sent to SACS at the end of the summer. The *Addendum* detailed USA's response to the Principal Committee's recommendations and provided documentation of positive changes in the institution's educational programs and planning. The self-study team then turned its energies toward preparing for the visit of the reaffirmation committee scheduled for November 17, 2002.

### **Organization of the Self-Study Report**

The *Self-Study Report* carefully parallels the format of the SACS *Criteria for Accreditation*. The *Report* includes a table of contents, an introduction, a review of the **must** statements from Section I through VI, a table of recommendations and a summary. Each major section contains an introduction. Documentation for each section will be available for the Visiting Committee at USA.

The *Addendum to the Self-Study Report* addresses the institutional response to each recommendation offered by the Principal Committees, describes the results of implementation,

and provides pertinent up-dates. The data are organized section by section, I through VI.

The *Institutional Response to the Visiting Committees Recommendations* document will contain USA's section-by-section response to the recommendations of the Visiting Committee and USA's plans for implementation of the recommendations. As necessary, it may also contain additional documentation or correction of errors of fact.

### **Compliance Requirements**

The *Self-Study Report* concludes its review of each **must/should** statement with a determination by the appropriate Principal Committee of the degree to which USA is in compliance with the criterion. The determination indicates that the institution is either in compliance, in partial compliance, or not in compliance with the criterion. When a Principal Committee determined that USA was not in compliance or only partially in compliance, the committee prepared a recommendation. The recommendation focused USA upon a specific area in need of attention. The recommendations were reviewed by the relevant Principal Committee, the Steering Committee, and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee had the responsibility and authority to approve the changes necessary to bring the institution into compliance with the criteria. It was the intention of the institution to achieve compliance with every criterion.

In some instances, the Principal Committees felt that although USA was in compliance with a criterion, more could be done to enhance USA's performance in that area. In such instances, the Principal Committees wrote "Proposals for Excellence." The Executive Committee reviewed each proposal during 2002 and made every effort to implement proposals wherever possible.

### **Self-Study Committee Members**

The self-study director is Roger C. Du Mars, Professor of Behavioral Studies and Educational

Technology, and the co-director is Judy P. Stout, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Executive Committee is composed of V. Gordon Moulton, University President (ex officio); Pat C. Covey, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Carl C. Moore, Dean of the Mitchell College of Business; Robert A. Shearer, Assistant to the President for Academics; John E. Morrow, 1993 Self-Study Director (advisory); Alfred Yeager, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning; Betsy Bennett, Vice Dean for Student Affairs and Medical Education; Thomas Wells, Dean of Continuing Education and Special Programs, Judy P. Stout; and Roger C. Du Mars. The self-study director chairs the Steering and Executive Committees.

Table 1 describes the self-study Steering Committee, and Table 2 depicts the impressive growth of the University of South Alabama since the last accreditation reaffirmation.

**Table 1**  
**Self-Study Steering Committee**

1.	Roger C. Du Mars	Professor of Behavioral Studies and Educational Technology	Self-Study Director, and Steering and Executive Committees Chair
2.	Judy P. Stout	Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs	Self-Study Co-Director and Steering Committee Co-Chair; Executive Committee member
3.	Larry Beason	Associate Professor of English and Director of Composition	Self-Study Editor
4.	William J. Korzun	Chair; Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences	Section I: Principles and Philosophy
5.	Ellwood B. Hannum	Associate Dean of Continuing Education and Special Programs	Section II: Institutional Purpose
6.	Alfred H. Yeager	Assistant Vice President of Institutional Research and Planning	Section III: Institutional Effectiveness
7.	Victoria L. Rivizzigno	Associate Professor of Geography	Section IV: Educational Programs: Undergraduate
8.	Rosemary S. Rhodes	Associate Dean of Nursing	Section IV: Educational Programs: Graduate
9.	Phillip E. Norris	Director: Baldwin County Campus	Section IV: Educational Programs: Publications, DL, Records

10.	Charles W. Newell	Chair, Department of Radiologic Science	Section IV: Educational Programs: Faculty
11.	Marjorie L. Icenogle	Associate Professor of Management	Section V: Educational Support: Library and Technology
12.	Robert H. Bennett &	Assistant Professor of Management	Section V: Educational Support: Student Development and Athletics
13.	Joel W. Erdmann	Associate Professor of Health, PE & LS	
14.	Donald L. Moak	Chair of Departments of Finance and Economics	Section VI: Administrative Processes
15.	Thomas L. Wells	Dean of Continuing Education and Special Programs	Resource
16.	Betsy D. Bennett	Vice Dean for Student Affairs and Medical Education	Advisory

Table 2

## The University of South Alabama

## A Ten Year Comparison \*

Funding	1990 – 1991	2000 – 2001
State Funds	\$ 47,373,150	\$ 74,712,938
Local Appropriations	2,087,788	576,647
Educational Activities	926,323	1,362,538
Grants and Contracts	26,537,700	44,329,926
Tuition & Fees	20,204,324	34,514,945
University Endowment	998,742	3,160,293
Hospitals	117,184,929	271,891,459
Auxiliary & Other Sources	14, 179,232	23,000,789
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 229,461,197</b>	<b>\$ 453,549,535</b>
Student Enrollment **		
Full-Time Students	68 %	63.3 %
Part-Time Students	32 %	36.7 %

Undergraduate Students	9,869	9,232
Graduate Students	1,715	2,441
Total	11,584	11,673
<b>Student Diversity**</b>		
Females	56 %	60.10 %
Caucasian	82 %	73.70 %
African-American	10 %	14.70 %
Hispanic	0.8 %	1.30 %
Other	2.2 %	10.30 %
<b>Number of Degrees Awarded*</b>	<b>1990-1991</b>	<b>2000 – 2001</b>
Bachelor's	1,252	1,391
Graduate (M.A. + Ph.D.)	345	502
First Professional (M.D.)	59	58
<b>Faculty</b>		
Full-Time Faculty	669	688
Part-Time Faculty	148	213
Total	817	901
Full-Time Faculty Holding Doctoral Degree	73 %	79.36 %
Full Time Female Faculty	30 %	33 %
Full Time Minority Faculty	10% (1996)	12 %
<b>Libraries*</b>		
Total Bound Volumes Held	317,640	410,075
<b>Physical Plant Assets</b>		
Land, Building & Equipment	\$ 250,314,343	\$ 393,903,516

\* Data compiled from The University of South Alabama *Statistical Profiles*, 1990-1991 and 2000-2001.

\*\* Includes College of Medicine. 157 Medical Center house Staff not included in

computations.

