

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND  
PROFESSIONAL STUDIES  
VOLUME 13  
FALL 2021

# PILLARS



**Barton  
Academy**

EDUCATION ALUMS REMAKE HISTORY





# PILLARS

VOLUME 13 | FALL 2021

A publication of the University of South Alabama  
College of Education and Professional Studies

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The mission of the University of South Alabama  
College of Education and Professional Studies  
is to transform our community and expand our  
outreach through a commitment to excellence in  
education and human services, advancement of  
innovative research, and supporting the dedicated  
service of our faculty, staff, students and alumni.

 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES





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## FROM THE INTERIM DEAN

On behalf of the College of Education and Professional Studies, I am honored to introduce the 2021 edition of the Pillars – our publication about the people and the many activities and events that are happening in the college.

The 2020-2021 academic year will be looked back on and studied for decades to come. At the College of Education and Professional Studies, we will look back at this period as a time filled with extraordinary challenges, but also filled with life-changing accomplishments due to the response of our students, faculty, staff and alumni. Our sense of connectedness and community — our ability to safely work together toward common goals — is the reason we remained true to our mission and able to offer on-campus classes and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking back at this past academic year, we have reason to celebrate collective milestones and the achievements of our students and faculty. In November 2020, the College of Education and Professional Studies received full accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. This accreditation is a testament to our commitment to preparing exemplary school professionals in the P-12 setting. In March 2021, the Alabama State Department Board of Education acted to adopt a resolution to extend approval of all College of Education and Professional Studies Educator Preparation Programs under the Continuous Improvement in Educator Preparation process. We were recognized as the first institution in the state to achieve the distinction. Our faculty and administrative staff are commended for their work and dedication that led to achieving this recognition. It is our vision that we continue to be a leading learning-centered and innovative college recognized for educational and research excellence. That said, faculty in FY 2020 received external funding that totaled over \$4.5 million and excelled in numerous scholarly activities in research, journal and book publications, and presentations made to professional organizations.

I remain confident that a bright future is in store for the college. We attract and instruct students across various disciplines, research the bounds of human performance both intellectually and physiologically, provide instruction, offer internship and service-learning experiences, and champion the latest teaching methodologies and technologies. We are student centered, provide for the education of individuals across the life span, and are committed to the centrality of diversity, social justice and democratic citizenship. We believe teaching and learning should be informed by scholarly

research and effective practice with improvement based on sound research. The building of transformative educational experiences for students should be focused on disciplinary knowledge; problem solving; leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills; and personal health and well-being. We strive to provide leadership in the development of collaborative, professional relationships with schools, organizations and other institutions focused on the improvement of education and human services in our communities and workplace settings.

I am grateful to work alongside students, faculty and staff who are committed to learning and leading and who focus on achieving excellence while lifting each other up. As we transition from one academic year into the next, with hope and excitement, we remain confident we can and will learn, share and innovate. For now, I hope you will enjoy reading about some of the terrific things happening in the college!

John E. Kovalski, Ph.D.  
Interim Dean  
College of Education and Professional Studies

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# STUDENT AWARDS

## Spotlighting Outstanding Departmental Student Awardees

University of South Alabama  
College of Education and  
Professional Studies faculty, staff  
and students were honored at the  
2021 Spring Awards Ceremony.  
Congratulations to all awardees for  
your hard work and success. To see  
a full list of all student awardees,  
visit page nine in the magazine.  
Faculty and staff awardees are  
featured on pages 46-47.







**PATRICIA SPENCER** was named the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences Dr. Chandru Hiremath Memorial Endowed Award Instructional Design and Development Ph.D. Student of the Year. Spencer earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and master's in history. She earned a Ph.D. in Instructional Design and Development in May 2021. During her time at South, Spencer served as the treasurer for the Instructional Design and Development Graduate Association and a member of Phi Kappa Phi. In addition, Spencer has recently accepted a postdoctoral

**"I am passionate about program evaluation... because of its potential to improve outcomes in people's lives..."**

fellowship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where she will work on program evaluation in the Division of Adolescent and School Health. This is in line with her plans to become an evaluation specialist and work on projects that specifically promote education, economic and health equity. "I am passionate about program evaluation, an area within instructional design and development, because of its potential to improve outcomes in people's lives through the continuous focus on refining programs, courses, training or any type of intervention, through the use of data to inform decision making and make significant changes."



**SHELDONNA CHAPPELL** was named the Department of Integrative Studies Outstanding Educational Studies Student. Chappell earned a bachelor's degree in educational studies with a concentration in teaching and learning and a minor in criminal justice. Originally from Fort Payne, Ala., Chappell is currently in the K-6 alternative master's in education degree program at South. She has a passion for making a difference in the world, especially through the education of children. Chappell completed a virtual internship at the Waterfront Rescue Mission at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. She created instructional videos on resume writing, completing job applications and interviewing for the clients. Upon completing her master's degree, Chappell would like to teach kindergarten or third grade, and she said she might even consider a Ph.D. program after some experience in the classroom. "Dr. Paige Vitulli has had such a positive influence during my last year of undergrad and also coming into my master's degree. I have had very honest conversations with Dr. Vitulli about the things going on in the world around us and she has also been there for me academically and pushes me to do more than I thought I could."

**"Dr. Paige Vitulli has had such a positive influence during my last year of undergrad and also coming into my master's degree. I have had very honest conversations with [her] about the things going on in the world..."**



**MERRITT VISE** was named the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport Outstanding Exercise Science Undergraduate Student. Vise earned a bachelor's degree in exercise science in May 2021 with a 4.0 GPA. Originally from Lucedale, Miss., Vise was active in the University's

**"I am passionate about my field because no matter who you are or what career you pursue, you take part in movement."**

Honors College, which has rigorous requirements of the major, and served as a member of the Pre-Occupational Therapy Club. In addition, Vise has worked throughout school, served his community in various roles and conducted ongoing research with the Department of Occupational Therapy. Vise also served as a Jag Pal, a peer academic leader where he sent weekly emails to the class to present on various college success topics such as study skills and served as a resource for the students as they adjusted to college. Vise was recently accepted to the occupational therapy graduate program at South. "I decided to come to South because I loved the campus and because the Allied Health programs were the best in the area. I am passionate about my field because no matter who you are or what career you pursue, you take part in movement. I love kinesiology so much because in the end, we all need to move in some way or another. I see a career in kinesiology as being a professional in helping people achieve their own goals."



**AUSTIN ROPER** was named the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management Outstanding Intern of the Year. Originally from Greenville, Ala., Roper earned a bachelor's degree in hospitality and tourism management in May 2021. Roper served as vice president for the Hospitality Club, president of Eta Sigma Delta, and ambassador for the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management. He completed an internship with Meyer Vacation Rentals in Gulf Shores, Ala. After completing his internship, Roper was hired as the owner's relations manager with the company. He now serves as a graduate assistant in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice at South. "When I was touring different universities in high school, South was welcoming and made me feel like I belonged. It had a small school atmosphere within a large university, and that was very comforting to me, especially coming from a small town."

**"South was welcoming and made me feel like I belonged. It had a small school atmosphere within a large university, and that was very comforting to me, especially coming from a small town."**

In my field, hospitality and tourism management, it is truly a world of opportunities. I am passionate about this field because I get the chance to serve others while also being able to travel and be immersed in other cultures from around the world."





**KARLESHA SPRINGS** was named the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences Outstanding Educational Media - Library (M.Ed.) Graduate Student. Springs recently earned a master's in educational media. As a wife and a mother of three, Springs stays focused on structure, family and faith. After completing her first internship at a local high school, Springs saw a great need to reach students before they enrolled in college or vocational schools. She hopes to one day work at a high school to help students think critically and become better prepared when navigating complex digital tools or content.

**"I had selected the most challenging option for the program and told her that I was going to go for it."**

"Dr. Pamela Moore motivates and encourages her graduate students to strive for excellence within our career and personal goals. When I first began my journey in the graduate program, it was not easy. In fact, I had several personal and professional setbacks. In January 2020, I had an advising meeting with Dr. Moore and shared my concerns with her about some of the situations. She told me there were seasons in our lives and sometimes, we have to do what we have to do. I was unsure at the moment of those words she'd spoken to me. She counseled me and gave me two options for my next steps in the program. Afterwards, I prayed, cried, and stood on faith. I was able to be still and at that moment, I had selected the most challenging option for the program and told her that I was going to go for it."



**GEORGIA DAVIS** was named the Outstanding PASSAGE USA Student. Davis graduated in May 2021 and received her PASSAGE USA (Preparing All Students Socially and Academically for Gainful Employment) Certificate. While at South, Davis enrolled in a variety of classes that complemented her interest in art, business, education, communication and fitness.

**"She taught me a lot about cooking, and now I am making progress in getting over my fear of cooking."**

Davis is originally from Fairhope, and her favorite thing about South was going to the Starbucks in the library. Through the PASSAGE USA program, Davis had access to multiple employment experiences on and off campus. Her future plans are still undecided. "Ms. Alex (Alexandra Chanto-Wetter) always makes sure that I don't worry about different things," Davis said. "She taught me a lot about cooking, and now I am making progress in getting over my fear of cooking."



**VICTORIA DIXON** was named the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences Outstanding Clinical Mental Health Counseling (M.S.) Graduate Student. Dixon earned a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in May 2021 and graduated Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor's in psychology. She also previously received the Dr. Vaughn Millner Endowed Scholarship in Counseling. Dixon is an involved member of the Chi Sigma Iota counseling honor society. She plans to continue her education in the area of clinical psychology. In the fall 2021, Dixon recently began doctoral studies in South's Clinical and Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Program.

**"The College of Education and Professional Studies' community outreach and commitment to continuing education makes the college unique."**

"The College of Education and Professional Studies' community outreach and commitment to continuing education makes the college unique," Dixon said. "I have personally had multiple positive contributors to my experiences at South. Dr. Tres Stefurak, who has been a committed mentor and advocate throughout my educational journey, and Dr. Yvette Getch, who has always been communicative and looking for ways to meet her students' needs, are two that stand out."



**ZAIN SAYEGH** was named the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education Outstanding K-6 Teacher Education Student Teacher. Sayegh graduated summer 2021 and received a bachelor's degree in K-6 teacher education with a minor in chemistry.

**"She always made me feel like I could do anything."**

Originally from Auburn, Ala., Sayegh was a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta Club and served as a tutor at the Center for Academic Excellence for general chemistry and First Year Experience mentor. She also served as a WileyPLUS Student Partner for Organic Chemistry. Sayegh was involved in the March for Life and the World Food Championship. She took care of children after school at St. Paul's Episcopal School and tutored children at St. Luke's Elementary School. She also volunteered at Providence Hospital and Pediatric Associates of Mobile. "Dr. Karen Morrison has been amazing and never fails to help me whenever I need it," Sayegh said. "She would always help me and email me back at any time day or night. She always made me feel like I could do anything. She has helped me grow so much and gain so much more confidence as a future teacher."





**BROOKE ALEXIS BARRE** was named the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport Outstanding Therapeutic Recreation Undergraduate Student. Barre earned a bachelor's degree in leisure studies in May 2021. Originally from Mobile, Barre knew she wanted to major in therapeutic recreation from the first time she heard the profession explained. "Attending South has allowed me to continue working toward my passions as I completed my coursework," Barre said. "My first passion is using the healing power of horses to help people. I was able to continue working at Celisse's School of the Equestrian Arts. This organization is a therapeutic riding center that serves individuals with physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities. My second passion is circus performing. Since age 11, I have performed trick horseback riding in front of audiences. Trick riding involves performing stunts like standing up and hanging upside down on horses. I am now a professional equestrian circus performer, and attending classes at South made it possible to keep practicing my skills with my circus troupe in Mobile."

**"My intuition told me that this profession could give me the tools to turn my two passions into a career."**

I knew I wanted to major in therapeutic recreation from the first time I heard the profession explained. My intuition told me that this profession could give me the tools to turn my two passions into a career."



**GILLIANNE SHARP** was named the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education Outstanding Early Childhood Education Student. Sharp received a bachelor's degree in K-6 elementary education and master's in early childhood education from South. Originally from Huntsville, Sharp came to South to run cross country and track. She has always loved working with kids and students. Sharp believes that children have so much to offer, and spending time with them and teaching them is a great way for her to get a glimpse of what is going on in their minds. She is currently a K3 teacher at St. Paul's Early Education Center.

**"My professors, classmates and mentor teachers were exactly the support I needed to succeed and enjoy my experience."**

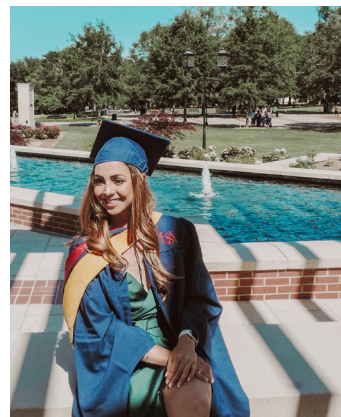
"South Alabama was a place of great growth for me as an educator and an individual. My professors, classmates and mentor teachers during my internship were exactly the support I needed to succeed and enjoy my experience. Another influential place for me during my education was St. Paul's Church, where I found my second family. Without the knowledge I received from South, I would not have felt confident in accepting a job at the wonderful Early Education Center of St. Paul's Church."



**KEARRIA FREED** was named the Department of Integrative Studies Outstanding Interdisciplinary Studies Student. Freed earned a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in human services in May 2021. She chose South because the interdisciplinary studies program was flexible and it allowed her to choose courses that supported her educational goals. Freed credits Bob Charlebois, director of the Office of Adult Learner Services, as an amazing asset to her experience at South. He guided her during her transition from a community college to South through the Pathway USA program. Freed plans to obtain her master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and assist disabled individuals with employment, education and independent living.

**"My mother is my biggest inspiration, because she has exemplified what it is to be a hard-working first generation graduate with multiple degrees in education."**

"My mother is my biggest inspiration, because she has exemplified what it is to be a hard-working first generation graduate with multiple degrees in education." For two years, following a 2015 shooting, Freed was unable to walk unassisted. Read more about Freed's personal and educational journey on pages 34-35.



**GIOVANA MAYMON REYNOSO** was named the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport Outstanding Sport Management Graduate Student. Reynoso earned a master's in sport management and master's in health in May 2021. Originally from Mexico City, Reynoso earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Baylor University. During her time at South, she served as graduate assistant for the women's golf team. "When I first enrolled and started my master's programs at South Alabama, I never thought they would help and lead me to where I am today."

**"I just got an incredible job thanks to every person that was part of my journey at South."**

I just got an incredible job thanks to every person that was part of my journey at South. My teachers and mentor Dr. (Shelley) Holden made sure I would be prepared for the next step, and there are not enough words to thank them. These two programs changed my life, and I believe anybody that chooses South as their second home would be extremely lucky. I just got the job as the assistant coach for the women's golf team at Texas A&M. I am so thankful for everyone that helped me achieve this dream, and I hope I get to come back and coach at South again one day."





**HUNTER APPLING** was named the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education Outstanding Secondary Education Student Teacher. Appling graduated May 2021 with a degree in Secondary Social Studies 6-12. Originally from Cullman, Ala., Appling served as a member of the USA Track and Field team and was a part of the South Alabama Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. He enjoyed being a history major living in Mobile because of Mobile's rich history. Appling loved meeting new people from all different backgrounds while he was at South. He is currently living back home in Cullman County and teaching ninth and tenth grade history at West Morgan High School in Trinity, Ala. He decided to forgo his remaining track eligibility to begin teaching. He is also pursuing a master's degree online at South. "I did not have a single professor from the College of Education and Professional Studies that was not spectacular. I loved each and every one of my professors, especially Dr. (Susan) Santoli, who is a true gem. I was in the field within my first year at South. After that year, I was in the field each semester, observing and learning."

**"I was in the field within my first year at South."**

This was so helpful for me because it showed me that I knew that what I was pursuing was right for me. I absolutely loved my field experience here at USA, especially my student teaching internship. The amazing support from our professors and passion we see in them combined with amazing field experiences at an early stage in our academic careers is what sets South apart. I truly have loved my college professors so much. They have been amazing."



**ASHLEY OAKMAN** was named the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management Outstanding Undergraduate Student. Oakman is originally from Birmingham, Ala., and she graduated with a bachelor's degree in hospitality and tourism management in December 2020.

**"I have always been passionate about culture, language, and travel, and when I discovered that I could focus on those things as a career, I had to jump at the opportunity."**

During her time at South, Oakman was in the Jaguar Marching Band and a member of Eta Sigma Delta Honor Society. Her thesis in the Honors College was titled "Enhancing Cultural Learning in Walt Disney World's Epcot." "I decided to study at South simply due to the hospitality and tourism program offered here. I have always been passionate about culture, language and travel, and when I discovered that I could focus on those things as a career, I had to jump at the opportunity. It also helps that I am completely obsessed with one of the largest hospitality entities in the world, the Walt Disney Company."

## 2021 Student Awardees

### Counseling and Instructional Sciences

#### PATRICIA SPENCER

*Dr. Chandru Hiremath Memorial Endowed Award Instructional Design and Development Ph.D. Student of the Year*

#### JULIE ANDEL

*Dr. John E. Morrow Sr., Memorial Award Instructional Design and Development Master's Student of the Year*

#### VICTORIA DIXON

*Outstanding Clinical Mental Health Counseling (M.S.) Graduate Student*

#### KAITLYN MOUNT

*Outstanding School Counseling (M.Ed.) Graduate Student*

#### KARLESHA SPRINGS

*Outstanding Educational Media - Library (M.Ed.) Graduate Student*

#### JAIME KOPPERSMITH

*Outstanding Educational Media and Technology (M.S.) Graduate Student*

### Health, Kinesiology, and Sport

#### GEENA PITTS

*Outstanding Exercise Science Graduate Student*

#### MERRITT VISE

*Outstanding Exercise Science Undergraduate Student*

#### PAIGE STRIBLING

*Outstanding Health and Physical Education/Teacher Certification Undergraduate Student*

#### HUNTER PETERS

*Outstanding Sport and Recreation Management Undergraduate Student*

#### BROOKE ALEXIS BARRE

*Outstanding Therapeutic Recreation Undergraduate Student*

#### GIOVANA MAYMON REYNOSO

*Outstanding Sport Management Graduate Student*

### Hospitality and Tourism Management

#### ASHLEY OAKMAN

*Outstanding Undergraduate Student*

#### AUSTIN ROPER

*Outstanding Intern of the Year*

#### ALEXA WEAVER

*Outstanding Intern of the Year*

### Integrative Studies

#### KEARRIA FREED

*Outstanding Interdisciplinary Studies Student*

#### SHELDONNA CHAPPELL

*Outstanding Educational Studies Student*

### Leadership and Teacher Education

#### GILLIANNE SHARP

*Outstanding Early Childhood Education Student*

#### ZAIN SAYEGH

*Outstanding K-6 Teacher Education Student Teacher*

#### TEMPLE ZIMLICH

*Outstanding Graduate Student - Elementary Education*

#### CAITLIN MCCOY

*Outstanding Undergraduate Student - K-6 Teacher Education*

#### ABIGAIL CRAWFORD

*Outstanding Graduate Student - Special Education (M.Ed.)*

#### GEORGIA DAVIS

*Outstanding PASSAGE USA Student*

#### HUNTER APPLING

*Outstanding Secondary Education Student Teacher*

#### LAUREN BOSHELL

*Outstanding Student - Secondary Education*



## Transforming the Community through a Commitment to Excellence

The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies has several externally funded community-engaged projects led by various faculty members. One key aspect of the college's mission is to transform the community through a collective commitment to excellence in education and human services. In order to fulfill this mission, the college engages in teaching, research and service partnerships with community entities such as K-12 schools, non-profit human service agencies and partners in industries such as nutrition, exercise, hospitality and tourism. Through these mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships, the college participates in expanding the community's capacity for delivering highly effective educational and other human services.

The Office of Contracts and Grants is the administrative unit within the college that provides leadership in the identification, development and coordination of public and private external funding that supports faculty projects that further the college's strategic goals.

"The college's ability to effectively garner external funding while also maintaining a commitment to community-engaged work compliment one another," said Dr. Tres Stefurak, associate dean and director of the Office of Contracts and Grants. "When we are able to find financial backing for values-driven community-engaged faculty projects, these efforts can become a rising tide that lifts all ships. The result is that our faculty's competence grows, but so does the capacity of our community partners to conduct their important work."

### Externally Funded Community Engagement Projects

# \$3,499,897

**Southeastern Regional Robert Noyce Conference** - This funding supported hosting the Noyce Scholars regional conference to promote STEM education.

*Funded by: National Science Foundation*

# \$464,550

**National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative** - This funding supported the work of the Mobile Police Department, Mobile Rape Crisis Center and Dr. Tres Stefurak of the USA College of Education and Professional Studies in developing comprehensive trauma-informed public safety responses to rape and sexual assault in Mobile.

*Funded by: U.S. Department of Justice*

# \$13,920

**Dr. Joe Gaston's Summer Video Production Camp** - This camp provided training for teachers and students on how to complete video production projects.

*Funded by: Mobile County Commission and Commissioner Merceria Ludgood*

# \$7,790

**110: The Story of the Last Enslaved Africans Brought to America** -

This project involved producing a documentary on the survivors of the Clotilda and their descendents.

*Funded by: Alabama Humanities Foundation*

# \$2,334,260

**PASSAGE USA Expansion** -

This will fund expansion of the PASSAGE USA program offering a college experience to students with intellectual disabilities.

*Funded by: U.S. Department of Education*

# \$91,790

**Work Experiences for PASSAGE USA Students** - This funding helped local businesses offer paid employment to students with intellectual disabilities participating in the PASSAGE USA program.

*Funded by: Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment*

# \$6,308

**Williamson Computer Coding & Computational Reasoning** -

This funded a project working with Williamson Middle Grades Preparatory Academy teachers and students to learn computer coding, robotics, engineering and computation reasoning skills.

*Funded by: Gulf Coast Resource, Conservation and Development Council*





## EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIP

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The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies is excited to announce the launch of a new podcast titled "Sincerely, South." The mission of the podcast is to have meaningful conversations with students, alumni, community partners and faculty that center around the core values of the college, such as professional excellence, lifelong learning and civil discourse.

The first episode will feature Rachel Broadhead, director, and Chasity Collier, assistant director, of the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative at the University of South Alabama.

*Available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Stitcher and all major podcast platforms.*

COMING  
NOVEMBER  
2021



**A New Podcast Production by**

**the USA College of Education**

**and Professional Studies**



## Coding with Students at Williamson Prep

**A**t the end of the 2020–2021 academic school year, seventh-grade students at Williamson Middle Grades Preparatory Academy displayed coding skills and techniques they developed through a partnership between the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies and Mobile County Public Schools.

This project was made possible by a University of South Alabama Social Justice Initiative Grant. Dr. Shenghua Zha, assistant professor in the College of Education and Professional Studies, and Dr. Joél Lewis Billingsley, associate professor of counseling and instructional sciences and former head of the College of Education and Professional Studies Diversity Council, are two of the first recipients of the grant, which has a goal of opening access to opportunities and strengthening civil and human rights in the community.

The grant program was established to support faculty research in social stratification, environmental justice and racial equity. Zha and Billingsley's winning proposal is titled "Building a Positive Learning Experience to Bridge Gender Difference and Advance Middle-Grade Students' Computational Thinking Skills."

Zha, principal investigator, and Billingsley, co-principal investigator, established the Code Team for You program, which created a positive learning experience and studied the impact of underrepresented minority students interested in computer science at Williamson Prep. Billingsley said the program started with the idea for a long-term partnership with a single school. South educators approached the Mobile County Public School System, which suggested Williamson Prep, a middle school located in the Maysville neighborhood south of Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

This most recent project at Williamson Prep included 25 seventh-grade students. At the showcase, the students demonstrated the capabilities of the robotic vehicles they coded in an obstacle course and other challenges. The opportunity allowed the students to learn skills that are important for their academic advancement and in a variety of jobs in the real world.





Zha met regularly throughout the pandemic with the seventh-grade students. She made it clear that the project was not made to just teach students how to code, but also to show them the computational thinking behind it. John'ay Rogers, an elementary education major at South, also assisted Zha in the robotics sessions to help answer questions from online students.

"Students also learned design-thinking skills, such as testing and debugging a malfunctioning car," Zha said. "We see those design-thinking skills frequently used in different organizations, such as industries, business and government. So in addition to the STEM subject knowledge, students learned the problem-solving and design-thinking skills that will benefit their future learning and career no matter what direction they choose."

**"THE STUDENTS STEPPED UP TO THE CHALLENGE TO NOT ONLY MASTER IT, BUT SHOW THEY KNEW MORE THAN WE THOUGHT THEY KNEW."**

Williamson Signature Academy Specialist Monique Pettaway said the students really soaked in the learning experiences and enjoyed the project along the way.

"These kids can tell you exactly what they are doing," Pettaway said. "Everything we're doing right now with technology has to do with coding."

Students involved in the project also had the opportunity to learn how mathematics is used in coding. Dr. Diana Nelson, a mathematics teacher at Williamson Prep, said that this project allowed the students to be creative and use their imagination.

"The students stepped up to the challenge to not only master it, but show they knew more than we thought they knew," Nelson said.

**For more on this story, scan the QR code below.**



*Dr. Shenghua Zha, assistant professor in the College of Education and Professional Studies, worked with students at Williamson Prep Academy as part of the Code Team for You program.*

## Focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In 2020, the College developed the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement below:

*The College of Education and Professional Studies is committed to creating and sustaining an inclusive environment where every student's unique identity is valued and respected, and in which students feel safe to explore their intellectual, interpersonal and professional development in order to serve competently in a multicultural world.*

*The risk of engaging in bias is always present and requires constant vigilance. Faculty, staff and administrators of the College of Education and Professional Studies are dedicated to making an active, conscious, and intentional effort to provide educational experiences, conduct research, and provide community service in a manner which furthers our collective capacity for civil discourse, which actively combats racism, sexism and other forms of bigotry, and which reflects an appreciation for diverse values and cultures of all people.*

To further the values inherent in this statement, Dr. Tres Stefurak was appointed to serve as the College Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator. In this role, Stefurak works to improve the recruitment of diverse new faculty and staff as well as work with the College Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council to build an inclusive community within the college for all. Dr. Joél Lewis Billingsley was formerly the chair of the council and now serves as the Interim Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer for South. Dr. Pamela Moore and Dr. Amy Upton will now serve as co-chairs of the council. During this academic year, the council will focus its efforts on engaging in a SWOT analysis to determine the best methods for creating an inclusive, welcoming and pluralistic environment in the College and how effective diversity, equity and inclusion practices are integrated within the curricula of academic programs within the College.





Pictured left to right: Jose Diaz-Acosta, Maura Smolinski and Ramsey Willis

## NOYCE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

**T**he Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program, funded by the National Science Foundation, responds to the critical need for K-12 teachers of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, by encouraging talented students and professionals to pursue science teaching careers. Dr. André Green, associate vice president for academic affairs and professor of science education at the University of South Alabama, was awarded the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship grant, Pathway to Science, in 2009, Pathway to Mathematics in 2011, and Pathway to Science II in 2016 in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences through their mathematics and science departments.

Dr. Susan Ferguson, associate professor and program coordinator of secondary education at the University of South Alabama, served as co-principal investigator and project director of the scholarship program and ensured that the overall goals were achieved. Ferguson advised and mentored each Noyce Scholar and has maintained close relationships with each. Over the past decade, approximately 60 scholars have graduated from the Pathway to Science and Pathway to Mathematics programs and more than 90% of the graduates are still teaching science and mathematics in the local and surrounding communities.

The scholarship program also yielded a further reaching impact in that two of the teachers have been named secondary teachers of the year for their school systems and for the region,

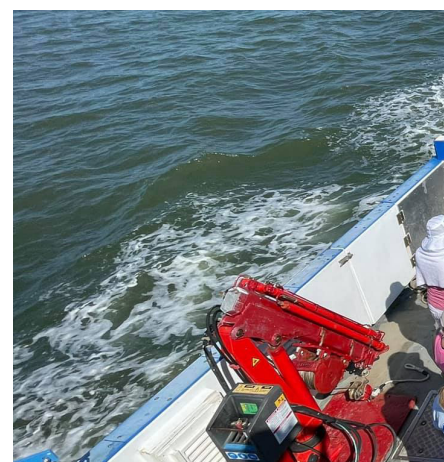
three have been secondary teacher of the year candidates for their schools, and two program graduates have continued their education by completing educational specialist degrees in teacher leadership. Additionally, more than half of the graduates serve as department chairs for the science departments at their schools, and nearly all participate in the mentorship of pre-residency scholars and early career Noyce Scholars.

Although Green's NSF Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship grants are coming to a close, the main focus in the College of Education and Professional Studies still remains to recruit, graduate and retain highly qualified science teachers in our local school systems. Green and his co-investigators brought in approximately \$3.5 million in NSF Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship grants to the University of South Alabama. Both the Pathway to Science and Pathway to Mathematics programs through the College of Education and Professional Studies and the College of Arts and Sciences put quality science and mathematics teachers into the schools to teach the next generation. Both colleges are proud of this accomplishment.

### *Noyce Scholars Serve Together at Davidson*

Three Noyce Scholars continue to bond as professionals, and their journeys have led them to serve together as educators at W.P. Davidson High School in Mobile. Jose Diaz-Acosta, Maura Smolinski and Ramsey Willis are each thankful for the Noyce scholarship program.

"I AM THANKFUL FOR THE NOYCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM BECAUSE IT TURNED WHAT I THOUGHT WOULD BE A VERY LENGTHY, EXPENSIVE AND DIFFICULT PATH INTO SOMETHING I COULD MANAGE."





Smolinski earned an Alternative Master of Education in Secondary Science Education from South in May 2017 as a Noyce Scholar. She previously worked as an alterations manager for David's Bridal and a restaurant manager in Key Largo, Fla. In 2007, Smolinski earned a bachelor's in technical design for theater. She met Willis at an informational meeting at South when she was pursuing options for a second degree. Willis convinced Smolinski that the Noyce program was a good option.

"When I was young, I had always wanted to teach, but ended up down other paths to make others happy," Smolinski said. "The one thing that I enjoyed the most about any job I had ever had was teaching and training others. I am thankful for the Noyce Scholarship program because it turned what I thought would be a very lengthy, expensive and difficult path into something I could manage. It allowed me to follow a dream and see it through a lot faster than I thought possible. The program has allowed me to learn, gain experience and network through different events and conferences and has continued to support me well into the classroom. Each generation of Noyce helps the next, and everyone you meet along the way is just a call or email away if you need them."

Smolinski currently serves as the science department chair at Davidson. She has coached soccer and volleyball and worked as an academic coach for the football team. Willis and Smolinski started a STEM club together. In summer 2016, the Noyce Scholars program invited Smolinski to work with a team of fellow scholars to host a summer STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) camp for middle school students. Smolinski was able to incorporate her design background with science to create hands-on learning opportunities for students.

Prior to earning an alternative master's degree in education in general science as a Noyce Scholar, Diaz-Acosta was not employed. He earned a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from South, and after seeing an advertisement for the Noyce Scholarship posted on a bulletin board in the Life Sciences Building, Diaz-Acosta contacted Green.

"Teaching is what I have always wanted to do since I was 15 years old after taking biology in high school," said Diaz-Acosta, who is originally from Miami and has worked at Davidson for the last five years. "Nothing makes me happier than being able to help

young people be the best version of themselves, all while sharing my enthusiasm for science. Six years after completing the Noyce program, I still network with members of my cohort and scholars from other cohorts around the country."

**"EACH GENERATION OF NOYCE HELPS THE NEXT, AND EVERYONE YOU MEET ALONG THE WAY IS JUST A CALL OR EMAIL AWAY IF YOU NEED THEM."**

Willis earned an Alternative Master of Education in Secondary Math Education in May 2015 as a Noyce Scholar. He previously earned a bachelor's degree in human resources management and a master's degree in instructional design and technology. Before starting the Noyce program, Willis worked for a Michigan-based marketing and advertising company prior to leaving his home state of Michigan to come to Alabama to teach.

"Neither my wife nor I had any family here in Alabama, and we had never been to southern Alabama," Willis said. "This was all new for us, but I knew it was what I was supposed to do because God told me so."

Willis previously taught at Williamson High School during his last semester at South and moved to Davidson after graduation. He has led many of the JROTC STEM camps and worked with the S.T.A.R.S. and S.T.R.I.P.E.S. program at South.

"I was strongly encouraged by mentors Dr. André Green and Dr. Susan Ferguson," Willis said. "There were several professors that also encouraged me and made sure I was successful – Dr. Joerg Feldvoss and Dr. Madhuri Mulekar. Without the aforementioned group of individuals, my road to success would have been much more difficult. I am very thankful for this program because teaching is rewarding and the Noyce Scholars program presented me with the opportunity to be a great teacher. I am also thankful for the Noyce Scholars program because it continues to provide support and enrichment opportunities for Noyce graduates."



## Exploring Mobile Bay

*Noyce Scholars recently explored the Gulf Coast and Mobile Bay aboard the Dauphin Island Sea Lab's research vessel Alabama Discovery. The trip was led by College of Education and Professional Studies graduate Greg Graeber, who has served as a marine educator at the sea lab for more than 18 years. The scholars joined Dr. Katie Guffey, assistant professor of science education at the USA College of Education and Professional Studies, who said "just like students, our teachers learn science by doing science in their local communities."*

*"In order to think like a student, a teacher has to become the student," said Noyce Scholar Pamela McPherson, who teaches physics at Baker High School in Mobile. "Thank you Dauphin Island Sea Lab for teaching us how rich Mobile Bay is in science content."*



## SOUTH ALABAMA RESEARCH AND INSERVICE CENTER

The South Alabama Research and Inservice Center was established by the Alabama Legislature in 1984-85 as one of 11 regional centers whose purpose is to provide professional learning to the PK-12 educators in designated public school systems in its geographic region. The center serves more than 7,500 educators in Baldwin County Public Schools, Chickasaw City Schools, Clarke County School District, Gulf Shores City Schools, Mobile County Public Schools, Monroe County Public Schools, Satsuma City Schools, Saraland City Schools, Thomasville City Schools, Washington County Public Schools and ACCEL Day and Evening Academy.

The inservice center supports professional learning in literacy, math, science, social studies, technology, special education, health, library/media, economics, administration and guidance/counseling. In alignment with the Alabama Achieves strategic plan, the center provides support for educators within these areas by supporting their journey in the National Board Certification process. This support includes monthly cohort meetings, access to resources to provide support in the process and small group mentoring. National Board Certification is a rigorous process including four components that assess a teacher's content knowledge, ability to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all students, ability to demonstrate high quality teaching practices in an effective learning environment and ability to demonstrate being an effective and reflective practitioner.

Alabama offers a national board scholarship each spring for PK-12 public school teachers in Alabama. The South Alabama Research and Inservice Center will share the application with Region 10 districts and post information on their social media pages.

# NBCT SPOTLIGHTS



**Dr. Becky Murray, Principal**  
Hollinger's Island Elementary School  
Mobile County Public Schools

"As a principal, National Board Certification is important to me because it provides me with an amazing opportunity to support my teachers in a more impactful way. It's also the best professional development I have ever received, and has completely changed how I view the art of teaching. I believe it is important that, as leaders, we set an example of continuous learning for our teachers. The most impactful support during my journey has been the collaboration between Mobile County Public Schools' National Board District Support and the University of South Alabama Research and Inservice Center; in particular, the virtual training and small group mentoring sessions. The kindness, patience, support and knowledge of the leaders and mentors has made all the difference for me. I would have been lost in a sea of confusion without them."



**Krista Marcum, Science Teacher,  
Chair for National Board Leadership Team,  
and President of Alabama NBCT Network**  
Gulf Shores High School  
Gulf Shores City Schools

"National Board Certification has transformed my teaching. I recommend all educators step up to the challenge of achieving board certification to promote deep reflection of their practice. My students benefit from my achievement each and every day as I focus on creating engaging, relevant ways for students to master content knowledge. National Board Certification opens doors for you to become a teacher leader. In addition, you will hone your skills in reviewing data and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners, build relationships with students, and become a member of a community of lifelong learners. My only regret is that I did not pursue National Board Certification earlier in my career."



**Rakesia Wilson, First-Grade Teacher**  
Saraland Early Education Center  
Saraland City Schools

"After more than 10 years of teaching, I am always looking for ways to advance my career and become a more effective educator in and outside of the classroom. The journey leading up to becoming a National Board certified teacher helped me accomplish those goals and many more. Even though it was challenging at times, the National Board was the absolute best professional decision I have ever made."





## AMSTI-USA

# Learning by Doing, Supporting Region 10 Educators

The Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative, commonly referred to as AMSTI, is the Alabama Department of Education's initiative to improve STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) teaching statewide, including improvements in the individual, as well as the integrated, STEM subjects. Its mission is to support Alabama educators and students in learning STEM through doing STEM. Each region of the state must have an AMSTI site to support schools within the region. The University of South Alabama site supports all districts in Region 10.

## *The Five E's of AMSTI*

**Equity** – ensuring learning opportunities for all

**Expertise** – delivering content and pedagogical knowledge and resources informed by evidence of effective practice

**Efficacy** – maintaining high expectations for staff and stakeholders

**Empowerment** – building sustainability and connecting STEM providers in Alabama communities

**Engagement** – learning by doing for staff and stakeholders

## AMSTI-USA

*Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative at the University of South Alabama*

### AMSTI-USA SERVES

# 10

### LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

*Mobile County Public Schools, Baldwin County Public Schools, Clarke County School District, Monroe County Public Schools, Washington County Public Schools, Thomasville City Schools, Saraland City Schools, Satsuma City Schools, Chickasaw City Schools, Gulf Shores City Schools*

*In the 2020-2021 academic year,*

### AMSTI-USA SUPPORTED

# 75 SCHOOLS.

### AMSTI-USA HAS

## 13 CURRICULUM PROFESSIONALS,

*seven of whom are math specialists and four are science specialists. Six people work to refurbish and prepare math and science kits.*

*In the 2020-2021 academic year,*

## 415 ONLINE AND 18 IN-PERSON

### TRAINING CERTIFICATIONS WERE AWARDED.

*During summer 2021,*

## 52 ONLINE AND 328 FACE-TO-FACE

### TRAINING CERTIFICATIONS WERE AWARDED.

*Despite COVID-19,*

## 813 AMSTI CERTIFICATIONS

*were processed through AMSTI-USA.*



# ADVENTURE ADVENTURE ADVENTURE ADVENTURE ADVENTURE

## LITERACY CENTER HOSTS ADVENTURE AWAITS SUMMER CAMP

“WE ARE FORTUNATE  
TO HAVE HAD SUCH  
AWESOME TALENT  
AND ROLE MODELS  
CONTRIBUTE TO THE  
EXCITEMENT AND  
LEARNING THAT TOOK  
PLACE THIS SUMMER.”

**T**he USA College of Education and Professional Studies Literacy Center 2021 Literacy-Video Production Camp was a huge success. More than 30 participants attended this year’s camp themed “Adventure Awaits.” Campers from schools across Mobile and Baldwin counties and southeast Mississippi sharpened reading, writing and technology skills.

“It was wonderful to have the chance to host the camp again this summer,” said Dr. Joe Gaston, who led the video production segment of the camp and serves as assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences. “The children were so excited to have the opportunity to interact with each other, and they created some amazing products.”

During the camp, teams wrote, illustrated and published books of mystery and adventure. Then, they turned their stories into movies using studio-quality video equipment. South teacher education students Isabella Zimlich, Cierra Carter and Mariah Nix

served as this year’s camp counselors. Tiffany Whitfield, a 2015 USA graduate, even stopped by for a special visit. Whitfield earned a dual certification in elementary education and special education from South and established the Tiffany Whitfield Scholarship for undergraduate students. She is a teacher in Kuwait and attended the Literacy Center summer camp to read her new book “Astronaut Commands” to campers.

“I enjoyed the students during the literacy camp,” Whitfield said. “I haven’t been in a classroom in 15 months due to COVID-19, so it was exciting to engage and interact with students. We enjoyed reading and playing reading comprehension games on Kahoot!”

Dr. Rebecca Giles, a professor in the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, also stopped by and shared her recently published book, “Coastal Mississippi Alphabet,” with campers. The book celebrates the people, places and events unique to the area of south Mississippi from Bay St. Louis to Pascagoula. Rhymed verse, interesting



ALWAYS  
ALWAYS  
ALWAYS  
ALWAYS  
ALWAYS

facts, historical photographs and beautifully detailed illustrations depict the rich offerings of this distinctive geographic region.

"During her visit, Dr. Giles also told us about her adventures as an author," said Joan Holland, director of the Literacy Center. "This certainly set the tone for the 2021 camp theme. We are fortunate to have had such awesome talent and role models contribute to the excitement and learning that took place this summer. I am so grateful for these two ladies, as well as Dr. Joe and our camp leaders."

The Mobile Public Library also sent their bookmobile to campus. The campers were able to obtain a library card and check out books while at camp.

"Overall, this was a very successful year, and we could not have done it without our donors and partners," Holland said.

The University of South Alabama Literacy Center is a community engagement program hosted by the College of Education and Professional Studies. Located at University



*Tiffany Whitfield read her new book "Astronaut Commands" to Literacy Center summer campers.*

Commons, the Literacy Center provides children in the local community opportunities to enhance their reading and writing skills through individual and small group sessions. The USA Literacy Center offers online and in-person reading and writing instruction. All sessions are one hour and designed to meet the individual needs of each client.

## K-12 Reading and Writing Support

**We meet the individual needs of each client.**

**Monday-Thursday | 3 – 6:30 p.m.**

Initial Assessment and Orientation Fee: \$50

One-Hour Academic Instruction: \$40 per session

Online and in-person sessions available.

Joan Holland, Director  
jmholland@SouthAlabama.edu  
(251) 380-2891

**[SouthAlabama.edu/Literacy](https://SouthAlabama.edu/Literacy)**





# Peer Mentoring is a Two-Way Street

PASSAGE USA



**T**he term mentor, in the traditional sense, means to be an advisor or supporter. For peer mentoring on a college campus, PASSAGE USA thinks mentoring means more than that. It is about developing meaningful relationships that benefit all who are involved and should be considered a two-way street where both learn from the other, improving the quality of life for all involved.

PASSAGE USA (Preparing All Students Socially and Academically for Gainful Employment) is a two- and four-year non-degree certificate program that focuses on independent living, social, employment and self-determination skills. Students in the program are diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and attend elective classes with other USA students as well as specialized classes that target the skills they need to achieve their goals.

Hannah James (pictured right) recently started her second year as a student in the PASSAGE USA program. After attending Shelton Academy in Mobile, James wanted something more.

"Before South, I was just staying at home, helping my mom around the house," James said. "I was scared at first. I liked making new friends."

Mia Pennison (pictured left), who is from Louisiana, will graduate from South in May 2022 with a bachelor's degree in secondary special education with a concentration in English. She recently started her fourth year as a PASSAGE USA mentor.

"I love working with the PASSAGE USA students because I have a passion for working with special needs adults," Pennison said. "Not only am I able to mentor them, but I am also there to be a cheerleader, friend and motivator for them so they can learn what they are capable of."

**"Not only am I able to mentor them, but I am also there to be a cheerleader, friend and motivator for them so they can learn what they are capable of."**



**“My mentors make me feel good, and I like knowing I have friends I can talk to,” James said. “We like to go to Starbucks, do homework together and go shopping. I would be lost without a mentor.”**

Like Pennison, all mentors advocate for students in PASSAGE USA to have privileges on campus that other students do. Pennison has worked with James for one year and said James has grown in multiple ways.

“She is already a very motivated student who completes her school work and takes care of her responsibilities as a student,” Pennison said. “The best change I have seen in Hannah was her ability to narrow her focus on what is important in life. This not only positively impacted her, but also her peers. Getting to watch PASSAGE USA students work together is one of the most rewarding parts of being a mentor.”

James hopes to work full time in a daycare setting one day. She started an off-campus job at United Way this fall.

“My mentors make me feel good, and I like knowing I have friends I can talk to,” James said. “We like to go to Starbucks, do homework together and go shopping. I would be lost without a mentor. Mia is my favorite mentor!”

All PASSAGE USA students are paired with peer mentors who serve as natural supports in social, academic and employment situations. Mentors work with students from one to 15 hours per week depending on the mentors' and students' schedules. Peer mentors commit for one full semester and serve as friends, study

buddies, advocates and role models for PASSAGE USA students. Most recently, 118 South students served as peer mentors for PASSAGE USA. More than 16,000 hours have been logged by volunteer mentors since January 2017. Responsibilities for mentors vary. Some go to classes with students, others go to work with them. Some help with homework, and some just hang out with PASSAGE students and socialize or engage in campus activities.

“Overall, we want mentors to help the students in PASSAGE USA learn what it means to be a student at South,” said Dr. Abigail Baxter, professor of leadership and teacher education. “We also want them to help the students learn to make their own decisions and do what needs to be done to act on those decisions.”

PASSAGE USA and the peer mentor program impact the University campus in many ways.

“We have had at least two doctoral dissertations focused on peer mentoring,” Baxter said. “We have other students who are mentors become interested in the students in PASSAGE USA and complete undergraduate honors theses related to PASSAGE USA. The mentoring program allows students access to a population that they may work with later but whom training programs typically do not include. PASSAGE USA and our mentors have also helped the larger University community better embrace the diversity dimension of ability.”

Many mentors have gone off to graduate study and careers in medicine, radiology, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, engineering, teaching and more.

“In the future, I would like to work with special needs adults either in a college environment or a day program environment,” Pennison said. “This past summer, I worked at Alabama’s Special Camp for Children and Adults, where I was able to work with special needs adults giving them the summer of a lifetime while bringing genuine value to who they are despite their disabilities. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and would like to do something of that nature after college.”

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## *Major Grant Fuels PASSAGE USA Expansion*

The College of Education and Professional Studies at the University of South Alabama has been awarded a \$2.3 million U.S. Department of Education grant to expand its PASSAGE USA program. With the new grant funding, PASSAGE USA intends to provide a four-year program option and include additional academic areas of emphasis, advanced instruction, and experience in developing independent living and employment skills.

“This program will now be new and improved,” said Dr. Abigail Baxter, professor of leadership and teacher education and the principal investigator of the PASSAGE USA grant. “We are going to have more program options, and we are planning to have a four-year program where the students will do general

academic work and then focus on an academic area in their last two years. Those academic areas of emphasis will include areas such as interdisciplinary studies, health and wellness, and hospitality and tourism management.”

The expanded program will draw in faculty and students from counseling and occupational therapy to refine the PASSAGE curriculum and allow Baxter to hire additional staff. The two-year option will still be available, and the program will grow to serve up to 60 students during the grant funding period.

The principal and co-principal investigators are Dr. Shelley Holden, investigator, health, kinesiology, and sport; Dr. Paige Vitulli, investigator, integrative

studies; Dr. Linda Reeves, co-principal, leadership and teacher education; Dr. Tara Thompson, co-principal, occupational therapy; and Dr. Yvette Getch, co-principal, counseling and instructional sciences. In addition, Dr. Robert Thompson, chair, hospitality and tourism management, will work on curriculum development.

PASSAGE USA partners include the University of South Alabama, Mobile County Public Schools, Chickasaw City Schools, Saraland City Schools, Satsuma City Schools, and the South Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment.







# South Graduates Remake History at Barton Academy

**“It’s an opportunity to do something new and different. I’ve worked at schools that were just starting before, but I don’t think I’ve been around this level of excitement.”**

**O**n a busy summer day, less than a month before the reopening of Barton Academy, Principal Amanda Jones weaves down a middle school hallway. No straight lines. She dodges workmen, avoids crates and slips between stacks of office supplies.

“I’ve got people carrying in furniture,” she said in mid-stride. “I’ve got people running back and forth. Literally, my desk was delivered today.”

Dr. Jones, who earned four education degrees at the University of South Alabama, can’t wait to show off the Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies. The oldest public school in the state of Alabama has a new mission and identity.

From the outside, the magnet school remains a Greek Revival monument in downtown Mobile. On the inside, it features labs with 3D printers and lounges with mod furniture that invite students to sit down and share problems and solutions.

“It’s an 1836 exterior,” Jones said, “for a 21st century learning environment.”

Most of her teachers are South graduates who embrace the challenge of starting a new school with a nontraditional approach to education.

Barton Academy offers flexible schedules to pursue unique learning experiences. There is an emphasis on global studies, foreign languages and fine arts. Another priority is entrepreneurial skills such as communication, creativity and critical thinking.

“We have a lot of collaborative spaces for students to work together,” Jones said. “We’re doing project-based learning that is driven by student questioning, exploration and critical thinking.”

The historic school building, designed by James Gallier and Charles and James Dakin, has been a fixture on Government Street for nearly two centuries. The walls of the three-story structure appear bright white behind live oaks and a black wrought-iron fence.





*Photo of Barton Academy in 1896, courtesy of T. E. Armitstead Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.*

Barton Academy remained a school until it closed in 1965. It served as the school system's administration office until 2007. It had been vacant for more than a decade.

It was listed as one of Alabama's "Places In Peril," but local preservation groups rallied support to restore the building. Mobile County Public Schools spent \$4.2 million to renovate the exterior. The Barton Academy Foundation raised \$14 million to rebuild the interior. Now construction is complete and the school has reopened for 250 students.

"We want them to realize how big of a deal this is," Jones said. "We gave a yard sign to every student that says, 'I'm Making History.'"

### *Teachers and Parents*

Barton Academy is small for a middle school in Mobile County. Full capacity is 320 students. The magnet school draws students from Citronelle to Prichard to Grand Bay.

**"We want them to realize how big of a deal this is," Jones said. "We gave a yard sign to every student that says, 'I'm Making History.'"**

There are 19 teachers on staff for the first school year. Fifteen of them have degrees from South.

They include Dr. Megan McCall, a science teacher who has done research in Antarctica and won a Fulbright Distinguished Teaching Award; Marcee Hinds, who was the 2020 Alabama History Teacher of the Year; and Amy McGowan, who taught English at the Clark-Shaw Magnet School for 25 years.

Will Edmonds, a French teacher, earned a master's degree in education at South. He taught in the International Baccalaureate program at Davidson High School for 20 years. Now he's working at Barton Academy.

"A school that's focused on world studies and world languages – that's right up my alley," he said. "It's an opportunity to do something new and different. I've worked at schools that were just starting before, but I don't think I've been around this level of excitement."

Before becoming a teacher, Edmonds worked at a downtown bank. He took the first step toward a new career at the old school administration offices.

"For me, Barton Academy is this huge circle," he said. "It's where I originally applied, and now I'm returning to teach."

Chris Estis, vice president of the new Parent Teacher Organization, has a son that entered sixth grade at Barton Academy. He and his wife like the idea of recreating Mobile history.

"We've been hearing rumors about Barton Academy reopening since the time our son was born," he said. "It's such a historic place that it makes sense to bring it back to life. What better way than with a bunch of energetic middle school students?"



## **“It’s such a historic place that it makes sense to bring it back to life. What better way than with a bunch of energetic middle school students?”**

Estis supports entrepreneurship as part of the school curriculum. He’s heard great things about faculty drawn to the magnet school.

Magnet schools in Mobile County are open-zoned schools. To determine which students should be able to attend one of the system’s eight magnet schools, students are chosen based on an application and lottery process and are required to meet entrance criteria.

### *Barton Academy Family*

One of the unique things about the academy is its enrollment of students in sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grades. This makes it less of a middle school and more like a junior high.

Jones thinks that’s a good idea.

“A lot of times,” she said, “that ninth grade year can be a tough transition.”

When she was growing up, Jones always loved school and always knew she wanted to become a teacher. She’s from Clarke County. She was a big Alabama football fan, but chose to attend the University of South Alabama.

“It had a little bit of a hometown feel,” she said. “There was more of that feeling at South.”

Jones earned her bachelor’s degree in three-and-a-half years. She met her husband at South, got married and started teaching in Mobile. She got her master’s degree, educational specialist degree and Ed.D., later returning to South as an adjunct instructor.

She became an assistant principal and then a principal before taking a district-level job in school administration. That was three years ago. Now she’s returning to her own school at Barton Academy.

“I knew this was a great opportunity,” she said. “The more I learned about it, the more interested I was. And I missed being in a school, being with kids every day.”

Jones said she feels grateful to the Barton Academy Foundation, along with the school board and superintendent for Mobile County Public Schools.

As principal, she had a big part in shaping the school curriculum. Along with a committee, she helped select an academy mascot (the Explorers) and school colors (blue and gray), along with the egg-shaped white chairs that delight students in a first-floor lounge.

On a brief tour of Barton Academy, she points out the science lab that offers the “We Build It Better” program from Flight Works Alabama. The school music room, facing east, offers the best view of Mobile’s downtown skyline.

School sports include soccer, track and archery. There will be cheerleading and dance opportunities.

Jones does a lot of her own social media work for the magnet school. The idea is to reach parents, attract downtown partners and recruit students.

“I like doing the marketing,” she said. “I think it’s important to tell your own story.”

The first chapter of the new Barton Academy story includes a breaking-in period for students, teachers and parents. Everything is new. Everyone is getting settled.

For Jones, there are some familiar faces this fall.

“I have several students coming from my previous school,” she said. “It’s going to be fun.”



*All individuals photographed are South alumni serving as faculty and staff at the new Barton Academy. Pictured top from left: Helen Ramsay, Elizabeth Smith, Christy LeGros, Marcee Hinds, Yvette Nicholson, Chrissy Winsor, Amy McGowan, William Edmonds, Nicole Bolton, Daniela Yunker, Susan Henderson and Dr. Megan McCall. Bottom from left: Amanda Delaney, Amber Blackmore, Dr. Amanda Jones, Mary Alice Pouliot and Christine Hayes.*



## COUNSELING AND INSTRUCTIONAL SCIENCES

# Helping People Learn and Grow

**T**he Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences offers graduate degree programs in instructional design and development, educational technology, library media, school counseling, mental health counseling, and clinical and counseling psychology. The success of alumni displays the fulfillment of the department's mission to help people learn and grow.

### *We are designers of workforce skills...*

The Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences works to impact the region's economy by training leaders in instructional design who work in private business and industry, government agencies including the military, educational institutions, and healthcare organizations designing and evaluating programs of training that keep our workforce on the cutting edge.



**Dr. Angelia Bendolph** received both a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Instructional Design and Development from the University of South Alabama. Because of the networking opportunities for students to connect with local program alumni, Bendolph was able to begin work as a contractor for the Department of Homeland Security. She currently serves as a site lead and e-learning developer and provides instructional design support through training, assessments and evaluation solutions. Before working as a contractor, Bendolph was employed for 15 years at South in Academic Computing and Web Services. In her last position with the University, Bendolph served as associate director for Web Services.

"It sounds strange now, but the World Wide Web as a public resource and communication medium was in its infancy; however, our instructional design program at South was on the cutting edge of teaching web technology and online learning," Bendolph said. "When I obtained my master's degree in instructional design, the IDD program had a web track that combined web design and e-learning. My focus on the technology track yielded great dividends and led to career opportunities for advancement at South spanning my 15-year career."

Most recently, Bendolph worked alongside her colleague and dissertation committee chair, Dr. Joél Lewis Billingsley. Bendolph created an online curriculum for the NEH

Landmarks Africatown project. She developed a curriculum framework specifically for this project called "Culturally Responsive Instructional Design Framework for Teaching Hard History Online." She implemented the curriculum in Canvas LMS with interactive lessons developed using Articulate Rise.

"Developing this curriculum on teaching hard history was difficult because of the content and my proximity to the history as a descendant of enslaved Africans," Bendolph said. "However, I count it as a privilege and a blessing to have been a part of this project because I had a chance to humanize them. One way of accomplishing this was intentionally using humanizing language by referring to the Africans as enslaved instead of slaves and enslavement instead of slavery."

### *We are educational innovators...*

The department works to enable schools to innovate and adapt through training school counselors, school librarians and educational technology specialists. School counseling graduates use data-based methods to advocate, consult and intervene with all students to ensure all students can become well developed and college and career ready young adults. Graduates from the library media and educational technology master's programs innovate and deliver 21st century learning experiences that leverage digital and web-based resources to the region's students.



**Adrian Johnson** earned a master's degree in educational media from the University of South Alabama. Johnson currently serves as the media specialist and technology resource teacher at Ella Grant Elementary School in Mobile. She previously served as a teacher at Fonde Elementary School for five years where she taught first and second grades. During her time at Fonde, Johnson regularly implemented educational technology and digital resources into her daily lessons. She frequently hosted events such as "Hour of Code" and breakout rooms for not only her homeroom class, but also with the entire grade level.

"In my current position, I spend a large amount of time teaching digital citizenship and online safety," Johnson said. "Through these lessons, I'm consistently modeling how to navigate online while also incorporating digital resources like Kahoot to assess and determine how to proceed. As the technology teacher, things can seem to get out of hand quickly because we've moved to a 1:1 student-to-device ratio. This could easily take away from my library duties; however, I believe it has made it possible for me to integrate more 21st century learning experiences. I love to find ways to make my library lessons more engaging through educational technology."



Johnson hosts a STEM club and co-sponsors the broadcasting team this year. During her time at South, Johnson was exposed to several professional learning opportunities. "I had an amazing experience at South," Johnson said. "My advisor, Dr. Pamela Moore, was extremely helpful and always available for questions. She also was great at providing learning opportunities for us both in and out of class. I was able to hear from more than one phenomenal speaker and even attend some conferences that I wouldn't have known about without her guidance. Another thing I loved about South was all of the amazing classmates I met. I made so many great friends, some of whom are colleagues now, and we have a great support network."



**Ellen Douglas** received a master's degree in educational technology from South. She is currently a second grade teacher at St. Ignatius Catholic School. Last year, she taught kindergarten at Christ the King Catholic School and she served as a long-term substitute at Summerdale Elementary School and Kindergarten while pursuing her master's degree.

St. Ignatius Catholic School's mission is to be a leader among area schools in the integration of technology in all subject areas. Douglas currently uses her background and experiences from South to fulfill this mission. After earning a master's degree, Douglas continued to expand her knowledge of technology and later became the first teacher at her school to be a Google Certified Educator. She currently uses Google Classroom to communicate with parents and implements Google Docs in her classroom to create a collaborative learning environment. Her students enjoy creating videos to share when presenting their knowledge of a certain topic.

"I am teaching my students to use technology in meaningful ways to guide their learning and understanding," Douglas said. "I engage my students by using digital and web-based resources, and I continue to explore different technologies that I can implement into my classroom."

Douglas is currently working on a project called Short the Squirrel, founded by Monica Anderson Young and Dr. Dee Dupree Bennett. In honor of Short's second birthday, Douglas will be featured as a spokesperson in a promotional video to be launched soon to students around the state. "They noticed how children coming to court lacked materials to occupy themselves since electronic devices are not permitted in Alabama courtrooms," Douglas said. "The two women created Short, a curious squirrel who wants to help children explore their surroundings, starting with the courtrooms of Alabama. Coincidentally, in 2020, Gov. Kay Ivey signed the Alabama Literacy Act declaring all Alabama children will be reading on or above grade level by third grade. Bennett and Young hope Short will become a statewide initiative. "Douglas hopes to work with Short to spread literacy-rich, community-oriented, enjoyable content to children across the state.



**Rebecca Johnson** earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Master of Education in School Counseling from South. Johnson

currently serves as a school counselor at Daphne Elementary School, a Blue Ribbon and Leader in Me school. "Through my current work, I feel I am fulfilling the mission of the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences by helping not only my students, but also my school families and faculty to learn and grow to become better human beings," Johnson said. "I am an educational innovator."

## "I AM TEACHING MY STUDENTS TO USE TECHNOLOGY IN MEANINGFUL WAYS TO GUIDE THEIR LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING."

Johnson was one of the first school counselors in her district to receive the Alabama School Counseling Association's RAVE award in 2017. Since then, her school counseling program has received two additional state recognitions and one national recognition for running a comprehensive data-driven school counseling program. She continues to run and refine her school counseling program and has advocated the need for additional school counselors in all Title 1 elementary schools. In addition, she is a member of the Alabama School Counselor Association where she serves on the board as the chair for communication.

"Receiving my education from the University of South Alabama was the best investment I made for both personal and professional growth," Johnson said. "I left campus receiving two degrees that prepared me for today's workforce with the vision to create a better tomorrow."

## *We are catalysts for healing and growth...*

Graduates from the mental health counseling master's program are the front line of our region's mental health system and serve as clinical leaders in that system. Graduates of the clinical and counseling psychology doctoral program become mental health experts and make contributions to mental health reform and policymaking.





**Dr. Kristine Ramsay-Seaner** earned a bachelor's in speech and hearing sciences and a master's in community counseling from the University of South Alabama. She currently serves as an assistant professor in the School of Education, Counseling and Human Development at South Dakota State University. "I relish the

opportunity to work with passionate and engaged students who want to be change agents in their communities," Ramsay-Seaner said. "Not only do I prepare counselors who go on to serve vulnerable clients across the Midwest, I also co-founded a federally funded multi-state collaborative, Strengthening the Heartland."

**"ONE OF MY GOALS AS A FACULTY MEMBER IS TO TRY TO HAVE THE SAME ENERGY IN MY CLASSROOM AS I EXPERIENCED WHEN I WAS A STUDENT AT SOUTH."**

Since Strengthening the Heartland's inception, Ramsay-Seaner has raised more than \$3.5 million in federal funding to provide free educational resources and training to promote rural mental health and rural wellness. Ramsay-Seaner served as a member of the community counseling program and Chi Sigma Iota while at South. She now serves as a chapter faculty advisor at South Dakota State University. In 2020, the chapter won the Outstanding Individual Program Small Chapter award.

"South gave me the tools to become the professional that I am today," Ramsay-Seaner said. "I had amazing colleagues who allowed me to be vulnerable and push myself. One of my goals as a faculty member is to try to have the same energy in my classroom as I experienced when I was a student at South."



**Dr. Sheree Bodiford** received both a master's degree in community counseling and a Ph.D. in Combined Clinical and Counseling Psychology from South. She currently serves as the director of the Psychological Assessment and Treatment Clinic at Alabama Psychiatry as well as the training director for the Alabama Psychiatry Clinical Psychology Training Consortium.

For the past four years, Bodiford has worked at Alabama Psychiatry to develop a psychological clinic that serves toddlers through adulthood with psychological testing, consultation and therapy services. She has expanded the clinic to meet community needs and developed a specialty

autism testing clinic. In her current role, Bodiford sees a wide range of therapy patients with anxiety, mood, autism, developmental and other related disorders and provides psychological testing services to a broad range of clients. Through the training consortium, she works closely with Auburn University at Montgomery, Easter Seals of Central Alabama and HeadStart agencies to train graduate clinical psychology students in evidence-based assessment, therapy and consultation models and supervises their development as growing clinicians.

"I believe community outreach and service provision is a core component of taking care of one's local area and investing in the overall mental health of a region," Bodiford said. "In my work, I do believe that I am in the front line of mental health care daily, and it is my goal to provide the best evidence-based care to every client that comes through our doors. Furthermore, it is even more important to train students to have the same values of practice, for all people, and to teach them how to invest in their local community and to be a leader in mental health service provision by setting the quality of care bar high, regardless of systemic barriers."

The experience that Bodiford had at South was foundational for her professional development as a psychologist and mental health leader in her local region. "In particular, my experience working in the juvenile justice system as a graduate trainee was transformative, as it shaped my practice of evidence-based decision making and respecting everyone involved in a system to promote change. In one of my roles, as a mental health consultant, it is important to empower every person in the system to enact evidence-based processes and it is my experience as a graduate trainee in the juvenile justice system that taught me how to work through a systems perspective."

**"IN MY WORK, I DO BELIEVE THAT I AM IN THE FRONT LINE OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE DAILY, AND IT IS MY GOAL TO PROVIDE THE BEST EVIDENCE-BASED CARE TO EVERY CLIENT THAT COMES THROUGH OUR DOORS."**



# Faculty News



**Dr. Pamela Moore**, assistant professor and coordinator for the educational media and educational technology graduate program, is a national leader in the field of library media. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Moore has continued to provide guidance and inspiration to educators across the U.S. During her first virtual presentation for the South Alabama Research and Inservice Center at the beginning of the pandemic, Moore focused on telling people ‘we can do this.’ “We can strategically plan our way. I am very logical minded and I wanted people to know that we can do this. We can survive through this.” More than 200 local K-12 educators attended that first SARIC call on Zoom to hear from Moore.

In the past year, Moore presented with the American Association of School Librarians and the Alabama School Librarians Association. She served as the keynote speaker for a school district in the suburb of Westchester outside of New York City. Most recently, Moore served as programs co-chair for the American Association of School Librarians National Conference held in Salt Lake City.



**Dr. Ryon McDermott**, associate professor of clinical and counseling psychology, has authored numerous peer-reviewed papers on college student well-being and the intersection between culture (race, gender, socioeconomic status) and psychological characteristics. One of McDermott’s primary areas of interest is the intersection between masculinity ideology (what people believe men should be and do) and college men’s wellbeing. He will serve as the president starting in January 2023 for the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinities - Division 51 of the American Psychological Association.

McDermott and his research team of doctoral and master’s students at South have been studying the positive psychology of college men to identify how masculinity can serve as a strength in this population. “Considering that men, particularly men of color or first-generation college men, are likely to drop out of college, my research has important implications for academic retention,” McDermott said. “Most psychology takes a deficit approach by studying what is wrong with individuals or what they do that contributes to a problem. I believe that this only captures half of the picture. I focus on what is right with college students - what functions well and what factors lead to thriving in college. I am currently working on several projects related to these interests, including one that has been funded by South where my team has followed incoming first-year students for a year and a half to identify how academic, social, psychological and cultural factors contribute to their well-being.”



**Dr. Joe Gaston**, assistant professor of educational media and technology, worked in collaboration with the informational technology department from Mobile County Public Schools to create the “Next in Ed” podcast series. As schools began shutting down in March 2020 as result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to launch the series early in order to document the impact this unprecedented event was having in the field of education and those connected to it. The podcast was launched on April 21, 2020 with Gaston and Julie Neidhardt, science curriculum specialist for Mobile County Public Schools, as co-hosts. The two have produced 65 episodes to date.

Gaston has been working with the College of Education and Professional Studies to develop a new podcast series called “Sincerely, South.” The podcast focuses on stories that reflect the college’s core values of professional excellence, lifelong learning and civil discourse. The new series launched in Fall 2021 and features interviews with current students, alumni, community partners, faculty and content area experts outside of South.



**Dr. Amy Upton**, assistant professor of school counseling, has served on the governing board for the Alabama School Counselor Association for the past five years, and this year she serves in the capacity of president. Her primary work has been around advocacy for the association and profession, which includes providing testimony in the legislature around bills that impact school counselors and collaboratively writing white papers around bills and legislation that school-based mental health practitioners, including school counselors, feel either in support or opposition of based upon the impact of these bills on youth and the profession.

Additionally, Upton has worked closely with the association, Alabama State Department of Education, regional school districts and individual school counselors providing training and support to school counselors across the state in delivering comprehensive, data-driven school counseling programs. This past year, 15 schools across Alabama received national recognition for their programs and the outcomes they have for students. Alabama was third nationally for number of schools receiving this recognition, with only Virginia and California having more schools recognized. This year, five of Upton’s graduates serve on the governing board and provide leadership to school counselors.



## LEADERS IN INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

**T**he College of Education and Professional Studies emphasizes the cross-disciplinary foundations of health, kinesiology, and sport while providing both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the biological, physical, socio-cultural, philosophical, and psychological factors underlying health and all forms of physical activity and sport. Faculty in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport are dynamic leaders and provide real-world experiences for their students.

Dr. Caitlyn Hauff (below), assistant professor of health promotion, is passionate about mental health issues and athletes. Personally, she has been involved in sports since she was a toddler. Her dad was a collegiate tennis player, and Hauff was a multi-sport athlete growing up, participating in tennis, basketball, volleyball and softball most of her life. Much of her attention now is directed on running. It was in college that Hauff realized the importance of the mental side of sports. Her demeanor and behavior were completely different on and off the court.

"On the court, I was the person throwing my racquet and screaming," Hauff said. "While off the court, I was completely 'normal,' as my friends would like to say. By the time my senior year rolled around, I knew that studying sport psychology was something I wanted to make a career out of, mainly because I was really invested in my own behaviors and how significantly my mental health and mentality affected my physical performance."

Hauff earned a master's in sport psychology, and her Ph.D. research focused on body image in sport and exercise. "I identified myself as an athlete for the greater part of my life, and now I identify myself as someone who helps athletes. My experiences very much go hand in hand, but my engagement in sports has definitely taken on different forms."

Hauff's current research at South centers on health promotion, mainly through the use of behavior change theory and psychological skills training. She is involved in several projects with the College of Nursing, School of Computer Science, professors in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and fellow professors in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport. The team received a \$22,794 internal grant from the University to examine stress, physical activity, nutrition and numerous other psychosocial variables in nursing students. "Over the last several years, we

have been collecting data on nursing student mental and physical health in the hopes of bettering their overall health and well-being," Hauff said. "The main initiative for this team is to secure funding to develop an app, called iHope, that would be a tailored, user-centered, theoretically driven, evidence-based mHealth app. This app would ideally elicit behavior change through the use of persuasive technology, self-efficacy development and goal setting."

A separate focus of Hauff's and College of Nursing faculty involves producing resources and evaluating the effectiveness of those resources for raising awareness about weight bias and decreasing weight stigma in health care providers. Hauff is also working on an interdisciplinary project with Drs. Brooke Forester, Shelley Holden and Mitchell Woltring that examines how to enhance the student-athlete experience. The group received a \$3,536 internal grant from the College of Education and Professional Studies and will look to revamp the current "Life Skills" course created for incoming student-athletes.

**"I IDENTIFIED MYSELF AS AN ATHLETE  
FOR THE GREATER PART OF MY LIFE, AND  
NOW I IDENTIFY MYSELF AS SOMEONE  
WHO HELPS ATHLETES."**

"This project has been extremely interesting, mainly because we have obtained several unexpected findings," Hauff said. "Specifically, we have learned of the significant challenges our international student-athletes face, and many of those challenges are not being addressed. Through a partnership with the Department of Athletics and further external funding, we hope to create a more holistic Life Skills program that will focus on transitioning to campus, how to succeed as a student-athlete, and how to prepare for life after college athletics. This revamp of the program would also include a specific focus on the needs of our international student-athletes, potentially developing a handbook about transitioning to campus."

Future projects include working with members from the Department of Psychology to create a mental health center for student-athletes at South. "This would be a large collaboration between Psychology, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, our department and Athletics,"





Hauff said. "The center would focus on performance enhancement from both a physical and mental perspective. We currently do not have specific mental health services for our student-athletes and many of them are referred to the main University counseling department or elsewhere. The hope with this program is to provide a main hub for student-athletes where they can go for all different types of performance enhancement services, including mental health counseling, sport psychology consultations, VO2 max testing, DEXA screening and nutritional information. Right now, this program is in the proposal stage, but we hope to receive positive feedback with the potential to implement the program next year."

Katie Kennedy, from Alliance, Ohio, is a current graduate student in the Master of Science in Exercise Science graduate program and serves as graduate assistant in the department. Sydnie Fleming, a recent graduate of the same program, is from Oklahoma City and also served as a graduate assistant at South. Dr. Ryan Colquhoun, who serves as an assistant professor of exercise science in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport, recruited both Kennedy and Fleming to work in the Exercise and Applied Neuromuscular Physiology Laboratory over the past several months. Fleming was an undergraduate student who worked in the same lab as Colquhoun when he was a Ph.D. student at Oklahoma State University, and Kennedy was highly recommended by a colleague of Colquhoun's who worked with Kennedy when she was a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "This past year, I had three graduate and five undergraduate students working on

projects, and our department is always looking for students who want to be involved in research," Colquhoun said.

Kennedy and Fleming work with Colquhoun on research projects funded through the USA Graduate School's Graduate Student Enhancement Award. Fleming's project examines the role of a caffeine-metabolizing genotype (CYP1A2) on the time-course of muscle strength, power and activation following caffeine supplementation. She examines this in females who are currently on oral contraceptives, as there is very little information on caffeine supplementation in females.

"I have enjoyed this experience mostly because I was given the freedom to design and conduct my own thesis investigation," Fleming said. "It was fun getting to run my own project and involve some of the undergraduate students in the data collection process. I'm thankful for this experience because of the way the faculty and staff have invested in my education and my life. They have been supportive and encouraging through my whole experience as a graduate student. I'm currently on the job hunt, but I am hoping to start applying for physician assistant programs in the next couple of years."

Kennedy's project examines changes in fatigue following high- and low-intensity contractions of the quadriceps and whether a difference in fatigue exists between males and females. The goal of this project is to better understand the neuromuscular changes during different exercise protocols and between sexes to provide better, more efficient exercise recommendations.



## *New Recreational Therapy Major*

The Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport now offers a Bachelor of Science in Recreational Therapy degree program that prepares students to become certified recreational therapists. Recreational therapy, also known as therapeutic recreation, is a systematic process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions, as a means to psychological and physical health, recovery and well-being. The recreational therapy bachelor's degree program at South prepares students for work in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, assisted living facilities, long term care, schools, mental health programs, substance abuse centers, programs for returning service members, and community-based recreation programs that serve children and adults with disabilities.

Learn more at [SouthAlabama.edu/HKS](https://SouthAlabama.edu/HKS).

"I've enjoyed getting to lead and design research projects here at South and have a very hands-on experience with a close-knit group," Kennedy said. "I'm extremely thankful to Dr. Colquhoun and Sydnie for helping me further develop my research skills while at South. I look forward to continuing my education in a Ph.D. program after graduation."



*Katie Kennedy and Sydnie Fleming working with a volunteer in the Exercise and Applied Neuromuscular Physiology Laboratory*

Outside of these projects, Colquhoun has several upcoming projects planned for the fall semester and beyond. The two major ones include working with Dr. Neil Schwarz and Dr. Joshua Keller on an externally funded study to investigate the acute cardiovascular responses to a supplement. Schwarz and Colquhoun are also starting a resistance training study that Kennedy is running, examining the effects of different amounts of exercise on body composition, neuromuscular function and muscular strength.



# GRAD LANDS JOB IN PRIVATE AVIATION



**A**aron White, a 2019 University of South Alabama graduate, believes in the power of relationships, conversations and connections that lead to career opportunities.

When the Hoover, Ala., native tells his story, everything comes together. Eventually. One of his business skills is leading people on the journey that ends with his job as a research analyst with AirplaneIQ, a private aviation company based in Sarasota, Fla. After earning a bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management, White headed to Nashville, where he stayed with a friend, worked at a hot chicken restaurant and took a marketing internship to begin his career.

"One day at the restaurant, I see this lady sitting at the bar, and she's wearing a suit and carrying a laptop, looking out of place," he said. "I hear this almost audible voice that said, 'Go talk to her.'"

## "I HAD 26 INTERVIEWS AND I GOT 26 NO'S."

The woman turned out to be a software creator who hated sales and marketing. He volunteered to help in his spare time. Later on, that meeting led to a position as a business development executive.

In the meantime, he took a job with a recruiting firm, where he spent his time cold-calling managers and executives. "The recruiting world is tough," he said. "You're doing 90 or 100 calls a day. It's very equalizing."

When the software company from the bar was sold, the new owner hired White to lead teams in business development. Then came the coronavirus pandemic, which slowed things down and reduced his hours. He was considering his options when a sales call with a client turned his boyhood dream of aviation into an achievable goal.



## “THAT’S THE ESSENCE OF HOSPITALITY,” HE SAID. “SERVICE TO OTHERS.”

Training to become a pilot can be very expensive, but he learned that there are other jobs in the field. He used his cold-calling experience to contact anyone he could find in the aviation industry. He started applying for jobs.

“I had 26 interviews and I got 26 No’s,” he said. “Then this guy called me from Sarasota, and I flew down to meet with him the next day.”

Now White works to help match buyers and sellers with aircraft that range from small planes to corporate jets. The company slogan is “Wherever you want, whenever you want.” He plans to work for AirpanelQ in Nashville after training for several months in Sarasota.

The Gulf Coast city is famous for blue water and white beaches, but his time there has coincided with an outbreak of red tide.

“It’s killing me,” he said. “The water’s so pretty that it’s hard to stay away.”

At South, White was active with the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity. He worked at the Student Rec Center for several years. One of his hospitality mentors was David Clark, president and CEO of Visit Mobile.

Before graduation, White did an internship at the Fairhope clinic of the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute. Renee Sanford, a nursing supervisor who later died of cancer, was another mentor. She encouraged patients and gave them hope for a better life.

“She taught me a lot about hospitality,” he said. “She explained that my real job was talking with patients and helping them think about anything other than dying. Music can speak to a lot of

people, so one of the things I would do is ask about their favorite music or bands, look them up on Spotify while we were talking, and then hand them one of my earbuds.”

White thinks about that experience sometimes when he’s talking with clients and searching for airplanes that meet their needs. He chose a Hospitality and Tourism major because it seemed less about business and more about relationships. When networking in Nashville, he tries to be efficient, friendly and helpful.

“That’s the essence of hospitality,” he said. “Service to others.”



## *Miles of Opportunities Driven by Workforce Shortage*

The Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management in the College of Education and Professional Studies prepares students to become leaders in the fastest growing industry in the world.

Dr. Robert Thompson, chair of the department, shares these statistics:

- The hospitality and tourism industry in the U.S. represents a \$6.8 trillion-dollar industry and it is projected to create 350 million new jobs by 2024.
- Hospitality and tourism creates a new position every 2.5 seconds.
- Tourism is the second largest industry in Alabama.
- There are 72,000 travel and tourism jobs between Mobile and Baldwin counties.

David Clark (pictured right) is president and CEO of Visit Mobile and president of the University of South Alabama Hospitality and Tourism Management Advisory Board Executive Committee. He has more than 30 years of experience in the industry. Outside of the national

and international opportunities, Clark constantly reminds students that South’s prominent location along the Gulf Coast provides unique exposure to the industry.

“Baldwin and Mobile counties host 40 percent of the state’s total tourism,” Clark said. “When students leave South, they have been exposed to so much more. Students have access to many opportunities in mentors and internships. Being in the tourism mecca, if you want a job in coastal Alabama, you can probably have one instantaneously when you graduate from South.”

Clark’s daughter, Savannah, recently earned a hospitality and tourism degree from South. Clark has the perspective from the day in the life of a student and as a leader in the community. He encourages prospective students to take advantage of the opportunities at South.

“Between Mobile and Baldwin counties, there are more than 72,000 travel and tourism jobs that service 10 million visitors annually who

spend about \$8 to \$9 billion,” Clark said. “Get educated through the USA Hospitality and Tourism Management program. South provides that network, collaboration and exposure to mentors that in return gives future opportunities for students. These graduates have a distinct advantage. They’ll probably start out as at least a supervisor or maybe a junior manager, as opposed to just starting from the line per se.”

Clark also calls on the local tourism industry to see South as a unique provider and pipeline of future employees and leaders in the field.

“It is important for hospitality and tourism leaders to be engaged in the USA Hospitality and Tourism Management Program, from a leadership, mentorship and monetary contribution perspective,” Clark said. “The students of the program are the future industry leaders, and they are in our backyard. Today’s hospitality and tourism professionals will substantially benefit by investing in South and the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program.”



## INTEGRATIVE STUDIES

# A Customizable Degree that Changes Lives

**T**he Department of Integrative Studies offers an online bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies that builds skills in communication, cultural competency, analytical thinking, leadership and teamwork.

The online program is designed for new undergraduate students, as well as students who are entering college later in life or who have some undergraduate coursework and want to complete their degree. It's a completely customizable program geared toward individuals who are seeking a career change, pursuing a promotion, embarking on a first-time career or preparing to enter graduate study.

For two years, following a 2015 shooting, Kearria Freed was unable to walk unassisted. This past May, she walked across the stage at the University of South Alabama Mitchell Center – one of 2,119 spring and summer degree candidates.

"Living with a disability is a challenge," she said. "You never get used to it. You have to constantly adapt to the world around you."

Freed was shot in the head at a Panama City Beach house party during spring break in 2015. She underwent extensive physical therapy and remains partially paralyzed on the left side of her body. Her service dog, a Labrador/golden retriever named Darling, helped her manage rehabilitation and higher education.

Freed took classes at Bishop State Community College before transferring to South in the Pathway USA program, which guarantees enrollment to students who complete their associate's degree at a partnering community college. On campus, she worked with the Office of Student Disability Services as she pursued a degree in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in human services.

Her mother, Madonna Burden, has been her biggest supporter, cheerleader and inspiration. "I told her, 'We're going to fight to regain your independence,'" Burden said. "We're going to move forward in life."

Freed plans to obtain a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling to assist disabled individuals with employment, education and independent living.

"I did this for all the individuals with disabilities, to show everyone that we are capable of overcoming and there is



*For two years, following a 2015 shooting, Kearria Freed was unable to walk unassisted. In May 2021, she walked across the stage at the University of South Alabama Mitchell Center. Watch a video interview here.*



*Ronie Langston, who serves as a staff member in the University of South Alabama's One Stop office, attended college later in life and said the online interdisciplinary studies program offered flexibility.*

hope in the future. No matter how slow you go, forward is forward," Freed said. "My disability does not define my capabilities."





*Kearria Freed had support all over campus, including Director of Adult Learner Services Bob Charlebois, pictured left handing a diploma to Freed at graduation.*

**“I did this for all the individuals with disabilities, to show everyone that we are capable of overcoming and there is hope in the future. No matter how slow you go, forward is forward.”**

Freed started a nonprofit organization called the Kearria Kares Foundation. The mission is to share hope and provide recovery resources to young adults who are survivors of traumatic brain injuries. “Our vision at Kearria Kares Foundation is to bridge the gap between the access of care for young adults with traumatic brain injuries, promote communal support among these young adults and increase the number of resources available to young adults and their caregivers.”

Ronie Langston also graduated May 2021 with a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies. Langston has served as a staff member in the University of South Alabama’s One Stop office for the past two years. She previously worked in the Office of Student Accounting and now primarily works with South CARES, the University’s Collaborative Access, Resources, and Emergency Support program.

“I chose interdisciplinary studies because I think it’s a great way to learn and understand how different

disciplines approach a complex problem or issue,” Langston said. “I specifically chose human services so that I could study the disciplines of sociology, psychology and biological psychology.”

Langston attended college later in life and said the online program offered flexibility. Since the program can be tailored to interests of the students, Langston was able to select a concentration that provided new skills to enhance her abilities to serve students at South.

“You gain a multi-faceted education and skill set through studying multiple disciplines,” Langston said. “Interdisciplinary studies enhances learning and prepares students for this ever-changing world, whether you’re entering the workforce for the first time or have been employed for a long time.”

The interdisciplinary studies program helped Langston think outside the box. During the course of the program, Langston developed better listening and communication skills.

“Through the classes that I took, I gained a clearer understanding of the many different ways a situation can be viewed,” Langston said. “I firmly believe this helps me when talking to a parent who is dealing with the emotions of their child living away from home for the first time versus their student who is excited, and somewhat nervous, to be going off to college and spreading their wings for the first time. Our college students face a variety of issues and stressors that were unheard of 40 or so years ago. The multidisciplinary approach of sociology, psychology and biopsychology has been useful in helping me understand the culture of our student body, especially among our younger students.”

Langston’s husband went to seminary and their children attended South. She decided it was her turn to attend college. “Personally, I enjoyed the classes and it gave me a newer appreciation for the art of learning,” Langston said. “You’re never too old to learn.”







# CATALYSTS *for* CHANGE

## LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER EDUCATION

**T**he Department of Leadership and Teacher Education's mission is to train educational entrepreneurs who are catalysts for change. Education unlocks many doors to opportunities, and College of Education and Professional Studies graduates have been issued keys to unlock opportunities for countless others. Alumni continually challenge themselves to use this power wisely as they make a difference, one life at a time.

### "MY EXPERIENCE AS A PRINCIPAL HAS BEEN ONE OF BUILDING THE PLANE AS I FLY IT."

After high school in Mobile, **Hope Belle-Payne** studied education at the University of South Alabama and became a teacher. Her sister, **Faith Belle-Lucy**, was working as a restaurant manager when she decided to begin her own career in education. "It was because of Hope," Belle-Lucy said. "I'd hear her all the time, talking about her kids, talking about what they were doing in school, and that sounded good to me."

Belle-Lucy started student teaching at Gilliard Elementary School, then joined the faculty, served as a reading coach and became an administrator. She's never worked at another school. After earning a master's degree at South, she became an assistant principal and then principal in 2016. "Our parents lived two streets over from Gilliard, so I'm very familiar with the area. I remember watching the school being

built. I graduated from South in May 2007, and began teaching here that August."

Belle-Lucy is the third principal of Gilliard Elementary and its first African American principal. She had full respect of her fellow faculty and staff members, which made for an easy transition. "You would think, 'Okay, they're not going to respect me because I was once a student teacher in the building.' But it's not that way. We are one, big happy family. They were my biggest cheerleaders."

Belle-Payne's journey to becoming a principal was a different path. Her experience with Mobile County Public Schools started in 1998 as a paraprofessional. She completed her student teaching at Council Traditional School and later accepted her first teaching position at Morningside Elementary School. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at South while working at several schools in Mobile. Belle-Payne served as a math intervention teacher and Title I facilitator at Maryvale and O'Rourke elementary schools before becoming a reading coach and instructional partner at George Hall Elementary and Mae Eanes Middle School.

Belle-Payne's first year as a principal was not typical. The sisters supported each other and made it through. "The principal of Leinkauf left in July 2019, and I started in late August 2019," Belle-Payne said. "The school year ended early in March 2020 because of the pandemic, and then it didn't start as normal the next year, so my experience as a principal has been one of building the plane as I fly it."

No one was more proud of the sisters serving as principals than their father, Pastor Fleet Belle of Rock of Faith Missionary Baptist Church. He was a former member of the Mobile County School Board. Everyone knew he doted on his daughters. "My dad wouldn't introduce us to people, he'd announce us," Belle-Payne said. "He'd say, 'These are my daughters, they're principals in Mobile,' before he'd even say our names." Pastor Belle died of COVID-19 last year, but not before his girls reached their career goals. "He got to see it," said Belle-Lucy. "So much of what we do comes straight from him."



**Dr. Tracey Childs**

earned a Doctor of Education degree in higher education leadership from South. She is the owner of Class 101 and helps students and

families in Mobile navigate the complex college planning process. Prior to Class 101, Childs worked as an assistant professor and director of student success at Spring Hill College. She also serves as a part-time faculty member for the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education at South.

### "I LEARNED TO BE MORE INTENTIONAL, CRAVING GOOD DATA TO DRIVE ETHICAL DECISIONS."

"While working on my doctorate, my broad research focus was on increasing student persistence," Childs said. "So much of my research showed high attrition rates for college students after their first year. Many of the factors that contribute to that attrition can be addressed while students are in high school. In our office, my team works with current high school students to assist them in the college planning process. Our approach is individualized and holistic. We work to empower students, helping them achieve their goals academically and socially."



Childs and her team help juniors and seniors with test prep for both the ACT and PSAT. They also help families with financial aid and applying for the FAFSA. Childs' team celebrates submitted applications, college acceptances and scholarship offers each year.

"My education at South helped me to be a better decision-maker," Childs said. "I am naturally an intuitive person, but through my courses and projects, I learned to be more intentional, craving good data to drive ethical decisions. I also loved working in a cohort. I am still in contact regularly with several of my classmates who are making positive contributions in education."



**Timothy Johnson**

earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from South. Johnson was honored as

the 2019 Outstanding

Alabama Elementary School Science Teacher and most recently served as a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) lab instructor at E.R. Dickson Elementary School in Mobile. He recently accepted a position as the Alabama Technology in Motion specialist for the University of South Alabama. Johnson serves the educators and students in Region 10 districts, including Baldwin County Public Schools, Chickasaw City Schools, Clarke County School District, Gulf Shores City Schools, Mobile County Public Schools, Monroe County Public Schools, Satsuma City Schools, Saraland City Schools, Thomasville City Schools, Washington County Public Schools and ACCEL Day and Evening Academy.

"In my work as a STEM teacher, I was able to spark a love for learning and a love for science, technology, engineering and mathematics within my students," Johnson said. "In my current position as a technology in motion specialist, I have the opportunity to serve and create a passion for STEM for our teachers, administrators

## "I HAVE AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT OTHERS IN INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO THEIR CLASSROOMS..."

and districts across Region 10. This means I have an amazing opportunity to support others in integrating technology into their classrooms in order to increase student engagement through hands-on learning."

Johnson recently filmed several episodes for Alabama STEM Explorers, and the recordings were featured on Alabama Public Television. "I recently worked with McIntosh Elementary School to provide a session on drones and completed the second annual ATIM Virtual PD Summit."

Johnson was a student-athlete for the USA track team for four years and was part of the USA 2007 Sun Belt Conference Indoor Track and Field Championship winning team. In 2012, he served as an assistant for the track team and stays in contact with his teammates to this day. "I loved my experience at South because I had the opportunity to meet some amazing people through athletics and around campus that helped shape and molded me into what I am today."



**Marcee Hinds**

received a bachelor's degree in secondary education with a specialization in social studies. She also double majored

in history. Hinds was awarded the 2019 James Madison Fellowship for Alabama, which allowed her to return to South in fall 2019 to pursue a Master of Education in Secondary Education in Social Studies and Constitutional Studies. After graduating from South in

spring 2011, Hinds accepted a teaching position at Baker High School. In her 10 years at Baker, Hinds taught Honors U.S. History 10, AP Psychology, Mobile History and Study of Popular Music in America. She recently transitioned to middle school to teach Civics, Geography and Global Studies at the new Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies in Mobile.

"Whether pursuing my master's in education or seeking out professional development pertaining to my field, I am constantly seeking opportunities to become a better educator for my students and my community," Hinds said. "The field of education is continuously evolving to meet the needs of our students. If I am to ensure my students receive the best possible instruction and guidance in my classroom, I need to stay abreast of new and relevant information and resources in the world of social studies education."

## "I AM CONSTANTLY SEEKING OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME A BETTER EDUCATOR FOR MY STUDENTS AND MY COMMUNITY..."



Hinds has begun work with the Bill of Rights Institute as a member of their teacher

advisory council for the 2021-2022 school year. She was selected from a pool of applicants to serve on this 25-member panel to advise and provide feedback to the Bill of Rights Institute on the needs of educators and students concerning education on the Constitution and constitutional issues. Hinds was also chosen by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History as the Alabama History Teacher of the Year and was named a top 12 finalist for National History Teacher of the Year.





**Amanda Youngblood**

received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a concentration in painting and Master of Education in Art Education from

South. She has served as an art teacher at St. Paul's Episcopal School for nearly four years. "I have the pleasure of teaching visual arts to third through sixth grade students," Youngblood said. "We have so much fun in my art classroom. We explore, experiment and create art in a variety of medias from clay, paper mache', recycled arts, printmaking and even just simple processes with Crayola markers."

Youngblood worked as a graduate student while at South and now teaches art education courses part time in the college. She has also worked several summers at the Mobile Museum of Art's Art Blast camp. "It was actually during my undergrad years while working at Alabama Art Supply that I really felt my calling to work in education and share my passion for art and creativity with others."

**"I HAVE LEARNED TO EMBRACE MY OWN MISTAKES OR JUST ENJOY THE EXPERIMENTATION..."**

Youngblood encourages her students both in elementary school and college to embrace exploration in art. "Personally, teaching art specifically to children has made me a better artist. I have learned to embrace my own mistakes or just enjoy the experimentation and that art is not about the end result, it's about the process and joy derived from creating. It is important to practice what I preach and what I teach. In my classroom, we have a saying that I adopted from a friend of mine: 'turn that mess-up

into a bless-up.' I think this attitude and growth mindset can be applied to all areas of life and subjects or difficult tasks we may face."

Youngblood was recently awarded "The Arty" for art educator from the Mobile Arts Council. The Artys are awards for those dedicated to the arts in education and art advocacy in the community. Youngblood was also voted president of the Bay Area Art Educators in May 2018. She is coordinating a student art show this November at the Mobile Arts Council, which will coincide with the Alabama Art Education Association Fall Conference. For the past two years, Youngblood has been working with a committee to plan the conference.



**Lauren Perry** received a Bachelor of Science in Special Education as a Collaborative 6-12 Teacher and Master of Education in Special Education as a Collaborative K-6 Teacher from South.

She will complete the Instructional Leadership graduate certification program in December 2021. Perry currently serves as the Satsuma City School System's special services coordinator, directing the district's special education, gifted, 504, homebound, Response to Intervention and English Language Learner programs. Before accepting this position in July 2020, Perry worked with PASSAGE USA, a post-secondary program for students with intellectual disabilities at the University of South Alabama, as the employment coordinator.

"I had the privilege of also working alongside the Student Academic Success department with the Career Services Office at South," Perry said. "Before obtaining the position with PASSAGE USA, I kickstarted my professional career with Saraland City School System as a high school inclusion and self-contained special education teacher."

**"AS EDUCATORS, WE MUST REJECT COMPLACENCY AND PROUDLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE LIFELONG LEARNERS STRIVING FOR THE NEXT INNOVATIVE BREAKTHROUGH."**

Perry grew up in Satsuma, Ala., and has a strong sense of pride for the community and its school system. "Although my greatest passion and life's calling is to serve those with disabilities and those affected by disabilities, I advocate for equality and equity among all people," Perry said. "I strive to empower and give voice to those from historically underserved and underrepresented populations. I'm honored to represent and advocate for our community through initiatives that make a difference and create change, but these are not enough. As educators, we must reject complacency and proudly acknowledge that we are lifelong learners striving for the next innovative breakthrough."

Perry has most recently worked to review the state of her district's special services programs. "During this time, my leadership skills have developed as a result of the modeling and instruction provided by my incredible professors from the Instructional Leadership program at South. My goal is to utilize the knowledge I have gained from this experiential learning process to build capacity within our special services department through assessing current program efficiency, implementing policies and procedures derived from data, collaboration, shared decision-making, and supporting teachers in their individual and collective professional growth and development."



## *Mentoring Future Educators*

**T**he Office of Field Services in the College of Education and Professional Studies administers the placements of clinical field experiences for graduate and undergraduate education candidates. Clinical field experiences relate directly to classroom instruction. Candidates engage in real world settings to develop a context for learning or enhancing new skills, to reflect on dispositions for working with others and to relate theory to practice.

Partnerships with local school districts are essential to the success of the college's mission. Working with program faculty, the Office of Field Services has as a primary responsibility to establish and maintain effective working relationships with school district teachers and administrators, agency personnel, and local and state governmental officials. Fifteen adjunct faculty members serve as field supervisors throughout the school year. Each supervisor has an extraordinary background in the field of education. Meet a few members of the team.



### **Rosanne Reynolds Plash**

As a third grade student, Rosanne Plash decided she wanted to be a teacher one day. In 1975, she graduated from the University of South Alabama with a degree in elementary education and began her teaching career in the Mobile County Public School System. After several years in the classroom, Plash completed her master's

***“Teaching is not simply an occupation. It is a ‘calling’ that requires a strong commitment to positively impacting the lives of young people.”***

degree in early childhood education, once again as a USA graduate. In 2014, after nearly 40 years as a classroom teacher, intervention teacher and reading coach, she retired from the school system. During the 2014 fall semester, after a brief retirement, Plash began work as a field supervisor at South. “Hopefully I have and will continue to impress upon students that teaching is not simply an occupation. It is a ‘calling’ that requires a strong commitment to positively impacting the lives of young people. I would also hope they realize the world around us is constantly changing; therefore, you can never stop learning if you want to be an effective teacher.” Plash uses her spare time to keep up with the activities of her husband, three daughters and their spouses, and her eight grandchildren, and relies on her favorite scripture from Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” to face each day with a smile.



### **Carol Palumbo**

Carol Palumbo has been a field supervisor and adjunct instructor for the University since fall 2015. Prior to working for the University, Palumbo served the Baldwin County Public Schools system as a special education teacher, high school assistant principal, middle school principal and coordinator for special services - special education, gifted, ESOL, psychometry and even secondary music. After 27 years in education, Palumbo retired, but her desire to influence education remained strong. “Making a direct impact on the teaching of children is why I love being a field supervisor. I view my role as more of a coach rather than a supervisor,

***“They are passionate about teaching and are shining examples of what good teachers should be.”***

and hopefully my students are better prepared to teach, and teach well, with my guidance. I can't say enough about how proud I am to see my students teaching after they graduate. They are passionate about teaching and are shining examples of what good teachers should be.” Carol's time outside of teaching is spent with her husband of 39 years, her four grandchildren with another on the way, quilting, sewing and watching the Yankees.





### Joan Holland

Joan Holland is a field supervisor in the K-6 teacher education program and serves as the

***“After all of these years, I am happy to say I am still a learner—a teacher.”***

director of the USA Literacy Center. She is also a graduate of the USA College of Education and Professional Studies. Upon graduation, she immediately went to work in the Mobile County Public School System and remained there serving as a teacher, staff developer, curriculum writer and mentor for 25 years before joining the USA team. Holland enjoys working with South students in local schools as they sharpen their skills in preparation for leading classrooms of their own. She finds working with and guiding future teachers as they move from students to teachers a rewarding experience. “I want our teachers to hold on to the love for learning and consistently pass that love on to students. After all of these years, I am happy to say I am still a learner—a teacher.” Away from work, Holland enjoys all things family, traveling with her husband, Rod, and serving in her church and the Mobile community.



### Katherine Malone

Katherine Malone taught for 32 years prior to joining the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education as a supervisor of secondary education students. During that time, Malone taught in middle school and high school and served as a principal in Louisiana. Before she launched her education career, Malone worked in industrial jobs for the state of Alabama. But, at the encouragement of her husband, she finally utilized her degree and became a teacher. As a supervisor, Malone believes it is her responsibility to “encourage her students to do their best and to love what they are doing.” That often is evident when she can participate in their learning segments and see the “awesome engaging lessons” that her students prepare.

***Malone believes it is her responsibility to “encourage her students to do their best and to love what they are doing.”***



### Janet Wells

Janet Wells spent the first half of her career teaching in kindergarten and second grade before completing her master’s degree and certification in school administration. She then served as an assistant principal in two elementary schools and two magnet middle schools before retiring from Mobile County Public Schools. Because she wanted to continue her involvement in local education, following retirement, Janet began supervising secondary student teacher candidates

***“I enjoy going into schools and seeing my past student teachers settled into their careers.”***

and has continued mentoring and assisting in that area for the past 10 years. “I enjoy going into schools and seeing my past student teachers settled into their careers and sometimes even have the opportunity to chat with them for a brief minute. I enjoy getting emails from them every now and then or seeing and hearing of their awards and accomplishments as great teachers. It is always a pleasure to speak with fellow school administrators and hear that our teacher graduates are doing well and are assets to their faculty teams.” Wells stays busy with her three “grand” grandchildren, visiting art galleries, taking an occasional art class and antique shopping.



## OFFICE OF ADULT LEARNER SERVICES

**A**fter managing a Vietnamese restaurant and doing other jobs in Mobile, Thanh Haas got the idea for a new business venture—a coffee shop near the University of South Alabama.

Then she changed her mind and chose a new direction in the same neighborhood.

"I heard this voice in my head and decided not to invest in this business, but in my education," said Haas, 36. "I thought, 'this school is where I want to go.' So I went to the German department, talked to them, and they said OK."

Haas was born in Vietnam, but left to live and work in Germany at the age of 20. She met and married a German engineer. Six years ago, his job brought them to Alabama, where their son and daughter were born.

"We wanted to challenge ourselves and take this adventure," she said. "We decided to stay because of the weather, and the local people and living close to the beach on weekends."

**"We wanted to challenge ourselves and take this adventure."**

At South, people know Haas by her childhood nickname, "Moon." She decided on a double major of German and hospitality and tourism management, but first she had to improve her English. Now she has a freshman schedule of marketing, public speaking, advanced German and hospitality and tourism management.

Her parents were entrepreneurs in Vietnam.

"My father had a restaurant and was a wedding planner before he retired," she said. "My mom had her own businesses. I learned a lot from them."

Haas was selected to join the USA chapter of Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society. Housed in the Office of Adult Learner Services and led by director Bob Charlebois, the honor society is not only the oldest, but also the largest, chapter-based honor society for full and part-time students.

"Its purpose is to recognize academically outstanding adult and non-traditional students in higher education who come together to celebrate scholarship and leadership," Charlebois said. "Moon is a great success story of an adult who returned to college to finish her degree. She is a hard worker and deserves everything that comes her way."

Haas recently received the Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society Scholarship Award, Bickel Memorial Education Scholarship, Loomis Scholarship in Arts & Sciences and the Evelyn Green Tourism Scholarship. She also serves as a student ambassador for the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

As a mother of young twins, Haas works until midnight and on weekends to support her family and maintain her studies.

"With a 4.0 GPA, I proudly became a top student and earned a place on the President's Scholar list for the University of South Alabama."

## Q & A with Thanh Haas

### WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF SOUTH?

"One thing surprised me a lot. In Vietnam, we were afraid to meet with our professors, but at South, it's not like that. You can just go and talk with them. My marketing professor, Dr. Robert Thompson, he knew I had children and couldn't start a class during the pandemic, so he met me in the parking lot with my textbook. That made me feel so special."

### DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE SPOT ON CAMPUS?

"Yes — Marx Library. I like the view from the second floor. You can sit next to the big windows and look out over the lake. When I started school at South, I would come and try to read, write and improve my vocabulary."

### YOU MENTIONED BEACHES. WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ONE ON THE GULF COAST?

"We go to Pensacola Beach and Santa Rosa Island. My husband likes to drive to a quiet part and we enjoy the sunset before we go home."

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO STUDY HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT?

"I worked for years in the tourism industry in Vietnam. And I'd really like to work in international business. I love to serve people."

### WHAT WAS IT LIKE LEAVING VIETNAM FOR GERMANY?

"I loved the culture, the people, the education system — I went to a German community college. And I met my husband. I can tell Germany is my second homeland."

### WHAT'S HARDER TO LEARN, ENGLISH OR GERMAN?

"I learned English before I learned German, but I never studied academic English before I moved to the United States and came to South. I took German in Germany, so it's not that hard for me now. German grammar can be difficult. You have to sit down and analyze, are you doing this or doing that?"

### WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF FIVE YEARS AFTER GRADUATION?

"My plan is to look for a school where I can work with children and teach them German. Languages have changed my life. I think they're really important, and I love teaching them."

### DO YOU HAVE A HIDDEN TALENT?

"Baking. I bake German bread a lot — I won't buy it from the store. My husband likes it. He says, 'Oh, it tastes just like my mom's.'"





MOVE BRINGS  
ADVENTURE,  
NEW DIRECTION



# DR. THOMAS CHILTON'S 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

**D**r. Thomas Chilton, long-time professor and associate dean, celebrates 50 years of association with the College of Education and Professional Studies on Sept. 1, 2022. Chilton completed his Ed.D. in Health Education from the University of Tennessee and began his career at the University of South Alabama on Sept. 1, 1972, as an assistant professor of health education in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Studies. He was promoted to the rank of professor in 1983 and served as an associate dean of academic and financial affairs in the college from 1986 to 2012. During this period, Chilton also served two terms as interim dean of the college. He then retired from the associate dean position. Between 2009 to 2021, Chilton served the college part-time as director of international partnerships and collaborated on faculty exchange and visiting scholar programs along with various international student recruitment initiatives.

Chilton received the then-College of Education's Distinguished Career Award in 2013 in recognition of sustained excellence as a professor and administrator and for his support to the college's mission and to improving our community. Between 1995 and 1997, Chilton designed the current space that today is the College of Education and Professional Studies in University Commons and coordinated the move of the college from the Instructional Learning Laboratory Building. In 1996, he was appointed to a University committee charged with beginning online education. Between 1998 and 2011, Chilton served as director of USA Online, the University of South Alabama's learning management system.

"Dr. Chilton is a knowledgeable and capable leader who skillfully guided the college throughout his years as associate dean and who was deeply committed to the University's mission and goals," said Dr. John Kovalski, interim dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies.





In his years as a professor, Chilton's primary research interest involved computerized nutritional assessment. In 1974, Chilton conducted a landmark study with Dr. William Gilley, then associate professor of health and physical education, who together developed a mainframe program to analyze food nutritional content in conjunction with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use by nurses and dietitians. Gilley also served as an associate dean and director of graduate studies in the College of Education until his retirement in 2007.

Chilton's many notable administrative and service contributions contributed to not only the college but also to athletics, the University community and the Alabama State Department of Education. Chilton served as assistant chair of Health and Physical Education (1977-1983) and worked with then dean of the College of Education, Dr. George Uhlig, and helped initiate the move of the U.S. Sports Academy from Wisconsin, where it was then housed within the Department of Health and Physical Education at South for several years. He also served as the interim athletic director (1980), golf coach (1980-1984), and chair of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Studies (1983-1985). His contributions to the Alabama State Department of Education include State Certification Officer for teacher preparation programs (1985-2012) and chairman of the Alabama State Department of Education General Education Committee (1995-2005).

A lifelong advocate of physical fitness, Chilton is known for being physically active and enjoying running for health and fitness. He was a top four finisher in the long jump at the NCAA Track and Field Championships and was a member of the U.S. Track team and the U.S. Olympic Training team. He was ranked as high as seventh overall in the United States in 1968 and was a national master's champion in the long jump in 1972 and 1978.

"Thank you Dr. Chilton for 50 years of service to the College of Education and Professional Studies," Kovaleski said.

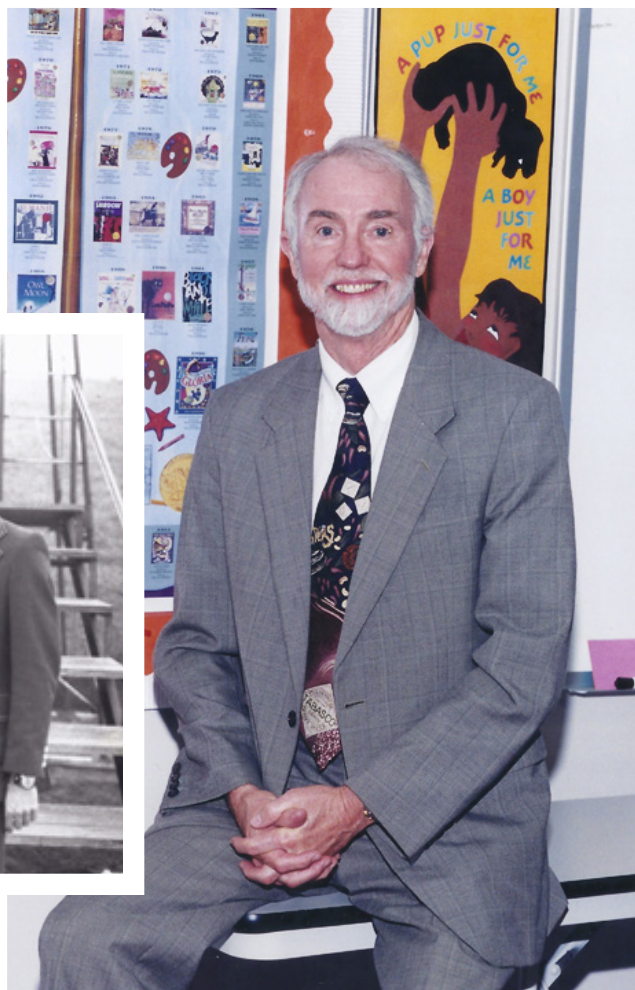
Dr. Andrea M. Kent, interim provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs, said Chilton is a well-respected colleague in the College of Education and Professional Studies.

"Throughout his career, Dr. Chilton positively impacted the lives of countless students and faculty through his knowledge, expertise, mentorship and leadership," said Kent, who previously served as the college's dean. "His unwavering commitment to the college and the university for 50 years is unprecedented and his legacy will continue for many years to come."

**"HIS UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO  
THE COLLEGE AND THE UNIVERSITY  
FOR 50 YEARS IS UNPRECEDENTED  
AND HIS LEGACY WILL CONTINUE FOR  
MANY YEARS TO COME."**



*Dr. Thomas Chilton (far right) and University President Dr. Fred Whiddon (second from left) are pictured at the National Championship for Pentathlon on the USA campus in the late 1970s. The University hosted the event with United States Sports Academy President Dr. Thomas P. Rosandich (far left), and Chilton assisted as an official.*





# FACULTY AND STAFF

The College of Education and Professional Studies offers an exciting learning environment based on a tradition of innovation and excellence. If students are pursuing their first professional credential, seeking advanced degrees or exploring new certifications, they will find a support system of faculty and advisers in the college who are committed to student success.

Faculty and staff receive honors in teaching and excel in professional practice. Many are well published, conduct research and offer opportunities for students to broaden their professional and cultural experiences, locally and internationally. Students find a contagious enthusiasm in the classroom coupled with excellence in teaching that is driven by research to enhance their knowledge.

University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies faculty and staff were honored at the 2021 Spring Awards Ceremony.

"I simply would like to say that our faculty and staff are the heart of the things that we do in the College of Education and Professional Studies," said Dr. John Kovalesski, interim dean. "Our success is owed to their hard work and dedication. Congratulations to our spring 2021 faculty and staff awardees, and thank you for your outstanding contributions to the college."



**PAM JAMES** is the recipient of the Gerry Jean Clark Exemplary Staff Award. James is an academic advisor in the college and is assigned to undergraduate students who are majoring in elementary, secondary and special education. "It was around this time last year when the University went remote for COVID, and we shifted all advising appointments to Zoom," said Josh Wooden, who serves as executive director of CEPS Student Services. "Pam never skipped a beat and continues to be a stable source of support for her students in all appointment formats. In the words of her students from their advising satisfaction surveys, 'Mrs. James is extremely helpful, resourceful, great, thorough and awesome.'"



**DR. SHENGHUA ZHA** received a Faculty Excellence Award. Zha is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences. Zha has been able to successfully show a productive balance between publication and grants during her time at South. She produced several publications this year, including articles published, in press or under submission. Zha's teaching evaluations are consistently at or above departmental averages, and she works continuously to improve her teaching by participating in Innovation in Learning Center events or activities. Some of Zha's grant projects and external collaborations include working with Williamson Middle Grades Preparatory Academy through a University of South Alabama Social Justice Initiative Grant and providing professional development opportunities for local educators through the Research Experiences for Teachers program funded by the National Science Foundation.



**AMANDA DONALDSON** received a Faculty Excellence Award. Donaldson currently serves as an instructor for the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM). She is a faculty-practitioner with 20 years of industry experience who is passionate about educating future leaders in hospitality and tourism. Consistently, she teaches a full load of four HTM courses each semester, along with teaching Global Tourism for the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport. Donaldson conducts the Study Abroad program, serves as the faculty liaison on the HTM Advisory Board Fundraising Committee, and serves as the HTM Hospitality Club advisor. Donaldson has a true volunteer spirit, desire to lead and passion for community involvement.



# AWARDS



## **DR. CHRISTOPHER PARRISH**

received a Faculty Excellence Award. Parrish teaches courses in secondary education. While his expertise is secondary mathematics education, he also teaches courses that include students from other secondary areas. Parrish is involved in various projects that make use of Team-Based Learning (TBL). He collaborated with those in the Innovation in Learning Center to develop the Integrated Online Team-Based Learning model, which is an online model of TBL that includes elements of both synchronous and asynchronous engagement. He has also conducted research on the implementation of Team-Based Inquiry Learning (TBIL) in a secondary mathematics classroom, as well as serving as co-principal investigator on a NSF grant examining TBIL in undergraduate mathematics courses. He enjoys teaching at South because of the autonomy he has been given to develop and implement innovative teaching practices. He is thankful for the support the University provides faculty through the Innovation in Learning Center to improve teaching, either through professional development courses or small group instructional feedback.



**DR. MATT BINION**, director of academic assessment, received the Dean's Award of Excellence. The College of Education and Professional Studies teacher education programs were re-accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, or CAEP, from 2020 to 2027. Binion worked to prepare the educator preparation programs for review by the national accreditor. He spent three years developing the tools, processes and procedures that make up all of the facets of a solid quality assurance system. As a result of his work, there has been a great deal of improvement and refinement within the educator preparation programs. CAEP recently announced the USA College of Education and Professional Studies as a recipient of the 2021 Frank Murray Leadership Recognition for Continuous Improvement. South is the first university in Alabama with an educator preparation program to receive the award. Programs are selected for providing evidence and data trends to achieve accreditation with no stipulations or areas for improvement.

## *Welcoming New Faculty and Staff*

### **DR. DREW GOSSEN**

Assistant Professor of  
Elementary Science  
Education  
Department of Leadership  
and Teacher Education

### **DR. EUN MIN HWANG**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Hospitality  
and Tourism Management

### **OLIVIA LOGAN**

Academic Records Specialist  
Office of Graduate Studies

### **DR. MATTHEW HENSLEY**

Assistant Professor of  
Secondary Social Studies  
Education  
Department of Leadership  
and Teacher Education

### **TAMARA MCCLENDON**

Secretary V  
Department of Leadership  
and Teacher Education

## *New Appointment*

### **DR. NEIL SCHWARZ**

Associate Professor of Health,  
Kinesiology, and Sport  
Named Department Chair  
*effective 8/15/2021*

## *Honoring Recent College Retirees*

### **KATHY BECK**

Academic Records  
*33 years of service*

### **DR. SUSAN SANTOLI**

Leadership and Teacher  
Education  
*21 years of service*

### **DR. EVELYN GREEN**

Hospitality and Tourism  
Management  
*Six years of service*

## *Awarded Tenure*

### **DR. GEOFFREY HUDSON**

Department of Health,  
Kinesiology, and Sport

## *Awarded Promotion*

### **DR. SHELLEY HOLDEN**

Department of Health,  
Kinesiology, and Sport  
Promoted to Professor

### **DR. TRES STEFURAK**

Associate Dean  
College of Education and  
Professional Studies  
Promoted to Professor

### **DR. GEOFFREY HUDSON**

Department of Health,  
Kinesiology, and Sport  
Promoted to Associate  
Professor

# South Graduate Leads Mobile Innovation Team

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

**A**t the City of Mobile, Terrance Smith leads an Innovation Team that has drawn local praise and national attention. He was promoted to the director of the Strategic Initiatives and will lead ongoing efforts in Africatown.

Bloomberg CityLab named him one of “Six Innovators to Watch.” He appeared on the cover of Mobile Bay Magazine’s “Forty Under 40” issue. He was appointed to the Leadership Alabama Commission on Race and Equity and serves as a member of the USA College of Education and Professional Studies Advisory Council.

Building that kind of reputation – and resume – leads to career opportunities. Last year, he was contacted about a government position in California.

“It sounded amazing, but I don’t know how things work in California,” he said. “I do know how things operate in Mobile. And whatever I do here would have a tenfold impact, because of all the challenges we face.

“You know, when my friends were going off to college, or different jobs, they all wanted to end up in Atlanta or Dallas. As a housing project kid from Prichard, I wanted to go to Mobile. I wanted to have an impact in Mobile.”

Growing up in the Bessemer housing development gives Smith a different perspective from the mayor’s suite on the 10th floor of City Hall in downtown Mobile. His government experience and state work has supporters asking when he might run for public office.

Smith has little political experience, but has developed a broad support group of friends and colleagues. The 37-year-old says his brand is networking and problem solving. He has a repertoire of autobiographical stories that mix life lessons with self-deprecating humor.

He and his mother, who became a nurse, started out in Prichard. She made sure he had opportunities and made the most of them. He became a student musician who got to perform with an Adams Middle School orchestra on a trip to New York City’s famous Carnegie Hall.

“I didn’t even know that was a big deal,” he said. “My wife was the one who told me. I’m like, ‘Carnegie Hall – I played there.’ She said, ‘No, you didn’t.’ I said, ‘Yes, I did,’ and I had to get down the book to show her. She was like, ‘That’s amazing.’”

At the University of South Alabama, Smith studied everything from accounting to sociology, then learned he could save time with a degree in interdisciplinary studies. “I jumped into that program and, there you have it, I was a graduate of South.” Two years later, he earned a master’s degree in instructional design and development.

Smith worked full-time while going to college, so he didn’t have many extracurricular activities. He enjoys telling the tale of his first job at a pet store. One of his duties, several times a day, was carrying bags of dog hair from the grooming station to the dumpster. None of the managers taking smoke breaks ever offered to help him.

“I vowed then that I would never do that when I became a leader,” he said.

“To this day, with every team I’ve ever led, I’ve always made myself accessible, and never asked anyone to do anything I wouldn’t do myself.”

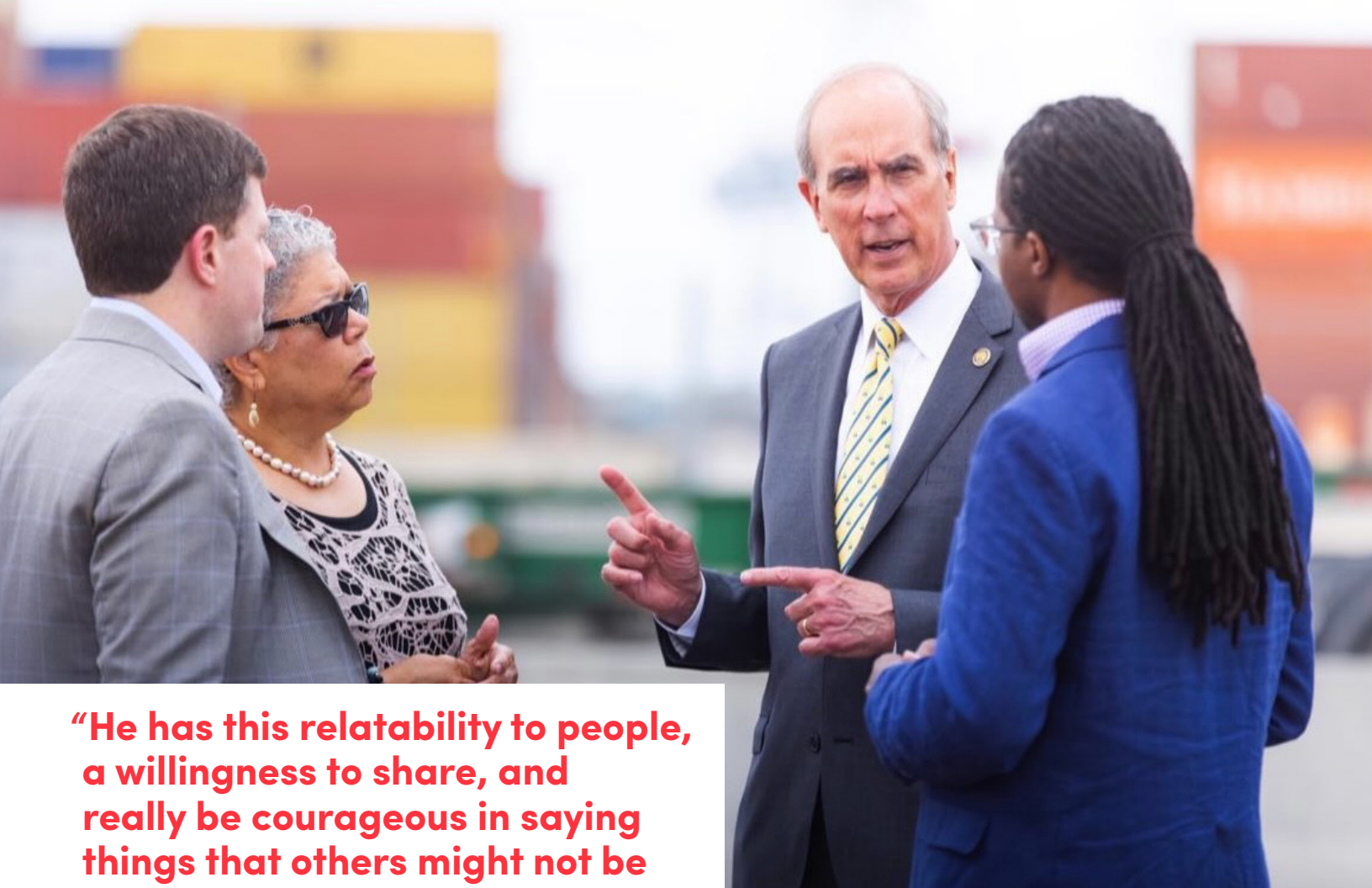
After college, Smith worked for the Mobile Area Education Foundation, then did a pop-up project downtown, which led to his job with the city. The Innovation Team, originally funded by Bloomberg

**“When my friends were going off to college, or different jobs, they all wanted to end up in Atlanta or Dallas. As a housing project kid from Prichard, I wanted to go to Mobile. I wanted to have an impact in Mobile.”**









**“He has this relatability to people, a willingness to share, and really be courageous in saying things that others might not be comfortable saying.”**

Philanthropies, tackles complex problems such as housing blight. After three years of collaborating with municipal departments, business interests and community groups, Smith was named director.

On the Bloomberg team, he traded ideas with groups from cities across the country and around the world. He found himself along the cutting edge of civic innovation. It didn't take long.

“Within my second week, we went to a Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Convention in Memphis, and I realized there were teams from Toronto and Jerusalem,” he said. “I’m thinking, ‘Oh, my gosh, these are the best of young government thinkers. This is a big deal. This is not just a Mobile deal.’”

Closer to home, the Leadership Alabama program has introduced him to people and programs across the state. Each week, he tries to meet someone new, especially if they're not from his circle of business and politics.

After his mother died five years ago, Smith felt down during the holidays. He and his wife began a November tradition of having people over to share a pre-holiday dinner. The meal started with just six friends, but the guest list grew to 30, 60 and then more than 100 people.

He calls it Smithsgiving.

Smithsgiving?

“Smithsgiving,” he said, laughing. “Like Thanksgiving.”

### *Advisers and Mentors*

Stimpson, who first hired Smith for the Innovation Team, remains one of his biggest supporters.

“The City of Mobile is very fortunate to have someone with Terrance’s talents and drive,” said the three-term Mobile mayor. “He has a lot of interpersonal skills. He’s comfortable in every situation. He’s compatible with people from all walks of

*Terrance Smith, far right, meets with Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson and other community stakeholders to learn about the impact and operations at APM Terminals, a high productivity terminal located in the Port of Mobile.*

life. It doesn't matter if he's talking to a homeless person on the street or someone in a corporate boardroom.”

Smith earned a reputation as a stickler for quality systems and orderly processes. He could listen to people, understand their motivations and respect their opinions. He could identify problems and suggest solutions that different groups of people found acceptable.

Stimpson hopes Smith will remain in Alabama and continue working for the people of Mobile.

“If Terrance wants a future as an elected official, it's there for him, and he would do an excellent job,” he said. “Timing has a lot to do with those decisions, but he has that opportunity, or he could have the opportunity to run nonprofits.



He is successful and he will continue to be successful."

Dr. Joél Lewis Billingsley, an associate professor of Instructional Design at South, met Smith when he was in graduate school. She volunteered to become his advisor. She encouraged him to apply for an internship with Mobile County Commissioner Merceria Ludgood, another important mentor.

"I knew community engagement was important to him," she said. "So I've been overjoyed and delighted at what he's been able to accomplish and how he's been able to help improve our community."

Billingsley believes Smith's roots in Prichard are important. He's humble and respectful. He enjoys listening to people and wants all voices to be heard.

"People recognize authenticity and genuineness," she said. "He has this relatability to people, a willingness to share, and really be courageous in saying things that others might not be comfortable in saying. In meetings about education, he would always advocate for students to be part of the conversation. In the community, he would always advocate for residents to be part of a conversation."

"He's a genuine problem solver who has a heart for people. I'm grateful to know him and be part of his journey. There's no telling where he's going to have the greatest impact, but I know his work will continue."

### *Porch Views and Beach Dreams*

Smith's wife, Johnnice Edwards Smith, is director of human resources for a Baldwin County nursing home. They live in Magnolia Grove along the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. His son Ty'Terious just started college.

He describes his mother, Cynthia Smith, as a single parent who set him on a path for success.

"She believed in me more than anyone else," he said. "Her parenting style was very liberal, very open. She allowed you

to make your own mistakes, go at your own pace, and have a full range of emotional experiences."

Smith grew up next to Interstate 65 in Prichard. It was a close-knit community of families who all knew one another. He still thinks about the second grade teacher who taught him so much. He remembers the band director who insisted he learn the xylophone and other percussion instruments before picking up a snare drum.

Even as a boy, he was curious, willing to approach people and ask questions.

Smith remembers a nursing friend of his mom's inviting them to a beach house in Gulf Shores. He got to talking with the owner, who explained that he had one house in Mobile and a second home along the shore. This was another world.

"So I asked him, 'You think I could buy a house on the beach one day?'" Smith said.

"And he said, 'Yeah, I'm going to tell you how: Do your homework every day.' I'm thinking to myself this guy's lying to me, he's hiding secrets, but I'll tell you what, that's the one thing I remembered. I went back to that housing project and I did my homework on the porch every day."

"You can imagine the scene, this porch next to the interstate, and I would do my homework wondering all the time, those people going up and down the highway, are they smart, are they rich, are they doctors or lawyers, and were they thinking about me the same way I'm thinking about them? These were all the things that went through my mind from about 9 to 17 years old."

"What I realized later on was that it was never really about the beach house. It was about relentless preparation. Doing my homework every day was how I ended up getting a scholarship to go to college in the first place. I was able to avoid all the negative stuff going on around me. I was able to surround myself with people to help me accomplish my goals."

## *CEPS Advisory Council*

### **Carolyn Akers**

Executive Director  
Mobile Area Education Foundation

### **Gigi Armbrecht**

AT&T (Retired)

### **Frank Barrow**

Director of Army Instruction  
Mobile County Public Schools

### **Travis Bedsole**

Attorney (Retired)

### **David Clark**

President/CEO  
Visit Mobile

### **Rufus Hudson**

Vice President of Commercial Banking  
Regions Financial Corporation

### **Betty Huff**

Senior Consultant  
AACRAO Consulting

### **Dr. Aaron Milner**

Superintendent  
Saraland City Schools

### **Eric Patterson, Council Chairman**

Alabama Power (Retired)

### **Martha Peek**

Superintendent (Retired)  
Mobile County Public Schools

### **Paige Plash**

Co-Owner  
Encore Rehabilitation, Inc.

### **Jeanne McAleer Sanderford**

School Counselor (Retired)

### **Terrance Smith**

Director of Strategic Initiatives  
City of Mobile

### **Mark Spivey**

Vice President of Commercial Banking  
BB&T now Truist

### **Chresal Threadgill**

Superintendent  
Mobile County Public Schools

### **Eddie Tyler**

Superintendent  
Baldwin County Public Schools

## FAST FACTS



**CEPS STUDENTS**  
are from  
**32**  
states and  
**24**  
countries



**37 ACTIVE SPONSORED  
GRANT PROJECTS**  
(\$16,591,494.15)



**64 DONOR  
SCHOLARSHIPS**  
(AY 20-21 \$120,388)



**50,000+  
ALUMNI**



**57 FULL-TIME  
FACULTY AND  
28 STAFF**



**3,631 INTERNSHIP  
CREDITS**  
awarded in 2020-2021  
academic year



**420 EDUCATOR  
EXCELLENCE  
SCHOLARSHIP  
RECIPIENTS**  
(AY 20-21)



**\$6 MILLION**  
left to be matched through  
the Mitchell-Moulton  
Scholarship Initiative  
(As of July 2021)



**49 GRADUATE  
PROGRAMS**

**SINCE THE COLLEGE'S INCEPTION IN 1967, OUR GRADUATES HAVE  
MADE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY.**

**WE ARE THE LARGEST TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM ON THE GULF COAST  
WITH MORE THAN 85% OF EDUCATORS IN THE GREATER MOBILE AREA HAVING  
AT LEAST ONE DEGREE OR TEACHING CREDENTIAL FROM THE COLLEGE.**

### STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

#### CINS

- Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Honor Society
- Instructional Design and Developmental Graduate Student Organization
- Clinical and Counseling Psychology Graduate Student Organization

#### HTM

- Eta Sigma Delta - International Hospitality Management Honor Society
- Hospitality Club

#### HKS

- Recreational Therapy Association
- Jaguar Sport Management and Administration Club

#### INGS

- Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society

#### LTE

- Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society

### ACCREDITATIONS



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION



EXCELLENCE IN  
EDUCATOR PREPARATION  
ACCREDITATION

*College of Education and Professional Studies programs are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, Alabama State Department of Education, American Psychological Association, and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.*





#### SARIC OUTREACH

**4,260**

K-12 AREA  
EDUCATORS  
SERVED

**711+**

HOURS OF  
PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING

**304**

PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
SESSIONS

**161**

COURSES  
OFFERED

(Fall 2020 – July 2021)

#### ENROLLMENT



**1,088**  
SUMMER 2020



**2,003**  
FALL 2020



**1,889**  
SPRING 2021



**1,004**  
SUMMER 2021

(Undergraduate and Graduate)

#### PUBLICATIONS

**71**

PUBLISHED  
PEER-REVIEWED  
JOURNAL ARTICLES

**3**

PUBLISHED BOOKS

**8**

PUBLISHED BOOK  
CHAPTERS

**89**

PROFESSIONAL  
PRESENTATIONS

(Fall 2020–Summer 2021)

# Know the Lingo

## CEPS ACRONYMS

**CEPS**

*College of Education  
and Professional Studies*

**CINS**

*Counseling and  
Instructional Sciences*

**HKS**

*Health, Kinesiology, and Sport*

**HTM**

*Hospitality and Tourism Management*

**INGS**

*Integrative Studies*

**LTE**

*Leadership and  
Teacher Education*

**SARIC**

*South Alabama Research  
and Inservice Center*

**AMSTI-USA**

*Alabama Math, Science, and  
Technology Initiative at USA*

**PASSAGE  
USA**

*Preparing All Students Socially and  
Academically for Gainful Employment*



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

## William "Willie" Peck Memorial Scholarship

**W**illiam "Willie" Peck, a graduate of the University of South Alabama and beloved teacher at Robertsdale High School, passed away on Feb. 14, 2021. After receiving both his bachelor's and master's degrees from the College of Education and Professional Studies, Peck, a native of Louisiana, spent his entire career at Robertsdale High School teaching government and economics. He was recognized as Teacher of the Year in December 2020.

Soon after Peck's passing, the William "Willie" Peck Memorial Scholarship was formed by two of Peck's fraternity brothers. Peck was a dedicated member and active alumnus of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. Ed Donaldson and Michael Summar, both alumni of the University, formed this scholarship to honor Peck's memory and, through others, perpetuate his dream to educate students to make the community stronger. Each year, a student from Robertsdale High School who plans to major in the College of Education and Professional Studies is chosen to be a recipient of the award. The recipient must be an undergraduate student with a GPA of 3.0 and a score of 23 or higher on the ACT.

The recipient of this year's William "Willie" Peck Memorial Scholarship is Chloe Giardina, an undergraduate student majoring in elementary education. Like many others, Giardina was inspired by Peck, and she is humbled and honored to be chosen to carry on such an outstanding legacy. Giardina, a former student of Peck, applied for this scholarship in hopes that it would aid her to getting one step closer to leading a classroom in the way Peck led his.

"Mr. Peck was an exceptional teacher and a kind man," Giardina said. "He fully immersed himself into his teaching career and ensured that every student's life was changed for the better when they stepped foot into his classroom. Mr. Peck was a loyal man who made everyone, including myself, feel important. He leaves behind many friends and students in my community who adore him and mourn him. I am so thankful to have been chosen to represent the life's work of such a stellar man."

Giardina was fortunate enough to know Peck outside of the classroom as well, as Peck was a dear friend to Giardina's family. She remembers going to many crawfish boils hosted by Peck.



**"HE FULLY IMMERSED HIMSELF INTO HIS TEACHING CAREER AND ENSURED THAT EVERY STUDENT'S LIFE WAS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER WHEN THEY STEPPED FOOT INTO HIS CLASSROOM."**



"Mr. Peck loved cooking for crowds of family and friends," Giardina said. "One of his favorite things to do was to boil crawfish. He had a secret recipe, and they turned out perfect every time. I will always cherish the memories that I have of Mr. Peck."

After taking a tour of the University of South Alabama during her sophomore year of high school, Giardina knew that South was the place for her. Both of her parents are alumni of the University, and she has heard them talk about the endless opportunities offered to them while students at South. Giardina recently started her first semester at South as a student in the College of Education and Professional Studies. She is excited to meet new friends, make new memories and make Willie Peck proud.



*Chloe Giardina, an undergraduate student at South majoring in elementary education, is the recipient of the William "Willie" Peck Memorial Scholarship.*

**To learn more about the scholarship, visit giving.SouthAlabama.edu/Peck.**

According to the principal of Robertsdale High School, Joseph Sharp, Giardina is a well-deserving recipient of the William "Willie" Peck Memorial scholarship.

"Chloe Giardina was an outstanding student while attending Robertsdale High School, and I am sure she will make a fantastic teacher after she graduates," Sharp said.

Peck had a passion for teaching and made an impact on students inside and outside the classroom. As an active member of the Graduation Task Force at Robertsdale High School, he worked tirelessly to help seniors reach the finish line and graduate with their cohort.

"Along with being an exceptional teacher, Peck was also a great friend, coworker and colleague to many," Sharp said. "He helped out coworkers, new and old, many times in many different ways. He would always be happy to help with classroom projects and as a handyman because he could do a little bit of everything. One project included giving the teacher's lounge at our school a makeover. The project included new paint, new cabinets and a coffee bar. He also held many end-of-the-year celebrations at his home."

Along with being a dedicated teacher and coworker, Peck had many friends, including the lifelong friendships he made as a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. Donaldson graduated from South in 1989. He described Peck as an outstanding person that was a true friend to everyone.

"He lived the creed of our fraternity and was the epitome of 'The True Gentleman,'" Donaldson said. "To maintain those fraternal relationships, he was part of a core group, including Michael, that began a yearly fishing trip in Orange Beach for SAE alumni. With his continued efforts, that event has occurred every year for the last 27 years."

Summar described Peck as a passionate leader and knew teaching was Peck's dream job.

"When Ed and I decided to start the William 'Willie' Peck Scholarship, we knew it would be the best way to honor Willie," Summar said. "Even from his early days at the University of South Alabama, Willie taught and educated his family, friends and colleagues every day. He always had something new to share and a way to explain it so that everyone would understand."

Another fraternity brother from the chapter, Thomas Boone, also considered Peck to be a true friend.

"When Willie passed away, I was sharing and listening to all the Willie stories," Boone said. "It finally dawned on me that I wasn't alone in my bond with him. Everyone felt it. That was his way; he made us all feel special. A true gentleman and a true friend indeed."

# INVEST IN THE COLLEGE



## GIVING PRIORITIES

Financial support dramatically impacts the lives of students in the College of Education and Professional Studies. Your support allows us to transform our community and expand our outreach through a commitment to excellence in education and human services. Two areas of priority for the college include:

### *Student Scholarships*

The enrollment, education and graduation of outstanding students is of paramount importance to the College of Education and Professional Studies. Employers and other external constituents benefit from inspired graduates entering the workforce. In order to attract these students, the College of Education and Professional Studies must offer competitive scholarships. The Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative matches any endowed undergraduate scholarship gift dollar-for-dollar.

### *Community Engagement*

Studies have shown that community engagement improves learning outcomes, improves critical thinking and increases ability to apply classroom knowledge of real-world problems. The College of Education and Professional Studies provides community engagement opportunities for our students, faculty and staff such as the Literacy Center, Williamson Prep, and court systems among other opportunities. Support from our donors allows the college to continue to provide service and engagement to our community.

To give to the listed priorities, please visit giving.southalabama.edu or contact College of Education and Professional Studies Development Officer Aimee Meyers at ameyers@SouthAlabama.edu.

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### *Scholarship Recipient Spotlight*

## **Amiriam Watson**

*Recreational Therapy / Class of 2021*

"The Ruth M. Gwinn-Heitman Endowed Scholarship has allowed me to pursue my studies in recreational therapy with less stress about finances. I am grateful for Ms. Gwinn-Heitman's generosity. The experiences at South have been wonderful, I'm happy that I've met so many wonderful people. One of my college friends told me about the recreational therapy program, and I thought, 'wow, this is my dream career.' I enjoy helping people with their lives and making them smile. In the future, I hope to become a recreational therapist and move to Houston, Texas. I am currently a senior and will graduate in December 2021."



# 2020-2021 College of Education and Professional Studies Scholarships

Akridge-DeVan Family Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Aniston Weeks**

Alfred F. Delchamps Sr. Memorial Scholarship

**Kaitlyn Boykin**

Bobbie and Steve Hancock Scholarship in Interdisciplinary Studies

**Savannah Long**

Burette S Tillinghast Jr. Graduate Scholarship in School Counseling

**Gregory Heckel**

Captain Allen U. Graham Memorial Scholarship

**Madison Edwards**

Carol and Jim Statter Endowed Scholarship for Literacy Education

**Leslie Rhodes**

Charles & Virginia Thompson Endowed Scholarship in Hospitality

**Austin Roper**

College of Education and Professional Studies Scholarship

**Cynthia Tompkins**

Don Winterton Endowed Scholarship for Science Education

**Jacob Green**

Dr. Evelyn Kwan Green Endowed Scholarship in Hospitality and Tourism

**Sophie Mikkelsen**

Dr. George E. Uhlig Endowed Award

**Allison Morrow**

Dr. Vaughn Millner Endowed Scholarship in Counseling

**Victoria Dixon**

Dr. Richard L. Hayes Endowed Scholarship in School Counseling

**Kaitlyn Mount**

Ed Bunnell Adult Degree Program Scholarship

**Lawrence Smith**

Harold Bickel Memorial Scholarship in Education

**Morgan Walden**

Helping Hands Development Award

**Rachel Cargill**

Hospitality Advisory Board Leadership Endowed Scholarship

**Courtney Bulger**

J. Howe and Annie Bell Hadley Memorial Scholarship

**Hadley DiForti**

Jeanne M. Sanderford Scholarship

**Madison Green**

Jim and Liz Connors Hospitality Management Scholarship

**Carson Bentley**

Joycelyn Franklin Finley Trailblazer Scholarship

**Brunilda Vega-Santiago**

John Hadley Strange Scholarship

**Taylor Eady**

Josephine Wood Tillinghast Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Janie Arnold**

Keasler/Spillers Scholarship

**Mandy Antwine**

Lavonne Simon Endowed Book Award

**Mariah Nix**

Linda Reaves Endowment for Educators in Science and Mathematics

**Jacob Green**

Lisa Mitchell Bukstein Developing Students Scholarship

**Briah Sewell**

Malcolm R. Howell Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Leslie Rhodes**

Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative Scholarship in Education

**Jennifer Lazarus**

Mobile Area Lodging Association Scholarship

**Courtney Bulger**

Pamela Lynne Patterson Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Cailey Turnbow**

Patricia Kelly Lofton Endowed Scholarship for Teachers

**Morgan Walden**

Paula Lawkis-Bruton Memorial Endowed Scholarship

**Michael Sims**

PNC Bank Endowed Scholarship in Early Childhood Education

**Zain Sayegh**

Ralph Jones Memorial Scholarship

**Hadley DiForti**

Robert Hopkins Memorial Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Tianna Nickens**

Ronald A. Styron Sr. Memorial Endowed Scholarship

**Christopher Bagwell**

Rotary Club of Mobile Scholarship

**Darian Coleman**

Ruth M. Gwinn-Heitman Endowed Scholarship

**Amiriam Watson**

Spectrum Resorts Scholarship

**Natalie Kelley**

Student Leaders in Education Scholarship

**Matthew Jalkh**

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama Endowed Scholarship for Teachers

**Savannah Dinkel**

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama Endowed Scholarship for Teachers

**Natalie Mortellaro**

The Nancy Gaillard Love of Teaching Scholarship

**Ashlyn Thompson**

Thomas Corcoran Scholarship in Interdisciplinary Studies

**Brittany Wones**

Tom Wood Tillinghast Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Rachel Cargill**

Travis M. Bedsole Jr. and Susan D. Bedsole Endowed Scholarship in Education

**Nichole Harting**

Valerie R. Morgan Memorial Scholarship in Graduate Education

**Brittany Allemand**

White-Spinner Endowment Scholarship in Education

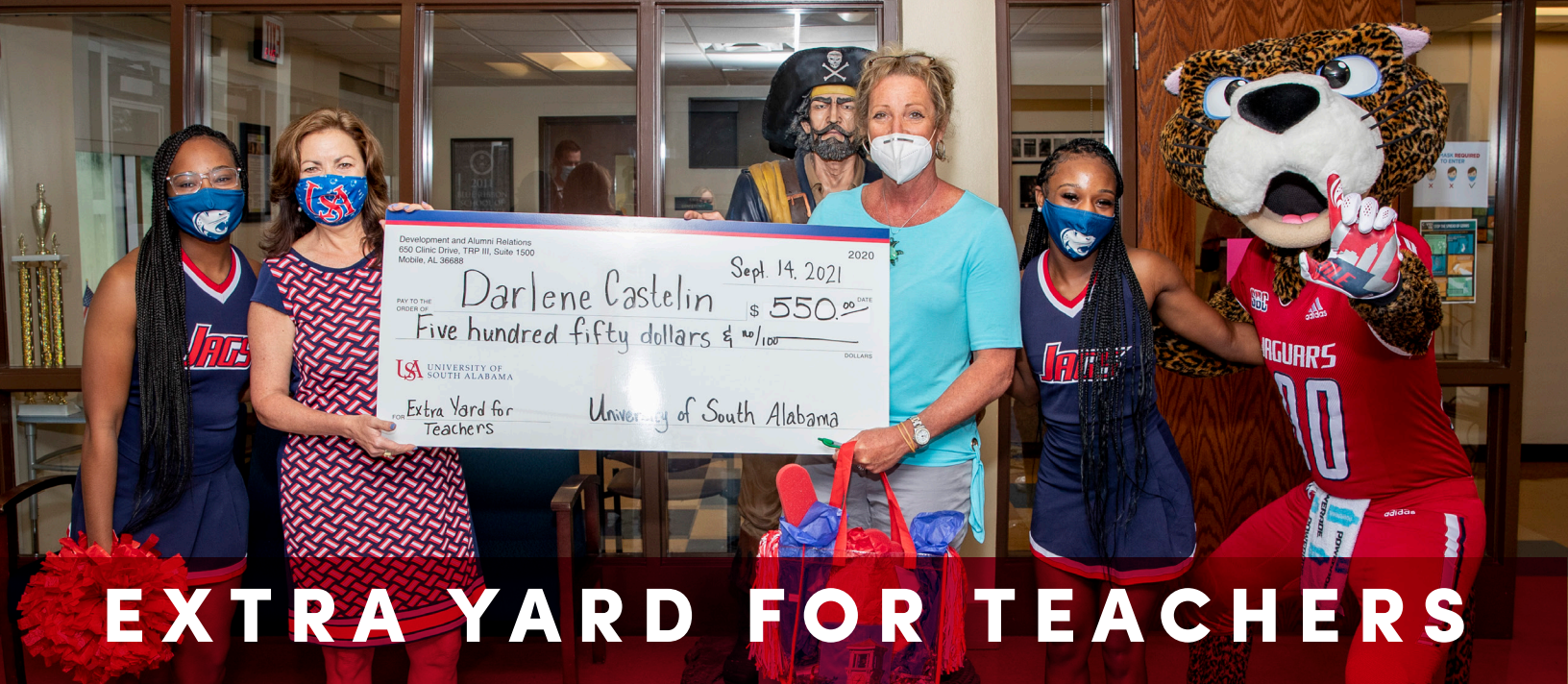
**Phillip Ramirez**

William Chamberlain Technology Teaching Award

**Selena Miller**

Wind Creek Hospitality Endowed Scholarship in Hospitality and Tourism

**Katie Joiner**



*Darlene Castelin, top winner of the Extra Yard for Teachers Week Classroom Project Contest, was surprised at her school with a special visit from the University of South Alabama. Dr. Paige Vitulli, interim chair of the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, presented a big check to Castelin, who was surrounded by her students, South cheerleaders and SouthPaw to celebrate the award.*

The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies and the South Alabama Athletics Department partnered with the College Football Playoff Foundation to celebrate teachers in Mobile and Baldwin counties for Extra Yard for Teachers Week.

"Extra Yard for Teachers Week allows us to bring recognition to our area teachers and to say 'thank you' for all they do daily to make an impact on their students and communities," said Dr. John Kovaleski, interim dean of the USA College of Education and Professional Studies.

To show appreciation, the USA Classroom Project Contest provided teachers with an opportunity to win gift cards to help them accomplish their classroom project. The goal of the classroom project contest is to assist educators in making a direct impact on student learning. The College of Education and Professional Studies and the College Football Playoff Foundation provided one \$550 gift card and two \$250 gift cards to the teachers who submitted the best project ideas for classroom enrichment. The College Football Playoff Foundation surprised South this year and gave seven additional \$100 Donors Choose gift cards for the classroom project contest. More than 60 educators submitted project proposals.

The top three winners were featured at the Sept. 18, 2021 Jags vs. Alcorn State football game at Hancock Whitney Stadium.

### **\$550 WINNER:**

Darlene Castelin, Phillips Preparatory School, Sixth grade  
**Project Name: STEM Garden**

### **\$250 WINNERS:**

Rachel Gebhart, Magnolia Elementary School, K-6 grades  
**Project Name: Drum It!**

David Dai, Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies, 8-9 grades  
**Project Name: The Look Like Me Library**

### **\$100 WINNERS:**

Brittni Wright, Satsuma High School, 7-12 grades  
**Project Name: Sensory Room Makeover**

Rebekah Campbell, W.C. Griggs Elementary, Third grade  
**Project name: Full STEM Ahead-STEM Bins for Students!**

Annie Fitzgerald, O'Rourke Elementary, First grade  
**Project Name: Plants for Profit**

Jabari Jackson, B.C. Rain High School, 11-12 grades  
**Project Name: Financial Literacy**

Leah Willisson, Fairhope East Elementary, Sixth grade  
**Project Name: Learning from Watt Key**

Kerryn Hollins, Murphy High School, 10<sup>th</sup> grade  
**Project Name: Chapter Chats**

Jami Martin, W. D. Robbins Elementary, Fifth grade  
**Project Name: Broadcasting in the Classroom**






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