



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

MINUTES

Staff Assembly

The University of South Alabama's Staff Assembly was duly convened by Dallas Schmidt, President, on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 from 9:30-10:30 am at the University's Faculty Club.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Debbie Cobb, Autumn Courtney, Joel Dobson, Courtney Ellis, Elizabeth Hall, Tamir Haseeb, Pamela Howard, Trey Ruffin Johnson, Lindsey Kendall, Kevin Morris, Broderick Morrissette, William Nguyen, Dallas Schmidt, Sarah Schrenk, Heather Sprinkle, Kassidy Wilcox, Andi Winborn, Coleman Wolf, Alison Gay Wood

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marjorie Burkett, Ashley Lawson, Bailey Smith

EX OFFICIO MEMBER Peter Susman

PRESENT:

GUESTS: Elizabeth Dickson, Angela Jordan, Jennifer Mills

1. Welcome – Dallas Schmidt, President

Staff Assembly President, Dallas Schmidt, welcomed assembly members and guests.

2. Roll Call – Broderick Morrissette, Parliamentarian/Historian

Attendance: 82% of members present (quorum met)

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve: Joel Dobson

Seconded: Heather Sprinkle

Unanimous approval

4. Approval of Minutes

October 7, 2025 Staff Assembly Meeting

Motion to approve: Andi Winborn

Seconded: Broderick Morrissette

Unanimous approval

November 18, 2025 Listening Session

Motion to approve: Andi Winborn

Seconded: Coleman Wolf

Unanimous approval



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

5. Guests

- Dr. Angela Jordan, Assistant Vice President of Research Development
Jennifer Mills, Assistant Vice President of Sponsored Projects Administration

Angela Jordan and Jennifer Mills provided an overview of [Discovery 2030 @ South](#), the Office of Research and Economic Development's (ORED) process to develop a five-year strategic plan focused on strengthening research across campus. ORED aims to expand the University's research portfolio, strengthen industry partnerships, and better connect faculty research to education.

This initiative has entered Phase 2, Analysis and Action Planning, which includes meeting with university constituencies and hosting town halls to gather input from the campus community. ORED anticipates completing Phase 3 in Summer 2026 with the release of a draft strategic plan.

This work aligns with the University's goal of achieving the [Carnegie R1 designation](#). Presenters emphasized that reaching R1 status will require collaboration across campus and ongoing engagement from faculty and staff.

The Research Administration Integration Strategy for Excellence (RAISE) Committee is examining university research administration processes to improve coordination, streamline procedures, and create greater uniformity in support of faculty research. This effort may require additional training for staff and potentially increased research administrative personnel. The committee is focused on identifying short- and medium-term solutions to enhance efficiency and is expected to deliver formal recommendations by March 1, 2026, with implementation anticipated later this spring.

University leadership's commitment to maintaining a student-centered institutional identity was also emphasized.

When asked about peer institutions for comparison, the presenters noted that benchmarking depends on specific goals and metrics, but suggested reviewing institutions with healthcare systems that have recently transitioned from R2 to R1 status, including the University of South Florida, Virginia Commonwealth University, and UMass Lowell.

Staff Assembly members were encouraged to attend a campus-wide [Town Hall](#) scheduled for Wednesday, February 25th at 2:00 pm in the Marx Library Auditorium and to participate in related surveys.

6. Ongoing Business – Coleman Wolf, Vice-President

The Staff Assembly continues to advance the Childcare Initiative. We are still waiting for two departments to submit their committee nominations. Once those nominations are received, a proposed committee list will be submitted to Dr. Kent for review. The goal is to finalize committee membership by the end of January.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

7. **New Business** – Dallas Schmidt, President

- Julia Kristman has left the University, creating a vacancy in her role as an At-Large Representative on the Staff Assembly. In accordance with the [Staff Assembly Bylaws](#), an at-large representative vacancy is to be filled by the runner-up (alternate) candidate from the most recent election, based on votes received and willingness to serve.

The runner-up from the previous election was Lindsay Allyn. No objections were raised to extending an offer of membership to Lindsay to fill the vacancy.

- Building on the success of the recent Listening Session, the Staff Assembly discussed hosting informal Brown Bag Lunch gatherings in the Fresh Food Company dining facility. These gatherings would provide an opportunity for university staff to come together, connect with colleagues, and strengthen community ties across campus.

The proposal received no objections from Staff Assembly members.

8. **Committee Reports**

Elections and Nominations Committee:

- Bailey Smith, Chair

The committee is preparing for the Spring election cycle. The nomination period will take place in May, followed by elections in June. The committee is working to ensure that all procedures align with the Staff Assembly Constitution and Bylaws. There is also a desire to increase participation and broaden representation across university constituencies.

Policies and Issues Committee:

- Trey Ruffin Johnson and Courtney Ellis, Co-Chairs

The committee met with University administration to discuss the approval process for policy proposals. They have decided to pursue updates that would allow employees to directly donate sick leave to colleagues facing serious or life-altering illnesses. The committee will work with Peter Sussman to clarify the approval process and receive guidance by the end of February. This effort is intended as an initial step in understanding and navigating the institutional review process.

Communications Committee:

- Heather Sprinkle, Chair

Staff Assembly members are asked to [submit a headshot](#) for inclusion on the Staff Assembly website.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Research Committee:

- Autumn Courtney, Chair

Following a review of the Listening Session minutes, the committee narrowed the list of discussion topics from twelve to the [top three priorities](#) for further study. The Research Committee will forward its reports to the Policies and Issues Committee, which will determine next steps and appropriate actions.

9. Listening Session – Dallas Schmidt, President

The Staff Assembly hosted a Listening Session for University staff on November 18, 2025. The session provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the Staff Assembly and its work, and generated valuable feedback from participants. The Assembly hopes to host another Listening Session in early summer, after the Spring semester concludes but before Orientation begins.

10. Announcements

Staff Mixer

The Assembly would like to plan a summer staff mixer to provide an opportunity for University staff to connect and learn more about Staff Assembly initiatives.

Jag Pantry

The Jag Pantry expressed appreciation for the Staff Assembly's Fall food drive efforts and extended thanks for the support.

Website Update

The Office of Marketing and Communications is in the process of updating the University website. Email communications will be sent to University personnel with additional information.

Faculty & Staff Basketball Game

Staff are encouraged to attend the Faculty and Staff basketball doubleheader on Saturday, January 10.

11. Adjournment – Dallas Schmidt, President

Minutes respectfully submitted by Alison Gay Wood, Secretary.