

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND  
PROFESSIONAL STUDIES  
VOLUME 14  
FALL 2022

# PILLARS



# PILLARS

VOLUME 14 | FALL 2022

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.





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**USA** UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
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On behalf of the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies, I am honored to present the 2022 edition of Pillars, our publication about the people and the many activities and events happening in the college. As we transitioned into the new academic year with fall classes, we welcomed new and returning students on August 16.

Whether attending classes on campus or online, performing internships in the community, or employing a combination of instructional modalities, students will experience the same rigor, relevance and excellence, all delivered with our supportive, welcoming South Alabama culture.

Our faculty demonstrate their dedication to their students' futures and to their own professional development and advancement by making knowledge matter and engaging in unfettered inquiry. Whether it is a classroom setting, service learning opportunity, clinical practice or field-based experience, each allows for a high level of interaction with their students. Coupled with that, our professional and administrative staff are committed to helping students transition to the higher education environment and provide support services to help students stay connected. Preparing educators and human service professionals is a collective endeavor so that our students achieve their aspirations to make a difference and become successful. We strive to empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and to lead meaningful lives. With that focus, we want the educational experiences we provide — both in and out of the classrooms — to change the lives of our graduates. As we embark on this exciting academic year, I very much look forward to capitalizing on our collective strengths and advancing the college's mission to collaborate with, and learn from, the communities we support.

Throughout this edition, you will find success stories that illustrate our impact — the ways in which a South Alabama education continues to guide our graduates to support communities, to enrich the lives of other people by creating connections and to facilitate similar transformation in the next generation of graduates.

Dr. Andrea Kent — on the cover of this edition — earned her master's and doctoral degrees from the College of Education and Professional Studies (p. 33). As a graduate of South and through her experiences as an elementary school teacher, a university professor, a college dean, and now the University's provost and executive vice president, Kent has displayed a passion for instilling an expectation of excellence in learning, enhancing student and faculty scholarly interactions, and helping build communities that she leads.

There are also stories like that of Martha Peek, a 2022 University of South Alabama Distinguished Alumni Award recipient who earned a master's in education from South in 1978 (p. 57). She began her 46-year career in education as a teacher at Alba School in Bayou La Batre, Alabama, and served as principal, assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent before being named superintendent of Mobile County Public Schools in 2012. Peek became the first female to hold this position in the school system's 180-year history.

There are many individuals working in the college also highlighted in this issue, including Dr. Joshua Keller, an assistant professor of exercise science in the Department of Health, Kinesiology and Sport (p. 42), and Timothy Johnson, an Alabama Technology in Motion specialist (p. 26). Keller, who has more than 50 accepted scientific articles in refereed journals, understands the process of effectively disseminating and communicating findings derived from his original investigations, which include the study of peripheral vascular function and physiological correlates of healthy aging. Johnson, through the South Alabama Research and Inservice Center in the College of Education and Professional Studies, provides professional development training and modeling for K-12 teachers on integrating digital literacy and computer science into the curriculum to better facilitate learning.

Some stories involve more than a single person — like the many centers, laboratories and field experiences provided across the five departments in the college. Not only do these initiatives positively impact hundreds of students, but they also impact the communities in which they serve.

Lastly, I would like to highlight another inspirational individual featured in this year's magazine — Dr. Thomas L. Chilton, who served as faculty member and administrator in the college for nearly 50 years (p. 61). In such roles as department chair, associate dean and interim dean, Chilton was called upon repeatedly to provide direction for a young college that matured under his committed leadership. He passed away on February 14, 2022. Throughout his career, Chilton positively impacted the lives of countless students and faculty through his knowledge, expertise, mentorship and leadership. His unwavering commitment to the College of Education and Professional Studies and the University is unprecedented, and his legacy will continue for many years to come.

I hope articles like these, and many others in this edition, make you proud. As faculty, staff, students, alumni or friends of the College of Education and Professional Studies, we all play a role in strengthening and advancing the work that leads to meaningful lives. Together and as individuals, we are enriching the lives of the people we serve and support.

Sincerely,

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

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@USACEPS



*Dr. John Kovalski, interim dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies, meets with Dr. Josh Keller, assistant professor of exercise science in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport*

“I chose South because I knew that I wouldn’t be just a number. Thank you for sharing the research, the science and the data to help me teach more effectively in the classroom.”

*Courtney Thompson, a South alumna and kindergarten teacher at Griggs Elementary School in Mobile*

### Fast Facts



**CEPS STUDENTS** are from

**31** states and **7** countries



**36 ACTIVE SPONSORED GRANT PROJECTS** (\$18,007,262)



**68 DONOR SCHOLARSHIPS** (AY 21-22 \$120,389)



**517 INTERNSHIPS COMPLETED** in the 2021-2022 academic year



**14,664 CEPS ALUMNI** (As of August 2022)



**341 EDUCATOR EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS** (AY 21-22)



**\$4.8 MILLION** left to be matched through the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative (As of September 2022)



**53 FULL-TIME FACULTY AND 24 STAFF**



**18 Undergraduate Majors**  
**4 Undergraduate Minors**  
**49 Graduate Programs**

### Student Orgs

#### 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

#### INGS

- Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society

#### HKS

- Recreational Therapy Association
- Jaguar Sport Management and Administration Club
- Exercise Science Club
- Health and Physical Education Major Club

#### LTE

- Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society

### Enrollment



**1,004** SUMMER 2021



**1,914** FALL 2021



**1,813** SPRING 2021



**942** SUMMER 2022

*(Undergraduate and Graduate)*

# 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

## Outreach

### SARIC

**6,409**  
K-12 AREA  
EDUCATORS SERVED

**1,016**  
HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING

**266**  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

### AMSTI

**4,700**  
K-12 AREA EDUCATORS  
SERVED

**3,280**  
HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL  
LEARNING

**616**  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

(2021-2022 Academic Year)

## Accreditations



*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.*

## Publications

**67**  
PUBLISHED PEER-REVIEWED  
JOURNAL ARTICLES  
(246% INCREASE SINCE 2014)

**3**  
PUBLISHED BOOKS

**6**  
PUBLISHED BOOK CHAPTERS

**42**  
NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

(Fall 2021 - Summer 2022)



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies students were honored at the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Student Honors and Awards Ceremony in April 2022. Congratulations to all awardees for your hard work and success. To see a full list of student awardees, visit page 10 in the magazine.

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





**Lucas Andrianopoulos** was named the Outstanding Clinical Mental Health Counseling (M.S.) Graduate Student. Andrianopoulos recently earned a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. During his time at South, Andrianopoulos served as a member of the Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society. He plans to run his own private practice in the future, with a long-term goal to create a practice that incorporates music therapy, poetry therapy and therapeutic horticulture within one facility. “I decided to study at South because my grandfather Walter Darring taught English for years at the University. I have always looked up to him, developing my passion for the humanities through his generous attention and appreciation. I have pivoted to a focus on counseling as an expression of my passion for counseling psychology, because I have always felt called to be there with people in their times of suffering.”



**Stephanie Bradford** was named the Outstanding School Counseling (M.Ed.) Graduate Student. Bradford recently earned a master’s degree in school counseling and served as a member of the Chi Sigma Iota and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies. She now works as a school counselor at Leinkauf Elementary School in Mobile. “Dr. Amy Upton has been a constant source of encouragement and champion for my success in the school counseling graduate program. Given my lack of experience in the field of education, I had my fair share of apprehension over whether I would be a good fit for the program. I also had my concerns over the feasibility of completing a full-time master’s as an ‘older’ student managing the demands of a family. In that first conversation with Dr. Upton, she exuded passion for the field of school counseling and articulated so clearly why and how school counselors make a difference in our schools.”



**Katie Kennedy** was named the Outstanding Exercise Science Graduate Student. Kennedy recently earned a master’s degree in exercise science. She worked as a graduate assistant and served as a member of the Academic Standards Committee. Kennedy is now pursuing a Ph.D. in Exercise Physiology at Texas Tech University. “I attended South to work with Dr. Ryan Colquhoun, and I had the unique opportunity to lead my own research from the start of my time here. I am passionate about involving more females in research and understanding how we can improve the health and wellness of not only athletes, but the everyday individual looking to be more active. Dr. Colquhoun had an inspiring impact both on my experience at South and my career. I am inspired by his ability to care about his students as people while still pushing them to pursue the highest levels of the field academically and professionally.”



**Gabrielle Barnickel** was named the Outstanding Educational Media and Technology (M.S.) Graduate Student. Barnickel recently earned a master’s degree in educational media and technology. She is passionate about the field of study because she is a technology teacher for grades 3-5. Barnickel hopes to continue her education one day and pursue a doctorate. “My students inspire me professionally because it is my job to prepare them to be competent with technology. My two boys inspire me personally and are the reason I have not given up on my dream to write a children’s book. My hope is to use their adventures on the farm, fishing and hunting to inspire a storyline for my book. The Jaguar family makes you feel at home. My professors have been quick to respond, help and extend grace when needed throughout my whole graduate school journey.”



**Heather Barsukoff** was named the Outstanding Recreational Therapy Undergraduate Student. Barsukoff recently earned a bachelor’s degree in recreational therapy. She served as a member of the Pre-Occupational Therapy Club, Criminal Justice Association, Indian Student Association, Mortar Board honor society and Freshman Leadership Scholars; treasurer of the Recreational Therapy Association; vice president of Campus Civitan; and peer mentor for PASSAGE USA. In addition, Barsukoff was in the USA Honors College. “My plans are to pursue a doctorate degree in occupational therapy. Upon graduation, I hope to enter the workforce as an occupational therapist. My aspirations are to open a practice of my own and to heavily use therapy dogs in my treatment and practice.”



**Paige Stribling** was named the Outstanding Health and Physical Education/Teacher Certification Graduate Student. Stribling recently earned a master’s degree in physical education (P-12) and started working as a P.E. teacher at Indian Springs Elementary School in Eight Mile, Alabama. She served as president of the Health and Physical Education Majors Club, manager of the women’s basketball team and a member of Kappa Delta Pi honor society. Stribling said Dr. Shelley Holden was a great mentor. “She guided me through my career and pushed me out of my comfort zone many times. Thanks to her, I have done things I never thought I would do. For example, I worked with her and Dr. Craig Parkes on some research, and they had me present it at a research event. I never would have thought I’d be doing research nor presenting it at a college event, but I enjoyed every minute of it.”



**Ashley Weaver Field** was named the Outstanding K-6 Teacher Education Student Teacher. Field earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education and recently enrolled in graduate school for elementary education at South. "The College of Education and Professional Studies is unique in the fact that it has professors and staff that genuinely care about the success of their students. The professors go above and beyond and are willing to help students long after they leave their class. The first person that comes to mind as a positive contributor to my experience at South is Mrs. Kelly Lomax. She has high expectations, but gives her students everything they need to be successful. Her dedication to seeing her students succeed is evident. She is always willing to help."



**Shenavia Todd-Norwood** was named the Outstanding K-12 Leadership Master's Student. Todd-Norwood recently earned an educational administration certification in school leadership. During her time at South, she served as a member of Kappa Delta Pi honor society. Todd-Norwood hopes to get a job as a school administrator soon. "I decided to attend South because I believed that I could receive a quality education while staying close to home. The College of Education and Professional Studies is very unique because of the faculty's dedication for the success of all learners. The program consists of a rigorous and informative program that provides students with requirements for application into the chosen careers."



**Emily Fogt** was named the Outstanding Hospitality and Tourism Management Undergraduate Student. Fogt, who is from Sidney, Ohio, recently earned a bachelor's degree in hospitality and tourism management. She now attends Capital University Law School to focus her studies on hospitality and tourism law. While at South, Fogt served as a member of the Student Government Association, Eta Sigma Delta International Hospitality Management Society, Hospitality and Tourism Management Ambassadors and Pre-Law Society. "Every professor in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at South had a huge impact on the way I think and the opportunities I've had."



**Anthony Burkett** was named the Outstanding PASSAGE USA Student. PASSAGE USA (Preparing All Students Socially and Academically for Gainful Employment) is a postsecondary, nondegree, certificate program. It is designed for students who need extra support to be successful in our community. Burkett recently graduated from PASSAGE USA. During his time at South, he served as a member of the USA Civitan Club. Burkett returned to South this fall to attend the extended PASSAGE USA program. He said that Dr. Alexandra Chanto-Wetter has played a large role in his success at South. "She has always believed in me and pushed me to be better."



**Jacob Green** was named the Outstanding Secondary Education Student Teacher. Green recently earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education and biology with University honors. During his time at South, Green was a member of the Student Government Association, Kappa Delta Pi and Mortar Board honor societies, Animal Rights Alliance and USA Honors College Association. Green is now pursuing a Ph.D. in Botany at Washington State and hopes to teach in higher education one day. He said that South is a special university because of the faculty. "Dr. Katie Guffey McCarrison has been my advisor, mentor and professor throughout the last three years at South. She has always exuded professionalism and friendliness towards me since day one, and for that I am forever grateful. I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for Dr. Guffey McCarrison."



**Leigh Shropshire** was named the Outstanding Graduate Student in Elementary/Early Childhood Education. Shropshire recently earned her master's degree in elementary education and now works as a third grade teacher at Collier Elementary School in Mobile. "I started my master's after being out of school for 20 years and was very hesitant to do this due to my age. Dr. Kelly Byrd was one of the first professors I had when I began this program. She gave me great advice, answered any questions I had and was available to help me anytime I asked. I later took a math elective with Dr. Byrd where I learned so much about how to be a more effective math teacher. She made me branch out and try new things with my students, and it proved to be very beneficial to myself and my students. She was also very encouraging and supportive during a trying time in my life this past fall semester. I am so grateful for Dr. Byrd's guidance and support."

# AWARDS

## **COUNSELING AND INSTRUCTIONAL SCIENCES**

### *Jessica Freeland*

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

### *Sharon Holbert*

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

### *Lucas Andrianopoulos*

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

### *Stephanie Bradford*

Outstanding School Counseling (M.Ed.) Graduate Student

### *Patrice Browning*

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

### *Gabrielle "Nikki" Barnickel*

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

### *Kyle Brasil*

Counseling and Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Research Award

### *Hannah Hinkel*

Counseling and Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Psychotherapy Award

## **HEALTH, KINESIOLOGY, AND SPORT**

### *Katie Kennedy*

Outstanding Exercise Science Graduate Student

### *Elaina Rilee White*

Outstanding Exercise Science Undergraduate Student

### *Rebekah Howard*

Outstanding Health and Physical Education/Teacher Certification Undergraduate Student

### *Paige Stribling*

Outstanding Health and Physical Education/Teacher Certification Graduate Student

### *Belinda May*

Outstanding Sport and Recreation Management Undergraduate Student

### *Heather Barsukoff*

Outstanding Recreational Therapy Undergraduate Student

### *Sean Sutton*

Outstanding Sport Management Graduate Student

## **HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT**

### *Emily Fogt*

Outstanding Undergraduate Student

## **INTEGRATIVE STUDIES**

### *Amelia Rose Zimlich*

Outstanding Interdisciplinary Studies Student

## **LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER EDUCATION**

### *Ashley Weaver Field*

Outstanding K-6 Teacher Education Student Teacher

### *Leigh Shropshire*

Outstanding Graduate Student-Elementary/Early Childhood

### *Kristin Kuehn*

Outstanding Graduate Student-Elementary/Early Childhood

### *Katie Johnson*

Outstanding Graduate Student-Special Education

### *Anthony "Trice" Burkett*

Outstanding PASSAGE USA Student

### *Shenavia Todd-Norwood*

Outstanding K-12 Leadership Master's Student

### *Karin Bryson*

Outstanding Higher Education Leadership Master's Student

### *Jacob Green*

Outstanding Secondary Education Student Teacher

### *Malcolm Meares*

Outstanding Student-Secondary Education

### *Isabella Zimlich*

Outstanding Undergraduate Student-K-6 Teacher Education

### *Mia Pennison*

Outstanding Undergraduate Student-Special Education 6-12

### *Sophia Zimlich*

Outstanding Undergraduate Student-Early Childhood Studies



SCAN TO READ ALL STUDENT BIOS

# FIVE FOR FIVE



*Zimlich quintuplets, from left, Hallie, Isabella, Shipley, Amelia Rose and Sophia*

The Zimlich quintuplets — Amelia Rose, Hallie, Isabella, Shipley and Sophia — enrolled at the University of South Alabama together. They took some of the same classes together. And they graduated together in May 2022.

After all the years together, having grown up in Saraland and attended South, they know one another pretty well. They're part of a close family. Similar, but different.

Shipley, who served as a lifeguard at the Student Recreation Center, thinks Amelia Rose might be the funniest of the quintuplets.

"She's very sarcastic," he said. "I'm the same with sarcasm, but not as witty."

Amelia Rose, who served as editor of The Vanguard student newspaper at South, says Hallie is the most artistic and adventurous.

**"HE'S THE ONLY BOY WITH FOUR GIRLS, SO WE OVERPOWER HIM, BUT HE'S A GOOD SPORT ABOUT IT. HE'S REALLY TOUGH. HE TAKES A LOT."**

"She's playful and driven about the things that she cares about," she said. "She's stubborn, but in a good way."

Hallie, who majored in visual arts with a concentration in photography, calls Sophia a natural teacher.

"She's sweet. She loves children," she said. "She's really enjoying her job as a teacher."

Sophia, who is now working at Council Traditional School in Mobile, thinks Isabella has the best study habits.

"She's the most organized person, besides our mom, and she's very much like our mom," she said. "She has everything planned out. She's very much a planner. And she likes dressing up and being girly."

Isabella, who studied elementary education, says Shipley has the thickest skin.

"He's the only boy with four girls, so we overpower him, but he's a good sport about it," she said. "He's really tough. He takes a lot."

The Zimlich quintuplets, who are 23 years old, enrolled at South in the fall of 2018. South runs in the family. Their grandfather, Dr. Eugene Aromi, was an education professor at the

University. Their father, Mark Zimlich, earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, while their mother, Jeannette Zimlich, earned a bachelor's degree in education. They have an older sister, Temple, who graduated from South with her master's in elementary education in 2021, and a younger brother, Julius, who is a sophomore at the University.

When the quintuplets were born prematurely at USA Health Children's and Women's Hospital in 1999, each of them weighed less than two pounds. They spent months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, but all of them survived and thrived.

Gordon Moulton, president of South at the time, promised them all full scholarships. Nineteen years later, the Zimlichs accepted that offer.

While at South, the Zimlichs had part-time jobs at the Student Recreation Center. Some worked with Jaguar Productions. Others were involved with the Catholic Student Center. Isabella, who was named 2021-2022 Outstanding Undergraduate in Elementary Education at South, worked at the Center for Academic Excellence.

"I loved it — it's such a fantastic community," she said. "I started out as a Jag Pal, and then I became a subject tutor and a success coach."

Isabella passed her edTPA Teacher Performance Assessment and recently started teaching kindergarten at Kate Shepard Elementary School in Mobile.

Sophia, who was named 2021-2022 Outstanding Undergraduate in Early Childhood Studies, was hired at Council Traditional School prior to starting her spring internship there.

"I got hired over Christmas break in 2021, and it was such a surprise," she said. "I thought I was living in a dream for a little bit. I didn't think it would go so smoothly for me."

Shipley, who earned a degree in exercise science, now works as the assistant aquatics director at the Country Club of Mobile. He has his pilot's license and enjoys flying over Mobile Bay, Dauphin Island and the Gulf of Mexico. He dreams of becoming a Navy pilot.

Hallie, the artist, got the idea for her major from Amelia Rose.

"It snowed in Mobile one year, and I took some pictures, and she said I should think about photography," Hallie said. "So I was like, OK. I had thought about doing ceramics, but I don't think I would have been as passionate about that."



*The Zimlich quintuplets meet with University of South Alabama President Jo Bonner at a graduation brunch.*

After graduation, Hallie apprenticed with a local photographer to learn more about art and business. She now works at Masquerade, a Mardi Gras float-building company.

Amelia Rose, who served as the Vanguard editor, might have been the most prominent Zimlich on campus. She wrote news stories and opinion columns, but wasn't interested in clickbait.

"The goal wasn't to be controversial," she said. "The goal was to be truthful."

Amelia Rose started at South as a music major. She enjoyed playing the guitar and writing songs, but not enough to make it her career. She began taking communication classes, became a reporter and editor, and graduated with a degree in interdisciplinary studies; she was the program's 2021-2022 Outstanding Undergraduate Student.

Amelia Rose completed internships at Elevator World, an international trade magazine, WKRG News 5 and Mobile Bay Magazine. She recently accepted a full-time position as an editorial assistant at Mobile Bay.

"Working for a magazine that celebrates the bay area is such a dream," Amelia Rose said. "I started my job in May feeling very prepared thanks to the courses I took at South and my internships."



# Community-Engaged Scholarship

The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies is a hub for research that seeks innovation in K-12 education as well as in the areas of disabilities, mental health, youth violence and physical health. College faculty devote roughly a third of their time to research and community and industry service, much of which is externally funded. These endeavors involve the college in community and economic development endeavors throughout the upper Gulf Coast. Doing everything from studying how to best teach children computer coding to understanding vaccine behaviors during the pandemic, faculty are community-engaged scholars.

“The isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic could have easily severely stunted much of our faculty’s research, particularly that which involved partnerships with external partners,” said Dr. Trés Stefurak, associate dean and director of the College of Education and Professional Studies Office of Contracts and Grants. “What was very surprising is that faculty proposals for funded research actually increased during the pandemic.”

*Above: As part of a National Science Foundation grant project, a multidisciplinary team of faculty are training pre-service elementary teachers to improve their subject knowledge, computational thinking and design thinking skills.*

## Externally Funded Community Engagement Research and Service Projects

### IMPACTING EDUCATION



#### PASSAGE USA Expansion:

The PASSAGE USA program offers a college experience to students with intellectual disabilities. The new grant allows PASSAGE USA to expand from a two-year to a four-year program. PASSAGE USA student experiences have also enhanced with the addition of new services provided by graduate students in counseling and occupational therapy.

**Funded by:** U.S. Department of Education  
Principal Investigator: Dr. Abigail Baxter, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Dr. Linda Reeves, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education; Dr. Yvette Getch, Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences; and Dr. Tara Thompson, Department of Occupational Therapy (Pat Capps Covey College of Allied Health Professions)

**Total Funding: \$321,811**



#### Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment (SWAPTE) Job Supports:

This grant funds compensated work experiences for PASSAGE USA students.

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

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Abby Baxter, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education

**Total Funding: \$151,662**



#### Science Teacher, Research, Education and Methods (STREAM):

This will fund recruitment and scholarships for STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) teachers earning the alternative master’s degree in secondary science education in the College of Education and Professional Studies.

The program will provide a range of support as well as scholarships that promote professional STEM education skills, professional identity as a STEM educator and resiliency among these future STEM educators.

**Funded by:** National Science Foundation

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Katie Guffey McCarrison, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Dr. David Forbes, Department of Chemistry (College of Arts and Sciences); Dr. Justin Sanders, Department of Physics (College of Arts and Sciences); Dr. Andre Green (USA Academic Affairs); and Dr. Trés Stefurak (College of Education and Professional Studies)

**Total Funding:** \$1,171,305

**“What was very surprising is that faculty proposals for funded research actually increased during the pandemic.”**

*Dr. Trés Stefurak, associate dean and director of the College of Education and Professional Studies Office of Contracts and Grants*



**Preparing Elementary Pre-Service Teachers to Integrate Computing across the Curriculum (PEPTICC):**

This grant funds the training of K-12 teachers to deliver instruction on computer coding in their curricula. The content will focus on four types of knowledge: computing, K-6 subject content, technology and pedagogy. The second goal of this project is to establish an evidence-based model with guidelines for integrating computing in K-6 subject content.

**Funded by:** National Science Foundation

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Shenghua Zha, Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Dr. Lauren Brannan, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education; Dr. Na Gong (College of Engineering); Dr. Karen Morrison, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education; and Dr. Kelly Byrd, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education

**Total Funding:** \$299,929

**IMPACTING WELLNESS AND HEALTH**



**Solidroside and Exercise Performance:**

This grant funds a randomized, double-blind study to evaluate the effect of solidroside nutrition supplements on exercise performance and on markers of muscle damage and inflammation. Solidroside is a compound in the Rhodiola plant. It has been found to have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective effects and to reduce muscle atrophy, and it is purported to be an adaptogen that reduces the body's response to stress.

**Funded by:** Double Rainbow Biosciences, Inc.

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Neil Schwarz, Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport

**Total Funding:** \$174,415





**Dying to Be Masculine:** Investigating the Longitudinal Relationships between Traditional Masculinity and Men's COVID-19 Vaccine Attitudes and Behavior: This grant funds research into the factors behind sex differences in COVID-19 vaccination rates. Men, especially men of color, are disproportionately more likely to develop severe COVID, but their rates of vaccination lag behind those of women. Increasing evidence points toward internalized masculinity norms, i.e., rigid and restrictive gender roles for men that prohibit a variety of healthy and adaptive behaviors, as a contributing factor.

**Funded by:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and American Psychological Association

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Ryon McDermott, Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences

**Total Funding:** \$217,239



**A Comparative Study of Media Consumption in Relation to Healthcare in Rural and Urban Counties in Alabama:**

This grant funds research on the associations between social media use and beliefs in conspiracy theories and misinformation among rural and urban communities and white and African American communities in Mobile, Alabama. The primary goal is to visualize how information (both false and accurate) flows through social media, traditional media and social networks to influence decision making.

**Funded by:** Air Force Office of Scientific Research

**Principal Investigators:** Dr. Prakash Duraisamy (School of Computing) and Dr. James Van Haneghan, Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences

**Total Funding:** \$597,906

**IMPACTING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND YOUTH RESILIENCE**



**Preventing Youth Violence Through Building Equitable Communities:**

An Evaluation of a Multisystemic Intervention: This grant funds research to look at whether an intervention addressing structural racism in education and law enforcement reduces interpersonal violence and suicidal behaviors among middle-school students. The study focuses on African American and low-income communities and will examine both youth-level and community-level changes.

**Funded by:** National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Krista Mehari (College of Arts and Sciences)

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Dr. Benterah Morton, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education; Dr. Joël Billingsley, vice president for Diversity and Community Engagement; and Dr. Phillip Smith (College of Arts and Sciences)

**Key Personnel:** Dr. Trés Stefurak (College of Education and Professional Studies)

**Total Funding:** \$3,671,405



**Community-Based Crisis Intervention Training and Support for Primary Responders:**

In partnership with Global USA and the Center for Continuing Education and Conference Services, this grant funds delivery and evaluation of the Crisis Intervention Team training model to law enforcement officers throughout the region. The Crisis Intervention Team model focuses on tactics that reduce use of force and promote referral to mental health care services when officers encounter people with mental illness.

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

**Principal Investigators:** Dr. Trés Stefurak (College of Education and Professional Studies) and Joy Aull (Center for Continuing Education and Conference Services)

**Total Funding:** \$500,000



**Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program:**

This grant subaward funds program evaluation services as part of the City of Mobile's grant to fund implementation of a co-response model of mental health crisis response, in which police and mental health professionals respond in a collaborative and coordinated way to citizens in mental health crises.

**Funded by:** U.S. Department of Justice  
**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Trés Stefurak (College of Education and Professional Studies)

**Total Funding:** \$92,672



**Program Evaluation of The Bridge's Mobile County Transitions Program:**

This subaward supports evaluation of the Mobile County Juvenile Court's primary community-based intervention program, Mobile County Transitions. It includes in-home family therapy and intensive case management for court-involved youths.

**Funded by:** Alabama Department of Youth Services

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Trés Stefurak (College of Education and Professional Studies)

**Total Funding:** \$30,367





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**Scan below to learn how Adrian Johnson combines her passion for  
reading and technology as a media specialist.**



## Research Experiences for Teachers

In summer 2022, the Research Experiences for Teachers program at the University of South Alabama welcomed its second cohort as part of a more than \$600,000 National Science Foundation grant. Leading the program are Dr. Shenghua Zha, assistant professor of counseling and instructional sciences, and Dr. Na Gong, Warren Nicholson Endowed professor of electrical and computer engineering.

Twelve teachers from Mobile and Baldwin counties participated in the six-week program in summer 2022, which included discovery-

The goals of the program include helping South scientists and engineers build relationships with teachers and administrators at local schools. It also offers the University an opportunity to improve teacher experiences and recruit engineering and computing students.

“We are excited to see the development of collegiality and collaboration among the participating teachers and the South team members,” Zha said. “This year, our instructional focus is helping teachers develop AI-integrated curricula in their STEM courses.”

**“WE ARE EXCITED TO SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGIALLY AND COLLABORATION AMONG THE PARTICIPATING TEACHERS AND THE SOUTH TEAM MEMBERS.”**

based research with faculty and pedagogical workshops. Eight teachers started the program in summer 2021.

The second cohort of teachers will work with the team at South in fall 2022 and spring 2023 to develop ways of using artificial intelligence in their middle- or high-school STEM classes. A third group of science, technology, engineering and math educators will go through the same training in summer 2023.

Summer lab work and lectures are just the beginning of the project. Teachers receive a stipend for participation and a budget to purchase equipment for their classrooms.

Teachers in the research program are organized into four groups, each focusing on a facet of biologically inspired computing systems. The focus areas are advanced hyperspectral imaging techniques for early cancer detection, design of biologically inspired computing chips/systems, advanced power-efficient computer memory chips and support software.

Mentors leading the groups are Gong; Dr. Silas Leavesley, professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering; Dr. Jinhui Wang, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering; and Dr. Jingshan Huang, professor of computer science. Drs. Katie Guffey McCorrison and Christopher Parrish from the College of Education and



*Mike Fletcher and Amber Simpson, a pair of Mobile County Public Schools science teachers, doing lab work during summer 2021 at the University of South Alabama*



Professional Studies have taught workshops and will continue to offer consultation and conduct collaborative research. Dr. James Van Haneghan, interim chair of counseling and instructional sciences, leads formative and summative evaluations for the project.

Teachers from the first cohort are Amber Simpson (Ben C. Rain High School), Anthony Bondora (Davidson High School), Ashton Irvin (Davidson High School), Charlene Lockett (Blount High School), Michael Fletcher (Davidson High School), Randa Smith (Central Baldwin Middle School), Shila Gilbert (John L. LeFlore Magnet High School) and Victoria Wilson (Murphy High School).

Teachers from the second cohort are Amber Simpson (Ben C. Rain High School), Angie Irvin (UMS-Wright Preparatory School), Ashton Irvin (Mobile County Public Schools), Kenneth Holmes (Ben C. Rain High School), Marcy Bragdon (Saraland High School), Myeshea Holmes (Ben C. Rain High School), Matthew Davenport (Alabama School of Mathematics and Science), Michael Fletcher (Davidson High School), Mykel Williams (Fairhope Middle School), Shaundrie Jones (John L. LeFlore Magnet High School), Stacey Thomas (Ben C. Rain High School) and Tchanavia Rabb (Scarborough Model Middle School).

*Participants in the second cohort of the Research Experiences for Teachers program photographed at Shelby Hall on campus at the University of South Alabama*



# *Increasing Science Teachers in Local Schools with STREAM*

The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies was awarded a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program. This grant will help address the shortage of certified, highly qualified science teachers for grades six through 12 in rural and urban areas of Mobile County.

The new project, Investigating Science Teacher Research, Education and Methods Used to Prepare Pre-Service Science Teachers, will be known as STREAM. The grant seeks to help students in low-performing schools. It also focuses on increasing racial and ethnic diversity among science teachers.

**“As we continue to be one of the leading institutions of higher education on the Gulf Coast, we are very proud to receive this new grant.”**

STREAM will recruit potential science teacher candidates each spring during the final semester of their bachelor’s degree studies in a STEM field (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). A 10-week pre-residency experience, including classroom experience, will begin in the following fall semester.

Each yearly cohort will have four students. The \$40,000 per student scholarship will pay for tuition, books, fees and a housing stipend. The project has a goal of producing 16 new science teachers over the five-year duration of the grant.

The principal investigator for the NSF grant is Dr. Katie Guffey McCorrison, assistant professor of science education in the College of Education and Professional Studies Department of Leadership and Teacher Education. She was a Noyce Scholar. After completing her master’s degree, she taught earth science to ninth graders.

“As a white female teacher, I got to see the challenges and barriers that many children of color face while in an inner-city school,” Guffey McCorrison said. “I faced many



*College of Education and Professional Studies and College of Arts and Sciences faculty will support a new \$1.2 million grant to help increase the number of k-12 science teachers in rural and urban areas of Mobile County.*

challenges as a first-year teacher. I was not equipped to teach students in my classroom. But that first-year experience inspired me to want to pursue my Ph.D. and use what I learned as a Noyce Scholar to look at the structural boundaries so that I could train other teachers to better serve all students.”

Co-principal investigators are Dr. David Forbes, professor of chemistry; Dr. Andre Green, professor of science education and associate vice president of Academic Affairs; Dr. Justin Sanders, associate professor and department chair of physics; and Dr. Tres Stefurak, associate dean in the College of Education and Professional Studies and professor of counseling psychology. Dr. James Van Haneghan, professor of professional studies, will manage the evaluation of the program.

The grant project will also create partnerships with Mobile County Public Schools, Bishop State Community College, the Alabama State Department of Education’s Alabama Science in Motion initiative, and the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative.

“As we continue to be one of the leading institutions of higher education on the Gulf Coast, we are very proud to receive this new grant,” Guffey McCorrison said. “I am also grateful for all the work that Dr. Green has done to make sure our teachers are prepared no matter what child they provide classroom instruction to. I was able to use Dr. Green’s model when writing this new grant. I value his expertise and his success with students from urban areas.”



## *Partnering to Curb Youth Violence*

The University of South Alabama, in collaboration with Mobile County Public Schools and the Mobile Police Department, recently launched SOAR, an initiative focused on reducing youth violence and suicide. Short for Strengthening Opportunities for Achievement and Resilience, SOAR will be implemented under the umbrella of Operation Echo Stop, the police department's initiative launched in February 2022 to help stop gun violence in the city. SOAR is supported by a five-year, \$3.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

"I believe we're in, and have been at, a critical junction with youth violence for decades," said Commander Curtis Graves, with the police department's Office of Strategic Initiatives. "Youth violence has become a public health crisis and should be treated as such, regardless of the size of the town or city you live in."

The first year will include baseline data collection to identify rates of youth violence and suicidal inclinations in Mobile before the intervention process begins.

Dr. Krista Mehari, assistant professor of psychology, said she hopes SOAR will become a national model for youth violence prevention. "We want to intervene to change the trajectory before these youths get started on a path that could end in death, injury or incarceration."

University researchers will survey youths about their behaviors and experiences. Four middle schools, one in each of the city's police precincts, will participate.

*The University of South Alabama held an official press conference for SOAR at the MacQueen Alumni Center in July 2022. Principals from each participating school chose a balloon that revealed the year intervention strategies would begin at their schools.*

**"We want to intervene to change the trajectory before these youths get started on a path that could end in death, injury or incarceration."**

The project will include school-based strategies, law enforcement strategies and integrated community intervention.

"SOAR is a worthwhile initiative that will expand upon the work that school counselors, social workers, teachers, administrators and security personnel have been doing to make sure that we are meeting not only the academic goals of our students, but also their social and emotional needs," said Mobile County Public Schools Superintendent Chresal D. Threadgill. "We are looking forward to working with the University of South Alabama and the Mobile Police Department on this very important project."

Co-investigators for SOAR are Dr. Phillip Smith, professor of psychology; Dr. Benterah Morton, associate professor of educational leadership and administration; and Dr. Joél Billingsley, vice president for diversity and community engagement. Dr. Trés Stefurak, associate dean for the College of Education and Professional Studies and professor of counseling psychology, serves as key personnel on the grant.

## Field Ready

*The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies prides itself on providing students with opportunities for hands-on experience in their disciplines. That creates long-lasting relationships between students and the college's industry partners. Field experience lets students apply classroom-learned skills to real-world problems. Those connections give students an advantage over future job competitors.*



**Dylan Thomas** will earn a bachelor's degree in exercise science in spring 2023. He chose this discipline because of his passion for fitness and family. Through his mentor, Dr. Shelly Holden, a professor in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport, Thomas has learned how to help people develop a better sense of wellness. As an intern with a home healthcare clinic, Saad Healthcare in Mobile, he helps guide and motivate patients in Saad's Rock Steady Boxing program for individuals with Parkinson's disease. He's eager to show his patients that no task is too big. Thomas' favorite part of the internship has been connecting with each individual, making an impact on their lives and "seeing a smile on their faces after a workout, knowing they're improving." After graduation, Thomas hopes for a job that inspires him to wake up each morning looking forward to assisting people with their overall wellness.

*Dylan Thomas, pictured left, working with a patient at Saad Healthcare's Rock Steady Boxing program*





**Katie Wilson** recently earned a master's degree in higher education administration at South. She also earned a bachelor's degree in art with a concentration in studio art from the University. Wilson was eager to understand the dynamics of higher education. She also wanted to apply the creative skills from her undergraduate program. Courses about law and regulations gave her a new perspective on the field. Dr. Peggy Delmas, assistant professor in the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, arranged an internship for Wilson at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Wilson worked for the housing and residence life department as well as the department administering compliance with Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination. She learned the dynamics of the campus, grew connections and explored the operations of different departments. Wilson would like to pursue a doctorate in education and work in student services.



**Laura Thomas** earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in elementary education at South. She needed library media certification to accept an opportunity for her dream job as a library media specialist. So she enrolled in the fully online Master of Education in Educational Media program at South, which leads to library media certification. She said she enjoyed South's "family feel" and credited much of her success in the program to advisor and Assistant Professor Dr. Pamela Moore. Thomas will earn a master's in educational media in May 2023. She interned with the Fairhope Public Library in Baldwin County, Alabama, and learned the importance of collaborating with local libraries. That hands-on experience enabled her to form long-lasting relationships with the staff, who continue to support and mentor Thomas to this day. She now serves as the library media specialist at Fairhope Middle School.



**Samuel Richardson** will graduate in fall 2022 with a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies and a concentration in applied sciences. In summer 2020, Richardson earned an Emergency Medical Technician certification, which helped establish his passion for a career in the health field. He pursued an interdisciplinary studies degree at South because the program accepted previously earned credits and offered new credits needed for physician assistant school. He loves the variety and flexibility of the program courses. Richardson interned with Victory Health Partners in Mobile, where he gained experience working with patients who lack health insurance. The internship showed him how what he had learned in each of his disciplines in school applied in real life. It also helped him improve at balancing life, work and school. After graduation, Richardson plans to move abroad to practice medicine in a low-income community.



**Kristi Kadel** will earn a bachelor's degree in hospitality and tourism management in spring 2023. "The program combines a variety of subject matters in order to create the perfect range of skill sets needed to enter the workforce," Kadel said. Her mentor, Assistant Professor Amanda Donaldson, helped her connect with her current supervisor at the Fort Condé Inn and its restaurant, Bistro St. Emanuel, in Mobile, where she still works after starting as an intern. Working in a hotel setting has given Kadel a variety of skills needed for a career in hospitality and tourism management. "The bond at both Fort Condé Inn and Bistro St. Emanuel is like no other," Kadel said. The job has shown her how classroom information applies in the professional world. After graduation, Kadel hopes to work in management and possibly explore different sectors of hospitality.



## *National Certificate for STEM Teaching*

The University of South Alabama Research and Inservice Center (SARIC) was established by the Alabama Legislature in 1984–85 as one of 11 statewide regional centers. SARIC’s mission is to provide professional learning to pre-K–12 educators in designated public school systems in its geographic region. The center serves more than 7,500 educators in ACCEL Academy, Baldwin County Public Schools, Chickasaw City Schools, Clarke County School District, Gulf Shores City Schools, Mobile County Public Schools, Monroe County Public Schools, Orange Beach City Schools, Satsuma City Schools, Saraland City Schools, Thomasville City Schools and Washington County Public Schools.

SARIC supports professional learning in literacy, math, science, social studies, technology, special education, health, library/media services, economics, administration and guidance/counseling. During the 2021–2022 academic year, SARIC and the USA College of Education and Professional Studies’ Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program partnered with the National Institute for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education to offer the first National Certificate for STEM Teaching cohort. Participants were 49 secondary math and science teachers from lower Alabama. A second cohort involved 42 more teachers.

The National Certificate for STEM Teaching cohort received comprehensive support during the program, which includes:

- A live virtual informational session focused on an overview of the program.
- A live virtual launch focused on setting candidates up for success, including navigation and program requirements.
- On-site support involving six hours of professional learning sessions focused on the 15 STEM Teacher Actions and unpacking what defines quality STEM instruction.
- Live virtual monthly support sessions providing candidates with opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers and a coach to address misconceptions, scaffold learning, navigate elements of a successful submission and more.

“The National Certificate for STEM Teaching cohort provided support and resources that helped make the journey to STEM certification possible,” said Mykel Williams, a math teacher at Fairhope Middle School in Fairhope. “I am grateful to SARIC and the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies for making this possible.”

SARIC and the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program recently welcomed a third National Certificate for STEM Teaching cohort of 32 more math and science teachers. The goal is to continue supporting educators as they strengthen STEM integration in Alabama classrooms.



## *Alabama's Roadmap to STEM Success*

In November 2019, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey presented a plan to improve STEM education across the state and create a workforce pipeline critical to providing the more than 850,000 STEM workers that will be needed in the state by 2026.

“Academically, Alabama’s students have fallen behind in math and science proficiency, and significant educator shortages make it difficult to recruit, train and retain well qualified educators equipped in the methods of a modern STEM classroom,” Ivey said. “This is why I am encouraged by the recommendations included in Alabama’s Roadmap to STEM Success, developed by the Governor’s Advisory Council for Excellence in STEM.”

The council, a group of 78 leaders from across the state representing STEM-related fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), included K-12 and undergraduate education representatives, as well as industry and community leaders. The Alabama Roadmap to STEM Success recommended mathematics instructional coaches at each elementary school to help the school’s math teachers improve their teaching methods.

Through the support of the Alabama Department of Education’s Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), a Teacher in Residence pilot project was launched to develop mathematics teacher leaders to fill coach positions. The teachers in residence provide coaching, support and professional learning to build mathematics content and pedagogical knowledge, to increase teacher application of eight practices of effective mathematics instruction and to increase student use of the mathematics practice standards. They work with school administrators, a Mathematics School Improvement Team and an AMSTI specialist mentor toward school mathematics goals, including those for student achievement, community support, and family and stakeholder involvement.

Meet three math teachers in residences that completed training with the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative at the University of South Alabama.

## *Math Teacher in Residence Spotlights*



**DENITA HANKINS**

Thomasville Elementary School

“As a teacher, you might get stuck doing the same thing every year. As a Teacher in Residence and through the AMSTI training, I get to help my teachers with new strategies. My teachers have really opened up and been willing to change and do things a little differently. They have pride in these new techniques. I’ve really seen improvements with my teachers and with our students in the classroom.”



**BROOKE LOVE**

Chickasaw Elementary School

“I am so thankful to be a Teacher in Residence. I have been able to receive incredible support from my mentoring specialist, Raphaella Archie, and from several of the other Region 10 AMSTI math specialists. They have helped me develop my skills in leadership, content and pedagogy, and coaching. I cannot imagine beginning my journey as a math coach without their expertise, listening ears and constant support.”



**REBECCA SOUMEILLAN**

Monroeville Elementary School

“For the last three years, my journey as a Teacher in Residence has been a great learning experience as I worked side by side with teachers at our school to implement research-based strategies to improve our students’ learning. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of such a hard-working team of educators that allow me to share my love for math with others.”



## *Robots, Drones and Green Slime*

Timothy Johnson enjoyed his first “aha” teaching moment even before he began studying education at the University of South Alabama. As a freshman, he planned to study psychology, but took a student job as a reading tutor at Fonde Elementary School in Mobile.

“I was helping struggling readers, and the kids started to improve, started to enjoy reading,” he said. “I realized it was about finding interest. There was this third-grade boy who liked race cars, sports, anything with action. So I’d take him to the library, and we’d get one book the teacher wanted him to read and one book that he could choose. I realized that if I could find interest with students, we could make progress. That was the moment where I said, ‘OK, let’s try education.’”

Johnson attended South on a track and field scholarship and earned a degree in elementary education. He began teaching STEM subjects – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics – at Mobile elementary schools. Finding student interest in science meant hands-on learning. Toys and technology. Projects and experiments. Using everything from robots and flying drones to 3D printers and Nickelodeon’s green slime.

“I’m competing against computers and video games – how could I engage them?” Johnson asked. “I thought, I need to be an innovator for these students.”

Johnson became a laboratory instructor at E.R. Dickson Elementary School in Mobile. He presented papers at STEM conferences. He attended a NASA camp in Huntsville, Alabama, and the Mickelson ExxonMobil Teachers Academy in Pittsburgh.

Last year, Johnson, 34, became an Alabama Technology in Motion specialist at the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies, serving students and teachers in 12 school districts. He also began appearing in a program called “Alabama STEM Explorers” on Alabama Public Television.

“I still get chills when I see myself on television,” he said. “I went to Saraland Elementary one time, and this kid said, ‘I know you! Aren’t you on that TV show on Saturday?’”

### **MENTORS AND COLLEAGUES**

One of Johnson’s mentors was Dr. Carl Cunningham Jr., the former head of Multicultural Student Affairs at South, who is now director of student support services at Coastal Alabama Community College in Bay Minette, Fairhope and Gulf Shores. Through a Mobile Kappa League program, he began advising Johnson when Johnson was a high school sophomore.

“He’s never been a boisterous guy, but he was always a detail guy, and he has great follow-through,” Cunningham said. “At South Alabama, he continued with that. My advice for him was to stay the course.”

Cunningham was thrilled when Johnson turned to education – especially elementary education and science education.

“He saw the need to have more black men in that space,” Cunningham said. “He saw how successful he could be, particularly with boys.”

Last year, Johnson began work for Technology in Motion, a STEM program in Alabama public schools, providing support and training for educators in five counties. Johnson works with Nikkisha Hooks, state program director of Technology in Motion. She appreciates his experience in STEM, project-based learning and instructional technology.

“Timothy has been working with local schools to support technology integration, digital literacy and computer science,” Hooks said. “Timothy is a successful educator who is hardworking and dedicated, but most of all enjoys what he does.”

### **SPRINTING TO SOUTH**

Johnson grew up in Prichard, just north of Mobile, where his father was a parole officer and his mother was a bookkeeper. His grandmother was a sixth-grade social studies teacher. He was in her class for one year.

“That was a different experience,” he said, laughing. “She’d say, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll just tell your daddy.’”

When he wasn’t at school, he and his friends rode bikes and played sports. Anything to stay outside. At LeFlore Magnet High School in Mobile, Johnson competed in track and field. He ran the 100-meter and 200-meter dashes and the 400-meter relay. He trained for years.

**“HE SAW THE NEED TO HAVE MORE BLACK MEN IN THAT SPACE. HE SAW HOW SUCCESSFUL HE COULD BE, PARTICULARLY WITH BOYS.”**



“It’s something you have to work on,” he said. “It’s technique, technique, technique.”

Johnson won a track scholarship to South, where his coach was Lee Evans, an Olympic gold medalist famous for giving a Black Power salute at the Mexico City Olympic Games in 1968. The physical training was difficult. He also learned from weekly counseling and relaxation sessions.

“It helped us with school, also, just managing stress and the expectations of others,” he said. “When I first started teaching, it was like ‘You need to do this’ and ‘You need to do that,’ and I was able to walk inside my classroom and do what I needed to do for my students.”

In 2010, Johnson earned his bachelor’s degree at South in the College of Education and Professional Studies. While teaching, he earned a master’s degree. In 2019, while at Dickson Elementary School in Mobile, Johnson was named Outstanding Alabama Elementary School Science Teacher.

He used to keep a journal about what he was doing and what he needed to do better. He remains a stickler for lesson plans and lab prep.

“I plan everything out and set everything up for the next day,” he said. “So I can just walk in and start teaching, which makes the job a lot easier.”

Each summer, he makes time for camps, seminars and professional development courses.

“When you’re pouring out information in classes all year, you need to refill your tank in the summer,” he said. “It keeps you on your toes, especially in science education.”

In December 2021, Johnson married Celeste Napier, an adjunct chemistry instructor at South. They met on campus as undergraduates. Now they’re colleagues.

On one of his jackets, Johnson wears souvenir pins from NASA and various science camps. A different kind of pin represents Secret Scientist, a clothing brand started by a friend of his.

In his spare time, he enjoys reading science fiction and anime. He relaxes by fishing with his cellphone turned off.

In Mobile, Johnson sees former students all the time. Some of them are high school kids ready to become adults. He’s never been tempted to teach older students.

“It’s easier to talk to kids,” he said. “And I’d rather start with children than work with them at the end stage of their education. I feel like the greatest impact I can have is at the elementary level.”



## *Finding a Love for Reading*

Appie McMurphy is a fifth grader at UMS-Wright Preparatory School. Thanks to the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies Literacy Center, McMurphy now has the skills and confidence needed to be successful in her schoolwork.

"I do not like to read, but when I visit Ms. Joan, I enjoy doing it," McMurphy said.

Joan Holland, director of the USA Literacy Center, has more than 30 years of experience in education. Holland serves as the face of this community engagement program, which provides local children with tools to improve reading and writing skills.

Between pre-K and first grade, McMurphy's mother, whose first name is also Appie, noticed a shift in her daughter's literacy skills.

"Ms. Joan was a name I kept hearing in the community," McMurphy's mother said. "She is the biggest blessing that has fallen into my child's lap."

McMurphy began her journey with the Literacy Center at the age of 4. Once teachers suggested additional work in the summer to prepare her for kindergarten, it was only a matter of time before Holland and McMurphy established an unbreakable bond.

McMurphy was struggling with phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words), working memory and number sense after switching schools. The foundational work that Holland

*"Mrs. Holland has become another figure in my child's life that is supportive, loving, caring and accountable. It is all the things needed to boost her confidence."*

focused on improved McMurphy's ability to speak more confidently while believing in herself.

"I cannot put into words how much the change was black-and-white," McMurphy's mother said. "It was absolutely unbelievable."

In early 2020, McMurphy's mother felt they needed to take the next step. They started meeting with Holland twice a week to work on reading and math problem-solving skills. There was still what McMurphy's mother described as a "disconnect" with reading. Prior to third grade, McMurphy was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia. The diagnosis helped clarify her academic struggles.

"Mrs. Holland has become another figure in my child's life that is supportive, loving, caring and accountable," McMurphy's mother said. "It is all the things needed to boost her confidence."

McMurphy's favorite books are graphic novels such as "The Baby-Sitters Club" series, "Smile" and "Sisters." Holland has helped McMurphy find a way to like reading. She understands McMurphy's interests and recommends books based on this knowledge, while incorporating books of other genres to expand her repertoire of reading power.

"I really hate reading, but these books make it more enjoyable," McMurphy said.



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# INDEPENDENCE DAYS



After 20 years of living with his parents, Enrique Lynch left home for the University of South Alabama's PASSAGE USA program, a two- and four-year non-degree certificate program that focuses on life, social, employment and self-determination skills for students with intellectual disabilities. This was Lynch's chance for a more independent life.

Now he stays in an apartment just off campus and rides a city bus downtown to his job as a banquet server and houseman at the Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel.

Lynch, who's 22, has a thin mustache and wispy beard to go along with a broad smile. When he started going to classes at South, he wasn't so confident. He didn't smile so much.

"I was, like, shy," he said, emphasizing the word. "I was the shy kid on campus. I didn't know who my teachers were; I didn't know anybody. It took a long time to get to my happy place."

Now Lynch knows all sorts of people at South. He rattles off the names of students and professors in PASSAGE USA, which stands for Preparing All Students Socially and Academically for Gainful Employment. This is his community.

Lynch shares a two-bedroom apartment with a PASSAGE USA student from Mississippi. He isn't much of a cook, but he can make sandwiches and heat up turkey burgers. He does laundry on weekends.

When he's not cheering for Jaguar sports teams, he's watching movies or playing video games.

His parents, Catrina and Enrique Lynch, are proud their son can do so much on his own. PASSAGE USA training helps him navigate daily life.

He often spends holiday weekends back home in Opelika, Alabama. It's only a three-hour drive from Mobile.

"I was very nervous when he started school, but he really took to it," said Catrina. "He never said, 'Come and get me.' He never said, 'I'm ready to come home.'"

"He did call a lot — I will say that," his father said, laughing. "That was his homesickness."

## **"I WAS THE SHY KID ON CAMPUS. IT TOOK A LONG TIME TO GET TO MY HAPPY PLACE."**

Enrique has an Android phone that he uses to call and text friends and family. It's good to have for emergencies and backup plans too.

"If I miss the bus, I can take an Uber," he said. "I've been doing that for a while now."

Last year, Lynch and another PASSAGE USA student worked with an ESPN+ broadcasting crew for South football games. In the press box at Hancock Whitney Stadium, one of their jobs was updating first downs and yardage on the huge scoreboard.

In the spring, Lynch stayed on to work basketball, baseball and softball games too.

"Really good kid," said Pat Greenwood, multimedia director for the South athletic department. "We had a good time with him. He was always early and never missed anything. And he seemed genuinely happy to be here."

Even when he's not working a ballgame, Lynch likes to wear his South Alabama Athletics press pass around campus.



*Enrique Lynch is pictured above with South cheerleaders and Ms. Pawla at a fire safety training and cookout hosted by USA Facilities Management.*

Most days, he sports a polo shirt and long pants over his Air Jordan sneakers. When he's not working, he stays close to home. His PASSAGE USA classes are at University Commons, near University Boulevard and Old Shell Road.

PASSAGE USA students attend specialized classes that target the skills they need to achieve their goals. They also attend inclusive courses across campus in a variety of subjects.

In 2020, the USA College of Education and Professional Studies was awarded a \$2.3 million U.S. Department of Education grant to expand the program, which draws in faculty and South students from counseling, health and kinesiology, and occupational therapy to enhance the program's curriculum. PASSAGE USA continues to grow and can serve up to 60 students during the current grant funding period.

Next to the Mellow Mushroom pizzeria is Lynch's city bus stop. He catches a No. 4 Wave bus to his downtown job at the Riverview Plaza Hotel. This summer, he worked Mondays through Thursdays for an average of 15 to 20 hours a week.

Lynch sweeps floors sometimes, but spends most of his shifts with a team of co-workers preparing for events. It's a job — a paying job that helps him lead his own life. This is what PASSAGE USA is all about.

David Clarke, CEO of the Visit Mobile tourism and convention organization, is one of many supporters of the program downtown.

"PASSAGE USA is helping our hospitality community, and our hospitality community is helping PASSAGE USA," Clarke said. "It's a great partnership. Great stuff."

# Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



*Dr. Joél Billingsley, vice president for diversity and community engagement at South and former professor in the College of Education and Professional Studies, gives a speech at graduation*

## **PowerSchool Grant**

The College of Education and Professional Studies received an \$80,000 donation from PowerSchool, a provider of cloud-based software for K-12 education, to help students in teacher preparation programs pass the Praxis teacher preparation test. The donation will be distributed to students who demonstrate financial need and will assist students with preparation for the Praxis test, which is required of all students entering a teacher preparation program or seeking teacher certification. The funding will also cover the cost of Praxis preparation materials. The college piloted the program for a small number of teacher education students in spring 2022. The program will expand in the 2022-2023 academic year.

## **Black Faculty and Staff Association Summit**

The Black Faculty and Staff Association, including College of Education and Professional Studies faculty members Dr. Joél Billingsley and Dr. Benterah Morton, hosted an inaugural Education Summit on Retention for underrepresented students enrolled at the University. The event was attended by more

than 70 students focusing on promoting academic and professional networking for students from underrepresented groups, particularly African American students. The College of Education and Professional Studies provided financial support for the event alongside other colleges and will continue to support follow-up events in the 2022-2023 academic year.

## **College Diversity and Hiring**

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the College of Education and Professional Studies hired two new faculty members, both of whom identify as members of racially and ethnically underrepresented groups. All searches have included advertising faculty positions in outlets focusing on professionals from underrepresented groups as well as sending invitation letters to academic departments in minority-serving institutions that grant doctoral degrees and fit the hiring area. Invitation emails also are sent to current faculty from underrepresented groups at other institutions when searches target midcareer/senior faculty.

## **College DEI SWOT Analysis**

The College of Education and Professional Studies Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator Dr. Trés Stefurak, in collaboration with the DEI Council, conducted an anonymous survey of college faculty and staff to gauge perceptions of the college's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in DEI practices. Results were shared with the USA DEI Office and CEPS faculty and staff. Results demonstrated a strong consensus among CEPS faculty that gathering data related to the needs of underrepresented students and making programmatic changes using such data to improve outcomes for such students are valued commitments within the college, though much work remains to fully realize these goals in the college. Areas in which faculty believed the college is making the most strides included building a welcoming and inclusive college culture and evaluating students equitably and fairly. Areas in which faculty believed the college should invest continued efforts included engaging students in

organizational decision-making and recruiting more diverse faculty, staff and students.

## **'What's Trending'**

College of Education and Professional Studies faculty, staff and students were invited to attend the following "What's Trending" sessions. "A Conversation About Critical Race Theory" was held Nov. 2, 2021. This discussion offered an opportunity to review components of proposed Alabama legislation. Dr. Benterah Morton and Dr. Matt Hensley led the discussion. Morton shared information pertinent to school administrators, and Hensley shared information pertinent to social studies educators. "The Teacher Shortage" was held Feb. 9, 2022, to discuss the nationwide teacher shortage and the impact on teacher diversity. The featured speaker was David Dai, a math teacher at Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies in Mobile. Dai was the 2020 Alabama Alternate Teacher of the Year.





**A podcast by the University of South Alabama  
College of Education and Professional Studies**

*Meaningful conversations with faculty, students,  
alumni and community partners*

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# Making the Grade



**E**ven in kindergarten, Dr. Andi Kent knew she wanted to become a schoolteacher.

“From K through sixth grade, I never missed a day of school,” she said. “I was one of those students who loved going to school. I remember all of my teachers.”

Kent grew up in Tillmans Corner, southwest of Mobile, where her father owned an auto supply store and put in long hours to make sure the family always had more than they needed. She and her brother and sister helped sort invoices on the living room floor. Cloverleaf Auto Supply was a family business.

Education was important to her family, though neither of her parents earned a four-year college degree. Her mother was a licensed practical nurse who found her true calling in raising her children and supporting the family.

“My first-grade teacher, Jackie Brunson, often told a story about me saying I was going to get a Ph.D.,” she said. “Just like my Uncle Doyle.”

Kent did become a schoolteacher, and she did earn a master’s degree in early childhood education and a Ph.D. in instructional design and development from the University of South Alabama. Her goal was to work in curriculum and instruction at the central office for the Mobile County Public School System.

She never planned a career at South, but mentors convinced her otherwise.

“I was working really hard to make an impact in the lives of children, and I wasn’t sure I could make that kind of impact in higher ed, because I’d be further removed from them,” Kent said. “At some point, I realized that, perhaps, the impact could be exponential. If you’re teaching future teachers, and they’re going back to teach their students, then you’re able to reach more people.”

In the College of Education and Professional Studies, Kent rose from assistant professor and director of field services to professor and then associate dean. In 2015, when the dean of education retired, she was asked to serve as interim dean and encouraged by many to apply for the position. A few months later, she was named dean.

Five years later, the same thing happened.

The University needed a new provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. President Tony Waldrop made a surprise visit to Kent’s office and asked her to serve as an interim administrator. She told Waldrop that others were more suited. Waldrop was insistent, though, so Kent took on the challenge.

**“If you’re teaching future teachers, and they’re going back to teach their students, then you’re able to reach more people.”**

In spring 2022, after Jo Bonner became the fourth president of the University of South Alabama, he initiated a national search for the provost position. Following that, he appointed Kent as provost and decided to combine the role with that of the executive vice president. As a nontraditional college president, the former congressman has relied on her academic background and institutional knowledge of South.

On a listening tour of meetings with students, faculty and community leaders, Bonner liked to joke that Kent was coaching him through questions and grading his answers.

“I still haven’t gotten my report card from her, but her role has been incredibly valuable in our getting off to a strong start,” he said. “Dr. Kent commands respect and is admired for her work on campus and in Mobile. She’s an optimist. She’s dedicated to the core. And she’s tireless.”

Both of them put in long hours designing and implementing strategic initiatives in an effort to expand the reach of the University.

“Often, my first email of the day is from Andi, around 5 a.m., and my last email of the day is from Andi, about 11 p.m.,” Bonner said. “I realized on day one that no one was going to put more into their job than Andi Kent. That was obvious.”

## **MEETINGS, EMAILS AND EXERCISE**

Kent – her name is Andrea, but she’s always been Andi – describes herself as family-focused.

After dorm life and living with friends during her first years as an undergraduate student, she lived at home with her parents until she married Derek Kent, her high school sweetheart. Derek is a South graduate and nurse manager in surgical services at USA Health Children’s & Women’s Hospital. They have a son and a daughter.

The Kents live in West Mobile. They enjoy visiting Orange Beach and taking sea cruises. In town, they share casual meals at various restaurants.

"My favorite food is Mexican," Andi said. "I would eat it every day of the week if I could."

On most days, she rises at 4:45 a.m. to exercise on an elliptical trainer. In the Whiddon Administration Building, back-to-back meetings often fill her day. In the evenings, she's usually going through more than 100 emails.

"I'm not a great sleeper," she said. "The nights are often filled with thinking about how to best embrace the many opportunities in front of us."

Kent makes time in her demanding work/life routine for volleyball games at Baker High School. Her daughter, Mary Elizabeth, plays on the junior varsity team. Mom roots for the Lady Hornets.

"I try not to embarrass her," she said, laughing. "That's my goal. But I do cheer her on."

Her son, Andrew, is a freshman at the University of South Alabama, and is loving being a Jaguar.

"We looked at eight different universities," she said. "I was elated that he chose South."

## MENTORS AND COLLEAGUES

When Kent attended Theodore High School, she was elected president of her class. Principal Richard Davis became one of her first mentors.

"He was definitely my second dad," she said. "He valued and respected my opinion. To this day, he calls me 'Madam President.'"

After earning a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Mobile, Kent began teaching and working on her master's degree at South.

Her first permanent teaching position was at Burroughs Elementary School in Theodore. She was 22 years old. Dr. William Foster, who later became a member of the Mobile County Board of School Commissioners, was her first principal.

Kent made an impression.

"You kind of see things in people," Foster said. "You know they're going to be successful. She was on top of everything, extremely well organized. And she was a sponge. If somebody told her something, she'd take it all in. She was one of those people. And I followed her career over the years."

**"She doesn't have to be the center of attention. She doesn't have to control every situation. But with that said, she's never afraid to say what she's thinking."**

"If she has a job to do, somebody's going to notice, and that leads to the next job. Andi's really good with people, and she's really good in groups, and not everybody is."

Kent became one of many Mobile educators who taught during the day and worked on their graduate degrees in the evening. It meant years of sacrifice for her entire family. And a grueling schedule.

"I can remember teaching and then staying after school to 5:30, preparing for the next day, and then going to class at 6 at South. Classes took a lot of time. The Instructional Design and Development graduate program required several statistics courses, which were not my forte, so I studied 24/7. If I was going to do it, I was going to do it right. And I worked alongside fabulous educators and made great friends, lifetime friends. If I had to redo it, I would do it exactly the same way."

This kind of experience helped prepare Kent for career building as a faculty member and administrator at South.

As a professor, she was a recognized scholar with dozens of publications and hundreds of scholarly presentations, and she has authored and edited multiple books. She directed student research and secured nearly \$7 million in external research funding. During her tenure in the College of Education and Professional Studies, she served in many administrative roles, while also teaching and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students.

As provost, Kent supported creation of the School of Marine and Environmental Sciences. She implemented the Start South dual enrollment program for high school students. She supported the growth of research in health sciences, engineering and business.

Dr. Paige Vitulli, chair of the Department of Integrative Studies, watched Kent rise through the College of Education and Professional Studies into University administration.

*Dr. Andi Kent is pictured with her husband, Derek, and their two children, Andrew and Mary Elizabeth. Andrew is a current student at South majoring in exercise science.*



"I wasn't surprised," Vitulli said. "She always had the determination, the work ethic, the drive. She also had the right temperament. Her ability to listen and keep her cool has always impressed me. She doesn't have to be the center of attention. She doesn't have to control every situation. But with that said, she's never afraid to say what she's thinking."

For Kent, Bonner's listening tour of South was an opportunity to re-connect with her constituencies.

"Visiting all of the areas on campus and at USA Health with President Bonner provided me the opportunity to further develop a shared vision for where the University is going," she said. "Each visit was valuable and reminded me of what makes South so special — the people."

Kent hasn't lost any of her enthusiasm for teaching, coaching or recruiting. The goal of improving education remains the same, whether she's teaching third graders, encouraging elementary-school reading teachers or recruiting postdoctorate researchers. She is driven by a desire to make a difference.

She's never been tempted to leave South, her graduate alma mater, and says that she is honored to serve. As she looks to the future, she is excited about the direction the University is headed.

"Working alongside President Bonner and incredible people at South," Kent said, "we are committed to making a bigger impact than ever before, embracing the opportunities to make a difference.

"I love it here," she said. "I love the mission. I love the people. I love the University."

## *Meet Amazon's Senior Learning Program Evaluator*

Dr. Jessica Bauer, a senior learning program evaluator at Amazon, grew up in small-town Snelling, California. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in social psychology from California State University, Stanislaus. Bauer wanted to start her career in corporate training evaluation at a major company in Silicon Valley.

Unfortunately, the financial crisis of 2007 put a stop to her plans.

For several years, Bauer taught undergraduate classes in psychology, human sexuality and behavioral statistics at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento and Modesto Junior College in Modesto, both in California. Her consulting business, Jessica Harlan Consulting, provided instructional design, program evaluation and program development services. Key clients were the University of California, Irvine; the University of California San Diego; the University of California Office of the President; University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources; Thinc Design in New York; the Smithsonian Institution; Mobile Baykeeper in Mobile; and the College Brain Trust (now the Collaborative Brain Trust) in Sacramento.

Bauer then decided to push herself to the next level and returned to her studies. She was very interested in the corporate training field and researched doctoral possibilities. She discovered the University of South Alabama's Instructional Design and Development Ph.D. program.

"I had already gone beyond what I thought was possible for me, but the program and opportunity were there," Bauer said.

At South, Bauer served as a graduate research assistant and worked with Dr. James Van Haneghan, now the interim chair for the Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences. Bauer assisted in research as part of a National Science Foundation grant under Van Haneghan's direction. She earned a doctoral degree from South in 2016.

"I walked out of my Ph.D. program with a better ability to have rigorous academic and research scaffolding to bring to the table," Bauer said. "That's fundamentally because of Jim's mentorship and willingness to provide the right balance of autonomy and coaching."

Bauer knew she would not stay in Alabama long. She completed a graduate internship at the Smithsonian Institution's Office of Policy and Analysis (now Smithsonian Organization and Audience Research) in Washington and accepted a position as senior program evaluation specialist at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

After working at Hopkins for nearly four years, Bauer decided she needed more opportunity for growth. As senior research consultant at Gallup in Washington and then director of assessment, evaluation and educational scholarship at the University of Virginia School of Medicine's Inova campus, Bauer gained invaluable experience.

At Inova, Bauer thought she was finally where she was meant to be. However, an Amazon recruiter reached out and presented a compelling opportunity.

### **"THEY WERE LOOKING FOR A UNICORN, AND I WAS THE UNICORN"**

"They were looking for a unicorn, and I was the unicorn," Bauer said. "Amazon's evaluation program has the funding and ability to achieve limitless possibilities in understanding adult learning and development."

In April 2022, Bauer began work in Arlington, Virginia, with the Learning Science and Engineering team within Amazon's Global Learning and Development organization. Her team includes machine-learning scientists, instructional designers and other research scientists. Bauer works with Amazon to evaluate workplace learning programs and their impact on business outcomes.

"The Learning Science and Engineering organization's vision is to reinvent workplace learning by building the programs, products, technologies and mechanisms that make teaching and learning fast, effective and scalable for Amazon employees," Bauer said.

Within her department, Bauer most recently worked with an instructional designer to build an online course to serve as a workplace guide for creating an inclusive and accessible learning experience. She and her associate will identify which employees need to take the course, then determine if the course was impactful. They will use the data they gather to improve the course if necessary.



“I THINK IT’S REALLY DELIGHTFUL TO SEE THAT IT’S NOT JUST A NUMBERS GAME.”

Bauer works with Amazon customers to ensure that each stage of their own training programs furthers business success. That includes determining whether the programs positively influence the trainees. The goal is to produce greater productivity and diligence through employee growth, thus improving outcomes for everyone involved.

“There really is an emphasis on the voice of the customer and the voice of the employee,” Bauer said. “I think it’s really delightful to see that it’s not just a numbers game.”

Bauer’s job also involves global interviewing and qualitative research. She’s collaborated, using rigorous methodologies, with other researchers from various parts of the world. Bauer and her associates use the gold standard of qualitative research — interviews and focus groups. That allows individuals’ voices to be acknowledged, even in a company as large as Amazon.

“I’m working on actual program evaluation that has real-world consequences.”



# *‘How Do We Make Vaccines Manly?’*



Dr. Ryon McDermott, an associate professor of clinical and counseling psychology who studies men and ideas of masculinity, is leading a national research project that examines how men think, feel and act regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

The \$250,000 research project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Psychological Association, includes faculty at Texas Tech University and the University of Akron, along with doctoral students at the University of South Alabama. The yearlong study begins with online questionnaires completed by 1,000 men across the country over a period of six months, followed by focus group interviews in Ohio, Texas and Alabama.

McDermott said traditional ideas of masculinity, including reluctance to show fear, sadness or vulnerability,

have been linked with unwillingness to adhere to CDC-recommended behavior such as mask wearing and social distancing. Men in the United States are less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19 than women. Rigid gender roles, along with identity variables such as race, politics and religion, may help explain vaccine reluctance and inform architects of public health initiatives to increase male vaccinations.

“A big part of what I do is looking at how people violate gender roles, how they change their beliefs and how we measure those experiences,” said McDermott, associate director of clinical training in the clinical and counseling psychology Ph.D. program at South.

Much of McDermott’s research revolves around the concept of traditional masculinity. “We focus on the concept of traditional masculinity

ideology rather than ‘toxic masculinity.’ Traditional masculinity is more descriptive, because something that is toxic is bad for you at every level. However, beliefs that men should be unemotional, powerful, tough or dominant, those are traditional perspectives about men that can be helpful in certain circumstances but can also be very restrictive if you buy into them in a rigid fashion.

“What we find is that men who endorse these beliefs are much less likely to engage in proactive health behaviors, like getting a vaccine, because it’s somehow seen as being feminine, or being weak. We also know there are pretty good ways of marketing to men, so the question becomes, ‘How do we make vaccines manly?’”





Vaccine hesitancy varies around the country and has varied over time, but is more common in certain groups.

“Where we see a lot of unvaccinated men is in white, evangelical and conservative populations,” McDermott said. “Those are the three things that our research so far has shown to be important predictors. But even within that group there is variability. Some people who are evangelical and conservative are getting vaccinated. Our grant will help us understand what factors helped get those men vaccinated.”

A co-principal investigator for the CDC study is Dr. Ronald Levant, a professor emeritus at the University of Akron and a former president of the American Psychological Association. His 1995 book, “A New Psychology of Men,” questioned models of masculinity and influenced a generation of researchers. McDermott has published extensively with Levant in academic journals over the last 15 years.

Dr. Nicholas Borgogna, an assistant professor at Texas Tech University, is a co-investigator for the CDC study. He earned his Ph.D. from South last year and didn’t hesitate to collaborate again with McDermott.

“In terms of how men think and how men behave, he’s definitely a leader, an authority in the field,” Borgogna said of McDermott. “In 2016, he won Researcher of the Year from the APA for his work in men and masculinity. And he’s published a lot of journal articles since then.”

Borgogna studied psychology in Utah and Illinois before spending four years in Mobile. The doctoral program in clinical and counseling psychology draws students from across the country.

**“WHAT WE FIND IS THAT MEN WHO ENDORSE THESE BELIEFS ARE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN PROACTIVE HEALTH BEHAVIORS.”**

“It’s one of South’s gems,” he said. “It’s very competitive, very sought after. Most programs do clinical or counseling, so the fact that it’s combined helps make it special.”

Contributing to the CDC study at South are doctoral students Jennifer Barinas and Kyle Brasil. Their work has been published in journals such as *Psychology of Men & Masculinities* and *Journal of Health Psychology*.

McDermott, who joined the South faculty in 2013, divides most of his time between counseling and research.

“I’m a scientist practitioner, so I was trained to incorporate both,” he said. “My research informs my practice, and my practice informs my research. I’ve been working with men for many years. Soon I’ll start working as a consultant at VRR, Veterans Recovery Resources. College student well-being is another passion of mine, because I worked at college counseling centers for a number of years.”

McDermott has been involved with Jag Success, an academic resource for students that includes peer mentoring, homework help and learning workshops. He has also contributed to a variety of campus-wide assessments tracking student psychological, social and academic well-being. He received a \$25,000 internal grant and has been a co-investigator on nearly \$1 million of projects funded by the National Science Foundation.

In August 2022, McDermott became president of the APA’s Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinities. His research has focused on culture, individual differences and ideologies.

“I’m a big fan of what’s called positive psychology, a movement that started in the ‘90s, where we focus on what’s right with people,” he said. “What we find is really fascinating. For most people, what’s right with them far outnumbers what’s wrong with them. An emerging area of research is connecting these positive psychology factors to men’s issues. Our research team is one of the few in the country actively studying positive psychology in men.”

# TWO-IN-ONE DREAM COME TRUE



When Mi'Asia Barclay accepted a health coordinator job with the Morehouse School of Medicine, the city of Atlanta loomed large in her imagination.

Now she has an office on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor. Her view includes a slice of the Atlanta skyline.

"Atlanta is very different from Alabama," Barclay said. "Very different, very fast, the way they drive and the way they live. But so far, nothing crazy has happened."

"I can actually see the Coca-Cola factory from my window. That's amazing, going from seeing crawfish and Airport Boulevard in Mobile."

Barclay, 24, earned a bachelor's degree in exercise science from the University of South Alabama in 2020. She earned a master's degree in health promotion in spring 2022. For her graduate assistantship, she worked in community engagement for the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

At Morehouse, she uses all of her training and experience.

She's a health coordinator for family medicine in the Innovation Learning Laboratory for Population Health at the School of Medicine. At health fairs and community events, she promotes a healthy diet and exercise, along with vaccines and booster shots, for people in underserved communities.

"Being in a place where I can connect people with resources, where people can better themselves, it makes

"BEING IN A PLACE WHERE I CAN CONNECT PEOPLE WITH RESOURCES, WHERE PEOPLE CAN BETTER THEMSELVES, IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M DOING SOMETHING."

me feel like I'm doing something," she said. "The health aspect of being a coordinator, that's like a two-in-one dream come true."

The School of Medicine was originally part of Morehouse College, a historically black college for men. It became independent in 1981. That was a relief for Barclay, who wasn't sure what to expect.

"I was thinking, am I going to be the only woman at an all-male school?" she said, laughing. "But the School of Medicine accepts women and men."

## *From Mobile to Morehouse*

Barclay is from Talladega, Alabama, but her family moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, when she was in high school. Her mother works on the assembly line at the huge Mercedes-Benz plant nearby. She had some advice about starting a career for the first college graduate in her family.

“Go to work early,” Barclay said. “Work hard. Do what you have to do.”

After high school, she chose South for its health and medical programs, along with its location near the beach. She became community involvement chair for the Minority Association of Premedical Students. She did undergraduate research for Dr. Caitlyn Hauff in the Department of Health, Kinesiology and Sport on awareness of obesity bias in clinical practice.

Barclay was a regular at the Student Recreation Center, where she played sports and enjoyed the swimming pools. She worked student jobs and lived on campus during her first two years.

With the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Barclay promoted events such as Unity Day and Belonging Rocks! She also worked with agencies such as the United Way of Southwest Alabama and Victory Health Partners through a program called Semester of Service.

“That was basically us working with community partners to get South Alabama students back into face-to-face volunteerism,” she said. “That was one of the biggest coordination projects I had to complete.”

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. was a big part of her college experience at South

“I was able to get myself involved with a lot of volunteer work,” she said. “I was treasurer for two years, and I served on a lot of committees. Those kinds of coordination things helped me get where I am today.”

### *Starting a Career*

In Atlanta, Barclay found an apartment in the suburban city of Smyrna. Her commute is a half-hour or an hour, depending on traffic. On some days at the School of Medicine, she wears an AKA polo shirt to work. It’s business casual. Often she has lunch at her desk.

At weekend events, she talks to people about getting enough exercise and finding fresh food, even if there’s not a nearby market. She urges residents to vaccinate and protect themselves from COVID-19 variants.

Barclay says she’s grateful to have a job that feels like such a good match. She hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in health administration one day.

“They focus a lot on professional development here,” she said. “Their goal is to help me progress into what I want to do long term.”



## ***Research in Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias***

*Dr. Joshua Keller is an active researcher and accomplished assistant professor of exercise science in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport at the University of South Alabama. Keller was recently accepted to the Butler-Williams Scholars Program and the Institute on Methods and Protocols for Advancement of Clinical Trials (IMPACT) in Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias.*

*The scholars program is a very competitive training program that provides special opportunities for junior faculty who are new to the field of aging. It’s operated by the National Institute on Aging. The IMPACT program provides researchers with fully funded travel to train for a week at the University of Southern California’s prestigious Alzheimer’s Therapeutic Research Institute in San Diego. Keller was accepted to participate in a fellowship track that focuses on training individuals to make essential choices related to protocols.*

*“I am incredibly grateful and eager to learn from both of these opportunities in order to secure federal funding to assist in improving the health of our surrounding communities,” Keller said.*

*During his time at South, Keller has worked closely with Dr. Amy Nelson in the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology and other researchers to examine underlying mechanisms associated with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias.*

*The team aims to create a treatment that will prevent or delay the onset of neurodegeneration – progressive damage to the brain. With internal funding from the USA Research and Scholarly Development Grant Program, Keller and his team were able to begin data collection relevant to the study from midlife adults in the community.*

*A recent graduate of the exercise science program, Miranda Traylor, joined the team while earning her master’s degree. With the knowledge Traylor brought to the table, Keller and his team were able to display data that suggested brain-derived neurotrophic factor, a popular cognitive biomarker to assess following exercise, was associated with complex attention and processing speed in the study participants.*

*Keller and Nelson are preparing their next manuscript on research that will identify relevant biomarker differences among races/ethnicities. Both hope to have their work submitted to an Alzheimer’s Association-linked academic journal. Keller and his team are also working on leveraging their momentum to generate funding for large-scale clinical trials here in the Gulf Coast region.*

# BUILDING CONNECTIONS



Camille Bonura serves as the Student Government Association president at the University of South Alabama, and her passion for hospitality has helped her get to where she is today.

Originally from Enterprise, Alabama, Bonura chose South because her parents are alumni of the University and she was excited about the quality of the undergraduate program in hospitality and tourism management. As a student at Enterprise High School, Bonura served in several leadership roles, including captain of the dance team, historian and reporter for Future Business Leaders of America, and member of the National Honor Society.

Bonura is pursuing a major in hospitality and tourism management and a double minor in sport management and general business. She has held multiple positions in the SGA leading up to her presidency. She served as senator for the College of Education and Professional Studies, committee chair for Homecoming and director of athletic relations.

Bonura said she decided to run for president because she wanted to give back to the student body. Her main goal is to show other organizations how the SGA can help them be successful. She believes the SGA offers many benefits to students and wants students to know that the SGA advocates for them.

**“I love being around people. I love talking to people, learning about them and learning where they come from.”**

“I’m really excited about getting the entire campus involved with the Student Government Association, so they don’t just know us as another organization on campus and they actually understand what SGA means to them and the student body,” Bonura said.

Bonura’s major has taught her how to connect with people in meaningful ways.

“I think it’s really helped just making connections and being a people person,” she said. “I love being around people. I love talking to people, learning about them and learning where they come from. I’ve built even more connections by attending the department’s networking events.”

Bonura is thankful for many opportunities she’s had to make close connections with faculty and the community.

## **“I’m just super excited to show that women can excel in the sports industry.”**

“I’m close friends with both of my professors, and they’ve helped me get different jobs and opportunities,” she said. “They really hand-pick what jobs and internships they give their students. I like that the classes aren’t very big, and there are only two professors, so you really get to know and have a connection with your professors to get you through college. They really help you be successful.”

Bonura has completed several internships. She currently works as an intern for operations and recruiting with South’s football team. She previously worked for the Athletic Department in facilities and operations for all sports on campus.

She has always been interested in sports event planning and has found her passion in athletics management and operations. After graduation, she plans to continue her career in the sports industry. Bonura hopes to work in operations and would like to be in the front office of a National Football League team or part of a college-level sports conference.

“I’ve seen so many different aspects of the sports industry by working for facilities and operations and now just in operations and recruiting,” she said. “I have a special place in my heart for it. Women in sports have been on the rise for the past couple of years, so I think that is a cool opportunity because women are becoming the presidents of NFL teams now. That hasn’t happened in the past, so I’m just super excited to show that women can excel in the sports industry.”

Bonura is a part of many organizations on campus outside of SGA. She is a member of the Hospitality Club, Hospitality Ambassadors, Eta Sigma Delta Honor Society, Phi Mu sorority and Mortar Board honor society. Her experience as an ambassador has allowed her to show potential students what the hospitality and tourism management program is all about.

“During USA Days or other recruiting events, we welcome prospective students. We show them around campus, the College of Education and Professional Studies, and the Hospitality and Tourism Management office. I love sharing my passion for the field.”



SCAN FOR CAMILLE'S  
SOUTH SAYS VIDEO

## ***Students Study Abroad in Italy***

*Six hospitality and tourism management students recently traveled to Perugia, Italy, for a faculty-led study abroad program. This trip involved two courses titled “International Hospitality and Tourism Management” and “International Culture, Cuisine and Culinary Practices.” Students were fully immersed in Italian culture.*

*The trip included tours of five-star hotels led by general managers, authentic Italian cooking classes with a Michelin star chef and a visit to the world-renowned art museum the Uffizi Gallery. Students had a chance to speak with top managers in Perugia’s hospitality organizations and connect with expatriates who moved to Italy to start their own businesses. Students also toured organic and sustainable vineyards and an agriturismo, where they made cheese, toured the farm, viewed rooms for rent and explored the on-site restaurant.*

*The hospitality and tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic, but leaders have worked diligently to bounce back with a vengeance. Speaking with employees, owners and managers of hospitality organizations in Italy allowed students to see that employee shortages and higher expectations from guests are not just a local challenge in Alabama, but an international one. The trip also allowed students to see the differences in service and engage in discussions about different solutions to some of these challenges. Not only did students make national and international connections and friendships, but they also made lifelong memories.*

*Students can join the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management on its next study abroad adventure to Seville, Spain, in May-June 2023. Open your eyes to the countless opportunities available in hospitality and tourism management and see how a degree in this industry can take you anywhere in the world.*

*Would you like to donate to the hospitality and tourism management study abroad program? All contributions will go toward minimizing the cost of the trip for students. Please contact Amanda Donaldson at [amandadonaldson@SouthAlabama.edu](mailto:amandadonaldson@SouthAlabama.edu) for more information.*



# Starter to Start-Up

From the office of Owl Peak Labs, the life sciences company he co-founded in Charlottesville, Va., Tim Harvey leads a national team of doctors and scientists working to save lives with technology that could help detect early-stage colorectal cancer.

He takes Zoom meetings in front of a bookshelf decorated with a University of South Alabama football helmet. Once a Jaguar, always a Jaguar.

“Yeah, that’s my helmet – I love this thing,” Harvey said, pulling it down from a shelf. “I have all my jerseys, too.”

In 2009, Harvey came to South as a safety for the very first Jaguar football team. He was defensive captain for a squad that went undefeated during his senior year. He remains a South supporter and fan.

“Having the opportunity to build a program and see what’s happening there, to this day, is very special,” he said. “With the company, I’ve been surprised at how often I’ve drawn on my athletic and communication skill sets – the ability to make sure everyone’s speaking from the same platform. It helps a company, it helps a team, move in one direction. You can really accelerate pace and get things done.”

The mission of Owl Peak Labs is to improve screening for colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. The company hopes to use remote diagnostics to reach patients in underserved communities. Its first product is an imaging pill that can scan a patient’s gastrointestinal tract for polyps and other signs of cancer.

Harvey and his partner at Owl Peak, Dr. Taison Bell, met in the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. They hit it off and launched the company even before earning their MBAs.

Since then, Bell has gained fame in public health during the coronavirus pandemic. As assistant director of medical intensive care at UVA Hospital, he’s written and spoken about everything from surges in care to experimental treatments and coronavirus vaccines.

In the Athletic Department at South, people remember Harvey – even when they claim they don’t.

“Tim Harvey? Never heard of him,” joked Jinni Frisbey, senior associate athletic director and football chief of staff. “No, no, no – he was everything you’d want from a student-athlete. Super driven, loved the game, fun guy. He has this charismatic personality and spirit about everything.”

Frisbey was in charge of sports medicine when Harvey was battling knee, thumb and ankle injuries. He went through surgery and rehab several times. If he was told that a recovery might take six weeks, or six months, he would strive to finish in four.

She thought that kind of grit and determination would pay off after college.

"I knew he was very business-oriented, so I wasn't surprised that's what he's done," Frisbey said. "I knew he was going to be successful at whatever he did."

Harvey, 34, grew up in Evanston, Illinois, where both of his parents worked in finance. After graduating from South in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies, he returned home for postgraduate work in finance at Northwestern University.

In Chicago, he worked as a commodities trader. In New York, he worked on Wall Street and became executive director of an equity research firm. He has advised several start-up companies, including Lost Ones film and television studio and Digital Direct IR.

These kinds of finance and technology connections led Harvey to Virginia, the Darden School of Business and Owl Peak Labs. He worked and went to business school at the same time.

"It was tough, it was definitely tough," he said. "But it's just discipline, right? There is an extreme level of efficiency, and a lot of it comes down to time, what you're willing to sacrifice and how you're determined to get there."

He runs in the morning, makes time for yoga and saves some exercise or weight training for the evening. Work begins with what he calls a "morning huddle." His days are long – "I'm a 100-hour-a-week guy" – but he enjoys a flexible schedule.



*Tim Harvey, Owl Peak Lab's founder, presenting at a Creative Destruction Lab - Vancouver session on Oct. 27, 2022. Photo captured by Brian Howell.*

"Less routine, more rhythm," Harvey said. "I'm trying to find a balance with company building, fitness and the right amount of downtime, surfing if possible."

Harvey travels around the world building relationships and raising capital to forward the development of the technology.

In pre-pandemic days, he enjoyed visiting Mobile. He stayed at the Battle House Hotel and went to Wintzell's for roasted oysters. He imagined himself getting ready for a Saturday night game at Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

Harvey hasn't seen the new Hancock Whitney Stadium on campus yet, but says he will be back this season to support the new staff. He stays in touch with several football players and coaches from South. He still loves the game.

He started his college football career at Drake University, a private institution in Iowa, before heading south to join a brand-new program in Mobile.

"We were all new recruits and a bunch of transfer students," he said. "I was so lucky to be on those teams and have such a blast. It was exciting to watch great people build a program and experience vision become a reality firsthand. We also didn't lose, so we set a pretty high standard for years to come."

**"Less routine, more rhythm. I'm trying to find a balance with company building, fitness and the right amount of downtime, surfing if possible."**

# New Chair Returns to Alabama



The University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies welcomes Dr. R. Allan Allday as its new chair for the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education. Allday has had many experiences teaching and mentoring around the globe, and now he returns to work in his home state for the first time in nearly 20 years.

Originally from Fulton, Alabama, Allday is a first-generation college graduate. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, master's in special education and doctoral degree in special education with a minor in school psychology, all from Auburn University. He earned his Board Certified Behavior Analyst-Doctoral (BCBA-D) certification in 2011 and is now a licensed behavior analyst in Alabama.

Upon earning his master's degree and obtaining a teaching certificate, Allday jumped right into teaching. He worked as a special education teacher at W.F. Burns Middle School in Valley, Alabama.

During his doctoral studies at Auburn, Allday worked in the university's Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education as a graduate teaching assistant, supervisor of field experiences and assistant director for the Summer Learning Clinic.

After earning a Ph.D., Allday accepted a position as an assistant professor of special education at the College of Charleston in South Carolina. He then moved to Oklahoma State University and served as an assistant professor of special education. While at Oklahoma State, Allday was awarded his first Fulbright Scholar grant.



“THERE’S THIS MISCONCEPTION ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION  
– THAT WE JUST SIT AROUND AND THINK DEEP THOUGHTS.  
BUT WE ACTUALLY DO A LOT OF REALLY PRACTICAL THINGS.”

As a Fulbright Scholar, Allday traveled to Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Municipal Pedagogical University in Ukraine and served as a member of the faculty in social pedagogy. He primarily taught courses to future teachers, social workers and psychologists about children with problem behaviors. Allday also consulted with a rehabilitation center for children with disabilities and worked with various schools and families in the Kyiv and Lviv communities.

In 2011, Allday accepted a position as assistant professor at the University of Kentucky College of Education in the Department of Early Childhood, Special Education and Counselor Education. In 2014, he was promoted to associate professor, and in 2016, he started a joint appointment as an associate professor in the College of Medicine’s Department of Pediatrics.

“I think that my experience with developmental behavioral pediatrics is cool because I don’t know that most people think about teacher education and medicine working together,” Allday said. “We were able to help a lot of children with behavior problems that weren’t always helped by medicinal interventions. While working in collaboration with pediatrics, we were able to meet the needs of families that would have otherwise not received any services to help with challenging behaviors.”

Allday also served as founding director of the University of Kentucky’s Applied Behavior Analysis graduate program. This led to him co-founding the Center for Applied Behavioral Supports at the University, which serves children and youths with severe challenging behaviors and their families. He worked with the Women and Philanthropy Network, a group that provides grants to professors, to help his students pay for college tuition. In return, the students worked with Allday at the behavioral clinic and learned the skills needed to consult with families. Students offer their services at the clinic free of charge, teaching parents how to reduce their child’s behavioral problems.

During Allday’s tenure at Kentucky, he worked with a student from Ukraine who had received a Fulbright award to complete a graduate degree in the United States. Allday had worked with the student in Lviv. Also while at Kentucky, Allday was awarded a second Fulbright Scholar grant to travel to the University of Sopron in Hungary. He was a member of the Benedek Elek Faculty of Pedagogy.

“The Fulbright experience in Hungary was both professionally and personally satisfying,” Allday said. “I was able to teach courses at the university and provide consultation for teachers who were managing challenging behaviors. Personally, it was very special because I was able to take my family with me. This was powerful for me due to my experiences as a child in rural Alabama. As a child, coming to Mobile was a big outing. However, my children have had the opportunity to see things that I only read about as a child.”

Allday has been an active researcher, with nearly 40 peer-reviewed journal articles. He has presented his research at more than 100 venues, from local schools to international conferences. His research has focused on strategies for dealing with problem behavior. Allday has worked with children with and without disabilities as well as the adults in their lives to help manage behavior. He has worked with hospitals, school districts, universities and orphanages across the world.

“Working with children with challenging behavior can be difficult,” he said. “Helping families is such an important thing because, as parents, you never know what you’re going to get. Every parent has hopes for what their child will do. No one wants or hopes to have a child that is extraordinarily aggressive. When this happens, reality hits, and as parents, they don’t know what to do. It is such a blessing to be able to empower parents to help their children through interventions they can carry out in their homes.”

Though his motivation for returning to Alabama was to be closer to his family, Allday has many plans for his time at South. He’s most passionate about involving the community in departmental research and projects. He hopes to get his faculty involved in local schools for hands-on research opportunities. Allday also plans to work closely with his faculty to help them realize their potential.

“I really enjoy bringing the community into what we’re doing. There’s this misconception about higher education – that we just sit around and think deep thoughts. But we actually do a lot of really practical things. There is so much potential here at South to positively impact our community and get our community involved in what we are doing.”

# Reading Education in the Era of Literacy Legislation

*Dr. Lauren Brannan (left), Dr. Karen Morrison (center) and Dr. Hannah Szatkowski (right) plan to measure the language and reading instruction knowledge, skills and pedagogy of Alabama's elementary public school teachers.*



Dr. Lauren Brannan, assistant professor of reading education, was awarded an internal research grant from the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies for a project titled “Reading Education in the Era of Literacy Legislation.”

Supporting the grant are Dr. Karen Morrison, assistant professor of elementary education, co-principal investigator; Dr. Hannah Szatkowski, assistant professor of reading education, co-principal investigator; and Dr. Marissa J. Filderman, assistant professor of collaborative special education at the University of Alabama, external collaborator. The team received \$3,000 to measure the language and reading instruction knowledge, skills and pedagogy of Alabama’s elementary public elementary school teachers.

Following the implementation of the Alabama Literacy Act, this research will assess how the professional development offered to teachers that flowed from the act impacted elementary teachers’ knowledge of language, confidence teaching reading, and beliefs about reading difficulties.

According to the team’s research so far, the majority of American elementary students are reading below grade level, and Alabama is below the national average. Teachers’ knowledge of language is low, which may be a contributing factor to what is causing the students to fall behind.

“The science of reading training has been geared toward teachers in grades pre-K-3,” Brannan said. “This leaves out the upper elementary grade levels, where teachers often still encounter struggling readers who are in need of instructional intervention.”

Early analyses are showing that Alabama elementary teachers, including those who have not participated in the professional development, still possess some gaps in knowledge of language and some misconceptions about

“THE SCIENCE OF READING TRAINING HAS BEEN GEARED TOWARD TEACHERS IN GRADES PRE-K-3. THIS LEAVES OUT THE UPPER ELEMENTARY GRADE LEVELS, WHERE TEACHERS OFTEN STILL ENCOUNTER STRUGGLING READERS WHO ARE IN NEED OF INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION.”

reading difficulties. The team has found that professional development appears to be having a positive impact. Brannan’s team has also found that teachers in grades K-2 tend to score higher on the knowledge assessment. They believe this is because professional development has been geared towards these grade levels.

Ultimately, the team plans to provide information about the effectiveness of the science of reading – the interdisciplinary body of scientifically based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing – through professional development opportunities throughout the state.

“I am immensely passionate about the impact of the science of reading on teachers’ confidence and implementation of reading instruction,” Szatkowski said. “I look forward to finding out more about how the science of reading translates into classrooms throughout the state of Alabama.”

Internal research grant recipients will make presentations to the college in spring 2023 regarding the findings and impact of their research as well as future external funding proposals that may result from these seed grants.

# Leadership in Social Justice & Perseverance Scholarship



Find out how to support this initiative at [giving.SouthAlabama.edu/socialjustice](https://giving.SouthAlabama.edu/socialjustice), or contact the Office of Development at (251) 460-7032. To apply for this scholarship log on to JagSPOT using your J number and JagMail password.

**K**ennedy Reese, who recently earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education from the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies, was one of the first recipients of the Leadership in Social Justice and Perseverance Scholarship, awarded to students who demonstrate leadership, a commitment to social justice and perseverance.

Reese, a social studies teacher at Blount High School in Eight Mile, was a leader against social inequities during her time at South. She was vice president for the University chapter of the NAACP.

"I believe to see the more progressive world I deeply desire, it is very important that I use my voice and inspire others to use theirs to stand up to any injustices they may face. We are the change," she said.

The 100 Black Men of Greater Mobile, in partnership with the University, established the Leadership in Social Justice and Perseverance Scholarship in 2020 with an initial gift of \$10,000 to remember all of those who have fallen to systems of oppression and injustice.

The group also created the 100 Black Men USA Scholars of Perseverance and Social Justice award, a full-tuition scholarship for an incoming freshman.

The University has raised more than \$338,000 for the Leadership in Social Justice and Perseverance Scholarship including matching funds provided by the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative. Notable gifts include the 100 Black Men of Greater Mobile, Inc, Alabama Power Foundation, Hancock Whitney Bank, the AT&T Alabama Foundation, University administrative leaders and many individuals. The Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative, which matches donations dollar for dollar, doubles the impact for our students.

**"I BELIEVE TO SEE THE MORE PROGRESSIVE WORLD I DEEPLY DESIRE, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT I USE MY VOICE AND INSPIRE OTHERS TO USE THEIRS TO STAND UP TO ANY INJUSTICES THEY MAY FACE. WE ARE THE CHANGE."**

## *MCPSS Honors South as Learning Leading Award Winner*



“IT WAS A WIN FOR SOUTH, AS WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT IN AS LITTLE AS SEVEN YEARS SOME OF THESE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WILL BECOME JAGUARS.”

*Pictured left to right are Dr. Trés Stefurak, associate dean and professor for the College of Education and Professional Studies; Jennifer Simpson, director of field services; Pam Patterson, assistant director of field services; and Dr. John Kovaleski, interim dean for the College of Education and Professional Studies.*

Mobile County Public Schools recognized the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies with a Learning Leading Award in June 2022 for being an outstanding community partner. In fall 2021, during a teacher shortage, South partnered with the school system to staff the elementary-level Academy of Virtual Learning.

“The program came about from a desire of the district and the college to begin to address the teacher shortage that so many districts are experiencing these days,” said Dr. Andre Green, professor and associate vice president of academic affairs.

Traditional student teachers typically work in a classroom alongside a certified teacher, referred to as the cooperating teacher. A University supervisor also visits the classroom several times a month to provide support and observe lessons. Prior to the final student-teaching semester, South student teachers learn successful teaching methods in on-campus classes and complete many field experiences in local elementary school classrooms.

As part of a new Transitioning to Teaching program, some fall 2021 student teachers worked in the Mobile County Public Schools’ Academy of Virtual Learning, where they assumed more teaching responsibilities than traditional student teachers. A team of retired teachers oversaw the student teachers, serving as both the cooperating teacher and University supervisor. The oversight team also

helped with planning and support and observed lessons to provide feedback. Certified teachers on-site provided additional support.

Student teachers in the Transitioning to Teaching program received a monthly stipend and free fall tuition. After meeting graduation requirements in December 2021, each student in the program was offered a full-time position with Mobile County Public Schools.

“As COVID-19 disrupted school systems nationwide, new ideas and strategies emerged as a result of the pandemic,” said Jennifer Simpson, senior instructor and director of field services in College of Education and Professional Studies. “This partnership was a result of two groups working together to solve COVID-19 related challenges as well as the teacher shortage. I think it is also important to note that the student teachers who participated in the program had extensive field experiences in the two semesters prior to beginning at the MCPSS Academy of Virtual Learning in the fall of 2021. Those experiences, along with the support from University faculty and supervisors, were vital to the success of these new teachers.”

“The program was able to assist the district with meeting a need, and the district was able to assist the college in providing this opportunity for our students,” Green said. “It was a win for South, as we sincerely hope that in as little as seven years some of these elementary students will become Jaguars.”

# It's never too late.

*Complete your degree at South.*  
[SouthAlabama.edu/AdultLearner](http://SouthAlabama.edu/AdultLearner)





*Bob Charlebois, director of the University of South Alabama Office of Adult Learner Services, leads efforts to support current and prospective nontraditional, adult students. The office, although housed in the College of Education and Professional Studies, serves a University-wide initiative to reach adults pursuing any degree program at South.*

# South Partnering with Amazon

A new partnership between the University of South Alabama and Amazon will make earning a college degree much easier for employees of the e-commerce giant. Amazon's Career Choice program is an educational benefit that empowers Amazon employees to learn new skills for career success with the company or elsewhere. The company will reimburse its employees' college tuition costs under the program.

"Amazon pays the university directly up front," said Bob Charlebois, director of USA's adult learner services. "Many similar programs make the student pay then reimburse them which can be difficult for students to come up with the money initially."

Amazon's Career Choice program launched in 2012. Since then, more than 50,000 Amazon employees have participated globally, including more than 35,000 in the U.S. Healthcare, transportation and information technology have been the programs' more popular fields of study. More than half of the participants have identified as Black, Hispanic or Native American.

In the U.S., the company is investing \$1.2 billion to upskill more than 300,000 Amazon employees by 2025 to help move them into higher-paying, in-demand jobs. Amazon will fund college tuition toward bachelor's degrees, as well as high school programs, GEDs, and English as a Second Language proficiency certifications for eligible employees, including those who joined the company as recently as three months ago.

"We're looking forward to the University of South Alabama coming on board as an education partner for Career Choice, adding to the hundreds of best-in-class offerings available to our employees," said Tammy Thieman, Global Program Lead of Amazon's Career Choice program. "We're committed to empowering our employees by providing them access to the education and training they need to grow their careers, whether that's with us or elsewhere."

South is one of 180 institutions nationally and the first on the Gulf Coast to enter this partnership. According to Amazon press information, the company chose the partner schools based on the school's history of educating adult students, such as those who went straight from high school into full-time employment or those who never had a way to pay for a college

## New Academic Opportunities to Launch Soon

### BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

An application to start a fully online Bachelor of Science degree in Organizational Leadership has been submitted to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. Once approved, the new program will be housed in the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies and will target adult learners, military personnel and traditional undergraduate students. The program seeks to provide a pathway to leadership positions in business, nonprofit and government organizations and will consist of core courses in the following domains:

- Leadership theory and management practice
- Legal and ethical issues
- Staff development and evaluation
- Diversity, equity and inclusion practices
- Teamwork and conflict resolution
- Financial affairs
- Communication skills
- Capstone internship

**Dr. Paige Vitulli, [pvitulli@southalabama.edu](mailto:pvitulli@southalabama.edu)**

### PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

The term prior learning assessment refers to all of the processes the University of South Alabama uses to review and evaluate evidence of learning outside formal higher education for which academic credit cannot be granted through existing articulation agreements or course equivalencies. Evidence of such learning may be derived from previous academic work, testing, or various life and work experiences. At South, credit for prior learning is assessed through the College Level Examination Program, Challenge Exams, ROTC/Military credits, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and by Portfolio.

Credit through prior learning assessment by Portfolio can be awarded based on the review and approval of a comprehensive collection of evidence that documents knowledge and skills acquired outside of the academic classroom that align with learning objectives of specific and approved college courses.

**Bob Charlebois, [rjcharlebois@southalabama.edu](mailto:rjcharlebois@southalabama.edu)**

education right out of high school. Qualified employees can take as long as they need to earn their degrees.

The Career Choice program benefits South as a potential pipeline for students who will have an easier time navigating their financial path toward a college degree.

# A Commitment to Excellence

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 advisors in the college who are committed to student success.

“OUR SUCCESS IS OWED TO THEIR HARD WORK AND DEDICATION”

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.

The college hosted its Faculty and Staff Awards and Retiree Celebration in May 2022.

“Our faculty and staff are the heart of 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 2022 faculty and staff awardees, and thank you for your outstanding contributions to the college.”



Gerry Jean Clark  
Exemplary Staff Award  
**Patricia “Patti” Foster**

Being located in the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport Building requires above average levels of coordination, as many areas in the building are shared with Athletics, University events and the Jaguar Marching Band. Mrs. Patricia “Patti” Foster does an excellent job of recognizing the needs of everyone involved and organizing availability to meet the demands. Foster has also been incredible in scheduling courses and helping with the management of adjunct instructors. Her position has many seen and unseen aspects, and she handles all of them in a professional and timely manner. She is always willing to help any faculty or staff member in the department with whatever is needed. Her work ethic, interpersonal skills and professionalism in working with students, staff and faculty are appreciated by all.



Faculty of Excellence Award  
**Dr. Ryan Colquhoun**

Dr. Ryan Colquhoun demonstrates extraordinary commitment to the success of the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport. Colquhoun increased the research capabilities of the exercise science laboratories by creating a resistance exercise lab space, where he is currently managing a time-intensive resistance training study. He has heavily involved eight undergraduate students and two master’s students as research assistants and coordinators for the study. He is actively working with students who are submitting abstracts for poster presentations at annual conferences for academic professional organizations, including the National Strength and Conditioning Association, International Society of Sports Nutrition and Southeast Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine. Colquhoun served as a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellow mentor for the past two years. He has been active in collaborating with other faculty members on their research projects, demonstrating his willingness to be a team member and to not build a silo within the department. This effort is resulting in increased visibility and recognition of the exercise science program on regional and national scales. Colquhoun serves as the exercise science graduate program coordinator, activity program coordinator and graduate assistant coordinator. He serves as a committee member on the USA Institutional Review Board, which is an important role in ensuring efficient implementation of research compliance across the University community.





**Dean's Award of Excellence**  
**Dr. Paige Vitulli**

Dr. Paige Vitulli is recognized for the Dean's Award of Excellence for her leadership skills and efforts as chair of the Department of Integrative Studies and interim chair of the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, faculty athletic representative for the University and officer of the USA National Alumni Association Board, and for her involvement with various community organizations. She is recognized as an innovator and effective collaborator across the University community. Vitulli is acknowledged as supportive in creating and sharing ideas while working for the betterment of students, faculty and staff. "As someone who has enriched the lives of so many students through the excellence of her teaching and service to help every student, Vitulli richly deserves recognition through this award," said Dr. John Kovaleski, interim dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies.



**Faculty of Excellence Award**  
**Dr. Jeanette Manders**

Dr. Jeanette "Jenny" Manders consistently involves students in innovative and creative strategies to engage them in online learning and revises her teaching to improve student learning outcomes. She has most recently participated in Symbiosis Course Redesign through departmental collaboration with Symbiosis Educational Consultants and the USA Innovation in Learning Center as well as the Association of College and University Educators Course Redesign. Manders' service includes involvement and significant community engagement in Baldwin County as evidenced by her selection by leadership in the Office of Community Engagement to be part of the 2020-2021 Faculty Fellows Program in Service Learning and Community Engagement. Her recent community service in Baldwin County includes work with the South Baldwin Literacy Council; South Baldwin Chamber Foundation Board; Coastal Alabama Business Chamber; and Education Council, Scholarship Committee, Business Development Committee. For the University of South Alabama, Manders most recently served on the Academic Standards Committee and Curriculum Committee and is the College of Education and Professional Studies caucus leader in the Faculty Senate. She has been instrumental in the development of time-intensive instructive and policy documents to initiate prior learning assessment by portfolio. These include the PLA Policy Guide, PLA Faculty Reviewer's Guide and rubric, PLA Student Contract, and PLA Online Module.

*Welcoming New Faculty and Staff*

**Dr. Allan Alday**

Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education

**Shelly Bates**

Assistant Professor, Recreational Therapy, Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport

**Dr. Lu Ding**

Assistant Professor, Instructional Design and Development, Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences

**Dr. Matthew Stratton**

Assistant Professor, Exercise Science Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport

**Tonette Adams**

Academic Records Specialist, Office of Student Services

**Dominique House**

Academic Records Specialist, Office of Student Services

**Sharon Leibert**

Secretary V, South Alabama Research and Inservice Center

**Timothy Johnson**

Technology in Motion Specialist, South Alabama Research and Inservice Center

**Blakely McAllister**

Secretary V, Department of Integrative Studies

*Honoring Recent College Retirees*

**Dr. Ellen Broach**

Associate Professor, Recreational Therapy, Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport

**Dr. Burke Johnson**

Professor, Instructional Design and Development, Department of Counseling and Instructional Sciences

**Jennifer Fillingim**

Credentials and Degree Analyst I, Office of Student Services

# *The Heart of Education*



 South  
Alabama  
NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



**M**artha Peek, a University of South Alabama alumna, grew up in the beautiful fishing community of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, and graduated from Alba School. Many family members worked as educators, and she grew up knowing clearly that one day she would become a teacher.

"I grew up in a close-knit community where my grandmother was a teacher on Dauphin Island," Peek said. "My mother and great-aunt were teachers and principals. They all were extraordinary educators because they didn't mind asking the tough and difficult questions to make sure the students were getting the best curriculum and instruction. They demanded rigor, which is a high standard of excellence, and with dedication developed caring and inspiring relationships with their students. Because of them, I couldn't help but have a heart and passion for teaching."

**"THEY ALL WERE EXTRAORDINARY EDUCATORS BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T MIND ASKING THE TOUGH AND DIFFICULT QUESTIONS TO MAKE SURE THE STUDENTS WERE GETTING THE BEST CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION."**

Peek began her teaching career at Alba School after graduating from college. Her first-grade teacher was still at the school. She became Peek's mentor.

"I wanted to teach to enlighten students and prepare them for their future careers," Peek said. "I am honored to follow in the footsteps of my family members who as educators enjoyed learning and sharing their knowledge and skills. I am also grateful my first-grade teacher was kind enough to support me when I needed it the most."

News reports today warn of teacher shortages and their effect on students. Peek said it is important for new teachers to have extra support from seasoned teachers as well as administrators. Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, according to the National Education Association, an estimated 55 percent of educators have thought about leaving the profession earlier than they had previously planned.

Eighty-six percent of NEA members say they have seen more educators leaving the profession due to burnout and retirement.

"We need teachers who are caring and compassionate with a heart for the students," Peek said. "Current and future teachers need to be committed and dedicated to helping students achieve success. We need teachers to inspire young people and help them to be their very best. Great teachers understand clearly that the No. 1 priority is the students."



*In March 2022, Martha Peek was honored by University of South Alabama President Jo Bonner as a 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient.*

In 2012, Peek was named Mobile County Public Schools superintendent. It was not on her radar for future careers. She had worked her way up from teacher to principal, assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent. Peek was very surprised when the Board of School Commissioners offered her the job. She became the first female superintendent in the 180-year history of the school system.

"Being named superintendent was a big surprise and a great honor," Peek said. "I was not expecting this opportunity. I knew deep in my heart and mind that I was a teacher. I was passionate about changing the lives of students. As an educator, I shared my passion for teaching with the teachers, administrators and support staff."

Peek had already positioned herself as an educational leader by earning her master's degree in education from South. She wanted to learn as much as she could to teach and lead as an administrator.

She established a Leadership Roundtable and Signature Academy Councils that have linked business, industry and higher education in robust partnerships with the school system to inform curriculum design and support the development of student career pathways.

"As a former Mobile County Public School System superintendent, Martha Peek continues to leave an indelible mark as an educator," said Interim Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies Dr. John Kovaleski. "We are proud she is an alumna of the University of South Alabama who continues to mentor current and future teachers."



“THE STUDENTS ARE THE HEART OF EDUCATION AND DESERVE NOTHING BUT THE BEST FROM EVERY TEACHER.”

In March 2022, Peek was honored along with four others as a 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient, for outstanding leadership as an educator. She is a graduate of Leadership Alabama’s Class XXVI. In 2015 AL.com named her one of the “Women Who Shape the State.”

“I am honored to serve on the College of Education and Professional Studies Advisory Council,” Peek said. “I am also humbled to have been recognized and honored along with other great people during this year’s University of South Alabama’s Distinguished Alumni Awards. It was one of the major highlights of my life.”

During her extensive career in education, Peek served as a volunteer leader in the community while sharing the great work of all educators in Mobile County Public Schools.

“I could not have done this great work by myself,” Peek said. “I had some great professionals who worked with me tirelessly and remained serious about student success and rigor. Today, I tell new teachers to teach and love the students every day. The students are the heart of education and deserve nothing but the best from every teacher, administrator and support staff. It’s a team effort.”

After a 46-year career as a caring and compassionate educator, Peek continues to mentor teachers about the importance of being excellent in the classroom. She is married to Tyler Peek, a '76 graduate of the University of South Alabama.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

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CEO  
Mobile Area Education Foundation

**Gigi Armbrecht**

AT&T (Retired)

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**David Clark**

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AACRAO Consulting

**Dr. Aaron Milner**

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Saraland City Schools

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**Chresal Threadgill**

Superintendent  
Mobile County Public Schools

**Eddie Tyler**

Superintendent  
Baldwin County Public Schools

# Invest in the College

## PRIORITIZED GIVING

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 are:



### 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 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 multiple community engagement opportunities for students, faculty and staff, including work with the USA Literacy Center, Williamson Middle Grades Preparatory Academy, local court systems and many other organizations. Support from donors allows the college to continue to provide meaningful service to the local community.



### GIFT PLANNING

Support the University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies with a charitable gift. Put your assets to work with our tax-efficient charitable strategies, and take advantage of the many tax benefits of making a gift.



### ABOUT BEQUESTS

You may be looking for a way to make a significant gift to help further our mission. A bequest is a gift made through your will or trust. It is one of the most popular and flexible ways that you can support our cause.



### IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER

An IRA rollover allows people age 70 1/2 or older to reduce their taxable income by making a gift directly from their IRA. Donors have created a scholarship or given an outright gift toward a variety of programs.

Your investment makes a difference for current and future University of South Alabama students. However you choose to give, Aimee Meyers, associate director of University Development, is here to assist you in making a lasting impact. Please visit [usalegacy.org](http://usalegacy.org) for more information or contact Meyers at [ameyers@SouthAlabama.edu](mailto:ameyers@SouthAlabama.edu) or (251) 414-8276.



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Giving.SouthAlabama.edu



## *Dr. Thomas L. Chilton Legacy Scholarship*

The College of Education and Professional Studies mourns the passing of Dr. Thomas Chilton, a longtime professor and associate dean who had recently celebrated 50 years of association with the college.

“Dr. Chilton was 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 Kovaleski, interim dean of the college.

Chilton held many titles at the University, and each contributed to his legacy. After earning an Ed.D. in Health Education from the University of Tennessee, Chilton began his career at the University of South Alabama in 1972 as an assistant professor of health education in the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Studies. He was promoted to 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. From 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 international student recruitment initiatives.

Between 1995 and 1997, Chilton designed the space that today houses the College of Education and Professional Studies at 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

*Dr. Thomas Chilton (left) hands a University of South Alabama College of Education and Professional Studies graduate a diploma at Commencement in December 2012*

**“He was such a giver to this University, and it is our hope that through this scholarship, his devotion and commitment to excellence will be his legacy for many years to come.”**

education. Between 1998 and 2011, Chilton served as director of USAonline, the University of South Alabama’s learning management system. In that capacity, he helped the University take one of its biggest leaps. In 1999, USA launched its first batch of online courses: a total of nine, spread across education, business and nursing.

In his years as a professor, Chilton’s primary research interest involved computerized nutritional assessment. In 1974, he conducted a landmark study with Dr. William Gilley, then associate professor of health and physical education. Together, they developed, in conjunction with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, a computer program to analyze food nutritional content for use by nurses and dietitians.

Chilton made many notable administrative and service contributions not only to the college but also to Athletics, the University community and the Alabama State Department of Education. Chilton served as assistant chair of the Department of Health and Physical Education (1977–1983) and worked with then Dean of the College of Education Dr. George Uhlig to initiate the move of the U.S. Sports Academy from Wisconsin to South, where it was housed within the department for several years. It moved in 1983 to nearby Daphne, Alabama. He also served as interim athletic director (1980), golf coach (1980–1984), and chair of the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Studies (1983–1985). His contributions to the Alabama State Department of Education include service as state certification officer for teacher preparation programs (1985–2012) and chairman of the General Education Committee (1995–2005).

A lifelong advocate of physical fitness, Chilton enjoyed running. 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.

The Dr. Thomas L. Chilton Legacy Scholarship in Education was created to honor Chilton's legacy and will be available to undergraduate students who study in the field of education at South.

"The only thing to do after Dr. Chilton's passing was to create a scholarship in his name to keep his legacy alive," said Rebecca Chilton, his daughter-in-law. "He was such a giver to this University, and it is our hope that through this scholarship, his devotion and commitment to excellence will be his legacy for many years to come."

Chilton's family said he demonstrated excellence in everything he did, from athletics to academics, and even in the way he carried himself around his family, to which he was devoted.

"He was never the guy who was too busy," Rebecca said. "When he was with family, he was fully engaged and present. Nothing would deter him from spending quality time with his grandchildren."

Tommy, Chilton's son, and Rebecca both graduated from South in 1983 and earned bachelor's degrees in marketing. Following graduation, Rebecca began her career at a management company, but discovered a passion for education. After speaking with her father-in-law, she began studying to earn certification to teach in Mobile.



*Tommy Chilton (left) poses with his dad, Dr. Thomas Chilton, and his wife, Rebecca Chilton, at the College of Education and Professional Studies 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in 2017. Dr. Chilton was selected as an outstanding contributor to the college's success and transformation, and his image still hangs in the college with those of the other honorees.*

"Education was dad's wheelhouse," Tommy said. "Dad went back to college to become a teacher. He excelled and got his master's degree fast and furious with a passion for excellence. He knew he wanted to be in the education spectrum for the rest of his life. I think it's paramount that this scholarship fulfills that obligation long after his passing, and I'm hoping long after our passing as well."

Dr. Andrea M. Kent, executive vice president and provost, said Chilton was 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."

### *Give Now to the Dr. Thomas L. Chilton Legacy Scholarship in Education*

**[Giving.SouthAlabama.edu/Chilton](https://Giving.SouthAlabama.edu/Chilton)**



# SCHOLAR

*Investing in scholarships for students is one of the most important ways you can support the University of South Alabama. Scholarships are a vital means to expand educational opportunities. In addition to providing the financial help that students need to succeed in higher education, scholarships also enrich and grow the student body, help retain students, attract high performing students and create a diverse community. As part of the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative, your gift to establish an endowed undergraduate scholarship will be matched dollar for dollar – doubling impact for deserving students.*

Akridge-DeVan Family  
Endowed Scholarship  
in Education  
**Stephen Margavio**

Alane and Mark Hoffman  
Special Education Certification  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Madison Gewalt**

Alfred F. Delchamps Sr.  
Memorial Scholarship  
**Katie Morgan**

Barbara Phillips Endowed  
Award for Special  
Education Teachers  
**Timothy Tenorio**

Betty and Richard Wold  
Education Administration  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Alani Rodgers**

Bobbie and Steve Hancock  
Endowed Scholarship in  
Interdisciplinary Studies  
**Taylor Campbell**

Burette S. Tillinghast Jr.  
Graduate Scholarship in  
School Counseling  
**Julia Martin**

Captain Allen U. Graham  
Memorial Scholarship  
**Nichole Harting**

Captain George A.  
Manders Endowed Fund in  
Interdisciplinary Studies  
**Joseph Kinney**

Carol and Jim Statter  
Endowed Scholarship for  
Literacy Education  
**Kierra Tucker**

Charles and Virginia  
Thompson Endowed  
Scholarship in Hospitality  
**Mallory Erickson**

College of Education  
Scholarship  
**Robert Heckman**

Don Winterton  
Endowed Scholarship  
for Science Education  
**Meredith Annan**

Dr. Chandru Hiremath  
Memorial Endowed Award  
in Instructional Design  
Development  
**Allison Morrow**

Dr. Elizabeth F. Martin and Dr.  
Wilma M. Scrivner Scholarship  
**Madison Gewalt**

Dr. Evelyn Kwan Green  
Endowed Scholarship in  
Hospitality and Tourism  
**Moon Nguyen-Haas**

Dr. George E. Uhlig  
Endowed Award  
**Jessica Hultquist**

Dr. Richard L. Hayes  
Endowed Scholarship in  
School Counseling  
**Paityn Collier**

Dr. Vaughn Millner Endowed  
Scholarship in Counseling  
**Savannah Rommel**

Ed Bunnell Adult Degree  
Program Scholarship  
**Ashley Lawson**

Gaillard-Neville Reynolds  
Scholarship for PASSAGE USA  
**Javon Wiggins**

**Terri Penn**  
**Michelle Oranika**  
**Erreina Morehead**  
**Brandon Driver**  
**Alyse Delph**  
**Bryson Dinkins**  
**Alex McCurley**  
**Bryan Sanders**

Harold Bickel Memorial  
Scholarship in Education  
**Morgan Everett**  
**Moon Nguyen-Haas**

Harvel A. Owens Endowed  
Scholarship In Education  
**Selena Miller**

Helping Hands  
Development Award  
**Lazoria Wright**

Hospitality Advisory  
Board Leadership  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Camille Bonura**

J. Howe and Annie Bell  
Hadley Memorial Scholarship  
**Katie Morgan**

Jeanne M. Sanderford  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Lauren Stauffer**  
**Jennifer Bankston**  
**Robert Heckman**

Jim and Liz Connors  
Hospitality Management  
Scholarship  
**Karolina Holm**

John Hadley Strange  
Scholarship  
**Chaz McGhee**

Josephine Wood Tillinghast  
Endowed Scholarship  
in Education  
**Nealetha Holloway**

Joycelyn Franklin Finley  
Trailblazer Scholarship  
**Elizabeth Eubanks**

Keasler/Spillers Scholarship  
**Veronica Coleman**



# SCHOLARSHIPS

## *2021-2022 College of Education and Professional Studies Scholarship Recipients*

Kent and Green Families  
Breaking Barriers in Education  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Quentin Brown**

Lavonne Simon Endowed  
Book Award  
**Mariah Nix**  
**Megan Redmond**

Lavord and Doris Crook  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Sara Morgan**

Linda J. Reaves Endowment  
for Educators in Science  
and Mathematics  
**Sarah Lawrey**

Lisa Mitchell Bukstein  
Developing Students  
Scholarship  
**Mariah Nix**

Malcolm R. Howell Endowed  
Scholarship in Education  
**Maresa Serra**

Mobile Area Lodging  
Association Scholarship  
**Camille Bonura**  
**Emily Fogt**

Pamela Lynne Patterson  
Endowed Scholarship  
in Education  
**Ashley Field**

Patricia Kelly Lofton Endowed  
Scholarship for Teachers  
**Kierra Tucker**

Paula Lawkis-Bruton Memorial  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Elizabeth Eubanks**

Pitts Family Scholarship  
in Education  
**Patricia Massey**

PNC Bank Endowed  
Scholarship in Early  
Childhood Education  
**Jessica Adair**

Ralph Jones Memorial  
Scholarship  
**Lauren Stauffer**

Robert Hopkins Memorial  
Endowed Scholarship  
in Education  
**Mariah Nix**

Ronald A. Styron Sr. Memorial  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Veronica Coleman**

Rotary Club of Mobile  
Scholarship  
**Regan Grantham**

Ruth M. Gwinn-Heitman  
Endowed Scholarship  
**Amiriam Watson**

Spectrum Resorts Scholarship  
**Emily Fogt**

Student Leaders in Education  
Scholarship  
**Olivia Rouse**

The Daniel Foundation of  
Alabama Endowed Scholarship  
for Teachers  
**MaLaysia Marbury**  
**Milton Massey**

The Nancy Gaillard Love of  
Teaching Scholarship  
**Brooke Holmes**

Thomas Corcoran Scholarship  
in Interdisciplinary Studies  
**John Gillis**

Tiffany K. Whitfield Book  
Scholarship for Education  
Students  
**Keri Williams**

Tom Wood Tillinghast  
Endowed Scholarship  
in Education  
**Jessica Saville**

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

Valerie R. Morgan Memorial  
Scholarship in Graduate  
Education  
**Ragan Ferguson**

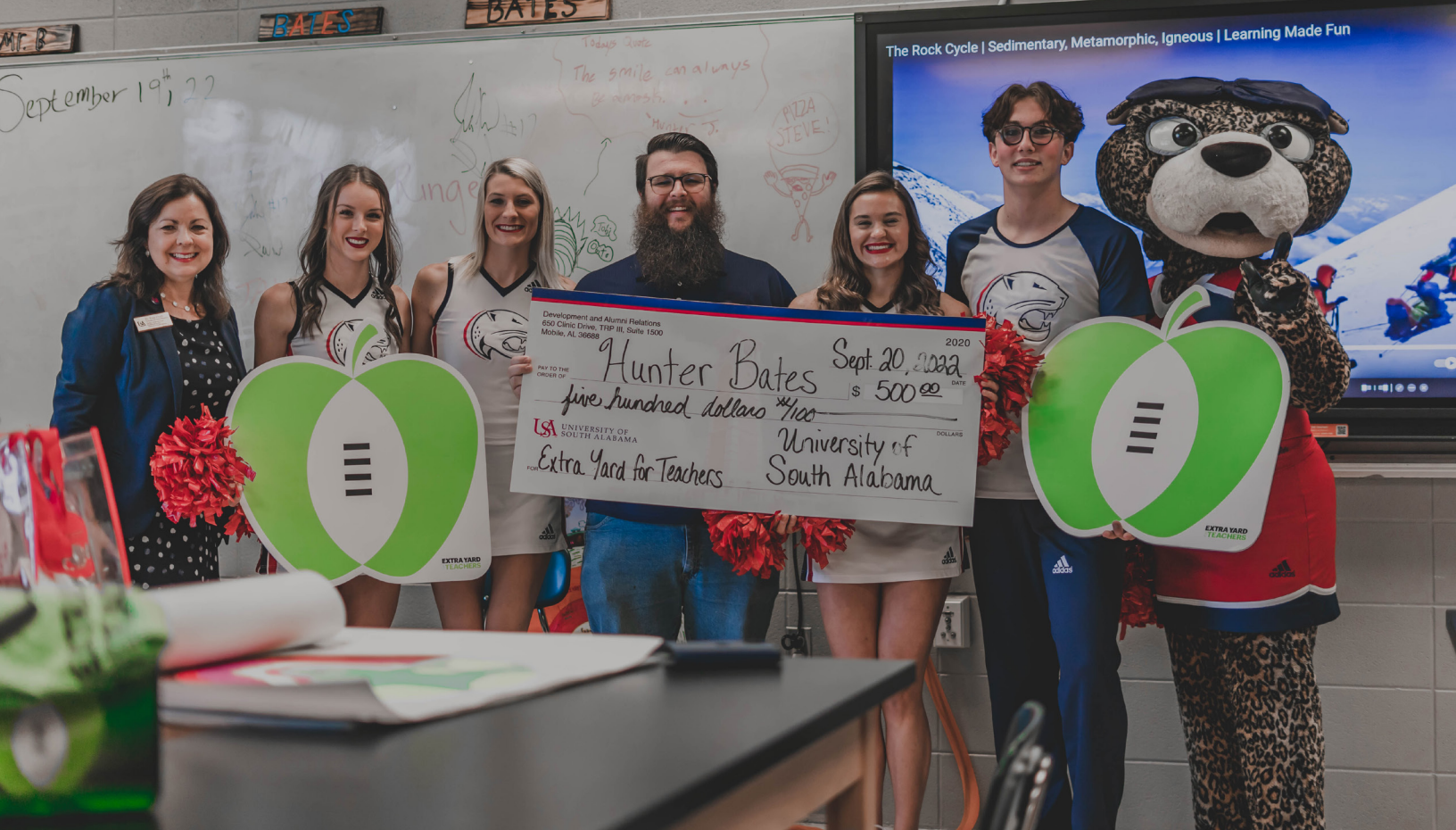
Valerie Wood Simmerman  
Scholarship in Education  
**Lauren Stauffer**

White-Spinner Endowed  
Scholarship in Education  
**Samuel Richardson**

William Chamberlain  
Technology Teaching Award  
**Chaz McGhee**

Williams Charitable  
Foundation Book Award  
**Dana Bishop**

Wind Creek Hospitality  
Endowed Scholarship in  
Hospitality and Tourism  
**Trinity Walker**



# Extra Yard for Teachers

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.

“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 College of Education and Professional Studies.

The USA Classroom Project Contest provided teachers with an opportunity to win gift cards to make a direct impact on student learning. The college provided one \$500 gift card and two \$250 gift cards to the teachers who submitted the best project ideas for classroom enrichment. The foundation surprised South this year and gave an additional \$100 and \$1,000 DonorsChoose gift cards for the contest. More than 130 educators submitted project proposals.

The winners were honored Sept. 24, 2022, at the Jaguars’ 38-14 football victory over Louisiana Tech football game at Hancock Whitney Stadium.

*Hunter Bates, the top individual winner of the Extra Yard for Teachers Classroom Project Contest, was surprised at Baldwin County High School with a special visit from the University of South Alabama. Dr. Paige Vitulli, a department chair from the USA College of Education and Professional Studies and NCAA faculty representative for South, presented \$500 to Bates, who was surrounded by his students, South cheerleaders and the Miss Pawla mascot to celebrate the award.*

## **\$1,000 WINNER:**

**Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies, Mobile**

Nine entries from teachers  
Principal: Dr. Amanda Jones

## **\$500 WINNER:**

**Hunter Bates, Baldwin County High School, Bay Minette**

Project name: The Pond Restoration Project

## **\$250 WINNERS:**

**Melissa Motes, Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies**

Project name: From Agricultural Revolution to Deep Space Food

**Miranda Manley, Clark-Shaw Magnet School, Mobile**

Project name: Making History Come Alive through “Captured: An American Prisoner of War in North Vietnam” (Jeremiah Denton story)

## **\$100 WINNER:**

**Kris Cieutat, Williamson High School, Mobile**

Project name: Jackets for Chefs



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