FALL 2024

FLAGSHIP OF THE GULF COAST℠

South magazine

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA



Ready. South. Go.
10

Formidable Flyers | Happy Trails | On the Road | Aerospace Hub

South magazine

SOUTH MAGAZINE is published twice a year by the University of South Alabama and distributed to alumni and friends.

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT
Jo Bonner

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST
Dr. Andi M. Kent

VICE PRESIDENT, DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS
Margaret Sullivan

VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Jim Berscheidt

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC AND EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
Jeb Schrenk

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND CREATIVE SERVICES
Diana Nichols

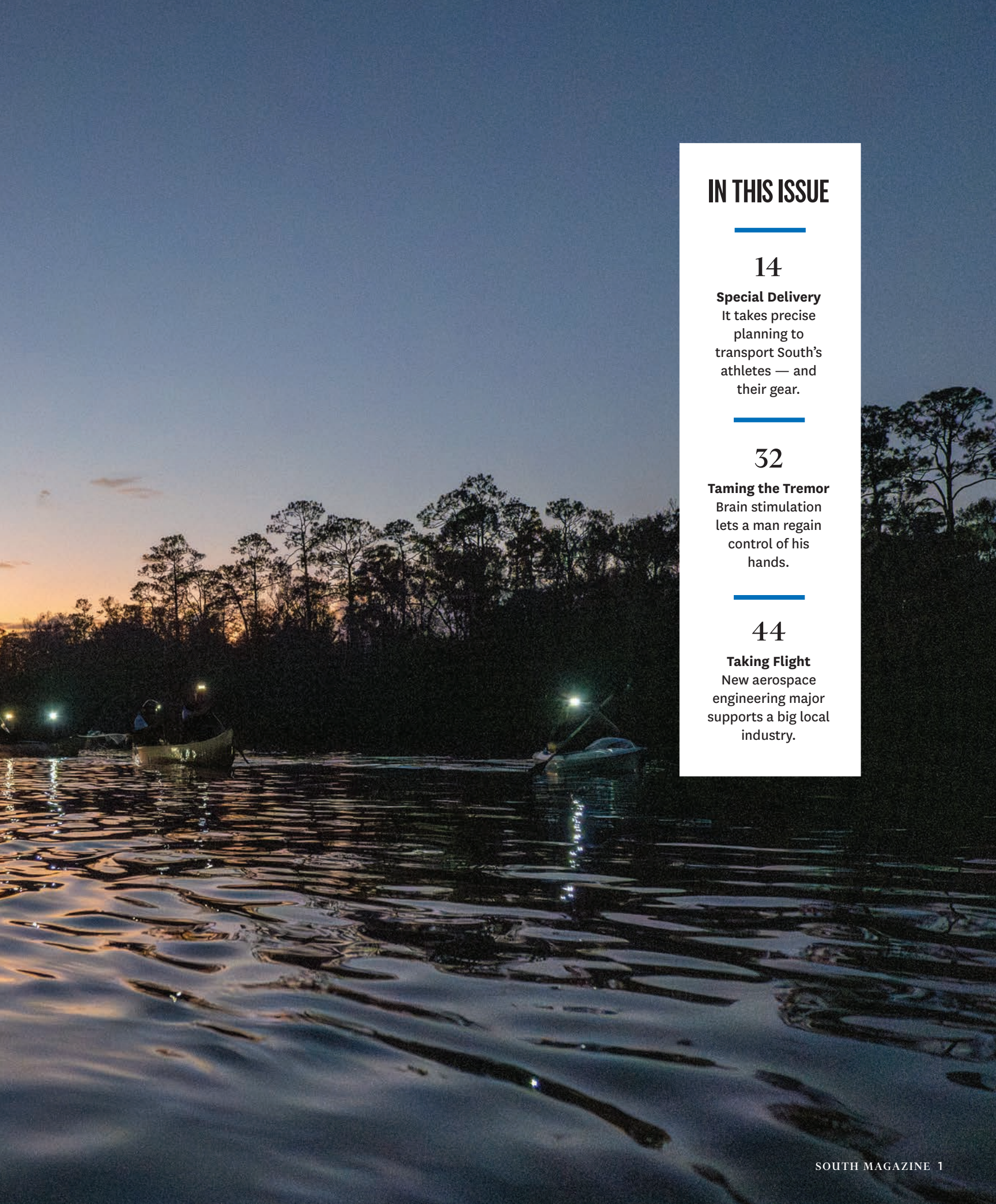
CONTRIBUTORS
Thomas Becnel
Lance Crawford
Riley Ferrer
Elizabeth Gelineau
Mike Kittrell
Seth Laubinger
Kim Lovvorn
Michelle Matthews
Steve Millburg
Kevin Morris
James Palomo
Michelle Ryan-Day
Kylie Scioneaux
Bill Starling
Amelia Rose Zimlich

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Jim Berscheidt
Lance Crawford
Amber Day
Karen Edwards
Kim Lovvorn
Michelle Matthews
Diana Nichols
Jeb Schrenk
Margaret Sullivan
Joy Washington

ON THE COVER
A visual nod by Zara Picken to the University of South Alabama's progress and some of the stories in this edition.



FULL MOON PADDLING TRIPS from the Department of Campus Recreation and Wellness start just before sunset. This one in September took place on Chickasaw Creek.



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It takes precise planning to transport South's athletes — and their gear.

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Brain stimulation lets a man regain control of his hands.

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New aerospace engineering major supports a big local industry.


SOUTH ALABAMA
JAGUARS



PRESIDENT JO BONNER throws the game's ceremonial first pitch to Arizona Diamondbacks Hall of Famer and USA Trustee Luis Gonzalez during an alumni and friends event Aug. 13 at Chase Field.

On the Go

Your University, and its students and alumni, are continually moving toward brighter futures.

ONE THING YOU CAN COUNT ON from the Flagship of the Gulf Coast is this: We are always on the move.

We need to be, in order to navigate today's challenges and chase down tomorrow's opportunities. And we want to be. We thrive on growth and movement. Our tagline perfectly encapsulates our energy: Ready. South. Go.

At our recent Commencement, we celebrated our 100,000th graduate — both a proud milestone and an inspiration to move forward with enrolling and educating our next 100,000 Jaguars. In our 60-plus years, we have brought eager, ambitious young people (and those chasing their dreams later in life) into our University community and sent them back out into the world ready to make a positive intellectual, cultural and economic impact.

As I travel to promote South, meeting with new audiences and old friends of the University, I find future Jaguars and enthusiastic alumni on the move as well. In Atlanta, Clyde Higgs '97 is not only the CEO of the Atlanta Beltline, an urban trail around the heart of the city that has sparked transformative economic development. He's also an avid user of the Beltline on his bicycle.

On campus, we received a challenge from one of our most generous donors, Elliot Maisel, to keep on the move. We have taken that to heart, expanding our programs with a new Office of Military Services and a new major in aerospace engineering. We achieved another record year in fundraising and, during our annual Wall of Honor Ceremony, added the most names ever of National Alumni Association Lifetime Members.

The busy construction crane along University Boulevard marks the site of the new Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine building, which will allow us to increase our medical student classes from 80 to 100, and eventually even more. And USA Health continues to advance healthcare along the upper Gulf Coast. For example, a neurological procedure available in our region only at USA Health allowed a retired electrician to regain control of his hands.

Looking behind the scenes can reveal fascinating stories. Transporting Jaguar athletes and their gear to away games — especially the football team — involves planning and coordination every bit as intricate as what goes into the game plans. Our transportation and Jaguar Athletics crews made national headlines with their short-notice assist, complete with hot pizza, when the New Mexico football team, on its way to play Auburn, got stranded in Mobile by a bad-weather diversion.

One of our academic superstars, Dr. Joe Hair of the Mitchell College of Business, says the secret to his vigorous academic research productivity at age 80 is continually reinventing himself. His business and marketing research articles have been cited more than 500,000 times.

You can read about those movers and shakers, and many more, in these pages. We take inspiration from them. Everyone at South, from the administration and faculty to the staff and students, understands that moving forward provides the path to a better tomorrow.

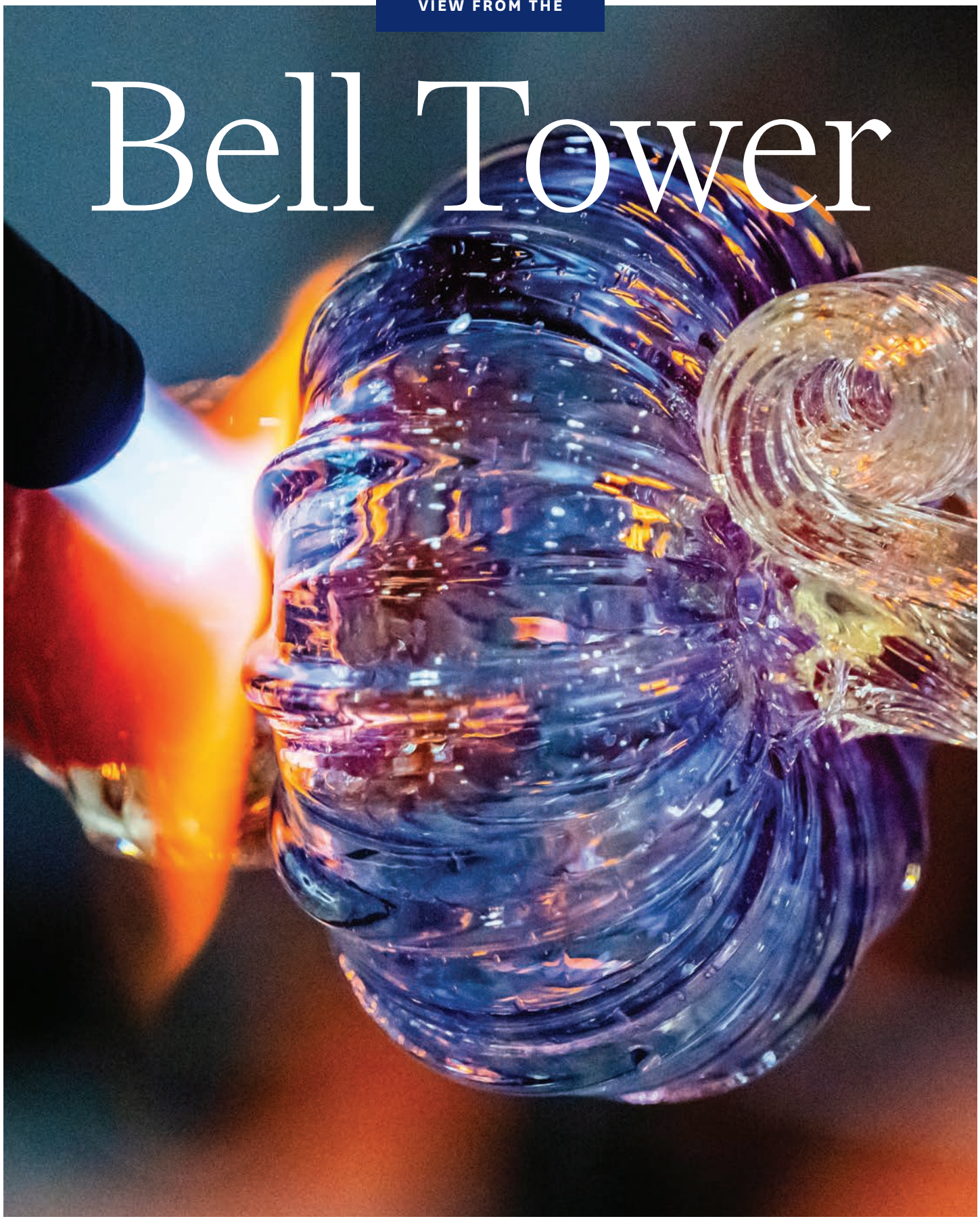
Every one of our students helps build our University even as they are building their own futures. Every graduate takes a bit of South with them as they strive to benefit their communities and themselves.

No matter your situation, remember this: It's always your move to make. Do it boldly, thoughtfully and with purpose. Go Jags!

Jo Bonner
President

VIEW FROM THE

Bell Tower



GREAT PUMPKINS

MORE THAN 1,700 gorgeous glass pumpkins found homes during the fifth annual Glass Pumpkin Patch Festival at Marx Library in October.

The University of South Alabama's glass art program, the only one in the state, uses the event as a fundraiser. Pumpkin prices ranged from $20 to $400.

"Glass blowing teaches speed and efficiency while also learning about consumable energy," says Matthew Patterson, associate professor of visual arts, who leads the four-year program. "There is a lot of teamwork and communication skills involved in the art of glass blowing. It teaches you patience."

Glass is one of nine possible concentrations for South's Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art. The others are animation, art history, ceramics, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking and sculpture.

"My favorite part about it is working with all of these awesome people," says student Harper Hendren. "I had no idea that we were going to have to be working so closely together. You can't make anything in here without having somebody else there to assist you."

>> WATCH VIDEO.

Meet the team that draws beauty from fire in South's glass studio.



Miss University of South Alabama Crowned

MISS UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA is back! After a 13-year absence, the competition returned with Maleigha Lewis selected to reign as the 2024-25 Miss University of South Alabama. Her initiative, Happy Plate, focuses on fighting the stigma around food insecurity and providing resources for healthier living. As the winner, Lewis received a $5,000 scholarship. Sydnee Cantley was picked as first alternate, and Sarah Claire Hults as second alternate.

New Engineering Dean on Campus



DR. DARRYL JAMES began his appointment Oct. 1 as dean of the University of South Alabama College of Engineering.

"He has an ambitious plan for our College of Engineering that includes increasing student engagement, supporting our excellent faculty, and expanding collaboration with our community and industry partners throughout the Gulf Coast region and beyond," says Dr. Andi Kent, USA executive vice president and provost.

James is a professor of mechanical engineering and, since 2015, has been the vice provost for institutional effectiveness at Texas Tech University, where he served for more than 30 years.

"We will empower our people to push the boundaries of knowledge, create sustainable solutions to global challenges and foster collaborations within the USA community and with industry partners," he says.

Undergraduate enrollment in the College of Engineering jumped 10.5% this fall, one of the largest increases across the University.

James holds a Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Science in mechanical engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Texas A&M University.



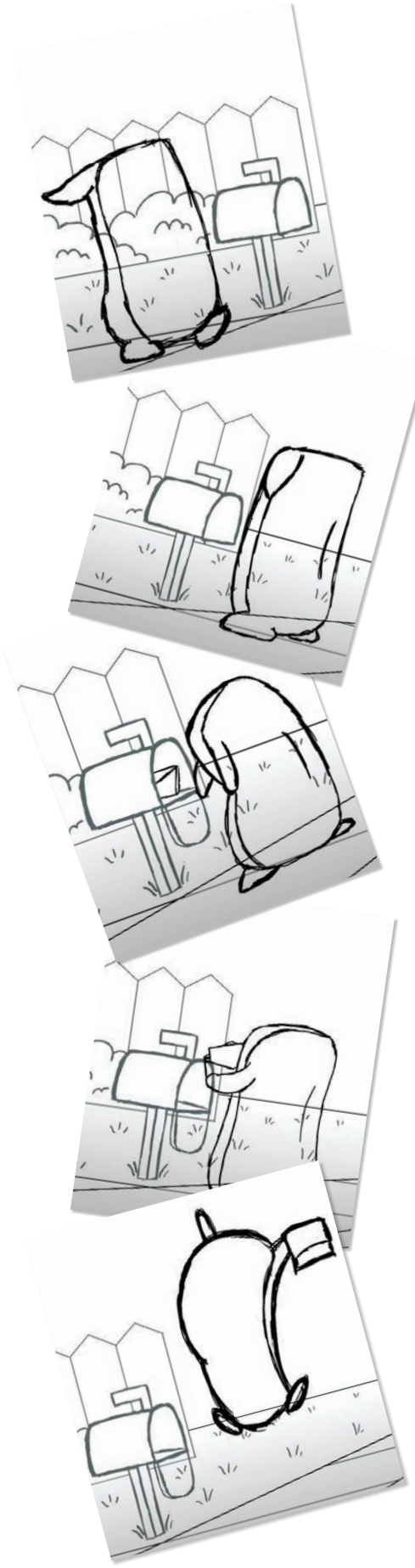
Fishmas

"FISHMAS" COMES IN midsummer for dozens of faculty and students at the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences. That's when the Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo on Dauphin Island offers an extraordinary opportunity to collect data about the Gulf of Mexico's underwater residents.

"It's like Christmas for us geek fishery students," says Dr. Sean Powers, who directs the school.

The University of South Alabama has been involved in the rodeo since 1989. Powers estimates that competitors pull in 3,000 to 4,000 fish each year. The scientists examine 1,000 of those, taking tissue samples to study reproductive dynamics and life histories.

"We get incredibly cool fish — frogfish, snake mackerels, scorpion fish, things students would never get to see," Powers says. "Here I have the best fishermen in the region collecting fish for free for me."



IN THE BAG:

Animation Students Face Rite of Passage

MAKING A FLOUR SACK MOVE constitutes a historical final challenge in the University of South Alabama's Two Dimensional Animation I course. Hollywood animation studios devised the flour sack test nearly a century ago.

"The idea is simple," says John T. Hill, assistant professor of animation. "If you can animate a flour sack moving, acting, performing in a way that convinces the audience that it is a real character, then you have the skill set to breathe life into a more conventional character."

The sack's simplicity leaves South students nothing to hide behind at 24 frames per second. Over four weeks, they create 15-30 seconds of a flour sack walking and interacting with an object or another character.

"They have to figure out how to communicate a full range of emotions and physical abilities with body language alone," says Hill.

Bringing the flour sack to life requires patience and problem solving. Succeeding lets student animators advance to finishing their animation concentration, one of nine in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. Says Hill, "It's a rite of passage."

YOU'VE GOT MAIL; the flour sack drawn by senior animation student Gabrielle Gichie of Mobile craves correspondence.



New Office Focuses on Military Services

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA expanded its support for active-duty members of the U.S. military, their dependents and veterans through the new Office of Military Services. Director David Blair, a retired U.S. Army sergeant major, has more than 18 years of experience leading similar programs at other universities.

In addition to what the GI Bill provides, many scholarships are available for active-duty personnel, retirees and their dependents, including USA's Heroes Scholarship. As part of his role, Blair will travel to military installations in the region to establish stronger ties with the University.

There are 13,000 active-duty service members, 25,000 National Guard and Reserve members, and 343,000 veterans in Alabama, plus additional opportunities to provide educational services to military members and their families with Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi and Naval Air Station Pensacola and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

"We have more than 115 degree programs at South — both on-campus and online — and are committed to providing the best support possible to the military community so they can access these educational opportunities," says Dr. Andi Kent, executive vice president and provost. "David Blair has a stellar reputation, and we look forward to supporting these students in unprecedented ways under his leadership."



Record retention for sophomores

Undergraduate enrollment up nearly 11% in the College of Engineering

2,600
students living on campus

LARGEST HONORS CLASS

4%
increase in enrollment

Here We Grow

ENROLLMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA increased for the second consecutive year in 2024 and topped 14,000 for the first time in four years.

"Declining enrollment at universities is regularly in the news, so we are ecstatic that the University is bucking the trend and that more students are again choosing South," says USA President Jo Bonner. "South is increasingly popular because of our growing academic offerings, research opportunities, spirited campus life and student-focused faculty and staff."

The enrollment data released also shows that:

- Undergraduate enrollment increased by nearly 4%.
- The Honors College welcomed the largest first-year class in its history and experienced a double-digit percentage increase in first-time freshmen for the second year in a row.
- More than 2,600 students are living on campus — the highest number in South's history.
- The Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences continues to see rapid growth and is now the largest such program in the country.
- Initiatives aimed at helping sophomores continue on a path to earning a degree paid off with a record rate of students returning for their third year.

Hair's Half-Million

DR. JOE HAIR, one of the most prolific academic researchers in the history of the University of South Alabama, reached a satisfyingly round number this fall when his business and marketing articles were cited for the half-millionth time.

The director of the Ph.D. program in the Mitchell College of Business ranks No. 1 in the world among professors cited in marketing, multivariate data analysis and structural equation modeling.

"I basically reinvented myself when I was 62," says Hair, who's now 80 years old. "I've reinvented myself my entire career, and my long-term success as a scholar, teacher and consultant has been based on continuously reinventing myself."

At South, he recruits nontraditional graduate students with a flexible curriculum that enables them to attend classes on weekends and keep working in business and industry.

"These students are experienced, intelligent and highly motivated," Hair says. "And they too want to reinvent themselves."

Hair attended the University of Florida, where he earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. Before coming to South, he taught at the University of Mississippi, Louisiana State University and Kennesaw State University. Hair still finds time to teach graduate courses each semester.

"Teaching and research go hand in hand," he says. "I'm constantly updating my books, and I use my students and their feedback to learn what I need to improve upon. It's like a circular chain. I could not update my books if I didn't stay in touch with what's happening in the field, and the way I stay in touch with what's happening is through my teaching and research."





Going the Distance

Soccer players can run the length of the field more than 100 times in a game.

TOWARD THE END of the Texas State game, Jags midfielder Juliana Lopes had to pull quickly back to defend. It was a big game against a conference rival near the end of the season. One physically fit team against another.

"My head was saying, 'Let's go,'" Lopes says, "but my legs were not letting me run as fast."

At the end of the game, "I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I need to look at the GPS data.'"

Team members wear tracking devices that measure performance. Lopes had run 9.1 miles that day — the most any Jags soccer player ran at a conference game this season. (Right back Sydney Magliocca tied the distance in a nonconference match.)

Athletes in few sports come close to matching the distances run by soccer players. A basketball point guard? About two miles. The 10K (6.2 miles) is the longest cross country distance, though warm-ups and cooldowns push those runners over the 10-mile mark.

It's not unusual for Jag soccer athletes to log 6, 7, 8 miles on game day. Of Lopes' 9.1 miles, all but 1.7 came during the game. Midfielders tend to cover the most ground, and Lopes says she had to play wide against Texas State, spreading the field and increasing her distance during the Oct. 24 defensive battle. She stopped and started more than 4,200 times that day and hit a max speed of nearly 17 mph.

Oh, and she had to kick a ball.

"She is going to cover nine miles," says Katie Forage, director of athletic performance for soccer and volleyball. "But she also has to sprint. She also has to accelerate. She also has to decelerate. She has to change her direction. She has to fight off defenders. She has to jump. She has to do all these different things."

Forage has to prepare players for all those demands on their bodies. That means squats, jumps, sprints and weight lifting. Pulling and pushing. Chin-ups, core work and single calf raises.

The day after Texas State, for Lopes, recovery included an ice bath.



ANCHORED IN 160 TONS of concrete and soaring 176 feet above its foundation, the tower crane at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine construction site can lift 22,000 pounds — but only 7,000 at the tip of the boom. At rest, the boom angles up toward the tip. That's because a heavy load can make it nose-dive several feet. In a brisk wind, the crane twists and bobs like a seagoing boat. The building is scheduled for completion in December 2026.



Ready. South. Go.

In September, the University of South Alabama launched its first rebranding in eight years, backed by data from hundreds of interviews across the U.S. and input from constituents on campus and in the community.

The result: "Ready. South. Go.," a campaign that is enrollment-focused, action-oriented and rooted in the University's strength as the Flagship of the Gulf Coast. Taking a familiar phrase, but giving it a slightly different arc, makes the rallying cry uniquely South.

Here's a behind-the-curtains look at the brand's foundation and how it's being executed.

Why South stands out

(Brand Positioning)

With a name that has become synonymous with excellence along the Gulf Coast, the University of South Alabama leads the way by **taking deliberate action** to engage, educate and advance.

South's love language

(Voice)

Ready to go, no matter what.

Genuine
Friendly
Welcoming
Proud
Spirited
Resourceful

Lean in

Photos and shapes can be angled — always at 10.5 degrees — to evoke movement and a forward direction.

The Flagship of the Gulf Coast tagline serves as an anchor, like a flagpole, to the photo's angular shape.



Our true colors

(Palette)



Go big

South is running digital and permanent billboards from Louisiana into Florida and up to Huntsville, in addition to a targeted digital campaign. Alabama beaches get more than 6 million visitors a year. SouthPaw, featured prominently on this billboard on the Foley Beach Express, welcomes them.





President Jo Bonner's spirit buttons have become an integral part of the South experience, so they will have a place in South branding.

South's brand in 30 seconds

The voice, tone and new look all came together in South's fall TV spot, produced in-house in just two weeks.

MacQueen
ALUMNI CENTER
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

The Gulf Coast's Premier Event Venue

15,000 SQUARE FEET | GRAND BALLROOM | SPACIOUS LOBBY
LARGE REAR DECK | INDOOR/OUTDOOR FIREPLACE
WELCOMING OUTDOOR PLAZA | ZOOM CONFERENCE CAPABILITIES













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SNAPSHOT



A Clutch Paint Job

How South's first bus became a rolling billboard

"WE'RE NO 1 IN THE NATION," proclaims the University of South Alabama's bus in a 1972 photo. The baseball team proudly poses alongside, celebrating the Jaguars' first appearance at No. 1 in national polls.

The creator of that paint job was also the bus driver. And mechanic. Joe "Clutch" Smith, an Army veteran of Vietnam, began a 38-year career at South in 1970 as a jack-of-all-trades in maintenance. When the University founded its transportation fleet by acquiring a former Greyhound bus (a General Motors PD-4104), Smith got handed the keys.

"I had good times with the bus," says Smith, now retired in Semmes, just northwest of Mobile. Sure, it had logged more than a decade and maybe a million-plus miles on the road. The gears would grind, which is why the players nicknamed him "Clutch."

And it was a little shabby. But Smith could fix that. Three weeks of prepping and painting (with some equipment borrowed from a body shop) left the bus gleaming in red, white and blue: Blue for the stripe and big lettering on the sides, white for the roof, wheels and small "University of South Alabama" lettering, and red for the roof stripe and the big, boastful "1."

"It looked really good," Smith says. He's right. It really did.

JAGUAR
ATHLETIC FUND

Members of the JAF support South Alabama Athletics through the following methods:

- Unrestricted giving
- Priority seating gifts
- Sport-specific contributions
- Endowments
- Faculty naming opportunities

All proceeds to the Jaguar Athletic Fund directly enhance the student-athlete experience in the following ways

- Wellness Initiatives
- Athletic Performance
- Sports Medicine
- Sports Nutrition
- Facility Enhancements

SOUTH ALABAMA JAGUARS

Please make all checks payable to **Jaguar Athletic Fund**
University of South Alabama Athletic Development
300 Joseph E. Gottfried Dr., 4th Floor, Mobile, AL 36688-0002
Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the IRS. Consult your tax advisor.
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POINT A TO POINT B

Transporting athletics teams across the country can be as simple as a drive to Mobile Regional Airport, or it might involve an intricately choreographed dance of buses and a chartered jet.

BY **STEVE MILLBURG**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SETH LAUBINGER**




usajaguars.com

Even in this high-flying, high-tech age, the humble bus remains a key part of a complex, finely tuned and precisely coordinated collaboration.

HOW MANY BUSES does it take to fly the University of South Alabama football team to an away game?

No, that's not a trick question. The answer is eight or nine — not counting the semitrailer truck that hauls the equipment. If that sounds complicated, welcome to the world of South's transportation wizards and puzzle masters.

Even in this high-flying, high-tech age, the humble bus remains a key part of a complex, finely tuned and precisely coordinated collaboration between South's transportation and athletics staffs that moves athletes from point A to point B.

Paula Wallace, the University's transportation coordinator, explains the intricacies along with Tyese Pelt, manager of facilities services and former transportation campus supervisor. They sit at a table in a no-frills Transportation Services Building room dominated by color-coded whiteboards on three walls. The whiteboards — large versions of the continually updated spreadsheets on Wallace's computer — track the transportation needs of all members of the Jaguar family.

Wallace compares the scheduling, deploying and tracking of buses to a chess match and, sometimes, to fruit-basket turnover. "Before this, I directed weddings for 15 years," she says, "so I'm used to it."

For competitions less than eight hours' drive away, South athletes travel by bus. When the football team flies to distant away games, buses at both ends of the journey take the players, coaches and others in the traveling party to and from the airports, and back and forth between the hotel, the game day walk-through practice field and the stadium.

The team's charter airliner (athletes in other sports, which have much smaller traveling contingents, fly commercial) doesn't have room for equipment managers and some other staff members. So they make the entire trip by bus.

Meanwhile, the equipment, including trainers' and medical supplies, travels in a 53-foot semitrailer emblazoned "South Alabama" in linebacker-size letters. Depending on the distance and time, that rolling billboard and the buses may need extra drivers. Federal regulations allow bus drivers a 10-hour driving window before a mandatory eight-hour break. For cargo drivers, it's 11 hours driving after 10 hours off.

What if trouble strikes, like a bus breakdown? You reach out to charter bus contacts, call in favors, do whatever it takes to meet the schedule. "We have to have good customer service skills," Wallace says, "because you've got to be flexible, you've got to have patience and you've got to accept change."

South made national news in September by doing all of the above to help the New Mexico football team make it to its game at Auburn. Bad weather diverted the Lobos' flight to Mobile instead of Montgomery. The team asked South for help.

Pelt, reached at a high school football game where her cheerleader daughter was in the homecoming court, rounded up four drivers on a Friday night and coordinated the logistics, all by phone. South's four buses picked up the Lobos and headed north, handing them off to the team's regular charter bus company at Atmore, Alabama. Jon Clark, South's football chief of staff, even had the buses stocked with hot pizza.

Transporting South's nonfootball athletes is relatively straightforward. The women's volleyball team, for example, travels to almost all away games by bus. A couple of times a year, the players carpool very early in the morning to the airport for a longer trip.

The team trainer checks three or four bags, says South alum and Assistant Coach Morgan Stalcup B.A. '20 (criminal justice), MPA '21 (public administration). One player checks the "tech bag" (projector for video study, radar gun for clocking serve speeds, computer equipment, etc.). Otherwise, Stalcup says, "They carry on everything."

With one exception, the same is true for other teams. Golf bags, baseball and softball bags, tennis bags, bags for javelins and shots (for the shot put) — they're all basically just luggage. Even vaulting poles, which can be up to 17 and a half feet long, can ride as cargo in planes or buses.

Not so for football. "We travel with trunks," says Mark Hewes B.A. '10, M.A. '18 (both in communication). "It's kind of like a rock band."

Hewes is assistant athletic director for equipment services. The trunks have wheels and are made of plywood in different sizes depending on what they store: helmets, cleats, jerseys, equipment repair tools, headsets and



AT 5:42 A.M. ON OCT. 31, the volleyball team boards a flight at Mobile Regional Airport on their way to a two-match sweep of James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.



VOLLEYBALL LIBERO (defensive specialist) Briana Wilson and football linebacker Dalton Hughes pose with player travel gear.

so on. What goes in where, and in what order, is all meticulously diagrammed.

Team equipment takes up 60% of the Jaguars' semitrailer, which is usually found between games at the Football Field House loading dock — the one with the giant jaguar fang at each end. Gear for the team trainers and sports medicine personnel fills the other 40%.

Early on the week of a Saturday away game, Hewes says, "We'll clean everything and replenish stock of anything that we used that previous game. Then, starting on Tuesday, the trainers will start loading all their stuff."

The trainers finish about 2 p.m. Wednesday. Then Hewes' staff starts loading. After the team's practice on Thursday, the staff adds the helmets, shoulder pads and other gear. By 5 that afternoon, the truck is ready to roll for an arrival at the team hotel no later than 9 o'clock Friday morning.

Growing up, Hewes says, he loved playing Tetris, the video game that involves perfectly fitting together variously shaped pieces. Now, he's doing the same thing, except with the equipment trunks. "It's just a big game of Tetris on that truck."

Whether chess match or video game, the collaborative effort that gets teams to and from games always has the same goal: contributing to a Jaguars win.

The Long Haul

Transporting football team equipment, trainers' gear for away games:

TUESDAY

Trainers start loading truck.

WEDNESDAY

2 p.m.: Trainers finish; equipment staff starts loading.

THURSDAY

After practice: Player gear (helmets, pads) loaded by 5 p.m. Truck departs.

FRIDAY

By 9 a.m.: Truck reaches team hotel, unloads some gear, drives to stadium, finishes unloading.

SATURDAY

6 hours prekickoff: Managers, trainers, video crew arrive at stadium. 2 hours prekickoff: Players, coaches arrive. Postgame: Managers, trainers load gear; truck leaves for Mobile.


South Alabama
SOUTH
Jaguars
SOUTH ALABAMA
JAGUARS
24
JAGUARS
FOOTBALL
adidas
SOUTH



Fierce Featherweights

Birds dramatically bulk up their bodies to undergo the rigors of their annual migrations.

BY **STEVE MILLBURG**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KIM LOVVORN AND SETH LAUBINGER**

NEWLY TAGGED during a public banding event at Fort Morgan, a white-eyed vireo impatiently awaits release to continue its fall migration.



AMERICAN REDSTARTS breed across Canada and much of the United States, including Alabama.

Imagine being able to increase your muscle mass by 40% within a few weeks. Welcome to a bird's life.

WHEN YOU PREPARE FOR A LONG TRIP, you get the car fueled and ready. You plan your route, including stops along the way. You pack snacks and other necessities for the journey. You time your departure to reach your destination on schedule.

When they migrate, birds do much the same. Except that, for a bird, its "car" is its own body.

That body undergoes astounding changes, bulking up enormously with both muscle and fat. Some birds also shrink their gastrointestinal tract. In extreme cases, says Dr. Jonathan Pérez, an assistant professor of biology at South, "they actually have to spend a couple of days rebuilding it when they get to stopover sites to be able to feed."

Longer-term modifications allow birds to channel as much energy as possible to migration. For example, reproductive organs contract during times of the year when they're not needed.

"Most if not all seasonal breeders basically go to an infantile state in terms of their reproductive system outside the breeding period," says Pérez, who researches bird migration and the timing of their reproductive activity. "They regress to a prepuberty stage."

In some birds, the pectoralis muscles — the main engines of flight — grow 40% larger just before migration, says Emma Rhodes '17. She's a South biological sciences graduate and Auburn University Ph.D. candidate who's preparing her dissertation on migration physiology.

The birds don't work out in some avian gym. Their bodies just change — triggered, scientists have found, by seasonal changes in daylight. "Think about that in terms of an athlete," Rhodes says. "To be able to increase your muscle mass by 40% within a few weeks would be pretty spectacular."

To fuel up for the trip, birds go on feeding frenzies, packing on huge amounts of body fat that will serve as snacks along the way.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds, which can migrate across the Gulf of Mexico, normally weigh 2.5 to 3 grams, Rhodes says. "To put that into perspective, a nickel is 5 grams. Prior to jumping across the Gulf, they will weigh upwards of 6 grams. So they're doubling their body weight."

During each spring and fall migration season, Rhodes says, approximately 1 billion birds pass through the northern Gulf Coast. "One night when we were banding, upwards of 10 million birds were coming through the Mobile-Baldwin County area."

She knows that thanks to a research consortium called BirdCast. It uses weather radar to track flocks and estimate numbers. Its website, birdcast.info, includes continually updated migration maps that show the number of birds currently in flight.

Most are traveling between breeding grounds up north, sometimes as far as the Arctic, and winter feeding grounds in warmer regions that provide plenty of year-round food. Some journeys last thousands of miles and include long segments over water.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds, for example, sometimes make the 500-mile Gulf of Mexico crossing in 18 to 24 hours. Imagine driving all day with no food, no beverages and no rest stops — and, like Fred Flintstone, supplying all of your car's power yourself.

The name of Pérez's lab at South reveals the focus of his research. It's called Bird Brain'd. Last year, he won a $478,878 National Science Foundation grant to explore how songbirds use environmental cues to time

SONGBIRDS SEEM SO TINY, so delicate. And yet they can fly 500 miles nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico, besting storms, headwinds and predators.

their migrations. Part of the money went to purchase a cryostat machine, which preserves tissue samples by deep-freezing and allows them to be studied in their cryogenically frozen state.

Most birds apparently sense changes in daylight through photoreceptors in the brain itself, Pérez says. That tells the body to prepare for migration. The cryostat helps him study those receptors.

What determines the exact departure date? "It seems to be mostly weather," he says. Songbirds can detect incoming storms and move out to avoid the turbulence. Among waterfowl, flocks of geese will take test flights to assess wind conditions. "They go up, circle around, come back down, go up, circle around, come back down — for days. And then one day they just go up and are gone."

Pérez has set up 60 bluebird houses at South and 32 more at the Mobile Botanical Gardens just east of campus. He eventually wants to test a hypothesis about the birds' migration. "I'm fairly convinced that at least a good chunk of our bluebird population is resident year-round, even though, officially, the population is migratory." For now, the houses give students experience at gathering data (currently for reproductive studies) and working with wild birds.

As a child, Rhodes volunteered with a longtime bird banding group during spring and fall migration at Fort Morgan, on a peninsula at the mouth of Mobile Bay. The group's leaders, Martha and the late Bob Sargent, became mentors.

Today, as co-founder of a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization called Banding Coalition of the Americas (bandingcoalition.org), Rhodes carries on the Sargents' legacy.

Technology is helping to solve migration mysteries. For example, a conservation organization called Birds Canada has set up the Motus Wildlife Tracking System. It uses radio telemetry to trace birds that have been fitted with tiny radio transmitters. Last year, Banding Coalition of the Americas worked with the South-affiliated Dauphin Island Sea Lab and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at Cornell University to install, at the Sea Lab, coastal Alabama's first Motus receiving station.

Mostly, though, the coalition uses a distinctly low-tech tracking system. It attaches a featherweight, numbered aluminum band to a bird's leg. If the bird is recaptured, the number helps researchers track its travels.

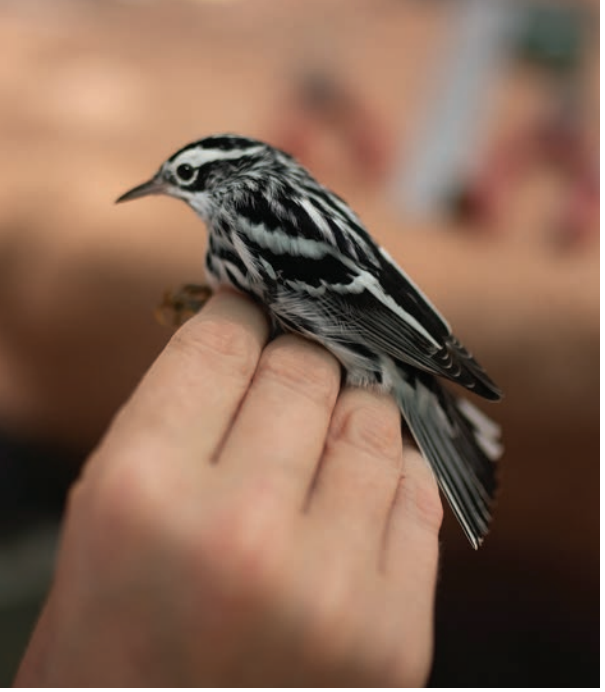
The coalition leads multiday public banding events every fall at Fort Morgan and every spring at nearby Dauphin Island. Visitors watch, spellbound, as trained volunteers — Pérez is one of them — gently remove chirping, squawking, fluttering birds caught in nearly invisible mist nets (mostly songbirds), band them, quickly examine them and then safely release them.

During the fall sessions, 500 to 600 birds from 45 to 55 species get bands. To come so close to these wary, wild creatures, to sense their spirit and determination, to get a brief, intimate glimpse into a life so different from your own can be life-changing.

Songbirds seem so tiny, so delicate. And yet they can fly 500 miles nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico, besting storms, headwinds and predators.

"It's a really special experience," Rhodes says, "and one that we really believe helps make people advocates for the wildlife."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A black-and-white warbler; Dr. Jonathan Pérez and student Emily Robinson with the cryostat machine; bird tracking equipment; a cryostat slide; Pérez with an on-campus bluebird house; Emma Rhodes explains the banding process.

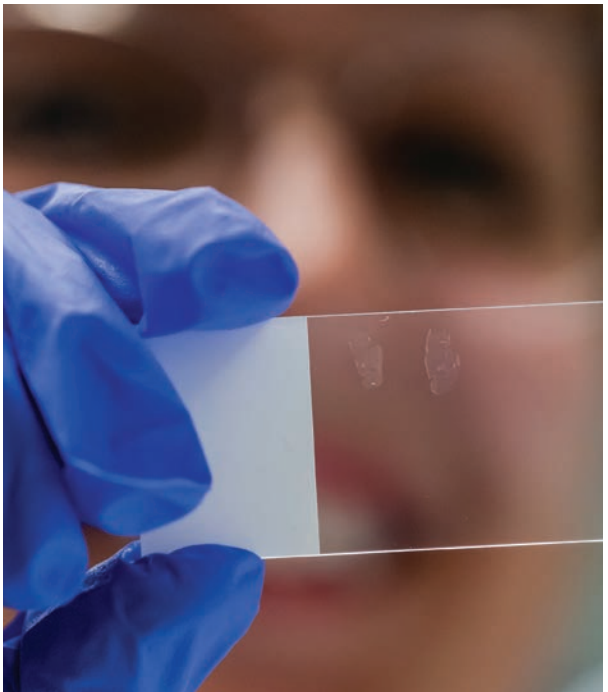












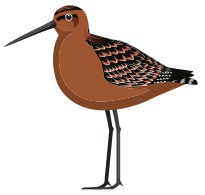
Migratory Feats



LONGEST JOURNEY
Arctic tern, up to 56,000 miles during a meandering Arctic-to-Antarctic-and-back round trip every year.



LONGEST AVIAN PEDESTRIAN JOURNEY
Adélie penguin, 8,077-mile annual trip, marching from breeding colony to winter grounds and back.



LONGEST NONSTOP FLIGHT
Bar-tailed godwit, 11 days, 8,425 miles aloft, Alaska to Australia.



HIGHEST ALTITUDE
Bar-headed goose, over the Himalayas from Mongolia-Tibetan Plateau-northern China to India at elevations of 23,000 feet — where air contains less than 10% of its sea level oxygen.



FASTEST MIGRANT
Great snipe, up to 60 mph during 4,225-mile journey, Scandinavia to sub-Saharan Africa.

SOURCES: BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Redeveloping

The Atlanta Beltline, led by South alumnus Clyde Higgs, is sparking new energy in one of America's biggest cities and reshaping how its residents connect and commute.

BY **STEVE MILLBURG**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **THE SINTOSES**

ON A RECENT FALL AFTERNOON, on just a two-mile stretch of the Atlanta Beltline, joggers, dog walkers, scooter riders, wheelchair users, strolling couples, roller skaters and bicyclists all zip or amble by, flowing deftly in both directions along the 14-foot-wide concrete pathway.

Among the cyclists is Clyde Higgs '97, who beams with pride. He's the president and CEO of the Beltline, one of the nation's largest and most wide-ranging urban redevelopment programs — and a $10 billion economic development catalyst — that he calls "the people's project."

"It was truly born by the community," he says. "They told elected officials and business leaders, 'We want to see this project happen.'"

In a 1999 master's thesis, Georgia Tech urban planning student Ryan Gravel proposed a 22-mile trail looping around the heart of Atlanta, mostly following old railroad routes. The idea quickly gathered grassroots momentum. In 2008, the first segment opened: the West End Trail.

Today, Atlantans and visitors enjoy nearly 11 miles of the Beltline. Higgs says the total will be 17.9 miles of contiguous trail by the end of next year, in time for the World Cup soccer tournament, which Atlanta is scheduled to host in summer 2026. Completion of the full 22-mile loop is planned for 2030.

Already, the Beltline has transformed the city. "The traditional spine of Atlanta was Buckhead at the north, and then Midtown and downtown," says Higgs. "Now you have the Beltline that is creating new nodes of business and new places where people want to live and congregate."

Younger Atlantans in particular love the Beltline's egalitarian energy. "If you're a business that's recruiting young people," Higgs says, "all you have to do is say you're on the Beltline."

His own journey to the Beltline began when, as a high school student in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, he interned with a University of South Alabama alumnus who was a physical therapist. That got him interested in both healthcare and the University. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology with a biomedical concentration.

Leadership roles at South in student government and his fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi, stirred an interest in public service. He earned a Master of Public Administration from East Carolina University. Senior positions in higher education, technology development and business development followed. In 2015, the Beltline recruited him as chief operating officer. He became president and CEO in 2019.

The Beltline moves Atlanta forward in many ways, including economically. "We've put about $800 million into the Beltline to date, which is a big number," Higgs says. "But we've seen $10 billion in private investment that's followed. That's more than a 12-to-1 return on your public dollar being invested."

He's confident that the project will meet its goal of creating 50,000 permanent jobs by the end of 2030. "We're already at 25,000 jobs."

All along the path, restaurants, coffee shops, bike rental shops and other retail businesses cater directly to Beltline traffic. Outdoor tables provide great places to linger. "If you want some of the best people watching in Atlanta," Higgs says, "just come to the Beltline on a Saturday morning or early on a Friday evening."

The trail runs alongside established green spaces, such as the hugely popular Piedmont Park, and has spawned new ones like Historic Fourth Ward Park, which includes a skate park, a splash pad, playground equipment, a lake, an amphitheater and a giant sculpture called "Wake" that resembles the figurehead and ribs of an old sailing ship. Westside



Atlanta

One Mile at a Time

CLYDE HIGGS '97 helps get Atlanta moving in new directions.


M
LSA





Park, opened in 2021 on the site of a former granite quarry, features a 35-acre reservoir and will soon have more than two miles of mountain bike trails.

The nonprofit organization Trees Atlanta manages the Atlanta Beltline Arboretum, which consists of both restored natural areas and newly planted green spaces. It showcases more than 350 kinds of trees and shrubs.

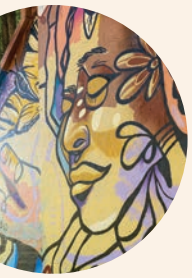
The Beltline is also an extensive series of temporary public art exhibits and linear galleries, with murals, sculptures and performance spaces. It has become a major tourist attraction, with hotels serving out-of-town visitors.

Some 14,000 apartment units have popped up alongside the Beltline, Higgs says. Inclusionary zoning requires developers to set aside a certain percentage of apartments for people earning below-median incomes.

"Teachers are not our highest earners, but still, they should be here in our community, right?" Higgs says. "The same with our firefighters and other people that serve our community. They should be right here on the Beltline, accessing all of these resources."

Atlanta's long tradition of embracing all segments of its population, he says, is one of the biggest reasons why the city continues to grow and prosper. "That's why companies like Microsoft and Google and Airbnb, all these high-flying companies, are moving here, because we're very inclusive. It's a diverse community, and everybody knows that, and so we need to make sure we're preserving that as an advantage for us."

"We've put about $800 million into the Beltline to date, which is a big number. But we've seen $10 billion in private investment that's followed. That's more than a 12-to-1 return on your public dollar being invested."



WAYPOINTS

8 Stops on the Beltline

Enjoy everything from art to food halls to tranquil parks along the eight connecting trails that form the Atlanta Beltline. Here are some favorite stops.



NORTHEAST TRAIL
Murals under the Buford Highway Connector; **beltline.org/parks-trails/northeast-trail**

EASTSIDE TRAIL
Ponce City Market: Food, beverages, shopping, rooftop deck, lodging in historic building; **poncecitymarket.com**

SOUTHEAST TRAIL
Murals along Wylie Street; **beltline.org/parks-trails/southeast-trail**



SOUTHSIDE TRAIL
Pittsburgh Yards: Coworking space, art gallery; plans for shops, restaurants; **pittsburghyards.com**

SOUTHWEST TRAIL
Lee + White: Food hall, brews, spirits; **leeandwhiteatl.com**

WEST END TRAIL
Gordon White Park: Beltline's first park; frequent art exhibits, performances; **beltline.org/parks-trails/west-end-trail**



WESTSIDE TRAIL
Westside Park: Many trails accessible to people with disabilities; **atlantaareaparks.com/parks/westside-reservoir-park**

NORTHSIDE TRAIL
Tanyard Creek Park: 14.5 forested acres, creeks, playground, wooden train trestle; **buckhead.com/parks/tanyard-creek-park**



For more, see **beltline.org.**



Although most people use the Beltline for recreation and exercise, Higgs says, "At its core, it's transportation."

Local residents take the trail to grocery stores and other retail shops, and to the offices of doctors and other professionals. Kids walk to school. Plans call for light rail or streetcar transit to eventually run alongside large segments of the current trail.

The Beltline's success has caught the attention of other communities looking to revitalize their own economies and civic cultures. "Whatever the place or the opportunity for development," Higgs says, "it has to be true to the community." Atlanta, born as a railroad hub and originally named Terminus, used abandoned rail lines as a starting point for redevelopment. Other cities and towns might have a waterfront or mountains or disused industrial sites.

Again and again, Higgs uses the word "intentional" — meaning that you can't just build a trail and assume that it will stimulate economic growth and benefit all levels of the population. You have to plan for that outcome, encourage it and lead it.

"It is about being comprehensive," Higgs says. "Yes, people think about the Beltline as this multiuse trail network, but it's so much more. It's also about us pushing housing affordability. It's about us pushing jobs that are located on the Beltline. It's about cleaning up polluted dirt. You have got to do all of these things in concert."

And, he says, you have to consider the effects of redevelopment on the neighborhoods where it takes place. "It can't be just for new people. It's also got to be for the people who really held down those communities for decades."

Guiding the success of the Atlanta Beltline "is the honor of my career," Higgs says. "I didn't plan this at all. The stairsteps of my career just prepared me to be in this destination — and it goes back to South giving me the ability to serve in leadership roles."


You know those stories
where the good guy wins?
We write those stories.
Sometimes, there's a chapter in a child's life where there are bad guys. Like cancer and heart problems and anything that threatens what should be the happy, magical years of life. That's why we've created a comprehensive blanket of kid-sized care, provided by some of the best pediatric specialists in the country. We're armed with the latest in innovation, skill and technology. And we make sure that no matter how hard the bad guys try, every child's story has a shot at a happy ending.
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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA


REWIRED
CONQUERING
Sjogren's
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Deep brain stimulation, offered in Mobile only through USA Health, puts an ex-electrician back in control of his hands.

BY **MICHELLE RYAN-DAY**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **BILL STARLING**

HARRY LANCASTER'S livelihood had always rested in his hands. As an electrical technician, he relied on them for a paycheck. Until he couldn't.

"I went to a neurologist because my hands were shaking so bad, and I was about to the point where I couldn't feed myself, not without making a huge mess," says the 80-year-old Thomasville, Alabama, resident.

His once-steady hands had begun to move uncontrollably, prompting a shift to desk work and eventually to retirement.

At first, Lancaster attributed the shaking to age. But when he couldn't button a shirt or enjoy a cup of coffee, he and his wife, Carol, knew it was time to seek help.

Their search ultimately led to USA Health and Dr. Hanna Czarkowska, a neurologist and assistant professor of neurology who specializes in movement disorders.

Lancaster has essential tremor. It causes involuntary, rhythmic shaking or trembling, usually in the hands and arms. It has no cure, and its cause is unknown. Medication was ineffective and left him nauseated.

The next option was deep brain stimulation, a surgical procedure that corrects faulty brain signals that cause shaking. Lancaster was a good candidate.

"He was quite debilitated by his tremor and determined to have it fixed," Czarkowska says. "He understood the steps involved in the procedure and that it may take a while to see its full benefit. He also had a great cheerleader in his wife. The importance of a strong support system should never be overlooked."

The decision to move forward with deep brain stimulation, offered in Mobile only through USA Health, also involved USA Health neurosurgeon Dr. Andrew Romeo, assistant professor of neurosurgery.

The process begins with an MRI under general anesthesia. It shows the surgeon where in the brain to place the electrode, which is 1.27 millimeters wide (slightly thicker than a medium-size safety pin) and 40 centimeters long — of which 7-8 centimeters (about 3 inches) extends into the brain. The next day, when the electrode is implanted through a small incision in the scalp, the patient is awake.

Why keep the patient conscious? For testing, Romeo says. The surgical team sends electricity through the electrode to make sure the patient doesn't exhibit or report side effects that could indicate improper positioning.

A week later, a battery-powered implantable pulse generator is placed under the skin. It sends electrical stimulation to the electrode, blocking abnormal nerve signals.

"We do not turn the stimulator on for another month or so," Czarkowska says. "This is to allow the brain tissue surrounding the electrode to recover from the surgery and assure that we do not program the device while the brain is still healing. When the system is finally activated during an office visit, we go through several combinations of stimulation settings to find one that offers best symptom control with no side effects."

Lancaster had the first surgery on one side of his brain in October 2023 and another to address the other side of his body in February 2024.

Like Lancaster, most patients are satisfied with the results. For 80%-90%, deep brain stimulation can reduce tremors by 80%.

The treatment restored Lancaster's independence and allayed his fears about the future. "If I get to a point where I can't feed myself and something happens to my wife, what am I going to do?" he asks.

Follow-ups with Czarkowska fine-tuned the device.

"The visits are initially fairly frequent, every few weeks or so, as we are testing the adjustments following the first big programming session in real-life situations," she says. "They eventually extend to every few months. Not only do we tweak stimulation to match the disease demands and progression, but in the case of nonrechargeable stimulators, we also keep an eye on battery life."

Romeo says the ability to adjust stimulation according to the patient's needs elevates the procedure above other treatments for essential tremor.

"It's a relatively low-risk, minimally invasive procedure, so there aren't a lot of patients who I feel like are not healthy enough for it," he says. "It's very effective, and patients are generally happy with the results, so I think there's a lot of upside to it. There's not a lot in neurosurgery that has that kind of effect."

These days, Lancaster can start his day with coffee again. He can button a shirt without frustration. He cooks and takes up computer repair now and then.

"Oh, it's made all the difference in the world," he says. "I can sign my name now, and I can eat without spilling everything on my plate. I still shake a little bit for an old man, but nothing — nothing — like what I was going through before."



MAKING (AND EATING) cornbread is again possible for Harry Lancaster thanks to USA Health.



For more information visit SouthAlabama.edu/JaguarJourneys

Jaguar JOURNEYS
ALUMNI TRAVEL PROGRAM

Flavors of Northern Italy
October 3-11, 2025

Rosette



SOUTHERNERS LOOK AT 183 new names — a record bringing the total to 4,114 — that now grace the Walls of Honor at Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza. The annual ceremony recognizing both National Alumni Association Lifetime Members and special University honorees took place Oct. 24.

CHEERS TO THE 1974



IN AUGUST, MOBILE'S BRAIDED RIVER BREWING CO. debuted The 1974, a limited-release beer toasting the 50th anniversary of South's National Alumni Association. "We made this more in the style of a traditional bock, though on the lighter color end of its typical range. This helped it land on a deep gold color," says Braided River founder David Nelson. The beer was released on draft and in cans. "It was a delicious companion for fall and football."

The $25 Million Carrot

PHILANTHROPIST ABRAHAM A. MITCHELL committed $25 million to the University of South Alabama for a dollar-for-dollar scholarship challenge match on the occasion of South's 50th Anniversary. The Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative, named after Mitchell and South's second president, V. Gordon Moulton, recently met its $50 million goal in commitments and is set to provide a sustainable source of income for scholarships for the next 50 years and beyond.

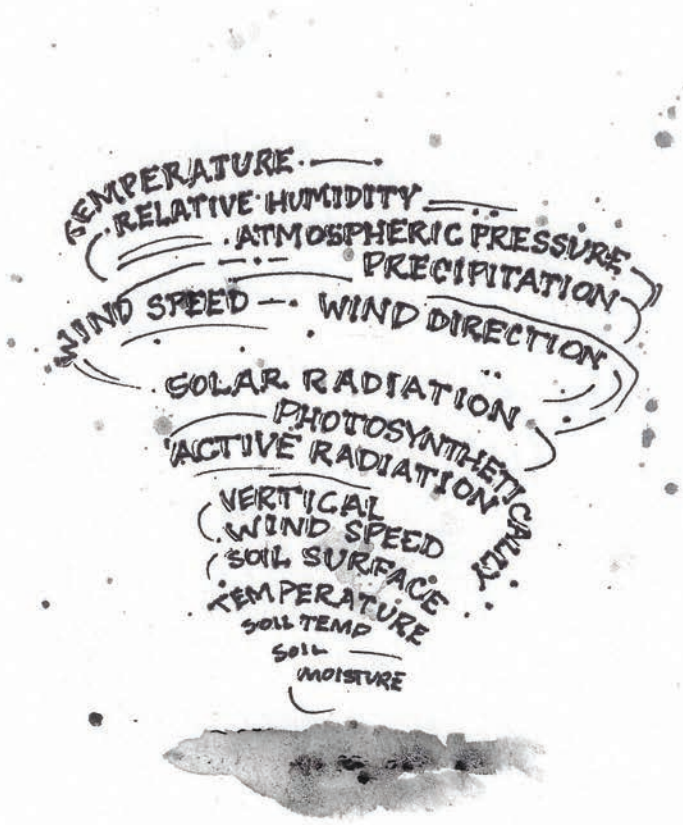
328
new scholarship endowments

190
additional scholarships enhanced with new gifts and matching funds

$2.25
MILLION
annual projected awards by 2030

1,700+
students supported with scholarship awards

2,183
new donors



Fine-Tuning Forecasts

The University of South Alabama has received a $3 million award from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to improve weather prediction across 20 counties in Alabama's Black Belt region.

The funding, secured with the help of U.S. Sen. Katie Britt, R-Ala., will expand the South Alabama Mesonet. Here are three takeaways:

1. **THE WEATHER NETWORK** will grow across more than a third of the state and connect areas previously covered only by satellite monitoring.

2. **STATIONS COLLECT** 24 different atmospheric and soil parameters every minute, including air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, precipitation, soil temperature and moisture.

3. **THE DATA IS ACCESSED** by the National Weather Service to provide timely warnings in advance of storms. The information also can be beneficial to organizations, including those in the agriculture, aviation, energy and forestry sectors.

Maisel Donation Highlights Record Fundraising

A $5 MILLION GIFT from Mobile businessman Elliot B. Maisel for the new Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine building highlighted record-breaking University of South Alabama fundraising — again.

South logged $45.3 million in new gifts and commitments for fiscal year 2024, the third year in a row crossing the $40 million mark. Fiscal 2024 brought 8,174 gifts and commitments from 4,960 donors, including 1,572 new donors.

Maisel's gift is the largest by an individual for the $200 million building, now under construction. A large gathering area inside will be named the Maisel Family Forum.

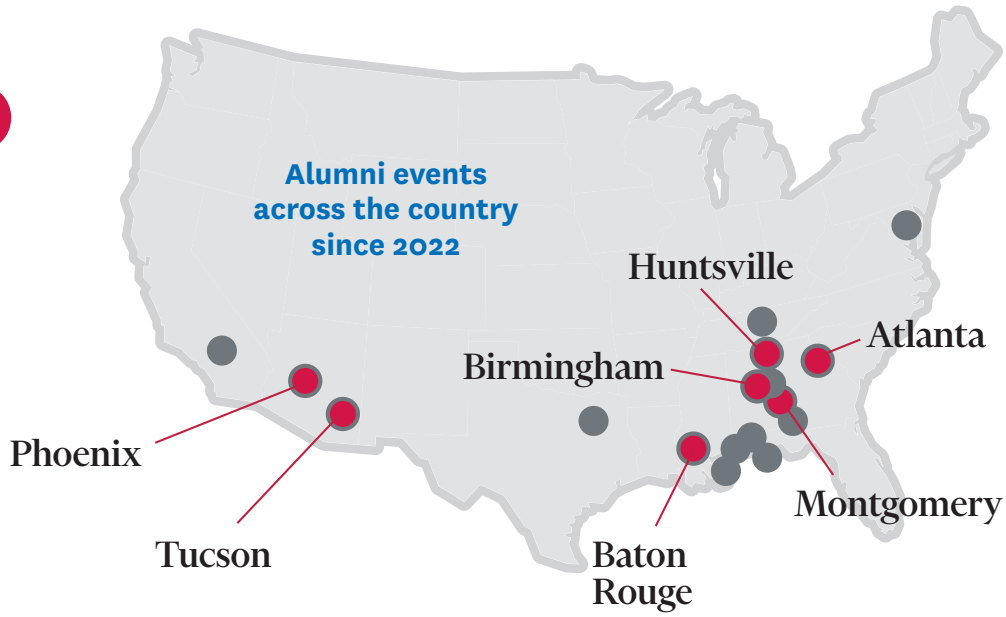
"We are truly grateful for the transformational gift from Elliot Maisel," says University President Jo Bonner. "Its impact will be felt not only in our local community but also statewide. Medical students at the Whiddon College of Medicine perform at the highest levels, outscoring their contemporaries at many of the most prestigious medical schools in the United States, and this new building will enhance learning opportunities in so many ways."

Maisel notes that he encounters high recognition of USA when he travels. "So don't underestimate yourself," he says. "You're big. We're big. Think big. Be big."



Coast to Coast

The University of South Alabama and the USA National Alumni Association continue to meet with alumni and friends at events across the United States.



Fall 2024 events



Hamilton Appointed to Board

ENTERPRISE, ALABAMA, BUSINESSWOMAN Meredith Mitchell Hamilton ’95 has been appointed by Gov. Kay Ivey to an at-large seat on the University of South Alabama Board of Trustees. The appointment is set to be confirmed in 2025 by the Alabama Senate.

Hamilton serves as treasurer of the Mitchell Automotive group, general manager of Toyota of Dothan, and operations manager of Mitchell Hyundai and Mitchell Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram. She graduated from the University of South Alabama in 1995 with a bachelor’s degree in finance.

“I have a strong passion for education, as well as a deep commitment to supporting the growth and success of our state’s universities,” says Hamilton. “USA strives every day to deliver an exceptional educational experience along with ensuring Alabamians have access to high-quality healthcare opportunities through USA Health, and I am eager to give back to my alma mater.”



Casting Comfort

Bed of Flowers greets visitors outside the Pediatric Emergency Center at USA Health Children’s & Women’s Hospital.

FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF patients, families and staff, USA Health Children’s & Women’s Hospital dedicated a new art sculpture on Nov. 1 created by internationally renowned artist Gay Outlaw.

The sculpture, called Bed of Flowers, was made possible through a gift from Arlene Mitchell, chair pro tem of the USA Board of Trustees and a longtime volunteer at the hospital.

“You are my new hero for positive energy,” Outlaw told Mitchell at the dedication. “I can’t thank you enough.”

The piece was constructed in San Francisco and Mobile and features 120 cast aluminum flowers in various shades of hot pink. The flowers are connected to a network of cast bronze stems. The sculpture now fills an oval-shaped concrete median in front of the hospital’s new Pediatric Emergency Center, which opened in March.

The expanded center is nearly 19,000 square feet — more than double the size of the former emergency department — and has more than 30 treatment areas, including 25 private treatment rooms. It provides more space for parents and caregivers to be with their children and offers sensory strategies to help calm and support patients during their emergency visit.

Outlaw grew up in Mobile and now lives in California. Her work recently has been exhibited in Kyoto, Japan; Le Consortium in Dijon, France; and the Aspen Art Museum in Colorado. She also has sculptures on permanent display at San Francisco International Airport.



Jag Tags *for scholarships*

In Alabama, proceeds from the University of South Alabama collegiate license plates go to the "Jag Tags for Scholarships" Endowment Fund, a statewide student scholarship. More than $100,000 in scholarships will be awarded in the 2024-25 academic year.

We invite our alumni and friends to join this effort by purchasing a Jag Tag for your vehicle.

South Alabama
NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

SouthAlabama.edu/Alumni



Stay Connected, Stay Jaguar Proud!

Join the South Alabama National Alumni Association today



Stay connected to **100,000** South Alabama alumni through your membership to the South Alabama National Alumni Association. Your membership not only grants you access to member-only benefits, but it also supports your alma mater and Jaguar community.

For more information on how to join or get involved, visit **alumni.southalabama.edu** or call us at **(251) 460-7084.**

South Alabama
NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

5 Questions with Ronnie Stallworth

RONNIE STALLWORTH '03 became the University of South Alabama National Alumni Association's 46th president on Aug. 22. Stallworth, senior director of business development at Hargrove Engineers & Constructors, worked his way through college over 13 years, earning a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering. He recently spoke to South Magazine about how alumni can get involved and what lies ahead.

WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA FOR THE NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION UNDER A PRESIDENT RONNIE STALLWORTH?
Key priorities include accelerating our alumni membership beyond our current record levels and seeding more opportunities for alumni and current students to connect. As we move into the next decade, it's essential that we lead more opportunities for collaboration between current students, new grads and the vast network of experienced professionals that we have around the globe.

ONE OF THE WAYS YOU'VE SUPPORTED SOUTH IS THROUGH THE RONNIE STALLWORTH CHEMICAL ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIP. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT GIFT?
Getting a chemical engineering degree from South drastically changed the trajectory of my life and my family's. With the help of very generous donors, such as Mr. Charles Koetting, this scholarship has helped dozens of students complete their degrees and go on to have very successful careers in engineering.

FILL IN THE BLANK. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA ALUMNI _____ .
Are always willing to help fellow Jaguars become more successful.

HOW CAN ALUMNI GET INVOLVED IF THERE IS NO CHAPTER WHERE THEY LIVE?
I didn't have a local chapter from 2003-2018; however, joining the NAA gave me plenty of opportunities to get and stay involved. I also connected through social media and made it a priority to attend at least one game during the season.

THE NAA TURNED 50 IN 2024. USE YOUR CRYSTAL BALL AND TELL US WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE AT 100.
Rapidly changing technology is creating larger gaps between traditional and nontraditional career paths. The NAA is the glue and a conduit to connect graduates back to South. I envision the NAA evolving into an essential hub and even a service provider, to an extent, for current students and alumni to forge deeper professional connections.



MESSAGE FROM THE MAC



GREETINGS, JAG NATION!

As the year comes to a close, so too does our celebration of the National Alumni Association's 50th anniversary. Over the past year, it has been such a privilege to connect with so many of you, both on campus and at events across the country. From the inspiring stories to the laughter and camaraderie, your presence has truly made this celebration unforgettable. This milestone year has been a stirring reminder of the enduring legacy built by generations of graduates who have carried the values, spirit and mission of the University of South Alabama into the world.

Central to this celebration was the annual Wall of Honor Ceremony, an event that exemplifies the profound connection between our alumni and our beloved university. As part of Homecoming this past October, it was our pleasure to recognize Lifetime Members of the National Alumni Association by unveiling their names on the Walls of Honor.

Located in the heart of campus at Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, the Walls of Honor are perhaps the University's most recognized campus landmark. This year we added 183 names, which is the most we've ever added in a single year. Seeing familiar faces and watching the excitement as alumni, along with their families, pointed to their names forever engraved on the walls was the highlight of our year!

The Walls of Honor symbolize the collective legacy of our alumni. They remind students and faculty of the remarkable journeys that began here more than 60 years ago and serve as a testament to the lifelong bonds that unite us. We are inspired and grateful for the powerful example they set.

Throughout this celebratory year, we experienced again and again the vibrant and far-reaching community that makes up the University of South Alabama. Alumni support helps us continue to provide transformative education, enhance campus facilities and extend opportunities for current students. Whether it's through your alumni association membership, your financial contributions, mentoring, participating in events or contributing to scholarship funds, each of you plays a vital role in sustaining and growing the mission of our university. You are the heart of our institution, and your dedication fuels us as we look to the future.

Thank you for being an integral part of this memorable year. As we close this chapter and look forward to the next, we are excited to continue building on the strong foundation created over the past 50 years. We hope to see you at future events, whether back on campus or in your corner of the world. Together, we can shape the next chapter of the University of South Alabama's history.

GO JAGS!

Karen Webster Edwards '80
Executive Director
USA National Alumni Association

2024-2025 NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Shadia Anderson '96
Ross Bonura '95
Donovan Brooks '97
Kayla Byrne '18
Cary Cash '99
Jeff Conrad M.D. '98
Laura Gabel '94
John Galanos '80
Kimberly Hargrove '89
Ingrid Lawson '94
Terrence Lewis '06
Mary Beth Massey '13, M.Ed. '15
Joe Molyneux '71
Kristin Odom '09, M.S. '14, Ed.D. '19
Bryan Op't Holt '01
Renee Semiz '98
Mark Spivey '02, M.S. '05
Mike Sumrall '70
Peter Susman MBA '20
Courtney Wegel '18
Micah Wheeler '05
Gia Wiggins Ph.D. '19

NOT EVEN AT CRUISING ALTITUDE

Mobile's aerospace industry, already second in employment for manufacturing in Mobile County, is still climbing.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AIRBUS



THE INAUGURAL TEST flight for JetBlue's first A220-300 was performed from the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley in Mobile.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA'S new aerospace engineering major, debuting with the fall 2024 semester, reflects Mobile's emergence as one of the country's major aerospace manufacturing hubs.

Among manufacturing industries in Mobile County, aerospace is second in employment only to ship and boat building. Across Mobile Bay in Baldwin County, it's No. 1.

Mobile's aerospace industry dates back to the 1890s, when a watch, clock and sewing machine repairman named John Fowler built a series of gliders and, without successful flights, powered aircraft.

Today, "In Mobile and Baldwin counties, we have about 40 aerospace engineering companies," says Dr. Anh-Vu Phan, professor and interim chair of South's William B. Burnsed Jr. Department of Mechanical, Aerospace and Biomedical Engineering.

Airbus, one of the world's two dominant makers of large commercial aircraft along with Boeing, supercharged the area's ascension as an aerospace hub when the company selected Mobile for its U.S. airliner manufacturing facility in 2005.

Airbus operates two final commercial aircraft assembly lines at Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley, a former Air Force base south of downtown Mobile. It employs 2,400 people in the Mobile area and expects to hire more when it opens a third assembly line next year.

The first Airbus airliner left the factory in 2016. In August 2024, the facility delivered its 500th.

One of America's oldest aerospace companies also manufactures at Brookley: Continental Aerospace Technologies, formerly Continental Motors, founded in 1929. It makes engines for light aircraft, and services them across the bay in Fairhope, Alabama.

Now more than ever, Alabama is an aerospace leader, with more than 300 companies across 30 counties. The state leads the nation, by far, in its concentration of aerospace engineers compared to other types of workers. Of every 1,000 jobs in the state, 2.41 are aerospace engineering jobs. Washington and Kansas are second and third at 1.55 and 1.52, respectively.

That information comes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Across the United States, the bureau expects the demand for aerospace engineers to grow by 6% from 2023 through 2033 — with an average of 4,200 job openings each year.

South's first Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering majors will graduate in May 2028. Phan says the department is quickly ramping up support for the new major, with a second aerospace engineering professor starting in January and two more by 2027.

Airbus has supported the University and the department. Since 2012, it has given South nearly $315,000, with $4 of every $5 going to engineering scholarships.

"Airbus is a European company, and we're bringing in tons of people from overseas and creating a bunch of jobs," says Dr. Carlos Montalvo, an associate professor with a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering. "So many of my former students work at Airbus right now. Where would they be living if it wasn't for Airbus? A lot of graduates want to stay in Mobile."

Montalvo, a native of Pensacola, Florida, loves where the Gulf Coast region is moving.

"Airbus adding the new final assembly line is already going in a good direction," he says. "You add our aerospace engineering major into this, and it's another cog in this huge machine. It's just one more thing that can make Mobile a great place to live."

AEROSPACE ENGINEERS BY STATE

California	**11,130**
Texas	**6,250**
Washington	**5,430**
Alabama	**4,950**
Colorado	**3,760**

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, MAY 2023 (LATEST NUMBERS AVAILABLE)

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA
FLAGSHIP OF THE GULF COAST.

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Upcoming Events

Doc Rock benefiting USA Health
Jan. 30, 2025
Soul Kitchen, Mobile

Jaguar Marching Band in the Conde Cavaliers Parade
Feb. 14, 2025
Downtown Mobile

20th Annual Distinguished Alumni and Service Awards
March 13, 2025
MacQueen Alumni Center

Local Goodness benefiting USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital
May 4, 2025
Magnolia Manor, Mobile



THE JAGS CELEBRATE after defeating rival Troy, 25-9, snapping a six-game losing streak against the Trojans in the Battle for the Belt. Later in the season, the Jags secured bowl eligibility for the third straight year.