

SOUTH

USA NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Spring 2020



*South opens its new
alumni home on campus*



11 **MACQUEEN ALUMNI CENTER OPENS**
*After 57 years, South Alabama alumni
have a permanent home on campus.*

SOUTH



SOUTH Magazine is a publication of the Office of Alumni Relations and the USA National Alumni Association. It is intended to inform alumni and friends of current USA events and issues.

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This is an unprecedented time for the world. The University has been affected in countless ways, from our students and faculty transitioning to online learning, to staff adjusting to working from home, to our USA Health employees braving the front lines to save lives.

I am constantly reminded that we are united as one University of South Alabama family. We have received many stories of alumni across the country and the world who are giving their time, talent and resources to make a positive difference during this global health emergency.

This has been a challenging time for our students, especially those who graduated in May without an in-person ceremony. One of the highlights of the alumni association's year is when we celebrate our new graduates and welcome them into the alumni family. We may not be able to congratulate them in person this semester; however, we are finding unique opportunities to "virtually" highlight their incredible accomplishments.

There continue to be unknowns, but we are rallying together as USA alumni to weather this storm. Brighter days are ahead, and we look forward to sharing them with you as soon as possible. We Are South Alumni!

Go Jags!
Karen Edwards '80
Executive Director

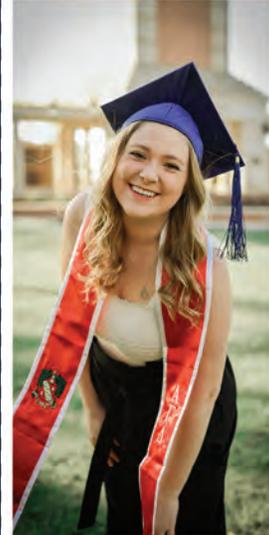


To the Class of 2020

You have studied.
You have struggled.
You have laughed.
You have dreamed.
You have persevered.
You have succeeded.
You have achieved your goals.



And we are here to join in celebrating your outstanding accomplishments. Although we are not able to commemorate your graduation in person, you are now part of the South Alabama alumni family.



We share your pride in your achievements. You embody what it means to be a South Alabama Jaguar. Now is the time to take what you have learned at South and move forward into the next, exciting chapters of your lives.

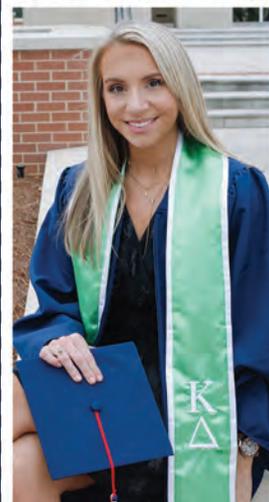


We are leaders.
We are strong.
We are resilient.

WE ARE SOUTH ALUMNI



 **South
Alabama**
NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Goldwater Scholars

University of South Alabama undergraduate students Richard Fu, Hannah Giannini, Samantha Michlowitz and John Pomerat are among 396 students from across the country who have been named to the 2020 class of Goldwater Scholars, a national competition that recognizes outstanding achievement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.



“Having all four nominees from South be recognized as Goldwater Scholars is unprecedented for the University,” said Dr. David Forbes, scholarship/fellowship coordinator and professor of chemistry. “This is a fantastic testament to the students, mentors and the Honors curriculum.”



Thank you!

USA Giving Day

The University of South Alabama community showed its love for the University and USA Health during the third annual USA Giving Day on February 14. During the 24-hour online fundraising drive, a total of \$534,671 was raised from 1,771 donors to support scholarships, research initiatives, athletics and USA Health programs.

Health Simulation Building opens

The 39,000-square-foot Health Simulation Building opened on USA's campus in February. The new building will train students from USA's colleges of nursing, allied health professions and medicine, along with USA Health healthcare professionals. High-tech equipment and computerized human-like simulators help students have real healthcare experiences. The computer-controlled simulators are used to create customized scenarios, which mimic real patient conditions.



“The new Health Simulation Building will give students a variety of situations in a safe environment,” said Dr. Mike Jacobs, professor and director of the USA Simulation Program. “We want them to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills required in the different healthcare academic disciplines.”



College of Medicine class of 2020 celebrates Match Day

USA College of Medicine seniors learned the results of the National Resident Matching Program on March 20. The logistics of this year's Match Day may have been different, but the spirit of the day remained the same. Instead of gathering in one room and opening their envelopes simultaneously, most medical students opened their emails to find out where they would be doing their residency training and took to social media to share their news.

This year, USA medical students matched in 23 states, with 42 students matching out of state and 23 students matching in the state of Alabama. Eight of those students matching in Alabama matched at USA Health hospitals.



Jaguar football season tickets

South Alabama football season tickets and parking passes are on sale now for the new Hancock Whitney Stadium. Season tickets start at \$100 with multiple price points, and seating options are available. Be a part of Jaguar history with 2020 football season tickets. For more information, call (251) 461-IUSA or visit jaguarathleticfund.com.



USA Responds

USA launched USA Responds in March to raise vital resources for our students who find themselves with urgent expenses they are unprepared to meet. It also supports USA Health and its critical needs in response to the COVID-19 crisis. USA Responds has raised more than \$57,000 from alumni and friends. The campaign is ongoing at southalabama.edu/usaresponds.



USA College of Medicine researcher launches COVID-19 data project

A public health researcher at the USA College of Medicine is compiling data that could provide insights into COVID-19 symptoms, the spread of the infection and its impact on Mobile-area residents.

Casey L. Daniel, Ph.D., M.P.H., assistant professor of family medicine at the USA College of Medicine, said that patient data being collected at USA Health clinics, hospitals and testing sites could provide critical information to policymakers and others as they respond to the pandemic.

“The project has multiple objectives,” Daniel said. “We want to inform health system coordination and policies in real time to ensure maximization of limited resources such as test kits, PPE and personnel.”



Children of alumni apply for free

Children of alumni can now apply to South Alabama at no charge. When applying, simply enter SOUTHFAM in the promo code box. This box will appear after all of the application information has been entered. For questions, contact the USA Office of Admissions at (251) 460-6141 or recruitment@southalabama.edu.



Volunteer virtually with South Serves

Find meaningful opportunities for community engagement while social distancing with the South Serves Virtual Volunteerism initiative. Managed by USA’s Office of Community Engagement, South Serves matches volunteers with needs in the Mobile community and beyond. Do you know of a virtual volunteer opportunity? Contact the Office of Community Engagement at (251) 460-6116 or visit southserves.southalabama.edu.

USA professor named to state coronavirus task force

John A. Vande Waa, D.O., Ph.D., professor of internal medicine at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, is one of four infectious disease specialists serving on Gov. Kay Ivey’s 18-member task force to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in the state.

Spring 2020 Virtual Commencement



USA holds virtual commencement

The University of South Alabama held a virtual, online commencement ceremony on May 9 to honor the 2,181 spring and summer degree candidates. Congratulations to South's newest graduates, and welcome to the alumni family. The University is continuing to look for ways to honor graduates this fall on campus. Watch the virtual ceremony at bit.ly/usagradaution2020.



SouthFund employee campaign sets record

The 2020 University of South Alabama employee and retiree annual giving campaign for the SouthFund raised \$1.3 million, exceeding its goal by 71 percent!

The annual campaign seeks support from University and USA Health employees and retirees to benefit all areas of USA including student access and success, research, athletics, global engagement, excellence in healthcare, and community engagement.

A total of 2,897 employees and retirees contributed to this year's campaign, realizing a 45 percent participation rate. President Tony Waldrop emphasized the importance of the annual campaign's success. "I am honored to work with such a dedicated group of faculty, staff and retirees who genuinely care about the future of their University and health system," said Waldrop. "Their generous annual support continues to strengthen the Jaguar community."



New benefits for alumni members

The USA National Alumni Association has partnered with MemberDeals to provide extensive nationwide discounts for alumni association members. After joining the USA National Alumni Association, members can access discounts including Disney World resorts, Universal Studios, SeaWorld resorts and Six Flags, as well as high-profile sporting events, Broadway shows, concerts, movies, hotels, car rentals and more. For more information, to see a complete list of benefits or to join the alumni association, visit alumni.southalabama.edu or call (251) 460-7084.

Stay up-to-date with SouthConnects

Alumni can now update their contact information directly through the SouthConnects portal at alumni.southalabama.edu. Registration is quick and simple. From there, search for classmates in AlumniConnects, add a class note in SouthChat or check out alumni job postings in CareerConnects.



ALUMNI HEROES

South Alabama alumni across the country have shown strength during the global health crisis. From front-line workers to educators to citizens making a difference in their communities, the Jaguar spirit finds a way to shine through the darkness.



GINA WARNER

Gina Warner is a 1990 graduate of the USA College of Education and Professional Studies.

Gina Warner is president of the National AfterSchool Association, a 32,000-member organization that supports education professionals who work with children during out-of-school hours. During the COVID-19 crisis, members are working in program sites providing emergency childcare for families of essential workers like doctors, first responders and grocery store clerks. Through her role with the National AfterSchool Association, Warner helps provide training and support for these childcare workers.



JOHN DING

John Ding earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama's Mitchell College of Business.

Engineers from Airbus and faculty from the University of South Alabama are working with healthcare workers at USA Health during the coronavirus pandemic to produce hundreds of reusable face masks for providers in clinics and hospitals.

One of the team members is John Ding, who earned a master's degree in business administration from South and is an aircraft engineer at Airbus. "At Airbus, we do a lot of 3D printing," Ding said. "We knew we wanted to do something, but we didn't know where, so I decided to reach out to the University." Read the full story at southalabama.edu.



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP

Steve Clements, Ronnie Stallworth, Chris Jett, administrator of USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital and assistant vice president for medical affairs; Karen Edwards and Ann Sirmon.

Members of the USA National Alumni Association board of directors and past presidents delivered lunches in April to front-line USA Health employees at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. The Meals for Heroes Fund provides consistent and hearty snacks and meals to USA Health workers during their shifts as they battle the COVID-19 pandemic in the Mobile and Baldwin County communities.



DR. STEVEN H. STOKES

Dr. Steven Stokes volunteers with Lizbeth Soto Jacome, a USA student from Enterprise, Ala.

Dr. Steven H. Stokes, a 1980 graduate of the USA College of Medicine and co-chair with his wife, Angelia '79, of USA's Upward & Onward Campaign, provides free medical care and meals each week to hundreds of homeless and low-income residents in Dothan, Alabama as a volunteer for Love in Action International Ministries. The nonprofit organization has seen a steep increase in need during the COVID-19 crisis.



GERALD EVERETT

Gerald Everett played tight end as a South Alabama Jaguar from 2015-2016 before being drafted by the Los Angeles Rams in 2017.

Former Jaguar football player Gerald Everett donated lunch to West Hills Hospital emergency staff in Los Angeles in April. "I just want to do my part, do anything that I can to assist and help them because they're here around the clock every day," he said. Everett is currently a tight end with the Los Angeles Rams.



USA STUDENT NURSES ASSOCIATIONS

Sarah Roberts, Caroline Webster and Ayshe Shepherd deliver items to USA Health University Hospital.

The University of South Alabama Mobile and Baldwin County Student Nurses associations donated sterile gloves, N95 masks and homemade face masks to USA Health University Hospital in April.

Pivoting to address a pandemic



“WE’RE TRYING TO FIGURE THIS OUT,” CRASS SAID. “WE’RE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO SERVE WHERE WE CAN.”

Last year, when Sarah Crass became chief of staff at Medical Teams International in Portland, Oregon, she thought the faith-based organization would continue to focus on preventing disease and misery in refugee camps from Lebanon to Bangladesh.

Now that mission hits closer to home.

Near Seattle, where the first novel coronavirus case in the United States was diagnosed, Medical Teams vans now provide mobile command centers for hospitals doing drive-through testing for COVID-19.

“We’ve been able to pivot really well,” said Crass, who graduated from the University of South Alabama in 2000. “We have staff, we have volunteers, so we can tell hospitals and public health departments, ‘Hey, let us help you.’ We have experience working with Ebola and other viruses, so we know how to do isolation, patient care and hygiene education.”

In Portland, where Crass works at the headquarters of Medical Teams International, the organization is coping with travel restrictions that complicate its mission in developing countries.

“We work with some of the most vulnerable people in the world,” Crass said. “We’re in Lebanon, Uganda, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Guatemala.

We’re praying that the coronavirus stays out of the refugee camps. That would be a heartbreaking scenario.”

In the United States, Medical Teams International is known for the big red vans that it sends out to provide emergency dental care in underserved communities. These are the vehicles that have helped respond to COVID-19 in the state of Washington. The challenge becomes much bigger as coronavirus moves through the rest of the country.

“We’re trying to figure this out,” Crass said. “We’re trying to figure out how to serve where we can.”

Medical Teams International was founded in 1979 by a Salem, Oregon, businessman named Ron Post. News coverage of atrocities in Cambodia inspired him to create Northwest Medical Teams, which became Medical Teams International. The faith-based organization has responded to help refugees of earthquakes in Mexico, famine in Ethiopia and wars all over the world.

Crass has always been based in the United States, but she’s worked all over the world. She grew up in Seattle, where her father worked for Boeing, until he was transferred to Huntsville, Alabama. She chose to go to college at South in Mobile.

After receiving a bachelor’s degree in biomedical sciences, Crass earned a master’s degree in public health from Tulane University. She returned to the state of Washington and spent 11 years at World Vision, another Christian humanitarian organization. Medical Teams has a similar mission.

“We’re definitely led by our faith,” Crass said. “A very passionate group of people.”

In Portland, she lives with her husband and two children. Like so many others, she works from home now.

Public health issues are now a top priority of every nation on earth. Everyone is thinking about pandemics.

“We knew this would be the health threat of the future,” Crass said, “but it came sooner than we expected.”

Your Jag pride can turn dreams into reality.

When you purchase a University of South Alabama license plate, 100% of net proceeds benefit US A student scholarships. Since 2013, USA license plates have raised more than \$1 million for students to follow their dreams.

Through the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative, the proceeds from your Jag Tag are automatically matched.

Get your Jag Tag today! #WeAreSouthAlumni

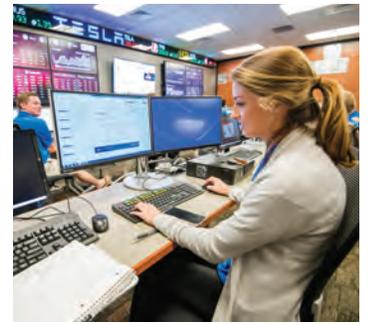


UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

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*Sahilee Waitman '20
2019-2020 SGA President*



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South now offers in-state tuition rates for out-of-state students who qualify for freshman admission scholarships.



Incoming freshmen need an ACT of 21 or higher or an SAT of 1060 or higher and a minimum 3.0 high school GPA to qualify.

Contact the USA Office of Admissions at recruitment@southalabama.edu or (800) USA-JAGS today to find out more.

MACQUEEN ALUMNI CENTER

SOUTH OPENS ITS NEW ALUMNI HOME ON CAMPUS



MCKINNEY FAMILY
GREEK PLAZA

IN HONOR OF
SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY

LEE ANN
EVERETT

The McKinney Family Greek Plaza, in honor of Sigma Chi fraternity and the Greek system at South Alabama, welcomes visitors to the MacQueen Alumni Center and offers a unique outdoor seating area for alumni, students and friends.

Adjacent to Greek Plaza is the Hearin-Chandler Foundation Terrace, featuring an outdoor fireplace and comfortable seating.





The University of South Alabama Foundation Lobby greets alumni with a large, open seating area and cozy fireplace—an ideal setting for receptions, small events and game-day activities.

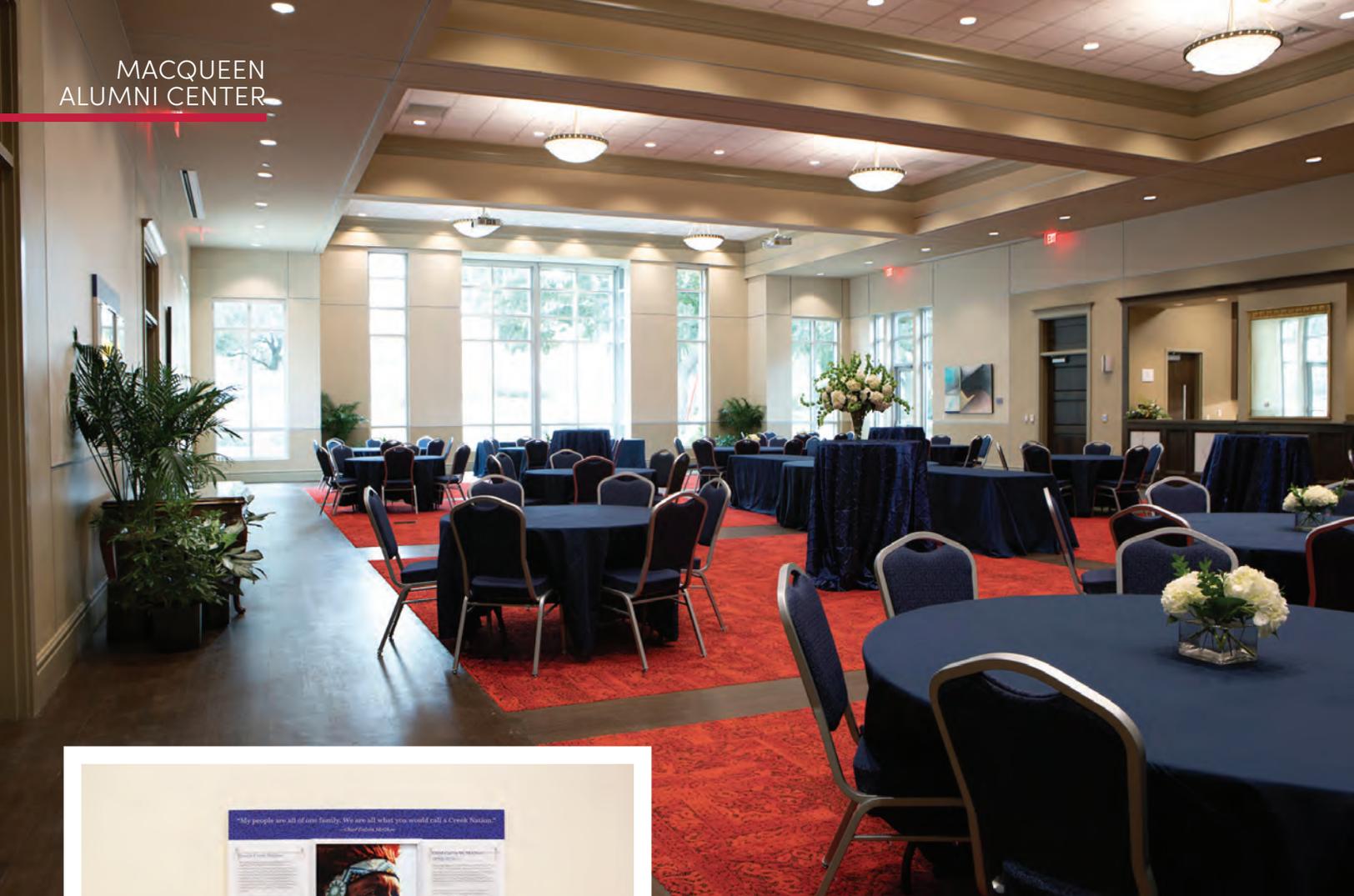
For the first time since its founding in 1963, the University of South Alabama has a permanent home for its more than 87,000 alumni.

Located in the center of campus, across from Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, the 15,000-square-foot facility houses the Chief Calvin W. McGhee Grand Ballroom,

McKinney Family Greek Plaza, USA Foundation Lobby, Gordon and Geri Moulton Board Room and administrative offices.

On January 24, the USA National Alumni Association board of directors, USA President Dr. Tony Waldrop, faculty, staff and friends officially opened the MacQueen Alumni Center.





Above: The focal point of the MacQueen Alumni Center is the Grand Ballroom. The state-of-the-art event space is named in honor of Chief Calvin W. McGhee, who served as the head of the council for the Creek Nation East of the Mississippi, the precursor to today's Poarch Creek Indians, from 1950 until his death in 1970.

Right: Walters Family Bar



*“Now we have a true
home for all of our
alumni to visit, to bring
their children and
grandchildren, and to
continue South’s legacy
for future generations.”*

*—Patrick Dungan '06, President,
USA National Alumni Association*





The Moulton Board Room is named for former USA President Gordon Moulton and his wife, Geri. This large meeting room includes a 28-seat table and state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment. Adjacent to the Moulton Board Room is the Holle Briskman Terrace.

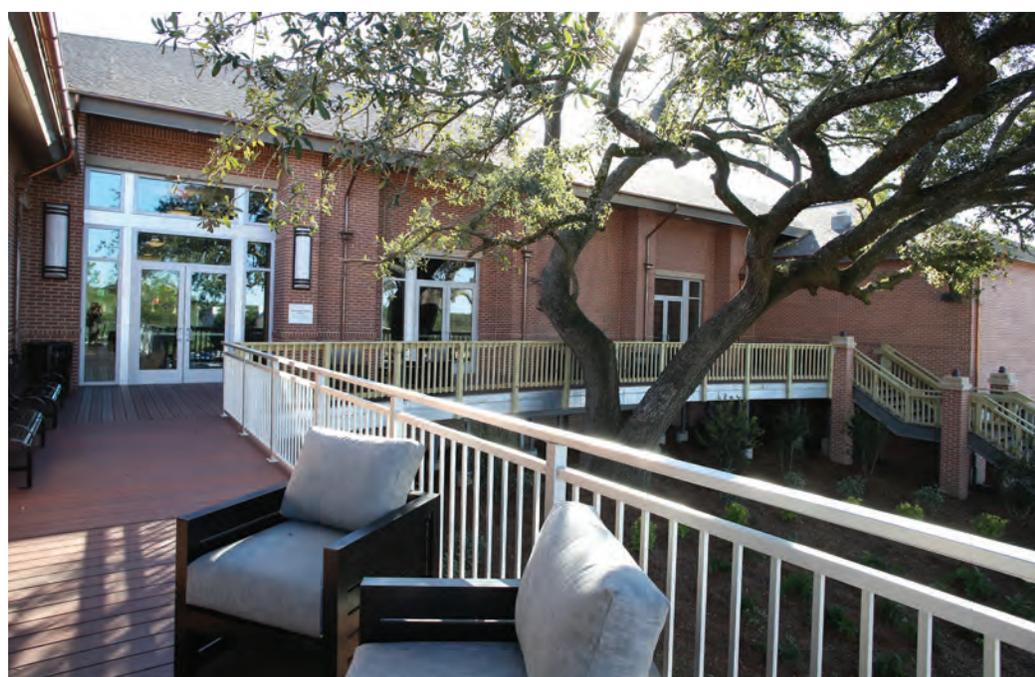


The six-person Office of Alumni Relations staff is housed in the MacQueen Alumni Center. There are additional administrative spaces for student workers and the Southerners, USA's student ambassadors.

Dedicated to USA's outstanding alumni, students and friends, Inspiration Gallery features unique recognition plaques honoring 1974 Society members and donors, Distinguished Alumni and Service Award recipients, Lifetime Alumni Association members and the Southerners.



The Whitmore Family Deck, framed by a majestic oak tree, creates a stunning backdrop for alumni events and gatherings.





MacQueen Alumni Center

THE GULF COAST'S NEWEST EVENT VENUE.

MACQUEEN ALUMNI CENTER

at the University of South Alabama

15,000 square feet | Grand ballroom | Spacious lobby | Large back patio | Indoor/outdoor fireplace
Perfect for weddings, rehearsal dinners, corporate events, fundraisers and more.

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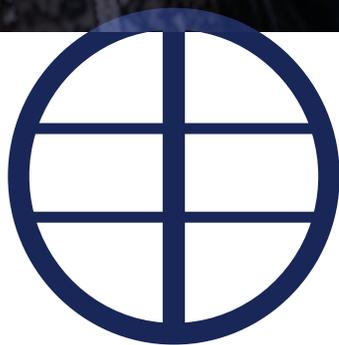
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SEVEN HONORED AT 16TH ANNUAL DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI & SERVICE AWARDS

The USA National Alumni Association honored five alumni, a Mobile civic leader and a retired USA administrator for their outstanding accomplishments during the 16th annual Distinguished Alumni and Service Awards gala in March at the MacQueen Alumni Center.

“We are delighted to have the opportunity to recognize the achievements of our alumni, friends and supporters,” said Margaret Sullivan, vice president for development and alumni relations. “These individuals have shown outstanding leadership in their respective career fields, to the University and in their communities.”





“These individuals represent the significant contributions our alumni and friends are making in our region and throughout the world.”

*—Karen Edwards, executive director,
National Alumni Association*



**WILLIAM B. “BILL”
BURNSIED JR. '72**

*Distinguished
Alumni Award recipient*

After graduating from the University of South Alabama in 1972, Bill Burnsed worked for South Central Bell and BellSouth for two decades. He then started the Burnsed Oil Company, which bought property where major oil companies had abandoned production.

After initial success, Burnsed taught himself petroleum geology and studied seismographic data to decide where to drill new wells. Burnsed Oil is now one of the largest oil producers in southwest Mississippi.

He has endowed engineering scholarships and made a transformational \$1.5 million gift to name the William B. Burnsed Jr. Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Bill Burnsed resides in Natchez, Mississippi.



JOHN T. CROWDER '69

*Distinguished
Alumni Award recipient*

John Crowder grew up in the Eight Mile community north of Mobile. After earning an undergraduate degree from South in 1969, he received his juris doctorate from the University of Alabama. He returned to Mobile and began a distinguished career as a trial lawyer.

In the late 1990s, Crowder represented the state of Alabama against Exxon and obtained a \$3.5 billion verdict for the state, which gained worldwide recognition. The National Law Journal named him the lawyer of the year.

At South, he has established a scholarship fund for pre-law students.

Crowder and his wife, Karen, live in Fairhope.



BRIAN CUCCIAS '79

*Distinguished
Alumni Award recipient*

Brian Cuccias graduated from South Alabama in 1979 and began his career as a financial analyst on Navy shipbuilding programs in Pascagoula, Miss. He has led the construction of Coast Guard vessels, amphibious assault ships and Arleigh Burke-class destroyers.

In 2014, Cuccias was named president of Ingalls Shipbuilding. Under his leadership, Ingalls has been awarded ship contracts worth more than \$16 billion. The former governor of Mississippi, Phil Bryant, praised Cuccias as “a people-first leader fiercely loyal to his fellow shipbuilders.”

In 2018, he was honored as one of the “Top CEOs in Mississippi” by the Mississippi Business Journal. Cuccias lives in Mobile with his wife, Helen.

COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD

New in 2020, the Community Partner Award is presented to an individual, corporate or nonprofit entity devoted to building a stronger Gulf Coast community and, therefore, strengthening the impact of the University of South Alabama. University of South Alabama.



JAMES "JAKE" GOSA '73
Distinguished Service Award recipient

After graduating from South Alabama in 1973, Jake Gosa built a career that saw him rise to become CEO of the American Woodmark Corporation.

During his time leading American Woodmark, the manufacturer grew from \$220 million to \$838 million in annual revenue and was named to Forbes Magazine's 200 Best Small Companies List.

In 2017, Gosa served as the Executive in Residence at USA's Mitchell College of Business. He was named a Mitchell College of Business Alumni Fellow and received the Mitchell College Impact Award. He has endowed scholarships in the Mitchell College of Business and the College of Nursing.

Gosa and his wife, Pat, live in Amelia Island, Florida.



JOSEPH F. "JOE" BUSTA JR., PH.D.

V. Gordon Moulton Distinguished Service Award recipient

In 2002, President Gordon Moulton tasked Joe Busta with creating a new office of development and alumni relations. Under Busta's leadership, the division exceeded its first capital campaign goal by \$18 million. He also grew the USA Alumni Association into a national organization with 5,000 members.

One of his final projects at South was leading the campaign for a new alumni center. In 2013, Busta successfully secured the lead gift to name the MacQueen Alumni Center, enabling the project to move forward. Before retiring in 2017, Busta began the University's second comprehensive campaign with a goal of \$150 million.

He and his wife, Jackie, reside in Orange Beach.

INSPIRATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Established in 2020, the Inspirational Achievement Award recognizes a University of South Alabama employee who has served the University for a minimum of 10 years and has demonstrated outstanding loyalty and support to South, has made a significant professional impact beyond his or her assigned job duties and who exemplifies personal integrity and stature. Going forward, this award will be known as the William J. "Happy" Fulford III Inspirational Achievement Award.



MERCERIA LUDGOOD
Community Partner Award

Merceria Ludgood grew up in the Crichton neighborhood of Mobile. She received her undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of Alabama. Ludgood also earned a law degree from the Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C., and a Master of Divinity from the Alabama Interdenominational Seminary.

She has been selected for programs such as Leadership Mobile, Leadership Alabama and the Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship. As a Kellogg fellow, Ludgood traveled to 17 countries on five continents, interviewing female leaders.

In 1995, Ludgood served as director of the Office of Program Services for the Legal Services Corporation in Washington, D.C. She returned home to Mobile in 1998 and served as a full-time assistant county attorney and assistant city attorney, respectively, until she was elected to the Mobile County Commission in 2007.

Ludgood and her husband, Carlos Williams, reside in Mobile.



WILLIAM J. "HAPPY" FULFORD III '73

Inspirational Achievement Award

William J. "Happy" Fulford III '73, '91 A Mobile native, William "Happy" Fulford graduated with a bachelor's degree in marketing from USA's Mitchell College of Business in 1973. In 1991, he was awarded a master's degree in educational leadership from the College of Education and Professional Studies.

In 1981, Fulford returned to South as director of alumni affairs, then director of development and alumni affairs and, finally, as executive director of governmental relations, a position he held until his retirement in 2019.

In 2019, the Alabama House and Senate passed a resolution recognizing Fulford as an exceptional administrator who served others and distinguished himself through his professional contributions.

Fulford served in the Army Reserve for many years. He also served in the Middle East during Operation Desert Storm before retiring in 2002 with the rank of colonel.

He and his wife, Sherri, live in Alexander City, Alabama.



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USA HEALTH
Transforming Medicine

THREE NEW FACILITIES
ALLOW EXPANDED
CARE THROUGHOUT
THE MOBILE AREA.

Advancing healthcare through growth



Three significant USA Health construction projects, all scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021, will continue the transformation not only of USA Health, but the healthcare environment for the Mobile region.

“As the only academic health system in the Upper Gulf Coast region, USA Health holds the unique position of providing primary care through the most advanced care in our burn unit, advanced neonatal intensive care unit and Level I trauma center,” said John V. Marymont, M.D., MBA, vice president for medical affairs and dean of the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. “Each level of service has an appropriate setting, and we continue with our long-term effort to ensure the people within our region have access to care and benefit from our healthcare experts.”

FANNY MEISLER TRAUMA CENTER

The largest of the three projects, the Fanny Meisler Trauma Center at University Hospital will nearly triple the size of the emergency department and trauma center to 27,000 square feet and nearly double the number of examination rooms to 41. This will enhance the hospital’s ability to accommodate patients with traumatic injuries and respond to mass casualty situations in the region. A \$5 million gift from local businessman and philanthropist Bert Meisler and a \$4 million economic development grant from the state of Alabama have enabled USA Health to continue to meet the trauma needs of our community.

“The importance of a Level I trauma center in our region cannot be overstated,” said Owen Bailey, MHA, chief executive officer for USA Health. “Many of the large industrial players won’t think of expanding into an area if this type of facility is not nearby. And the care that we provide for those who are the victims of car accidents or other traumatic events is so important to our patients.”

MIDTOWN CLINIC

As part of its strategic growth, USA Health knew a critical component was the need to increase its presence within the community, especially in primary care. To this end, USA Health partnered with Mobile Diagnostic Center in 2017. The success of this effort is no more evident than the planned opening later this year of a new location in midtown Mobile for USA Health Mobile Diagnostic Center. The 10,000-square-foot, two-story building will house MDC on the first floor and USA Health specialty practices on the second floor. This will provide patients with the convenience of a single location for many of their healthcare needs.

This facility also marks MDC’s return to its roots in providing outstanding healthcare to the people of our region.

“We are thrilled that we have the chance to come back to where it all began nearly 40 years ago,” said Dr. Jimmy Walker, one of the original members in the practice. “What is even better is that through our relationship with USA Health, we are bringing back much more in terms of healthcare and expertise than we had when we were here originally. These are very exciting times.”

“All of us at USA Health recognized the value in partnering with highly respected community-based physicians to improve patient access to the advanced healthcare associated with academic medicine,” Marymont said. “The relationship with Dr. Walker and everyone associated with Mobile Diagnostic Center has enabled this vision to become reality and this facility is a demonstration of it.”





FREESTANDING EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Looking to increase access to specialized healthcare and emergency services, USA Health has begun construction of a free-standing emergency department in west Mobile. The facility will be located on property bounded by Hillcrest Road and Old Shell Road, making it more convenient for people in the area to receive advanced care.

“When this facility is completed, the people who live in west Mobile will have easier access to some of the most advanced care in our region,” Marymont said. “Patients will be able to come to a state-of-the-art facility with a full complement of imaging services and be seen by board-certified emergency medicine physicians.”

Free-standing Emergency Departments are a relatively new concept in Alabama with only a few being in operation, including one in Daphne, one in Saraland and locations around Birmingham. USA Health has been developing its plans for the facility since receiving state approval through the Certificate of Need process in 2018.

USA Health anticipates up to 15,000 patient visits per year at the location, which will house significant imaging capabilities including a CT scanner, an MRI, X-ray and ultrasound and mammography. Additionally, a helipad, as required for all free-standing emergency departments, will be located at the facility, with likely use being to take patients from the location to other facilities in rare situations.

“PATIENTS WILL BE ABLE TO COME TO A STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY WITH A FULL COMPLEMENT OF IMAGING SERVICES AND BE SEEN BY BOARD-CERTIFIED EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIANS.”

“Over the past several years, the growth in the western portion of Mobile has been significant,” Bailey said. “This facility will enable people to have their emergency healthcare needs met in a nearby and convenient location that is part of

the region’s only academic health system dedicated to helping people lead longer, better lives.”

The new facility also will help in the training of future generations of healthcare providers. USA this year started an emergency medicine residency program to increase the number of physicians specifically trained for emergency medicine. In addition to the medical school, USA has introductory and advanced educational programs in nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, physician assistant, radiological services and speech pathology and audiology. “Being located adjacent to the University campus will enhance the convenience of our healthcare learners and provide them with an additional training site,” Marymont said.

“While these three projects are indicative of the strategic, revolutionary growth occurring within USA Health, they are only the most recent demonstrations of our transformation,” Bailey said. “We look forward to telling you more in the near future.”

FOR THE BOYS

**FORMER JAGUAR
STUDENT-ATHLETE USES
EXPERIENCES ON AND
OFF THE COURT TO
PREPARE BOYS FOR LIFE.**



Mansa El has been coaching high school boys for three years, but she still turns heads in Houston. The former University of South Alabama point guard remains one of the few women in the country coaching boys basketball. At Cypress Springs High School, where she is an assistant coach of the varsity team, El hears the occasional comments from fans, parents and coaches. Even referees join the conversation.

“I had one ref ask what I knew about basketball,” she said. “I had another one say I would get more calls if I wasn’t so distracting on the sideline. The funny thing is that it never comes from the kids. The kids are the only ones that matter, and they don’t care. I do think it’s a good thing for the boys playing for me. They’re learning about adversity that they wouldn’t have known.”

El, 30, played for the women’s team at South from 2010 to 2013. She went on to become a graduate assistant and assistant coach at Canisius College, West Virginia Wesleyan and the University of Houston. Along the way, she earned a master’s degree in human resources development and started a graphic design business called Magnify Creative Services.

Her creative work includes designing promotional material for college sports programs.

“HAVING A HAND IN PREPARING THEM FOR LIFE, THAT’S A PRETTY GOOD FEELING.”

“That’s something I’ve been doing for years,” she said. “Different coaches I’ve known over the years will come to me for different things. I’ve actually worked for the women’s basketball team at South Alabama.”

The Jaguars finished with a winning record in each of the three seasons El played in Mobile. The hardest part for El was injuring her knee – twice – and having to work her way back through surgery and rehabilitation.

“Those were some trying times, but that was the development of my mental toughness,” El said. “I was intent on learning more about the game, going over the scouting reports, following practice from a stationary bike on the side of the court.”

Rick Pietri, who was her coach at South 10 years ago, remembers what El went through as a Jaguar. She couldn’t play more than two days in a row, because of soreness in her knees, but she managed to stay focused on the team and help younger players learn the game.

“She was very thoughtful, very sensitive to everything going on around her,” Pietri said. “She was a vegetarian who ate right and had diverse interests. She was somebody I thought could become anything she wanted to be.”

When El became a coach, he thought her combination of tenacity and tact would help her succeed. At South, El had a nickname – “Whispers” – that came from her teammates.

“She had this thin, high-pitched tone, but she also had this gravelly hard voice she used on the court,” Pietri said, laughing. “As a coach, she’s probably using that hard voice.”

THE VALUE OF DISCIPLINE

El’s mother is from Houston, but her father comes from Ghana in West Africa. For years, he led a traditional dance team on tours of the United States. “The Ishangi Family Dancers,” El said. “We grew up dancing and playing instruments. We traveled around the country, from the Smithsonian to small schools and rec centers. I learned the value of discipline, practicing your craft every day. It gave me great footwork, I will say that. I was great at every sport I ever played.”

At 10, El began playing basketball in Houston. Her high school team won a Texas state championship. She played a year at North Texas State before transferring to South Alabama. Coaching finally brought her home to Houston.

Years of college basketball helped her appreciate working with younger athletes in high school. “Having a hand in preparing them for life, that’s a pretty good feeling,” she said. “I think a lot of times, by the time you get to college, it’s too late.” Coaching teenaged boys was not a difficult transition to make. The X’s and O’s remain the same. The only change is that she has to make sure her players are dressed before she enters the locker room.

“When people ask me the difference, I say they’re very similar,” El said, laughing. “They’re the same creatures we used to be at that age. They want attention, they crave attention. They want to be liked, they want their coach to like them. Everybody wants to be a star, and nobody knows their role.”

COACH EL CONNECTIONS

In recent years, women coaches have become more common on men’s teams. Becky Hammon is a well-known assistant coach with the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA.

In Houston, El has been featured in newspaper stories and television broadcasts. She tries to take it in stride. A little publicity for her team is a plus. At Cypress Springs, El started out as an English teacher. Then there was an opening for a junior varsity basketball coach. She met with the head coach, they talked for three hours, and he offered her the job.

“THEY’RE THE SAME CREATURES WE USED TO BE AT THAT AGE. THEY WANT ATTENTION, THEY CRAVE ATTENTION. THEY WANT TO BE LIKED, THEY WANT THEIR COACH TO LIKE THEM.”

“When I met the team, he’d already introduced me, already shown them my highlight film from South Alabama, so that was a first-level connection,” she said. “And they knew I’d coached at the college level, so that was second-level, because that’s what they aspire to be.”

El’s goal is to become a head coach of a high school team, but she isn’t sure when she’ll get the opportunity. She has other options.

“I think of consulting, now and then, using my master’s in human resources,” El said. “I think it would be cool to go in and help people assess what their issues are.”

During the summer, she works with boys and girls in a Houston AAU basketball program called FAM Elite. The emphasis is on basic skills, conditioning and teamwork. FAM stands for Fundamentals And Mechanics.

El has stayed in touch with some of the Jaguar players she met in Mobile. She’s been to a few of their weddings. One of her teammates now lives in Houston.

It’s been awhile since anyone called her “Whispers.” On the basketball court at Cypress Springs, boys call her “Coach” or “Coach El.” Other titles are trickier.

“Oh, it’s hilarious,” El says. “They’ll be like, ‘Yes, sir, yes, sir -- no, wait! -- yes, ma’am, yes, ma’am.’ It happens all the time. I don’t think it matters to them.”



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