



# THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

THE PLAN FOR ACADEMIC  
REORGANIZATION: VISION 2020

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE II – SPRING 2018

## **OVERVIEW**

The Plan for Academic Reorganization arose from the commitment of academic affairs at The University of Southern Mississippi to enhance the distinctiveness of academic programs and to create a sustainable model for academic programming. The academic leadership at all levels and faculty advisory bodies have played a critical role in shaping the reorganization initiative and the concomitant success of academic programs. The participation of faculty in the first phases of this process has been critical – faculty were encouraged to think boldly, talk to colleagues across campus, and propose transformative ideas, and they have.

The fall 2016 request for proposals resulted in 44 submissions that included more than 100 faculty participants. These proposals were submitted to the Provost for consideration and subsequently reviewed and discussed by Deans and by leadership of the faculty governance bodies, the Academic Leadership Council (ALC). These bodies assessed and discussed the proposals and provided insightful, cogent summaries to the Office of the Provost. Following the initial presentation of the *Comprehensive Plan for Academic Reorganization*, two comment periods ensued with the final comment period ending on May 12, 2017.

The board of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning unanimously approved the plan in July 2017. On September 15, 2017, I as Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, formed four committees and identified a liaison to guide the first phase of Vision 2020 implementation. The liaison and the four committees - the Academic Reorganization Steering Committee (ARSC), the Academic Structure and Evaluation Committee (ASEC), the Faculty Governance and Representation Committee (FGRC), and the Academic Staff Structure Committee (ASSC) – received charges with these aspirational goals in view:

- Design evaluative practices that allow for greater flexibility and innovation as we recognize and expand upon the strengths in our reorganized community;
- Increase our ability to respond to changes in the external environment, particularly appropriation rescissions and/or reductions; and
- Attain administrative coherence, consistency in practice across disciplines, and opportunities for collaboration from arts to sciences and in professional programming.

More than 50 faculty and staff served on these committees, all of whom were asked to think broadly about new and innovative ways of shaping the future of the academy at the University of Southern Mississippi. Sixteen proposals resulted from that effort. Throughout this intensive endeavor, the process has been structured as exceptionally inclusive and deliberative, designed to address major issues and guide a powerful, creative, appropriate restructuring that will enable us to respond effectively to the challenges we face. One committee member involved in the Implementation Phase I said the following:

I've been involved with the university for more than 30 years... This is the first time that I am aware of that the senior administration has really fostered a faculty and staff-based process. That's why we have seen the engagement, enthusiasm and commitment. It is a process that faculty and staff are embracing. To the administration's credit, they've fostered and are now continuing to nurture this process. It is truly organic, and I have full confidence that the outcomes will be institutionalized—in part or in whole because of what is occurring now. It is a new day and new opportunity for The University of Southern Mississippi.

Another member observed that “what has been reassuring is that people have come together and said, ‘We are not going to be intimidated by change. We are going to embrace this opportunity.’ Change is scary, but it is also an amazing opportunity to be intentional about who it is we want to be.”

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

I concur with the steering committee's observation that the core principles that should guide future steps should include enhanced emphasis upon staff, faculty and leadership development; flexibility and increased operational efficiency; enhanced university-wide communications; improved procedural consistency; and heightened fairness in organizational structure, compensation and evaluation. I support the steering committee's recommendations, as expanded below:

1. Appoint an Academic Reorganization Implementation Committee to oversee Phase II with membership as follows:

### **Committee Chairs\*\***

Jeffrey Wiggins, Implementation Committee Chair  
Jacob Breland, Committee on Academic Structure and Evaluation  
Kelly Lester, Committee on Faculty Governance and Representation  
Kelly James-Penot, Academic Staff Structure Committee

### **Liaisons**

Ellen Weinauer, Deans Council  
Marek Steedman, Advisory & Governance Bodies  
Kenneth Zantow, Gulf Coast  
Martha Resavy, Staff Council

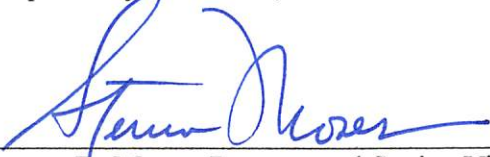
2. Implement each of the sixteen proposals, either in full or in part as guided by the Academic Reorganization Implementation Committee, and as appropriately modified or enhanced through university-wide feedback by priority date - July 1, 2018 or July 1 2019.

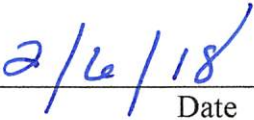
3. Keep the ASEC, FGRC, and ASSC committees intact to oversee respective implementation activities during the Vision 2020 rollout period. These committees should lead the work as the originators of the proposed models. Governance and advisory bodies should be consulted throughout the Phase II process and be given opportunities to provide feedback and input as appropriate. The work of such bodies on matters specific to the reorganization will be in procedural abeyance\* until recommendations are presented for final approval, without delay to the timeline established by the Implementation Committee.

4. Include more USM faculty and staff at the Gulf Park Campus, GCRL, and Stennis Space Center for reorganization implementation. Specifically, create Coast committees to address proposal impact on operations, including recommendations that expand or clarify the proposals as they bear on the coast.

5. Hand off implementation to relevant university/academic units during the 2018-19 academic year.

Respectfully submitted,

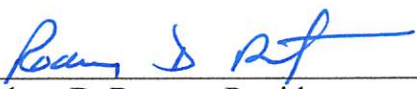
  
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Steven R. Moser, Provost and Senior Vice  
President for Academic Affairs

  
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Date

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*Procedural abeyance\* – temporary inactivity or the suspension of standard procedures. In all matters of the reorganization, by virtue of endorsements below, the broad framework has been accepted. The details are to be addressed by the appointed faculty and staff reorganization/implementation committees\*\*, who shall collaborate with current governance structures to ensure all voices are heard prior to submitting final recommendations.*

Approved By

  
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Rodney D. Bennett, President

  
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Date