

# STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ONLINE LEARNING



# INTRODUCTION

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Encompassing a main campus in Hattiesburg and five teaching and research sites along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the University of Southern Mississippi is the leading research university of the Gulf South, with over 90 different academic programs for undergraduate, graduate, and international students.

Like many institutions across the country, the University of Southern Mississippi faced rising competition both regionally and online. The University sought to recruit and retain students more effectively, preparing many for careers in a post-Katrina landscape where the need for skilled professionals in healthcare, education, and other areas was rising.

In order to tackle these multifaceted challenges, the University approached online learning in a very different way, engaging students at a higher level through improved quality of courses, pedagogical support, and professional development programs designed to assist faculty with one on one and group training, student support, and faculty oversight through the Online Learning Steering Committee. Today, the University of Southern Mississippi leads the state in online learning.

Additionally, the University faced numerous historical challenges:

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Online courses would need to serve and appeal to students beyond the traditional 18-21 year old demographic, and in parts of the state not convenient to a University of Southern Mississippi campus.

## **BRANDING**

For distance-learning students, the online classroom would be the face of the university, so its design and functionality would need to communicate the identity of the University of Southern Mississippi clearly and consistently.

## **FACULTY BUY-IN**

The University's previous efforts to develop online programs found limited faculty buy-in. New program development will need to be a closely collaborative process with faculty and administration.

## **FINANCIAL CONTEXT**

A budget did not exist to fully support the ongoing needs of online development, as well as the potential for growth and scalability. Understanding the potential for growth, the University committed substantial funds to launch and support a truly dynamic and well-planned program to bring the University of Southern Mississippi to the forefront in online learning in both the state and region.

The University of Southern Mississippi has identified two fundamental initiatives that underscore the institutional vision and mission: recruitment and student success. The institution is responding to these initiatives by employing numerous strategies. Over the past six months, a number of new student success programs have been implemented, including the creation of the office of New Students and Retention Programs and a website devoted to student success. On the Hattiesburg campus, a new position, titled Associate Provost for Academic Excellence, was created and filled; the Gulf Park campus now has an Interim Associate Provost. Both of these individuals are responsible for enhancing academic success and engagement programs for students. The University is advancing a culture where student success is central to every decision.

The online student has unique, individual needs that can be more difficult to evaluate and to resolve. This document is provided to assist faculty, staff, students, and other community members in translating their University experience into an effective and successful one. Online learners expect and deserve the same quality of instruction, infrastructure, and support as face-to-face students receive. They value and require support, resources, and connection to the institution as much as traditional students do.

Many campus entities are involved in the infrastructure, development, delivery, support, and assessment of online learning. Support services for online learners include information technology, instructional technology, libraries, student services, financial, business office, and academic support. Faculty members require training and support, both technical and pedagogical, and they need to understand institutional considerations for quality, assessment, and review of their courses. Students demand assistance with online learning, as well as navigation through institutional processes and activities.

This document addresses the vision, objectives, measurements, and actions that comprise The University of Southern Mississippi's strategic plan regarding online learning. It contains topics that are essential to online learning: organizational structure; college and departmental academic plans, reports, and assessment; technology tools and resources; online course development, marketing, recruitment, and support; best practices and resources; student success services; faculty training, mentoring, collaboration, and support; learning goals and action steps; and institutional evaluation, programmatic assessment and improvement of online offerings. Data is presented to illustrate the progression of online learning and to provide context to these goals, objectives, actions, and measures.

# INTRODUCTION

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While this plan defines and summarizes strategies for the online learning environment, it is important to recognize that all practices described here truly apply to all learners, not simply those in virtual classrooms. The practices outlined in this document should apply to face-to-face and hybrid courses, as well as to online classes. Quality education includes active engagement by teachers and learners; supportive academic communities; varied educational experiences; social and cognitive presence; interaction between students, content, and instructors; frequent communication via assorted channels; and continuous enhancements to content, delivery, and outcomes. These should be incorporated in every course offering and be used to evaluate the entire teaching and learning experience.

## ONLINE VISION STATEMENT

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### UNIVERSITY VISION

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The University of Southern Mississippi aspires to be a model student-centered public research university that prepares students to thrive in a global society by providing high quality programs and transformative experiences in a community distinguished by inclusiveness.

### ONLINE VISION

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The University of Southern Mississippi will gain local and national recognition as a leader in online education. Grounded in the tradition of academic excellence and transformative experience, online learning at the University of Southern Mississippi will meet the needs of our students by providing innovative and emerging technologies that reflect the same quality education received by traditional, on-campus students.

## ONLINE MISSION STATEMENT

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### UNIVERSITY MISSION

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The University of Southern Mississippi is a community of engaged citizens, operating as a public, student-centered, doctoral-granting research university serving Mississippi, the nation, and the world. The University is dedicated to scholarship and learning, integrating students at all levels in the creation and application of knowledge through excellence in teaching, research, creative activities, outreach, and service. The University nurtures student success by providing distinctive and competitive educational programs embedded in a welcoming environment, preparing a diverse student population to embark on meaningful life endeavors.

### ONLINE MISSION

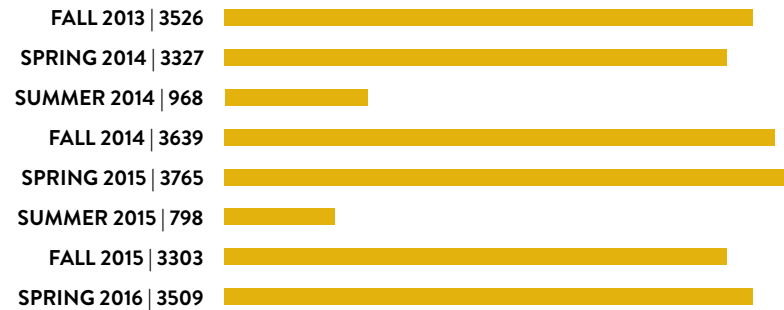
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The University of Southern Mississippi's delivery of online courses and programs aims to provide flexible, responsive, student-centered education through accessibility, competitive programs, support, collaboration, and excellence in teaching.

# CURRENT LANDSCAPE: COURSE DELIVERY

Data as of 1/28/16 excluding dissertation/research hrs/practicums/internships/thesis.

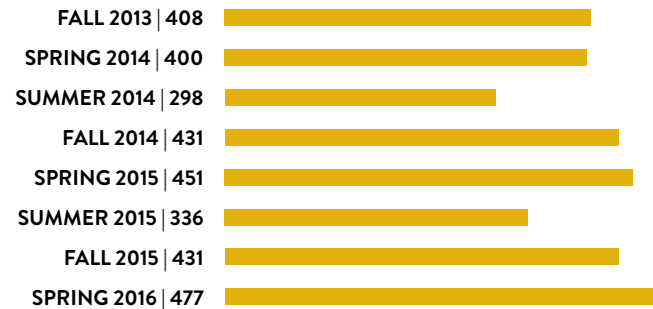
## FACE-TO-FACE COURSES



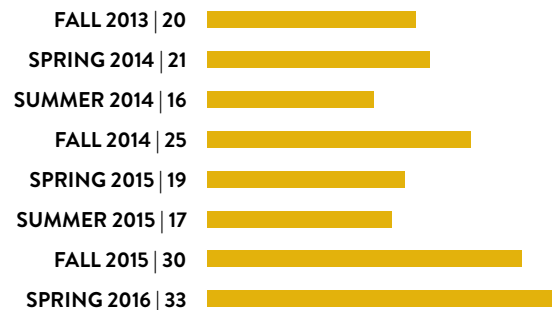
The last three years of academic data at the University of Southern Mississippi has shown an increase in the amount of online courses offered by academic departments. An approximate increase of 12% in online courses was reported from the academic year 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 (excluding summer semesters, as data from Summer 2016 is not yet available).

There was a 13% increase in fully online courses between the Summer 2014 and Summer 2015 semesters. The data to the left indicates that the growth in online courses does not mirror the trends in face-to-face courses being offered by the University.

## ONLINE COURSES



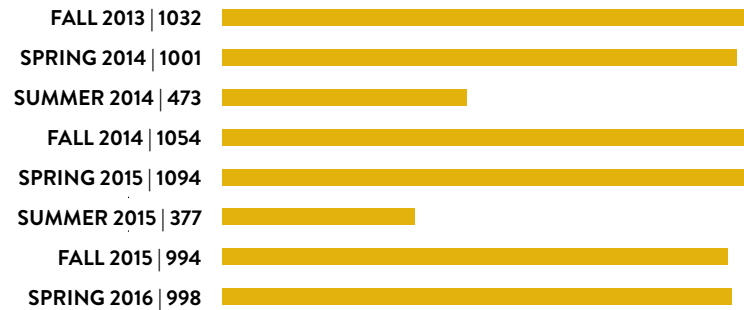
## HYBRID COURSES



# CURRENT LANDSCAPE: FACULTY INFORMATION

Data as of 1/28/16 excluding dissertation/research hrs/practicums/internships/thesis.

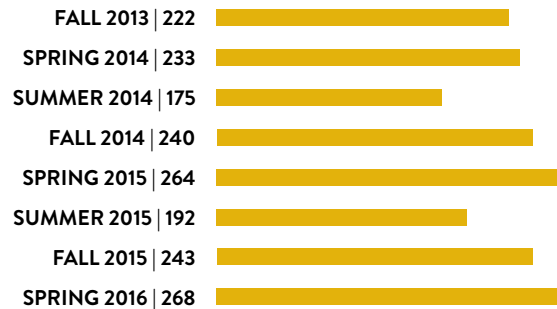
## FACE-TO-FACE FACULTY



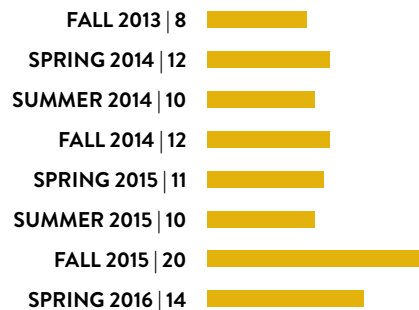
Similar to the rising pattern of online courses being offered at The University of Southern Mississippi, an increase in faculty teaching using the online platform has also occurred over the last three years. Online faculty increased from academic year 2013-2014 approximately 12% in 2015-2016 (excluding summer semesters, as data from Summer 2016 is not yet available).

There was an approximate 10% increase in online faculty between the Summer 2014 and Summer 2015 semesters. The data to the left indicates that the growth in online faculty does not mirror the trends in face-to-face faculty data.

## ONLINE FACULTY



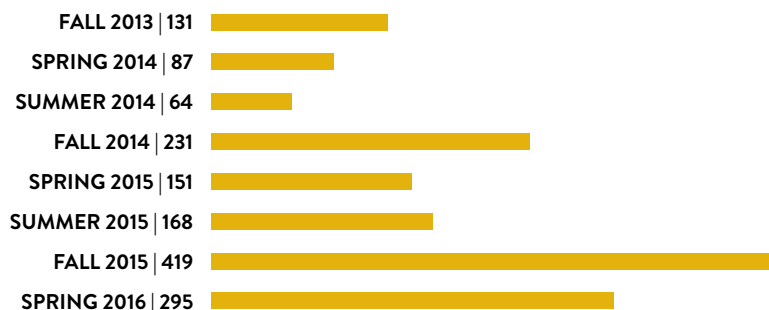
## HYBRID FACULTY



# CURRENT LANDSCAPE: STUDENT DATA

Data as of 1/28/16 excluding dissertation/research hrs/practicums/internships/thesis.

## FULLY ONLINE NEW ADMISSIONS BY SEMESTER



## 2013—2014 YEAR TOTAL

282

## 2014—2015 YEAR TOTAL

550

## 2015—2016 YEAR TOTAL\*

714

\*EXCLUDES SUMMER 2016 DATA

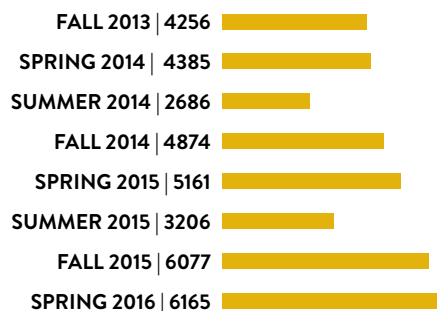
Over the past three years, the University of Southern Mississippi has seen a substantial rise in the number of both fully online students and students enrolled in online courses. For the purpose of this report, a fully online student is identified as one who has been admitted to a fully online degree program where 100% of the classes are offered online, meaning students are not required to come to campus. Students enrolled in online classes are identified as students who are enrolled in at least one course that is delivered 100% online.

An approximate increase of 228% in newly admitted students in fully online programs was reported from academic year 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 (excluding summer semesters, as data from Summer 2016 is not yet available). There was a 163% increase in newly admitted students in fully online programs between the Summer 2014 and Summer 2015 semesters.

# CURRENT LANDSCAPE: STUDENT DATA

Data as of 1/28/16 excluding dissertation/research hrs/practicums/internships/thesis.

## STUDENTS IN ONLINE CLASSES



### 2013—2014 YEAR TOTAL

11,327

### 2014—2015 YEAR TOTAL

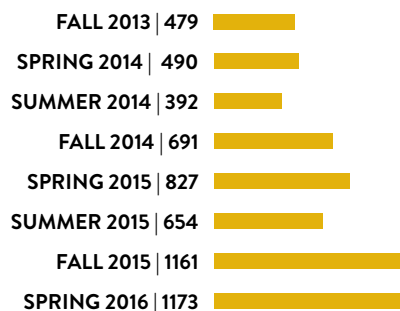
13,241

### 2015—2016 YEAR TOTAL\*

12,242

\*EXCLUDES SUMMER 2016 DATA

## FULLY ONLINE STUDENTS



### 2013—2014 YEAR TOTAL

1,361

### 2014—2015 YEAR TOTAL

2,172

### 2015—2016 YEAR TOTAL\*

2,334

\*EXCLUDES SUMMER 2016 DATA

An approximate increase of 42% in students taking online classes was reported from academic year 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 (excluding summer semesters, as data from Summer 2016 is not yet available). There was a 19% increase in students taking online classes between the Summer 2014 and Summer 2015 semesters.

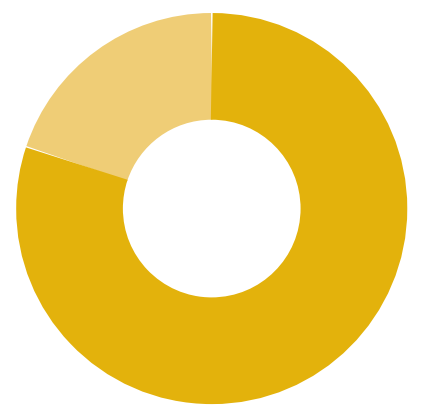
An approximate increase of 141% in fully online students (students enrolled in a fully online degree program) was reported from academic year 2013-2014 to 2015-2016 (excluding summer semesters, as data from Summer 2016 is not yet available). There was approximately a 67% increase in fully online students (students enrolled in a fully online degree program) between the Summer 2014 and Summer 2015 semesters.



# CURRENT LANDSCAPE: STUDENT DATA

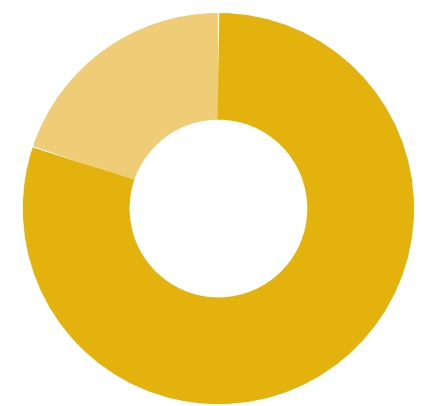
Data as of 1/28/16 excluding dissertation/research hrs/practicums/internships/thesis.

## ENROLLMENT BY LOCATION



IN-STATE RESIDENT | 11,727  
OUT-OF-STATE RESIDENT | 2,824

## ENROLLMENT BY PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME

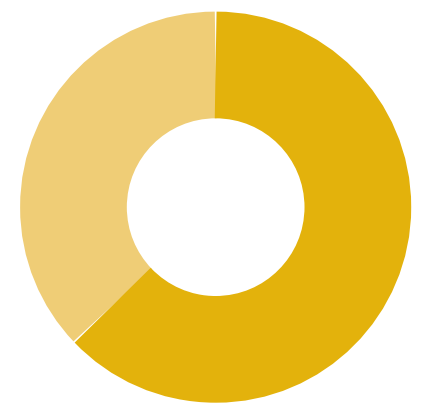


FULL-TIME | 11,735  
PART-TIME | 2,816

The University of Southern Mississippi is home to a variety of students with diverse backgrounds, demonstrating the dynamic environment of our university. The data reflects all populations of University of Southern Mississippi students, including traditional (face-to-face) students, students in online classes, students enrolled in hybrid degree programs, as well as fully online degree seeking students.

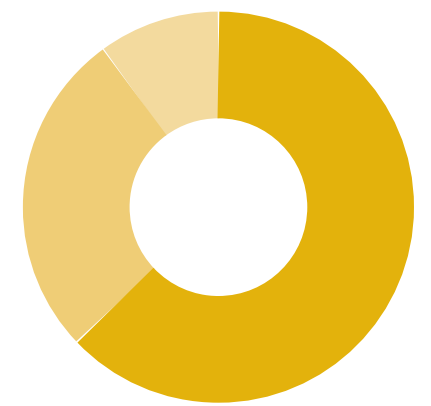
As of Fall 2015, the University reported a total enrollment of 14,551 students. See data on this page for information regarding gender, enrollment status, location, age, and ethnicity.

## ENROLLMENT BY GENDER



FEMALE | 9,210  
MALE | 5,341

## ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY



WHITE: 9,096 | BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN: 3,963  
HISPANIC/LATINO: 436 | ASIAN: 175 | AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE: 52 | NATIVE HAWAIIAN/OTH PAC ISLAND: 10 | MULTI-RACIAL: 350 | NON-RESIDENT ALIEN: 360 | NOT SPECIFIED: 109

## AVERAGE STUDENT AGE

25

## TOTAL ENROLLMENT

14,551

# GENERAL BUDGET NARRATIVE

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## SALARIES

Over the last three years, the University has expended almost \$500,000 in instructional, technological, and pedagogical support by professional trainers and instructional design specialists focused on online learning. Additionally, the promotion and marketing of programs and courses through web and social media outlets has resulted in approximately \$240,00 in salaries over that same time period. Student Support personnel has resulted in almost \$140,00 over three years.

## SUPPORT STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

To be competitive as well as efficient, the University invests in professional development for the online learning support staff. Over the last three years, the Learning Enhancement Center staff that support online learning have attended conferences such as Blackboard World, Hobsons, and Google Adwords and Analytics School. Cost for professional development does not usually exceed \$2000 per employee annually.

## FACULTY STIPENDS AND DEPARTMENTAL INCENTIVES

Approximately \$60,000 has been spent over the last three years through faculty incentives for developing online courses and programs. Each faculty member receives a \$1500 stipend, and the department receives a \$500 stipend. Additionally, departments who develop and deliver a fully online program receive substantial assistance in branding, marketing, and social media outreach to potential students. These services are provided at no charge to the department and are rendered through the professional staff in the Learning Enhancement Center.

## SOFTWARE

The University utilizes the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) for online course delivery. This also includes Blackboard Collaborate for synchronous learning activities and 24/7 student support through Blackboard Student Support Services. The cost for the Blackboard LMS, support services, and managed hosting is approximately \$600,000 annually.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING

Attempting to reach the target audience demographics who indicate they are interested in online learning usually means outreach through social media. Facebook ads and Google Adwords are typically used in promoting programs. The Learning Enhancement Center provides matching funds up to \$1500 to any department that chooses to use our services to promote and advertise their online programs through this method. A separate marketing budget is utilized so proper tracking can be done to determine ROI.

## EVENTS

Each year, the Learning Enhancement Center offers a professional conference for faculty and staff from not only this institution, but also from other higher ed institutions within the state and around the region. Educators Connect has become a conference focused on best practices for teaching and learning, both face to face and in the online environment. Concurrent sessions, nationally recognized keynote speakers, and breakout sessions comprise this one-day free conference. Attendees are not charged any fees, and costs for the conference are covered by vendors who attend and participate. A substantial amount is also provided by the Learning Enhancement Center. This conference typically costs anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually. The University expects the growth of online to increase exponentially over the next three to five years. Appropriate and adequate resources will be determined as the need develops and will require support from the institution's administration.

# ONLINE LEARNING GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

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## GOAL 1: THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI IS TO CONTINUE TO BE THE LEADER IN ONLINE EDUCATION IN MISSISSIPPI.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- The University of Southern Mississippi will meet the needs of online students by increasing the total number of quality courses and programs offered online.
- The University of Southern Mississippi will support recruitment and marketing efforts, resulting in increased enrollment and success of online students.

### ASSESSMENT MEASURES

- Receiving national and state ranking through publications
- Comparison of enrollment data and online programs offered by other universities
- Evaluation of student satisfaction, retention, and graduation rate
- Annual evaluation, financial support, and infrastructure to assure it reflects online growth

### ASSOCIATED TASKS

- Provide initial and continuous training opportunities for online faculty
- Provide resources and services to ensure the success of online students
- Evaluate course quality utilizing a rubric that encompasses best practices
- Create additional student surveys measuring student satisfaction from recruitment to graduation
- Create evaluation for online programs and courses

# ONLINE LEARNING GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

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## GOAL 2: THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE SUPPORT STRUCTURES TO FOSTER RETENTION, PROGRESSION, AND GRADUATION WITHIN ONLINE LEARNING.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Maintain scheduled communication plans for online learners.
- Collaborate with the Office of the Registrar to remove barriers for online students when completing critical University paperwork and processes.
- Provide equitable, engaging, and comprehensive academic support for distance learners.
- Provide equitable, engaging, and comprehensive student support for distance learners.
- Create specific opportunities for online learners to become involved in campus activities.

### ASSESSMENT MEASURES

- Percent of increased undergraduate graduation rates
- Percent of increased graduate graduation rates
- Percent of returning undergraduate students from semester to semester
- Percent of returning graduate students from semester to semester
- Student course evaluations
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Graduation/Exit surveys
- Usage reports for academic services
- Attendance records
- Alumni Association membership

### ASSOCIATED TASKS

- Continue email campaign throughout semester to newly admitted and registered students, notifying them of orientation opportunities, upcoming drop/withdrawal and financial deadlines, as well as advisement and registration.
- Contact students who did not return from prior semester (not including summer) in hope of identifying issues that may benefit from our assistance.
- Continue and update live Blackboard Orientation.
- Streamline an online process for Change of Major Form, Academic Suspension Petition, and Degree Application using the current online process for adding/dropping a class with permission and withdrawing from the University.
- University-wide implementation of “Starfish”.
- Initiate peer mentoring for online learners and restructure current section of GS 101 to be more specific to the online learner in collaboration with the Office of New Students and Retention Programs.
- Increase availability of online tutoring in online courses and continued support from Writing and Speaking Center.
- Collaborate with specific Student Affairs entities to offer workshops, career fairs, telemedicine, and student organization memberships for online learners.
- Create an online presence in the Student Government Association and offer voting for online students.
- Forward “Welcome Packs” and invitations to campus events to online students, host a graduation reception, and offer discounts for athletic events to online students.

# ONLINE LEARNING GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

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## GOAL 3: THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI WILL IMPLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICIES TO CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE ONLINE COURSE QUALITY, INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, AND FACULTY GUIDANCE.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Course review will help maintain and improve the quality of online learning.
- Faculty will be provided with training opportunities and support that will improve online course and program quality.
- The collaboration of all stakeholders will guide the growth, support, and quality of online learning.
- Technology will be implemented, supported, and evaluated to improve the online learning environment.

### ASSESSMENT MEASURES

- Course evaluations based on a standard rubric
- Faculty and student feedback through surveys and course evaluations
- Student retention, progression, and graduation data
- Faculty mentor/peer evaluations
- Online training assessments
- Attendance and activity of the Online Learning Steering committee
- Policies and guidance from the Online Learning Steering committee
- LMS 24/7 student support incidences
- LMS and instructional technology case submissions

### ASSOCIATED TASKS

- Departments, mentors, and faculty will evaluate all online courses to ensure content is delivered effectively utilizing a standard rubric.
- Online training modules will be developed by the Learning Enhancement Center.
- The Learning Enhancement Center will promote best online practices, instructional technology, and pedagogy.
- Training will be provided both individually and in groups on the main campus, Gulf Park campus, and online.
- Online mentor programs will be developed and implemented.
- Emerging instructional technology will be evaluated, piloted, and implemented when deemed beneficial to online faculty, students, and support staff.
- The Online Learning Steering committee will evaluate current policies and plans for online learning.
- The Online Learning Steering committee will evaluate the current online course rubric and revise as necessary.
- The Online Learning Steering committee will guide training topics and opportunities concerning instructional technology and sound pedagogy.
- Faculty and staff will adhere to online policies and utilize the online training plan as a guide to their professional development in terms of online teaching.

# ONLINE LEARNING GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

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## GOAL 4: THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI WILL INCREASE UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE ONLINE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT THROUGH STRATEGIC MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Given that the average percent of growth over the past 4 years is 65%, over the next 3 years, we hope to increase fully online student enrollment in for both undergraduate and graduate students by an average of 80%.
- Establish a dynamic and efficient digital marketing plan for recruiting students to online programs and courses.

### ASSESSMENT MEASURES

- Percent of increased enrollment in undergraduate programs
- Percent of increased enrollment in graduate programs
- Percent of money spent on marketing both undergraduate and graduate programs has a positive return on our investment. Typically, we spend 1% of the cost of undergraduate tuition to recruit an undergraduate student, and 3% of the cost of graduate tuition to recruit a graduate student
- Evaluate the effectiveness of digital advertising through the use of Google Analytics
- Evaluate the effectiveness of email marketing. Through Radius Analytics, the amount of emails opened and URLs that are clicked can be monitored and will identify the positive and negative returns on email marketing campaigns

### ASSOCIATED TASKS

- Strategically identify programs for fully online implementation.
- Identify programs where at least 50% of their major plan of study is currently being offered online. Once these programs are identified, approach department chair/director about the possibility of offering a fully online degree option in addition to their face-to-face degree.
- Continuously identify, evaluate, and improve our marketing efforts to ensure an increase in enrollment of high quality students.
- Increase the use of digital advertising, email marketing, social media, blogging, and promotional video.
- Recommend an annually increasing marketing budget tied to success and return on investment. Additionally, to increase the amount of money spent on digital marketing efforts, the online marketing budget will be used to match departmental funds given to promote their online programs.

# ONLINE LEARNING GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

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## **GOAL 5: THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI WILL EXPAND ONLINE EDUCATION IN TERMS OF ADDITIONAL COURSES, DEGREES, AND CERTIFICATES, AND WILL ENSURE THIS GROWTH IS APPROPRIATELY SUPPORTED.**

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

- Provide all programs with the opportunity to increase enrollment by reaching outside markets and non-traditional students that demand flexibility.
- Improve undergraduate enrollment by offering additional general education core courses and electives online.
- Ensure online faculty, students, technology, and staff support scales appropriately to meet the needs of online courses and program growth.

### **ASSESSMENT MEASURES**

- Evaluate the number of online courses, programs, faculty, students and support staff.
- Review literature and data that pertains to program popularity and the needs of industry and students.
- Annual evaluation of the budget used to support online learning in terms of technology, faculty, staff, and marketing.

### **ASSOCIATED TASKS**

- Identify programs close to being 100% online.
- Work with faculty and departments to convert courses and programs to 100% online.
- Identify programs that are in high demand in the region and nation.
- Identify and convert courses that can be used across multiple degrees and programs.
- Outline additional budget requirements needed by departments and support entities as courses and programs are converted.

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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## ONLINE LEARNING STEERING COMMITTEE

The Online Learning Steering Committee was created to provide consistent leadership for academic units and faculty engaging in the development or implementation of online degrees and coursework at the University of Southern Mississippi. To this end, the Online Learning Steering Committee examines critical topics, creates policies and procedures, and provides recommendations related to online learning, as well as other duties as assigned by the Provost as related to online learning. The committee will continuously evaluate the strategic plan for online learning and provide feedback to the University community about any changes in policy and procedures or future directions.

The committee includes representatives from: Academic Council, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate, each College (excluding the Honors College and University Libraries), Gulf Park campus (2), and the Learning Enhancement Center. Additional ex-officio members from the following campus entities are also represented: Institutional Effectiveness, Institutional Research, Office of Budget and Tax Compliance, Office of Disability Accommodations, Office of the Registrar, Graduate Student Organization, and Student Government Association.

Subcommittees for ongoing projects are frequently formed. These subcommittees contain members of the Online Learning Steering Committee and representatives from the Learning Enhancement Center, and may contain members from the larger campus community. Outcomes of the subcommittees and committee result in recommendations to the Provost through the committee chair.

## THE LEARNING ENHANCEMENT CENTER

The Learning Enhancement Center provides support to faculty in their efforts to develop creative, innovative, and engaging teaching and learning environments that foster an atmosphere of critical thinking and collaboration among students, both face to face and, more specifically, in the area of online teaching and learning. In addition, the Learning Enhancement Center strives to improve faculty, staff, and student performance in the areas of new academic technologies that have a direct impact on the overall mission of the University.



# INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENT

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There are four tools used to assess and ensure that the quality of online education and support continuously improves at the University of Southern Mississippi. These assessments provide additional insight to the quality of our faculty and courses. With several of these tools being international awards, they also provide a means of recognition of excellence in online teaching, both internally and externally.

## COURSE EVALUATION RUBRIC

During the initial implementation of Eagle Learning Online, a rubric was developed to help trainers and faculty assess the effectiveness of online courses. This rubric was derived from the “Quality Matters” course evaluation rubric that was freely available at that time. It is utilized during the initial phase of converting traditional classes to online, and is the basis for the University’s annual exemplary online course awards. The major standards covered in this rubric are: Course Overview and Introduction, Learning Objectives (Competencies), Assessment and Measurement, Instructional Materials, Course Activities and Learner Interaction, Course Technology, Learner Support, and Accessibility and Usability. This rubric will be maintained and modified by the Online Steering Committee as needed.

## BLACKBOARD EXEMPLARY COURSE AWARD

Faculty are encouraged to participate in the Blackboard Exemplary Course Award program. This program recognizes faculty who develop exciting and innovative courses that represent the best in online learning. The benefits of engaging in this evaluation include reflection and self-evaluation, gaining external insight on their course design, and international recognition for excellence in online instructional design.

## QUALITY MATTERS

Over the next three years the University hopes to utilize additional resources and assessments provided by “Quality Matters,” such as Quality Matters course review and Quality Matters professional development. Quality Matters course review promotes a peer review process and provides a database of trained Quality Matters Peer Reviewers eligible for assignment to a peer review team. Any subscribing institution may conduct internal or informal reviews, or contract with Quality Matters to conduct an official review. Official Subscriber-Managed course reviews may only be conducted by eligible subscribers. Courses that successfully meet QM Rubric Standards in an official (Subscriber-Managed or QM-Managed) course review are eligible for certification and carry the Quality Matters Certification Mark that is specific to the Quality Matters Rubric version used in the course review.

Quality Matters professional development opportunities are crucial to guiding faculty towards a better understanding of online instructional design. One of these opportunities is the peer review course. It may be taken by faculty interested in learning more about the peer reviewer role. Instructional designers or faculty who do not have current online teaching experience may take the peer review course to meet institutional goals of conducting internal reviews. It is strongly suggested that all the University peer reviewers complete this course.

## SREB STANDARDS FOR QUALITY TEACHING

The SREB Standards for Online Teaching has several major focal points: academic preparation, content knowledge, attitude towards instructional technology, instructional design, course management, and instructional technology skills. Within these areas are 11 standard statements with behavioral indicators that can be used to assist faculty with assessing their instructional practices within the online environment. These standards can be used as a guide for providing training, peer-to-peer discussions, peer review, and as a tool for improved pedagogy within online learning.