The University of Southern Mississippi School of Library and Information Science has been continuously accredited since 1980 and received continued accreditation with the next comprehensive review to be conducted in 2019 (COA correspondence, June 24, 2012). This is the first biennial report since the annual review. Even in such a short time there have been notable changes at the University of Southern Miss:

- The University of Southern Mississippi's chief executive officer Dr. Martha Saunders resigned in April 2012. A national search for a new president is underway, with hopes to have a new president in place before fall 2013 semester.

- The Interim President is retired president Dr. Aubrey Lucas who sought and obtained ALA Accreditation for SLIS during his first term as president in 1980.

- The chief academic officer is Provost Denis Weisenberg; he was the interim provost at the time of the meeting with the Committee for Accreditation in June, 2012.

- In August 2012 SLIS hired Dr. J. Brenton Stewart, recent graduate of the Madison, Wisconsin PhD program, where he was a Spectrum Scholar. His interest in antebellum south print history, organization of information, social informatics and his professional experience as a cataloger make him an especially good fit for us. (Appendix III Dr. Stewart Vita)

- September 2012 the second issue of our online journal *SLIS Connecting aquila.usm.edu/slisconnecting/* was made available.

- Renewed Advisory Board met June 1, 2012, to hear a presentation of the program and discuss the issues that influence the School (Appendix I Presentation to Advisory Board).

- Construction of three additional offices in our suite has been completed as of this writing and furnishings are being purchased. Funding has been made available from the Provost, rather than through any of our program's budget.

SLIS has been situated administratively in the College of Education and Psychology since 2003. This has proven to be a very good fit, primarily because the other departments all value accreditation. Current Dean, Dr. Ann Blackwell has been a strong advocate for every member of the College and has offered support to the accreditation process through the appointment of Associate Deans, Dr. Thomas Lipscomb and Dr. Diane Fisher as the college accreditation contacts. The multiple layers of support have worked well to keep our particular needs in front of the University administration.

Information Requested by the Committee for Accreditation

In the June 24, 2012 decision letter the Committee for Accreditation requested we address five concerns.

> As part of the biennial report due December 1, 2012, please address the following concerns:
> 1. The lack of an explicit broad-based systematic planning process (Standard 1.1), including development of student learning outcome assessment at the program level;
> 2. Inadequate documented evidence that data are collected *and* utilized in the planning process (Standard 1.1);
> 3. An update of the activities of the reconstituted Advisory Council and its role in the planning process;
> 4. Progress in conducting curricular review beyond the individual course level (Standard 11.1); and
> 5. Development and retention of early career faculty (Standard 111.1).

 These questions will be addressed within the context of our BNR report of the Standards.

I: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

Standard I.1 threads through everything we do, and through every standard. We do have a "broad-based, systematic planning process that involves the constituency that a program seeks to serve. Consistent with the values of the parent institution and culture and mission of the school…" We maintain contact with our constituencies consistent with the opportunities and limitations of their and our resources. We continue to seek methods to improve mutual access and communication; adaption of improved interactive online technology such as our Collaborate classrooms, aid us in this. Our primary constituency as a state institution is Mississippi. We also serve the south eastern region, but through the

online program we serve many other states, and have international students. We periodically survey our

students, employers, graduates (Appendix I see various survey excerpts). The most recent employer

survey (February 2012) still indicates the desire for more management training in our students. This was

somewhat disappointing since we had previously added additional budgeting tasks, more fiscal and

physical planning tasks, and grant writing into core and management courses. The meeting with the

Advisory Board also supported the need for increased management focus, from political attunement, i.e.

'Being able to tell your library's story' to the delicate issues of personnel management (Appendix I

Advisory Board Minutes). This information is critical to our decision making regarding our curriculum,

and faculty hiring. We must recognize the challenges that our constituency continues to face, including

Hurricane Katrina damage which continues to be visible in our state and which has had a long-lasting

impact on state resources. The complexities of FEMA communication, personnel implications and all

aspects of management from trying to restore collections, to designing and constructing new buildings

have altered the nature of library management in Mississippi. The budgetary implications remain from

the storm, as well as the increased impact through the 2008 economic crash. More recent events such as

Hurricanes Sandy and Isaac impacted our east coast students and will continue to affect those areas for

years to come. They too will have to devise methods for increasing funding in an ever frugal future .

We maintain a presence and embrace the opportunity to interact with our Mississippi community

by annual attendance and participation in the Mississippi Library Association conference (Appendix I

Focus Group Notes). We use the opportunity of the conference to make contact with alums, students,

employers, and have held focus groups at the conference since 2002.

We have recently re-invigorated the Advisory Board (Appendix I Advisory Board Minutes). In

November, a request for comment on a proposal to move to an e-portfolio as a capstone and

comprehensive exam was distributed to the board, we are arranging an online meeting to discuss this in

February, and will have proposals for how we can implement the suggestions the board made regarding

management. The University and College planning systems will influence the speed with which we can

attempt to address the issues.

In 2007 Dr. Saunders, as the new president, led the campus in a series of dialogues with stakeholders – community, students, faculty, staff- to prepare for a new strategic institutional plan to guide us into the next 100 years. http://www.usm.edu/strategicplanning/ . Planning at all levels of the university focuses on assessment, evaluation and application of data to decision making. The School participates through representation on university and college committees in the review and analysis of existing Southern Miss strategic goals and plans, economic planning and curriculum review. We employ a monitoring assessment and evaluation system through WEAVE Online and the Teacher Education Program employs TK20. The nature of the review committees and university accrediting bodies has integrated "continuous review and revision of …vision, mission, goals, objectives, and learning outcomes" (Standards, 2008, 3) into the Southern Mississippi system. The University is engaged on all levels in broad based strategic planning, from physical plant to student enrollment and retention to academic assessment.

The WEAVE assessment tool is used by the entire university as a method of managing the data involved in student assessment for purposes of reporting to SACS and many other accrediting bodies. For our part we collect and submit data each semester based on student outcomes that are associated with multiple courses that have been related to the ALA Core Competencies, the program goals, program objectives and course objectives and learning outcomes overtime (Appendix II Program Assessment Alignment, Appendix II Mission, Goals and Objectives) As part of gathering data about students' outcomes, and program assessment (which is based in multiple approaches) SLIS, with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness designed the WEAVE collection tool we use. Since attending Dr. Ling Hwey Jeng's presentation "Student Learning Outcome Assessment: A Programs Perspective" at the New Orleans conference June 27, 2011, we have been revising and improving this collection and analysis tool based on our understanding of that presentation and other research into program and outcomes assessment. The results of the WEAVE reports are discussed at faculty meetings at the beginning and end of semester and spontaneously in other faculty meetings. The initial analysis begins with student outcomes in various courses related to specific objectives. Review of the instrument, the assessments, the

rubrics and student outcomes may reveal that assessments are not capturing the data we are interested in, or that some element of the tool, the course, the curriculum is flawed. We feel very strongly that we are moving in the right direction, but assessment is always evolving. For convenience in working with WEAVE we identified specific courses with strong assessments related to particular outcomes. We are revising this to clarify the assessment and outcome measures data results from multiple sources. We are determined to have a clearer approach to programmatic assessment from the WEAVE tool. We are continuously seeking to improve the methodology, collection and analysis of the data. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is a mentor/monitor entity that collects and reviews all of these materials. The results of WEAVE analysis informs faculty of necessary syllabi and teaching reviews.

Standard II Curriculum

The curriculum standard is tightly woven with Standard I since the curriculum should be the reflected voice of the constituencies together with the faculty's vision. Our Missions, Goals and Objectives (Appendix II Mission Goals and Objectives) are consistent with and reflected in the curriculum. We will invite the current Advisory Board, and the alumnae to comment on the current version in fall 2013.

We make every attempt to engage our constituencies as possible in regard to their ongoing challenges and resources. We regard curriculum review as a living process that we must monitor through attention to professional and research literature, the various associations' guidelines and our own observations of the library/information landscape; we seek the advice of practitioners and friends with and without formal documentation, and have reformed an advisory board in Spring 2012. The plan for work with the advisory board is for two senior faculty and one junior to establish a regular rotation of contact with the members as well as meet in chat spaces at scheduled times. A request for comment on an e-portfolio has been sent out November 2012 (Appendix II Request for Comment) and we are planning a meeting in February 2013. We had planned to hold a luncheon meeting at the October 2012 Mississippi Library Association convention, but most of the board was unavailable to attend the conference. We did hold the luncheon with 40 alums and employers interested in curriculum discussion. They offered

recommendations regarding technology issues they wish addressed. We asked for scenarios for possible comp exam questions and for suggestions as to what technology competencies are most important for students to master at this time. We are still reviewing the information received from input at that luncheon.

We have been attending and participating in the Mississippi Library Association annual conferences, since 2002. We have made presentations, held focus groups and since 2006 held alumni breakfasts for community and general discussion. Each focus group has provided an opportunity to update the body on the activities of the school and to invite discussion of the challenges they face ~~and~~ that lend themselves to being addressed through the program.

At the 2008 Mississippi Library Association conference there were requests for SLIS to offer special forums or short courses focused on particular management challenges, such as difficult patrons, budget crisis management, legal issues and grant applications. We had not resolved our institutional issues about our ability to offer short forums and continuing education until recently. The improved technology will allow us to create podcasts, real-time webinars, etc. The process is developmental at this time, but we do believe we can have some short forums in place by fall 2013. However, we did make modifications in several of our regular courses to address their concerns and increased presentations in classes by practitioners dealing with management challenges, economic impacts and difficult patrons. The 2009 and 2010 MLA groups expressed continued interest in technology and management courses and the fiscal situation in Mississippi and nationwide. We continue to review our courses for methods to better integrate 'managerial information' into more courses. We also began in 2009 to compare our educational program goals and objectives with the ALA Core Competencies and test the alignments, as well as verify the assessments (Appendix II). While we were not able to offer any 'forums' in 2009 and 2010, in 2011during the winter break we were able to offer a 'mini-session' class on Library Programing for Youth, which has now evolved and been approved as a regularly listed course in our catalog, LIS 419/519: Programs and Services for Youth. In January 2013 we will offer a mini-session course on graphic novels and manga, at the request of many students and interested alums.

In the 2011 and 2012 focus groups issues regarding management, PR, community leadership and availability of short-focus courses were still frequently mentioned. The 2011 and 2012 attendees were also more interested in the accreditation process.

The School continues to work with online technology, developing more interactive class room situations, and practicum or internship opportunities. We circulated alumni surveys in 2011-2012 asking for feedback about the program and the appropriateness of the curriculum, overall the responses were in the positive range, that they felt the curriculum appropriate, but there were still suggestions for improvement. All of this information is still under study by the curriculum committee and will no doubt lead to some changes in how we teach, what we teach and the vehicles we use to do so.

Standard III Faculty

There have been changes in faculty composition at Southern Mississippi since the 2010 BNR, and since the June COA meeting. We have hired Dr. J. Brenton Stewart as of fall 2012, and are recruiting to fill two more tenure track lines at the assistant professor level. Currently our full-time teaching complement is nine, eight members holding PhDs, one of those is a visiting assistant professor (one of the tenure track lines to be filled with a permanent person) and there is one visiting instructor. We plan to advertise for a fulltime instructor to assist with the undergraduate program. There is currently one Teaching Assistant handling two sections of an undergraduate information literacy course, we will add another Teaching Assisting in the spring. (Appendix III, Stewart vita)

We were fortunate to be able to hire Dr. Stacy Creel, (recently of St. John's University) in 2010. Dr. Creel is in third year review, her record is strong and we are certain her pre-tenure review will be positive. Dr. Stewart is being mentored by Dr. Teresa Welsh and Dr. Elizabeth Haynes, to ensure that he always has a senior faculty member to consult. This fall the provost has required all new faculty have an appointed faculty mentor, and has held training meetings for both the new faculty and the mentors. Provost Weisenberg is very engaged in creating an environment to attract and retain high caliber faculty. To that end all the hires this fall were as close to CUPA averages as possible. In our case, Dr. Stewart was hired at CUPA average, and pay adjustments were made to bring Dr. Creel and Dr. Yu closer to

CUPA average. Additionally, it was possible to obtain some salary adjustments toward CUPA average for senior faculty Dr. Teresa Welsh and Dr. Elizabeth Haynes.

Dr. Xinyu Yu is in tenure and promotion process this year. Her publications and her performance as PI of a $400,000 plus IMLS grant to support Mississippi Minority students while they earn their MLIS has demonstrated her professional growth and supports her consideration for tenure and promotion.

We believe the strong actions by the administration to improve economic conditions and hiring offers increase the likelihood of retaining desirable faculty. Both Dr. Creel and Dr. Stewart received more than $10,000.00 startup money to support their research and travel, as well as new computer equipment and software. We are also able to provide faculty with more than 10 hours each week of graduate assistant support to aid in research, a benefit to both faculty and students.

Standard IV Students

Our program is online with real-time required chats and several courses require internships, practicum or observation hours. Our student composition is nearly evenly divided between Mississippi residents and out of state students. The online courses are offered to out of state students based on in-state Mississippi tuition rates. We are exploring more ways to help students engage with one another outside the classroom. The real-time chat experience does help students build relationships, as well as provides opportunity for some of the socialization necessary for professional development. SLIS insists on the real-time chats to ensure interaction with the students, and opportunities to exchange experiences.

Students report that chats are generally useful, though they do not enjoy group work. Despite the distaste for group work the employers and faculty members' own experiences indicate the absolute need for group interaction and activities that create collaborative dependencies. In addition, group work also helps build networking and socialization.

In the 2008 Biennial we reported our three year course rotation was available and functioning with regular updates of the schedule plan. The university is in the final stages of updating the entire student services system to integrate course schedules and rotations for a three year rotation. We are using this opportunity to review and reorganize the rotation.

Standard V Administration and Financial Support

The School of Library and Information Science is an active participant in the academic decisions of the College and, through our committee memberships, the University. The director of the School serves on the College Council, and the Academic Curriculum Committee of the college and completed two 3 year terms as an elected member of the University Council of Chairs. SLIS faculty have served or are serving in University Faculty Senate, Graduate Council, Academic Council, University Advisory Committee (T&P), and Professional Education Council to list only a few.

SLIS was engaged through the College of Education and Psychology and in conjunction with the University Priority Committee (2009-2010) and the Academic Planning Group (2008-2009) in review of mission, goals and objectives as well as reputation, enrollment, production etc. The process involved the analysis of all university initiatives – programs, degrees, certificates, etc. A system of review based upon Robert Dickeson's 1999 *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services,* was used to examine every element of The University of Southern Mississippi. The review was a method to identify programs to be supported and grown or considered for discontinuation. SLIS ranked highly among the programs identified to be supported and grown, at 7th in the 54 initiatives of the College of Education and Psychology and 19th out of 257 university initiatives.

The School's overall budget is reasonably stable though we have taken some operating cost cuts in response to the overall budgetary limitations of the state and nation. The general budget for 2011-2012 was $837, 676.00 a 4% increase over the 2010-2011 budget ($803,762.00) that had been a 7% decrease over the budget for 2009- 2010 ($862,500.00), which was 3% less than 2008- 2009 ($886,957.00). Additionally, there was an $82,000.00 carry over in the Developmental budget for faculty development, student services support, and equipment maintenance and upgrade. These budgets represent collected fees, recovered costs, and carry over from several smaller funds. These are very positive indications for the SLIS considering the current national economic situation and that the University had to make large cuts over the last three years. So long as the School maintains a stable enrollment and graduation rate, we will be supported.

VI Physical Resources and Facilities

Overall the School of Library and Information Science is well positioned as regards physical resources to conduct our activities. However, the Provost just paid for SLIS to have three new offices built in the suite to ensure we have adequate space for the addition of faculty. Some new furnishings are being purchased as well. This construction is in addition to the total replacement of our carpeting, and new paint.

Summary

The School of Library and Information Science has sufficient faculty (and is adding faculty), funds and facilities to operate within the standards as a result of broad based planning that has been integrated into the entire University system. We are employing outcome based assessment systems to measure student success and to inform our curriculum. We have enjoyed significant fiscal advances since joining the College of Education and Psychology in 2003, and expect while new funds may not be available for a period of time, we are well positioned to continue to address our mission.

We have a new advisory board, with clear plans to utilize their expertise extensively. We are in a position to address more of the recommendations from the MLA focus groups. Our administration is supporting our hiring of faculty, funding their initial research proposals, improving salaries to attain CUPA averages and providing physical resources. Our planning is integrated into our program and university, and is ever evolving and improving.