SCHOOL OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE

AY2024/2025-AY2029/2030

STRATEGIC PLAN

### (ADOPTED 05/2024)

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ABOUT

The University of Southern Mississippi was founded on March 30, 1910, as Mississippi Normal College, a teacher-training school. In 1924, it had its first name change to Mississippi State Teachers College. It was renamed again in 1940 to Mississippi Southern College and had its final name change in 1962 to The University of Southern Mississippi, or Southern Miss.

Library classes were first offered at Southern Miss in 1926. In 1957, the library science program became a part of the School of Education and Psychology and now resides in the College of Education and Human Sciences. In 1963, following national trends, the School began its first graduate library science program. While under the College of Education and Psychology, the department became the School of Library Service in 1976. In 1988, it was renamed the School of Library Science and moved to the College of Liberal Arts. In 1993, the School of Library Science was renamed the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS).

Southern Miss SLIS has held continuous ALA accreditation since 1980. At the last review by the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA) in 2019, ALA Accreditation status was Continued and the next accreditation review by ALA COA is scheduled for spring 2026.

A complete history can be found here: Griffis, Matthew R. (2015) "Library Science Education at Southern Miss: A History of Survival and Growth," SLIS Connecting: Vol. 4: Iss. 2, Article 6. DOI: 10.18785/slis.0402.06 Available at: https://aquila.usm.edu/slisconnecting/vol4/iss2/6

More information about the current program can be found at https://usm.edu/slis.
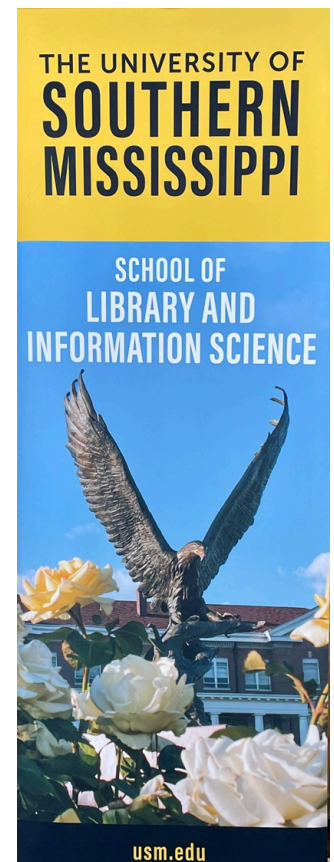
MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) is to prepare a diverse population of qualified professionals for roles in libraries, archives, and other information environments. Through evidence-based active learning, students gain appropriate knowledge, applied scholarship, and skills to serve the information needs of their diverse communities.

VALUES

The School of Library and Information Science is committed to:

Student-centered learning: We are committed to cultivating an active, student-centered learning community.

Diversity: We recognize and value the diversity of modern society and support an inclusive learning environment. We ensure principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion are cultivated to create advocacy for marginalized groups in the pursuit of social justice.

Intellectual freedom: We embrace the ideals of intellectual and academic freedom and strive to nurture an open, respectful learning environment for the free exchange of ideas.

Service: Because we believe that it is a core of the profession, we support service at all levels and encourage ongoing professional development as a means of enhancing skills and knowledge.

Community: We believe in creating, fostering, and participating in learning and research communities that span borders on state, national, and international levels.

Research: We believe that research is an essential part of scholarship, not just for the creation of new knowledge but also for the support of teaching and learning and the sharing of new knowledge with multiple communities of interest.

Assessment: We embrace a culture of assessment and evaluation that drives continuous improvement in course delivery, curriculum, and life-long learning.

Strategic Goal 1:
Maintain accreditation and enhance the visibility of SLIS programs and faculty.

Objective 1: Continue providing reasonable access to LIS education programs through accessible scheduling and diverse methods of teaching.
Strategy 1: Monthly School curriculum meetings to evaluate curriculum and plan schedules.

Objective 2: Promote School scholarship and real-world training opportunities including but not limited to publishing experiences, practicums, internships, and conferences.
Strategy 1: Offer/promote jobs, internships, practicums, and conferences over listserv and social media.
Strategy 2: Offer students opportunities to participate in scholarly publishing and presentations.
Strategy 3: Create assignments and in-class activities based on real-world experiences.

Objective 3: Sustain the quality of the MLIS program by maintaining ALA accreditation.
Strategy 1: Incorporate continuous review, including the Spring ALA COA assessment.

Objective 4: Prepare graduates for the current job market.
Strategy 1: Using input from stakeholders, surveys, and assessments, the faculty reviews findings and incorporates information accordingly.

Objective 5: Maintain an inclusive community of learners that reflects and respects diversity and ideas of social justice.
Strategy 1: Appropriately incorporate community building and DEI learning activities in courses.

Objective 6: Seek opportunities for collaboration with faculty within and outside of the university community.
Strategy 1: Incentivize faculty collaborations through the competitive funding process.

Objective 7: Distribute information on the accomplishments of the SLIS community.
Strategy 1: Publish accomplishments in *SLIS Connecting* and social media.
Strategy 2: Maintain updated faculty online profiles.

Strategic Goal 2:
Support targeted and strategic enrollment growth in undergraduate and graduate programs.

Objective 1: Identify opportunities and/or methods for recruiting students into our undergraduate and graduate programs.

Strategy 1: Fund advertisement and marketing materials for strategically identified conferences.

Strategy 2: Support institutional recruitment activities.

Strategic Goal 3:
Foster retention, progression, and graduation in LIS programs.

Objective 1: Educate students about available online student support services.

Strategy 1: Add student support statements and contact links to course syllabi and incorporate into course modules and lectures as appropriate.

Objective 2: Monitor students' progress.

Strategy 1: Use formalized school processes and procedures to ensure equitable learning and support.

Strategy 2: Actively engage students in advising throughout their program of study.

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Strategic Goal 4:
Promote and support professional development for faculty and students.

Objective 1: Promote the importance of professional organizations.
    Strategy 1: Introduce relevant professional associations in all courses (e.g., LIS 501 Reference introduces RUSA).

Objective 2: Support faculty members' participation in professional development activities (as resources permit).
    Strategy 1: Subsidize faculty memberships in the state library association.
    Strategy 2: Support travel for faculty to conferences.

Objective 3: Enhance student education with opportunities for professional development and training.
    Strategy 1: Expose students to experts and professional development opportunities via "lunch and learns" and student organizations programming.

Strategic Goal 5:
Maintain and develop connections with internal and external stakeholders to further the mission of the School of Library and Information Science.

Objective 1: Maintain an active agenda for SLIS student associations.
    Strategy 1: Maintain official status on campus as a student association.
    Strategy 2: Conduct regularly scheduled meetings and special events.

Objective 2: Collaborate with community partners to provide opportunities that further the mission of the school.
    Strategy 1: Identify community partners and engage in activities that align with librarianship and the mission of the School.

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Strategic Goal 6:
Support student research activities.

Objective 1: Seek opportunities to mentor and support student research activities.
Strategy 1: Mentor students through the Master's Capstone Research Project.
Strategy 2: Mentor students through research poster presentations.

Objective 2: Seek opportunities to collaborate with students on research.
Strategy 1: Invite students to collaborate on faculty research projects.

Strategic Goal 7:
Contribute to scholarship.

Objective 1: Pursue and participate in funding initiatives.
Strategy 1: Promote awareness of and utilization of the College's Grant Support Office

Objective 2: Contribute to scholarly and professional publications.
Strategy 1: Adjust course load as appropriate and allowable.

Objective 3: Participate in institutional scholarly activities.
Strategy 1: Promote and encourage faculty participation in scholarly on-campus opportunities.

Objective 4: Participate in external scholarly activities.
Strategy 1: Encourage and support the development of faculty research.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The School of Library and Information Science has 11 full-time faculty members and two administrative assistants housed in the historic Fritzsche-Gibbs Hall on the Hattiesburg campus. Additionally, the School is supported by four adjunct faculty who bring added subject expertise to the curriculum. Southern Miss supports the School with its technological needs to ensure the success of our fully online delivery model. Faculty are allotted travel funding, start-up research funds, and financial support for joining the state library association. The College of Education and Human Sciences offers additional support to the faculty via the College Office of Research Support Services. The University Libraries offer over 250 online databases, approximately five million print resources, and various research support services to faculty and students. Southern Miss provides a variety of training opportunities throughout the academic year, such as the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) teaching certifications and various workshops offered through the Center for Faculty Development and the Office of Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement. The tradition of engaged stakeholders has created a culture of collaboration and support for networking and assessment.

POTENTIAL NEEDS

The School of Library and Information Science continues to seek adjunct faculty who bring subject expertise that complements the existing faculty and supports the needs of the program. Ongoing investment in technology support is critical for ensuring the sustainability of our online programs. While Fritzsche-Gibbs Halls has sufficient space, the historical nature of the on-campus building means that building upgrades must be addressed as University funds allow. In light of the ever-changing landscape of higher education, monitoring the need for additional faculty, including the balance between tenure-track and teaching-track, is a priority for the School. As the School seeks to raise its profile and research footprint, an increase in funding for conference travel, recruitment, and professional development remains a priority.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- To increase information science and technology course offerings from both theoretical and practical perspectives.
- To provide students with up-to-date and continually improved curricula and innovative opportunities for credentialing as indicated by internal and external stakeholders.
- To seek input from all stakeholders and build relationships with campus and community partners.
- To strengthen commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice.
- To identify additional online dual masters for students to pursue.
- To identify doctoral opportunities for SLIS graduates interested in continuing their education.
- To continue to scaffold student success through deliberate community-building and retention efforts.
- To focus recruitment efforts to include diverse populations.
- To foster a culture of assessment and accountability among faculty and staff.
- To identify and foster opportunities for interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration.

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The strategic plan with measures is available on campus.