

**The University of Southern Mississippi**  
**Office of Affirmative Action & Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO)**  
**McLemore Hall, Room 310**  
**601-266-6618**  
[affirmativeaction@usm.edu](mailto:affirmativeaction@usm.edu)

## **Invitation to Self-Identify FAQ**

The University invites faculty, other academic appointees, and staff to update their disability and veteran status.

Under federal compliance obligations, the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs requires contractors to provide employees the opportunity to self-identify voluntarily as an individual with a disability and/or as a protected veteran. **To meet this requirement and our ongoing commitments, the University invites faculty, other academic appointees, and staff to update their disability and veteran status.**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. Why is the University asking faculty and staff to self-identify their disability and veteran status?**

As a recipient of federal funding (e.g., funding for research and student loans), the University is a federal contractor and subject to legal requirements regarding Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity. Applicable laws include Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Section 503) and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistant Act, as amended (VEVRAA). Section 503 and VEVRAA prohibit employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities and protected veterans, respectively. They require covered federal contractors to recruit, employ, promote, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities and protected veterans.

As part of these obligations, the University is required to provide reports to the government regarding the composition of its workforce, and to assess its affirmative action efforts.

#### **2. Do I have to self-identify?**

Completing the self-identification surveys is voluntary, but encouraged. Your participation helps ensure the accuracy of our workforce data, which is the basis for the University's assessment of its recruiting, hiring, and retention efforts.

#### **3. Where do I designate my disability and/or veteran status?**

You can designate your disability and veteran status designations in by filling out the [disability self-ID form](#) and [veteran self-ID form](#). Once completed, please send to [christian.n.lewis@usm.edu](mailto:christian.n.lewis@usm.edu) or Box # 5111.

#### **4. How is the disability and veteran information used?**

The University is required by law to conduct analyses of its workforce and to develop and implement an Affirmative Action Plan. These analyses help the University identify potential barriers to equal employment opportunities with respect to women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans.

#### **5. What if I do not have a disability and am not a veteran? What if I wish to decline to self-identify?**

The University must demonstrate its good faith efforts to collect this information to evaluate its affirmative action efforts. The option, "I don't wish to answer" is provided in each survey, as submission is voluntary. By completing the survey, it helps the University comply with reporting requirements.

**6. Can my disability and/or veteran status information be used in making employment decisions?**

No, the information you provide is confidential and will not be used as the basis for any employment decision affecting you.

**7. Who has access to the disability and veteran information I provide?**

Disability and veteran information is considered confidential and is used for Affirmative Action Plan-related reporting and analysis. The EEO Coordinator & a limited number of Human Resources employees have access to this this information.

**8. Do I need to complete the designation if I already provided the information when I applied to a position or during onboarding?**

You may change your status at any time if your status changes.

**9. How do I know if I have a disability?**

You are considered to have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment or medical condition that substantially limits a major life activity, or if you have a history or record of such an impairment or medical condition. The federal government has broadened conditions that may be considered a disability. The self-ID form includes a broad list of physical and mental conditions that may be considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**10. How do I know if I am a protected veteran?**

A veteran is a “protected veteran” under VEVRAA if they fall into one or more of the following categories: disabled veteran; recently separated veteran; active duty wartime or campaign badge veteran; or Armed Forces service medal veteran.

**11. What is the process for requesting a reasonable accommodation if I have a disability?**

Staff, faculty, and academic appointees with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits their ability to perform the essential functions of their job, are responsible for initiating the request for a reasonable accommodation.

**12. How do I request a reasonable accommodation?**

To request a reasonable accommodation to complete the survey, please contact Christian Cameron, EEO Coordinator, at [christian.n.lewis@usm.edu](mailto:christian.n.lewis@usm.edu).

**13. Who can I contact for more information, questions, or concerns about designating my disability and/or veteran status?**

For more information, questions, or concerns, please contact Christian Cameron, EEO Coordinator, at [christian.n.lewis@usm.edu](mailto:christian.n.lewis@usm.edu).

**EEO Statement & Notice of Non-Discrimination**

The University of Southern Mississippi does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, gender identity, genetic information, religion, race, color, national origin, veteran status, or any other status protected under applicable federal, state, or local law, in its admission, treatment, or access to its educational programs and activities or in its employment practices. The University of Southern

Mississippi prohibits sexual and gender-based harassment, including sexual assault and misconduct, and other forms of interpersonal violence.

If reasonable accommodation is needed to participate in the job application or interview process, to perform essential job functions, and/or to receive other benefits and privileges of employment, please contact:

The Office of Affirmative Action & Equal Employment Opportunity  
EEO Coordinator - Christian Cameron  
McLemore Hall (MCL) 310 | 118 College Drive #5111 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406  
Phone: 601.266.6618 | Fax: 601.266.4541 | TTY/TDD: 1.800.582.2233

This policy assists the University in complying with federal and state legal mandates and University policies in relation to discrimination and applies to all members of the University community. The full Notice of Non-Discrimination policy (Policy No. PRES-AA-005), as well as the Procedure for the Resolution of Discrimination Complaints (Policy No. PRES-AA-004), can be accessed on the University's Institutional policies webpage at [www.usm.edu/institutional-policies](http://www.usm.edu/institutional-policies).