



THE VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF USM AOP

JANUARY 2021 ISSUE NO. 1



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Valerie Craig

In the year 2020, we adapted and pivoted in ways that we could not have predicted. Our events and services are being delivered differently. I am proud that our University quickly implemented infrastructure and processes to enable remote advisement, communications, teaching, and learning. While we made sure that everyone had a remote option, we did so with the knowledge that this option does not work well for all. Grace was a word that we heard more than ever. The acts of grace that people bestowed on one another were outward signs of caring and were actions that demonstrated we considered the needs of others. It exposed a strength to overcome our adversities and at the same time it exposed a softness and vulnerability toward each other.

IN THIS ISSUE:

**MESSAGE FROM THE
PRESIDENT**

PSP OVERVIEW

WHY JOIN AOP

**FIGHT FLU AND
COVID-19**

**MODERATION IN A
TIME OF PLENTY**

FOOD INSECURITY

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

2020 EVENTS

USM AOP BOARD

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

UPCOMING IN 2021

RECIPES

COMMUNITY SERVICE

HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE VOICE



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED

Valerie Craig

Throughout the year, we discussed how to remain positive and work through issues that we could not have imagined months ago. When coworkers go sick, we took it a bit more seriously. Loved ones were lost this year. Consuming national news proved distressful. There were personal battles that we shared or that we silently fought. USM AOP, Staff Council and the Faculty Development Center provided sessions focused on coping with personal and community issues. These sessions offered opportunities for virtual connections that were not possible in person. In every difficult situation, there is an opportunity to acknowledge growth, change, and determination.

The past year produced a lot of poignant and funny Internet memes. We nodded knowingly or laughed because we all were part of this collective experience. We were all part of the big inside joke, and we laughed because it helped. Humor, kindness, and grace all helped us get through this 2020. The year itself became a depiction of abnormality, change, and uncertainty. Not since 1984 has a year become equivalent with such understanding of a widespread experience and imbued with so much feeling.

Let us move forward with all that we are and all that we know. We head into our new year with a new version of ourselves. It is now time to take stock of our lessons learned, new feelings, new perspectives, and apply them to upcoming endeavors; a mental dusting off before we lunge ahead yet again. It is entirely appropriate to take a personal moment to celebrate and acknowledge that we did the very best we could. You did not get out of 2020 because you were a quitter!

Will 2021 be a kinder and gentler year? All the challenges of 2020 will not magically vanish. The new version of us knows how to create opportunities out of challenges. Our next year will be informed because of the experience we bring forward. My goal is to bring hopeful and positive thoughts, and therefore, I say it will be what we make it. We can be kinder and gentler.

PSP OVERVIEW

A CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL OFFICE PROFESSIONALS

PSP OVERVIEW

HOW TO GAIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION

The Professional Standards Program is a certification program for educational office professionals administered by our national association, the National Association of Educational Office Professionals (NAEOP). Members take college courses, attend seminars and conferences, and earn responsibility points through association membership and participation on association committees. Progression through the program allows members to achieve the distinction of Certified Educational Office Employee or Certified Educational Support Employee.

USM AOP is honored to provide a variety of seminars for our members as well as the University community thereby allowing members to expand their skill sets and help one another. We also encourage members to build relationships with colleagues not only across our campuses but across the state and country. We are affiliated with NAEOP and our state association, Mississippi Association of Educational Office Professionals (MAEOP). This provides further opportunities for members to demonstrate their leadership abilities and form relationships that can benefit both employees and The University.

Further information regarding PSP requirements can be found on the AOP website or by contacting a board member. We are proud to see several of our members taking steps to become certified.

INVEST IN YOURSELF



Past President Cory Williams receiving her CEOE

WHY JOIN AOP?



JENNIFER S.
LEWIS, CEOE

People often ask me why I joined AOP. Often, they expect this to be a simple straight forward answer, but in all candor, it is a multi-tiered one. Essentially, being a member in USM AOP provides members with the ability to network with other employees, the ability to serve the community, and the ability to enhance their professional skills through the many professional standard program offerings. In each of these three ways, AOP membership provides members with a variety of long-term benefits aimed at improving their overall experiences as a USM employee.

In terms of networking, USM AOP provides you with the ability to network individuals with whom you do not interact regularly. It gives you the opportunity to get to know people across campus that you would otherwise not have known. By working together on products, socializing and learning together across a variety of events, these people become more than just USM colleagues: they become friends.

In terms of community service, the value of the opportunities provided for help a member to give back. If you too believe in giving back and in the innate responsibility we each have to care for others by lending a helping hand, USM AOP provides you with the opportunity to do so with like-minded individuals. Individuals who also believe that giving back is food for the soul and that nurturing others is as essential to being as it is to providing time for one's own self-care. These like-minded people believe in a greater purpose and are motivated to act based on that purpose: They lend their skills and time to helping others: they selflessly act to make the world a better place. AOP provides an avenue to help others by continually examining the needs both on our campus based on feedback from our members and in the greater community to make our little corner of the world better. Hence, if you join AOP, you gain a voice to highlight issues you observe and to gain help of like-minded individuals able to support new initiatives.

Of course, networking and community service are not the only reason for joining USM AOP. Many employees want to retain their existing skills while others seek to enhance their skills and knowledge.. To meet this need, AOP looks for and develops professional skill building opportunities that highlight campus resources to enable our members to better navigate all that our campus offers. Other learning opportunities provide practical skills on technology related topics. Additionally, conferences presented by affiliated organizations by MAEOP and NAEOP as well as free seminars provided by professional providers are among the resources of which our members are made aware.

FIGHT FLU AND COVID-19

KAYLA JOHNSON, MS, CHES



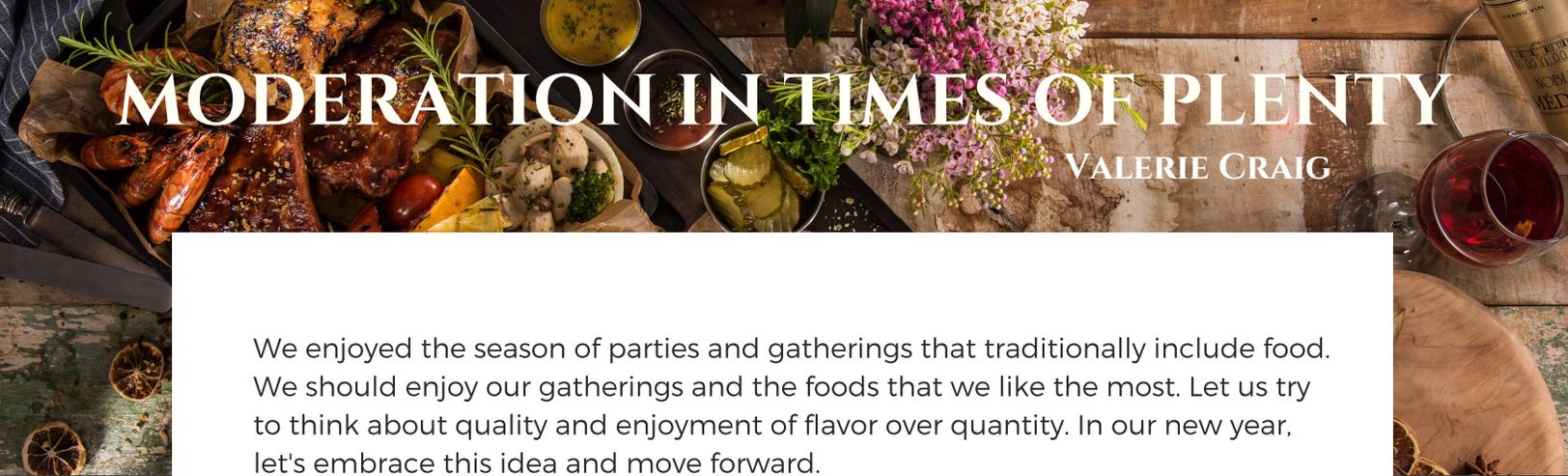
In a year that will forever be remembered by COVID-19, the first global pandemic in over a century, there has been a heightened focus on the health and well-being of ourselves and those around us. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 8% of the U.S. population gets sick with the flu each flu season. By comparison, the number of COVID-19 cases we have seen in the U.S. since January accounts for about 2.7% of our population. A rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations has the potential to overwhelm hospital and healthcare systems. Additional hospitalizations for flu and flu-related illnesses could negatively impact necessary access to hospital care and medical resources in our state.

So the question becomes, how can we protect ourselves and others from COVID-19 and the flu this fall? Diagnosing patients with flu is a familiar process for our providers at Moffitt Health Center. As flu season begins and the pandemic continues, there is still uncertainty surrounding cases in which an individual tests positive for both the flu and COVID-19. As this appears to be a real possibility, it is increasingly important that individuals and families practice prevention techniques as it applies to both the seasonal flu and COVID-19.

Tips to Prevent Flu and COVID-19:

- Get your annual flu vaccine. This is the first line of defense against the flu.
- Practice everyday prevention techniques. These can help protect against the flu and COVID-19.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Monitor your health and stay home/limit contact with others if you are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if no soap and water are available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. These are entryways for germs.
- Disinfect and clean high touch objects and surfaces regularly.
- Wear a mask. While this preventative measure has been put in place for COVID-19, it may also help reduce the spread of flu (also spread through respiratory droplets).
- If you have the flu, take prescribed antiviral medications.

If you find yourself feeling unwell this fall, no need to panic. At Southern Miss, you have access to a full service health clinic on the Hattiesburg campus. Moffitt Health Center is open Monday – Friday for primary and urgent care needs. Flu shots are also available at Moffitt Health Center during regular business hours. No appointment is necessary for immunizations. Contact us at 601.266.5390 for questions or to schedule an appointment. Additional information can be found by visiting <https://www.usm.edu/student-health-services/>.



MODERATION IN TIMES OF PLENTY

VALERIE CRAIG

We enjoyed the season of parties and gatherings that traditionally include food. We should enjoy our gatherings and the foods that we like the most. Let us try to think about quality and enjoyment of flavor over quantity. In our new year, let's embrace this idea and move forward.

Your stomach does not have taste buds. Eating more of something does not improve the flavor. When you arrive at a party or gathering, cruise around the table or buffet two or three times to scan all the available dishes. Make mental notes and select the dishes you like the most. What dish have you been waiting all year to eat? Make sure that item makes its way onto your plate. Select the top three or four items and put a serving of each on your plate. Please be reasonable with the serving size. First, eat the item that is your absolute favorite. Yes, eat dessert first if you like! Enjoy the taste, the texture, and be grateful for the person who prepared that dish – even if that person is you! Eat that one item until you think that you have experienced maximum enjoyment and tasted all the goodness that dish has to offer. Next, eat the item that ranks second, third, and finally fourth. By eating your favorites first, you will not be tempted to heap a second plate with things you do not really like. There is no need to weigh yourself down with “filler” if there are high-quality dishes. You get to decide what dishes are high-quality and worthy of your indulgence.

Try to take 20 to 25 minutes to eat. Converse with someone you have not seen for a while, cut your food into small pieces, put your fork down, take sips of water, and perform any other activity to extend the time it takes you to complete that meal. Now, wait ten minutes. The delay gives your stomach time to signal your brain. Are you still hungry? Are you really hungry? Or do you want more food because it tastes good. There is a difference. Only you can decide what is right for your body.

The summary of this exercise is to eat only when we are truly hungry, eat what we like, eat slowly, and eat only until we are full. This can be practiced every day and is especially useful during parties. I hope you enjoy your special events this year and make the most of social interactions. I will try to put activities and relationships over food. Our parties and gatherings are special because of the people around us and the memories we share. Health and happiness to you all!

Gratefully yours,

Valerie Craig

FOOD INSECURITY: PREVALENCE AND IMPACT



Jennifer S. Lewis, CEOE

You may have noticed that much of the community service that we have undertaken this year as an organization has been focused on supporting the USM Eagle's Nest Food Pantry, which has now relocated back to the Hub (across from the USM ticket offices at the stadium). The following provides some insight onto what food insecurity is and why it is critical for us to support the efforts to prevent food insecurity on our campus.

Food insecurity is a problem that campuses across the nation including ours face on a daily basis. Like other complicated concepts, there is not one definition of food insecurity. Rather, there is a general understanding that it does represent having an inadequate amount of food. Sadly, students can easily find themselves in the untenable position of having to allocate limited resources to an increasing amount of costs, including unexpected deficiencies in their regular sources of funding. During the pandemic, students have experienced shortages due to the economic upheaval incidental to the shuttering of the economy worldwide. As a result of the upheaval, many parents around the world were not able to earn their regular income, especially in tourist based locations. As a result, students had to make due without the same level of support as they previously received from their parents. Students (be they international or American students) were both affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic. Faced with limited resources, students are placed in the untenable position of lacking the funds necessary to purchase food. Without an adequate amount of food, students suffer from health concerns both physical and mental. Of course, the health consequences undermine a student's ability to succeed academically. Imagine how difficult it is for a student to concentrate when they haven't been able to eat. Imagine having to choose between getting another job even though you may then not have adequate time to study. Those are the choices that students potentially struggle with in the face of food insecurity.

Here on our campus, we are lucky to have the Eagle's Nest Food Pantry. The Eagle's Nest Food Pantry is manned by students from the school of Social Work and overseen by Dr. Tamara Hurst. The Eagle's Nest Food Pantry staff work tirelessly to help address food insecurity on campus directly by opening up the pantry several times a week, conducting the Grab and Go program that delivers food to students without vehicles, and by providing resources to students who need insight into other community resources they can use to offset food insecurity. Each time you hear us email asking for food donations or asking for volunteers on behalf of the pantry, we ask that you remember the beneficial impact that occurs when our students can avoid food insecurity.

Remember, the Eagle's Nest Food Pantry should you wish to donate through the Foundation - (usmfoundation.com/eaglesnest) . You can also donate to them through Amazon or directly- for more information see <https://www.usm.edu/social-work/eagles-nest-food-pantry.php>

MEET: MARY MANER



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CAREER SERVICES

My role is focused on making all our students are career ready when they graduate: ready to enter the workforce. Keep in mind, getting a degree does not make them career ready. Unless you have the skills and abilities to go along with that degree, then you are not career ready. An essential component of career readiness is civic engagement, which allows us to help our students connect with the community partners who allow students to participate in exponential learning opportunities that both engage as well as connect our students to the needs of the community. Additionally, we are seeing an expansion in the number of virtual internships including those in the areas of marketing as well as social media, and our goal is to capitalize on that growth by formulating additional partnership aimed at increasing the number of opportunities available to our students.

FAMILY

I have 5 children including a set of twins: all of them are adults now.

USM Times

I started my undergraduate degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing in 2013 and graduated in 2015. I completed my master's Program in Political Science with an emphasis on comparative politics in 2017 and am now a candidate for Ed.D. for Higher Education Administration.

HOBBIES

My primary hobby is outreach. I am the outreach person for my church. This allows me to keep people connected and build relationships so that the needs of others in my community are met. I also enjoy creating/inventing things, and I have a few patents.

AOP MEMBERSHIP

I was drawn to join AOP because when I was working in the public-school system we always had a training and development program. As part of that program, we got points added to our resumes, and this provided us with a direct path to professional development.

When I joined USM, I spoke with Karen Shaw who told me all about AOP, which clearly was also providing staff opportunities for training aimed at helping them develop themselves professionally to progress to the next level. Given all the opportunities that we have available, I am now working on my CEOE certification by starting on my first certificate and encourage others to take advantage of this opportunity.

PLANS FOR CAREER SERVICES

In 3 years, we will have built a flight path with partnerships to have a repository of jobs and internships so there are ample opportunities for all our students to have what they need to succeed in their academic and career flight paths

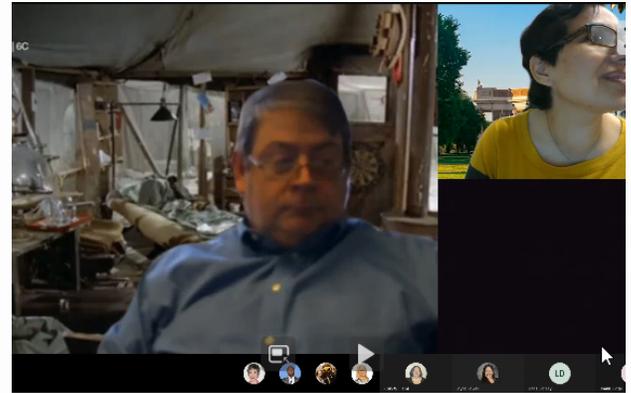
FUTURE OF AOP

AOP will have built stronger collaborative relationships and expanded our networks, including having all new employees be made aware of AOP. Additionally, AOP will be providing even more professional development opportunities responsive to the needs of our members, including in terms of resiliency and retention and continue to build our wonderful family of great members..

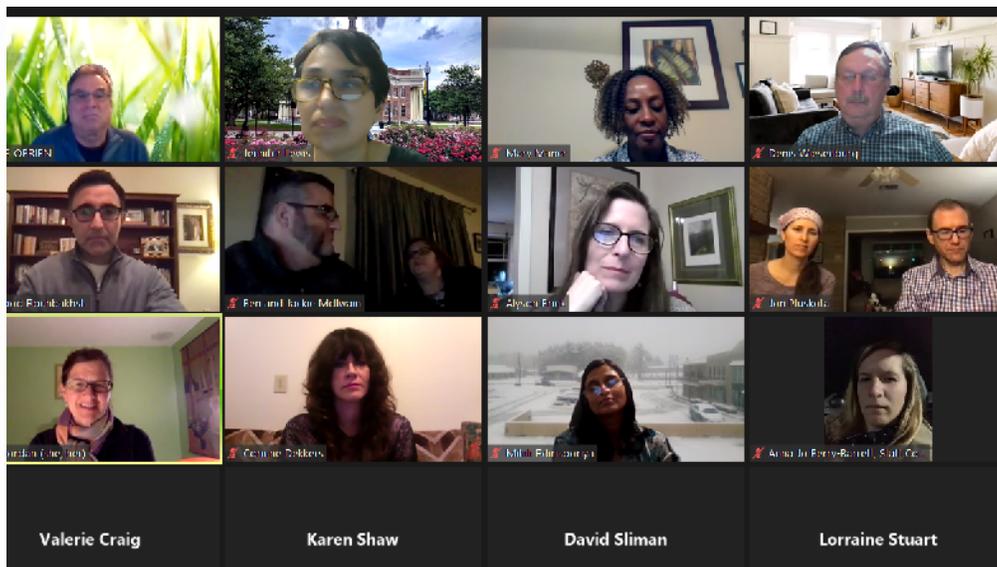
2020 EVENTS AT A GLANCE



Emotional Intelligence in the Pandemic



What is Institutional Effectiveness?



Holiday Social with AAUP and Staff Council

FOR A FULL LIST OF PAST EVENTS -
[HTTPS://WWW.USM.EDU/ASSOCIATION-OFFICE-PROFESSIONALS/PRIORTRAININGEVENTS.PHP](https://www.usm.edu/association-office-professionals/priortrainingevents.php)

2020 - 2021 USM AOP BOARD



Melissa Coker
Immediate Past
President



Valerie Craig
President



Katie Kitchens
President-Elect



Mary Maner
Vice President
Gulf Coast
Coordinator



Jennifer Lewis
Secretary/Hospitality Chairman
Co-Publicity Chairman
Community Service Chairman



Cindy Walker
Treasurer Budget
Chairman/Affiliations
Chairman



Troy Knight
Co-Publicity Chairman



Cory Williams
PSP Advisory Chairman

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

JANUARY

1 - Christy Harvey
3 - Ratonia Shaw
11 - JoAnn Johnson
13 - Jewel Adams
21 - Pam Posey
22 - Heather Miller
24 - Shanna Riles
& Carlos Sterling
25 - Cindy Walker

FEBRUARY

5 - Courtney Tesh
21 - Linda Dorsey
28 - Rusty Anderson

MARCH

11 - Tasha May
13 - Crystal Ingram
14 - Jessica Langston
28 - Kimberly Wyatt

AUGUST

2 - Terry Whittington
11 - Liz Fronkin
12 - Troy Knight
15 - Rayonne Grant
& Michelle Konscak
21 - Laura Garbee
22 - Alan Thompson
31 - Heather Houston

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

SEPTEMBER

9 - Saidul Hassan
8 - Tymika Rushiing
9 - Raven Moore
11 - Melanie Bryan
14 - Sandy Laubersheimer
20 - Cathy Ventura
29 - Matthew Jessee

OCTOBER

14 - Susan Christensen
15 - Melissa Carpenter
20 - Ruth Brooks
22 - Lisa Huff
27 - Cory Williams

NOVEMBER

1 - Shannon Ladner
3 - Pamela Bullard
15 - Kelly Johnson
18 - Katie Kitchens
21 - Petra Lamb
26 - Erin Sessions

DECEMBER

10 - Valerie Craig
& Betty Shaw
12 - Kayla Johnson
17 - Christopher Marcell
& Cassidy Jacquet
19 - Elizabeth Killinger
21 - Jennifer Lewis
& Marci Calcote
24 - Brenda Tart
29 - Becky Malley

UPCOMING IN 2021

Cybersecurity and Technology **Presented by Dr. Jeremy Graves**

2/2/21 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

Understand how rapidly changing technology and cybersecurity are affecting the world and how you can remain safe while taking advantage of the benefits that technology provides.

Health in the Pandemic: Tips for Staying Healthy

Presented by Lisa Wright, MPH, CHES Health Educator/Assessment Officer

January 27, 2021 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

A pandemic increases negative factors such as stress and decreases beneficial factors such as time. Learn how to stay healthy and effectively navigate these turbulent times.

The Changing Face of Admissions **Kate Howard, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment & Dean of Admissions**

2/11/21 From 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

How admissions in higher education is involving as a result of culture and technology.

Staying Healthy in 2021 **Presented by Madison Estrada, M.S., LMLP**

March 2021

With an increase in the impact of external factors affecting individuals, how can you remain healthy in 2021.

Leading in a Time of Crisis: Lessons Learned **Presented by Dr. Sirena Cantrell, Dean of Students**

04/12/21 From 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

How a crisis forces you to rise to the occasion and the impact of lessons learned during crisis in making one a stronger leader.

The Biloxi Wade-Ins: Lessons About Effective Social Change Presented by Dr. Casey Maugh Funderburk, Vice Provost for the Gulf Park Campus

06/14/21 From 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

What can be learned about how to effectively navigate social change from movements like the Biloxi Wade-Ins. Learn about the Wade-Ins and how they effectively translated into social change. Read the article on the Wade-Ins before attending.



Share News: Email jennifer.lewis@usm.edu with news for next semester's newsletter, to be published in May/June timeframe.

Email questions and comments to aop-info@groups.usm.edu

Follow us on social media

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/usmaop>

Twitter- <https://twitter.com/usmaop?lang=en>

Instagram- <https://www.instagram.com/usmaop/?hl=en>

RECIPES

GINGERBREAD CAKE

- 3/4 cup butter melted
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 2 cups molasses
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 cup buttermilk room temperature
- 3 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons ground ginger
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 cups all-purpose flour

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Lightly grease three 9-inch round pans and line the bottoms with parchment paper. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together melted butter, sugar, molasses, warm water, buttermilk, and eggs.
3. Whisk in ginger, cinnamon, cloves, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Slowly add in flour and mix until just combined.
4. Divide batter evenly into prepared baking pans.
5. Bake in the preheated oven for 30-35 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
6. Let the cakes cool in the pans for 5 to 10 minutes before removing and cooling completely on a wire rack.
7. Once cooled, make your frosting by beating butter and cream cheese in a large mixing bowl until smooth.
8. Beat in vanilla extract until just combined. Slowly add in powdered sugar until you reach your desired frosting consistency.
9. Layer the cake together, frosting between layers as well as the top and outside of the cake.

- 1 1/2 cups Dixie Crystals Extra Fine Granulated Sugar
- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 egg
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour*
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons Dixie Crystals Extra Fine Granulated Sugar (for rolling)
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon (for rolling)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside. In a large bowl, beat sugar, butter, egg and vanilla together until light and fluffy. Add flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and nutmeg, stirring until completely combined. Stir sugar and cinnamon together in a small bowl. Scoop dough into two tablespoon-sized balls and roll into cinnamon sugar mixture. Place on prepared baking sheet leaving room for spreading. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until edges of cookies are set and lightly golden. Allow to cool slightly before moving onto a wire rack to finish cooling completely.

WHITE CHOCOLATE RITZ CRACKERS

- Ritz crackers (or other favorite buttery crackers)
 - vanilla almond bark or white-chocolate chips
 - peanut butter
1. Begin making the “sandwiches” by spreading a small dab of peanut butter atop the flat side of a cracker, and then attaching the flat side of another cracker on top.
 2. Repeat with the remainder of the crackers and peanut butter. Then melt your vanilla almond bark (or white chocolate chips) in the microwave or a double boiler. If the chocolate is too thick, feel free to add in a few teaspoons of shortening to thin it out. Then carefully drop each “sandwich” in the chocolate and submerge so that it’s fully-coated.
 3. Remove with a fork and set on wax paper, parchment paper, aluminum foil, or a Silpat to dry. Feel free to decorate with sprinkles or drizzle with extra chocolate for decor! (I used clear sugar sprinkles above.)

CINNAMON SPICE SUGAR COOKIES

COMMUNITY SERVICE IN 2020

EAGLES NEST FOOD PANTRY



Weekly
Volunteering

Gulf Coast Pantry
Donations

1,175 items
donated

COMMUNITY SERVICE IN 2020

HOME BAKED FOR THE HOLIDAYS - THANKSGIVING



COMMUNITY SERVICE IN 2020

HOME BAKED FOR THE HOLIDAYS - CHRISTMAS



For more pictures see our Facebook page-
<https://www.facebook.com/usmaop>

COMMUNITY SERVICE IN 2020

TOYS FOR TOTS



Thanks to everyone who participated in The Toys for Tots drive. Through your efforts we helped make sure no child in our community goes without this Christmas.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021

FROM USM AOP

Cheers

TO THE NEW YEAR

**A New Year is like a blank book, and the pen is in your hands.
It is your chance to write a beautiful story for yourself.
Happy New Year.**



The USM Association of Office Professionals (AOP) is dedicated to providing opportunities for communication and relationship building among staff members of the University. Membership is open to all USM support staff. Associate membership is open to supervisors of USM support staff. The USM AOP is affiliated with the Mississippi Association of Education Office Professionals (MAEOP), and the National Association of Educational Office Professionals (NAEOP)