



THE VOICE

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AOP Elections for 2026-2027

Every year in April, AOP Members have the opportunity to step into leadership roles through our election and volunteer process. Following the Academic Calendar, the newly elected Executive Board will take office on July 1, 2026, and assume the roles to which they were elected for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Committee chairs are appointed on a volunteer basis, and a committee chair (aside from an Executive Board Member as chairperson) may choose to hold that position for subsequent years. Active members are encouraged to participate in committees as their schedule and interests allow.

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Message from the President

In March, I attended the Southern Regional Faculty and Instructional Development Consortium conference in Auburn, AL. One of the sessions had participants focus on who in their personal or academic journey had been a mentor. Since that session, I have been giving the idea of mentorship a great deal of thought.

One of the most dynamic roles you can adopt in your professional life is that of being a mentor. It takes courage, self-

knowledge, and intentional practice to come alongside a fellow staff member and help them grow. In a university setting, we hear about faculty mentorship and student mentorship, but what about staff mentoring staff?

Glenn Munson, Senior Consulting Director for Registrar Services at focusEDU, writes that in higher education,

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*Gayle Sollfrank,
President, USM Association
of Office Professionals*

AOP Elections for 2026–2027:

The Election Positions and Processes

The following positions on the Executive Board are elected for a 1-year period which spans from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. An Election Committee, made up of three members will oversee the election and ballot-counting process. Once an Executive Board has been elected, the official installation will be held on Monday, June 15th in the Officer Installation and Awards Ceremony at Luckyday's Vann Hall from 11:30-2:30. Their official term of service will begin on July 1, 2026.

President-Elect

- Serves as the president the succeeding year
- Performs the duties of the president in the event the absence of the president
- Serves as the chairperson of the In-service Committee

Vice President

- Serves as the president in the absence of the president and president-elect
- Serves as the chairperson of the Membership Committee

Secretary

- Keeps an accurate record of all proceedings of the organization
- Serves as the chairperson of the Hospitality Committee
- Presents correspondence to the organization at regular meetings
- Serves as co-editor for *The Voice*
- Corresponds with MAEOP and NAEOP's publications

Treasurer

- Receives and disburses all funds as may be necessary at the direction of the president and budget committee
- Makes a quarterly report to the membership
- Serves as the chairperson of the Budget Committee

AOP Committees

Affiliations Committee:

Positions: Chairperson & Active Members

- Responsible for the paperwork process of affiliating with MAEOP and NAEOP
- Responsible for the selection process for the USM AOP Educational Administrator and Office Professional of the Year
- Responsible for the selection process for the USM AOP Student Scholarship Award
- Works in conjunction with the president to ensure the presentation of the awards

Community Service Committee

Positions: Chairperson & Active Members

- Coordinate a minimum of two community service projects supported by the association

Hospitality Committee

Positions: Secretary is the Chairperson & Active Members

- Responsible for hospitality functions extended to members and their immediate family
- Responsible for providing door prizes as needed

In-service Committee

Positions: President-Elect is the Chairperson & Active Members

- Responsible for planning all in-service and workshop activities

Membership Committee

Positions: Vice President is the Chairperson & Active Members

- Verify credentials to determine the eligibility for membership voting
- Organize one function to build membership
- Contact members who need to renew membership for the year

Publicity Committee

Positions: Chairperson & Active Members

- Responsible for maintaining the AOP website and social media accounts

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- Serves as editor of *The Voice*
- Keeps a pictorial record of the association's activities

**The Publicity Chair needs to have a working knowledge of the social media that AOP uses, as well as Canva, and be capable of helping with The Voice newsletter. It would be beneficial if they have had USM training for editing the AOP website.*

PSP Advisory Committee:

Positions: Chairperson & Active Members

- Appointed by the president
- Answers questions about the program and assists the in-service committee to obtain preapproval for workshops
- Works with members to properly complete their PSP applications and verify the required documentation is included

**The PSP Chairperson must be a current NAEOP member and hold a valid PSP Certificate.*

Ways & Means Committee

Positions: Chairperson & Active Members

- Appointed by the president
- Coordinate a minimum of two fund-raising activities per year

Gulf Coast Committee

Positions: Chairperson & Active Members

- Appointed by the president
- Work with the president to represent the interests of the Gulf Coast membership in AOP activities

All Committee Chairpersons are responsible for holding regular meetings with their committee members, keeping minutes from those meetings, and posting those minutes to the appropriate AOP Teams Sharepoint folder.

If you know of an AOP Active Member who would be a great addition to the AOP Board, please consult with them first and gain their permission before nominating them for any position.

Each nominee will need to submit a biographical sketch to the Election Committee. This information will be provided in the election ballot.

The newly elected and appointed Board members will be invited to a mini-retreat with the 2025-2026 Board members to help pass along the wins and lessons and best practices of the year, with the goal to prepare the newly elected and appointed Board members for a successful year ahead.




BECOMING


A GREAT MENTOR



How?

- Cultivate follow-through after a conversation. Even an expression of support goes a long way.
- Empathy toward the mentee's journey empowers them to keep going.
- Know when to coach and when to teach. Both are essential. Know when to pivot.
- Consistently support the development of the mentee.
- Believe in the mentee, and focus on them, not the problem they may be facing.
- Be an unbiased listener, and listen with the intent to offer support.

These tips come from this article: Expert Panel®. (2024, January 12). 15 invaluable traits that make a good mentor great. Forbes. Consistently support the development of the mentee. <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2024/01/12/15-invaluable-traits-that-make-a-good-mentor-great/>



Have you had someone in your life whom you would consider a mentor? If so, what was one of the most valuable aspects of their mentorship?

Do you consider yourself a mentor to someone or a group of people? What specific things do you do for them to help them grow personally and professionally?



Community Service Committee

by Many Beth Simmons



Mary Beth Simmons, Community Service Committee Chair

If creating a community is at the heart of AOP as an organization, then community service is a natural result of building that community, and over the years, USM AOP has participated in many meaningful projects both on campus and in our

broader community.

The 2025-2026 year has been no exception! So far this year, AOP’s community service initiatives have included:

- Mississippi Coastal Clean-up Project: Participation in a community-wide beach clean-up event sponsored by MSCPP
- Cards of Caring: Holiday cards written by members and students and delivered to nursing homes in Hattiesburg and on the Coast
- Angel Tree: Partnership with USM’s Center for Faculty Development to sponsor an angel for Christmas and purchase clothes and toys—including a bike!

- Snacks of Support: A fundraiser to stock snacks at Forrest General Hospital’s Cancer Center for patients and their families

As one Community Service Committee member, Jamie O’Quinn, shares, “It has been exciting to be part of AOP and to witness the meaningful impact created through the unity of our members working toward shared goals... Each [service] project has a unique purpose, but all serve to promote our love of humanity.”

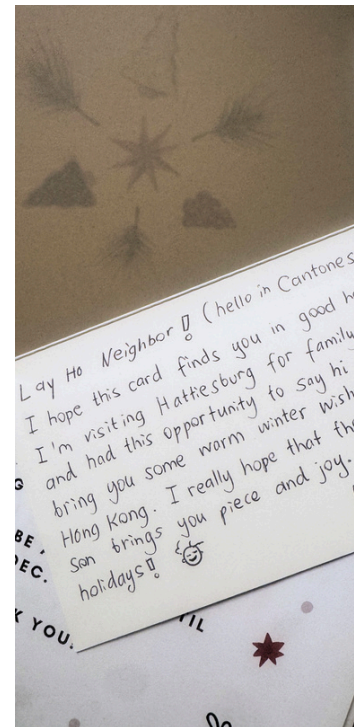
Across AOP, members give back to their communities in thoughtful, proactive ways, embodying the beloved USM call to action: Leave Southern Miss better than you found it!



The Big Event

Saturday, April 25
9 am - 12 pm

Mention AOP during sign up!



Member Spotlight: Stefanie Rogers

Welcome to our AOP Member Spotlight! Stefanie Rogers serves as the AOP Liaison to Staff Council. She has taken the time to share with us more about her role:

Serving as the USM Staff Council liaison for the Association of Office Professionals has given me a unique perspective on the importance of connection, communication, and on the needs and priorities of staff across campus.

When I first joined the university as a new staff member, I realized how valuable it was to build relationships beyond my own department. Joining AOP provided that opportunity.

Through AOP, I was able to connect with fellow staff members across campus, learn more about the many roles that support the university’s mission, and gain a better understanding of how we all contribute to the success of USM.

One of the most meaningful aspects of AOP is its commitment to professional development. AOP provides opportunities that encourage staff members to grow professionally, develop new skills, and become more effective in their roles.

Staff Council and AOP share the common goal of supporting staff. Because of this shared purpose, collaboration between them is especially valuable. When we communicate and work together, it strengthens the ability to represent staff perspectives, promote professional growth, and support initiatives that benefit all staff.

I’m appreciative of the opportunity to be a member of AOP and Staff Council. Being a member reinforces that my role at USM extends beyond my daily responsibilities. It is about making a meaningful, positive impact across campus and within the community.



Stefanie Rogers, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Finance & Administration, Association of Office Professionals Member, and Staff Council Secretary Elect

Is there someone you would like to nominate for the Member Spotlight?

Email AOPConnect@usm.edu and find out how!



THE BIG EVENT IS
THE BIGGEST
SERVICE EVENT AT
SOUTHERN MISS

April 25, 2026
SPIRIT PARK

Check-in begins at 8:45 a.m.
Service projects begin at 10 a.m.

Priority Registration
ENDS 3.27.26

Get first pick for service site sign-up and guarantee a free t-shirt and breakfast

Pre-Registration
ENDS 4.10.26

Sign up for your service site ahead of time and guarantee a free t-shirt and breakfast

Walk-ups Welcome!

The Big Schedule

APRIL 25, 2026

Check-in	8:45 a.m.
Welcome Ceremony	9:00 a.m.
Depart to Sites	9:30 a.m.
Service Projects Begin	10:00 a.m.
Approx. Conclusion	12:00 p.m.

Spring 2026 Professional Development Opportunities



Visit usm.edu/cfd for more info.

Own Your Role: Building a Desk Manual That Works for You

Do you know every university employee is required to have a desk manual? A desk manual is a "how-to guide" for your job and helps employees better understand their role and responsibilities. Bring your job description to this session, let's brainstorm what an efficient desk-top manual can look like for you!

Tuesday, April 21
12:15 -1:15 pm
Hybrid Session | IC 319 & Teams



Visit usm.edu/cfd for more info.

Mental Health First Aid Training - RSVP required by April 15

Learn how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. This training, provided through Student Counseling Services, gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care. Limited seating.

Friday, April 24
8:30 to 4:00 *Lunch is on your own.
In-person only | IC 319



2026 MAEOP ANNUAL Conference

JUNE 4-5 | 2026
 USM Gulf Park Campus
 Long Beach, MS

The conference early registration deadline is Friday, April 24, 2026. The early registration fee is \$225.00 for MAEOP members and \$275.00 for non-members. There will be a \$25.00 late fee for registrations after April 24, 2026. No registrations will be accepted after May 23, 2026. Please send your payment and completed registration form to Cory Williams, CEOE, MAEOP Vice President & Treasurer at the address on the registration form. If you pay by PayPal, please send the completed registration form to cory.smith@usm.edu. Payments must be made before the conference. If other arrangements are needed, please speak with Cory.

Please dress in business attire (blouse & slacks or dress). No T-shirts or jeans! Don't forget to bring cash for fundraisers such as 50/50 and chances on gift baskets. CashApp will NOT be available for fundraisers!

Our community service project is Bears on Patrol for MS Highway Patrol Troop K. Please bring huggable sized, new or gently used teddy bears to donate.

We hope to see you there!

<https://sites.google.com/view/maeop/home>

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Spring 2026 Highlights



Delivery of Snacks to Forest General Cancer Center
Thanks to your generosity, AOP's Community Service Committee was able to purchase over \$200 worth of snacks for the Cancer Center.



Jennifer Strength, Admin and Communication Specialist, Ocean Science and Engineering
Beautifully modeling the new AOP shirt design!



AOP at the WHEMN Conference, March 4-5, 2026
Hosted by USM in the Thad Cochran Ballroom



Board and General Body Meetings: April through June, 2026

April 9 - Board Meeting
11:30-12:30 - IC 319 & Teams

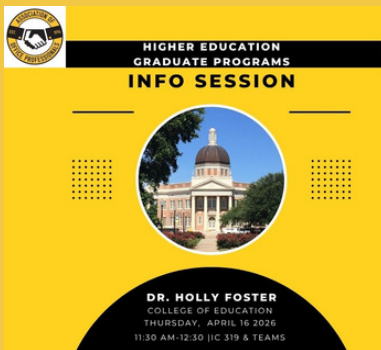
April 16 - General Body Meeting
11:30-12:30 - IC 319 & Teams
In-service Session: Higher Education Graduate Programs with Dr. Holly Foster

May 8 - Faculty and Staff Awards Ceremony
11:00-12:15 - Thad Cochran Ballroom

May 14 - Board Meeting
11:30-12:30 - IC 319 & Teams

May 21 - General Body Meeting
11:30-12:30 - Teams
In-service Session: TBD

June 15 - AOP Officer Installation and Awards Ceremony - 11:30-2:30, Luckyday Vann Hall



Each of the In-Service sessions are pre-approved through the PSP Advisory committee chair for Professional Standards Program Hours. Attendees received a Certificate of Attendance from the In-Service committee chair, to keep for their records toward their PSP Certificate goals.

Any USM staff person interested in AOP is welcome to attend a General Body Meeting.

Elections for the Executive Board and Committee Chair positions takes place in April and are made official in June. If you are interested in running or if you would like to serve on the Election Committee, reach out to AOPConnect@usm.edu

AOP PRESENTS

MARCH 2ND-APRIL 25TH
DRAWING: APRIL 25TH

SPRING BREAK Raffle

TICKETS
1 TICKET -\$2.00
6 TICKETS - \$10.00
10 TICKETS - \$15.00

PURCHASE TICKETS IN CASH OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO USE PAYPAL

USM Association of Office Professionals

What is in this amazing bundle? Everything you need for summer fun! A beach tote, two Turkish beach towels, a fan, \$100 Visa gift card, sunscreen, aloe vera gel, stainless steel water bottle, Owala water bottle, and lip balm!



Contact Ways & Means Chair, Kris Sullivan (Kristopher.Sullivan@usm.edu) to purchase your tickets today!

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