



# **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2025 - 2029**



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# INTRODUCTION

The Information Technology Services Department (iTech) is pleased to provide this Information Technology (IT) Strategic Plan that is designed to augment the [vision, mission, and values](#) of The University of Southern Mississippi and align with the [2025-2029 University Strategic Plan](#).

## VISION STATEMENT

iTech will be the trusted partner that provides secure, reliable, and cost-effective technology solutions to the students, faculty, and staff in alignment with the mission and goals of The University of Southern Mississippi.

## MISSION STATEMENT

iTech is tasked to provide exceptional technological services to all The University of Southern Mississippi locations in a cost-effective, efficient, and proactive manner. We will work with the students, faculty, and staff to determine needs, establish expectations, and provide solutions that enable the University to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission.



# CORE VALUES

iTech commits to fostering a community of SERVICE:

S	<b>STEWARDSHIP (SECURITY)</b> We protect data and systems with vigilance, ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of institutional assets.
E	<b>EMPATHY (RESPECT)</b> We engage others with fairness, professionalism, and understanding by fostering an inclusive and respectful environment.
R	<b>RELIABILITY (EXCELLENCE)</b> We deliver consistent, high-quality services that enable the university to function at its best.
V	<b>VISION (CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT)</b> We pursue innovation and learning with purpose by always seeking better ways to solve problems and support the mission.
I	<b>INTEGRITY (ACCOUNTABILITY)</b> We take responsibility for our actions, communicate openly, and operate with transparency.
C	<b>COLLABORATION (PARTNERSHIP)</b> We believe success is shared. We build cross-campus relationships that drive shared outcomes.
E	<b>ENGAGEMENT (RESPONSIVENESS)</b> We listen actively and act decisively supporting our users with accessibility, responsiveness, and care.



SWOT ANALYSIS

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <p>Ability to deliver high quality services with a lean, adaptable workforce</p> <p>Deep staff commitment to service excellence and the institutional mission</p> <p>Proven ability to maintain a modern network and data center infrastructure</p> <p>Strong disaster recovery posture and tested response capability</p> <p>Recognized innovation in student engagement through the iSouthernMS Mobile app</p> <p>Highly effective Help Desk and Desktop Support teams known for technical expertise and customer focus through a ticket tracking system</p> <p>Fully staffed and credentialed Project Management Office enabling structured project delivery</p>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <p>Limited capacity for employee training, professional certification, and succession planning</p> <p>Budgetary constraints affecting the competitiveness of salaries and retention</p> <p>Insufficient redundancy for staff in certain critical technologies</p> <p>Lack of authority to enforce enterprise-wide standards for technology selection and lifecycle management</p> <p>Gaps in visibility in academic and administrative strategic plans limit proactive IT alignment</p> <p>Excessive time commitment required for some purchases through the state</p>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <p>Expand access to online training and certifications to build workforce resilience and skills in emerging technologies</p> <p>Operationalize the IT Governance Steering Committee to ensure inclusive, transparent, and strategic technology decision-making</p> <p>Strengthen collaboration with the Information Security Advisory Committee to enhance risk posture and compliance alignment</p> <p>Expand and promote the secure research enclave to enable competitive advantages in regulated or grant-funded research</p> <p>Advocate for and support institutional initiatives aimed at improving IT compensation, retention, and career pathways</p>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <p>Rising sophistication and frequency of cybersecurity threats targeting higher education</p> <p>Intensifying competition for IT talent in public and private sectors as well as remote work</p> <p>Risk of operational disruption due to loss of institutional knowledge from anticipated retirements</p> <p>Technology-related decisions made without involvement of subject matter experts or governance structures</p> <p>Operational risk and user dissatisfaction stemming from outdated or unsupported enterprise software and systems</p> <p>AI's ability to enable faster, more convincing, and highly scaled attacks</p> <p>Inability of the university to keep restricted data from ingestion by public AI models</p>

LEVERAGING THE SWOT ANALYSIS TO DRIVE STRATEGIC EXECUTION

The SWOT analysis serves as a foundational lens through which iTech will shape priorities, mitigate risks, and capitalize on strategic opportunities through 2029. Each element of the analysis directly informs us of our approach to governance, service delivery, modernization, and workforce development.

IT STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES AND INITIATIVES

STRENGTHS AS STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Our lean yet highly capable workforce, modern infrastructure, and project management maturity will be fully leveraged to drive scalable innovation, enhance operational reliability, and execute complex initiatives, such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) modernization and classroom technology standardization, within existing resource constraints. The iSouthernMS Mobile platform and trusted desktop/help desk teams serve as high-impact examples of where institutional trust can be built upon and expanded.

ADDRESSING WEAKNESS THROUGH TARGETED INVESTMENT

We recognize that limited redundancy, constrained training pipelines, and the lack of enforcement authority over university-wide technology decisions hinder our ability to proactively serve the university. Through strategic initiatives, such as the activation of IT Governance, centralized project management services, standardized systems, and investments in staff upskilling, we will directly address these pain points and build a more resilient, future-ready organization.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES WITH INSTITUTIONAL ALIGNMENT

By expanding online training access for our staff, and operationalizing both the IT Governance Steering Committee and Information Security Advisory Committee, we will increase institutional alignment, transparency, and engagement in decision-making. We will also strengthen support for regulated research environments, positioning the university more competitively for grant funding and compliance success.

MITIGATING THREATS THROUGH PROACTIVE PLANNING

Cybersecurity, workforce retention, and legacy system risk require immediate, ongoing attention. To mitigate these threats, we will continue enhancing our security posture, participate in long-term planning to sunset unsupported software, and develop succession strategies to preserve institutional knowledge. Our governance structures will ensure that IT subject matter experts have a defined role in critical technology decisions to reduce the risk of siloed or misaligned implementations.

SWOT CONCLUSION

This SWOT analysis is not static but a dynamic guide that will shape tactical decisions and strategic investments. It ensures that the objectives and initiatives within our plan are grounded in self-awareness and institutional realities that strengthen our ability to deliver technology, which is secure, efficient, innovative, and aligned with the mission of The University of Southern Mississippi.

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1

To the best of our ability, govern and secure the infrastructure and data of the students, faculty, and staff at the university.

Maintain and enhance a governance structure and processes to assist informed decisions for the common good of the university. Vet and adopt a technical strategy that is affordable, secure, sustainable and aligned with university goals which are supported and enforced by senior administration. In collaboration with university functional experts, iTech will strive to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the university through business process re-engineering, software acquisition, and continued digital transformation.

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- **Operationalize the IT Governance Steering Committee and Subcommittees**  
Formalize a university-wide IT Governance structure that actively engages academic, research, and administrative stakeholders in the evaluation, prioritization, and recommendation of innovative technology solutions. This program will ensure alignment of technology initiatives with institutional goals, foster transparency in IT decision-making, and provide a structured forum for surfacing innovative ideas, assessing emerging technologies, and coordinating cross-functional pilots. The program will include thematic working groups focused on instructional technologies, administrative systems, research computing, and digital transformation.
- **Cybersecurity Risk Management**  
Strengthen the university’s cyber risk management posture by continuously evaluating threats and vulnerabilities and delivering actionable, risk-informed recommendations to senior leadership and stakeholders that support secure, strategic technology decisions.
- **Data Management**  
Provide support for the establishment of a university-wide data management program with an emphasis on student engagements, disparate data consolidation, and updating data sharing agreements.

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2

Investigate and evaluate the viability of modernizing enterprise software and systems.

To ensure long-term sustainability, adaptability, and efficiency, iTech will lead a structured effort to assess the current state and future readiness of the university’s enterprise software portfolio. The current suite of on-premises PeopleSoft applications--CampusSolutions (CS), Financials (FIN), and Human Capital Management (HCM)--has served the institution for over two decades. While vendor support is expected for at least another ten years, the evolving demands of higher education, combined with increasing expectations for agility, integration, user experience, and cloud-native functionality, require a comprehensive review of modernization opportunities.

This objective seeks to proactively position USM to make informed decisions about the future of its mission-critical systems by evaluating alternative ERP and student system platforms, identifying gaps in current functionality, analyzing total cost of ownership, and ensuring any transition aligns with institutional goals and stakeholder needs.

IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- **Conduct a Comprehensive ERP Modernization Feasibility Study**  
Engage stakeholders from across the university to analyze functional, technical, and financial aspects of the current PeopleSoft environment. Benchmark against leading Software as a Service (SaaS) platforms (e.g., Ellucian, Oracle, Workday) and assess the institutional readiness for potential transition. Evaluate vendor roadmaps, product lifecycles, support models, integration capabilities, and implementation timelines.
- **Establish an ERP Modernization Task Force**  
Create a cross-functional task force composed of administrative, academic, technical, and procurement stakeholders to guide the exploration and evaluation of future enterprise system options. This group will define evaluation criteria, engage with peer institutions, conduct vendor demonstrations, and provide recommendations for executive decision-making.
- **Develop a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and Return on Investment (ROI) Model**  
Create a financial model comparing current and projected costs of maintaining the existing PeopleSoft environment versus migrating to a SaaS solution. This model will include licensing, infrastructure, staffing, implementation, change management, and ongoing support in the analysis. Ensure that cost-benefit projections are transparent and defensible.
- **Document Functional and Integration Requirements for Future Systems**  
Engage end-users and process owners to document critical functional needs, pain points, and desired capabilities. Identify required integrations with ancillary systems (e.g., identity management, reporting platforms, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), etc.). Ensure requirements reflect modern expectations for user experience, mobile access, and data analytics.
- **Monitor and Contribute to System Sunset Planning**  
Stay aligned with vendor roadmaps and peer institution timelines to ensure USM is not at risk due to late-stage support or unplanned deprecation of key PeopleSoft modules. Actively participate in user communities and higher education consortiums to stay ahead of industry shifts and coordinate any eventual migration with minimal operational disruption.



## IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3

**Assess and modernize University workstations, meeting/teleconference systems, and instructional technologies by adhering to industry best practices, establishing standardized technology protocols, and implementing the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework alongside effective project management.**

Increase access to high-quality, interactive and interconnected technology-enhanced learning and collaboration environments by modernizing physical and virtual workspaces. Improving operational efficiency, instructional effectiveness, and user satisfaction by standardizing workstation configurations and instructional technologies. This will not only streamline support and lifecycle management but will also significantly enhance IT security. Updated systems are more resilient to vulnerabilities, easier to patch, and better aligned with endpoint protection strategies. Consistent configurations also reduce the risk of misconfigurations and unauthorized software, helping to safeguard institutional data.

Upgraded conference rooms and technology classrooms will provide a range of benefits that directly impact teaching, learning, and collaboration. Modern audio-visual (AV) systems and integrated teleconferencing tools improve hybrid meeting experiences and remote learning capabilities. Enhanced accessibility features support diverse learning needs, while standardized, user-friendly interfaces reduce downtime and support requests. The improvements will empower instructors and presenters with interactive displays, wireless content sharing, and audio systems that create more engaging and effective environments.

Leveraging ITIL principles and structured project management ensures that technology upgrades are sustainable, scalable, and aligned with institutional goals.

### IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

■ **Expanding the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure**

Assess expanding the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) currently used in the iTech computer labs and explore additional opportunities to broaden its deployment across academic and administrative units to enhance flexibility, security, and remote access.

■ **Standardize University Workstations Configurations**

Standardize university workstations by reviewing and analyzing the most used applications to develop workstation configurations for the university. Aiming to implement this with as few different models as possible to enhance efficiency and compatibility.

■ **Standardized Instructional Technology**

Standardize instructional technology to promote consistent and reliable in-person and hybrid learning experiences by unifying classroom technology setups and maintaining documentation for each instructional space. University constituents will be able to transition seamlessly between technology-enhanced rooms, improving the classroom experience for students and instructors, enhancing user-friendliness, and streamlining issue resolution by improving technical support efficiencies.

■ **Increase the Number of Technology Enhanced Classrooms**

Enhance presenter access by increasing the number of classrooms equipped with reliable, easy-to-use computing and presentation tools. Ensuring that instructors/presenters can deliver content seamlessly and allow presenters to focus on engaging with their audience.

## IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3

### IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

■ **Remove Outdated Computer Systems**

Partner with university stakeholders to assess and reduce the number of systems and devices impacted by the end-of-support for legacy platforms (e.g., Windows 10 and prior versions) and contribute to risk-informed remediation planning to maintain compliance and security. Replace outdated personal computers with standardized modern, secure, and energy-efficient systems. This will improve performance and reliability and reduce support demands and downtime. End users will have faster boot times, smoother application performance, and a more consistent computing experience increasing productivity across academic and administrative functions.

■ **ITIL Service Management**

Apply ITIL-based service management principles alongside structured project management methodologies to guide technology initiatives. Ensure that technological changes are implemented in a controlled, transparent, and efficient manner to minimize disruptions and enhance service reliability. The result will be smoother transitions, clearer communication, and more dependable access to the tools and systems customers rely on every day.

## IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4

**Assist in the protection of regulated and research data by supporting university-wide efforts to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data in accordance with applicable compliance obligations and security frameworks.**

The compliance obligations and security frameworks include, but are not limited to CMMC, FERPA, GBLA, HIPAA, and the Mississippi Enterprise Security Program. These efforts will require ongoing collaboration with functional departments, research leadership, legal, compliance teams, and senior leadership.

### IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

■ **Collaborating With Functional Leaders and Experts**

Collaborate with functional data owners, research leaders, and compliance officers to identify systems and workflows that process regulated or research data and assist in aligning those systems with relevant internal and external security and privacy requirements.

■ **Modernize Research and Administrative Workflows**

Support the adoption of secure electronic research and administrative workflows by facilitating the use of electronic signatures, secure file transfers, and compliant third-party integrations where appropriate.

■ **Develop and Enforce Technical Safeguards**

Assist in the development and enforcement of technical safeguards for regulated data, including device inventory management, endpoint protection deployment, and expanded use of multi-factor authentication.

■ **Promote Data Protection**

Promote awareness and understanding of data protection obligations by contributing to training, documentation, and communications for students, faculty, researchers, and staff who work with regulated data.



IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #5

Support and amplify technology innovation while serving as a valued solutions provider.

As a trusted partner and enabler of institutional progress, iTech will champion innovation by identifying, piloting, and scaling forward-thinking technology solutions. We will work collaboratively with academic, research, and administrative units to explore emerging technologies and process enhancements that deliver measurable value to the University. Through proactive engagement and responsive service delivery, iTech will strengthen its role as a solutions provider who empowers innovation, digital transformation, and operational excellence across the university ecosystem.

To foster an environment where innovation thrives, iTech will function as a catalyst to help surface novel ideas, experiment with new tools, and eliminate technology-related friction in day-to-day work. Our approach will be grounded in a service-oriented mindset and built upon a foundation of technical expertise, adaptability, and strategic foresight.

IT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

■ Deliver Enterprise IT Project Management Services

Expand the university’s capacity to plan, coordinate, and deliver strategic technology initiatives by providing centralized enterprise-level IT project management services. These services will apply industry-standard methodologies to support project governance, stakeholder communication, scope control, risk mitigation, and on-time delivery. The Project Management team will assist campus partners in aligning IT projects with university priorities, maximizing resource utilization, and ensuring measurable outcomes.

■ Invest in Staff Development for Emerging Technologies

Provide opportunities for iTech staff to explore, experiment with, and gain hands-on experience in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, low-code/no-code platforms, automation tools, and cloud-native services. This includes providing time for skill development, access to sandbox environments, participation in vendor-led labs, and support for industry certifications. Empowering staff to stay ahead of the technology curve will position iTech to better advise, support, and lead innovation across the university.

■ Optimize and Modernize Network Infrastructure

Continually replace end-of-life (EOL) access layer and distribution network hardware as well as upgrading to WiFi-6 at outdoor locations. Develop Microsoft Teams Calling and VoIP integration for unified communications.

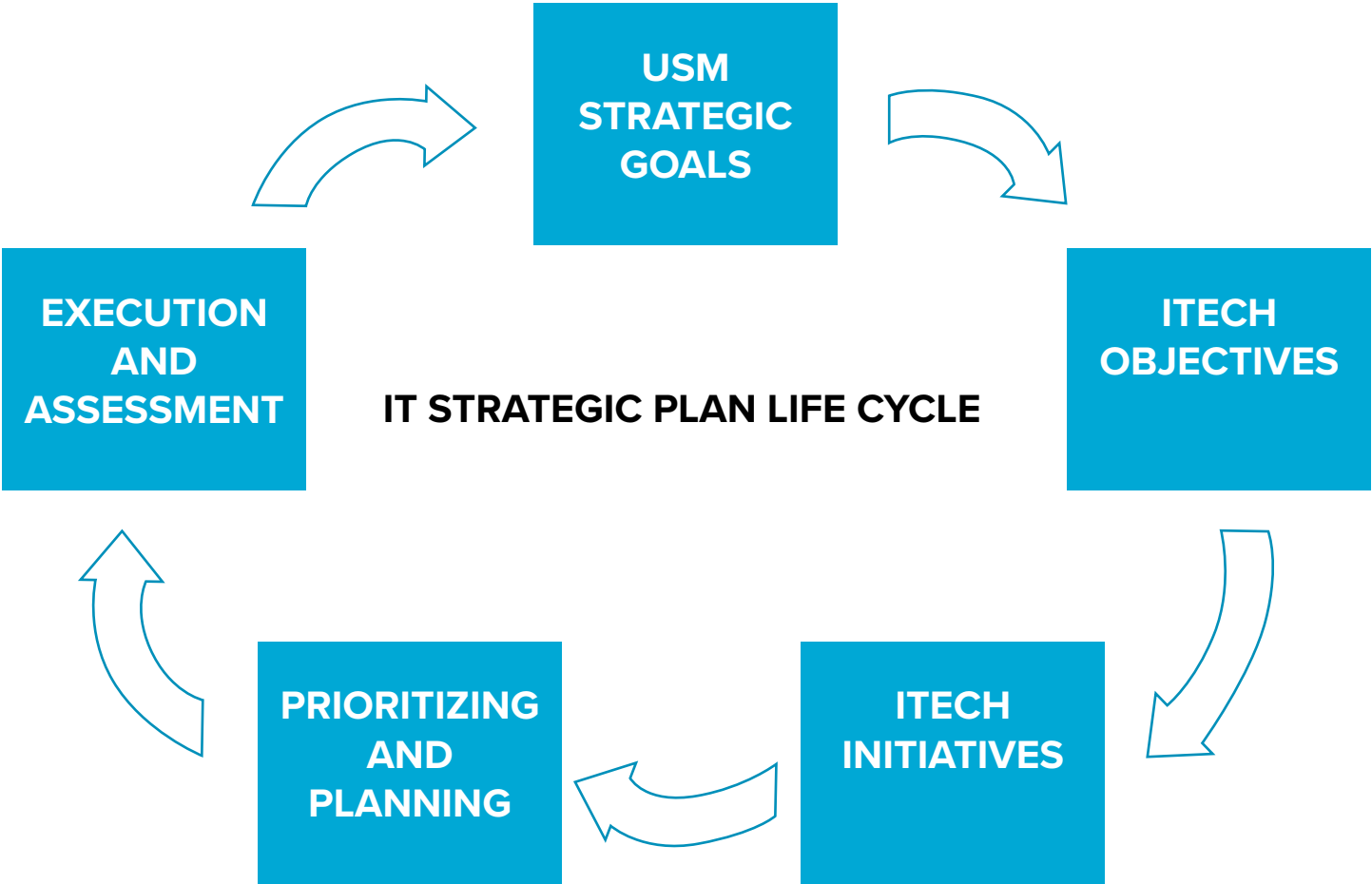
■ Expand Centralized Device Management

Continue to expand the centralized management of Microsoft Windows systems. Consolidate and centralize Apple device management for improved security and support.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC GOALS DRIVE THE IT STRATEGIC PLAN

For iTech to deliver relevant information technology services to the university, it is critical for us to align with the objectives in the latest [2025-2029 University Strategic Plan](#).

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC GOALS	IT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
1 Foster a culture that values the pursuit of high-impact research, innovation, scholarship, and creative activities that correspond with a Carnegie R1 very high research doctoral university. (KPI33)	4 Assist in the protection of regulated and research data by supporting university-wide efforts to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data in accordance with applicable compliance obligations and security frameworks.
2 Enhance the quality of research infrastructure to support a culture of excellence and innovation by optimizing research development processes, expanding support systems and services, and improving access to state-of-the-art equipment, research, and creative spaces across the institution. (KPI50)	4 Assist in protection of regulated and research data by supporting university-wide efforts to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data in accordance with applicable compliance obligations and security frameworks.
3 Streamline university operations and enhance efficiency. (KPI53)	2 Investigate and evaluate the viability of modernizing enterprise software and systems. 3 Assess and modernize University workstations, meeting/teleconference systems, and instructional technologies by adhering to industry best practices, establishing standardized technology protocols, and implementing the ITIL framework alongside effective project management.
4 Review and validate the existing roadmap, identifying critical steps for implementation and areas for potential adjustment within one year. (KPI54)	1 To the best of our ability, govern and secure the infrastructure and data of the students, faculty, and staff at the university.
5 Strategically plan and prepare for the modernization of applications and business operation systems to replace current infrastructures. (KPI55 & KPI56)	2 Investigate and evaluate the viability of modernizing enterprise software and systems.



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