group has existed for more than 4 years, and it plans to further grow its programming and outreach in 2011.

“These groups are a great addition to our alumni outreach in the college,” states Dr. Michael Forster, dean. “We hope to add more groups in the near future so that all our alumni have a chance to give back to their academic programs.”

The Nursing, MPH, and Nutrition groups are open to all alumni and friends, and require a minimum $25 gift per year for active membership. Benefits include the opportunity for networking, professional development, student outreach and job recruitment, and the opportunity to give back to the program.

For more information on College of Health alumni groups, contact Ryan Kelly at 601.266.5103 or michael.kelly@usm.edu.

Autism Project Offers Training, Programs for Children in Mississippi

Article by Charmaine Williams Schmermund

With the new school year approaching, the Autism Project at The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast wants to remind parents and school personnel about the services available regarding children with autism.

In addition to the training services available for parents and school personnel, the Autism Project has space available for children with autism ranging from pre-school through second grade. The $1.3 million program, developed through a partnership between the university and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), has a mission of designing and implementing appropriate school-based
DuBard School at Southern Miss Accepting Applications for LEAP Program

The DuBard School for Language Disorders at The University of Southern Mississippi is conducting open enrollment for the Language Enhancement and Achievement Program (LEAP). The LEAP program is an after-school initiative designed for students age 5-10 with challenges in reading, spelling and written language. Paraprofessionals, under the supervision of certified speech-language pathologists, conduct the one-hour sessions held three times per week.

“Since we started LEAP in 2009, we have been able to serve more children with dyslexia in our region,” said DuBard Director Dr. Maureen Martin. “LEAP gives families another option for specialized help for students who are struggling to read and write. Unfortunately, without therapy, some children would continue to fall further behind in reading, so intervention is key to long-term educational improvement.”

Catching Up with Dr. Virginia Crawford

Dr. Virginia Crawford serves as director of Student Health Services at The University of Southern Mississippi. Crawford, who once dreamed of becoming a veterinarian, took a few moments recently to reflect on her current responsibilities and outside interests in a question-and-answer format.

Q: What is your hometown and educational background?
A: My hometown is Jackson, Mississippi. I attended Mississippi College and Medical School and also the University of Mississippi School of Medicine. I am board certified in internal medicine.

Q: Did you always want to be a physician?
A: No, I thought about being a veterinarian, but there were no women vets in my college days. My mother, father and only sibling were all physicians, so, genetically, I was destined to be a doctor.

Q: How did you end up working at Southern Miss?
A: Because it is the best job in the world.

Q: How many doctors, nurses and assistants do you have on staff?
A: We have a staff of 20 healthcare professionals here to serve the university community.