The University of Southern Mississippi – Southern Miss suffered more than $200 million in damages to facilities on the Gulf Coast and in Hattiesburg. Damages to facilities in Hattiesburg, which included repairs to the iconic Aubrey K. Lucas Administration Building, were completed in 2010, while the Gulf Park campus in Long Beach embodies the university system’s biggest success story. Since Katrina, USM’s Gulf Park campus, which was decimated by the storm, has repaired 270,000 square feet of classroom and office space lost during the storm. In Fall 2014, the Gulf Park campus continued to grow: reporting 2,880 students enrolled, up by 3.26 percent from 2,789 in Fall 2013. The number of student credit hours produced by faculty based on the Gulf Park campus increased 2.24 percent from 23,742.5 in Fall 2013 to 24,274 in Fall 2014.

The Holloway Complex and the Fleming Education Center reopened in 2007. The Fleming Education Center (previously named the Advanced Education Center) contains a 500-seat auditorium, 19 classrooms, two interactive video classrooms and three computer laboratories.

The Gulf Park Library, which was flooded by storm water, reopened in spring 2008. The library housed The Katrina Research Center until 2014, which served as an interdisciplinary center and a public clearinghouse to facilitate the gathering of historical and current information related to the natural, physical, social, political, economic and spiritual aspects of recovery from Hurricane Katrina and other disasters. The library also offers tutoring and educational services through the Learning Commons, Think Center and Learning Enhancement Center.

The Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at the Gulf Park campus (formerly the Toy Library and Technology Learning Center) is a community-based, university-directed, non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing education, independence and quality of life for persons with disabilities. IDS serves children and adults with disabilities, their families, teachers and other special education professionals through specialized training and loan of assistive technology and recreational opportunities. IDS’ building project was completed in October 2009. An adjacent Adaptive Playground allows children with special needs an opportunity to interact in a “user-friendly” playground. The playground was completed in April 2009.

During the 2011-12 academic year, a new Science Building construction project began, and an existing building was converted to house the College of Nursing, both located on the northwest corner of campus. In spring 2013, the Science and Nursing Buildings opened, and historic restoration projects for Hardy Hall and Lloyd Hall were completed.

The Science Building features nine teaching laboratories, research space, approximately 20 faculty and administrative offices, and an 80-seat instructional classroom. The Nursing Building was a renovation project of an old gymnasium and features two laboratories, faculty offices and student learning and study areas.

Work on Hardy Hall included renovations to the entire facility, as well as new construction for a Barnes and Noble Bookstore and an adjacent parking lot. The three-story building houses dining services, the College of Education and Psychology, administrative offices, admissions and student services. Lloyd Hall provided 10 renovated classrooms for students.

Elizabeth Hall, which houses the College of Arts and Letters, was completed in fall 2013, and in May 2014, demolition was completed on the Administration Building and a new Administration Building Plaza
was opened. In late fall 2014, USM completed renovations on three houses along the east side of the Gulf Park campus which were washed through during Katrina, providing space for a new Fitness Center, Health Center and School of Social Work.

Construction is underway to complete the second floor of the College of Nursing Building, which will provide added classroom space. This project is schedule to be completed for the fall 2016 semester.

In April 2015, USM announced the approval of legislative funding to replace the Holloway Complex, currently comprised of a series of modular structures that were washed through during Hurricane Katrina. The new facility will house the Colleges of Business and Health. This two-story building will provide added academic and programmatic space for students, faculty and staff. Estimated completion of the new facility is fall 2017.

USM Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. The University of Southern Mississippi’s Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs is Mississippi’s designated marine laboratory, focusing on scientific research of the coastal and marine environment and education of future scientists.

Hurricane Katrina destroyed over 60,000 square feet of buildings at GCRL. Since 2005, GCRL has replaced 13,227 square feet, with plans to begin work on an additional 30,000 square feet in the near future. The physical plant maintenance shop and Summer Field Program teaching classrooms located adjacent to the GCRL harbor were rebuilt at the Cedar Point site and at a higher elevation on the Halstead Road site, respectively. The Marine Education Center and Toxicology replacement buildings are under contract and plan to be completed by 2017 with FEMA funding. Not replaced was the Anadromous Fisheries building, which supported Mississippi’s striped bass stocking program.

At the time of Katrina, the seatrout stock enhancement program was just beginning. Broodstock were being held on the Halstead Road site on a cycle to spawn in August or September. Hatchery, larval rearing, and grow-out facilities had been built at the Halstead Road site and rearing protocols had been developed. A test run of the protocol using seatrout larvae shipped in from Texas was underway when the storm struck. All facilities and animals were lost. The program relocated to Cedar Point, rebuilt and achieved the first small-scale release of seatrout in the fall of 2006.

The Thad Cochran Center for Aquaculture at Cedar Point received little damage during the storm. It supported recovery of the Gulf Islands National Seashore in Ocean Springs allowing them to set up their recovery headquarters at Cedar Point.

The Center for Fisheries Research and Development, located primarily in the Research Building which received 18 inches of storm water, was mostly able to continue its grant-funded sampling within a few weeks after Katrina. The Center is now back to full operational capacity.

During Katrina, the Gulf Coast Research Lab lost the 36,000-square-foot J.L. Scott Marine Education Center (MEC) in Biloxi. Since then, the MEC has been operating out of the 3,600-square-foot director’s home on the GCRL Halstead site. The MEC uses three modular units that house five classrooms to help support its educational programs. Of those programs, the summer-based undergraduate program, the Summer Field Program, has grown from 42 students representing 12 states, to 160 students from 30 states and 60 institutions. In the 10 years since the storm, the MEC has successfully rebounded and grown the undergraduate program to a nationally recognized leader in field-based marine biology course, while maintaining and expanding its successful K-12 camps and educational programs. A new
30,000-square-foot building is under contract to be built at the Cedar Point site to replace the building destroyed by Katrina.

USM at Stennis Space Center. At the time of Hurricane Katrina, USM’s Department of Marine Science had its operations in two buildings, the George A. Knauer Marine Science Building (Bldg. 1022) and the office/administration building (Bldg. 1020).

At the time of Katrina, the department also had a number of research assets deployed in the field. A weather station was deployed on the eastern shore of the Bay of St. Louis, which was completely lost during the storm. Funds from FEMA were used to replace it. Most of the facilities and instruments that were damaged by the storm have been repaired or replaced.

The department also had a semi-permanent instrumented buoy that was located in the Mississippi Bight, approximately due south of Pascagoula along the 20-meter isobath. The buoy and its instrumentation relayed weather and ocean condition data to the department facilities at Stennis in real time via a shore relay located at the U.S. Coast Guard facilities at the Port of Gulfport. The buoy collected information for much of the storm until it broke loose from its mooring and eventually was beached on the shores of the Chandeleur Islands where it was later recovered. The department is in the process of repairing and replacing part of this buoy.

Classes resumed at Stennis in fall 2005. For a short period of time, Bldg. 1022 classroom served to house a number of National Guard troops deployed to Mississippi to help in hurricane recovery. The troops were relocated when USM resumed classes.

Although the number of graduate students enrolled in marine science dropped the year after Katrina, spring 2015 enrollment numbers are the same as pre-Katrina. The Department of Marine Science has since added an undergraduate program with a current enrollment of 15 students.