



SEARCH PROSPECTUS

**DIRECTOR OF TRENT  
LOTT CENTER FOR  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT &  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTHERN  
MISSISSIPPI.**

# INTRODUCTION

Pictured below is the rotunda of the Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development & Entrepreneurship



## POSITION SPECIFICATIONS

The University of Southern Mississippi seeks a dynamic, forward-thinking leader for its distinguished Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development & Entrepreneurship. This individual will lead a nationally recognized center that is responsible for planning, coordinating, and directing the University's economic development initiatives and research. The university is strongly committed to promoting strategic economic development that will attract more business to the region and utilize academic research to bolster the local and state economy. Key to fulfilling this commitment is identifying ways to partner with local and state communities in mutually beneficial projects.



# INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

Founded in 1910, The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) opened its doors as a small teachers' college. Today, the University has grown into a comprehensive doctoral and research-driven institution with a proud history and an eye on the future. With a diverse student body of approximately 15,000 students representing 72 foreign countries, all regions of the United States, and every corner of Mississippi, the University celebrates diversity in every sense of the word.

As the state's only dual-campus university, USM serves students on campuses in Hattiesburg and Long Beach, in addition to teaching and research sites throughout south Mississippi, including the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs and the John C. Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, and through its growing online offerings.

As the premier research university of the Gulf South, USM takes pride in being classified as an R1: Doctoral University – Very high research activity category by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The category includes universities engaged in the highest level of research activity. A proven leader in innovation, Southern Miss is generating real-world solutions through transformative research.



### ***Hattiesburg Campus***

Characterized by history and tradition, the Hattiesburg campus sits on 300 acres in the middle of the largest city in the Piney Woods region of southeast Mississippi. More than 180 buildings dot a landscape that has been transformed into a pedestrian-friendly environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. From the rustic, industrial feel of the Power House Restaurant to the ultra-modern Trent Lott Center, the campus has a character and charm all its own in the heart of an urban setting.



### ***Gulf Park Campus***

Surrounded by live oak trees and sitting along the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the 52-acre Gulf Park campus in Long Beach—the only beachfront campus in the state—provides a beautiful setting for educational opportunities ranging from bachelor's through doctoral degree programs

# MISSION

The University of Southern Mississippi is a community of engaged citizens, operating as a public, student-centered, doctoral-granting research university serving Mississippi, the nation, and the world. The University is dedicated to scholarship and learning, integrating students at all levels in the creation and application of knowledge through excellence in teaching, research, creative activities, outreach, and service. The University nurtures student success by providing distinctive and competitive educational programs embedded in a welcoming environment, preparing a diverse student population to embark on meaningful life endeavors.

# VISION

The University of Southern Mississippi aspires to be a model student-centered public research university that prepares students to thrive in a global society by providing high-quality programs and transformative experiences in a community distinguished by inclusiveness.

# VALUES

The mission of the institution is supported by the following values:

- research and instructional excellence focused on student success at all teaching sites and through campus-based and distance education
- student engagement that fosters personal growth, professional development, and a lifelong commitment to wellness
- an inclusive community that embraces the diversity of people and ideas
- institutional governance that respects academic freedom and faculty inclusion
- a campus culture characterized by warmth and mutually supportive connections among students, faculty, staff, and alumni
- an approach to academics, research, and personal conduct based on integrity and civility
- an evolving curriculum that fosters lifelong curiosity and critical thinking
- community participation that promotes social responsibility and citizenship.



## INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC GOALS

- support student success to foster retention, progression, and graduation
- promote teaching, research, and creative excellence
- strategically expand undergraduate and graduate enrollment
- strengthen economic and community partnerships
- invest in faculty and staff to maximize their potential
- promote a culture of inclusiveness of people and ideas
- enhance physical, technological, and financial infrastructure to support the University's mission, vision, and values
- improve efficiency and effectiveness of institutional processes and systems

# UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



Rodney D. Bennett serves as the chief executive officer and principal educational officer of The University of Southern Mississippi. Under his leadership, the University has invested in new faculty positions, expanded coastal operations, and worked to increase access to quality education and research programs to serve the needs of the state of Mississippi and beyond.

President Bennett's vision is for The University of Southern Mississippi to become the model for public higher education across the country. His key institutional priorities include improving quality across the board while ensuring student success, expanding enrollment strategies, enhancing academic instruction, fostering greater focus on research, bolstering economic and community partnerships, and maximizing human potential.



Steven R. Moser is the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at The University of Southern Mississippi. The provost is charged with the oversight of The University of Southern Mississippi's graduate and undergraduate academic programs as well as curriculum development, program assessment, and university accreditation. Under his leadership, the university has expanded and enhanced its student success focus and initiatives. He is also responsible for leading the formulation and implementation of university-wide academic affairs policies related to faculty hiring, retention, tenure, promotion, and development. Since his appointment, Provost Moser has overseen the restructuring of admission and retention programming at the university, and in 2016 he began a university-wide dialogue to restructure academic units under the Plan for Academic Reorganization: Vision 2020. The academic reorganization, a bold plan that will foster operational efficiency and intellectual collaboration, is being implemented in the current academic year.



# HISTORY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The University of Southern Mississippi has a long and storied tradition concerning economic development. Southern Miss was the first in the nation to offer a masters level program in economic development and has continuously produced quality economic development professionals. Southern Miss has offered the Master of Science in Economic Development (MSED) program since 1979 and graduates of the MSED program are highly sought after by economic development firms and public sector agencies all over the country.





## HATTIESBURG & SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Home to The University of Southern Mississippi and three comprehensive medical centers, Hattiesburg blends a college-town atmosphere with an upscale entertainment district downtown and numerous outdoor, recreational, medical, research, and educational opportunities provided by our location. Today, the City of Hattiesburg's population is around 52,000, while the Hattiesburg Metropolitan Statistical Area has a population of about 150,000.

Known as the Hub City because of its proximity to New Orleans; the Mississippi Gulf Coast; Mobile, Alabama; and Jackson, Mississippi; Hattiesburg was founded in 1882 and incorporated in 1884. It developed as a railroad terminus to support the lumber industry. Hattiesburg also serves as a "hub" of medical facilities, shopping, dining, and entertainment for smaller communities in the southeast area of the state.

The University enjoys strong ties to the community. Black and gold signs and merchandise are displayed in local shops and restaurants showing support for Southern Miss. Dining opportunities abound, particularly local flavors such as New Orleans-style seafood, fried catfish, and barbecue.

Hattiesburg has a thriving arts community that complements University arts events with numerous venues for live music that continue a rich history of blues and rock. Through the University's new Arts Institute of Mississippi, the campus community collaborates with arts organizations in the city and throughout the state to enrich cultural offerings in Mississippi.

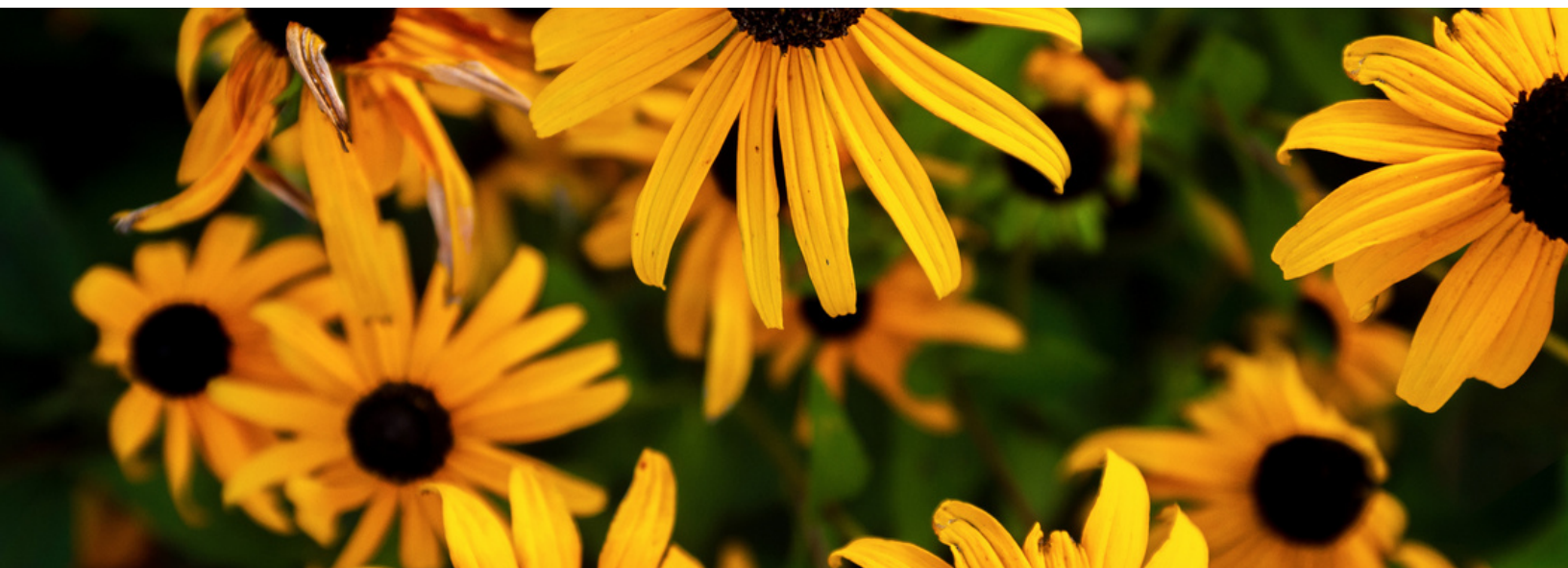
The Midtown Hattiesburg district adjacent to campus has been designed as “a walkable, workable, mixed use community that connects people to living, shopping, dining, entertaining, educational, medical, cultural, and recreational venues” (<http://www.midtowninmotion.org>). An upscale hotel, shops, and restaurants—mere steps away from campus—have just opened and promise to create a highly successful, sustainable, and thriving neighborhood.



The Saenger Theater, one of seven that operated in the South, dates to 1929 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1,000-seat venue is a downtown fixture and the home to local and regional arts productions. Hattiesburg is also home to the African-American Military History Museum, housed in a Black USO Club from World War II, one of only a few still surviving in the country. The museum focuses on the crucial role African-Americans played in all of the nation's conflicts.

Some of the top-ranked school districts in the state are located in the Hattiesburg area. For 2016-17, the Petal School District ranked #1 in Mississippi, 1 of only 15 to receive a grade of A, and the Lamar County School District ranked #7, also receiving an A grade. In 2018 Petal High School was ranked #3 in the state according to US News and World Report. Oak Grove High School in Lamar County is ranked 6th best in the state.

Southern Mississippi lies in the Gulf Coastal Plain (GCP), the world's most recently recognized biodiversity hotspot, according to Conservation International. Within the GCP, Hattiesburg is in the largest remaining unimpeded river system (Pascagoula River basin) in the continental U.S. and adjacent to some of the largest remaining clusters of the endangered longleaf pine ecosystem. Southern Miss has a long history of using these abundant natural resources to lead the region in ecological and conservation research.

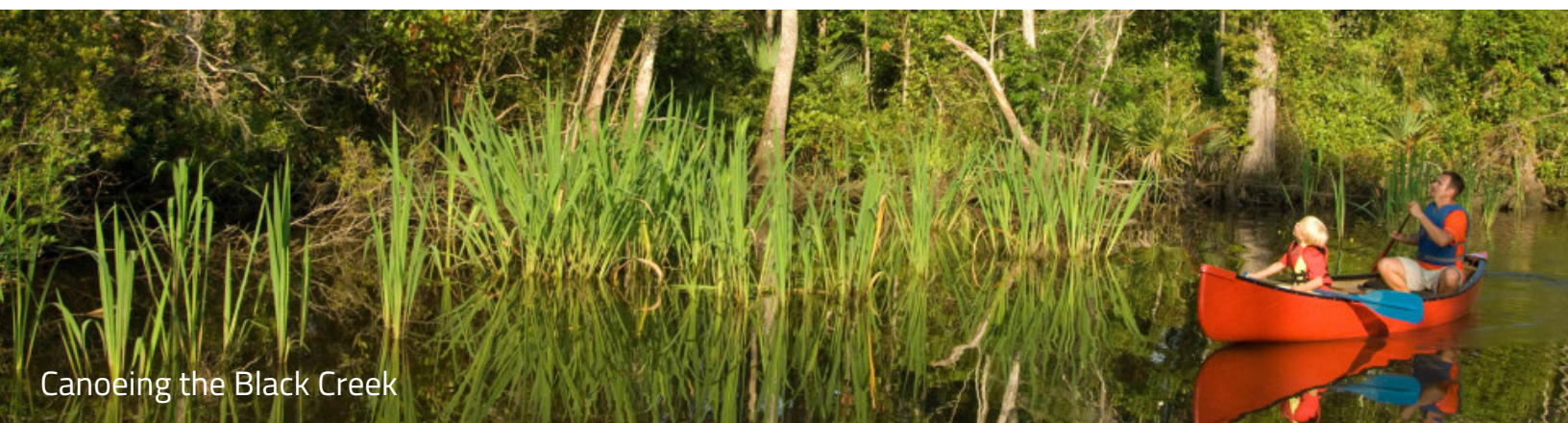


The University's Lake Thoreau Environmental Center, located several miles west of campus on the 131-acre Eubanks Preserve, offers opportunities for research, teaching, and outreach. Collaborations with local organizations have resulted in over 12 miles of trails. Today the Center is home to many educational and recreational activities for all ages and represents a critical site for environment research.

The Longleaf Trace is a 41-mile stretch of reclaimed railroad tracks that serves as a walking, jogging, biking, and equestrian trail. Parking and access to the trace are on the north edge of the Southern Miss campus, near the new Century Park residence halls.

Kemper Park and Zoo, just a mile from campus, is a 40-acre park that houses a 12-acre zoological garden. With exhibits dedicated to areas such as South America and the African Veldt, Kemper Park and Zoo is home to everything from prairie dogs to zebras to howler monkeys. The zoo also houses a variety of exotic birds, American alligators, and the tiger boardwalk exhibit. In addition, zoogoers can enjoy a peaceful train ride or a trip around the carousel, or shop in the gift shop or concession stand.

Paul B. Johnson State Park, 20 minutes south of Hattiesburg, offers vacation cabins, a nature trail, and fishing, boating, and swimming at Geiger Lake. It's also the place to be for a spectacular Fourth of July fireworks display. Eight other state lakes are nearby in South Mississippi, including Lake Perry in the Desoto National Forest. DeSoto offers camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing, golfing, and more. It is home to the state's only national scenic river, Black Creek.



Canoeing the Black Creek

Nearby Camp Shelby is another key member of the community. The camp, just south of town, is the largest National Guard training base east of the Mississippi River and has trained thousands of service personnel before their deployment overseas. Many active-duty service members live in the area, as does a large community of veterans. This active and engaged community is served by the University's Center for Military Veterans, Service Members and Families.

The city has been recognized by numerous publications and rankings as a retirement destination because of the area's amenities, low cost of living, and strong health care services. For more information about Hattiesburg, visit the Chamber of Commerce.



# Overview of The Trent Lott Center

The Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development and Entrepreneurship at The University of Southern Mississippi serves as the catalyst for a university-wide focus on economic development training and research serving public entities, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals. The Center provides client-requested assistance and offer expertise in strategic planning and leadership development; education and training; community analysis and research; and other technical support. The Trent Lott National Center is driven by passion, determination and commitment to be a leading force in advancing global competitiveness through knowledge-led economic development.

# AREAS OF EXCELLENCE

The Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development and Entrepreneurship at The University of Southern Mississippi works cooperatively with the nationally recognized College of Business & Economic Development Master of Science in Economic Development Program to support the research and education needs of the economic development community.

Annually, the Center manages \$1-\$2M of federally sponsored research and 20-30 community projects which range from \$500 to \$50,000. The Director manages two research analysts and 6-10 graduate research assistants who conduct strategic plans, feasibility studies, economic & fiscal impact studies, etc., requested by communities small and large. The Center also provides back-office research to support nationally known economic development consultants.



The Center also conducts economic development professional training, including:

True South Basic Economic Development Course - an IEDC accredited introductory course exposing participants to the fundamentals and practice of creating jobs, increasing wealth, improving the tax base and enhancing a community's quality-of-life, and the first step in pursuing professional certification.

Economic Development Certificate Program - provides knowledge and skills for those currently employed or pursuing careers in economic development.

Advanced Economic Development Program - seeks to help economic developers reimagine their role while providing leading-edge ways to think about and address challenges and create connections and a network that are invaluable. The University of Southern Mississippi partners with Clemson University, Texas Christian University, and The University of New Mexico to deliver this dynamic leadership program.





The Center is the point for the University's economic related outreach efforts. It works closely with the USM Office of Technology Development, Mississippi Polymer Institute, the Marine Research Center, the College of Business & Economic Development and centers across campus. It is integral to University-wide initiatives such as the Blue Economy and the Hatchery for entrepreneurship development effort. Statewide, the Director works with other higher education leaders, business executives, and public officials to improve the economy of the state.





# THE DIRECTOR POSITION

The Director of the Trent Lott Center will have overall administrative responsibility for the development and coordination of the University's economic development initiatives. The position leads and conducts economic development and business research.

# PRIMARY JOB DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of the Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development and Entrepreneurship is responsible for planning, coordinating and directing the University's economic development efforts and research. This includes supporting university research for communities and businesses in the state.

- Create job opportunities for Southern Miss graduates and citizens of the state by utilizing a variety of university resources.
- Provide support and advice to current and prospective area businesses and organizations through applied research and professional development.
- Serve as university liaison between federal, state, and local economic development agencies, and serve as a catalyst between external stakeholders and internal university constituents, including as a standing member of the Innovation and Commercialization leadership team.
- Contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of economic development; direct professional development opportunities for students in the Master of Science of Economic Development program including mentoring all student assigned to applied research projects; support and develop executive education; teach academic courses, as needed.
- Contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of economic development; Seek and secure external funding for university economic development initiatives.
- Seek and secure external funding for university economic development initiatives and provide leadership, guidance and expert advice to organizations or economic development and business research projects as needed.
- Provide leadership for economic development and business research projects as needed.
- Prepare reports to document findings of studies and prepare recommendations for implementation of courses of action.
- Provide guidance and expert advice to organizations or identify other subject matter experts within the university to do so.
- Teach academic courses, as needed.
- Serve as university liaison between federal, state, and local economic development agencies, and serve as a catalyst between external stakeholders and internal university constituents.
- Serve as a standing member of the Innovation and Commercialization leadership team.
- Give direct input into the recruitment of tenants and the direction of the Innovation and Commercialization Park.
- Support university-wide entrepreneurship efforts and initiatives.

# MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Master's degree from an accredited college or university in Economic Development, Business, or a related field and ten (10) years' experience.

# PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

Doctorate degree from an accredited college or university in Economic Development, Business, or a related field is preferred and ten (10) or more years' experience.

# KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES (KSA)

- Considerable professional experience in the field of economic development or consulting
- Experience in grant writing and project management.
- Comprehensive knowledge of the principles and practices of the economic development, business and entrepreneurship.
- Strong leadership and sound decision-making skills, and judgment with the flexibility of thought and approach to produce effective results in a matrix environment.
- Knowledge of general management principles and practices.
- A demonstrated track record of administrative experience and a portfolio of professional successes.
- A proven ability to work collaboratively with leaders across organizations.
- Must be comfortable as a visible leader in research representing himself/herself internally and to the outside community.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Excellent communication skills at executive and strategic level.
- Ability to work effectively in an environment subject to potentially conflicting priorities.
- Skill in problem solving, adept at discerning requirements, and managing multiple projects.
- Skill in effectively managing, supervising and evaluating assigned staff.
- Skill in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Ability to work effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Ability to travel or complete overnight stays.

## COMPENSATION

The University of Southern Mississippi will provide a competitive compensation and benefits package appropriate for a position of this scope, stature, and level of responsibility.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The screening committee will begin accepting applications and nominations immediately and will begin reviewing applications April 7, 2021, continuing until the position is filled. Applicants should submit a letter of interest, complete resume, and contact information for at least five references through the Southern Miss website at <https://jobs.usm.edu>. Questions and nominations should be directed to Dr. Bret Becton, chair of the screening committee, at 601-266-5544 or [Bret.Becton@usm.edu](mailto:Bret.Becton@usm.edu).



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