



Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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Proposal for a New Degree Program

I. Information and Rationale

A. Primary Contact Information

Institution: University of South Alabama

Contact: Dr. Sean Powers

Title: Director, Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Science

Email: spowers@southalabama.edu

Telephone: 251-460-7136

B. Program Information

Date of Proposal Submission: 3/1/24

Award Level: Doc Research (IPEDS 17)

Award Nomenclature (e.g., BS, MBA): PhD

Field of Study/Program Title: Environment and Society

CIP Code (6-digit): 03.0103

C. Implementation Information

Proposed Program Implementation Date: 8/20/2024

Anticipated Date of Approval from Institutional Governing Board: [Click or tap to enter a date.](#)

Anticipated Date of ACHE Meeting to Vote on Proposal: 6/14/2024

SACSCOC Sub Change Requirement (Notification, Approval, or NA): [Choose an item.](#)

Other Considerations for Timing and Approval (e.g., upcoming SACSCOC review):

D. Specific Rationale (Strengths) for the Program

List 3 – 5 strengths of the proposed program as specific rationale for recommending approval of this proposal.

1. The overarching mission of the Environment & Society PhD program is to provide transdisciplinary graduate education and training integrating the environmental and social sciences. The program is expected to be highly attractive to students interested in environmental change, environmental management and policy, hazard and disaster resilience, climate adaptation and mitigation, and natural resource management.
2. Multiple federal agencies have highlighted interdisciplinary social science as a major gap in expertise and ability to fulfill their mission. For instance, NOAA's recent report on Equity and Environmental Justice noted the expertise gap as a major barrier stating: "Our ability to identify, characterize, and serve all communities equitably requires prioritizing research conducted by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, economists, and



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interdisciplinary social scientists. Similarly, education and outreach staff are limited and do not have the resources to engage with all communities on all issues.”

3. As a Transdisciplinary Program housed in the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, the new PhD Program in Environment & Society will advance the University of South Alabama’s Mission to advance research and education programs that directly benefit the communities along the Gulf coast.

List external entities (more may be added) that may have supplied letters of support attesting to the program’s strengths and attach letters with the proposal at the end of this document.

1. The Nature Conservancy
2. Michigan University
3. NOAA Fisheries
4. US Geological Survey
5. Smithsonian Institution
6. Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
7. Mobile Baykeeper
8. Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
9. City of Mobile

II. Background with Context

A. Concise Program Description

Not required, however, we anticipate the high-flex model will allow more students to maintain or pursue related full-time careers while enrolled in the program.

B. Student Learning Outcomes

List four (4) to seven (7) of the student learning outcomes of the program.

1. Describe key theories and frameworks for evaluating the interconnected dynamics of environmental, social, and economic systems
2. Develop quantitative skills and conduct rigorous, transdisciplinary scientific research.
3. Demonstrate competence in collaborative science, including research and publications.
4. Build cultural competency for conducting research in diverse societal settings and communities.

C. Administration of the Program

Name of Dean and College: Andrzej Wierzbicki, Ph.D

Name of Department/Division: College of Arts and Sciences

Name of Chairperson: Sean Powers, Ph.D.

D. Similar Programs at Other Alabama Public Institutions



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List programs at other Alabama public institutions of the same degree level and the same (or similar) CIP codes. If no similar programs exist within Alabama, list similar programs offered within the 16 SREB states. If the proposed program duplicates, closely resembles, or is similar to any other offerings in the state, provide justification for any potential duplication.

None

E. Relationship to Existing Programs within the Institution

1. Is the proposed program associated with any existing offerings within the institution, including options within current degree programs? **Yes No**

(Note: Most new programs have some relationship to existing offerings, e.g., through shared courses or resources). If yes, complete the following table. If this is a graduate program, list any existing undergraduate programs which are directly or indirectly related. If this is a doctoral program, also list related master's programs.

Related Degree Program Level	Related Degree Program Title	Explanation of the Relationship Between the Programs
MS	Marine Conservation & Resource Management	See below

The Environment and Society PhD Program will add to the growing interdisciplinary programs of the Stokes School of Marine & Environmental Sciences as the first PhD program with a solid foundation in the social sciences. The closest existing program in scope is the Marine Conservation & Resource Management (MCRM) MS program, which has been extremely successful in both recruiting students, internship placement, and post-graduation jobs. The MRCM coursework requires students to complete a social science course, which currently is limited to Environmental Sociology, while the Environment and Society PhD Program would draw from other courses, such as Environmental Economics, Socio-Technical Systems, and others. SOMES' highly successful Marine Sciences PhD Program, which has an extensive oceanography-based curriculum, will offer synergies in quantitative methods courses, seminars, and professional development opportunities.

2. Will this program replace any existing programs or specializations, options, or concentrations? **Yes No**

If yes, please explain.

3. Will the program compete with any current internal offerings? **Yes No**

If yes, please explain.

F. Collaboration

- Have collaborations with other institutions or external entities been explored? **Yes No**

If yes, provide a brief explanation indicating those collaboration plan(s) for the proposed program.



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Have any collaborations within your institution been explored? **Yes** **No**

If yes, provide a brief explanation indicating those collaboration plan(s) for the proposed program.

G. Specialized Accreditation

1. Will this program have any external accreditation requirements in addition to the institution's SACSCOC program requirements? **Yes** **No**

If yes, list the name(s) of the specialized accrediting organization(s) and the anticipated timeframe of the application process.

2. Does your institution intend to pursue any other non-required accrediting organizations for the program? **Yes** **No**

If yes, list the name(s) of the organization(s) and the purpose of the pursuit.

If there are plans to pursue non-required external accreditation at a later date, list the name(s) and why the institution is not pursuing them at this time.

Note: Check **No** to indicate that non-required external accreditation will not be pursued, which requires no explanation.

H. Admissions

Will this program have any additional admissions requirements beyond the institution's standard admissions process/policies for this degree level? **Yes** **No**

If yes, describe any other special admissions or curricular requirements, including any prior education or work experience required for acceptance into the program.

I. Mode of Delivery

Provide the planned delivery format(s) (*i.e.*, in-person, online, hybrid) of the program as defined in policy along with the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered (*i.e.*, on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s)). Please also note whether any program requirements can be completed through competency-based assessment.

Hybrid

J. Projected Program Demand (Student Demand)

Briefly describe the primary method(s) used to determine the level of student demand for this program using evidence, such as enrollments in related coursework at the institution, or a survey of student interest conducted (indicate the survey instrument used), number and percentage of respondents, and summary of results.

The vision for USA's Environment & Society PhD program is supported by high and growing student demand for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary doctoral programs (Reisman et al. 2022). At USA, the Environment & Society PhD program aligns with several trends indicating student demand. For instance, applied and problem-and-solution focused electives such as Marine Resource Management, are among the most highly enrolled graduate course



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offerings. Demand for interdisciplinary environmental programs is growing nationwide. The current Marine Science program currently receives approximately 4 times as many applications as accepted, and anecdotal trends suggest that inquiries are closer to 10-15 times the available positions. However, we have also noticed that some students choose other programs over our Marine Sciences PhD due to the emphasis and requirements on oceanography courses in marine sciences. We also believe the Environment & Society PhD Program addresses a major gap in graduate programs ideally aligned with Environmental Studies undergraduate programs, which are widespread throughout the southeast and nation.

III. Program Resource Requirements

A. Proposed Program Faculty*

Current Faculty and Faculty to Be Hired

Complete the following **New Academic Degree Proposal Faculty Roster** to provide a brief summary and qualifications of current faculty and potential new hires specific to the program.

***Note:** Institutions must maintain and have current as well as additional faculty curriculum vitae available upon ACHE request for as long as the program is active, but CVs are **not** to be submitted with this proposal.

- Sean Powers, SSoMES
- Steven Scyphers, SSoMES / SASW
- John Lehrter, SSoMES
- Charles Martin, SSoMES
- Alison Robertson, SSoMES
- D. Lee Smees, SSoMES
- John Valentine, SSoMES
- Ruth Carmichael, SSoMES
- Ronald Baker, SSoMES
- Havalend, Steinmuller, SSoMES
- Gabriel de Oliveira, Earth Sciences / SSoMES
- Heidi Lyn, PSY / SSoMES
- Linda Sanchez, SASW
- Roma Hanks, SASW
- Philip Carr, SASW
- Kenneth Hudson, SASW
- Ermanno Affuso, Economics
- Jaclyn Bunch, Political Science
- Philip Habel, Political Science
- Donald Beebe, Earth Sciences
- Christine Wassenaar, MCOB
- Jeremiah Henning, Biology
- Bret Webb, CEE
- Stephanie Patch, CEE

Current Faculty			
1	2	3	4
CURRENT FACULTY NAME (FT, PT)	COURSES TAUGHT including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)



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Current Faculty			
1	2	3	4
CURRENT FACULTY NAME (FT, PT)	COURSES TAUGHT including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)
Additional Faculty (To Be Hired)			
1	2	3	4
FACULTY POSITION (FT, PT)	COURSES TO BE TAUGHT including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)

Abbreviations: (FT, PT): Full-Time, Part-Time; (D, UN, UT, G, DU): Developmental, Undergraduate Nontransferable, Undergraduate Transferable, Graduate, Dual: High School Dual Enrollment
 Course Modality: (IP, OL, HY, OCIS): In-Person, Online, Hybrid, Off-Campus Instructional Site
 Courses Taught/To be Taught – For a substantive change prospectus/application, list the courses *to be taught*, not historical teaching assignments.



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B. All Proposed Program Personnel

Provide all personnel counts for the proposed program.

Employment Status of Program Personnel		Personnel Information		
		Count from Proposed Program Department	Count from Other Departments	Subtotal of Personnel
Current	Full-Time Faculty	14		
	Part-Time Faculty	0		
	Administration			
	Support Staff	4		
**New To Be Hired	Full-Time Faculty			
	Part-Time Faculty			
	Administration			
	Support Staff			
			Personnel Total	18

****Note: Any new funds** designated for compensation costs (Faculty (FT/PT), Administration, and/or Support Staff to be Hired) **should be included** in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**. Current personnel salary/benefits (Faculty (FT/PT), Administration, and/or Support Staff) **should not be included** in the **Business Plan**.

Provide justification that the institution has proposed a sufficient number of faculty (full-time and part-time) for the proposed program to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review.

C. Equipment

Will any special equipment be needed specifically for this program? Yes No
 If yes, list the special equipment. Special equipment cost should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

D. Facilities

Will any new facilities be required specifically for the program? Yes No
 If yes, list only **new** facilities. New facilities cost should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

Will any renovations to any existing infrastructure be required specifically for the program? Yes No

If yes, list the renovations. Renovation costs should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

E. Assistantships/Fellowships

Will the institution offer any assistantships specifically for this program? Yes No



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If yes, how many assistantships will be offered?
15-17

The expenses associated with any *new* assistantships should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

F. Library

Provide a brief summarization (one to two paragraphs) describing the current status of the library collections supporting the proposed program.

The University of South Alabama maintains an extensive online collection of peer reviewed academic journals from publishers including Springer, Wiley, Elsevier, and others. This includes more than 6,000 journals and a number of bibliographic databases, including Web of Science. The University of South Alabama is also home to the McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which serves to collect and preserve recorded evidence of the history of the people of south Alabama and to promote its use for original research. This collection includes material related to the Alabama Black Belt, the City of Mobile and environments, and the institutional history of the University of South Alabama. Extensive photograph, manuscript, and oral history collections broadly document life in the region from the early nineteenth century to the present. The University also participates in an interlibrary loan program to further expand the reach of University researchers.

Will additional library resources be required to support the program? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied, and include the cost in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

G. Accreditation Expenses

Will the proposed program require accreditation expenses? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe the estimated cost and funding source(s) and include cost in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

H. Other Costs

Please explain any other costs to be incurred with program implementation, such as marketing or recruitment costs. Be sure to note these in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

I. Revenues for Program Support

Will the proposed program require budget reallocation? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied and include the revenue in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

Will the proposed program require external funding (e.g., Perkins, Foundation, Federal Grants, Sponsored Research, etc.)? Yes No

If yes, list the sources of external funding and include the revenue in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.



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Please describe how you calculated the tuition revenue that appears in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**. Specifically, did you calculate using cost per credit hour or per term? Did you factor in differences between resident and non-resident tuition rates?

IV. Employment Outcomes and Program Demand (Industry Need)

A. Standard Occupational Code System

Using the federal Standard Occupational Code (SOC) System, indicate the top three occupational codes related to post-graduation employment from the program. A full list of SOCs can be found at <https://www.onetcodeconnector.org/find/family/title#17>.

A list of Alabama's *In-Demand Occupations* is available at <https://www.ache.edu/index.php/policy-guidance/>.

SOC 1 (**required**): 25-1053.00

SOC 2 (*optional*): 19-1031.00

SOC 3 (*optional*):

Briefly describe how the program fulfills a specific industry or employment need for the State of Alabama. As appropriate, discuss alignment with Alabama's Statewide or Regional Lists of In-Demand Occupations (<https://www.ache.edu/index.php/policy-guidance/>) or with emerging industries as identified by [Innovate Alabama](#) or the [Economic Development Partnership of Alabama](#) (EDPA).

A top priority of Alabama's Innovation Commission is to develop "forward-thinking policies that will create a more resilient, inclusive and robust economy to remain competitive in a 21st century world." Environmental Scientists & Specialists are included in the list of Alabama's In-Demand Occupations with 105 annual openings and an average salary of \$58,086. Post-secondary teaching jobs

Within Alabama, Environmental Studies (CIP Code 03.0103) has shown a 20.5% year-over-year growth in "Direct Prep Jobs" according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Additional statistics and figures are provided in Appendix 2.

Multiple state and federal agencies have highlighted interdisciplinary social science as a major gap in expertise and ability to fulfill their mission. For instance, NOAA's recent report on Equity and Environmental Justice noted the expertise gap as a major barrier stating: "Our ability to identify, characterize, and serve all communities equitably requires prioritizing research conducted by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, economists, and interdisciplinary social scientists. Similarly, education and outreach staff are limited and do not have the resources to engage with all communities on all issues."

B. Employment Preparation

Describe how the proposed program prepares graduates to seek employment in the occupations ([SOC codes](#)) identified.

As described above, we anticipate diverse career pathways given the interdisciplinary nature of this program. All students in the program will gain knowledge and skills for assessing complex socio-environmental problems, yet the flexible curriculum will also allow individuality



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and specialization to pursue careers in academia, government, non-profits, or the private sector. With Environmental Studies (CIP Code 03.0103) the most closely related field, graduates would be highly competitive for careers as Environmental Scientists (SOC code 19-2041) or Postsecondary Environmental Science Teachers (SOC code (25-1053). Environmental Scientists and Specialists are listed on the State of Alabama’s In-Demand careers.

C. Professional Licensure/Certification

Please explain if professional licensure or industry certification is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations selected. Be sure to note which organization(s) grants licensure or certification.

N/A

D. Additional Education/Training

Please explain whether further education/training is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations selected.

We anticipate post-graduate training requirements will vary across employment sectors and occupations. We expect students will have employment opportunities with environmental non-profits, state and federal agencies, or the private sector immediately after graduation. For students focused on pursuing academic careers, postdoctoral training will be likely required, and we expect our graduates would be highly competitive for a wide variety of transdisciplinary postdoc opportunities.

V. Curriculum Information for Proposed Degree Program

A. Program Completion Requirements: Enter the credit hour value for all applicable components (enter N/A if not applicable).

Curriculum Overview of Proposed Program	
Credit hours required in general education	
Credit hours required in program courses	14
Credit hours in program electives/concentrations/tracks	16
Credit hours in free electives	
Credit hours in required research/thesis	30
Total Credit Hours Required for Completion	60

Note: The above credit hours **MUST** match the credit hours in the *Curriculum Components of Proposed Program* table in Section V.G.

B. Maximum number of credits that can be transferred in from another institution and applied to the program:

28

C. Intended program duration in semesters for full-time students:

7 - 8 (excluding summer)



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D. Intended program duration in semesters for part-time students:

N/A

E. Does the program require students to demonstrate industry-validated skills, specifically through an embedded industry-recognized certification, structured [work-based learning](#) with an employer partner, or alignment with nationally recognized industry standards? Yes No

If yes, explain how these components fit with the required coursework.

F. Does the program include any concentrations? Yes No

If yes, provide an overview and identify these courses in the *Electives/Concentrations/Tracks* section in the Curriculum Components of Proposed Program Table in Section V.G

G. Please provide all course information as indicated in the following table. Indicate new courses with “Y” in the associated column. If the course includes a required work-based learning component, such as an internship or practicum course, please indicate with a “Y” in the WBL column.

Program Name:				
Program Level:				
Curriculum Components of Proposed Program				
Course Number	Course Title	Credit Hours	New? (Y)	WBL? (Y)
General Education Courses (Undergraduate Only)				
Program Courses				
ENS XXX	Dynamics of Socio-Environmental Systems	3	Y	
ENS XXX	Seminar I	1	Y	
ENS XXX	Seminar II	1	Y	
	Environmental Sciences Core Course	3		
	Social Sciences Core Course	3		
	Research Methods	3		
Program Electives/Concentrations/Tracks				
	Program Electives	16		



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Research/Thesis				
	Research/Dissertation	30		
*Total Credit Hours Required for Completion		60		

***Note:** The total credit hours should equal the total credit hours in the Curriculum Overview table (V.B, p. 9).

New Academic Degree Program Summary/Business Plan

Use the Excel form from ACHE’s Academic Program webpage located at <https://www.ache.edu/index.php/forms/>, named **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan**, to complete the New Academic Program Degree Proposal.

Instructions and definitions are provided in the Excel file. **The New Academic Degree Program Business Plan should be uploaded as an Excel file (.xlsx) in the Academic Program Review (APR) Portal.**

Steps for Submitting the New Academic Degree Proposal

1. Complete the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document.
2. Attach the letters of support from external entities listed in *Section I.D.* at the end of the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document.
3. Save the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document as a **.pdf file**.
4. Complete the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan** and save as an **.xlsx file**.
5. Login to the Academic Program Review (APR) Portal at apr.ache.edu using your ACHE-provided login information. If you are not a designated user for your institution, contact your designated user.
6. Provide responses to questions in the APR Portal.
7. Upload the **New Academic Degree Proposal .pdf file** in the APR Portal.



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8. Upload the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan .xlsx file** in the APR Portal.
9. Click to “Validate” the proposal and then address any issues with your submission.
10. Once validation is clear, click “Review” to check your responses before submitting. If all looks good, click “Submit” at the bottom of the review screen.
11. The system will then prompt you to “Lock” the submission. Your proposal is considered submitted only once it has been locked within the APR Portal.

→ Note: Proposals that have not been locked by the deadline will not be reviewed for inclusion on the next Commission agenda.

NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUMMARY

INSTITUTION: University of South Alabama

PROGRAM: PhD in Environment and Society

Select Level: Doctorate

ESTIMATED *NEW* EXPENSES TO IMPLEMENT PROPOSED PROGRAM

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	TOTAL
FACULTY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
STAFF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FACILITIES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LIBRARY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ASSISTANTSHIPS	73800	181200	181200	181200	181200	181200	181200	1161000
OTHER (tuition remission)	17640	41160	41160	41160	41160	41160	41160	264600
TOTAL	91440	222360	222360	222360	222360	222360	222360	1425600

***NEW* REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM SUPPORT**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	TOTAL
REALLOCATIONS								0
EXTRAMURAL	42000	111000	204000	204000	204000	204000	204000	1173000
TUITION	35280	70560	94080	117600	117600	117600	117600	670320
TOTAL	77280	181560	298080	321600	321600	321600	321600	1843320

ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Note: "New Enrollment Headcount" is defined as unduplicated counts across years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	AVERAGE
FULL-TIME HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	11	15	18	19	18	19	16.66666667
PART-TIME HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	1	1	2	1	2	1	1.333333333
TOTAL HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	12	16	20	20	20	20	18
NEW ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS

Note: Do not count Lead "0"s and Lead 0 years in computing the average annual degree completions.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	AVERAGE
DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS	Year 1 - No data reporting required	0	0	3	6	6	6	4.5

New entails additional expenses or revenues associated with program implementation. Please include any planning or start-up expenses within Year 1 (even if these were incurred in Year 0 or prior). Do not include expenses or revenues already budgeted for a department or instructional unit prior to the development of this specific program. For instance, if new faculty will be hired to teach in this program, salary/benefits should be included for each year following hire, but salary/benefits for existing faculty would not be included.

Dr. Sean P. Powers
Director, Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences
University of South Alabama
Education and Outreach Building, Suite 300
600 Clinic Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36688

Re: University of South Alabama proposed PhD in Environment and Society

Dear Dr. Powers

I write this letter to acknowledge the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' support for the University of South Alabama's proposal to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for the addition of a PhD in Environment and Society.

Sustainable management of the State of Alabama's amazing natural resources requires an interdisciplinary scientific workforce that is well trained for understanding societal and environmental challenges. This is particularly true for natural resources in the State's vast coastal areas, where communities of people are connected through. USA is well positioned to develop this workforce because of many reasons, including its geographic location at the mouth of the rich Mobile-Tensaw Delta, access to the upper watershed, and its coastal presence.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources employs more than 1000 Alabamians and includes several divisions that could employ environmental scientists: State Lands, State Parks, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and Marine Resources Divisions. Additionally, we have a separate office that focuses on restoration activities related to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. These divisions hire a wide range of positions and broadly trained environmental scientists will be competitive for many of these.

We have hired USA graduates in the past and look forward to considering your graduates in this new Doctoral program for future careers in the Department. The program's research intensive focus in socio-environmental systems and diverse course offerings will help produce well-rounded scientists who should be competitive for jobs in non-profits, government, and the private sector. Given the highly flexible nature of the program, I also anticipate that some ADCNR researchers may be interested in pursuing their doctoral degree in the program.

Sincerely,

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Sean P. Powers
Director, Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences
University of South Alabama
Education and Outreach Building, Suite 300
600 Clinic Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36688

Re: University of South Alabama proposed PhD in Environment and Society

Dear Dr. Powers

I write this letter in support of the University of South Alabama's proposal to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for the addition of a PhD in Environment and Society.

I am a Professor in the Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University, where we have a long history of interdisciplinary graduate programs at the interface of environment and society. The Department of Community Sustainability engages with colleagues, students, stakeholders and communities to address social choices within specific environmental, economic and cultural contexts that advance or conflict with sustainability goals. Our department offers three graduate degree programs including an MS and PhD in Community Sustainability. These programs provide a way for individuals to advance knowledge through research or professional development in the context of community sustainability.

The University of South Alabama's PhD Proposal is highly innovative and well-designed with a strong focus on transdisciplinary research training and coursework. From my experience, this type of graduate training leads to diverse and creative scientists who are poised to solve challenging societal and environmental problems. At MSU, our students routinely secure careers in international non-profits, the private sector, federal government, and academia. I anticipate USA's graduates will have similar success, and I strongly endorse their program.

Sincerely,



Steven Gray, PhD
stevenallangray@gmail.com
Professor
Department of Community Sustainability, Michigan State University
Stevenallangray@gmail.com



**College of
Agriculture and
Natural
Resources**

**Department of Community
Sustainability**
Natural Resource Building
480 Wilson Road Room 151,
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 353-5190

February 20, 2024

Dr. Sean P. Powers
Director, Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences
University of South Alabama
Education and Outreach Building, Suite 300
600 Clinic Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36688

Re: University of South Alabama proposed PhD in Environment and Society

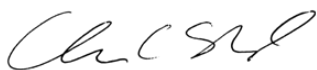
Dear Dr. Powers,

I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic support of the University of South Alabama's proposal to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for the addition of a PhD program in Environment and Society.

The Nature Conservancy has been active along the Gulf Coast for more than 40 years and has a long history of collaboration with the University of South Alabama with many projects focused on understanding and addressing our region's most pressing environmental and societal problems. As the Director of Science for The Nature Conservancy's Gulf of Mexico Program, I oversee a research portfolio that includes assessing coastal hazards risk, quantifying the role coastal habitats play in reducing risk, and identifying where ecosystem-based approaches such as conservation or restoration are likely to be effective for risk reduction. Our work also includes developing innovative spatial analyses and community engagement tools to help decision makers address coastal risks from climate change and coastal hazards like storms and sea-level rise.

I am excited about the potential for USA's Environment and Society PhD program to further expand opportunities with The Nature Conservancy, as well as strengthen our interdisciplinary workforce in the Gulf of Mexico region. The program's research-intensive focus in socio-environmental systems and diverse course offerings will help produce well-rounded researchers who should be competitive for jobs in non-profits, government, and the private sector. Given the highly flexible nature of the program, I also anticipate that some TNC researchers will be interested in pursuing their doctoral degree in the program.

Thank you,



Christine C. Shepard, Ph.D.

Director of Science, Gulf of Mexico Program

The Nature Conservancy

cshepard@tnc.org



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, Florida 33149 U.S.A.
(305) 361-4200 Fax: (305) 361-4499

February 28, 2024

Dr. Sean P. Powers
Director, Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences
University of South Alabama
Education and Outreach Building, Suite 300
600 Clinic Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36688

Re: University of South Alabama proposed PhD in Environment and Society

Dear Dr. Powers,

I write this letter in support of the University of South Alabama's proposal to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for the addition of a PhD in Environment and Society.

As the Ecosystem Science Lead for NOAA's Southeast Fisheries Science Center, I am directly responsible for leading the Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Program and developing initiatives to advance ecosystem approaches to management in the region -- both of which require furthering applied interdisciplinary research within NOAA Fisheries. I have also been actively collaborating with researchers at the University of South Alabama on stakeholder-driven research on the human dimensions of fisheries, development of Fishery Ecosystem Plans, and assessing the benefits and trade-offs of various approaches to biodiversity conservation.

I am excited about the potential for USA's Environment and Society PhD program to expand opportunities to collaborate, as well as strengthen our interdisciplinary workforce in the Gulf of Mexico. The program's research intensive focus in socio-environmental systems and diverse course offerings will help produce well-rounded researchers who should be competitive for jobs in the federal and state government, NGO's, and the private sector. NOAA Fisheries routinely hires research staff as well as postdoctoral affiliates, and highly values interdisciplinary research training. Given the highly flexible nature of the program, I also anticipate that some NOAA staff may take advantage of such a program in order to pursue their doctoral degree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Karnauskas".

Mandy Karnauskas, Ph.D.
NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center
75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, Florida 33149
Phone: (305) 361-4592 Email: Mandy.Karnauskas@noaa.gov