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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PORT OF GULFPORT CELEBRATES GROUNDBREAKING OF MARINE RESEARCH CENTER

GULFPORT, Miss. – Today, Nov. 14, state officials, in conjunction with the Mississippi State Port Authority (MSPA) and The University of Southern Mississippi's (USM) School of Ocean Science and Technology, celebrated the groundbreaking of the new Marine Research Center, which is set to be completed in early 2018. Commissioners of the Port Authority authorized advertisement for the \$10 million structure, which will serve as the marine operations and research facility for USM's School of Ocean Science and Technology, as well as enhance and beautify the industrial "front door" of the Port of Gulfport.

"The groundbreaking for USM's new Marine Research Center at the Port of Gulfport is an exciting step toward the enhancement of the University's impressive R&D portfolio. The facility will play a significant role in growing Mississippi's Blue Economy, which is a strong economic driver for the Gulf Coast region and the entire state," said Gov. Phil Bryant. "I congratulate the leadership of the Mississippi State Port Authority and USM on this milestone event and look forward to visiting this state-of-the-art research center once construction is complete."

The addition of a research center further solidifies the partnership between the two state institutions and allows for far-reaching benefits well beyond the waters of the Mississippi Sound.

"This is an opportunity for us to continue our diversification efforts and further develop a partnership that is a direct result of the state's investment in the Blue Economy," said Jonathan Daniels, Mississippi State Port Authority executive director and CEO. "The Port of Gulfport is merely a vehicle for the vision USM has put forth. Through their leadership, the port, along with the City of Gulfport, will serve as the epicenter of oceanographic research in the Gulf of Mexico."

"If you want to study the Gulf of Mexico and all its unforeseen wonders, the best place to do so is right here at Southern Miss," said Gordon C. Cannon, the University's vice president for research. "The addition of the Port of Gulfport's Marine Research Center will provide greater opportunities in the areas of academia and research for our students and faculty, and we are pleased to partner with the Port on this important project."

The new Marine Research Center will be an extension of USM’s 135-foot vessel, the *R/V Point Sur*, who makes her home at the Port of Gulfport and is the only oceanographic research vessel home ported in the northern Gulf of Mexico, east of the Mississippi River. This unique two-story building will encompass nearly 18,000 square feet. Upon completion, it will be the principal marine operations and support facility for USM’s oceanographic research efforts. The building will include administrative offices, classrooms, laboratories and storage areas.

Eley Guild Hardy Architects of Biloxi is overseeing the design, and construction is set to begin in early 2017. Anticipated completion is the first quarter of 2018.



Governor Phil Bryant, officials from the Port of Gulfport and The University of Southern Mississippi gathered today at the Port of Gulfport for the Marine Research Center groundbreaking. Upon completion, this unique two-story building will encompass nearly 18,000 square feet, and it will be the principal marine operations and support facility for USM’s oceanographic research efforts.

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