

## Kellogg Foundation Grant to USM Will Help Mobile County Children Learn Math in New Ways



Dr. Julie Cwikla

A \$900,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation has been awarded to The University of Southern Mississippi's Dr. Julie Cwikla, director of creativity and innovation in STEM. Funds will be used to help school children along the Gulf Coast learn math in new and exciting ways.

As part of a three-year project, Cwikla will work with Speakaboos, the New York City-based media company behind the award-winning literacy app for children ages two to six. Together, Cwikla and Speakaboos will develop interactive digital math stories that motivate children to read and expose them to important math concepts. By partnering with the Mobile County Public School System, the Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center and the Mobile Public Library, these stories and others in Speakaboos'

library will be made available to thousands of children in Mobile, Ala.

With prior support from the National Science Foundation, Cwikla and her Southern Miss team investigated early understanding of fractional concepts with children ages three to six. Results demonstrated young learners' ability to partition and fair-share in the context of story-based word problems. Mathematics and fractions are areas where children struggle once they reach upper elementary school. These findings will inform the design of the new interactive digital stories.

Support from the Kellogg Foundation brings together leading researchers with seasoned children's media experts and mobile engineers to build new interactive digital mathematics stories based on Cwikla's seminal fraction research. The grant also provides thousands of children across the Gulf Coast region access to the entire Speakaboos digital library. Cwikla will work alongside Dr. Alice Wilder, chief content officer of Speakaboos, who will co-design and develop the mathematical stories. Wilder is an educational psychologist and one of the world's leading experts on learning through media and formative research. She has developed educational content for children through Nick Jr. (Blue's Clues), PBS Kids and Amazon Studios.

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## Tisack-Kathmann Named Director of USM's Mississippi Polymer Institute



Dr. Monica Tisack-Kathmann

Dr. Monica Tisack-Kathmann has been named director of the Mississippi Polymer Institute, the industrial outreach service of The University of Southern Mississippi's School of Polymers and High Performance Materials.

The Mississippi Polymer Institute (MPI) leverages resources within the School of Polymers and High Performance Materials in order to assist high-tech polymer and polymer-related industries. From electron microscopes and thermal analysis to tensile strength testing, MPI offers access to a wide range of scientific equipment and the expertise to support both existing polymer-related industries and entrepreneurs.

Having produced thousands of prototyped parts, MPI has a customer list that includes some of the most prestigious manufacturing companies in the world.

Tisack-Kathmann is no stranger to working with big name manufacturers. Upon earning her doctorate in polymer science from Southern Miss in 1997, Tisack-Kathmann began an 18-year career with DuPont. Recently, Tisack-Kathmann was the Chemours Nafion™ North America regional business manager in Fluoroproducts. The Chemours Company is a new, publicly traded company created from the DuPont Performance Chemicals businesses.

The Mississippi Polymer Institute is located in The Garden, Southern Miss' 521-acre innovation and commercialization park, and housed in The Accelerator, a unique technology innovation center located within The Garden. The Accelerator is a 60,000-square-foot, full-service facility that provides state-of-the-art laboratories and professional support to technology-based enterprises innovating, manufacturing and testing new products.

To learn more about the Mississippi Polymer Institute, call 601.266.4607 or visit [thepolymerinstitute.com](http://thepolymerinstitute.com).

## Mississippi Arts Commission Chooses Southern Miss Dance Instructor for Esteemed Post



Julie Hammond White

Julie Hammond White, associate professor and director of dance education at The University of Southern Mississippi, was recently chosen to serve a three-year term as a teaching artist with the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC). In this role, White will partner with teachers throughout the state to artfully teach academics.

Teachers from K-12 schools will be able to select White from the MAC teaching artist roster, which consists of three other teaching artists chosen along with White. She will partner with MAC to teach K-12 students and instruct teachers on how to teach academics artfully, along with instruction of the dance elements and standards, professional development work in assessment and curriculum development, and other techniques.

The MAC application is extensive, highly competitive and consists of several review processes, including an

elected consortium of education experts who blind review all applications and determine qualified applicants. MAC is funded in part by the state and receives considerable funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. These funds enable MAC to financially support eligible arts programs and the work of individual artists in the form of grants.

White, who has been teaching dance at Southern Miss for the past 12 years, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in performance from the University of Illinois and a Master of Fine Arts in choreography, as well as Ohio licensure in K-12 dance education, from The Ohio State University. She performed professionally with BalletMet of Columbus, Ohio, and has produced work in Ohio and Illinois. White founded and directed a seventh through 12th grade program in dance at a magnet school in Ohio for 10 years.

White has also been selected as a Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education Teaching Artist for the second year, where she works with pre-K, kindergarten, first and third graders at Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary in Hattiesburg. She uses dance to teach reading, storytelling, science, mindfulness and cultures from around the world.