

Dr. Kelly Lucas, Panelist



Dr. Kelly Lucas is the Vice President for Research at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) and the Executive Director of the USM Research Foundation, bringing extensive expertise in marine sciences, ocean and atmosphere policy, and business. A Mississippi native, she previously served as the first chief scientific officer for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and as a Science Fellow for the late Senator Thad Cochran, where she provided guidance on ocean and atmospheric legislation. At USM, she has held leadership roles as the Associate Vice President for Research, Coastal Operations, and Director of the Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture

Center, before being appointed as the permanent Vice President for Research in 2023. In this capacity, she oversees all research initiatives, securing significant funding and fostering key industry partnerships. Her leadership has been instrumental in advancing USM's research portfolio, including playing a pivotal role in the "Gulf Blue Navigator Program" which supports blue technology innovation. Dr. Lucas holds a B.S. in Microbiology from Mississippi State University, an M.B.A. from the University of Alabama-Birmingham, and a Ph.D. in Coastal Sciences from The University of Southern Mississippi.