

The background of the entire page is a collage of six blue-tinted photographs. At the top is a large brick wall with the words 'JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY' carved into it. Below this, there are five smaller photos: two students smiling on the left, a student in a 'JSU' jersey in the center, a student on the right, a student playing a violin in the bottom left, a student with glasses in the bottom center, and a student with arms raised in the bottom right.

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

President

LEADERSHIP PROFILE | 2025

This is Jackson State University

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Founded in 1877, Jackson State University (JSU) is Mississippi's only urban research university and one of the nation's top historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The university is located in Jackson, Mississippi, one mile from the state capitol building, and has a history steeped in excellence, resilience, and service to humanity.

Jackson State University holds the Carnegie Classification of Research 2 (High Research Spending and Doctorate Production), recognizing universities that invest at least \$5 million annually in research and development and award a minimum of 20 research doctorates each year. This designation affirms JSU's expanding research enterprise and growing role in graduate education and innovation.

As one of eight public universities governed by the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), JSU operates within a coordinated structure that promotes accountability, collaboration, and statewide impact.

Building on a legacy of challenging minds and changing lives, Jackson State continues to set Thee Standard for academic excellence, student success, and community impact.

The next president will join JSU at a defining time as the university concludes its [current strategic plan](#) in 2026 and launches a new five-year vision for growth. This transition coincides with preparations for JSU's Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary) in 2027, a celebration of leadership, innovation, and impact. Guided by nearly a century and a half of purpose, Jackson State honors its history while reimagining how a public HBCU leads in innovation, access, and research that serves the public good.

Over nearly 150 years, JSU has evolved from Natchez Seminary into a nationally recognized public research university whose graduates and programs shape education, science, public policy, and culture across the nation.

Recent **milestones** show JSU's progress in academic expansion, community partnerships, and research leadership:

- Successful **decennial reaffirmation of accreditation** by SACSCOC | **2021**
- Partnership with **Microsoft TechSpark** to strengthen cybersecurity programs | **2022**
- National Park Service** grants for preservation of Ayer Hall and the COFO Center | **2022**
- Launch of **Jackson Middle College**, a dual-enrollment partnership with Jackson Public Schools | **2023**
- Wellness on Wheels** mobile lab introduced by the College of Health Sciences | **2024**
- First bachelor's degrees** awarded in Public Health and Supply Chain Management | **2025**
- Recognized among the nation's top HBCUs** for research productivity and social mobility, reinforcing its standing as Mississippi's Urban University

ABOUT THE IHL SYSTEM

The Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) governs the state's eight public universities, including Jackson State. The 12-member board is appointed from the three Mississippi Supreme Court districts and serves staggered nine-year terms. Dr. Al Rankins Jr., commissioner of higher education, advises the board and is responsible for administering the board's policies throughout the IHL system.

LOCATION

JSU is centrally located in Jackson, close to cultural assets such as the Mississippi Museum of Art, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, the Museum of Mississippi History, Thalia Mara Hall, and Davis Planetarium. The 245-acre campus features modern learning spaces, research spaces, student-centered amenities, and collaborative environments that support discovery and innovation. JSU is well-positioned for influence and partnership. Its proximity to government, healthcare, and industry anchors collaboration that benefits the entire state.

JSU HISTORY

Founded in 1877 as Natchez Seminary under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Jackson State moved to Jackson in November 1882 and became Jackson College in March 1899. The state of Mississippi assumed support in 1940, with a focused expansion on teacher education. Additional undergraduate and graduate programs followed (1953–1956), and the institution became Jackson State College in 1956. After a significant period of growth, it achieved university status on March 15, 1974. In 1979, Jackson State was officially designated Mississippi's Urban University. Today, Jackson State University is a public, coeducational institution recognized as an R2 (Research 2: High Spending and Doctorate Production) university.

Mission

The mission of Jackson State University, an HBCU and comprehensive urban research university, is to provide quality teaching, research and service at the baccalaureate, master's, specialist and doctoral levels to diverse populations of students and communities using various modalities to ensure that they are technologically-advanced, ethical and global leaders who think critically and address societal problems and compete effectively.

Vision

Building on its historic mission of empowering diverse students to become leaders, Jackson State University will become recognized as a challenging, yet nurturing, state-of-the-art technologically-infused intellectual community. Students and faculty will engage in creative research, participate in interdisciplinary and multi-instructional/organizational collaborative learning teams and serve the global community.

Core Values

1 Tradition

The university believes that its role as a historically Black university inspires and exemplifies positive societal change.

2 Accountability

The university believes in the principled exercise of leadership and the sanctity of the public trust.

3 Learning

The university believes in an experimentally enhanced learning environment where teaching, research, and service are integrated and mutually reinforcing.

4 Service

The university responds to the needs of society to the best of its ability and expects its graduates to do likewise.

5 Nurturing

The university is committed to creating a community, which affirms and welcomes persons from diverse backgrounds and experiences and supports the realization of their potential.

6 Responsibility

The university believes in and accepts its duty to enhance each generation's capacity to improve the human condition.



STRATEGIC PLAN
PILLAR 1:

Student Success

Jackson State University is ranked **#15** among HBCUs and **#65** nationally in Social Mobility in the U.S. News & World Report 2026 Best Colleges guide. Forbes Advisor 2025 ranks JSU **#6** among HBCUs for online programs, and the U.S. Department of State named the university a 2024 Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader.

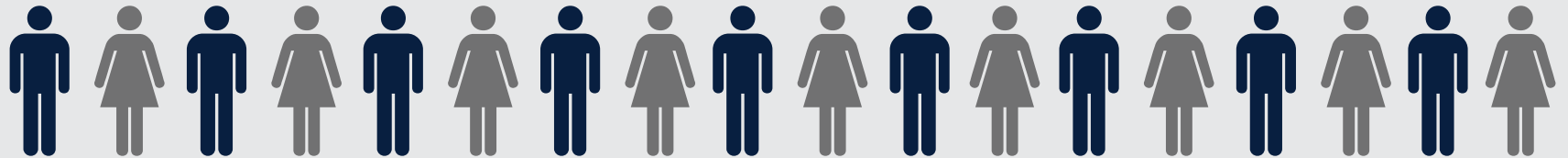
JSU's focus on access and outcomes is reflected in its social-mobility ranking, underscoring success in helping first-generation and underrepresented students complete degrees and build meaningful careers.

Students come from more than 60 countries, and the student-to-faculty ratio averages 15:1, ensuring personal attention and mentoring. JSU is also among the nation's top producers of Black doctoral graduates, demonstrating its commitment to advanced scholarship.

Recent investments in safety, classroom technology, and facility modernization demonstrate JSU's commitment to providing a modern, student-focused learning environment while planning for future campus renewal.

4,650
UNDERGRADUATE

1,676
GRADUATE



5,950
BLACK

217
WHITE

34
HISPANIC



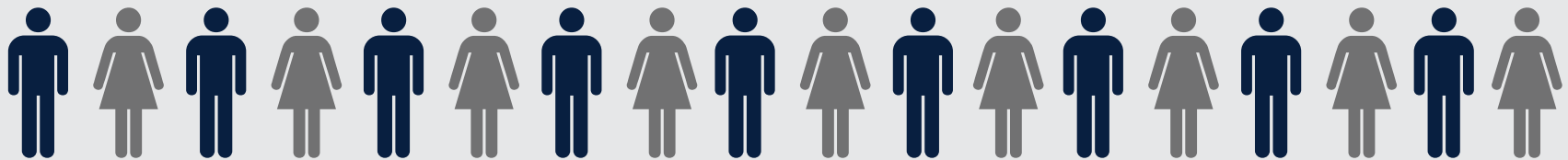
Only
**URBAN
RESEARCH**
University



1,337
Bachelor degrees
awarded in 2024

6,326

TOTAL
ENROLLMENT



66
ASIAN

20
AMERICAN INDIAN
OR ALASKAN NATIVE

26
MULTI-
RACIAL

9
NATIVE
HAWAIIAN

72%
Female



28%
Male





STRATEGIC PLAN
PILLAR 2:

Academic Prominence

JSU maintains **specialized accreditations** across business, education, engineering, public health, and the arts, affirming quality and rigor across all disciplines.

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

AACSB-accredited (top six percent of business schools worldwide) and one of only four HBCUs offering a Ph.D. in business.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Prepares a leading share of Mississippi's minority teachers and educational leaders through innovative teacher-preparation and counseling programs.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Home to JSU's Public Health Program, which leads statewide efforts in health equity and community wellness, including the Wellness on Wheels initiative (2024).

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Fosters creative expression and critical inquiry through the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The Department of Journalism and Media Studies prepares future media professionals and storytellers.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

Produces many of the nation's top Black STEM graduates and advances scholarship in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, defense-related research, and health disparities.

JSU recently launched a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and an M.S. in Public Health Informatics and Analytics, both designed to meet Mississippi's workforce needs. The university also graduated its first cohorts in Supply Chain Management and Public Health in 2025, producing graduates who strengthen regional and national industries.



STRATEGIC PLAN
PILLAR 3:

Research Excellence

Faculty across the university earn national recognition for innovation and discovery. For FY24, JSU secured more than **\$63 million in research funding through federal, state, and private sources**. These partnerships help JSU drive innovation that enhances Mississippi's competitiveness in STEM fields and contributes to national research capacity.

Recent achievements include an \$11.2 million NIH award to study minority health and health disparities. JSU's Public Health Program, within the College of Health Sciences, leads statewide efforts to address community wellness and reduce health inequities. A recent \$1.3 million state grant is expanding AI education, workforce training, and entrepreneurship, connecting JSU's strengths to Mississippi's economic diversification goals. In the social sciences, JSU researchers are advancing applied studies in public policy, environmental justice, and urban resilience, reinforcing the university's role as Mississippi's urban university.

JSU students distinguish themselves through academic competitions, community service and research collaborations, representing the next generation of innovators and leaders who embody the university's mission.



STRATEGIC PLAN
PILLAR 4:

Athletic Prowess

JSU is home to a storied athletic program in HBCU history, competing in **18 NCAA Division I** sports within the Southwestern Athletic Conference. The Tigers are the **2024 HBCU National Football Champions** and have led the Football Championship Subdivision in attendance six times. JSU has produced **four Pro Football Hall of Famers** — Walter Payton, Lem Barney, Robert Brazile, and Jackie Slater. JSU leads all Mississippi universities and HBCUs with this distinction, and its alumni continue to excel in professional sports and leadership roles.

In 2025, JSU's women's tennis team captured the HBCU National Championship, and the women's soccer team claimed the SWAC regular-season title and tournament runner-up finish.

Every JSU sport had student-athletes named to the **SWAC Commissioner's Honor Roll**, with 177 Tigers finishing the year with a **GPA of 3.0** or higher in 2024-2025. Bolstering JSU Athletics' visibility, the university's iconic Sonic Boom of the South and the Prancing J-Settes enhance game-day experiences and strengthen national recognition for Tiger sports.

Beyond competition, JSU athletics is a key driver of institutional visibility, alumni engagement, and student pride. Its championship culture, sustained by vibrant game-day traditions, raises the university's profile and reflects Thee Standard on the field, in the classroom, and in the community while preparing leaders who perform at the highest levels in every field. Athletics continues to serve as a gateway for national exposure, student engagement, and philanthropic growth aligned with the university's mission.

Community and Cultural Impact

As Mississippi's urban university, JSU plays an essential role in the state's capital city. Through partnerships that connect education, workforce development, and small-business growth, **the university strengthens the region's economy while expanding opportunities for Mississippi residents.**

ECONOMIC IMPACT

JSU generates an estimated \$329.3 million in annual economic activity and supports nearly 3,000 jobs across the region. Every dollar spent by JSU and its students produces \$1.37 in total spending. The 1,487 graduates of 2021 are projected to earn a collective \$4.5 billion in lifetime income — 46 percent more than without a college degree — demonstrating JSU's vital role in Mississippi's prosperity.

CULTURE AND REACH

From the Sonic Boom of the South's global performances to alumni shaping arts, policy, and media, JSU's culture transcends the campus, celebrating creativity, pride, and purpose that resonate far beyond Mississippi. Recent appearances by the Sonic Boom include the Super Bowl LVIII halftime show (2024), Coachella (2025), and the 2025 Tournament of Roses Parade. A Getty Images grant is digitizing 50,000 historic photographs and a forthcoming America 250 series marking the nation's 250th anniversary will feature JSU and its band tradition in the U.S. Library of Congress.

HOMECOMING'S REGIONAL LIFT

Each fall, JSU's Homecoming celebration draws more than 60,000 visitors to West Jackson and generates \$6–7 million in local spending, reinforcing the university's cultural and economic importance.

PHILANTHROPY AND SUPPORT

In FY 25, JSU awarded more than 700 scholarships totaling \$1.16 million, including \$212,000 in Gap Fund support to help students persist to graduation. The JSU Development Foundation increased donor participation by 8.5 percent, raising \$8.73 million in charitable gifts and grants — evidence of growing confidence in the university's mission and progress.

ALUMNI LEADERSHIP

JSU's alumni network, tens of thousands strong, forms a global community of advocates, donors, and partners who invest in the university's success through philanthropy, mentorship, and service. Distinguished alumni include Dr. Rod Paige, former U.S. Secretary of Education; Laphonza Butler, former U.S. Senator from California; Walter Payton, Pro Football Hall of Famer and humanitarian; Cassandra Wilson, Grammy award-winning jazz vocalist; and Tramell Tillman, the first Black person to win the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series.

The Presidency of Jackson State University



The Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning invites applications and nominations for the presidency of Jackson State University. The position offers a rare opportunity to lead a nationally recognized public HBCU with growing impact across Mississippi and beyond.

The role offers the chance to guide the next strategic planning process and lead the university into its 150th anniversary, shaping a new chapter for one of the nation's most respected HBCUs. The president will inherit an institution with strong progress in research, enrollment, partnerships, and clear opportunities to expand external funding and strengthen long-term sustainability.

Working with the IHL board, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the broader community, the next president will sustain JSU's trajectory in research, enrollment, student achievement, and institutional reputation. This is a moment for a visionary leader to champion JSU's people, programs, and purpose, elevating the university to new levels of research prominence, philanthropic growth, and public impact.

Desired Leadership Opportunities and Priorities

The following leadership opportunities and priorities reflect insights gathered from campus and community listening sessions conducted with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members. Collectively, they represent the aspirations and immediate needs identified across the Jackson State University community. While the opportunities outline areas of significant potential for institutional advancement, the priorities underscore the most urgent actions required of the next president to establish stability, strengthen trust, and position the university for sustainable growth. Together, these lists capture the community's vision for a leader who can translate shared values into decisive, forward-looking action.

LEADERSHIP

INTEGRITY, ETHICS, AND MORAL LEADERSHIP

- Strengthen and enhance the image and brand of JSU.
- Strengthen internal relationships with regard to shared governance and talent retention.
- Complete policy renewals, including the Faculty Handbook and compliance updates.
- Lead preparation for the SACSCOC fifth-year report.
- Promote transparency and accountability in stakeholder communication.

VISIONARY AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Engage the university in developing a new campus master plan.
- Focus on infrastructure improvements, with emphasis on water access and safety.
- Strengthen long-term institutional planning to support sustainable growth.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND SHARED GOVERNANCE

- Ensure policy and handbook revisions align with academic rigor and institutional goals.
- Strengthen faculty engagement, shared governance, and professional development.
- Support research expansion and curricular innovation.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT TO MISSION

- Strengthen community trust through leadership that honors JSU's HBCU legacy.
- Deepen alumni and community engagement as expressions of institutional mission.
- Build partnerships that uplift the surrounding community and reflect JSU's cultural role.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, HEALING, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL

- Demonstrate empathy and steadiness to restore morale following leadership transitions.
- Cultivate a culture of mutual respect, gratitude, and inclusion.
- Encourage optimism and shared responsibility across the university community.

Qualifications and Core Competencies

MANAGEMENT

TEAM BUILDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Complete searches for interim positions and strengthen administrative leadership.
- Develop professional development programs for leadership, faculty, and staff.
- Improve operational responsiveness and internal customer service.
- Establish a student-first, excellence-driven campus culture.
- Engage the campus community in the development of the next strategic plan.

FUNDRAISING, FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP, AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Pursue financial stability, institutional advancement, and endowment growth.
- Strengthen alumni relationships and leverage networks for advancement.
- Build partnerships with regional businesses to align programs with workforce needs.
- Elevate JSU's research classification from R2 toward R1 status.

POLITICAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS SAVVY

- Strengthen relationships with the City of Jackson and state and local leaders.
- Develop community partnerships that contribute to mutual revitalization.
- Guide JSU's response to evolving higher education challenges, including technology and infrastructure.
- Collaborate effectively with legislative bodies.

STUDENT-CENTERED AND PEOPLE-FOCUSED LEADERSHIP

- Improve student-facing processes, including financial aid and advising.
- Revitalize student life-cycle services—from recruitment through post-graduation.
- Prioritize student wellness and safety, with attention to housing, food, and mental health.

There is an expectation that the next president of Jackson State University will be ready to lead from the first day on campus. To meet that expectation, candidates should possess certain qualifications and core competencies, including but not limited to:

- Doctoral degree preferred
- Proven experience leading a large and complex enterprise, including oversight of substantial organizational structures, diverse operational units, and broad administrative or academic teams
- Proven experience working with students and developing programs that enhance their success and individual potential, with demonstrated ability to guide and support large-scale, student-facing units or other similarly complex organizations
- Proven experience working with faculty to provide best-in-class academic offerings, including effective collaboration with departments, colleges, and academic leadership across a multifaceted institution or equivalent governmental or private sector organization
- Proven experience in the generation of resources for a university or equivalent complex organization, including fundraising, donor cultivation, and managing units responsible for advancement and fiscal strategy
- Proven experience in working effectively with federal, state, and local officials, including representing a complex institution within political, civic, and regulatory environments

Nominations and Applications

Review of applications for the President of Jackson State University will begin immediately and continue until an appointment is made. To ensure full consideration, applications should be received by March 3, 2026, and must include:

- A letter of interest addressing the strategic objectives and qualifications identified in the profile;
- A current curriculum vitae; and
- Contact information (email and phone) for five professional references, including their relationship to the candidate.

Jackson State University is being assisted by AGB Search. Application materials should be submitted through the AGB Search portal system here: [Jackson State University President](#)

Please direct nominations and expressions of interest or any questions regarding the application process to: JSUPresident@agbsearch.com

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