

The University of Southern Mississippi Robotics Club – AUV Community Involvement

The University of Southern Mississippi's Robotics and Intelligent Machines Club, the team responsible for the university's entry into RoboSub 2026, has enjoyed collaboration with many local and state organizations in education, law enforcement, and first responder organizations.

Given the club's aim of directing and developing local talent in the fields of robotics and computer science/computer engineering for the budding technology-driven economy in the state, the club has directed a large amount of effort into reaching out to students in local high schools and middle schools, particularly, those already expressing interest in the field by being members of their school's robotics clubs.



Mississippi has proven to be a hotbed of talent in this industry, but the largest issue has been retaining these young men and women within the state, as generally those with the talent and drive tend to leave the state to pursue the field at other universities and in other states. As Mississippi experiences growth in technology across the tech sector in general and “Blue Industries” in particular, the purpose of our club is to provide a home for these prospective Golden Eagles in a technology-focused program within the state, close to their homes and families. In particular, West Jones High School, Oak Grove High School, Hattiesburg High School, and Moss Point High School have been consistent participants in demonstrations both at their own school events and at demonstrations held on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi.

Also, as the focus of RoboSub specifically and AUV design in general holds a lot of promise for Search and Rescue as well as Evidence Retrieval fields, several local agencies have been instrumental in providing advice towards that end. The Mississippi State Dive Team, a division of Mississippi Highway Patrol and Mississippi Bureau of Investigations, as well as Petal Fire Department and Petal Sheriff's Department, have offered a great deal of insight into the particulars of limited and zero visibility search techniques.



They have also proven extremely valuable in giving insight into the demands of the AUV marketplace in their specific fields. It was quite the shock when we realized the theme of this year's RoboSub competition involved search and recovery, as we had been partnering with professionals in that space for quite a while before the announcement was made. We intend on continuing these partnerships after the competition season has ended, as a way to help deliver aid to these communities so that they might be able to keep officers safe and deliver news quickly to the families of those affected by loss.