



BUSINESS FIRST

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

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| Silk | Jordan Sparkman | Tereza Janatova | Liza Cirlot Looser |
| Alexander | Stella Connell | Maverick McSparin | Matthew Currie |
| | Bryce Williams | Emmet Seibels | |

GREETINGS ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

We hope you enjoy this magazine, which details many of the great things going on in the Ole Miss School of Business. This year, we have experienced the difficulty of delivering classes and student services in the COVID-19 environment. It has been challenging for all of us, and I applaud the efforts by faculty, staff, students and alumni to make the year a success.

This is our first digital-only issue of *BusinessFirst*. Included in these pages are articles about our programs, news about our rankings, profiles on our faculty and students, and recognition of alumni gifts.

Our cover story showcases the resiliency of our faculty, staff, students and alumni in hosting the 16th annual Gillespie Business Plan Competition virtually with great success.

This issue gives us the opportunity to recognize Lyt Harris for his generosity to our school and university with a planned gift of \$2.5 million, as well as Beth and J. Walter Michel and ARGUS/Altus Group of Houston, Texas, for their support of our real estate program.

We also celebrate two outstanding faculty members, who received the business school's Teacher of the Year award for 2019-20, and two nontraditional graduates through the university's "Journey to Commencement" series.

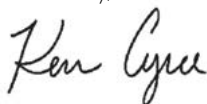
Our MBA program continues to thrive, with exceptional programs such as "Speaker's Edge," and grow in numbers and rankings. This year, the online MBA program was ranked No. 4 by *U.S. News & World Report* for American public universities and No. 6 overall.

We are fortunate at the business school to have a world-class faculty and a staff committed to help our students have the best possible experience in higher education. We also have dedicated and generous alumni who continue to provide the support to help us grow in so many ways.

I am thankful to each and every one of these groups for continuing to make it possible to give our students a first-class education so they can continue the traditions of excellence, success and generosity in the business world and life.

I hope you enjoy the 2020 issue of *BusinessFirst*.

Sincerely,



Ken Cyree
Dean



KEVIN BAIN



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The School of Business Administration (Ole Miss Business) at the University of Mississippi is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

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Social networking concept named Gillespie winner

An academic social network that allows students to connect with other students in their classes took first place at the University of Mississippi's Gillespie Business Plan Competition in April.

DaisNotes LLC – co-founded by Kyle Herbert, from Metairie, Louisiana, and Nicholas Neilson-Slabach, of Fort Worth, Texas – targets students for note-sharing and social networking for their classes.

“Winning this competition is the culmination of almost a year of hard work for us,” said Neilson-Slabach, who was a student in the UM Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and is CEO of DaisNotes. He graduated in May with a bachelor's degree in marketing and minors in entrepreneurship and computer science.

“The resources and the office space that comes with the award will make it possible to launch this in August after beta testing this summer,” he said after the competition.

The company won \$10,000 and a year of office space at the Innovation Hub at Insight Park, the university's business incubator. The award is given in two installments on agreed-upon milestones with the company and the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, or CIE, at the School of Business Administration.

“This is only the beginning of DaisNotes, and we are excited to see how we will grow,” said Herbert, an Ole Miss senior and COO of the company. “Sometimes working on a startup feels surreal, and I am so relieved that all of the work we have put in has been worth it so far.

“We couldn't have made it without the CIE, our mentor Owens Alexander's support and insights, and our friends and family that have encouraged us.”

Herbert, a managerial finance major with a minor in entrepreneurship, is on track to graduate in December.

DataBrace took second place, winning \$3,000 for a knee brace that tracks the range and motion of the knee, to be used by physicians and physical therapists. It also received the Thomas W. Colbert-Community Bank Innovation award, a \$5,000 contribution to an LLC.

The concept was developed by Tereza Janatova, a native of Nova Paka, Czech Republic, who majored in electrical engineering and was a member of the Ole Miss women's tennis team, and Matthew Currie, a native of St. Louis who majored in mechanical and electrical engineering, and was awarded a Taylor Medal. Both graduated in May.

“The Gillespie Business Plan Competition is an excellent experiential learning experience for these students,” said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration. “It is especially encouraging to see these students pursue their dreams in a virtual setting since the COVID-19 shutdown prevented us from hosting the competition in person.”

Four more startups received \$1,000 each for business development. They are:

- **exRcise VR Fitness**, a virtual reality fitness studio concept developed by Bryce Williams, a graduate student in exercise science from Ridgeland
- **Sparkleboxx**, a home-cleaning products subscription service presented by a team of MBA students: Jack Propst, of Nashville, Tennessee; Connor Silk, from Andover, Massachusetts; Lauren Cherup, of Olive Branch; Matt Halderman, from Fredericksburg, Texas, and Jordan Sparkman, of Scooba
- **Redgolf**, a golf club cleaning concept developed by Carson Zylicz, a banking and finance major from Sugarland, Texas, who played on his high school's golf team
- **Vaught It**, a portable storage service for tailgating on football game days developed by Maverick McSparin, from Edwardsville, Illinois, and Kathryn Bickerstaff, of Madison, both majoring in entrepreneurship



SCREEN SHOT BY TONG MENG

Some of the student participants in the 16th annual Gillespie Business Plan Competition present their proposals virtually to judges April 24. The competition is organized by the UM School of Business Administration and the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

This year the CIE introduced the Lynn and Ron Samuels Student Entrepreneur award, which includes a \$5,000 contribution to an LLC. This year's recipient was Vaught It.

"With so much that is uncertain and difficult, we are so proud our students came out of it with some incredible ideas and great work," said Rich Gentry, CIE co-director. "The students we worked with and encouraged in this competition are the kinds of people we're all depending on to help rebuild the state's economy."

This year, 26 student entrepreneurs or teams entered the competition. The CIE provided virtual workshops for all 26 applicants and requested a video pitch presentation for the semifinals.

The finals featured six participants, presenting eight-minute pitches in a virtual competition, on April 24. The presentations were followed by eight minutes of questions from the judges, who rated the finalists on their written business plans, video presentations and responses during the Q&A sessions.

Four judges reviewed the candidates' presentations remotely. The team consisted of Liza Cirlot-Looser, founder and CEO of The Cirlot Agency and chair of the CIE advisory board; Emmet

“

THE STUDENTS WE WORKED WITH AND ENCOURAGED IN THIS COMPETITION ARE THE KINDS OF PEOPLE WE'RE ALL DEPENDING ON TO HELP REBUILD THE STATE'S ECONOMY." – RICH GENTRY

Seibels, founder and former president of Snap-Worx LLC and a member of the CIE advisory board; Bill Andrews, former marketing head for Viking Corp.; and Henry "Hank" Jones, co-founder of Kopis Mobile.

"It is great to see our student entrepreneurs, like DaisNotes, go from an idea in the fall to winning Gillespie in the spring with a viable venture, as they worked their way through the Ole Miss entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Clay Dibrell, CIE co-director. "We are proud of their efforts and our other student entrepreneurs during this period of upheaval."

For more information about the Gillespie Business Plan Competition, go to <http://olemisscie.com/programs/gillespie-business-plan/>.

BY STELLA CONNELL

Student Veteran's Graduation 20 Years in the Making

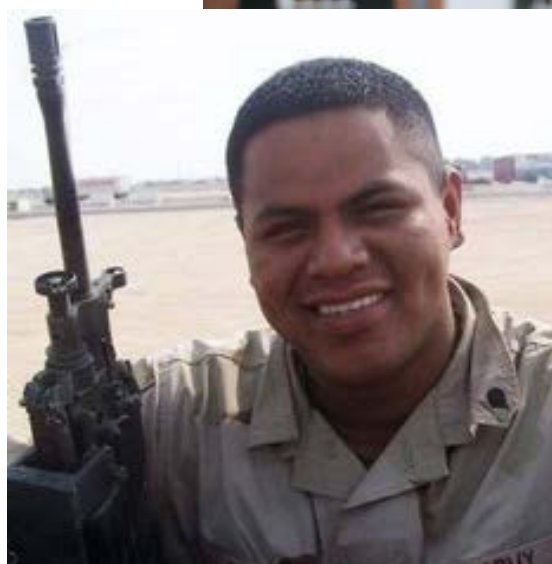
Jobie Charlie overcomes adversity, serves his country, provides for his family en route to finance degree

When Jobie Charlie sat down to take the GED exam for the fifth time, he knew the deck was stacked against him – a child raised in an abusive and alcoholic home on the Choctaw reservation outside Philadelphia, Mississippi. But he also knew he wasn't going to be another negative mark in the column for Mississippi, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians or young fathers.

Charlie's stepfather became violent when he drank, and he drank a lot of the time. When Charlie was finally big enough, he got the courage to stand up to his stepfather and try to protect his mother. She sided with her husband and kicked Charlie out of the house, so he went to live with his grandmother, whom he said showed him the only love he experienced as a child.

Despite being a high school dropout, teenage father and child of abuse, Charlie has spent the last 22 years laying the groundwork for a legacy of which he and his family can be proud. He has served his country, fought in a war, faced adversity at every turn, become a leader on the University of Mississippi campus and ultimately achieved every goal he set for himself along the way.

"I don't know that I've ever seen anything in my time as an administrator at any university I've worked at that compares to the story of Jobie Charlie," said Andrew Newby, UM assistant director of veteran and military services.



"From his childhood on the reservation, through high school years, enlisting into the service and deploying, to enrolling at Ole Miss, Jobie has consistently worked to take the next right step for himself. He doesn't quit. I know people say that flippantly, but to see the things he has overcome is evidence of that fact."

“

I WAS A STATISTIC, YOUR USUAL NO FATHER, ALCOHOLIC PARENTS AND LIVING ON THE CHOCTAW INDIAN RESERVATION OUTSIDE PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI.” – JOBIE CHARLIE



COURTESY OF OLE MISS ATHLETICS

After 20 years of speed bumps, trials and hard work, Jobie Charlie graduated from the University of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in finance, and is retiring from the Mississippi Army National Guard and turning 40 all in the same year.

Not Another Statistic

"I was a statistic, your usual no father, alcoholic parents and living on the Choctaw Indian Reservation outside Philadelphia, Mississippi," Charlie said. "And I had a kid with my high school sweetheart when I was 17. But I decided I wasn't going to let other people take care of my responsibilities."

When his son, Jacob, was born, Charlie decided to drop out of school and began working in factories around town so he could try to provide for his family.

"One day I realized I needed more out of life – something that my son would be proud of – so I decided to try to get my GED (General Educational Development diploma)," Charlie said.

He failed the math portion of the test four times before finally passing the test on his fifth try in 1998.

"I just don't know how to give up," he said. "And that was the first real victory I ever felt as far as personal goals go. All of a sudden the gates opened up, and I thought, 'If I can do that, maybe I can do some other stuff, too.'"

So Charlie talked to a military recruiter, enlisted in the Army Reserve and went off to boot camp.

Deployed to Iraq

With another success under his belt, he enrolled at Meridian Community College and obtained full custody of his son.



KEVIN BAIN

Just as things were starting to go his way, Charlie's unit was activated, and he was deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom. He spent a few months in Kuwait and the rest of the year in Mosul, running convoy missions and security details before returning home.

Back from the war, Charlie reenrolled in college and graduated from Meridian Community College with his associate's degree in general business in 2007.

The next step was his bachelor's, so he enrolled in the University of Mississippi, but as soon as he was back on track, things fell apart again. A few weeks into the semester, Charlie found himself back home caring for a sick family member and never went back to class.

He also had two more daughters to take care of now, Hannah, who was born in 2006, and Madison, born in 2009.

He kept working and advancing his way up the ladder of each job he held. He was providing for his family, but he said he was never satisfied.

"I knew I just couldn't go as far as I wanted to," Charlie said. "So around 2012, my girlfriend, Kat (Strangeman), and I decided to move to Oxford, and I started taking classes again. That's where I got serious."

One Last Try

After more than a decade of starts and stops, Charlie had a lot of work to do to

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HE IS INSIGHTFUL AND INTENTIONAL WITH HIS WORDS, AND EVERYONE LOVES HAVING HIM AROUND. THERE ISN'T A PERSON WHO KNOWS HIM THAT DOESN'T ENJOY HIS PRESENCE, AND WE ARE FORTUNATE TO SHARE ANY TIME WE CAN TOGETHER.” – ANDREW NEWBY

put his GPA back on track. He and Strangeman worked whatever jobs they could find around Oxford to make ends meet while taking classes.

"A big part of me getting through has been Kat, who has been in the trenches with me," Charlie said. "She came down from Chicago to work on her degree in psychology, and we literally sold our plasma so we could pay rent and stay in Oxford. She has seen all my lows as well as my highs."

Strangeman, a licensed clinical social worker in the mental health field, said watching Charlie overcome challenge after challenge without backing down is an inspiration to her.

"Getting through any school program is demanding for any person, but the fact that he's had to overcome the challenges the average person doesn't have to deal with, and that he can overcome them all on his own, speaks to his character," she said.

"Normal people have stressors that they can't get back up from or use negative coping, but here is Jobie finding a way to deal

“

A BIG PART OF ME GETTING THROUGH HAS BEEN KAT, WHO HAS BEEN IN THE TRENCHES WITH ME. SHE CAME DOWN FROM CHICAGO TO WORK ON HER DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY, AND WE LITERALLY SOLD OUR PLASMA SO WE COULD PAY RENT AND STAY IN OXFORD. SHE HAS SEEN ALL MY LOWS AS WELL AS MY HIGHS.” – JOBIE CHARLIE

with these internal demons without hurting himself or others. It's incredible to watch that in my own home and know that it's possible."

Charlie recommitted himself to his studies and did everything he could to stay in school this time. And through all his adversity, he never let "good enough" stand.

"When Jobie took my first course in the fall of 2018, although he passed the course, he

wasn't happy with his performance," said Arup Ganguly, UM assistant professor of finance.

"I was surprised when he came back to re-take the course the next semester, and on being asked why he was taking my course the second time, he said that he wanted to learn the material well so that he can apply it to his job after graduation and was determined to do better.

"I wasn't surprised to see his much better performance, which has improved even more in the course he is currently taking with me."

Charlie did all of this while serving as an on-campus leader in the Student Veterans Association.

"Jobie has a calming effect on the entire enterprise that is the student veteran network across campus," Newby said. "He is insightful and intentional with his words, and everyone loves having him around. There isn't a person who knows him that doesn't enjoy his presence, and we are fortunate to share any time we can together."

Now, more than two decades after his fifth attempt at the math portion of the GED exam, Charlie is graduating from Ole Miss with a bachelor's degree in finance, retiring from the Mississippi Army National Guard with 20 years of service and turning 40 all in the same year.

"I felt like it wasn't in my stars to do all this, but I finally got through it," Charlie said. "Now, I have a lot of catching up to do."

Next, Charlie plans to put his degree to work in Jackson, where he moved this summer with Strangeman so she can work in the Veterans Affairs hospital. But he said he eventually would like to return to Philadelphia to work with his tribe. Meanwhile, his son has graduated from Oxford High School and completed his freshman year of college.

"I think that I have a lot to give to people, and I think that's because of my grit," he said. "I'm either too dumb to stop or I don't know when to quit, but I've seen a lot and I've done a lot and I think I can offer a lot.

"I know that just because things don't go right to begin with doesn't mean they have to end the same. Ultimately you're still in charge of yourself. I could have easily said no one wanted me or loved me and wound up another guy on the street, but I feel proud of myself for not letting things happen to me and to take control."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

“

I THINK THAT I HAVE A LOT TO GIVE TO PEOPLE, AND I THINK THAT'S BECAUSE OF MY GRIT."

— JOBIE CHARLIE



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Top: Jobie Charlie and Kat Strangeman.
Bottom: Jobie Charlie and his son, Jacob, shopping for hunting gear



Sergio Gárate, UM assistant professor of real estate, teaches students in the School of Business Administration to use ARGUS Enterprise analytic software.

Teaching with cutting-edge technology

Real estate students gain experience using Argus software

A technology gift from the ARGUS/Altus Group of Houston, Texas, to the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration is providing students the opportunity to experience software they may ultimately use in their careers.

The recent gift, valued at more than \$330,000, is intended to train UM real estate students to use the same data and analytic software used daily by commercial real estate professionals.

“We want to ensure that students are prepared with the knowledge they need to enter the industry with the understanding of our software and how it’s used in different roles,” said Kari Mayfield, education coordinator for Altus Group. “Learning it while still in school creates a relationship with the students early on that sticks with them when they become the decision makers of tomorrow.”

Altus Group officials also hope the gift will facilitate a

connection between the company and students, Mayfield said.

“Many of the students we train become our industry clients, and we get to maintain this relationship throughout their careers,” she said. “That’s what we hope to continue accomplishing.”

ARGUS Enterprise allows developers and investors to evaluate, analyze and gauge the risk of an investment as well as facilitate the transaction of properties. Investors then use the information provided by the Argus analysis to keep track of their budgets and benchmark performance of multiple assets in a simple and visible way.

Students who learn to use the ARGUS technology will enter the industry with a competitive

edge, said Sergio Gárate, assistant professor of real estate.

“Working on a case study using this tool helps students polish their analytical skills and apply the theoretical concepts learned in the classroom in a practical manner,” Gárate said. “We are really excited and grateful to the Altus Group for giving our students this opportunity, and we believe it will help them land gainful employment once they graduate.”

For more information on supporting the School of Business Administration, contact Angela Brown, senior director of development, at browna@olemiss.edu or 662-915-3181.

BY BILL DABNEY

Hall of Fame inductee successfully transitions from Nepal to Mississippi

In Navodit Paudel's four years at the University of Mississippi, he has become a leader among international and minority students by getting involved in as many organizations as possible.

His efforts, both in and outside the classroom, led to the managerial finance major's induction into the UM Hall of Fame for the 2019-20 academic year.

"I grew up in a very crowded city with around 4 million people," said Paudel, a native of Dhading, Nepal. "When I started looking for colleges, my ideal choice was a place where I could get a little peace and a quality education."

Of course, Nepali – not English – is his native language. Initially, the language barrier was a struggle that lessened in time as his English improved.

Since then, he has broken many of the language and cultural barriers by joining numerous organizations at Ole Miss, such as the Associated Student Body, McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement, Nepalese Students Association and the Entrepreneurship Club.

"I chose to pursue my undergraduate degree 8,000 miles away from my home," Paudel said. "Yet, I feel like I am home, in a completely different environment, because of the kindhearted people of Oxford (and) the hospitality they offer."

"During my time, I've tried my best to become a voice for international students with my involvement in multiple organizations and leadership positions. I overcame my own language barrier and culture change to motivate other international students and minorities to take charge in leadership roles."

Paudel believes his campus involvement was a critical factor behind his being named to the Hall of Fame. In the classroom, he is on track to graduate in December. Interested in capital markets, he plans to pursue a career in the financial industry.

He dedicated his 2019 fall semester to an internship with FedEx Corp., and lived and worked in Memphis as a tax and compliance intern. He worked on tax filings and became proficient in various software platforms such as Alteryx and Oracle.



Navodit Paudel

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Since the tax environment often experiences change, "I learned how to catch up with trends and adapt to change quickly," he said.

In the School of Business Administration, Paudel has worked closely with Rich Gentry, associate professor of management, as a research assistant.

"Having the chance to work with him as a research assistant, and also as a student worker at the (Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship), has given me plenty of opportunities to learn and explore in the field of business," he said. "Being inducted into the Hall of Fame is such a high honor."

"It has boosted my confidence and has made me realize that if you work hard enough, your hard work pays off. With this recognition, I will always be determined to bring an effort to the table that can motivate people and bring a change to the community."

BY ALI MAE WALSH



Ken Cyree (center), dean of the School of Business Administration, congratulates Ross Hester (left), winner of the Marketplace Pitch category, and Bea Tisher, overall winner of the 2020 Speaker's Edge Competition.

Students show off public speaking skills during 16th Speaker's Edge competition

More than 120 business, accountancy and law students tackled ethical issues ranging from gender discrimination to price-gouging and pitched ideas for boosting the workplace at the University of Mississippi's annual Speaker's Edge competition.

They were joined by some 55 judges and 21 coaches for this year's speaking competition, a partnership between the university's School of Business Administration, Patterson School of Accountancy and Trent Lott Leadership Institute. The event kicked off Jan. 16, celebrating its 16th year.

After two days of competition, Bea Tisher, an accountancy

student from Mobile, Alabama, was declared the overall winner. The overall winner is the student who places highest in multiple categories, and Tisher placed first in Ethical Dilemmas and third in the Marketplace Pitch categories.

"I had such a great experience with this competition," Tisher said. "My instructors, coaches and classmates were so supportive

over those two weeks. I would recommend it to anyone going to graduate school interested in improving their speaking skills for presentations or interviews.”

Students competed in two rounds in three different categories: Ethical Dilemmas, Marketplace Pitch and Team Pitch.

“The Speaker’s Edge competition is a wonderful example of experiential learning,” said Ken Cyree, UM business dean. “It brings the alumni back to campus to interact with our students and allows for networking while the students are honing their communication skills.

“We are grateful to all of the coaches, judges and administrative team for making this event such a success. We appreciate the value this program adds to our students and the improvement to their communication skills that will enhance their success in the marketplace.”

In the Ethical Dilemmas category, following Tisher was Jonathan Cox, an accountancy student from Taylor, and in third was Jack Propst, an MBA student from Brentwood, Tennessee.

In this category, participants presented their best solutions for workplace challenges, where issues of gender discrimination, gifts for influence, alteration of budgets for personal gain, outsourcing using prison labor, and questionable social media behavior by company employees were addressed.

Tisher’s dilemma concerned a prospective buyout of a pharmaceutical company where the purchaser would raise the price of a much-needed drug by 600 percent.

In the Marketplace Pitch category, Ross Hester, an MBA student from Ridgeland, took first place, followed by Cox and Tisher.

Hester’s pitch advocated for background checks on Tinder, a popular online dating app, to assure users of their safety for

a small cost. His service was called “CheckMate.”

The competition provides an exceptional vehicle for students to enhance their verbal communication skills, said Mark Wilder, UM accountancy dean.

“The Patterson School of Accountancy is appreciative of the opportunity to have our master’s students involved in Speaker’s Edge as an elective course,” Wilder said. “Having strong presentation abilities is a clear differentiator in the marketplace, and the Speaker’s Edge program does an exceptional job in enhancing the verbal skills of our students.”

In the Team Pitch category, participating students randomly selected companies and applied the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, or SWOT, analysis to evaluate them. The team’s goal was to determine and address points of vulnerability or opportunity identified in the analysis and how best to present a solution or highlight a strength.

Retail outlets, air travel, supply chain management and

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WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL OF THE COACHES, JUDGES AND ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM FOR MAKING THIS EVENT SUCH A SUCCESS. WE APPRECIATE THE VALUE THIS PROGRAM ADDS TO OUR STUDENTS AND THE IMPROVEMENT TO THEIR COMMUNICATION SKILLS THAT WILL ENHANCE THEIR SUCCESS IN THE MARKETPLACE.” – KEN CYREE



Destiny Malone (left), Base Camp Coding Academy, Oxford; and Bailey Thibodeaux, MBA, Lake Charles, Louisiana

social media are examples of business in the Team Pitch area. The winning team's pitch represented Dollar General, and the group described how opening a distribution center in Salt Lake City would expand the retailer's business to the West. The other

skills before joining the workforce," Sparkman said. "Thanks to Mrs. (JoAnn) Edwards and her team, I feel much more prepared to take on any challenges that come my way after graduation."

The competition helps students gain an advantage as they prepare to launch their careers, said Walter Davis, MBA program faculty adviser.

"This is a great opportunity for our students to develop and demonstrate their talents not only for speaking but also for business decision making," he said. "It's a highlight experience for our students."

The competition was launched in 2004 by Ole Miss alumni. It brings together industry professionals, retirees, working alumni and students, requiring students to adapt their message to different audiences.

"Students are able to transform their speaking skills through an extensive 10-day period where they have access to a team of wonderfully talented coaches," said Ashley McGee, director of the MBA program. "These coaches prepare them for the competition, but more importantly, they prepare them for their future."

In preparation, participants spent a week and a half working with volunteer communication coaches to discover strengths and weaknesses of their own personal presentation styles in front of multiple judges.

"Speaker's Edge, as an experience, impresses me each year," said JoAnn Edwards, speech instructor and director of forensics and special projects manager at the Lott Leadership Institute. "The talent, heart, energy and good-natured competition from everyone – students, coaches and judges – creates an atmosphere for growth. Speaker's Edge is a singularly excellent event."

BY STELLA CONNELL



STELLA CONNELL

Kendall Watson, MBA, Ridgeland

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THE TALENT, HEART, ENERGY AND GOOD-NATURED COMPETITION FROM EVERYONE – STUDENTS, COACHES AND JUDGES – CREATES AN ATMOSPHERE FOR GROWTH. SPEAKER'S EDGE IS A SINGULARLY EXCELLENT EVENT.” – JOANN EDWARDS

businesses represented in the finals were Target and Old Navy.

The team, composed of Cary Allen, an accountancy student from Cockrum; Chase Brieske, an accountancy student from Lexington, Kentucky; Hayden Dix, an MBA student from St. Louis; Jordan Sparkman, an MBA student from Scooba; and Josh Speyerer, an accountancy student from Madison, received the Dollar General assignment through a random drawing.

"Speaker's Edge was a series of time-intensive, rigorous platform presentations that allowed for the honing of my demonstration



STELLA CONNELL

The UM Master of Business Administration program is tied with Pennsylvania State University and the University of Texas at Dallas for the No. 4 spot in the latest *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

Online MBA program ranks among top 5 in nation

The University of Mississippi's online Master of Business Administration program was named as one of the best in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. The rankings, released Jan. 14, place Ole Miss in a three-way tie for No. 4 among public universities and No. 6 overall.

UM is tied with Pennsylvania State University and the University of Texas at Dallas for the No. 4 spot. The University of Florida and Auburn University were the only other Southeastern Conference schools included in the top 25 of the 2020 rankings.

"We are thrilled with this recognition of our online MBA program that indicates the outstanding education and value of the degree," said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration. "We have focused on the best online experience possible that mirrors our on-campus program, while allowing students to keep their jobs while earning their degree.

"This ranking indicates the dedication of the faculty, staff and alumni who are providing an excellent program that creates competitive graduate degrees for our students. We are pleased to be ranked fourth, and we will strive to innovate and excel to remain a leader in online MBA programs."

MBA programs have a greater enrollment than any other type of graduate business degree program in the country, the *U.S. News* release noted. Prospective students often narrow their research exclusively to programs that award MBAs.

To aid their efforts, the publication compiles annual rankings of distance education MBA programs. This year's rankings include 335 schools nationally.



"The rankings reflect a combination of excellent faculty credentials, high standards for student performance and outstanding technical support from our outreach division," said Walter Davis, faculty adviser for the MBA program. "This is truly a team effort."

For the 2020 edition, *U.S. News* ranked online MBA programs using five categories: student engagement, expert opinion, faculty credentials and training, student excellence, and student services and technologies.

The publication selects factors, called ranking indicators, to assess each program in the five categories. A program's score for each ranking indicator is calculated using data that the program reported to *U.S. News* in a statistical survey and from data collected in a separate peer-reputation survey.

The strength of the Ole Miss curriculum is a plus for businesses in the state, said Ashley McGee, the program's director.

"In an increasingly competitive market, our online MBA program continues to attract some of the best and brightest professionals," she said. "Students looking for an accredited and affordable program recognize the value of an Ole Miss MBA."

BY STELLA CONNELL



Three Degrees and Three Journeys

Mother, two daughters graduate from Ole Miss at same time



Cindy DeFelice (right) received her B.B.A. in general business with a minor in accounting in May.

Cindy DeFelice is a mother, procurement agent at Williams-Sonoma, jewelry maker, breast cancer survivor and 2020 graduate of the University of Mississippi with a degree in general business and a minor in accounting.

“When I first started college, at age 48, I was so nervous about walking into an English class that first night on the Southaven campus,” she said.

The campus’s location, just a half-mile from her Southaven home, made it convenient to get to class, though.

Her sense of unease quickly disappeared when she realized a lot of the students in her classes

were just like her. Many were taking evening classes because they had full-time jobs and were trying to advance their careers.

“We all gave up what personal time we had so that we could make a difference for ourselves and our families,” she said.

DeFelice took almost all her classes on the regional campus, along with a handful of online classes, to complete her degree in five years while working full time. She did this not only for herself but also for her two daughters, Patricia and Emily, who attended Ole Miss.

When she started her college journey in fall 2015, she did not realize how much of an impact this experience would have on her relationship with her girls.

“Being at the same school with my mom and sister has completely shifted our family dynamic in the best of ways,” said Patricia “Tricia” DeFelice, a 26-year-old graduate student and Cindy’s oldest daughter, who received her master’s degree in sociology in May.

The New Work-Life Balance

“My mom, sister and I have a very tight-knit bond, and I’m glad I got to share this experience with them,” said Emily DeFelice, 22, Cindy’s youngest daughter, who received her bachelor’s degree in biology.

The bond shared by the three has grown stronger since they started taking classes at the same time in 2015.

“Mom was completely understanding of our struggles, trying to balance school, work and basic daily activities, because she was going through it too,” Emily said.

While Cindy has encountered many obstacles throughout her college journey, she didn’t let them stop her from graduating in May with her girls.

“I work full time, while also going to school full time, so there were many challenging days and sleepless nights,” she said.

Many might think it would be hard for Cindy to find personal time with so much going on, but she always made it work. However, in May 2019, she faced the biggest challenge in her personal journey.

“My mother fell ill and passed away last May,” Cindy said. “My parents have been some of my biggest cheerleaders, and she was so excited to see the three of us walk across the stage.”

This was hard on the whole family, but Tricia explained that there were other obstacles in Cindy’s explorations in higher education.



DeFelice with daughters Emily (left) and Tricia. All three received degrees at UM Commencement 2020.

KEVIN BAIN



BEING AT THE SAME SCHOOL WITH MY MOM AND SISTER HAS COMPLETELY SHIFTED OUR FAMILY DYNAMIC IN THE BEST OF WAYS.” – TRICIA DEFELICE

“From surviving breast cancer, being a single mom, often not being paid her worth for the jobs she’s done to getting a college degree at 52, Emily and I have the perfect blueprint for how to persist and persevere in the face of hardship,” Tricia said.

An Ole Miss Experience for Everyone

Tricia and Emily believe these challenges allowed their mother to grow and be more confident in herself, her skills and her knowledge.

While Cindy has been presented with obstacles many students do not share, she has never let that get in the way of capturing her own unique “college experience.”

Both Tricia and Emily loved seeing their mother’s excitement and joy when the three have gone to the Oxford Square or attended Ole Miss football and baseball games together.

The university prides itself on being a family – from the faculty and staff to alumni and students. It is special moments like these that have strengthened the DeFelice family’s bond with the Ole Miss family because of their journey together.

“We have always been close, but our bond through this shared experience has become even stronger,” Cindy said.

BY MORGAN GUSELLA

Bloomberg Businessweek ranks Ole Miss MBA program in top 50

The University of Mississippi's Master of Business Administration program was named one of the nation's best by *Bloomberg Businessweek*. The rankings, released Nov. 4, 2019, place Ole Miss at No. 34 among American public universities.

For the 2019 edition, *Bloomberg* ranked MBA programs using four categories: Compensation, Learning, Networking and Entrepreneurship. The UM program came in at No. 7 in both Entrepreneurship and Learning.

"We are thrilled with the success we have enjoyed in our MBA program, and the reflection of the value of our program and the positive trend as indicated in this ranking," said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration. "These rankings show the dedication of the faculty and staff who make the program successful, and our alumni who add additional significance with personal development programs for our students.

"We are especially proud of being ranked No. 7 in both the

areas of entrepreneurship and learning, which is very impressive and indicates the tremendous value of our program and our competitiveness among our peer institutions."

The *Bloomberg Businessweek* 2019-20 Best B-Schools ranking is based on 26,804 survey responses from MBA students, alumni and recruiters in 2019 about their goals and experiences, as well as compensation and job-placement data from each school.

"Many people work together to prepare our graduates for success," said Walter Davis, faculty adviser to the MBA program. "Our faculty are highly qualified, and engage students on a personal level.

"Also, our alumni are instrumental in preparing and

delivering a top-notch professional development program."

The list is based on data compiled from more than 9,000 students, 14,920 alumni, 900 corporate recruiters, and compensation and job-placement data from each school.

"The market for MBA programs is increasingly more and more competitive from year to year," said Ashley McGee, the program's director. "To remain alongside the top programs in the country is a testament to the true value and quality of our program.

"Knowledge gained within the classroom coupled with networking opportunities beyond the classroom walls provide our MBAs with competitive skills to equip them with a successful career."

Coming in at No. 68 overall, UM ranked ahead of South Carolina, No. 70; Baylor, No. 79; Missouri, No. 80; and Auburn, No. 85.

BY STELLA CONNELL



2019-20 Ole Miss Campus MBA candidates

Real estate scholarship pays tribute to faculty mentor

Beth and J. Walter Michel's gift to the University of Mississippi benefits students and recognizes two key factors responsible for J. Walter Michel's successful career: the School of Business Administration's real estate program and its founding professor, Dennis Tosh.

The Michels, of Ridgeland, created the J. Walter Michel and Dennis S. Tosh Real Estate Scholarship of Excellence Fund at Ole Miss to pay tribute to their favorite professor and friend for 40 years.

Each year, the \$100,000 fund will provide \$5,000 to two full-time rising seniors majoring in real estate who are Mississippi high school graduates and residents.

"Beth and I set up this scholarship as a way to show our appreciation to Ole Miss for providing me with an exceptional education and preparing me so well for the real estate profession," Michel said.

"This is also a way for us to thank my former real estate professor, Dennis Tosh, for all he taught me when I was a student and to let Dr. Tosh and his wife, Beth, who live in Oxford, know how much we have appreciated their friendship for so many years."

"I can think of no better honor for professors than to have a former student think enough of them to create a scholarship in their name," said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration.

"In many conversations I have had with Walter over the years, he talked about

the impact that Dr. Tosh had on him. Dr. Tosh was instrumental in starting the real estate program here at the university, and he impacted many students during his time at Ole Miss."

The Michels' decision to honor Tosh and his wife with a scholarship was unexpected and humbling, said Tosh, who added that the couple's gift reflects the Michels' philanthropic nature and their support for Ole Miss and its real estate program.

"Walter absolutely loves the University of Mississippi, and this is a very kind gesture from a very kind, good and generous couple," Tosh said.

He noted that establishing a scholarship to assist students financially and promote a vibrant real estate program at the university illustrates the admirable character of his former student.

"I met Walter shortly after I arrived at Ole Miss in 1980 to start a real estate program here," Tosh said. "I remember that the school had just made the announcement when he walked into my office, introduced himself and told me he wanted to major in real estate. So he was my first student."

The two stayed in touch after Michel graduated in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in real estate. They continue to attend sporting events on campus and get together for lunch or dinner during the Michels' frequent visits to Oxford.

While three generations of the Michel family have worked in the real estate

“

I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER HONOR FOR PROFESSORS THAN TO HAVE A FORMER STUDENT THINK ENOUGH OF THEM TO CREATE A SCHOLARSHIP IN THEIR NAME.” – KEN CYREE



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Beth and J. Walter Michel have created the J. Walter Michel and Dennis S. Tosh Real Estate Scholarship of Excellence Fund at UM to pay tribute to their favorite professor and longtime friend. Dennis Tosh (left), Walter Michel (right)

business in Mississippi, Walter Michel and his brother, Henry, continue the tradition with the J. Walter Michel Agency in Jackson.

Michel, also a longtime state senator, has supported the School of Business Administration's real estate program by serving on its Real Estate Advisory Board for many years.

Ole Miss offers an undergraduate degree in real estate, which is named in the nation's top 25 programs by College Choice. Students in the program become proficient with ARGUS, a software solution used by many commercial real estate companies.

Graduates are prepared to pursue careers throughout the industry, including property development, leasing and investment sales, property and asset management, mortgage lending, retail site selection and construction.

Michel said he wants to see a new generation consider the many professional opportunities the industry segment has to offer and enjoy rewarding careers like his.

"Hopefully, this scholarship will make a difference in the lives of some UM students by assisting them financially and, perhaps, encouraging them to pursue a major in real estate, which is a very versatile major that can prepare you for a career in a variety of fields," Michel said.

“

HOPEFULLY, THIS SCHOLARSHIP WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF SOME UM STUDENTS BY ASSISTING THEM FINANCIALLY AND, PERHAPS, ENCOURAGING THEM TO PURSUE A MAJOR IN REAL ESTATE, WHICH IS A VERY VERSATILE MAJOR THAT CAN PREPARE YOU FOR A CAREER IN A VARIETY OF FIELDS.” – J. WALTER MICHEL

This gift serves as a boost to the school and an endorsement of its real estate program, Cyree said.

"We are pleased and grateful for Walter's support, and it is through committed and dedicated donors like Walter and Beth Michel that we are able to continue and expand the success we have enjoyed in the real estate program," he said.

The J. Walter Michel and Dennis S. Tosh Real Estate Scholarship of Excellence Fund is open to gifts from individuals and organizations by mailing a check, with the fund's name noted in the memo line, to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655; or by visiting <https://give.olemiss.edu>.

For more information on supporting the School of Business Administration, contact Angela Brown, senior director of development, at browna@olemiss.edu or 662-915-3181.

BY JONATHAN SCOTT



STELLA CONNELL

The Total Internship Management Workshop, hosted by the School of Business Administration, is designed to help businesses of all sizes build successful internship programs.

UM hosts first internship management workshop

The value of internships, both to organizations and students, is well-known. For organizations, a strong intern program can maintain a pipeline of qualified candidates for full-time roles, and internships and other forms of experiential education can help students seamlessly transition to the world of work.

The School of Business Administration hosted its first Total Internship Management Workshop on Jan. 10 at the Jackson Avenue Center.

The workshop, presented by Intern Bridge Inc., an Austin-based research and consulting firm, has been designed to serve the needs of companies and organizations seeking to create successful internships for students and entry-level talent initiatives.

“We survey over 25,000 students annually to capture trends of internship and recruiting experiences,” said Robert Shindell, president and CEO of Intern Bridge. “The critical survey data is the basis for our work: helping companies build meaningful entry-level talent programs and assisting career centers to better serve their student populations.”

The workshop helps organizations of all sizes build successful internship programs. The program is based on in-depth research in successful management of internship programs and includes detailed statistics from proprietary research.

During the workshop, qualitative and quantitative responses were shared from the National Internship and Co-op Study, an examination of what makes internship programs successful based on the responses of more than 225,000 students from more than 500 universities.

“Businesses are struggling to find qualified workers these days,” said Jon Maynard, president and CEO of the Oxford-Lafayette County Economic Development Foundation and Chamber of Commerce. “This problem cuts across all sectors of both large and small businesses.

“Students, high school and post-secondary, desperately need to understand what job opportunities actually exist for them. There is no better way to begin solving the workforce issues on both ends of the spectrum than internships.”

Statistics from a recent National Association of Colleges and Employers’ Experiential Education Survey indicate that almost 40% of employers’ full-time, entry-level hires came from their internship programs.

Companies are recognizing the value of having a structured talent pipeline via interns. Also, nearly

two-thirds of interns are offered full-time positions after having interned with an organization.

The workshop teaches attendees to launch and run a meaningful internship program and create and maintain a pipeline of highly qualified candidates.

The process considers critical factors of internship programming, including understanding what students are seeking, program structure, choosing the best supervisor, marketing the opportunity, orientation, compensation, benefits and personnel evaluation.

The six-hour curricula for the program has been tested and proved effective in obtaining and retaining new talent – a strategy that all but guarantees both organizations and interns will benefit from the effective implementation of an internship program.

“We’re excited to host this workshop to support employers’ internship programs,” said Wesley Dickens, assistant director of experiential education at the UM business school. “Internships are a great opportunity for organizations to identify future hires and increase brand awareness on college campuses.

“They are also vital for students to build employability skills. It really is a win-win for everyone.”

BY STELLA CONNELL



An attendee of the Total Internship Management Workshop visits with representatives of FedEx.



STELLA CONNELL

Charles White (center) is named the recipient of the Distinguished Finance Executive award at the 19th annual Banking and Finance Symposium at the University of Mississippi in 2019. Pictured are John Lynch (left), daughter Elizabeth White, UM School of Business Dean Ken Cyree, wife Mary White, Charles White, mother Jean White Johnson, stepfather Dr. Richard Johnson, daughter-in-law Virginia White and son Matthew White.

Banking symposium surveys role of partnerships in economic development

STELLA CONNELL



Stan Viner, president of the Banking and Finance Advisory Board, watches as Lynn Fitch addresses the audience.

A record crowd of industry leaders and business students gathered to learn about the contributions of banks and financial services to the economies of the state and region at the 19th annual Banking and Finance Symposium at the University of Mississippi.

The UM School of Business Administration and its Banking and Finance Advisory Board hosted the Sept. 6, 2019, event at the Oxford Conference Center. It included numerous leaders in the field as speakers and guests.

“The annual Banking and Finance Symposium was an incredible experience that not only allowed me to meet real professionals in the banking and finance industries with ties to Ole Miss, but also to hear some of the hot topics in the industry via the three informative panel discussions,” said Cole Barnhill, a junior management major from Union, Kentucky, and student intern for the Banking and Finance Advisory Board.

“The opportunity to be a part of the planning process of the symposium was eye-opening and provided me with experiences I never could have

gotten anywhere else. I am excited to see the program continue to grow, and I am looking forward to next year's event."

Lynn Fitch, state treasurer of Mississippi, delivered the opening address, reminding the group that the treasurer is the only elected official who can legally give away money. She discussed the financial aspects of the treasurer's office and the importance of educating the state's young people through vocational, community and university systems.

Glenn McCullough, executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority, discussed the partnerships with banks and other capital providers in creating economic development and growth throughout Mississippi.

And, in defining the term "economic development," McCullough said, "it means importing more dollars than you export."

Warren Stephens, CEO of Stephens Inc., discussed the critical role of banks and capital formation on capitalism and economic activity. He also emphasized that successful small businesses help the entire community succeed.

Mississippi has more than 250 small businesses that are "helping build your state and your community," he said.

The symposium also included three panel discussions on bank-specific topics led by Mark Forbis of Jack Henry & Associates; Charles White of Stifel/KBW; and Paul Davis from American Banker, a daily trade paper and website covering the financial services industry.

Ken Cyree, dean of the business school, praised all the speakers and the continued growth in the symposium's attendance.

"It was an informative and outstanding educational opportunity for all participants and attendees," he said. "It was a great symposium that created value for our alumni, friends, students and financial professionals.

"The funds raised from our sponsors allow us to continue and expand the success of the banking and finance major here at the University of Mississippi."

Sponsors included the Keefe, Bruyette & Woods investment firm, Delta Bridge Inc., Community Bank, Regions Bank, Strategic Resource Management and more than 25 other financial institutions, law firms and business entities.

"We also awarded our Distinguished Finance Executive award to Charles White, from Birmingham, who is very deserving as an engaged alumnus and leader in the financial industry," Cyree said.

Throughout the day, SuperTalk Mississippi broadcast live radio interviews with the dean, faculty and winners of the spring Gillespie Business Plan Competition, Jake Harrison and Tyler Moore, on the "J.T. Show" and "SportsTalk Mississippi."

"The mission of the Ole Miss Banking and Finance Symposium is to provide an unparalleled educational opportunity for the banking and finance industry in the Southeast," said Stan Viner, president of the Banking and Finance Advisory Board. "We accomplish this by not only offering an outstanding lineup of speakers and panel discussions but also by fostering meaningful peer-to-peer industry conversations for the attendees.

"This year, we mixed all of that with an outstanding list of sponsors. The combination of all of these elements produced a lot of energy. It also led to a record crowd and an all-time high of financial support from our sponsors."

MORGAN GUSELLA



Clay and Jon Taylor, twin brothers both double majoring in finance and economics, attend the symposium.

MORGAN GUSELLA



Cole Barnhill (left), student intern for the Business and Finance Advisory Board, and Nik Lizine, symposium attendee

Finance, marketing professors share business school teaching honor

A longtime marketing professor and a junior faculty member in finance have been named winners of the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration's Outstanding Teacher of the Year award for the 2019-20 academic year.

The honorees are Sam Cousley, instructional associate professor of marketing, and Arup Ganguly, assistant professor of finance.

Each year, department chairs in the business school nominate candidates for the honor. The school's executive committee reviews all the nominations and makes the final decision. This year, two nominations stood out to a degree that the committee decided to award both of them.

"[Dr. Sam Cousley] is very deserving of the teaching award since he has had such an impact on so many students over his career," said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration. "We are fortunate to have such a wonderful and dedicated person to educate our students, and I

know many of them are supportive of honoring Dr. Cousley for his success in the classroom."

Although Ganguly is at the beginning of his teaching career, he already is making a similar impact on students, Cyree said.

"He is enthusiastic and committed, and the students respond well to his efforts," Cyree said. "His rigorous and practical teaching will allow our students to be successful in the competitive marketplace as they graduate and enter the workforce."

Sam Cousley

Cousley, a Greenville native, moved to Oxford in 1985 after serving as the general manager of Sandow Broadcasting Inc. in Tupelo and as a business professor at Arkansas State University. He began teaching advertising at Ole Miss in 1999.

He was attracted to Ole Miss because of its reputation and the "great town" of Oxford.

Cousley received his bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Mississippi State University. He earned his doctorate in business administration from Louisiana Technical University.

He was originally interested in the advertising industry, but after taking some classes, he knew that marketing was the subject he wanted to study.

He has taught many marketing and statistics classes, but the MBA Statistical Analysis class remains his favorite. He enjoys this course because it focuses on predictive modeling and analytics, which he considers "very relevant topics that use advanced computer technology."

Cousley is widely admired by both faculty and staff for his overall dedication to students in making sure they all have the opportunity to learn as much as possible.

Sam Cousley, UM instructional associate professor of marketing, lectures during his Marketing Principles class. Cousley is a recipient of the School of Business Administration's Outstanding Teacher of the Year award for the 2019-20 academic year.

THOMAS GRANING



Barry Babin, chair of the marketing department, referred to Cousley as “rare and a great asset” to himself and the university due to his combination of practical and academic experience.

“Sam’s institutional memory has been a great asset to me as well as I begin to learn about Ole Miss,” said Babin, who joined the business school in 2019. “I cannot count the number of times I would mention an alum or businessperson I had met, and Sam would tell me what class he taught that person in, when, and what kind of student they were.

“He remains engaged and is a key member of the academic marketing team here at Ole Miss business school.”

Cousley lives in Oxford with his wife, Trish. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August. They have two children: Starling and Margaret, who live in New Canaan, Connecticut, and Houston, Texas, respectively, with their spouses and children.

He is also a member of the Rotary Club of Oxford – a service club that brings together business and professional leaders to provide humanitarian service and advance goodwill – where he has served as a president and is a board member.

Cousley previously has been awarded the Outstanding Professional Master of Business Administration Professor of the Year four times and the Outstanding Campus MBA Professor of the Year once by the School of Business Administration over the course of his Ole Miss teaching career.

“When candidates for faculty positions interview with us, I always tell them this is the best job in the world,” he said. “I feel very fortunate to have the privilege of serving as a professor at the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration.

“I work hard to give our students the best education possible, and it’s gratifying to be recognized.”

Arup Ganguly

Ganguly arrived at the UM business school in 2018, after finishing his doctorate at the University of Pittsburgh, and quickly realized he loves three things about the school: the faculty, staff and students.

“My business school colleagues and the staff enable a stimulating environment of research and learning,” he said. “I am deeply grateful to all of them and have gotten to know many of them over the course of nearly two years, and share with them an exhilarating learning experience.”

The work environment provides Ganguly with opportunities to continue his research while making a difference as a teacher.

“In my opinion, the highest teaching honor is when a student tells me how I was able to have a positive impact on their life,” he said.

The importance of influencing students positively – whether in the classroom or down the road



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Arup Ganguly, UM assistant professor of finance, was honored for his enthusiasm and commitment to students with the School of Business Administration’s Outstanding Teacher of the Year award for the 2019-20 academic year.

professionally – was imparted to Ganguly at a young age, and he has tried to pay it forward in his role as an educator.

“It has been my good fortune and a great privilege to have learned from exceptional and caring teachers at different points of my life who will continue to be my role models and my beacons of hope and aspiration,” he said.

Ganguly’s mentorship both inside and outside the classroom makes him a perfect candidate for this award, said Jon Taylor, a senior managerial finance and economics major from Wiggins.

“No professor has had as much impact on the trajectory of my academic and personal development as Dr. Ganguly,” Taylor said. “His commitment to his students extends outside the classroom as he co-leads the Financiers Club and advises students for the University of Mississippi TVA Investment Fund.”

Fellow faculty members nominated Ganguly for the award.

“Students frequently comment about Dr. Ganguly’s classes to me,” said Bonnie Van Ness, chair of the Department of Finance. “They say that he is quite knowledgeable about finance and that his classes are interesting, interactive, challenging and that they learn a lot. It is a pleasure to have him as a faculty member.”

Alumnus designates estate gift for business students

A longtime mentor to students of all ages, Lyt Harris has expanded his legacy by committing a major estate gift to support University of Mississippi students in the School of Business Administration.

The estimated \$2.5 million planned gift will be added to the existing Lyttleton T. Harris IV Scholarship Endowment after his lifetime. With this planned gift, Harris is awarded membership in the 1848 Society, which is named for the year the university opened its doors to the first students and recognizes those who provide for UM through deferred gifts.

Harris has served as a mentor for MBA students at Ole Miss and was named an Otho Smith Fellow in 2008. He has also served as a mentor for middle and high school students in the Spring Branch Independent School District in Houston, Texas, where he lives.

But first, he was a student.

“I enjoyed the whole college experience and being in such a beautiful setting as Ole Miss and the Oxford area,” said Harris, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and 1962 graduate of the UM School of Business Administration. “It was a great environment for learning, going to school and enjoying a large variety of activities.”

He hopes his gift will help future generations of business students have a similar positive experience at Ole Miss. The Harris Scholarship is available to full-time juniors or seniors who are marketing majors in the business



Tim Noss (left), development director for the UM School of Business Administration, visits with donor Lyt Harris in Houston, Texas.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

school and maintain a minimum 3.0 grade-point average.

Tory Harless, a marketing major from Houston, is the 2020 and first-ever recipient of the Lyttleton T. Harris IV Scholarship.

Scholar and donor were set to meet in person earlier this year,

but COVID-19 restrictions prevented the two from gathering. To ensure they still met, University Development set up a virtual meeting to introduce them.

“When we had our Zoom meeting, we talked about what Ole Miss was like when Mr.

Harris attended,” Harless said. “I loved hearing about how much has changed and how much has remained the same.

“I cannot express how honored I felt to be the first recipient,” she continued. “The scholarship gives me even more confidence to continue along in this journey of college. I take pride in trying to achieve good grades and in obtaining knowledge. This scholarship brings me one step closer to finding my true potential and reassures me that all this hard work will pay off. For that, I am very grateful.”

Harris said he greatly enjoyed getting to know his scholarship recipient.

“I had a delightful video call with Tory,” Harris said. “I told her how impressed I was with her background and qualifications for the scholarship, and I regretted that we could not meet in person, but I would look forward to the day when we could.”

Harris originally established his UM endowment in August 2016 with a \$27,000 gift. He later pledged to increase the endowment to \$100,000, allowing the business school to award scholarships from it in perpetuity.

“Mr. Harris’ generous gifts encompass the scope of work we do here by meeting the financial needs of students who want to pursue an education in business,” said business dean Ken Cyree. “We are very grateful to Mr. Harris for his commitment to the school.”

About 12 years ago, Harris funded a similar scholarship program at Northwood University in Michigan, an all-business education university, where he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree and served on the board of trustees. He and his late wife, Venita, contributed to the fund regularly.

“Really, that was such a good program, and I received such positive feedback from the students selected for the scholarship that I thought, ‘Why not set up a similar scholarship at the University of Colorado, where Venita went to school, and also at Ole Miss and LSU, where I went to school?’”

After completing graduate school at LSU in 1963, Harris rose through the ranks of Scott Paper Co., where he became project manager for the first disposable diapers, taking them from test market to national distribution. Later, he joined a large division of Hunt Wesson Foods as director of marketing and was instrumental in propelling the Orville Redenbacher popcorn brand to its leading U.S. status.

Harris, a master at recognizing the potential in people like Redenbacher, hopes his scholarships will help students fulfill their own potential, building on their

specializing in venture capital investments including specialty foods, residential real estate, senior living facilities, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, and other projects.

Always active in civic and charitable activities, Harris has served on the boards of a number of nonprofit organizations, including the Kidney Foundation, Junior Achievement, Boy Scouts of America, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and St. Luke’s United Methodist Church. During his business career, he was listed in Who’s Who in America, Who’s Who in Finance and Industry, and Who’s Who in the South and Southwest.

Harris enjoys spectator sports, swimming, hiking, biking and traveling by cruise ship.

At Ole Miss, he was a member of the University Players theater company, Delta Sigma Pi business fraternity and Sigma Alpha Epsilon social fraternity.

HARRIS, A MASTER AT RECOGNIZING THE POTENTIAL IN PEOPLE LIKE REDENBACHER, HOPES HIS SCHOLARSHIPS WILL HELP STUDENTS FULFILL THEIR OWN POTENTIAL, BUILDING ON THEIR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL IN BUSINESS.

higher educational foundations to become successful in business.

“I’m looking forward to hearing from, and hopefully meeting, some of the students who receive the scholarships,” he said.

After Hunt Wesson, Harris worked several years as a senior executive in the banking and finance industry before moving to Houston in 1982 to become president and eventually CEO of Southwest Management and Marketing Co. There, he met his wife in 1984 at an art exhibition; both were avid collectors.

Harris sold his company and retired in 2004. He now serves as managing partner of the Harris Investment Partnership,

The Lyttleton T. Harris IV Endowed Scholarship is open to gifts from individuals and organizations. To contribute, send checks to the University of Mississippi Foundation, with the endowment name noted in the memo line, to 406 University Ave., University, MS 38655; visit <https://give.olemiss.edu>; or contact Angela Brown, business development officer, at browna@olemiss.edu or 662-801-0569.

For information on including Ole Miss in estate planning, contact Byron Liles, senior director of gift planning, at byron@olemiss.edu or 662-915-7601.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Students from 16 colleges and universities around the U.S. gathered in Chicago for the third annual Private Label Manufacturing Association's University Outreach program.

Business students learn private label manufacturing in the Windy City

Three University of Mississippi business students were among 62 undergraduates from 16 colleges and universities chosen to participate in the Private Label Manufacturers Association's third annual University Outreach program.

The meeting, held Nov. 15-19, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency in Chicago, was in conjunction with PLMA's annual trade show. The program provided students with an immersive experience in the grocery retailing and store-brand industry.

The Ole Miss students participating in the program were JaQaveious "Jay" Collins, a senior managerial finance major from Okolona; Skylar Read, a junior marketing and communications strategy major from Ocean Springs; and Brenna Johnson, a senior marketing major from Mobile, Alabama.

"Our Ole Miss business student team was one of the strongest at the program this year," said Amy Jo Carpenter, career planning specialist for the School of Business Administration. "Through the rigorous classes, and the time on the show floor with exhibitors and retail buyers, our students were provided countless networking opportunities.

"This event, and others like it, provide our students with hands-on experience and a glimpse into the workings of the private label industry."

The program included two days of university-level classes, followed by two days under the mentorship of practicing professionals in the buying and selling divisions of retail businesses.

Participating retailers included Walmart, Walgreens, Kroger, Trader Joe's, Sonoco and Castle Foods.

"PLMA gave me the opportunity to gather hands-on experience with the private labeling aspect of the marketing world," Read said. "I most enjoyed spending time with the retailers and buyers on the show floor.

"This experience was truly unique, and I am still thrilled that I was able to be a part of the 2019 University Outreach Program."

The classes included an overview of retailing and store-brand development in the U.S., the role of manufacturers and retailers,

generational marketing, store brand innovation, the e-commerce revolution, and leadership and teamwork.

"The Private Label Manufacturers Association has grown rapidly, and the 2019 program hosted approximately 60 students from around the country," said Clay Dockery, a business school alumnus and vice chair of the organization. "Manufacturers exhibiting included food, beverage and nonfood products.

"The industry attendees included grocers, mass merchandisers, drug chains, club stores, convenience stores and others. The team from Ole Miss had a tremendous level of engagement and learned quite a bit about our industry."

Besides UM, participating schools were Auburn University, Baruch College, California Polytechnic State University, Grambling State University, Ithaca College, Portland State University, Texas A&M University, Tuskegee University, Niagara University, St. Joseph's University, Western Michigan, and the universities of Arizona, Arkansas, Florida and North Florida.

BY STELLA CONNELL

Campus MBA program ranks among *U.S. News*' top 50 in nation

The University of Mississippi's Master of Business Administration program has been recognized as one of the best in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. The rankings, released March 17, place Ole Miss in a three-way tie for No. 31 among public universities and No. 92 overall.

UM is tied with Oklahoma State and Texas Tech for the No. 31 spot. The Southeastern Conference universities of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Missouri and Kentucky and Auburn University, Louisiana State University and Texas A&M University also are ranked in the top 50.

"We are excited for this recognition of our MBA program that reflects the outstanding education and value of the degree," said Ken Cyree, dean of the UM School of Business

Administration. "We have dedicated our efforts to create the best experience possible for our students who spend a year working hard to advance their business education.

"This ranking also reflects the dedication of the faculty, staff and alumni who are devoted to providing an excellent graduate education that creates competitive opportunities for our students."

MBA programs have a greater enrollment than any other type of graduate degree programs in the country, the *U.S. News* release noted. Prospective students often narrow their research exclusively to programs that award MBAs.

To aid their efforts, the publication compiles annual rankings of campus and online MBA programs. This year's campus rankings include 141 schools nationally.

"The ranking reflects a deep and ongoing commitment to excellence among our faculty, students and alumni," said Walter Davis, faculty adviser to the MBA program.

Each year, *U.S. News* ranks professional school programs in business, education, engineering, law, medicine and nursing, including specialties in each area. The rankings in these areas are based on two types of data: expert opinions about program excellence and statistical indicators that measure the quality of a school's faculty, research and students.

The data for the rankings in all six disciplines comes from statistical surveys of more than 2,081 programs and from reputation surveys sent to more than 24,603 academics and professionals, conducted in fall 2019 and early 2020.

For the 2021 edition, *U.S. News* ranked MBA programs using five categories: student engagement, expert opinion, faculty credentials and training, student excellence, and student services and technologies.

"Our campus program includes a 36-hour comprehensive curriculum that allows students to gain important business concepts and knowledge," said Ashley McGee, director of the MBA program. "Alongside this, we have a supportive MBA alumni board that emphasizes professional development.

"The knowledge gained in the classroom, plus the networking outside of class, equals outstanding career opportunities for our MBAs."



MARIA WHITE

University of Mississippi MBA class officers for 2019-20 include (from left) Aimee Dillenberger, of Waterloo, Illinois, vice president for recruitment; Emily Harral, of Jonesboro, Arkansas, president; Heath Rooks, of Collierville, Tennessee, vice president for communications; Tasia Tsiplakos, of San Mateo, California, vice president for finance; and Rachael Dickens, of Vancouver, Washington, vice president for social events. Not pictured: Gabrielle Little, of Collierville, Tennessee, vice president of community service.

BY STELLA CONNELL



Christy Wright (left), recruiting coordinator for the UM Career Center, visits with a student at UM's fourth annual part-time job and internship fair.

Fourth year successful for part-time job and internship fair

Nearly 100 University of Mississippi business students had an opportunity to network with a variety of companies in hopes of landing an internship or part-time job in fall 2019.

The annual internship and part-time job and career fair, sponsored by the School of Business Administration and the university's Career Center, hosted 21 companies to network with and meet students. Fortune 500 companies such as FedEx and International Paper were

there, as well as smaller, local companies from Oxford and the surrounding area.

This event has kicked off the school year for the business school for four years running. Ken Cyree, dean of the school, looks forward to this event each fall to welcome students back to campus.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IS SO IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS: JOB SHADOWING, INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS AND INTERNSHIPS. IT PROVIDES A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR WHAT YOU WANT TO DO WITH YOUR CAREER, AND IT MAKES A STUDENT MORE MARKETABLE FOR A JOB AFTER GRADUATION.” – WESLEY DICKENS

“We encourage students to interact with our staff and faculty, and this event allows students to explore the many facets of the business school in a concentrated environment,” Cyree said. “We are happy to provide lunch and offer our small part in making their return to school as smooth as possible.”

The event took place in the Gertrude C. Ford Ballroom at The Inn at Ole Miss, with decorated tables providing information about each company and opportunities they offer for business students.

Among the employers in attendance was North Mississippi Rural Legal Services, based in Oxford.

Alfred Cutturini, a practicing attorney at NMRLS, said he enjoyed the fair and meeting prospective interns and potential future employees.

“I was enthused about what we could offer Ole Miss business students and how they could learn while assisting legal services in areas beyond the law,” Cutturini said.

NMRLS hired a 2019 business graduate, Victoria Tracy, as an intern. She had been with the organization only a short time and, according to Cutturini, had already proven a vital asset to the team.

“What distinguishes Victoria (is that she) sees the bigger picture of how a nonprofit works, and she understands the obstacles we face at legal services: lack of funding for advertising and promotion, but also the immense need for our services throughout northern Mississippi,” Cutturini said. “Not all of our law student interns understand the struggle to provide free services to underserved and impoverished clients, while doing it with little budget and resources.

“I am so impressed with Victoria, and I want three more interns just like her,” he said.

Wesley Dickens, assistant director of experiential education in the business school, helped facilitate the event. He believes real-world experience is crucial for student success.

“Experiential learning is so important for students: job shadowing, informational interviews and internships,” Dickens said. “It provides a solid foundation for what you want to do with your career, and it makes a student more marketable for a job after graduation.”

The fair is just as beneficial for employers as it is for students, he said. It allows a bridge to be built in the community between Ole Miss students and outside employers, creating a strong relationship for both.

“We try to hit a wide variety of companies since an internship can be conducted in many types of business environments,” Dickens said. “The goal is to create a pipeline so internships can lead to full-time jobs in the future. “It’s essentially an extended interview process.”

The UM Career Center’s booth promoted a popular online job outlet called Handshake, which allows students to find internships and jobs, stay informed with on-campus recruiting events and connect directly with the career center.

“Handshake is a great tool to stay in touch with employers and also see the events we offer, such as workshops and LinkedIn headshots,” said Christy Wright, the Career Center’s recruiting coordinator.

BY KARSYN KING

Entrepreneurs stress passion, planning as keys to success at REDe summit

In the entrepreneurial world, time is of the essence, passion drives work, and success can feel like a marathon.

Those were among the messages at the second annual REDe Entrepreneurship Summit, hosted last November by the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Mississippi. The event for budding student entrepreneurs and the general public included a panel discussion moderated by student entrepreneur Elizabeth Lanford, a senior from Ridgeland and co-founder of

Fraze, an innovative brand of sunglasses.

Panelists were Benjamin Huston, chief operating officer of Carvana; Bill Rayburn, chairman and CEO of mTrade; and Edith Kelly-Green, former chief sourcing officer at FedEx Corp. and a Lenny's Sub Shop franchisee. While all these panelists come from different backgrounds, they share in their devotion to their work.

"I think the general landscape for entrepreneurship has shifted where there is excitement around starting your own thing and being able to control the culture of where you work," said Huston, the youngest panelist. "I think technology is opening up the ability to create the types of companies and experiences you want for your business."

While styles of entrepreneurship can shift with the times, its core values remain the same. Each panelist explained the amount of hard work that goes into startups and other new ventures.

Rayburn reflected on his idea of intelligence.

"One of the things I've had to learn is that there are many types of intelligence," he said. "Drive is a type of intelligence, and it took me a while to appreciate that."

"If a person says, 'I'm going to get that to you by Friday at 3 o'clock,' and they deliver every time, that's a type of intelligence."

Kelly-Green discussed her experience working with millennials and having to learn and accept the way they work.

"Working with my son, I've had to change in terms of accepting that we'll get to the same destination, but we each have an entirely different road map of getting there," she said.

Speaking from the perspective of a millennial, Huston admitted





KEVIN BAIN



KEVIN BAIN

Panelists discuss issues facing entrepreneurs at the second annual REDe Entrepreneurship Summit. They are Elizabeth Lanford (left), Benjamin Huston, Edith Kelly-Green and Bill Rayburn.

that becoming COO did not come easily for him. When the company launched, he was delivering cars to almost all the company's customers, he said.

Lanford brought the discussion to a conclusion by asking the panelists to give advice to those working along a path in entrepreneurship.

Huston highlighted a strong work ethic. Kelly-Green piggy-backed off of that idea, explaining that passion makes a successful entrepreneur, realizing that there

is never a true day off. She also stressed the importance of knowing your business inside and out.

"It's great to have a specific idea, but be a businessperson first; know where your money is going and all the facets of your business," she said.

Huston also encouraged students to continue to be curious and learn.

"A lot of people are more capable than they think they are, but very few people actually dare to go out and figure that

out," he said. "I think the entrepreneurial landscape gives you that platform if you want to go see what you can do.

"Push yourself out of your comfort zone to make you stronger."

BY ALI MAE WALSH

REDe's keynote speaker offers encouragement to tomorrow's leaders

Besides having a killer idea, perhaps the most critical factor in launching a new business is making sure you're in the right location for your venture to flourish, the co-founder of a rising networking technology firm told students at the University of Mississippi.

"As an entrepreneur, part of your job is finding the ecosystem that you fit into," said Ashlee Ammons, co-founder and chief operating officer of Mixtroz, a

startup based in Birmingham, Alabama. Ammons and her mother, Kerry Schrader, were the 37th and 38th black women to raise at least \$1 million in seed funding for a tech venture.

She was the keynote speaker Nov. 14 of last year at the second annual REDe Entrepreneurship Summit, a conference sponsored by the UM Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship to encourage, celebrate and enhance entrepreneurial endeavors among Ole Miss students.

Ammons named her business Mixtroz by combining "mixture"

“

IT WAS A DISASTER. YOU QUICKLY FIND OUT THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A HALF-TIME ENTREPRENEUR.”

– ASHLEE AMMONS

and "introduction." The concept grew from a desire to develop better networking events.

"I had to go to an event where I was supposed to talk to the people that had the same color dot as me on their name tag," she said. "Needless to say, it was awkward, and I didn't do it."

After this event she called her mother, who had spent more than 25 years working in human resources for large companies including Ford, Alcoa and Sears Holdings Corp. They discussed why it is so hard for people to network and get to know one another, but they came up empty-handed after Googling for solutions to the problem.

Following this conversation on Nov. 9, 2014, they created the concept of Mixtroz.

"I'm what is known as a quad outsider, which means I don't have a background in

REDe The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) proudly presents the 2019 **REDe Entrepreneurship Summit** Get Ready To Take On The World

Created to encourage, celebrate, and enhance entrepreneurial endeavors among Ole Miss students, the 2019 REDe Summit will focus on entrepreneurial change.

Thursday, November 14, 2019 • 11:00 a.m.
Keynote speaker Ashlee Ammons
Co-founder and President of Mixtroz

Thursday, November 14, 2019 • 2:00 p.m.
Entrepreneurial Change Panel Discussion

Bill Rayburn
 Chairman and CEO, MortgageTrade

Edith Kelly-Green
 Franchisee, Lenny's Sub Shops
 Former Chief Sourcing Officer, FedEx

Benjamin Huston
 Chief Operating Officer, Carvana

Elizabeth Lanford
 Student Moderator
 Co-founder, Frazee Shades

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of successful entrepreneurs and network with peers and alumni.

Registration and more information at redesummit.com.

Sponsors: UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, INSIGHT PARK, THE CARLOT AGENCY

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KEVIN BAIN

Ashlee Ammons, co-founder of Mixtroz, addresses the audience at the second annual REDe Entrepreneurship Summit.

technology,” Ammons said. “But I took what I knew from business, and everything else was pretty ‘Google-able.’”

For the next year and a half, Schrader worked full time on Mixtroz in Nashville, while Ammons spent nights and weekends on the concept from New York.

“It was a disaster,” Ammons said. “You quickly find out that there is no such thing as a half-time entrepreneur.”

With the realization that she either had to be completely in or out, Ammons quit her job in New York and moved to Nashville to commit herself fully to the business. It was there that the mother-daughter duo heard countless times that Mixtroz would not get off the ground.

“We constantly kept hearing, ‘Good idea, but you’re a black

“

WE BELIEVED THAT ASHLEE’S STORY (AND) ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY WAS RELATABLE TO OUR STUDENTS. WE HOPE SHE CAN HELP OUR STUDENTS SEE DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR THEIR CAREER PLANNING.” – TONG MENG

woman in the South; it’s not going to happen for you in tech,” Ammons said.

Wisely, the partners ignored the pessimists. After Ammons entered, and won, a pitch competition in Birmingham, they decided to move.

Since the move, Mixtroz has started to take off, earning countless accolades. Some of these include becoming a certified woman-owned business and attracting big-name investors such as Steve Case, Jeff Bezos and Sara Blakely.

“We believed that Ashlee’s story (and) entrepreneurial journey was relatable to our students,” said Tong Meng, CIE director of programs. “We hope she can help our students see different options for their career planning.”

Ammons’ core advice is simple. “Entrepreneurship is a marathon,” she said. “You have to use a healthy dose of what you learn in the classroom and common sense.”

BY MORGAN GUSELLA



Founded in 1917, the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration now serves over 3,200 students. The Ole Miss MBA program, which includes 175 students, is ranked No. 34 among American public universities by *Bloomberg Businessweek*. The online MBA program is ranked sixth in the nation (fourth among American public universities) by *U.S. News & World Report*.

The Ole Miss business school's extraordinary growth and success over the past 100 years can be traced back to the dedication, involvement and generosity of alumni and friends. Our gratitude is extended to all supporters for both service and financial investments.

All gifts will combine to recruit and retain faculty, provide scholarships, increase class offerings, sponsor guest speakers, improve programmatic involvement for student organizations, fund students' travel to national/global competitions, support the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, supplement the overall business school endowment and more. Attention to these areas will continue to propel the school forward as a leader among SEC and national programs.

We sincerely thank you for all your support,

Dean Ken Cyree

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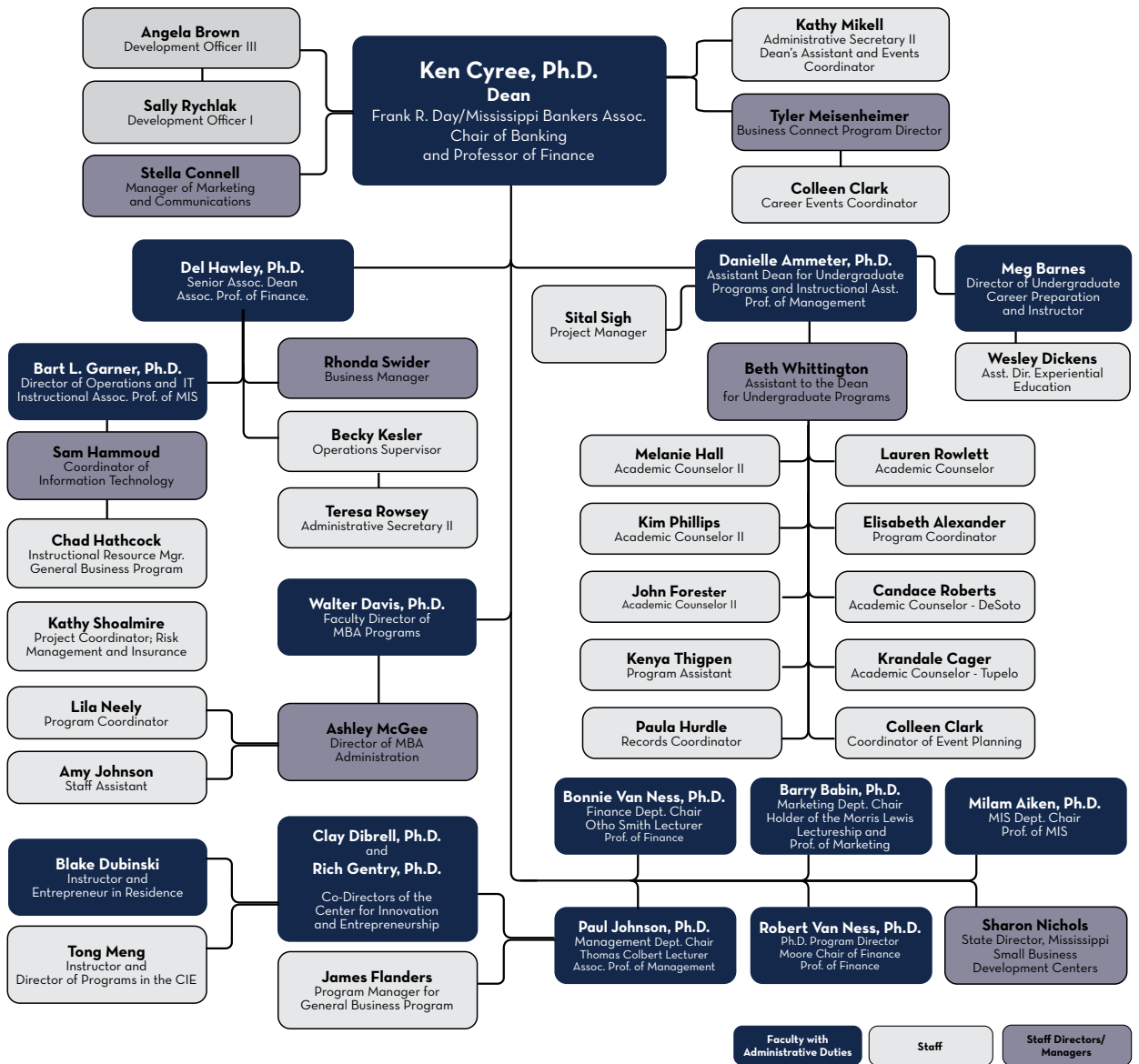
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