



# BUSINESS FIRST

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI



## GREETINGS ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

**W**e hope you enjoy the magazine that details many of the great things going on in the Ole Miss School of Business. This year, we have experienced outstanding alumni support including the highest gift totals we have ever received. Examples of the generosity of our alumni and friends include programmatic and faculty support in risk management and insurance, banking and gifts honoring Mike Overstreet and the Kim and Michael Perry family.

Engagement by alumni is making a difference in our students' lives and experiences here at Ole Miss. Our advisory board has been instrumental in creating the Business Connect program, which connects businesses with our career preparation team to provide jobs and internships for our students. Also this year, many of our female graduates joined in support of the school's first annual REDe Summit.

Our rigorous courses help prepare our graduates to compete, and our class offerings are the largest ever in number and scope. New emphasis areas created by our faculty include digital marketing, sales, global supply chain, health care management and international business. And, our faculty has productive scholars who are expanding knowledge in the business world by publishing 95 academic journal articles over the last two years.

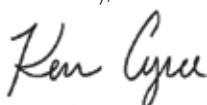
We continue to improve our curriculum, courses and offerings to create outstanding educational opportunities for our students. One such example is the first-ever graduate in our 3+3 business and law program. Our faculty and staff continue to offer educational opportunities through events such as the Banking and Finance Symposium, and the Gillespie Business Plan Competition.

Additionally, our success is showcased nationally by our online MBA program rated as one of the best in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* at No. 9. We are proud of this recognition, and this success is the result of talented and dedicated faculty, staff and alumni who foster excellence in the program.

This issue highlights three of our outstanding alumni entrepreneurs who have supported our Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship through monetary gifts, student engagement and, in the case of Owens Alexander, teaching and mentoring our students.

We are excited about the great things going on in the UM School of Business and look forward to the future as we expand our success and impact for generations to come. Thank you for the part you play in helping us create a wonderful business school and competitive graduates.

Sincerely,



Ken Cyree  
Dean



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REDe summit draws hundreds and inspires entrepreneurs



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

BUSINESS FIRST

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Published September 2019

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# Edith Kelly-Green keeps giving back

**E**dith Kelly-Green (BBA 73), an Oxford native and 1999 University of Mississippi Alumni Hall of Fame inductee, was named the 2019 Farrington Entrepreneur of the Year at this year's Gillespie Business Plan Competition. Her work with FedEx, the KGR group and various other projects made her a prime candidate for this year's award.

"When I thought about the recognition, I concluded that entrepreneurship isn't necessarily or only about one starting with \$10 and growing that \$10 to \$10 billion," Kelly-Green said. "Entrepreneurship comes in many ways, like encouraging others to step out and initiate something new, supporting other entrepreneurs, or creating non-profits that make a difference and are successful in helping others."

Kelly-Green said her education at Ole Miss enabled her to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate her career.

"I give Ole Miss credit for preparing me to operate in the business world," she said. "I knew nothing about business or accounting, not having any exposure during my early years.

"Ole Miss has a strong network throughout the country, and I have been afforded opportunities across the world because I'm an Ole Miss grad. One of the best things Ole Miss gave me was the tenacity to be the best and never give up."

Kelly-Green's upbringing played an important role in her love and connection to the university. She was raised in Oxford by her grandmother Christine Mitchell Hickonbottom, who worked as a housekeeper on campus.

"[She] strongly believed in education, having only gone through the sixth grade," Kelly-Green said. "She wanted much more for me than she had."

Hickonbottom became Kelly-Green's first role model. Witnessing her grandmother's perseverance and sacrifice inspired her.

Edith Kelly-Green receives the 2019 Farrington Entrepreneur of the Year Award following the Gillespie Business Plan Competition. From left: Ken Cyree, dean of the UM business school; Clay Dibrell, management professor; Lawrence Farrington, Jan Farrington, Kelly-Green; and Rich Gentry, management professor.



THOMAS GRANING/OLE MISS DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES



Edith Kelly-Green pledges two scholarships in the Rose Garden at an Ole Miss Women's Council event, while Mary Sharp Rayner looks on, in October 2012. Photo by Robert Jordan/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

"As a result, I place getting a great education at Ole Miss as my No. 1 key to any success I have achieved," Kelly-Green said.

At the university, Kelly-Green pursued a degree in accountancy, which had more to do with chance or fate than any preconceived visions she had of her future.

"In the world of college, and the business school, I was a really small fish in a big pond, and it was intimidating," she said. "At the time I selected accounting as a major, I had no idea what accountants did.

"There were a couple of women from Oxford majoring in accounting so they must have influenced me, although I don't remember ever having a conversation with them about our careers. Being comfortable with numbers, perhaps I gravitated to accounting."

Throughout her professional career, many of Kelly-Green's experiences have propelled her toward entrepreneurship, including her nearly

30-year career at FedEx. As chief sourcing officer, she allocated many of the company's resources toward entrepreneurship.

"FedEx is a poster child for entrepreneurship," she said. "We, who worked there in the early days, were charged with moving the company forward, taking action within the service capacity, finding new and better ways to move packages, and initiating new services.

"Everything was entrepreneurial in nature."

Once she retired from FedEx, Kelly-Green founded the KGR Group with her son James Kelly and daughter, Jayna Kelly, M.D., a 2005 Ole Miss graduate. Her son Ryan Green has also worked in the family business.

Their organization invests in restaurant franchises including Lennys Grill & Subs and Wimpy's Burgers and Fries. Their latest shop opened this June in Germantown, Tennessee. Kelly-Green is proud to "create a legacy for my family and help some other young people become owners."

Kelly-Green is founding chairman of the Ole Miss Women's Council for Philanthropy, a founding member of the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis and one of seven founders of Philanthropic Black Women of Memphis.

While she has faced many challenges in her pursuit of success and in entrepreneurship, including battling cancer and "being an African American female in a white male-dominated environment," she didn't let these things hinder her from achieving her goals.

"We all have daily challenges, and I don't know that any of mine have been more difficult than others," she said. "It just depends on what the day is."

"The uncertainty of cancer with two small kids created the challenge of making sure they would be provided for, regardless, while doing everything I could to understand the disease and to

fight it. Divine guidance and healing ultimately got me through this challenge."

Kelly-Green tries to remain rooted in positivity and thankfulness. She believes that "no matter who you are, someone would love to be you."

Many mentors, colleagues and friends have worked alongside her and provided her with support throughout her career. She notes the most meaningful piece of advice she has ever received was "Always take the high road. And, one may not be able to change the world, but you may be able to change one person, one issue, one outcome."

She has, indeed, lived by this philosophy and has influenced the lives of those she encounters, including her fellow Rebels.

Kelly-Green takes great pride in her children and considers them to be her greatest accomplishment. Like her grandmother before her, she

values being able to create opportunities for her children that she didn't have.

She is focused on spending time with her grandchildren and mother, as well as planning her daughter's May 2020 wedding. She is also an avid runner and continues to run marathons and half marathons across all 50 states.

She said she is also open to pursuing more passion projects and is "conscious of opportunities to make this world a better place."

BY ASIA HARDEN

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Kelly-Green and family at the Accountancy Hall of Fame Awards in April 2011

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Alumni Hall of Fame Awards, 1999; from left: George P. Hewes III (BBA 50, LLB 54), Carole Lynn Meadows (BSC 60, MBEEd 64), Edward O. Fritts (61), Edith Kelly-Green (BBA 73) and Paul Edward Gray (BA 61)

## Herasymova turns foreign exchange trip into everlasting Ole Miss experience

**W**hen Daria Herasymova was a high school sophomore, she left Dripro, Ukraine, as a foreign-exchange student, to spend her junior year 5,575 miles away at Oxford High School.

She had been selected as a finalist for the Future Leaders Exchange Program administered by the U.S. Department of State, but little did she know this would lead her to find her “second family” and college.

Carol and Robert Dorsey were Herasymova’s host parents during her time at OHS. Bob Dorsey is a former economics professor at the University of Mississippi and was one of the four founders of the financial services startup FNC Inc. in 1996. FNC was acquired by Core Logic in 2015.

After her high school year in Oxford, Herasymova returned to Ukraine, finished high school and enrolled at Oles Honchar Dnipro National University. However, she kept in contact with her host parents, and they were supportive and encouraged her to attend UM.

Herasymova graduated from Ole Miss in May with dual degrees in economics and finance. She also double minored in management information systems and German.



She accomplished her degree in four years by taking 18 hours of coursework almost every semester. She also traveled to numerous foreign countries through the university: Germany in her freshman year for language immersion classes; Poland in her sophomore year to work at a nonprofit; and China in her junior year as a Freeman Foundation intern at an investment bank.

“This past year, Daria has gone above and beyond what I expect from a student working on her thesis,” said Bonnie Van Ness, Herasymova’s finance professor and thesis adviser. “She attended classes with doctoral students, learned SAS programming, and she even attended some of our seminars.”

“The business school has allowed me to gain analytical and interpersonal skills that are vital to success in a rapidly changing business environment,” said Herasymova, reflecting on her four years at UM. “During my time at Ole Miss, I have diversified my skill set so that I can be of value in today’s job market.”

For the first time, the School of Business Administration hosted a special graduation ceremony for its international students on May 1. Nepal, China, India and Ukraine were among the countries represented.

“I understand the importance of developing technical and analytical skills, as well as interpersonal and leadership skills,” she said. “I have learned that true leadership comes from taking initiative and the ability to communicate and encourage others.”

STELLA CONNELL



Participants in the International Graduation Celebration at the UM School of Business Administration are Daria Herasymova (left), economics and managerial finance graduate from Ukraine; Shivani Chaudhary, a sophomore in general business from Nepal; and Yanqi Li, a junior in general business from China.

THOMAS GRANING/OLE MISS DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES

BY ALI MAE WALSH



## Banking symposium covers industry's trends, challenges, opportunities

**T**he University of Mississippi School of Business Administration's 18th Banking and Finance Symposium featured panels on real-world issues such as cybersecurity and drew over 200 industry leaders and guests.

Led by Ken Cyree, dean of the UM business school and Frank R. Day/Mississippi Bankers Association Chair of Banking, and Stan Viner, president of the school's Banking and Finance Advisory Board, the symposium was held at the Oxford Conference Center on Sept. 14 of last year.

Among the speakers, Gov. Phil Bryant discussed the challenges in reading education and his goal to make sure everyone who wants a job has a job. The governor referred to Mississippi as a corporation and himself as the CEO.

He held up the business school's 200-page illustrated history, *Ole*

*Miss Business: The First 100 Years*, and credited the publication "as one of the most comprehensive collections of the corporation of Mississippi I've ever seen."

Grayson Hall, executive chairman of Regions Financial Corp., covered trends in banking and how technology is critical to the infrastructure. As technology continues to grow, banks need to develop ways to innovate and meet the consumers' needs, Hall emphasized.

He encouraged attendees to focus on skills' training, engaging

SITAL SIGH



Clay Dibrell, Richard Cross, Ken Cyree





PHOTOS BY SITAL SIGH

Gov. Phil Bryant addresses the attendees of the 18th Banking and Finance Symposium, calling the school's centennial publication, *Ole Miss Business: The First 100 Years*, 'one of the most comprehensive collections of the corporation of Mississippi I've ever seen.'

with customers and the community, and following their company's culture.

"To achieve sustainable competitive advantage, banks must recruit the right team, provide the right training, engage with our customers and communities to create shared value, and develop the correct corporate mission and values that create a passion to serve customers," Hall said.

Throughout the day, Super-Talk Mississippi broadcast live radio interviews with the dean, faculty, staff, symposium attendees and Viner on the "Gallo Radio Show," the "J.T. Show," "Good Things with Rebecca Turner" and "Sports Talk Mississippi."

"I enjoyed the symposium, because it was a culmination of my education thus far and gave me a great deal of insight into the professional world," said Mo Karzon, a senior in managerial finance and banking, from Brandon. "The panels on cybersecurity, and mergers and acquisitions were fascinating, as they provided useful knowledge for postgraduate life."

The sponsors included Keefe, Bruyette & Woods, Community Bank, Regions Bank and more than 25 other financial institutions, law firms and business entities.

"The financial support from our sponsors in the private sector for this year's symposium reached a new mark," Viner said. "This allows the symposium to be self-sustaining, and it also allows the advisory board to help fund special programs and events for the banking and

finance students, and the business faculty at Ole Miss."

"It was a wonderful event with record attendance, and we look forward to future programs to continue the momentum we have enjoyed," Cyree added.

BY STELLA CONNELL



Yenu Wodajo (left), Joshua Jacobs, Justin Joy

STELLA CONNELL



Kathy Shoalmire (left), Amy Jo Carpenter, Sital Sigh, Meg Barnes

STELLA CONNELL



The first service station in Sunflower County, on Front Street in Indianola, in the late 1920s. William Walton Gresham Sr. is holding William Walton Gresham Jr. in front of the Goodyear tire.

## Alumnus carries on almost century-old family business in Delta

**W**alton Gresham (BBA 71) is a third-generation entrepreneur and proud to be one.

“If you look at business history in the United States, it is entrepreneurs that made this country,” said Walton Gresham (BBA 71). “Henry Ford, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Bill Gates and on and on.

“These men started with an idea and grew it. This is what we need more of today.”

Hardworking, dedicated and kind of mischievous are just a few of the words Gresham’s sister, Gayle Gresham Henry, would use to describe her older brother.

“Walton, he would give you the shirt off of his back,” Henry said. “If something goes wrong, he’s the first one to help.”



Gresham graduated from the University of Mississippi with a general business degree and has been a longtime supporter of the university. He was inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame in 2017, has served on the board of the Ole Miss Alumni Association, and the Gresham family has endowed numerous scholarships at the university.

“Ole Miss has been dear to my heart since I was a little boy and went to my first football game,” Gresham said. “I have

loved the school ever since the first time I stepped on campus.”

Since leaving Ole Miss, Gresham has continued to have a lasting effect on those around him.

He grew up in the Mississippi Delta in Sunflower County, the oldest of four children, with two younger sisters and a younger brother. He began to work at his family’s business at an early age and continues to run the petroleum division of Gresham Petroleum today.



**Above:** W.W. ‘Bill’ Gresham Jr., Walton Gresham and Walton Gresham Sr., three generations of Rotarians, look at the Indianola history of the Rotary Club.

**Bottom, left to right:** Balfour Holloway (left) and his brother, Sims Holloway, stand in front of the third service station, located at the corner of Depot and Second Street in Indianola and built by William Walton Gresham Sr. in the 1940s. Balfour Holloway worked at the station for a few years, then went to work for the Indianola Motor Co. | Gresham truck fleet in 1948. These trucks transported gasoline, kerosene, tractor and diesel fuel. | Front Street station in the 1940s.





BILL DABNEY/UM FOUNDATION

2017 UM Alumni Hall of Fame honorees: Don Frugé (left), Walton Gresham, Candie Simmons (Outstanding Young Alumna), Gov. William Winter (Outstanding Service Award), Mary Sharp Rayner, Dr. Jimmy Keeton and Tom Papa

“The Mississippi Delta has been my home for 70 years,” he said. “It was a great place to grow up, and it has a wonderful history and people.”

His grandfather, William Walton Gresham Sr., who built the first gasoline service station in Sunflower County, would eventually expand the business to build several more. With little electricity in the rural areas of Sunflower County, his grandfather recognized the need for fuel for stoves and lights.

In 1920, Indianola had roughly 4,000 residents, and more than 80,000 residents occupied Sunflower County. Gresham Sr. began to include kerosene in his distribution plant and had trucks disperse it to every house in the county.

In time, the Greshams’ business would evolve into tractor (diesel) fuel, and kerosene would be replaced by electricity in the 1940s. During this time, Gresham Sr. put gasoline pumps at every store in the county with the hope of making gasoline readily available for everyone.

Fast-forward to the early 1980s, Gresham along with his brother, Tom, and his first cousin Bill decided they were going to embark on the convenience store business. Gresham leased a store in Greenville from Murphy Oil in 1982, and bought an old Billups store in Ruleville from Charter Oil Co.

Two years later, the trio had the opportunity to buy 17 more stores from SuperValu.

“I have to give my dad and Uncle John all the credit, because they borrowed the money,” Gresham said. “In doing so, they were showing their belief in us by their willingness to finance Double Quick. They paid around \$2 million at the time to purchase these stations.”

Following the purchase, Gresham would go on to work with his father, William Walton Gresham Jr., and brother for 30 more years. (Gresham Jr. received his B.A. in mathematics from Ole Miss in 1948.)



Laura and Walton Gresham at the Chi Omega Spring Formal in 1971

"Dad was a classic entrepreneur as he used the petroleum company as his base to try other ventures," Gresham said.

While Gresham's father and uncle felt confident about the investment, Gresham's mother wasn't so sure.

"My momma almost had a stroke because, I mean, \$2 million?" Henry said.

Despite his mother's uneasiness, Gresham credits his mother as influencing his life more than anyone.

"She was a rock, full of witty sayings and a true Christian lady," he said.

Although \$2 million was a large investment, it was also a huge opportunity to help build up Sunflower County in the midst of financial trouble in the rural Delta region.

"Walton and Tom worked so hard to keep Sunflower County and Indianola going," Henry said.

Today, the business comprises more than 50 convenience stores, branded as Double Quick, including one in Oxford and additional stations in the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta areas.

"The Delta has trainable people that just need the opportunity to prove themselves," Gresham said. "It has the richest land in America.

"This area of four million acres will always be farmed. There are people that want to work, and we have the facilities to train them. The Delta just needs companies to come to our area and give us the chance to prove this to them."

Despite Gresham's success today, he said it was a hard journey professionally. He went through a lot of trial and error to figure out his strengths and weaknesses in business.

When his grandfather died, he left the family with a 50 percent interest in a Ford-Lincoln-Mercury dealership in Indianola. The family bought the other 50 percent and hired a veteran car dealership manager from St. Louis to run the business for them.

In less than a year, the business was losing money monthly. To compensate for these losses, the family bought the

Buick-Chrysler dealership in town. Then they bought the Chevy dealership.

"Even with the additional purchase, our family was continuing to lose money, and this wasn't a successful endeavor for our family," he said. "I decided to stick with what I know, and that is petroleum marketing."

Although, the car dealership attempt was unsuccessful, Gresham did not allow the experience to undermine his efforts in his family's enterprise.

"Every day there is a different challenge, but most are worked out or settled," Gresham said. "I want to say that not every venture we attempted was successful, but it's important not to get too discouraged when something doesn't work."

Gresham still lives in the Mississippi Delta with his wife, Laura. His second daughter, Elizabeth Veazey, and her husband, Rod, are there, too, with their three girls, Fran, Anna Gresham and Mary Charles.

His oldest daughter, Lenore Livingston, lives in San Mateo, California, with her children, Henry and Laura Beth.

Grateful for what he has been able to accomplish, Gresham said he has one wish left.

"I have done everything that I want to do," he said. "God has truly blessed Laura and me.

"The one thing all granddaddies might say is, 'I would like to see my five grandchildren grow up and have happy and productive lives,' and I believe my wish will come true."

BY KARSYN KING  
SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Walton Gresham, Gayle Gresham Henry, Susan Gresham Kay and brother, Tom Gresham, on Easter Sunday, 1982.

# UM wraps up 15th Speaker's Edge competition

**M**ore than 100 business and accountancy students tackled ethical issues ranging from gender discrimination to embezzlement and pitched ideas for boosting the workplace at the University of Mississippi's annual Speaker's Edge competition.

They were joined by 69 judges and 17 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 on Jan. 17, celebrating its 15th year.

After two days of competition, Mitchell Kulesza, an accountancy student from Dallas, was declared the overall winner. The overall winner is the student who places highest in multiple categories, and Kulesza placed fourth in the Ethical Dilemma and Marketplace Pitch categories.

"I am very thankful for the opportunity to participate in such a well-organized event," Kulesza said. "I never would have imagined winning a competition like this and would not have been able to do so without the teachings of all the amazing coaches we had available to us throughout the process."

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

"The Speaker's Edge competition is an outstanding experiential learning opportunity for our students and helps our graduates excel in speaking to an audience," said Ken Cyree, dean of the UM School of Business

Administration. "We are pleased with the support we receive from the judges and our sponsors that creates a competitive advantage for our MBA program."

In the Ethical Dilemmas category, Emily Harral, a Master of Business Administration student from Jonesboro, Arkansas, took first place. She was followed by Jack Sutton, an accountancy student from Sikeston, Missouri, in second, and Rachel Lochridge, an MBA student from Spring Hill, Tennessee, in third.

In this category, participants presented their best solutions for workplace challenges, where

issues of discriminating by gender, bribing, influencing with gifts, altering budgets for personal gain, padding expense reports and defining the term "the right thing" were presented.

Harral's dilemma addressed an expired work visa of a highly productive employee to find a solution for the issue from the perspective of a human resources manager.

In the Marketplace Pitch category, Amy Goodin, an MBA student from Booneville, took first place, followed by Jack Thompson, an MBA student from Nashville, and Maranda Armstrong, an MBA student from Collierville, Tennessee. These presentations were persuasive arguments regarding technology, strategy, leadership, productivity and innovation.

Goodin's pitch advocated for the inclusion of mental health



Speaker's Edge winners Amy Goodin (left), first-place finisher in Marketplace Pitch; Mitchell Kulesza, overall champion; and Emily Harral, first-place winner in Ethical Dilemmas, show off their awards.



Winners of the Team Pitch category in this year's Speaker's Edge competition – Daniel Goodspeed (left), Brandon McLarty, Caroline Hill, Brad Booth II and Alan DeSantis – came up with a remake of the classic film 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' for their winning pitch.

insurance in employee benefit packages.

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. "Winter 2014 was our first year to be involved, with 14 students enrolled, and that number has grown each year to 77 accountancy master's students participating in winter 2019."

In the Team Pitch category, participating students randomly selected companies and applied a 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.

Technology, lodging, social media, luxury goods, food services and entertainment were

represented in this division of the competition. The winning team's pitch was a remake of the film "Breakfast at Tiffany's" to attract millennials to shop at the famed jewelry and luxury-brand company.

The team, composed of Daniel Goodspeed, an MBA student from Madison; Brandon McLarty, MBA, of Olive Branch; Caroline Hill, accountancy major, of Houston, Texas; Brad Booth II, accountancy, of Bassfield; and Alan DeSantis, accountancy, of Laurel, received the Tiffany assignment through a random drawing.

"After we drew Tiffany & Co., we came up with a remake of the film," McLarty said. "Immediately, everyone was on board and we just ran with the idea. We had a lot of enthusiasm, and it was an honor to win the contest."

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

"Through this experience, students develop the communication skills that are vital to success in professional and leadership roles," Davis said.

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

"Speaker's Edge is a transformative event," said Ashley McGee, director of the MBA program. "Students that fear speaking in public are able to conquer or, at least, ease their fears, and students with natural charisma are able to polish theirs."

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

"Once again, the power of community to challenge, nurture and grow our students is on display during Speaker's Edge 2019," said JoAnn Edwards, speech instructor and director of forensics and special projects manager at the Lott Leadership Institute. "It is a joy to watch and experience."

PHOTOS AND STORY  
BY STELLA CONNELL

# Business school closes centennial celebration at Jackson event

**S**ome of the state's most celebrated business and civic leaders of the past century took center stage at a celebration in Jackson in August 2018, to conclude the centennial of the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration.

Ken Cyree, the school's dean, was joined by alumni Maj. Gen. Leon Collins, former adjutant general of Mississippi; Dick Molpus, former Mississippi secretary of state; and Candie Simmons, geography marketing strategist for Regions Bank, for the Aug. 1 lunchtime event at the Craig H. Neilsen Auditorium at Two Mississippi Museums.

Welcomed by Chris Goodwin, program organizer for "History Is Lunch," the audience watched a 20-minute feature video, narrated by Cyree, which includes a compilation of alumni. Also on hand were copies of *Ole Miss Business: The First 100 Years*, a 200-page illustrated history of the school published by Nautilus Publishing Co. in 2017.

"We were delighted at the great mix of regular attendees and people who came to 'History Is Lunch' specifically to hear the business school's story," Goodwin said. "Our series is built on programs just like this that examine a particular aspect of local Mississippi history, and the centennial publication makes this story even more special."

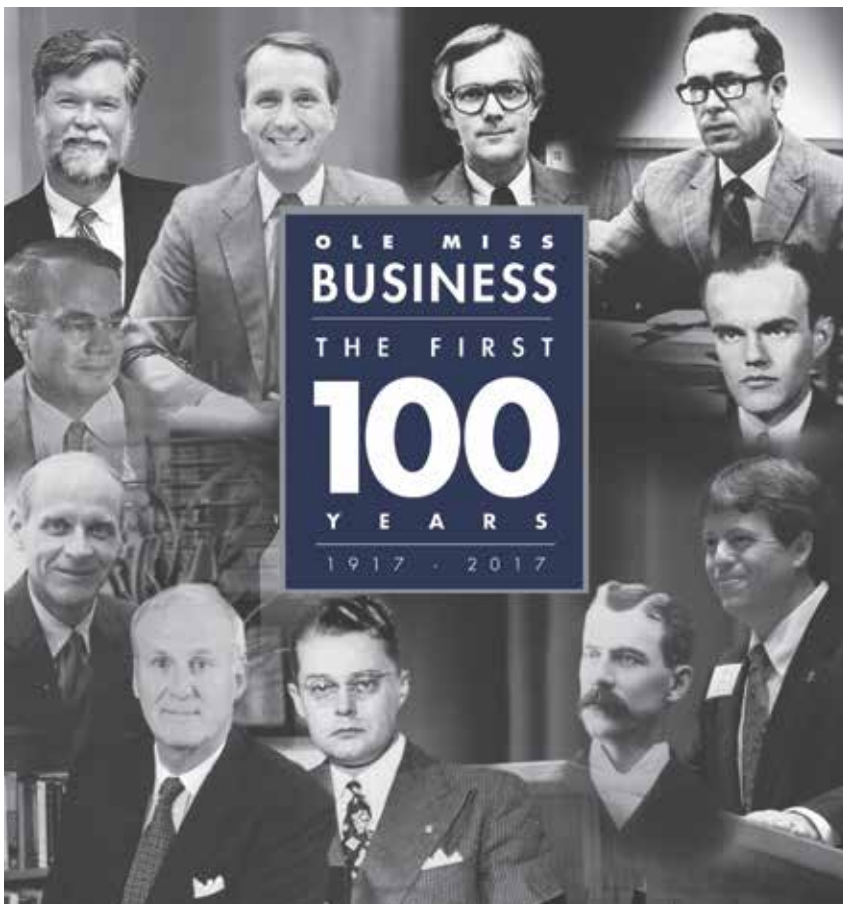
"It was great to be a part of such meaningful and fun series on the history of the state," Cyree said. "We had a terrific time working on the book, and it is fun to share it with people who are interested in our history and that of Mississippi."

Graduates of the business school have become ambassadors, university presidents, technology innovators, financial leaders, sports legends, commodities pioneers, politicians and military leaders.

The book chronicles the century-long journey from the inaugural 1917 semester of the School of Commerce, guided by founding Dean James Warsaw Bell, through the 10 men who have led the school, culminating with Cyree, the 11th dean. It also tells the story of the men and women who passed through the doors as students.

"The Ole Miss business school taught me something that was extremely important," said Simmons, who received a bachelor's degree in 2002 and an MBA in 2015, and received the Outstanding Young Alumni of the Year Award in 2017.

"It is not something you learn in the classroom or from a textbook, but you just learn it by building the relationships with people from day to day, and that key word and valuable asset I learned was 'networking.' The business school taught me to not be afraid to talk to people and share your career aspirations — especially when asked."





"I have made thousands of decisions in my lifetime," said Collins, who at the time of the event was incoming president of the Ole Miss Alumni Association. "Some were good and some were bad.

"Enrolling at the University of Mississippi was one of the best decisions I have made. Ole Miss provided a quality education and a network of graduates to interact with over the years.

"As the incoming president of the Alumni Association, I would like to mobilize that network to help all students approaching graduation to secure their first job prior to graduation day. What better way to show your love for your university than to lend a helping hand to a future alum."

Molpus, chairman of the Molpus Woodlands Group and 2013 inductee into the Ole Miss Alumni Hall of Fame, charmed the crowd in recounting how he failed his first test in college, in beloved professor Jimmy Davis' class, to take a girl on a date, and she dumped him two weeks later.

Molpus discussed professors who opened his mind to new ways of thinking.

"In 1968, Professor Fenstermacher said in 25 years, cash would be obsolete and everyone would be using something called 'credit cards.' Then in 1969, Professor Runnelling spent a whole class on how outdated Mississippi's economic development was by exploiting cheap labor and tax breaks to attract businesses to the state."

In closing, Molpus stressed that the most important lesson he learned while an Ole Miss student was a sense of social responsibility in business.

"I was taught the best businesses do well for their bottom line, but those that help society as a whole stand the test of time," he said.

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY STELLA CONNELL



Dr. Jimmy Keeton and Candie Simmons



Lori Cyree and Gen. Leon Collins, president of UM alumni association.



Lawrence and Jan Farrington with Phil and Ben Burnett



MBA class officers (from left): Chi Cunningham, vice president of recruitment, D'Iberville; Maranda Armstrong, vice president of finance, Collierville, Tennessee; Quinn McKemey, co-president, Fort Mill, South Carolina; Mary-Morgan Coburn, vice president of social events, Ridgeland; John Irvine, co-president, Leavenworth, Kansas; Abbey Bufkin, vice president of communications and public relations, Cleveland; Blain Rose, vice president of community service, Hickory. Photo by Andrew Nail

## Ole Miss online MBA program ranks among top 10 in nation

**T**he University of Mississippi's online Master of Business Administration program has been named as one of the best in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. The rankings, released Jan. 15, place Ole Miss in a four-way tie for No. 9 nationally.

UM is tied with Auburn University, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Wisconsin MBA Consortium for the No. 9 spot. The University of Florida, at No. 4, is the only other Southeastern Conference school ranked among the top 25.

"We are excited for this recognition of our online 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 online experience possible that mimics our on-campus program with scheduling flexibility

so students can keep their job while earning their degree.

"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 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 282 schools nationally.

The 2019 rankings evaluate schools solely on data related to their distance education MBA programs.

"The reputation of our online program results from the hard work of our faculty to create an inclusive and engaging online learning community for our students," said Walter Davis, faculty adviser for the MBA program. "The curriculum for the online program is the same as the campus program.

"While students in our online program are always welcome on campus, all course requirements can be completed online."

For the 2019 edition, *U.S. News* ranked online MBA programs using these categories: student engagement and excellence; expert opinion; faculty credentials and training, and student services and technologies.

The publication selects factors, known as ranking indicators, to assess each program in the 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.

"When I ask current students what made them choose our Ole Miss MBA program, I hear a similar response," McGee said. "They were looking for a highly ranked, accredited, reputable institution with a competitively priced tuition.

"We check all of those boxes. The value of an Ole Miss MBA is hard to beat."

BY STELLA CONNELL



MBA alumni Austin Ellis (left), Brandon Blewett and Patrick Kieffer attend an MBA professional development event in Oxford.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

#### 2019 MBA OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUMNUS:

## Brandon Blewett

Each year, the MBA program recognizes an outstanding young alumnus/alumna of the program. The 2019 honor went to University of Mississippi MBA alumni board president Brandon Blewett, director of corporate strategy, mergers and acquisitions at Select Interior Concepts in Atlanta.

"Receiving this award is both honoring and humbling," Blewett said. "I am grateful that the university chose me to represent it as a candidate, alumnus and board member. "I am now honored to be a representative in this capacity of an institution that provided me such a springboard to wonderful opportunities."

Blewett, a Texas native, previously worked as a legal analyst for Baker Botts LLP in Houston; practiced mergers and acquisitions tax and strategy consulting at KPMG LLP in Atlanta, and worked in mergers and acquisitions delivering deal value at PwC.

He received his undergraduate degrees in marketing and English from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He holds a Juris Doctor from the University of South Carolina, and he completed his MBA at Ole Miss in 2010.

"It has been an honor to see Brandon's progression from a graduate assistant in our office, to membership committee chairman and mentor, to MBA alumni board president," said Lila Neely, MBA program coordinator. "Brandon is passionate about seeing our MBAs flourish in the program and strives to ensure they are prepared for their futures in the business world.

"We are thrilled for Brandon to receive the 2019 MBA Outstanding Young Alumnus honor and cannot think of a more deserving candidate."

Blewett is an active mentor for students in the Ole Miss MBA program; remains active in both SMU and Ole Miss Atlanta leadership councils, and also serves on various committees and volunteer boards at Peachtree Road United Methodist Church. He maintains membership with the 43 Club at the George W. Bush Presidential Center and the Future Business Leaders of America.

BY MARIA WHITE

# UM business students learn label manufacturing in the Windy City

**Three University of Mississippi business students were among 60 undergraduates from 20 U.S. colleges and universities chosen to participate in the Private Label Manufacturers Association's third annual University Outreach program.**

The meeting, held Nov. 10-13 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, all seniors, participating in the program were Ryan Arneson, a management major from Granite Bay, California; Rachael Dickens, a marketing and management major from Vancouver, Washington; and Heath Rooks, a marketing major from Collierville, Tennessee.

"It was such an honor for the students and me to participate in the PLMA outreach program," said Amy Jo Carpenter, career planning specialist at the UM School of Business Administration. "We interacted with students and advisers from many other colleges and universities around the country and gleaned valuable information from industry leaders.

"Clay Dockery, an Ole Miss business school alumnus and vice chair of the organization, afforded us this opportunity to network and gain hands-on experience in this area of retail business, and we returned with valuable new knowledge."

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 Costco, Aldi, Ahold Delhaize, Topco, Wakefern, jet.com, Walgreens, CVS, Wegmans, Albertsons and Walmart.

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 career orientation, along with a tour of three supermarkets.

All coursework was led by industry executives and experienced consultants. Directed visits and subsequent analysis of

three nearby retail stores also offered examples of private-label products.

"We believe that learning about the various aspects of our thriving industry will encourage the students to consider the trade as a career choice following the completion of their education," said Brian Sharoff, PLMA president. "As in prior years, the 2018 students came away with a deeper knowledge and appreciation of store brands as well as of potential employment and career opportunities."

Besides UM, participating schools were Auburn University, Baruch College, Cal Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo, Grambling State University, Howard University, Illinois State University, Ithaca College, Niagara University, North Carolina A&T, Portland State University, Saint Joseph's University, Texas A&M University, Tuskegee University, Western Michigan University and the universities of Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois and Missouri.

BY STELLA CONNELL



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Heath Rooks (left), Rachael Dickens, Amy Jo Carpenter, career planning specialist at the UM School of Business Administration, and Ryan Arneson attend the 2018 PLMA University Outreach program in Chicago.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sixty students, representing 20 colleges and universities, attend the PLMA University Outreach program in Chicago.



SHIKHA SHRESTHA

## Bloomberg Terminal offers hands-on experience for UM business majors

**U**M business students have access to the Bloomberg Terminal, with provision by the UM business school, to better prepare them for the workplace.

The Bloomberg Terminal is a global financial services database that offers information and research to financial professionals. However, it supplies several key benefits for students, including professional networking and career preparation research.

Exposure to the terminal also introduces Ole Miss business students to an industry standard.

“Students can look up and potentially connect with alumni who also use Bloomberg, and they can research the companies with which they are interviewing,” said Bonnie Van Ness, chair of the Department of Banking and Finance. “Not only can students show potential employers their market and industry knowledge by earning a Bloomberg certification, (but) they can use the Bloomberg Terminal to network and assist in their job searches.”

The resources the Bloomberg Terminal holds for university-level and professional-level financial research are extensive. The terminal allows users to engage with companies, prospective employers and all other parties who have access to it.

Along with other top universities, the business school recognizes the terminal as a tool to help further students in their journey toward success in the workplace.

“Being adept at navigating the terminal puts Ole Miss students steps ahead of their competition,” said Andrew Lynch, a faculty adviser of the Financier’s Club. “Bloomberg is the gold standard for financial information and analysis.

“Being trained in using it gives our students a competitive advantage on the job market.”

Not only does access to the terminal benefit students’ futures, but it can also be helpful while they at the university.

Bilan Stribling, a Bloomberg account manager, highlighted the importance of seeking knowledge outside the classroom during a recent demonstration for members of the Financiers Club.

“One of the key things that Bloomberg does is that it gives you information and data that may support you in academia,” Stribling said. “It also gives you

an opportunity to think outside of the classroom.”

Students are also finding the benefits of the terminal demonstration to be numerous.

“It’ll be helpful with alumni and in looking for jobs in the future,” said Jake Christenson, a managerial finance major from Stonington, Connecticut.

Van Ness is hopeful that Ole Miss students will use the resources at the business school and take advantage of the Bloomberg Terminal.

“Having a Bloomberg Terminal at UM provides our students with real-world business information and with an additional tool for career preparation,” Van Ness said. “Bloomberg Terminals are used at most finance- and investment-related businesses, so learning to use a Bloomberg Terminal will give students an advantage.”

Student access to the terminal for research purposes can be gained by filling out an “Acceptable Use” form, which allows 24/7 individual or group entry to the room housing the terminal.

BY ASIA HARDEN



Alexander family in 2011. Jarrod (left), Owens, Daniel with Emily in the front at a family wedding in Texas. Submitted photo

## Alumnus leaves his footprint at the school he always called home

**O**wens Alexander grew up in the world of television. He moved to Jackson at the age of 5, in 1954, when his father took a job as the station manager of the new television station WJTV, a CBS affiliate.

"I started working at the station when I was 14 years old," said Alexander, former Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Mississippi's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and instructor in management at the UM business school. "I couldn't drive so I had to hitch a ride any way I could after school, and the lady that did the 10 p.m. weather lived nearby so she gave me a ride home."

He worked in the news department for about five years, including summers and holidays,

shooting 16mm film, covering anything from politicians to tornadoes.

"In 1964, the day after I got my driver's license, I was hired by CBS News to be a courier between Philadelphia [Mississippi] and Jackson," he said. "That is when three civil rights workers were killed there and their bodies were hidden."

Alexander's job was to get the film shot in Philadelphia on that particular day and rush it back to Jackson to be processed and sent to New York for the "CBS Evening News." Broadcast journalists Roger Mudd and Dan Rather visited Jackson several times during the investigation of the workers.

During the summers of high school and college, Alexander was the news cameraman for Bert Case, the news director at Channel 12. They





Pamela Bridgewater, U.S. ambassador to Benin; Alexander; and Mathieu Kerekou, president of Benin in 1982

After Titan Corp. received a buyout offer and the acquiring company was not interested in the international telecom business, Alexander took on the equally challenging job of selling off the telecom assets.

Following what could have been retirement, Alexander co-founded and served as CEO of a San Diego startup, Real Phone Corp.

“We designed and built the world’s thinnest and lightest mobile phone, and the only one in its class with voice recognition dialing,” he said. “We thought we had done things right, but the product just didn’t sell.

“The failure of Real Phone was one of the greatest business lessons of my life. It gave me much of the startup company experience I have been able to share with students.”

### The Move Back Home

Almost 50 years after Alexander attended UM, he found himself teaching at the institution.

“I guess the most difficult adjustment was the heat and humidity in the summer,” joked Alexander, regarding the decision to return to Mississippi in 2013. “Oxford is an incredible place to live with all the restaurants and university activities.”

After being introduced to Ken Cyree, dean of the UM business school, one afternoon on the Square, he then visited with the management

department chair and professors, which led to joining the UM faculty.

At that time, the business school had just received approval to start the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

“My background fit well with what they wanted to build,” Alexander said. “In addition to my role on the faculty, I held the title of Entrepreneur in Residence in the CIE.

“That means I was the guy in the shop who was available to students to help them develop business ideas and start their ventures.”

When the alumni-run Rebel Venture Capital Fund was established, to provide seed money grants to student startup companies, Alexander managed the “deal flow” by selecting students and coaching them to be ready to present their business ideas to the RVCF.

In the past five years, he has taught over 500 students in the classroom and another several hundred involved in the student entrepreneurial activities of the CIE. He has been able to give back to an organization that gave him so much.

“For me, it might have been a bit of a bucket list thing, but, really, I wanted to give back and share my experiences from a varied business career with the students,” he said.

BY HALEY YOUNG



Alexander teaches a class. He has taught classes in small business management, business venturing, venture finance and management at the UM School of Business Administration.





The late Charles V. Imbler Jr. is being remembered with a scholarship endowment in his name at the University of Mississippi. His father, Charles Imbler Sr. of Tupelo (far right), established the scholarship for MBA students in the School of Business Administration. With him are Imbler Jr.'s wife, Trentice Imbler (left); daughters Carrol and Mallie Imbler; and mother, Sue Imbler.

## Father's major gift memorializes son; supports MBA scholarships

**A** father's major gift to the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration provides scholarships for students pursuing master's degrees while honoring the life of his beloved son.

After contributions from friends and family, Charles Imbler Sr., of Tupelo, completed a \$100,000 gift for the Charles V. Imbler Jr. Memorial Scholarship in Business Administration Endowment.

In the latter stages of his 11-year battle with colon cancer, the late Chuck Imbler, of Belden, requested a memorial to help support MBA students from north Mississippi.

"I'm very proud of the fact that Chuck stayed at Ole Miss and received his MBA," the senior Imbler said, further explaining his desire to create the endowment. "We hope that this gift will help other young students reach new heights in the business world with their MBAs."

The younger Imbler earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Ole Miss in 1979 and 1980, respectively.

After graduating, he worked in several regional offices for Navistar Corp., a leading manufacturer of commercial vehicles, before serving in the company's

Chicago national headquarters as director of marketing for parts. He also worked as manager of medium duty sales.

During his career, he served as national president of both the Navistar and Idealease dealer associations.

In 1995, he returned to Tupelo to join his father in the family business, serving as president of Truck Center Inc.

"Chuck Jr. loved his hometown of Tupelo and north Mississippi," his father said.

Imbler served on the Tupelo Thoroughfare Committee for many years and was instrumental in improving the city's roadways. He was president of the Tupelo Kiwanis Club and a loyal supporter of Tupelo Public Schools, and he and his wife, Trentice Gooch Imbler, were honored as the Academics for Excellence members of the year.

The Imblers have two daughters: Mallie Imbler, a UM senior in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, public policy leadership major and 2019

student Hall of Fame inductee; and Carrol Trent Imbler, a junior at Tupelo High School who plans to attend Ole Miss in 2020.

Chuck Imbler Jr. attended the Super Bowl, Final Four and Masters Tournament, and he played golf at Pebble Beach and in Ireland and Scotland. His greatest joy in life, though, was traveling with family and attending events at Ole Miss, where his vocal "Go Rebels!" became familiar to fans seated nearby.

"On behalf of the School of Business Administration, I am extremely grateful to the Imbler family for their foresight in providing support to our graduate students, giving them a firm foundation on which to build successful careers after graduation," Dean Ken Cyree said.

To support the School of Business Administration, contact Tim Noss at [tnoss@olemiss.edu](mailto:tnoss@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-5932. More information is also available online at [give.olemiss.edu](http://give.olemiss.edu).

PHOTO AND STORY BY BILL DABNEY



Family members and friends gather at the home of Robert and Ashley Perry to celebrate the lives of Kim and Michael Perry. They include (front, from left) Lucy Perry, Anna Reed Perry, Annie Perry, Ada Grace Perry and Sarah Perry, and (back row, from left) Knox Perry, John West Perry, Ashley Perry, Robert Perry, UM business school Dean Ken Cyree and Clay Dibrell, co-director of the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

## Family, friends establish fund to support students exhibiting ‘Perry Grit’

**W**hen the Robert Perry family began picking up the pieces after losing two family members, they found a family motto: “Perry Grit.” Now the Kim and Dr. Michael Perry Memorial Scholarship at the University of Mississippi will help juniors and seniors who possess the kind of drive and passion that defined the couple.

Mississippi mourned in the wake of the 2016 plane crash near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, that took the lives of six people, including Kim and Michael Perry, of Oxford. The Perrys were known for touching countless lives through their generous and selfless actions, leading brother Robert Perry, family members and friends to create a scholarship endowment.

“Michael considered himself a bit of an underdog at times, and that’s why he was very much for the underdog,” Robert Perry said. “The intangible part of this scholarship is its designation for those who have that hustle, grit, integrity and work ethic

to show the world that they will do something in life and make a difference, and then turn around and give back to their community.”

The Perry Scholarship Endowment was created for ambitious students who also show commitment to innovation in their particular fields of study. Selected students will be better equipped to carry on the Perrys’ legacy.

The motivation to create a scholarship for hard-working students effectively came from Michael Perry himself, said Stewart Rutledge, a longtime family friend from Oxford.

“

**MY BROTHER AND I WORKED REALLY HARD WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP AND GOING THROUGH SCHOOL, AND WE BOTH NEEDED ASSISTANCE. THAT'S WHY THIS SCHOLARSHIP IS FOR SOMEONE WHO, ON PAPER, LOOKS LIKE AN AVERAGE STUDENT, BUT HAS THAT HUSTLE AND DRIVE. WE WANTED TO FOSTER THAT AND GIVE THEM SUPPORT.”** – ROBERT PERRY

“When you lose someone like him, you quickly ask yourself what he would want,” Rutledge said. “Michael made that clear in his life, so it was easy. He would have wanted us all to continue to give like he did, and, in this scholarship, we are supporting free-market thinkers and hardworking entrepreneurs.

“Michael was a teach-a-man-to-fish guy, but he’d just as soon give that man the fish when the work was over. It is rare to see that combination, and this scholarship will hopefully do some small justice to what we have lost in Michael’s and Kim’s passings.”

Robert Perry said a scholarship was a natural choice.

“My brother and I worked really hard when we were growing up and going through school, and we both needed assistance,” he said. “That’s why this scholarship is for someone who, on paper, looks like an average student, but has that hustle and drive. We wanted to foster that and give them support.”

Although natives of Brandon, the Perry family’s roots run deep in Oxford and at Ole Miss.

Michael Perry earned a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from Ole Miss in 1995 and a Doctor of Dental Medicine from the UM School of Dentistry in 1999, while Kim earned a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the School of Nursing in 1996. She went on to earn a master’s in nursing and a post-master’s degree as a family nurse practitioner. Michael Perry pursued postdoctoral training in periodontics.

Robert Perry also graduated from Ole Miss with an undergraduate degree in accountancy and an MBA, while his wife, Ashley Perry, holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education.

The Perrys left behind three children: Sarah, John West and Anna Reed. Shortly after their parents’ deaths, Ashley and Robert Perry moved to Oxford with their four children – Knox, Ada Grace, Lucy and Annie – to be guardians, becoming a family of nine.

“Ashley and I love Oxford and visited here frequently to see Michael, Kim and their kids,” Robert Perry said. “But when we moved here, there was a lot that we didn’t really know how to navigate, like how to get the kids enrolled in school and gymnastics or ballet classes and sports.

“The community was very supportive and helpful to us in doing all that.”

Michael Perry owned a dental practice of five clinics in Mississippi and the Memphis area; Kim

was a nurse practitioner in the Ole Miss Student Health Center.

“Kim really took on the role of a mother figure to the students, especially the girls who were away from home for the first time and without their moms,” Robert Perry said. “She valued being able to offer them that kind of support, was a great listener and had a great bedside manner. She loved taking care of students.”

Clay Dibrell, co-director of the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the School of Business Administration, said he’s grateful for the Perrys’ vision in establishing such a unique scholarship.

“This scholarship allows students who may not have the highest GPA but are exceedingly entrepreneurial the opportunity to have a scholarship and to realize their passion for entrepreneurship,” he said.

Besides their professional careers, Kim Perry was an officer in two parents associations and active with Meals on Wheels and the Junior Auxiliary. Michael Perry dedicated his energies to developing and funding the 73-acre Oxford-Lafayette Sportsplex because “he thought that every kid should have a place to play sports.” They also were involved with St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church.

Kim and Michael’s grit and giving spirits will live on.

“We talk about Michael and Kim all the time and try to keep them present in the kids’ memories,” Robert Perry said. “The scholarship is one more way to keep telling that story. We hope that people contribute to the scholarship for years to come – maybe on Kim’s and Michael’s birthdays, the anniversary of their deaths or other special occasions.

“I think it’s also important that people know that when they make a contribution, it is going back into a student, similar to how Michael and Kim dedicated themselves to giving back to kids in the community and the students they knew in their lives.”

Individuals and organizations can make gifts to the Kim and Dr. Michael Perry Scholarship Endowment by mailing a check with the fund noted in the memo line to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655. Online gifts can be made at <http://perryscholarship.com>.

For more information, contact Denson Hollis, executive director of development, at 662-915-5092 or [dhollis@olemiss.edu](mailto:dhollis@olemiss.edu).



THOMAS GRANING/OLE MISS DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES

Rich Gentry (left) and Clay Dibrell (right), co-directors of the UM Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, congratulate Tyler Moore and Jake Harrison, winners of the 2019 Gillespie Business Plan Competition.

# 15th annual Gillespie Business Plan Competition awards Move Fitness top spot

**A** lightweight, portable exercise device that targets the gluteal muscles took first place at the recent Gillespie Business Plan Competition at the University of Mississippi.

Move Fitness LLC, co-founded by Tyler Moore and Jake Harrison, designed the GluteMove device for exercise, targeting primarily college-aged women. Both from Corinth, Moore is majoring in business, and Harrison in exercise science.

Moore and Harrison's company won \$10,000 and a year of complimentary office space at the Innovation Hub at Insight Park, the university's business incubator.

"Since day one, we knew we had a unique product and business idea," the partners said. "We entered the Gillespie Business Plan Competition knowing we had a solid foundation for a business, but we were uncertain of the outcome due to all the great competition.

"We are very grateful for the prize money and the office space, as it gives us a starting point to launch our business."

The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship hosts the business plan competition each year.

"We are thrilled to have such a wonderful competition that highlights our students' initiatives and desires to start businesses," said Ken Cyree, dean of the UM School of Business Administration.

"The Gillespie Business Plan competition is an excellent experiential learning experience for these students, and to be able to pitch their ideas to our esteemed alumni and business professionals creates a real-world environment that is instructive and requires a careful analysis of their proposed businesses."

EZ Automation came in at second place, winning \$5,000. Prahar Patel, a double major in management information systems and biology from Madison, presented a technology company that integrates home electronic devices that can automate entertainment, lighting, environmental, security and other household systems. The company also helps

homeowners choose and install the equipment.

“We do the hard part, so you don’t have to,” Patel said. “You think of it; we will make it happen.”

Placing third in the contest was Scout’s Resale, an online thrift shop redesigning and selling clothing.

Founded by Elizabeth Furtao, an English major from Somerset, Massachusetts, the company donates a portion of all its proceeds to the local chapter of Court Appointed Special Advocates in Oxford. Scout’s Resale received \$2,500 in prize money.

“This may have been the best final four student entrepreneurial teams we have ever had in Gillespie,” said Owens Alexander, instructor of management and entrepreneurship, who has been a key figure in elevating the exposure of the CIE and mentoring students with their startup ideas.

Alexander plans to retire in May after five years with the program.

“This is the culmination of the year for us,” said Rich Gentry, co-director of the CIE. “It was bittersweet this year with Owens’ retirement, but we could not

be more thrilled with the support from the dean, the university and our outstanding alumni.

“Their support helped the CIE produce some truly exceptional students this year.”

This year, 34 entrepreneurs entered the competition. An internal business school faculty panel evaluated all entries and selected 18 businesses to advance in the competition.

The finals featured eight participants presenting eight-minute pitches to a panel of judges. The top four advanced to the final round on April 12. Presentations were followed by 10 minutes of questions from the judges.

This year featured a variety of distinguished judges, including Stuart Coleman of Chevron Ventures; Lawrence Adams, a Jimmy John’s franchisee; William Yates of W.G. Yates & Sons Construction; Stephen Johnston of Forté Ventures; Gail Pittman of Gail Pittman Designs; David Lane of Canal Barge in New Orleans; Adrienne Q. Sanford and Jessica Querin of Carvana; John Oxford of Renasant Bank; Keisha Richard of Cox Enterprises; NJ Correnti of Nicholas Air; Jeff Conley of Conley Buick

GMC Subaru; Chuck Smith Jr. of Guardian Manufacturing; Johnny Maloney of Cowboy Maloney’s Electric City; Liza Cirlot-Looser of The Cirlot Agency; Jan and Lawrence Farrington; Josh Mabus of the Mabus Agency; Edith Kelly-Green, former FedEx VP; and Chuck Nicholson of Community Bank.

“The competition allows student entrepreneurs from across campus to interact with entrepreneurship faculty along with our successful entrepreneurs who come back to campus,” said Clay Dibrell, CIE co-director.

“This interaction leads to the different teams, such as the Gillespie winners Tyler and Jake, with their venture to go from an interesting idea, which they created on their own this past fall, to a viable venture this spring through guidance from the CIE, Rebel Venture Capital Fund, Insight Park and our alumni.”

For more information about the Gillespie Business Plan Competition, visit [olemisscie.com/programs/gillespie-business-plan](http://olemisscie.com/programs/gillespie-business-plan).

BY KARSYN KING

MEGAN WOLFE/OLE MISS DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES



Tong Meng, director of programs for the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, applauds the conclusion of a presentation.

# Overstreet's legacy at UM expands with endowments

**H**elen Graeber Overstreet knew how her late husband, Mike Overstreet, felt about the University of Mississippi. When she was ready to expand his legacy, she turned to their alma mater to establish six endowments that will have an impact on the university for generations to come.

"I knew where his heart was, and I knew where mine was, too," said Helen Overstreet, of Oxford. "And I love to think that I'm continuing our story."

Her \$550,000 gift has created the Mike Overstreet Business Faculty Support Endowment for the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty members in the School of Business Administration and the Helen and Mike Overstreet Accountancy Scholarship in the Patterson School of Accountancy.

"Ole Miss made such an impact on our lives. We would not have enjoyed the successes we did without the degrees we received in business and accountancy," said Helen Overstreet, who also studied three years at Southern Methodist University.

"I had the best of the best when it came to professors. When I returned here to pursue a second undergraduate degree and graduate study, I was a single mother, and the faculty was very protective of me and understood the challenges I faced. The Bursar's Office staff even helped me find a place to live."

Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration, expressed appreciation for the faculty support.

"Helen experienced Ole Miss faculty members who are not only top-tier teachers but also academic leaders who care about their students' welfare," he said. "Professors were transformational in her life, and she is now helping to ensure that future Ole Miss students will continue to thrive with exceptional faculty members. We are grateful for this faculty-support endowment bearing Mike Overstreet's name.

"I always enjoyed talking to Mike, whether it was about the business school, golf or any topic. His passion was always evident."

Morris Stocks, professor and Don Jones Chair of Accountancy, knows the Overstreet family members and applauds the impact they continue to make on the university. Mike Overstreet, a 1970 accountancy graduate, began committing private support to the university in 1988 and continued until his death earlier this year.

"In the Patterson School, we are moved by the generous gift from Helen Overstreet in memory of her husband, Mike," Stocks said. "I was privileged to teach Helen in two of her accounting courses when she returned to the university to earn an additional degree. That classroom opportunity led to a 25-year friendship with Helen and Mike.

"I have a strong sense of professional and personal affection for the Overstreet family and appreciate the manner in which they have contributed to the overall mission of our university."

Two other endowments that Helen Overstreet created speak to the late businessman and health care administrator's love of music: the Mike Overstreet Memorial Band Scholarship and Jazz



Mike Overstreet ice climbing in Antarctica in 2009



Wendell Weakley (left), UM Foundation development officer; Mark Wilder, dean of the UM School of Accountancy; Helen Overstreet, donor; Ken Cyree, dean of the UM School of Business Administration; and Morris Stocks, professor and Don Jones Chair of Accountancy. Photo by Bill Dabney

Scholarship endowments. Thanks to a band scholarship, Overstreet was able to attend Ole Miss and played trumpet in the Pride of the South marching band and in the Jazz Ensemble throughout his undergraduate years.

Another endowment, the Edgar Harold Overstreet Family Endowment for University Police Department Training, recognizes the contributions of Mike Overstreet's father, who was a UPD officer for 17 years.

"To my knowledge, UPD has never received an endowment," UPD Chief Ray Hawkins said. "Often-times, the work officers do for the community goes overlooked. The countless hours they spend away

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**TO MY KNOWLEDGE, UPD HAS NEVER RECEIVED AN ENDOWMENT. OFTENTIMES, THE WORK OFFICERS DO FOR THE COMMUNITY GOES OVERLOOKED. THE COUNTLESS HOURS THEY SPEND AWAY FROM THEIR LOVED ONES TO BE PRESENT AND VIGILANT, PROVIDING SUPPORT AND SAFETY SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY, IS A TREMENDOUS SACRIFICE.”** – UPD CHIEF RAY HAWKINS

from their loved ones to be present and vigilant, providing support and safety services for the community, is a tremendous sacrifice.

"To have someone who knows personally of the commitment made by law enforcement officers acknowledge that sacrifice with such a generous offering is heartwarming and greatly appreciated."

The designation for another gift, the Helen and Mike Overstreet Exhibition Endowment, will support new exhibits at the UM Museum and Historic Houses.

Part of the gift also supports the Children's of Mississippi campaign to fund enhancements to the state's only hospital for children at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and other major funds are directed to the Vaught Society in support of Ole Miss athletics.

The gifts benefit areas that were important to Mike Overstreet and reflect his well-rounded life.

"Mike was full-on all the time," Helen Overstreet said, laughing at some of the memories from her 22-year marriage. "He was high-energy and embraced a strong work ethic. He was a visionary in

his professional career and was very adventurous in his personal life. He had more fun than anyone.

“Mike said to me, ‘We’re going to see all seven continents,’ and we did. He swam in hot lava pools, traveled with scientists on a freighter to South America, celebrated a New Year’s in Buenos Aires, scaled six peaks in Antarctica, skied cross country and more.

“But most of all, he cared about taking care of people, just like his daddy did,” Overstreet said, describing her husband, whom she first met at Christ Presbyterian Church in Oxford. “His faith and his family were very important to him.”

Born in Oxford to Edgar Harold and Katie Mae Wallace Overstreet, Mike Overstreet followed in his parents’ footsteps in the real estate and long-term care facility industries and served in various leadership roles in the Mississippi Nursing Home Association.

Earlier, Overstreet served as an accountant for Goodyear and American Greeting Cards, and farmed cotton, soybeans and rice in Mississippi

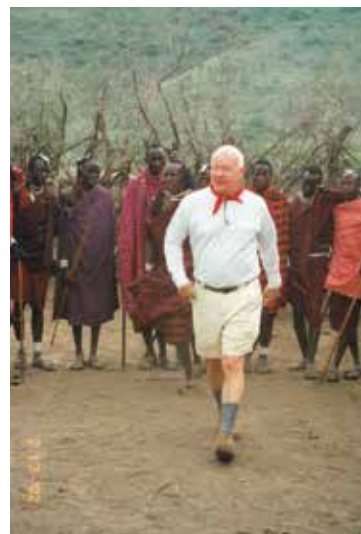
County, Arkansas, before moving back to Oxford in 1994.

Besides his wife, Overstreet is survived by daughters Marion McAbee and her husband, Jeff, of Broomfield, Colorado; Ruth Buss and her husband, Josh, of Neenah, Wisconsin, and Rebecca Cornelius, of Oxford; and son Robert Thomas “Rob” Cornelius, of Portland, Oregon. Another daughter, Katherine Overstreet Logan, preceded him in death. Helen Overstreet has established an endowment in Logan’s name at Arkansas State University, where she was a math professor.

To contribute to any of the six endowments bearing Mike Overstreet’s name, send a contribution with the endowment’s name written in the check’s memo line, to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655. Gifts can also be made online at [give.olemiss.edu](http://give.olemiss.edu).

For more information, contact Jason McCormick, development officer, at [jason@olemiss.edu](mailto:jason@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-1757.

BY TINA H. HAHN



SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Clockwise: Mike Overstreet at Mount Nebo in 2010. | Mike and Helen Overstreet in Zimbabwe at an elephant camp in 2004. | Mike Overstreet in Tanzania with the Maasai in 2002. | Pat Ellis Stubbs (left), Jack Stubbs and Mike Overstreet in Petra, Jordan, in 2008. | Mike and Helen Overstreet at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, in 2004.





Walter Davis, faculty adviser, and Ashley McGee, director of the UM School of Business Administration's MBA programs

## *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* ranks MBA program in top 50

**T**he University of Mississippi's Master of Business Administration program has been named as one of the nation's best by *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*. The rankings, released Nov. 8, 2018, place Ole Miss at No. 37 among American public universities.

For the 2018 edition, Bloomberg ranked MBA programs using four categories: Compensation, Learning, Networking and Entrepreneurship. The UM program came in at No. 28 in Entrepreneurship.

"We are excited about the success we have enjoyed in our MBA program, and the reflection of the quality of our program as indicated in these rankings," said Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration. "These rankings are an indication of the dedicated faculty and staff who make the program successful, and our alumni who add depth with personal development programs for our students.

"We are especially proud of being ranked No. 28 in the area

of entrepreneurship, as this is an up-and-coming part of the business school that has existed for less than a decade."

All schools surveyed were required to submit employment data for the Class of 2017 following standards set by MBA Career Services and Employer Alliance, a trade group founded in 1994 to establish and collect consistent, comparable, peer-reviewed data.

"The reputation of our MBA program is a result of a team of faculty members who are highly qualified and intensely engaged with our students," said Walter Davis, faculty adviser to the MBA program. "The faculty work hard to develop the professional skillset of our students."

Bloomberg surveyed 26,699 MBA students, alumni and recruiters in 2018 about their goals and experiences. These rankings are based on their responses, as well as compensation and job placement data from each school. A full global ranking was published Dec. 11, 2018.

"We are proud of our program and our most recent rankings," said Ashley McGee, the program's director. "Earning an MBA is going to give a person the opportunity to advance within their field and the flexibility to move across industries.

"At Ole Miss, we have the option of a one-year campus program, and the success of the program is a collaborative effort."

Coming in at No. 71 overall, UM ranked ahead of Auburn, at No. 75; Syracuse, No. 77; Missouri, No. 82; and University of South Carolina, No. 86.

# Business school launches networking program

**G**athering leaders from some of the state's largest businesses for a high-powered reception in Jackson, the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration has kicked off a new networking program to connect students with alumni for employment.

The Business Connect program, founded last summer, seeks to determine the hiring/talent acquisition goals of employers and match them with the school's "business-ready" students and graduates for placement with permanent career and internship opportunities.

The program officially kicked off Nov. 8 at a reception at the Jackson Yacht Club. Attendees included UM business Dean Ken Cyree, Business



Alon Bee (left) of Regions Bank, Phil Dixon of RJYoung and Tyler Meisenheimer, Business Connect director, gather at a Jackson reception to officially launch the UM Business Connect program.



Chip Crunk (left) of RJYoung, incoming president of the business school advisory board; Ken Cyree, dean of the UM School of Business Administration; and Melanie Dowell of Morgan Stanley, president of the school's advisory board, chat at the Jackson reception.

Connect director Tyler Meisenheimer and representatives of the school's advisory board, alumni and potential employers.

"Business leaders have spoken about keeping a talented workforce in state," Meisenheimer said. "The business school at the University of Mississippi has listened to their voices and acted quickly with the creation of this new program.

"My focus is to build relationships with industry leaders to discover their talent-acquisition goals that match our 'business-ready' graduates. Our students are benefiting from a multitude of career preparation resources with a dedicated team to prepare them for their respective careers."

The purpose of the gathering was to bring industry leaders and university advocates together to learn about how the program can benefit their organizations with hiring top talent. Some 60 attendees representing 25 companies came to learn about the program's goals and to connect with one another.

"We were pleased with the response and the turnout for the event," said Melanie Dowell, outgoing president of the school's advisory board. "We were also particularly impressed by the number of businesses expressing a desire to learn more about the Business Connect program and hire our graduates.

"We are excited about this new program for the business school and appreciate Dean Cyree and Provost Wilkin's support and enthusiasm as we move ahead."

The participating organizations included C Spire, Trustmark Bank, Butler Snow LLP, University of Mississippi Medical Center, St. Dominic Health Services, Baptist Memorial Health Care Corp., Regions Bank, Sysco, Ergon, Morgan Stanley, Raymond James, Irby, the Molpus Group and BancorpSouth.



Mary Claire Parrish (left) and Cara Carr of C Spire

Hu Meena, C Spire president and CEO, discussed the uniqueness of Ole Miss business graduates who are highly skilled in communication and networking and have excelled as C Spire employees.

Cyree discussed the university's commitment to Business Connect, and Meisenheimer detailed how the business school is taking major strides to prepare students for future careers and internships.

"This is the first step in outreach to potential employers who will hire our graduates, and the success of the event was very encouraging," Cyree said. "We are pleased to have had such a successful launch of this final piece of our career team to help our students get jobs and internships.

"We are delighted there was such an interest in Business Connect, and the impact it will have as employers engage with the business school and hire our students."



Jordan Harris-Irby (left), Frank Lenior and Tina Ruffin-Irby

STORY BY  
STELLA  
CONNELL

PHOTOS BY  
CAROLINE  
STEWART

# Internship Fair continues to grow

**S**cores of University of Mississippi business students got a jump-start on their careers recently by networking with corporate decision makers at the third annual Part-time Job and Internship Fair, sponsored by the university's School of Business Administration and Career Center.

The event at The Inn at Ole Miss attracted more than 280 students and representatives from 32 companies, including FedEx Corp., AutoZone, Viking Corp., Enterprise Holdings, Trustmark Corp. and Northwestern Mutual.

"We had the largest employer and student turnout in the three-year history of this event, and the feedback from both students and employers was incredible," said Wesley Dickens, assistant director of experiential education for the business school. "The success of the event could not have been possible without the support of the Career Center and the business school's administration."

Created in 2016, the fair focuses primarily on internship opportunities, but the school partnered with the Career

Center to add the part-time job component.

Participating companies filled the Gertrude C. Ford Ballroom with decorated booths and tables featuring information about their businesses and special prizes.

"At Enterprise, we are always looking to speak with students and share different ways they can jump-start their careers," said Natalie Miller, talent acquisition specialist with Enterprise Holdings. "We pride ourselves at Enterprise in helping students transition from student life to work life through our management trainee program and management trainee internship."

Miller, an Ole Miss alumna, brought fellow team member Ronan McBrearty, also a UM alumnus, to help work the company's booth.



"When I was a store manager with Enterprise, Ronan was the intern," she said. "The unique thing about Enterprise is that we promote 100 percent from within, so we are all able to speak to the exact role that we are hiring for in the process."

Students praised the school's efforts to help connect them with potential employers.

"Working with the business school's career preparation office was a very rewarding experience for me," said Samantha Herbert, a senior from Huron, Ohio, majoring in management information

Nicholas Neilson-Slabach, from Fort Worth, Texas, visits with representatives from the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement.

GARRETT FISCHER





CEOs Blake Echols, of Arlington, Texas; Laura Ann Salvador, of Pearland Texas; and Heath Rooks, from Collierville, Tennessee, welcome and assist attendees at the fair. Photo by Garrett Fischer

systems. “Initially, I had no idea where to start looking for internships, but Mr. Dickens immediately got me started by critiquing my resume, looking for the right internships in the right places and assisting me with my application.

“My status went from ‘Alternate’ to ‘Primary.’ Eventually I was offered an internship with International Paper because of the help and advice I was given.”

Recruiters praised the quality of talent available at the event.

“We want the best and brightest students for banking and for Trustmark, so that is why we recruit at schools like Ole Miss,” said Rita Floyd, first vice president and director of organizational development for Trustmark Bank. “Our corporate internship program hopefully piques

students’ interest in banking, and our management development associate program gets them trained and placed where they can be a productive, effective member of the Trustmark team.”

The Chief Emissary Officers, a student-leadership organization within the business school, served as hosts and ambassadors to help facilitate a dialogue between the students and companies.

“The Ole Miss Part-Time Job and Internship Fair was a huge success for the Lafayette-Oxford-University Volunteer Connection,” said Marlee Carpenter, volunteer coordinator for the organization. “We gathered lots of interest from students who are

genuinely passionate about building relationships, giving back and serving in the LOU community.

“Because of the fair, we have 40 new faces to match with nonprofit organizations.”

The fair continues to gain momentum in connecting business students with opportunities, said Meg Barnes, the school’s director of career preparation.

“We doubled participation of students in this year’s event,” Barnes said. “We look forward to expanding this fair based on this year’s response and the career outcomes.”

BY STELLA CONNELL

# B&R Insurance inspired to support RMI program

**A** University of Mississippi graduate's resume resulted not only in Brown & Riding Insurance hiring the applicant but also sparked the company's continuing interest in the university.

Learning about the risk management and insurance program and its caliber of students, B&R has been inspired to make a major gift to UM and hire more of the business school's graduates.

In 2010, then-recent graduate George Sella attracted the attention of B&R's president and CEO Jeff Rodriguez, which led to Sella becoming the company's first employee from the School of Business Administration's RMI program. Rodriguez, who had never visited Mississippi, decided to participate in B&R's inaugural Ole Miss recruiting trip later that year.

"I was very impressed with the school on that first trip, and the result was that Brown & Riding ended up making a number of new hires, including interns and full-time employees," Rodriguez said. "My relationship with Ole Miss began quite by accident due to receiving that first resume from George."

Since then, the company has expanded to 17 offices across the country. Sella's employment has led to more than 50 current employees from Ole Miss, making B&R the largest employer of RMI graduates, said Andre P. Liebenberg, associate professor of finance and the Gwenette P. and Jack W. Robertson Chair of Insurance.

"Once Jeff saw the talent that we have here at Ole Miss, he began to focus on recruiting students from our program," Liebenberg said. "Along the way, I think Jeff fell

in love with Ole Miss and Oxford and has since opened a processing office in Oxford and sent two of his children to Ole Miss."

B&R is furthering its relationship with Ole Miss by establishing the Brown & Riding Faculty Support Endowment, which will provide income for the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty members in the RMI program.

"There is a need for talent," Liebenberg said. "And although our RMI program has been successful at placing almost 100 percent of interested students in the risk and insurance industry, we are limited in the number of students we can teach and graduate due to the size of our RMI faculty."

"The endowment is an important first step toward being able to hire another professor."

Rodriguez credits the RMI program with significantly improving the insurance industry, and he wants to see it continue to offer students its well-rounded, real-world perspective.

"It is important to invest in the future of the industry, and Ole Miss has done a stellar job of turning out high-quality students," he said. "We want to help the program expand, as it will only mean great things for the industry."

Liebenberg likewise pointed to B&R's innovative approach.

"When they recruit at our RMI career fairs, they display the list of UM grads that they employ. I think the most impressive aspect is their retention of employees – I suspect it is somewhere around 90 percent – which is simply outstanding."



As Brown & Riding Insurance's relationship with the University of Mississippi has grown, so has the company. B&R has 17 offices across the country and counts some 50 Ole Miss alumni among its employees. The company's Atlanta office is home to UM alumni (back row, from left) Trevor Boling, Robert Alvarez, Walker McKenzie, Collin Nichols, Zac Bryant, Kyle Armitage and Beau Cantrell; and (front row) Dalton Young, Mary Catherine Hodgson, Taelor Rubin and Emily Chrismer.

Now a shareholder, senior vice president and broker, Sella believes the partnership between the university and B&R is mutually beneficial because it provides needed resources for the company while giving students experience in the industry.

"Interns get exposure to various teams and product lines, which can help them to grow faster in their careers," he said. "We get support from students who are invested, eager to learn and who could potentially become full-time employees after graduation. It's a win-win."

Stephen Fier, holder of the Liberto-King Professorship in Insurance and associate professor of finance, is grateful for gifts from corporations such as B&R.

"Private support enables us to attract and retain award-winning RMI faculty who are focused on preparing students for rewarding careers in the risk and insurance space," Fier said. "The students obtain a superior education both inside and outside the classroom and are more attractive to employers."

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**I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE SCHOOL ON THAT FIRST TRIP, AND THE RESULT WAS THAT BROWN & RIDING ENDED UP MAKING A NUMBER OF NEW HIRES, INCLUDING INTERNS AND FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES.”** – JEFF RODRIGUEZ

"This helps our program maintain an excellent job placement rate, benefiting students and the industry."

The Brown & Riding Faculty Support Endowment is open to accept gifts from individuals and organizations. To contribute, send a check to the University of Mississippi Foundation, with the fund noted in the memo line, to 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655, or give online at [give.olemiss.edu](http://give.olemiss.edu).

For more information, contact Nikki Neely Davis, executive director of development, at [nlneely@olemiss.edu](mailto:nlneely@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-6678.

BY MARY STANTON KNIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO



## UM kicks off first REDe summit with a powerful message

**M**ore than just an engine for economic development, entrepreneurship can be a potent tool for bringing about social change, prominent entrepreneur and women's rights activist Shiza Shahid told participants at the recent REDe Entrepreneurship Summit at the University of Mississippi.

"I believe entrepreneurship is one of the most powerful vehicles we have to change the world," Shahid said Oct. 18 in her keynote address kicking off the summit at the Ole Miss Student

Union. "If we're going to effect real change, we need entrepreneurship to be inclusive."

Created by the university's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship to encourage, celebrate

and enhance entrepreneurial endeavors among Ole Miss students, the summit focused on supporting female entrepreneurs.

"Entrepreneurship is about ideas," Shahid said. "When we





THOMAS GRANNING/OLE MISS DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES

The audience listens as Shiza Shahid delivers the keynote address during the REDe Entrepreneurship Summit at UM.

invest in others' ideas, that's when we transform the world."

Richard Gentry, CIE director, praised the inspirational message of Shahid's address.

"It was wonderful to have her come and talk to the students and to see that kind of engagement," Gentry said. "One of the students told me Shiza was her idol."

A native of Islamabad, Pakistan, Shahid was raised by parents who encouraged her to go to school even though it is not popular for Pakistani women to seek an education. Pakistan is the fifth-largest country in the world and has the second-lowest rate of childhood education.

It was Shahid's goal to change the system so all children – boys and girls – can have opportunities to learn, grow and prosper.

"I began showing up to the doors of nonprofits and asked to volunteer," she said. "I first worked in a women's prison and then a medical camp."

Children born to inmates or patients had particularly dismal futures and are "never given a chance to a better life," Shahid added. "They stay incarcerated, too."

While a student at Stanford University, Shahid met Malala Yousafzai, a young, outspoken

advocate for women's education. Yousafzai was shot in the head by the Taliban but survived and went on to win the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her work on behalf of education.

Shahid came to know Yousafzai and helped establish the Malala Fund, which works to create access to high-quality education for all children around the world.

"We push for policy changes, urging to allow a higher part of the GDP to girl education," Shahid said. "We also spend time to highlight issues that need awareness."

**CONT. ON P. 43**

# Female entrepreneurs look to future at inaugural REDe Summit

**A**n estimated 11.6 million women-owned businesses operated in the United States as of January 2017, employing nearly 9 million people and generating more than \$1.7 trillion in revenues, an American Express report revealed.

And 62 percent of female entrepreneurs say their business is their primary source of income, according to Small Business Trends, an online data tracking source.

"It takes a special kind of person to become an entrepreneur," said Robyn Tannehill, mayor of Oxford, opening the second day of the inaugural REDe Entrepreneurship Summit at the University of Mississippi. "Women who are leaders have a responsibility to aid in the success of other women."

The panel included some of the state's most successful female entrepreneurs: Donna Barksdale, president of Mississippi River Trading Co.; Jan Farrington, executive director of Medical Support and Development Organization Inc.; Gail Pittman, CEO of Gail Pittman Inc.; Leigh Reeves, founder and CEO of Snapshot Publishing; and Liza Cirlot Looser, CEO of the Cirlot Agency.

Looser opened the discussion by asking each panelist to reflect on her college curriculum and what she might have done differently. All wished they had taken one course: accounting.

"I would have taken some accounting had I known I was going to be where I ended up," Pittman said. "Accounting is what makes everything work."

Most admitted to moments of discouragement at various points in their career but encouraged audience members to persevere and to always "bring your A game."

"We tend, as women, to minimize ourselves and our work and our accomplishments," Barksdale said. "We are hard-wired to not appear too aggressive, too forward, but I encourage you all to not minimize yourself, ever."

Farrington offered a different perspective based on her experience investing in businesses in Mississippi.

"I didn't have anyone who didn't support my ideas," she said. "But I realized early on that it wasn't about having people say 'no,' but finding people to encourage you. It's important to find those people or the mentor who will be supportive of you."

Reeves told participants that she tries to "hire my weaknesses." She explained that she considers writing to be her weakness, but she doesn't allow that deficiency to hurt her brand or slow her success.

"I hired an editor early on, and they added much more to it," Reeves said.

"We worked together and learned from each other, pulling stories together and building content."

The group concluded by providing words of wisdom to an audience filled with future entrepreneurs.

"Your dream is your dream, and you are the CEO of you," Pittman said. "You're in charge of



Audience members at the inaugural REDe Entrepreneurship Summit participate as women business leaders discuss entrepreneurship in Mississippi and the importance of 'bringing your A game.' Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

The Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship welcomed Ole Miss students and the general public for the panel discussion on Oct. 19, the second day of the conference. The discussion was followed by student mentoring sessions with the panelists and CIE-linked entrepreneurs.

STELLA CONNELL



The panel included some of the state's most successful female entrepreneurs: Leigh Reeves, founder and CEO of Snapshot Publishing; Gail Pittman, CEO of Gail Pittman Inc.; Donna Barksdale, president of Mississippi River Trading Co.; Jan Farrington, executive director of Medical Support and Development Organization Inc., with Liza Cirlot Looser, CEO of the Cirlot Agency, as the panel moderator.

your corporation, building your own dream, and Mississippi is a great place to start it."

CIE leaders and others who helped organize the summit felt the panelists' messages resonated with students and reinforced the objectives for the gathering.

"Our goal for the REDe Summit is to inspire students with varied academic backgrounds, such as the arts, engineering, pharmacy or business to engage in entrepreneurship," said Clay Dibrell, CIE executive director. "This year's summit theme focused on women's entrepreneurship and change.

"There were several female and male students, from diverse backgrounds and majors, who are now thinking about the power of entrepreneurship

to positively change not only their lives but those around them."

The panel highlighted accomplished women in Mississippi, UM alumnae and student entrepreneurs who are trying to move forward with their own business ideas.

"It was wonderful to see so many students gather to learn from these successful women from across the world," said Richard Gentry, CIE director. "The CIE was happy to have the opportunity to partner with members of our board and the Oxford community to put on such a well-attended and exciting program. We are looking forward to next year's event."

BY SHIKHA SHRESTHA

## REDe SUMMIT, FROM P. 41

"Malala's story made the statistics real. There are certain moments in our lives where we have to decide who we are."

In August, Shahid launched NOW Ventures in Silicon Valley in partnership with AngelList, the world's largest venture capital platform. She also invests in mission-driven technology startups that are solving pressing challenges through technology, innovation and high-growth business models.

"All of us are born in a particular place, take on a particular view of the world," she said. "But if we want to truly transform the world, we have to suspend our judgments, biases and prejudices.

"We live in extraordinary times where we get to make choices beyond survival, a career that allows us a sense of meaning and purpose. And while it's a privilege, it's also a responsibility."

That message has potential to take root in Mississippi, said

Clay Dibrell, executive director of the CIE.

"Shiza's message of equality, change, hope and empowerment strongly resonated with our students and community," Dibrell said. "Her words have motivated several of our students to use entrepreneurship to create positive change for themselves and their communities."

BY STELLA CONNELL



Shelley and Scott Ririe (center) have honored their sons James (left) and Mike by establishing the Ririe Family Scholarship Endowment with a \$300,000 gift to the UM School of Business Administration. Photo by Bill Dabney/UM Foundation

## Ririe family aims to help university recruit in St. Louis area

**L**ike so many University of Mississippi students, Mike Ririe fell in love with Ole Miss during a campus visit.

As a high school junior in 2004, the St. Louis, Missouri, native and his dad, Scott Ririe, attended their first Rebel football game preceded by festivities in the Grove and a campus tour.

"We never visited another school after that day," said Scott Ririe, founder and co-president of Control Technology and Solutions, an energy service company based in St. Louis.

Mike Ririe graduated from Ole Miss with a bachelor's degree in business administration and is a commercial real estate agent in Chicago. His brother, James Ririe, of St. Louis, is on track to graduate from the UM School of Business Administration in 2020.

The Ririe brothers' love for their university spread to their parents, who recently made a \$300,000 gift to establish the Ririe Family Scholarship Endowment, which will award \$6,000 a year for up to eight semesters to two St. Louis freshmen in the School of Business Administration.

The Riries designated the scholarship for students in their area because "the amount of local groundswell to attend Ole Miss in the St. Louis area is growing," Scott Ririe said. "We viewed this as a way to give more kids the opportunity to attend the university when they may not have had the chance due to their financial circumstances."

UM business Dean Ken Cyree thanks the Riries for their generosity.

"It's always so encouraging to see parents of our students grow to value their children's education so much that they want to help others have the same experience here," he said. "We are very

CONT. P. 49

# Career preparation starts early, continues throughout UM business school

SITAL SIGH



**Meg Barnes**, director of career preparation and instructor in business communication; B.S. in vocational evaluation education and M.Ed. in counseling education, Auburn University; Ed.S. in counseling education, University of Alabama at Birmingham; Psy.D. in organizational psychology, Touro University Worldwide

**W**hen students enroll in the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration, the school's career prep team begins preparing them as freshmen to become part of the working world.

**Meg Barnes**, director of undergraduate career preparation, manages every entering student's introduction into career planning. Barnes oversees the core curriculum for 20 sections of BUS 271: Business Communication, an entry-level course required for sophomores.

In this course, students learn the importance of proper communication, focusing on how to write professional emails, branding their resumes, presentation skills and interview preparation.

"We want to focus on career preparation sooner rather than later," Barnes said.

After this first step into career planning, business students have a multitude of important resources available from the business school's career preparation team.

**Wesley Dickens**, assistant director of experiential education, helps students "test drive" their careers and helps them take what they learn from BUS 271 and apply it to the real world. Dickens supports students in finding internships or learning experiences, and he also helps students discover what they want to do once they graduate.

"It is important for students to think intentionally about the experiences they engage in as a student," Dickens said. "Everything they participate in shapes them in some manner or form.

"I encourage them to use their time wisely and to make sure they are engaging in experiences that will be the most meaningful and helpful for their future."

**Amy Jo Carpenter**, career planning and employer relations specialist, primarily assists juniors and seniors with branding their resumes and social media platforms, as well as finding entry-level jobs. This fall, she will teach a new class in the management department, directed at freshmen and sophomores – MGMT 101: Leadership for the Future – which is designed to help students learn about the practical applications of transformational leadership.

Carpenter has worked with employers for 22 years, identifying what they look for in a potential hire – from the attire they should wear to what should be on their resume. She also helps students shape their resumes to best attract the attention of potential employers.

"It never hurts to have another set of eyes look over your resume or have someone help you prepare for an interview," Carpenter said. "We work as a team to best assist our students on their journey to enter the workforce."

**Tyler Meisenheimer**, Business Connect program director, searches for job hubs where Ole Miss alumni have a significant presence. Meisenheimer used a career vision survey, developed by Barnes, to help the school's advisory board understand where students are looking for jobs, their majors and their expected salary ranges.

Tennessee and Texas have the strongest alumni hubs, with two per state – Memphis and Nashville, and Dallas and Houston. The following contenders

SITAL SIGH



**Wesley Dickens**, assistant director of experiential education and instructor in business communication; B.S., human performance, University of Southern Mississippi; M.A. in higher education and student personnel and MBA, University of Mississippi



STELLA CONNELL

Dean Ken Cyree visits with Brooke Kellam and Ian Soileau at the 2018 Banking Symposium.

## Estate gift supports banking and finance program

**B**anking and finance students in the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration will benefit from strengthened faculty and program support, thanks to an estate gift from the late Ted Cunningham, a longtime banking professional.

The Phoenix, Arizona, resident – a frequent supporter of the school's banking and finance program throughout his lifetime – bequeathed \$550,000 to the Frank R. Day/Mississippi Bankers Association Chair of Banking Endowment. The 1961 UM graduate earned a bachelor's degree in banking and finance.

"I recall Ted's pride in his involvement in the Financiers Club when he was a student, and his strong desire for other students to benefit as he had at Ole Miss," said Ken Cyree, chair of banking and dean of the School of Business Administration. "He was an avid supporter of our efforts to educate and graduate the best and the brightest banking and finance students, whom we hope will enter the field with transformative influence. We are extremely grateful for Ted's legacy of generous support."

The Day Chair of Banking Endowment provides salary support for the chair holder and additional funds for support staff, travel, commodities, contractual services and other expenditures of the banking and finance program.

A native of Lewistown, Pennsylvania, Cunningham graduated from Lewistown High School where he lettered in soccer and track, was sports editor of the school paper and sang in the concert choir. He attended Penn State, where he earned a freshman letter in soccer and sang in the glee club, before transferring to Ole Miss his sophomore year. On the Oxford campus, he was a charter member of the Financiers Club, Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, Chancellor's Committee of 100 and the Concert Singers.

Upon graduation, he became a field examiner for the FDIC and then joined Louisiana National Bank in Baton Rouge. In 1965, he began working for Arizona Bank in Phoenix, which ultimately became Bank of America.

Cunningham retired in 2002 after 38 years in banking. His career included tours as branch manager, national accounts officer, private banker and large commercial relationship manager.

His community activities included serving as past president and director of the University Club of Phoenix and the Phoenix General Hospital Foundation, and as president of the Arizona Chapter of the Ole Miss Alumni Association.

"I was fortunate to have spent time with Ted over the last four years, visiting in his home city of Phoenix," said Tim Noss, business school development officer. "He was passionate about Ole Miss and loved reminiscing about the great memories he had from his time here. He did what he could to create a strong presence for Ole Miss in the Phoenix area."

Cunningham was a board member and officer of the Men's Arts Council of the Phoenix Art Museum, Scottsdale Symphony, Arizona Chapter of Cystic Fibrosis and the Grammy-winning Phoenix Chorus. He also provided leadership as a founding director and officer of Jazz in Arizona.

In addition, Cunningham served as a national officer of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity and on the alumni advisory board for the Department of Finance at Ole Miss, where he also appeared as a guest lecturer and teacher. He was elected to the board of the Arizona Historical Society and was appointed by the mayor and city council to serve two terms as a member of the City of Phoenix Arts and Culture Commission, where he chaired the grants committee for four years.

He was an instructor at Rio Salado Community College and received a graduate degree in 1985 from the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University.

Cunningham was a life member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Lewistown, Mifflin County Historical Society, Huntington County Historical Society and the Ole Miss Alumni Association. He was a long-time member of the Arizona Country Club, Arizona Science Center, National Civil War Preservation Trust, Heard Museum and the Phoenix Art Museum.

His lifelong passion for jazz music resulted in a large collection of recordings in all media, books and art, which will be donated from his estate to the Los Angeles Jazz Institute.

Byron Liles, senior director of gift planning, said he appreciates Cunningham's thoughtfulness in providing support for banking and finance education at Ole Miss.

"Gifts like these can be used to support Ole Miss scholarships, academic and athletic programs, student experiences or many other opportunities that help transform the institution and the students who attend," Liles said.

The Frank R. Day/Mississippi Bankers Association Chair of Banking Endowment accepts gifts from individuals and organizations. To contribute, mail a check to the University of Mississippi Foundation, with the scholarship's name in the memo line, to 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655; or online at [give.olemiss.edu](http://give.olemiss.edu).

To support the School of Business Administration, contact Tim Noss at [tnoss@olemiss.edu](mailto:tnoss@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-5932. For information on including the university in estate planning, contact Byron Liles at [byron@olemiss.edu](mailto:byron@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-7601.

BY BILL DABNEY

## CAREER PREP TEAM,, FROM P. 45

are Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, Meisenheimer said.

"The core strategy of Business Connect is matching our talented and business-ready students with key distinguished alumni, who are successful business leaders in their respective communities," Meisenheimer said.

"Alumni, who work in the hotspot destinations, share with me that the UM business school prepared them very well when they were beginning their careers, and they are excited to help their companies by recruiting top talent."

Once students are ready to begin interviewing for jobs, they may do virtual interviews, which have been on the rise. The school's career preparation office has a quiet room for students where they can virtually visit with potential employers about full-time positions or internships.

"We find the students with a more diverse background experience make for a stronger work candidate," Barnes concluded. "It's our charge and responsibility to help them be the best they can be once they graduate and look for their next steps professionally, and it's a joy to see them launch and succeed."

BY ALI MAE WALSH

MELISSA RENAE SCOTT



**Amy Jo Carpenter,** career planning specialist and employer relations liaison, and instructor in management; B.S. in professional communication and interdisciplinary studies; M.A. in educational psychology, Tennessee Tech University; certification: The Protocol School of Washington

ASIA HARDEN



**Tyler Meisenheimer,** Business Connect program director; B.B.A. and MBA, University of Mississippi



Development officers from SEC business schools gather on the Ole Miss campus for their 11th annual conference. Photo by Bill Dabney/UM Foundation

## SEC development officers hosted by UM business school

**P**rofessionals from across the region gathered recently at the University of Mississippi for the 11th annual Southeastern Conference Business Schools Development Officers Conference.

This marked the university's first time to host the two-day conference, which included multiple sessions that addressed a wide range of donor and fundraising topics.

"We were extremely pleased to host the SEC development officers on our campus," said Ken Cyree, dean of the UM School of Business Administration. "The conference represents an outstanding networking opportunity for these professionals and allows them to learn best practices from each other.

"Collectively, this will help our SEC business schools continue to strive for the margin of excellence that makes our graduates competitive and helps bolster our economic success in Mississippi, the South and around the globe."

Participating universities were Alabama, Arkansas, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas A&M and Vanderbilt.

"It was wonderful to have the opportunity to host all the development officers from the SEC business schools," said Charlotte Parks, UM vice chancellor

for development. "When we are not competing in athletics, we openly share ideas and gain from each other's experiences.

"All the participants left impressed with Ole Miss and Oxford, thanks to the work Angela Brown, Tim Noss, Jason McCormick and Sally Rychlak put into planning the conference."

The first session – featuring Parks; Susan Boyette, executive director of central development; and Kristina Carlson, managing director of Carter, a global philanthropy firm – focused on billion-dollar fundraising campaigns, which have become "the new normal" for most universities.

Parks, Boyette and Carlson offered insights into the campaign process and provided development officers with advice on how their roles affect the success of these large, multiyear campaigns.

The second session featured a panel of development officers from Alabama, Arkansas, Texas A&M and Ole Miss. Attendees not only learned about the structure of different advisory boards but also how each board supports its school.





Following the panel, participants enjoyed lunch in the renovated Ole Miss Student Union, where nationally recognized cartoonist Marshall Ramsey, of *Mississippi Today*, was the guest speaker. The group toured the Student Union, South Campus Recreation Center and the William Magee Center for Wellness Education, discussing naming opportunities for the facilities.

Breakout sessions featured Maura Langhart, UM director of annual giving, and advisers from the Ole Miss Women's Council for Philanthropy. Their topics included leadership, mentorship and philanthropy.

"Hosting this conference provided an opportunity for the business school development professionals from around the SEC to connect, collaborate and learn from one another," said Angela Brown, senior director of development for the UM business school. "In our line of work, we are often on the go.

"This conference offers a beneficial time each year to disconnect from our daily duties and responsibilities as development professionals, to evaluate our strategies, and recharge and prepare for another fiscal year."

Second-day conference highlights included a panel of business school and Patterson School of Accountancy donors: Rita Howard Garcia, of Austin, Texas; Jackie Bailey, of Byram; and Jay Oliphant, of Memphis, Tennessee. All three alumni provided perspectives on their relationships with development officers.

Throughout the panel, the donors discussed the "exceptionally engaged faculty" at Ole Miss and the importance their roles play in the school's overall success.

A discussion by Byron Liles, UM senior director of gift and estate planning, focused on working with alumni on gifts that benefit both the institution and donors.

"We were so proud to represent Ole Miss and the business and accounting schools," said Noss, the business school's director of development. "I have attended many of these conferences across the SEC, enjoyed visiting the campuses and getting to know many of their business school development officers.

"Being able to host our business school counterparts was an honor, and we are so pleased with the success of the event."

BY BRYNN TRAHAN

## RIRIE ENDOWMENT, FROM P. 44

grateful to Scott and Shelley for their gracious support that will help generations of business administration students realize their dreams."

Scott Ririe graduated from Cornell College in 1979, and his wife, Shelley, is a 1981 graduate of the University of Iowa. Yet now, they proudly support Ole Miss.

"Our family has become attached to Ole Miss through our boys and their love and loyalty to the university," Scott Ririe said. The couple also has two other grown children: Andy, a paramedic studying to become a physician's assistant, and Elise, who graduated from the University of Dayton (Ohio) and is a pharmaceutical sales representative living in Cleveland, Ohio.

Scott Ririe began his career working in sales for Honeywell International Inc. in Des Moines, Iowa. He became service sales manager in 1984 and moved to St. Louis, where he was soon promoted again to district general manager.

In 2000, he and a business partner founded CTS, which has grown to become the CTS Group, operating in nine states with more than 124 employees and revenue of more than \$100 million a year.

Scott Ririe serves on the executive committee as treasurer for the National Association of Energy Services Cos. board of directors and the board of Midwest Easter Seals Association. He also has served on the advisory boards for General Motors and – along with his wife – Ranger Bass Boats.

His high school sweetheart and wife of 36 years, Shelley Ririe began her career with Revlon Inc., marketing cosmetics to retailers, before joining Ormco, an orthodontic supplier. She owns Branson West Marine and Powersports, which coincides nicely with the Riries' favorite activities.

"We love the water," Shelley Ririe said. "We have a home on Table Rock Lake in Branson (Missouri), and we enjoy boating, jet skiing and entertaining there."

To make a gift to the School of Business Administration, visit [umfoundation.com/makeagift](http://umfoundation.com/makeagift) or contact Tim Noss at 662-915-5932 or [tnoss@olemiss.edu](mailto:tnoss@olemiss.edu).

BY BILL DABNEY

“

**WE VIEWED THIS AS A WAY TO GIVE MORE KIDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY WHEN THEY MAY NOT HAVE HAD THE CHANCE DUE TO THEIR FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.” – SCOTT RIRIE**



Founded in 1917, the University of Mississippi School of Business Administration now serves almost 3,900 students and is the largest business school in the state. The Ole Miss MBA program, which includes 150 students, is ranked No. 36 among American public universities by *Bloomberg Businessweek*. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks the Professional MBA program among the top 25 programs in the nation.

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 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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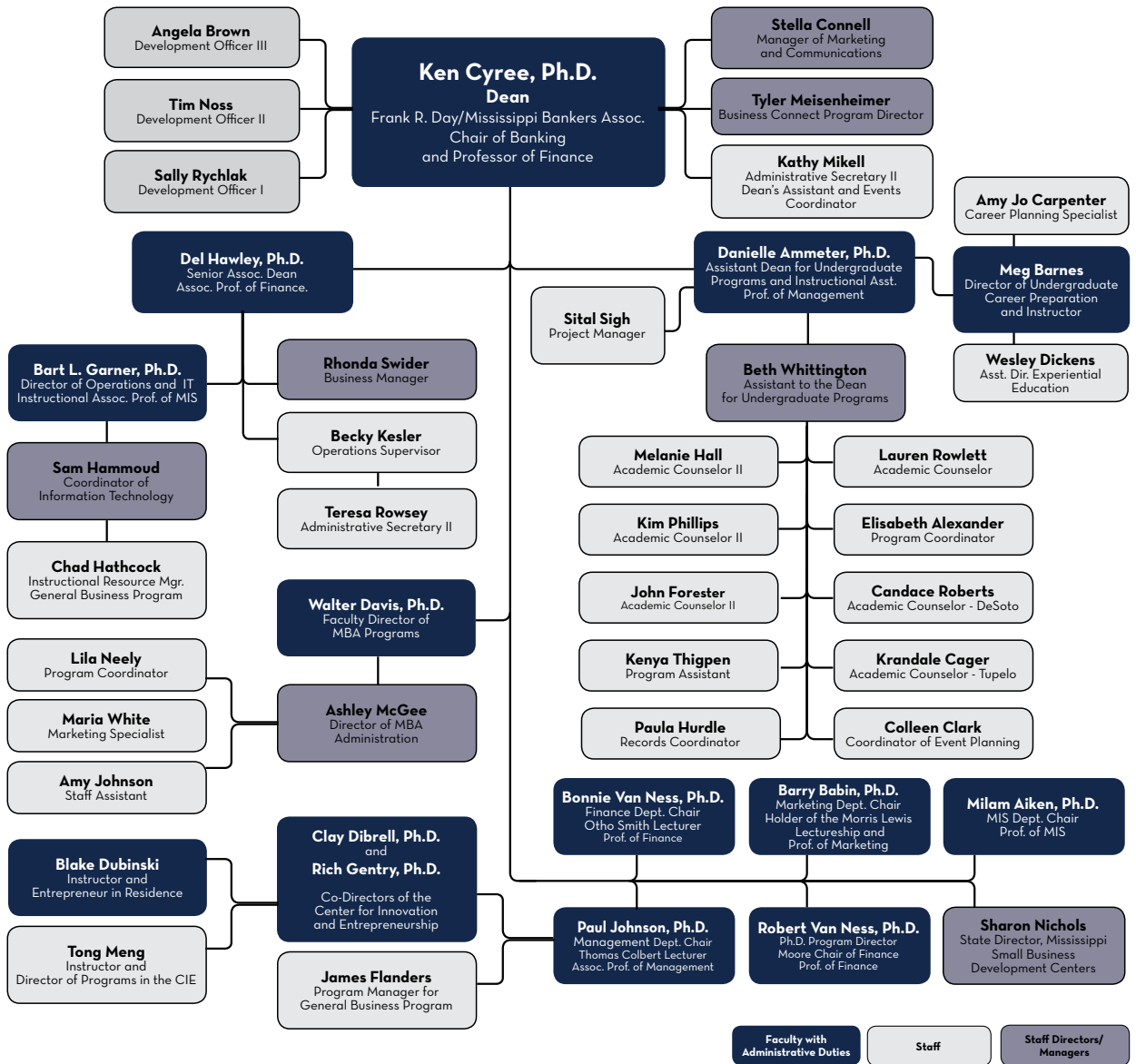
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You may also give online: [umfoundation.com/giving/landing.php?school=business](http://umfoundation.com/giving/landing.php?school=business)

or contact Angela Brown at 662-801-0569 or Tim Noss at 662-915-5932.

# ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE



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 Matthew Crook, Visiting Asst. Prof. of Finance  
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 Lin Ge, Asst. Prof.  
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