

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

HONORS REPORT

FALL 2024



Greetings ALUMNI & FRIENDS

This has been an incredible year of achievement in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College. Our students are thriving as citizen scholars, our faculty members are fully engaged, and we have experienced record-level giving, thanks to many of you.

When I engage with our alumni, one of the most frequently asked questions is: “How will you maintain quality honors education while your student body is growing so rapidly?” Let me share some of the work we are doing to provide our more than 1,700 citizen scholars with a premier academic experience.

Increased Staffing: We have added new positions in the Honors College to enhance our ability to provide personalized advising, capstone mentorship, strategic recruiting and advanced academic programming.

Strategic Partnerships: We are collaborating with several special programs on campus, including the Croft Institute for International Studies, the Lott Leadership Institute and the Ole Miss Women’s Council to ensure that the university’s top faculty, staff and researchers are engaged with our efforts in honors.

Development of National Scholarship Applicants: We are closely aligned with the Office of National Scholarship Advisement, which prepares students to compete for prestigious national awards such as Fulbright, Rhodes, National Science Foundation and Truman.

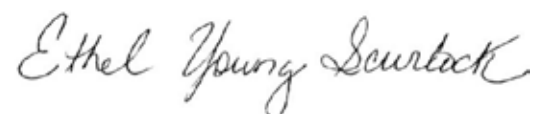
Increased Alumni Relations: We rely on alumni and friends like you, who are willing to give their time, talent and treasure to advance the mission of the SMBHC. This year, we had our most successful Giving Day in the history of the college.

Our students continue to excel and make a positive impact on the campus of the University of Mississippi. For the second year in a row, all members of the UM student Hall of Fame have come through the halls of the Honors College.

Thank you for your engagement with the SMBHC. Every gift matters and significantly enhances the quality of education we can provide to the next generation.

In closing, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the leadership of Janet Pilko who served as chairwoman of our leadership campaign. Janet partnered with director of development Brady Bramlett to help us achieve record-level giving to the SMBHC. Even more, she made an extraordinary personal gift of \$1.5 million to endow the Excellence in STEM Scholarship that she previously established with a \$100,000 gift!

I hope you enjoy reading about the exceptional work in the SMBHC in this year’s *Honors Report*. We look forward to engaging with you soon.



Ethel Young Scurlock



Ethel Young Scurlock (Photo by Tenola Plaxico)

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JOIN US!

Honors Fall Convocation with David Magee
Tuesday, Sept. 17
7:30 p.m., Ford Center



Bruce Levingston performing the national anthem at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium (Photo by Bruce Newman)

A Fantastic Year BRUCE LEVINGSTON

It was a fantastic year for the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College! Our students soared in their many accomplishments, goals and endeavors. The year began with a fun-filled Welcome Week. I was delighted to perform a concert for our incoming Class of 2027. They are bright, inquisitive, gracious and inspiring. During the summer, I had the opportunity to also perform for our gifted Explore the Arts track students in the Ole Miss Summer College for High School Students program. These

students have wonderful opportunities to interact with our outstanding faculty, staff and students. It is no wonder our university attracts so many of these stellar students to its arts and honors programs. Ole Miss maintains a substantial stable of top-tier artist-teachers that inspire, guide and lead our students through a rich, exciting educational experience unparalleled in our state.

This past fall, I taught my annual Art and the Republic

course in which we discuss the influences of the arts upon society. This year's class was overflowing with brilliant, insightful students deeply engaged with ideas and thoughts central to the well-being of our country and world. Each year, we invite notable artists and creative figures from the fields of painting, literature, journalism and film to discuss their work and creative processes. This year, our special guests were Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jane Smiley and the 2023 Eudora Welty prize

winner Ethel Morgan Smith. Our students eagerly read a number of their outstanding books and interacted one-on-one with these masterful writers. Later that week, both authors read excerpts from their works on the Thacker Mountain Radio Hour and appeared in a public discussion of their work at Nutt Auditorium, which I was delighted to moderate.

We also were honored to have Duke University professor Jarvis McInnis come to the Honors College to speak

with our students. Dr. McInnis, a renowned scholar in town to give the Howry Lecture in Faulkner Studies, kindly agreed to join our honors students for an informal discussion about literature, society and politics. Students were mesmerized by his thoughtful insights and warm presence.

In the spring, I was privileged to be joined by renowned painter and UM professor of art Philip Jackson for our Interactions in Art and Music course. Students studied connections in works by such important artists as Vermeer and Vivaldi, Rembrandt and Beethoven, Delacroix and Chopin, Monet and Debussy, and Picasso and Stravinsky. Later in the semester, some of these same talented students presented performances in the Honors Arts Showcase. Under the stellar leadership of SMBHC student Ross Cohen, these immensely gifted young artists, including recent Stamps Impact Prize winner Izzy Arthurs, performed exquisite music, read moving poetry and created powerful visual works of art displayed for an enthusiastic audience in Oxford's Powerhouse Arts Center.

Everyone was also thrilled by an impromptu visit with Jim and Donna Barksdale and Carol Palmer, who hosted over 25 of their good friends from around the Mid-South to see and visit the Honors College during a special women's symposium. Our own dynamic leader and beloved dean, Dr. Ethel Scurlock, spoke eloquently to the group about how we identify and recruit many of the finest students in the state and beyond, and several of our star students discussed the deep impact attending SMBHC has



Above: Bruce Levingston and Izzy Arthurs at the Ford Center (Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay) Below: Bruce Levingston and Donna and Jim Barksdale at the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College (Photo by HG Biggs)



had on their lives and future. Jim Barksdale then generously shared his thoughts about the history of the founding and funding of the Honors College and all it has meant to him and his family supporting this great institution.

I'd like to conclude with a few words about my own musical activities. In September, my

10th solo album, "Without Words" was released featuring 14 lyrical "Songs Without Words" of Felix Mendelssohn and a suite of new "Songs Without Words" by distinguished composer and former Honors College student Cecil Price Walden. I also had the honor of performing the national anthem at

Vaught-Hemingway Stadium for the Ole Miss vs. Arkansas game in October. Set to only be a solo performance, a few bars into the piece, our student section unexpectedly began singing along with my playing. Their voices swept across the stadium until all of Vaught was standing together singing “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Even “Juice” Kiffin was there by the piano to cheer along! When Ole Miss Athletics posted it on social media, the video went viral with nearly half-a-million views. Many in the comments section noted it was a joy to see



Bruce Levingston, Ethel Morgan Smith and Jane Smiley at Nutt Auditorium (Photo by Ethel Scurlock)

and hear our citizens coming together in a moment of peace and patriotism. May our

university and country continue to find that unity and harmony in the year ahead. **HR**

Bruce Levingston
Chancellor’s Honors College Artist in Residence and holder of the Lester Glenn Fant Chair



Left: Grace Lee, Carol Palmer, Bruce Levingston and Teresa Hubbard at the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College (Photo by HG Biggs)



Philip Jackson, Bruce Levingston and their Interactions in Art and Music honors class.



ABOUT THE COVER:
‘Between Water and Fire’
2020
15” x 18”
Acrylic on canvas
by Amber Malone

Meet the ARTIST

Amber Malone, alias Gold of the North, is a self-taught artist from Jackson and based in New York. Before her artistic journey, she dedicated years to human rights advocacy and foreign affairs with think tanks and nonprofit organizations in France, Italy and United States. Her transition to New York inspired her to create a platform for her creative desires and find her unique style with a medium that she often struggled to master, watercolor.

The feminine form, surrealism and her life experiences inspire her brush pen illustrations. Her choice of lines and abstract shapes to depict a sense of movement and depth in her illustrations comes from her desire to capture the beauty in ambiguity and unfettered evolution. Her work inspires the spectator to become lost in clashing colors and shapes flowing in different directions while embracing the warmth and calmness that coexist with the chaos invoked by the vibrant colors.

Her work has been featured at the 2024 Artexpo New York, believed to be the world’s largest fine art trade show, and the Atlantic Gallery in Chelsea. Art enthusiasts will also be able to see (and collect) a few of her pieces at the upcoming Superfine Art Fair in New York City this fall.

Malone enjoys making a playlist for everyday tasks and moods, dressing to match her

illustrations, and the color red. Her dream is to have a solo exhibit in NYC, share thousands of prints of her illustrations and someday transition her style over to commercial prints.



(Photo courtesy Amber Malone)

Honors alumna Amber Malone graduated from the Croft Institute for International Studies and earned her master’s degree in international affairs and economics from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

ARTIST STATEMENT

An exploration of “The Woman” is Malone’s most recent collection of brush pen illustrations. Her illustrations delve into the concept of the omnipresent woman — representing individual ways of seeing, thinking and being. Depicted in lines and abstract shapes to play with movement and depth, each piece aims to present women as active subjects rather than passive objects. The movement invoked by the gradients and curved lines in and around “The Woman” represents an embracing of unfettered evolution that is chaotic and enrapturing due to the vibrant colors. Malone devised this theme after moving to New York in 2021 and choosing to let go of the expat lifestyle — which she enjoyed for years since her graduation from Ole Miss in 2016. Two years after that leap, she decided to start over once again, letting go of a career path in international affairs to which she attached her value and identity. For Malone, this project is a culmination of the multiple personas that she has invoked to find the endurance and willpower to take risks, pursue different paths and allow herself the grace to pivot for her satisfaction.

JOURNEY TO COMMENCEMENT 2024

The SMBHC 2024 graduates began their college careers behind masks, screens and uncertainty. Their ability to persevere and earn undergraduate degrees while also completing and defending their honors capstones is a testament to their determination and work ethic. For these reasons, we have featured three stories from this year’s Journey to Commencement series, “which celebrates the pinnacle of the academic year by highlighting University of Mississippi students and their outstanding academic and personal journeys from college student to college graduate,” along with snapshots of JTC stories about 14 more honors students and two honors alumni. Be inspired by their journeys and what’s in store for their lives.

JOY FOR LIFE AND LEARNING

BY JENNIFER PARSONS

None seems to know when Nya Thompson sleeps. A Stamps scholar, Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program scholar and citizen scholar, the Ridgeland native has certainly maximized her opportunities at the University of Mississippi. When she first visited the Ole Miss campus in early spring 2020, Thompson felt nervous, but the people she met soon persuaded her that she belonged there. “The honors ambassadors were really reassuring, and being on campus was enlightening because I felt supported and comfortable with everyone,” she explained. Just four years later, Thompson has graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English education with minors in history and special education. A strong student in elementary school, Thompson felt a little lost in middle school, but playing French horn in the band was her daily respite. When she won a band award in eighth grade, she realized she could dive into her high school years by prioritizing her academic potential.

Thompson developed a love of learning at Ridgeland High School, and her eyes light up talking about influential teachers, such as her AP language and composition teacher, Christine Davidson. “Nya Thompson is a lifelong learner,” Davidson said. “Nya’s intellectual curiosity and openness to new experiences and differences will serve her well in life, and her joy for life and learning is one of her greatest contributions because it is contagious and she makes everyone around her more eager and open to learn.” Inspired by her high school experience and a handful of teachers, Thompson decided to pursue a degree in education. Her mom was the first college graduate in the family, and Thompson considered attending her mom’s alma mater, Belhaven University. “I was so surprised by my invitation into METP and the (Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College),” Thompson said. “That acceptance really shaped how I felt about coming here, and after having a good understanding of the coursework I

Nya
Thompson



Photo by Thomas Graning



Top row, left to right: Nya Thompson (left) and Azurrea Curry (second) with Susan McClelland and METP peers; Brady Wood and Nya Thompson; middle row, left to right: Nya Thompson in Portugal with a friend; Tina Truong and Nya Thompson at Chancellor’s Scholars Day 2023 by HG Biggs; Nya Thompson working as honors ambassador; bottom row, left to right: Nya Thompson; Nya Thompson with class

would pursue and meeting the people, I knew UM is where I wanted to be.”

David Rock, dean of the UM School of Education, was impressed by Thompson’s drive and personality.

“Nya is an outstanding future teacher and an energetic, enthusiastic and caring educator,” Rock said. “She has been a fantastic representative of METP, and I am proud that Nya is a graduate of the UM School of Education.”

For her first two years on campus, Thompson played mellophone for the Pride of the South

marching band and French horn during concert season. She stopped after that because the METP required her to fulfill classroom observation hours.

She moved on to other activities, including serving as a Mission Acceleration academic guide for Bramlett Elementary School; a peer educator through AmeriCorps for Scientific Research 1, a five-week STEM-based summer camp at Millsaps College; and an AmeriCorps VISTA for Oxford Boys & Girls Club. For the past two years, Thompson has also worked part time

on campus during the week and at a local restaurant on weekends.

“Pulling a double shift on a Saturday and interacting with the patrons is more fun than sitting at home,” she said.

Thompson is also a member of the Lambda Sigma Honor Society, Who’s Who and the Mortar Board Tassels Chapter, which reflect her academic excellence and outstanding leadership.

As a head honors ambassador for the past two years, Thompson and her co-head ambassadors have led the Honors College to its highest number of applications and largest yield of incoming honors students ever. A quiet and thoughtful leader,

Thompson ensures others feel welcomed and valued.

Her Honors College peers attest to her conscientiousness.

“Nya is like my other half,” fellow METP scholar and Stamps scholar Azurrea Curry (SMBHC 24) explained. “I could not imagine my life — or a world — without her in it. Nya is effortlessly hilarious, warm, patient and a light to all around her. She practices reflection both inward and outward.

“Being one of her best friends is nothing short of an honor and a joy, and I remain immensely grateful that Ole Miss, and more importantly the



Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay

“Nya is like my other half who I never knew was missing. We met at Chancellor’s Scholars Weekend, and a few weeks later she messaged me asking to be roommates. I was terrified, but now I could not imagine my life, or a world, without her in it. Nya is effortlessly hilarious, warm, patient and a light to all around her. She has this admirable, and fairly insane, capability to cheer and lift anyone up. Her gentleness and warmth to absolute strangers inspires me daily to treat people with kindness. Nya is honest, and always means what she says. Sometimes I think she may be the only person in this world who doesn’t see how awesome she is. I’ve seen our peers, teachers and friends be attracted to her presence, as her joyful energy is genuinely contagious. Nya is also thoughtful and cares for others wholeheartedly. She practices reflection both inward and outward. Being one of Nya’s best friends has been nothing short of an honor and a joy, and I know she’s going to always be a light, and strong force, in this world (even when she doubts it). I remain immensely grateful that Ole Miss, and more importantly the Honors College, brought me a lifelong friend and sister like Nya.” — Azurrea Curry (SMBHC 24)

“I am so excited to hear Nya is being recognized for her many accomplishments. She has worked with me and my international students as a volunteer conversation partner for more than three years, always lending friendliness, compassion and genuine interest in each individual to her conversation groups. These are traits which go a long way to help international students adjust to their unfamiliar surroundings and improve their academic and social communication skills, which are vital to their success at any university. Her own pursuits of international educational experiences have also been an inspiration to those who have met her along the way. She may not yet be a teacher, but she has already contributed to the education of many in countless ways.” — Tracy Lynn Case Koslowski, lecturer and associate director of recruitment and development

“It has been my incredible joy and honor to be friends with Nya Thompson. She is truly such a light, and she makes every room brighter, kinder and more wonderful. Nya’s humor and wit is both disarming and warm, and she never fails to make me smile. I cannot adequately convey my love for her, but I can tell you that if you have the pleasure of meeting her, you’re in for a sincere joy and delight!” — Marika Hall (SMBHC 24)

“Nya is an outstanding future teacher and an energetic, enthusiastic and caring educator. She is a fantastic representative of the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program. I am proud to have Nya as a graduate of the UM School of Education.” — David Rock, dean, School of Education

Honors College, brought me a lifelong friend and sister like Nya.”

Thompson has a gift for making any space she’s in feel like home and won the “top tour guide” award as an honors ambassador for her welcoming nature with prospective students and their families.

Finding home abroad also comes naturally to her. During the past four years, Thompson has traveled to Ireland, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, along with numerous places in the U.S. These trips were made possible through the METP and Stamps programs.

Thompson and a couple of peers traveled to Sydney, Australia, for a political science course in development, poverty and human rights earlier this year. She also participated in the International Higher Education Conference in Cuba and went to Portugal for a one-month study abroad on contemporary Portuguese history, presenting a research paper there.

She has traveled the world with a primary motivation of observing, learning and appreciating, spending her undergraduate years connecting with others.

“Nya has worked with me and my international students as a volunteer conversation partner for more than three years,” said Tracy Koslowski, lecturer and associate director of the university’s Intensive English Program.

“Nya’s friendliness, compassion and genuine interest in each individual are traits that go a long way in helping international students adjust to their unfamiliar surroundings, and her own pursuits of international educational experiences have been an inspiration to those who have met her. Nya has contributed to the education of many in countless ways.”

Ask Thompson about her success, and she’ll talk about everyone but herself. Repeatedly, she gives praise and credit to her family, mentors, friends and middle school students.

“Sometimes I think she may be the only person in this world who doesn’t see how awesome she is,” Curry said. “I’ve seen our peers, teachers and friends be attracted to her presence. Her joyful energy is genuinely contagious.”

This fall, Thompson is attending the University of Pennsylvania to pursue a master’s degree in education, culture and society. Afterwards, she plans to return home — to central Mississippi — to teach high school students.

Thompson believes her education at Ridgeland High School prepared her well for UM. When considering what UM has meant to her, she talks about the people.

“The professors, staff and friends I’ve met along with the K-12 students I’ve taught make me appreciate my college experience. I am so thankful.”

HR

“I was Nya’s band director for six years and can proudly say that she was one of my favorites. She was so likeable, intelligent, treated all teachers and students with respect, LOVED being a member of the band and always gave 100% in everything she did. She made everyone around her better. One of my favorite memories of her was how she rose to the occasion on a solo in our marching show her senior year. Her little brother is in eighth grade and is also a member of our band, and he shares similar quirky behavior to her — it makes all the band directors smile because we all loved Nya. I have kept up with her on social media since she graduated and am so proud of how hard she has worked in college. She is going to help make the world a better place.” — **Jill Wallace**, Thompson’s former teacher and director of bands at Ridgeland High School

“Nya Thompson was an EXCELLENT student! I believe that I had Nya for World History when she was a sophomore and again her senior year of high school for U.S. Government. She made great grades and was one of the most dependable and trustworthy students that I have ever had. Nya has such a sweet and caring personality, and I remember her as always being so very respectful. I know that Nya will make a WONDERFUL teacher, and I am so fortunate to have known her and to have had her as a student. Thank you for the opportunity to share this about Nya.” — **Lisa Watson**, Thompson’s world history and U.S. government teacher at Ridgeland High School

“Nya is one of the nicest, most compassionate and hardworking students I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. At times unsure of herself, but always determined and perseveres, she is truly an inspiration. With her friendly, positive and kind attitude, I do not doubt that she will do great things in life.” — **Nakia Carrothers**, SMBHC accountant

“Nya Thompson is the kind of student who is always eager to learn. In her AP Language class, she was willing to share her gardening tips while also learning how to make bread from her classmates. Nya is truly a lifelong learner. It is that intellectual curiosity and openness to new experiences and differences that will serve her well in life. Her joy for life and learning is one of her greatest contributions because it is contagious, and she makes everyone around her more eager and open to learn.” — **Christine Davidson**, Thompson’s AP language and composition/English/PSAT teacher at Ridgeland High School

“I remember the first time I met Nya — she spoke powerfully about educational inequalities in Mississippi and her desire to change that for the better. I left our meeting grateful for the opportunity to meet an extraordinary mind. Over four years, Nya has continued to prove time and again that she is a person who is driven to find solutions.” — **Ashleen Williams**, instructional assistant professor, Office of the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs



TRAILBLAZER ON THE MAIN STAGE

BY JENNIFER PARSONS

Born in Kansas and raised in Arkansas, Ben Oliver did not have the University of Mississippi on his college consideration list. The standout student at the Arkansas School of Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts visited Oxford with his family out of curiosity.

After that visit, Ole Miss became a serious contender.

“I soon realized that I could have a full ride, thanks to my ACT score, a band scholarship, the Chancellor’s Leadership class and the Ole Miss Women’s Council scholarship,” Oliver said.

Oliver understood that these scholarships also created pockets of community that would end up enriching his four years at the university. What he could not anticipate was that his family would join him by senior year.

A public policy leadership major with minors in political science and philosophy, Oliver’s résumé is intellectually impressive and demonstrates servant leadership. During his time at Ole Miss, Oliver served as an ambassador for both the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and the Women’s Council, a Columns Society member, section leader of the baritones for the Pride of the

South marching band and in various roles within the Associated Student Body.

Inducted into Who's Who, Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi, Oliver's work ethic is equal to his curiosity about the world. The way he processes information leads to a deep understanding of how to apply the knowledge to invoke meaningful action.

"As educators, we always hope our classes will leave their mark on students," said Kyle Fritz, associate professor of public policy leadership. "But every so often, a student will leave their mark on the class as well. Ben is that sort of student."

"In my leadership class a few years ago, he gave great examples to illustrate key concepts that I still use in my classes today because they do such a nice job of raising the sorts of rich

questions we discuss. In a way, it's as if he's still there in class discussions with us."

During his honors thesis defense examining issues behind the city of Jackson's water crisis, Oliver articulated ways to "adopt different argumentative frameworks for public policy." His motivation to spend more than a year on the study stemmed from concern he had for friends in the Jackson area and thinking of smart, yet practical, ways to address water security issues, he said.

Oliver's inclination to treat friends as family showed up in his band experiences, as well.

"Ben was truly my first college friend," said Brady Wood, who also graduated from the Honors College in May. "From the first day of band freshman year until now, Ben has always been a force of good for this community."

"I can say that it has been a great pleasure to instruct and advise Ben over the last few years. Our conversations surrounding converging interests — from philosophy and justice to music theory and the politics of video games — has been illuminating and enjoyable. Driven and compassionate students like Ben make me proud to be at UM and the PPL department!" — Zachary Vereb, assistant professor of public policy leadership

"I can't say enough great things about Ben. He truly understood the assignment about enjoying his college years, from cultivating lifelong relationships to being present and enjoying each moment as it was happening. In his student leadership role with the band, I watched how he made those around him better by simply being him. He is a caring and considerate person with a fun-loving attitude who wants the best for anyone he comes into contact with. He is an example of what a good student and great person should be." — Mel Morse, instructional assistant professor and assistant director of bands



Top: From left to right: honors ambassadors Morgan Whited, Ben Oliver, HG Biggs, Byron Swetman, Camia White, Racheal Embry, Meredith Whited and Caroline Page Sharp work the Honors College booth at Mississippi Day 2023. (Submitted photo) Bottom: Ben Oliver (back row, center) gathers with the Ole Miss Women's Council's graduating scholars for 2024. (Submitted photo)



"His love and passion for others are expressed in everything he does. ... Everyone deserves a Ben in their lives."

Another friend, bandmate and Honors College senior, Ben Jackson, agrees.

"Ben is the kind of person you can rely on to lift your spirits on a tough day but also be there to bounce ideas off of and walk with you through challenging times," he said.

Oliver plays baritone and euphonium in the Pride of the South marching band, and many of his greatest memories come from those experiences.

"Sophomore year, when we were scheduled to play Tulane, we were doing our Grove show," Oliver recalled. "The clouds started looking angry, and I thought, 'Oh no, we're about to get it.'"

"The sky opened up and poured down on us ... and to this day, I can still see in my mind where we sat and how the rain bounced off our horns



Pride of the South members Ben Oliver (right) and Brady Wood celebrate Ole Miss' victory over LSU on Sept. 30, 2023. (Submitted photo) Top inset: Ben Oliver (center) marches with the Pride of the South band from the Grove to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium before the 2023 Georgia Tech game, which the Rebels won 48-23. (Photo by Chloe Baker) Bottom inset: Ben Oliver (back row, right) celebrates with the basketball pep band and women's basketball coach Yolette McPhee-McCuin after Ole Miss upset Stanford 54-49 in the 2023 NCAA tournament. (Submitted photo)



Above: Ben Oliver (back left) stands with Tim Oliver, his dad and UM director of bands; and (front left) Gwen Oliver, his sister and incoming UM freshman; and Rebecca Oliver, his mom and SMBHC assistant dean of undergraduate academics, for a pre-game show in the Grove. (Submitted photo)

Right: Ben Oliver (back row, center) visits Schoenbrunn, a palace of the Habsburgs in Vienna, with a study abroad group. The group studied in Austria and Switzerland, focusing on nuclear disarmament and the United Nations. (Submitted photo)



and made little metallic sounds. Everything was soaked, the game wasn't even that remarkable, but I'll remember that night for the rest of my life."

Fast forward to the Ole Miss vs. LSU game on Sept. 30, 2023.

The Rebels won 55-49, but LSU was driving down the field with under a minute to play, and Oliver thought, "Oh, man, it's just like the Bama game all over again."

As everyone in the stands leaned in and held their breaths, Oliver looked over at the student section and wished, "Please let them storm the field. Please."

An illegal horse-collar tackle resulted in a 15-yard penalty, which moved LSU to a first down on the 21-yard line. The students were ants.

LSU quarterback Jayden Daniels overthrew his receiver in the end zone as time expired. No touchdown. Ole Miss wins!

"Suddenly everyone is out on the field, and it couldn't have been more perfect," Oliver said. "We never played the fight song so many times in a row as we did that night."

The win, followed by the Peach Bowl win against Penn State, left Oliver with awesome memories.

Those memories were even sweeter because he got to share them with his dad, Tim Oliver, who was hired as the university's band director last year.

When Oliver left his home in Jonesboro to attend his last two years of high school three hours away at ASMSA, he developed into an even more "fiercely independent" person. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced him back to his home, his family grew even closer.

"Being able to spend that much time with them before college ended up being a silver lining," Oliver said. "And, in a similar way, we feel close in that way again."

Soon after his dad accepted the band director position at UM, his mom, Rebecca Oliver, landed a position in the Honors College. Within months, his little sister, Gwen, accepted her offer of admission and will be an honors freshman at UM this fall.

"My last year at Ole Miss has been really special," Oliver said. "I've loved having my parents here. It's felt so natural and easy and good."

For the past few summers, Oliver has stayed busy. From working at a local movie theater to

studying at the Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, he hasn't stopped.

This summer, however, will be a "gap summer," before moving to the D.C. area in the fall.

When Oliver thinks about where he'll be 10 years from now, many potential paths unfold before him.

"I could be on the other side of law school and clerking for a federal justice," he said. "Or maybe I could be a leader in a nonprofit for one of my passions, or maybe being part of the essential personnel that runs the Kennedy Center or the National Endowment for the Arts to keep that element of musicianship and expression in my life."

Oliver described his Ole Miss experience as a combination of different instruments that came together to form an irresistible melody.

"You have all these different aspects of a college experience. Band is your fun escape. The academic instrument is the beating heart that punctuates critical thinking and exploration. Little volunteering opportunities here and there add bits of color. The trick is finding the balance of having all the instruments work and play together. Rehearsals improve the cohesion of instruments, and before long, we're on the main stage."

One thing is certain. Oliver will come back. His family followed him here, and Mississippi is home now. **HR**



Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay

"It has been a joy to get to know Ben over the last few years. He is the definition of a servant leader and a model student for our university. Whether he's leading a campus tour or leading his section of the Pride of the South marching band, Ben does it with kindness, integrity and a smile on his face. I'm so proud of you, Ben!" — Allison Lavender, SMBHC assistant to the dean for student engagement

"Ben is humble, intelligent, articulate and approachable. He's friendly and measured even when he deeply disagrees with other people's positions. His ability to lead without being overbearing and his passion for equity of opportunity speak volumes about his character. Serving as an academic mentor to Ben has helped me better understand how to meet the needs of the exceptional students I'm fortunate enough to work with here at the University of Mississippi. I'm also certain that no amount of praise he's given will go to his head or alter his perception of the work he still has to do personally or professionally. He's distinguished himself in his time at Ole Miss, and I'm excited to see what he does with his bright future. It's been a lot of fun to regularly beat him at Monopoly Deal, but it's been a real privilege getting to know him in the process." — Atkins Trout, scholar adviser for the Ole Miss Women's Council

"As educators, we always hope our classes will leave their mark on students. But every so often a student will leave their mark on the class as well. Ben is that sort of student. In my leadership class a few years ago, he gave great examples to illustrate key concepts in our class discussions and his presentations. I still use some of Ben's examples when I teach that leadership class today, because they do such a nice job of raising the sorts of rich questions we discuss. In a way, it's as if he's still there in class discussions with us. In addition to being an engaged, hardworking student, Ben is just a personable and respectful person. I always enjoyed our chats before or after class about weekend plans or score predictions for the game — even though I just made up numbers every time. He was never deterred!"

— Kyle G. Fritz, associate professor of public policy leadership

"Ben and I became very good friends over the past year or so, and I can safely say that he is one of the truest friends I have ever had. He is the kind of person that you can rely on to lift your spirits on a tough day, but also be there to bounce ideas off of and walk with you through the challenging times. I have learned so much from Ben in just a short time, and I hope to continue to learn even more as our friendship continues well after our graduation."

— Ben Jackson (SMBHC 24)

"Ben was truly my first college friend. No matter what stress was happening, especially in the midst of the pandemic, Ben was always there to talk or to share a laugh. From first day of band freshman year until now, Ben has always been a force of good for this community. His love and passion for others are expressed in everything that he does. Everyone deserves a Ben in their lives!"

— Brady Wood (SMBHC 24)

"Some graduates think that life is all about climbing that career ladder. I've never liked that metaphor because ladders go straight up and that implies there is only one way to do it. I'd rather you think about graduating from college, and all the knowledge and experience you've gained, being like the trunk of a tree. Your task is to grab the first branch available to see where life takes you. No matter what, the tree will keep growing, and you have choices to make in the branches of your life to explore, both personally and professionally. Don't worry if a branch breaks, grab another, and keep going. Your family roots are strong and so are you." — portion of a letter from Ben's mom, Rebecca Oliver, SMBHC assistant dean of undergraduate academics



Photo by Madison Caffey

Madison Cotten graduated with a B.S. in exercise science with an emphasis in recreational therapy from the School of Applied Sciences.



FULL RANGE OF MOTION FOR FIRST-GEN GRAD

BY JENNIFER PARSONS

She knows what a goniometer is, and she knows how to use it. Madison Cotten, a first-generation college student who anticipated attending medical school until she took a class required for a minor in recreational therapy at the University of Mississippi, will get plenty of chances to use one. That class, SRA 262: Introduction to Therapeutic Recreation, taught by Kris Brasher, opened Cotten's eyes to an opportunity to improve people's lives in another manner.

"Professor Brasher's class made me realize how pursuing recreational or occupational therapy would allow me to establish meaningful relationships with my patients," Cotten said. "With OT, I realized I could help people perform their ADLs (activities of daily living) comfortably. I could really know my patients and make a difference." Brasher, an instructor in health, exercise science and recreation management, called Cotten "an exceptionally bright student with enormous potential and a breath of fresh air in

Madison Cotten

the classroom," and said, "She is always smiling, attentive and willing to help others who may need some assistance."

Cotten, a New Albany native, is not interested in brief interactions. She has a record of loyalty, intellectual depth and drive. A member of Phi Kappa Phi honor society with a perfect 4.0 GPA, Cotten graduated in May with an exercise science degree.

This August, she will begin a doctorate in occupational therapy at Arkansas State University. She will be one of 15 in her doctoral cohort, and the possibility of a tight-knit group of aspiring OTs excites her and reminds her of the SMBHC.

Cotten said her favorite part of the honors experience has been the small class sizes and class options.

For example, she loved her conversations course "on death and dying" with honors alumnus Dr. Sumner Abraham. In that class, Cotten and her peers explored their "beliefs about human nature, moral agency and one's vision of the good life."

Things hit a snag in early spring, though, when Cotten scheduled an Honors College exit interview with Timothy Yenter, associate dean for capstone. A former member of the Ole Miss Pride of the South marching band, she originally planned to conduct a capstone study to see how the season affected band members' bodies and range of motion.

When that study did not pan out, she assumed she would not be able to finish in the Honors College.



Photo by Maggi Cotten

Madison Cotten (top, left) spends time with her young siblings Ainsley (right) and Cameron in New Albany.

"I was afraid to go to Dr. Yenter after my first capstone idea didn't happen," Cotten admitted. "I didn't want him looking at me like someone who had failed."

Of course, that did not happen.

"If I had to sum up Dr. Yenter in one word," Cotten said, "I'd choose 'encouraging.'"

That encouragement led to her honors capstone, "Proposals to Address Health Disparities in Occupational Therapy," wherein it should come as no surprise that Cotten recommends "cultural humility" and "understanding" as guiding principles for occupational therapists.

"Madison shows in her daily life and in her long-term commitments a deep concern with making the world more just, fairer and more inclusive," Yenter said. "She models empathy for all and passion for improving the world around her."

As a sophomore at New Albany High School, Cotten began working at a local restaurant as a dishwasher. For a couple of years, she tagged

along with her dad and did what she could for his logging business.

Although she wasn't physically strong enough to engage in "heavy lifting," she understood the hard work and discipline her dad embodied, and she respected her mom for working at a distribution center.

"My mom had me when (she) was 22, and my dad was 21," Cotten said. "I know they chose work over college to support our family, and I knew it was my responsibility to not throw away the opportunities they gave to me."

Cotten was selected as a Luckyday Scholar at Ole Miss, which eased the financial burden

of college. She loves her family and appreciates the knowledge she's gained as a first-generation student.

"I've made it very clear to my younger siblings that I am here, and I can help them," Cotten said.

In fact, Cotten chose to attend Arkansas State University in part because she wants to remain near her family in New Albany. The loyalty extends to her friends and, in particular, Jamie Lewis, her boyfriend of more than five years.

Lewis (BSEE 24) has landed a job as an electrical engineer in Savannah, Georgia. As they embark on a long-distance relationship, Cotten and

Lewis embrace the challenge with their signature maturity and focus.

"To say that Madison is one of the hardest-working and most intelligent people I have ever met would be an understatement," Lewis said. "She will never, ever admit it to anyone, not even to herself. She is a brilliant writer and always has been."

"She has been nothing but impressive throughout college and will forever astound me with what she is capable of."

During her undergraduate career, Cotten held leadership positions in Sigma Phi Lambda and worked as a UM research assistant and an adjunct band staff member at New Albany High School, among other roles. This semester, she was inducted into the Alpha Alpha Alpha national honors society, the university's first honor society for first-generation college students.

Just as Cotten knows a goniometer is an instrument that measures angle motion at a joint, she knows how much range of motion she has conquered on an intellectual scale.

"I hope first-generation students know they are achieving something that is a big deal," she said with a smile. "College is a big deal. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid to reroute. Ask for help. We can do hard things." [HR](#)



Madison Cotten and Alexa Hardie at the Luckyday senior reception. (Submitted photo)

Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay



“
WITH OT, I REALIZED I COULD
HELP PEOPLE PERFORM THEIR ADLS
(ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING)
COMFORTABLY.
**I COULD REALLY
KNOW MY PATIENTS
AND MAKE
A DIFFERENCE.**
”
MADISON COTTEN



Madison Cotten (left) with her family (back row, from left): mom, Maggi Cotten; dad, Jay Cotten; and brother Owen; and (front row, from left): sister Ainsley, brother Cameron and sister Kailyn. (Photo by Susan McLamb Drury)



Ronnie Cunitz

Hometown: Makakilo, Hawaii

Degree: B.S.Ch.E. in chemical engineering

What's next? University of Pennsylvania pursuing a Ph.D. in chemical and biomolecular engineering



Azurrea Curry

Hometown: Gulfport

Degree: B.A.Ed. in English education

What's next? Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City for a master's degree



Racheal Embry

Hometown: Olive Branch

Degree: B.A. in psychology

What's next? One more year at UM completing research on child and parent anxiety and relationships before pursuing a Ph.D. in clinical psychology



Aaliyah Gates

Hometown: Houka

Degree: B.A. in psychology

What's next? University of Alabama's School of Social Work



Latoria Hicks

Hometown: Ridgeland

Degree: B.F.A. in film production

What's next? Continue making art



Violet Jira

Hometown: Cleveland

Degrees: B.A. in philosophy, B.A.J. in journalism

What's next? At time of publication, choosing between a Fulbright young professional journalist program in Germany or a journalism fellowship



Elizabeth Johns

Hometown: Orange, Texas

Degree: B.S. in communication sciences and disorders

What's next? University of Nebraska, pursuing a doctoral degree in audiology



Daneel Konnar

Hometown: Meridian

Degree: B.A. in public policy leadership

What's next: A gap year before attending law school



Lydia Miller

Hometown: Harrisburg, Illinois

Degree: B.S.B.E. in biomedical engineering

What's next? A master's degree in biomedical engineering



Wake Monroe

Hometown: Jackson

Degree: B.A. in international studies and biochemistry

What's next? New York University Grossman School of Medicine



Macey Ross

Hometown: Jonesboro, Arkansas

Degree: B.S.B.E. in biomedical engineering

What's next? University of Michigan, pursuing Doctor of Dental Surgery



Jacquelyn Stewart-Kuhn

Hometown: Mobile, Alabama

Degree: B.A. in international studies and Arabic

What's next? Live in Morocco for Arabic Flagship capstone year and get certified fluency in Arabic



Ally Watrous

Hometown: Lexington, Kentucky

Degree: B.S. in chemistry, B.A. in physics and German

What's next? Pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Utah as a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow



Janie Watts

Hometown: Brandon

Degree: B.S.Ch.E. in chemical engineering

What's next? Begin employment with Chevron in Pascagoula as a process engineer

Honors Alumni



Jacob Fennell (SMBHC 22)
Hometown: Gulfport
Degrees: B.A. in public policy leadership,
M.A. in Southern studies
What’s next? Pursuing Ph.D. in English
at the University of Mississippi



Victoria Green (SMBHC 21)
Hometown: Canton
Degrees: B.S. in pharmaceutical sciences, Pharm.D.
What’s next? Completing a community-based
residency at ARcare in central Arkansas

Read the full Journey to Commencement stories by visiting
honors.olemiss.edu/2024/05/05/2024-journey-to-commencement-series

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS



09
23

Heather McTeer Toney delivered the keynote at the Honors Fall Convocation on Sept. 27, 2023. Oxonian McTeer Toney is the author of *Before the Streetlights Come On: Black America’s Urgent Call for Climate Solutions* (2023), and she challenged the honors students, ‘If it is important to you, you will find a way. If not, you’ll find an excuse.’ After the convocation, McTeer Toney signed her book for students. We also celebrated William Berry, associate dean for research and Montague Professor of Law, who received the 2023 Excellence in Honors Teaching award. (Photos by HG Biggs)

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS



10
23

Twenty-one UM students, including 15 SMBHC students, attended the Society of Women Engineers Conference in Los Angeles, the largest conference in the world for women in engineering and technology. Students connected with industry leaders, attended interactive workshops on leadership and engineering subjects, and had some fun touring SpaceX, Impulse Space and Varda Space Industries. The SMBHC funded \$7,500 of the journey, and Troy the Koi (center) tagged along, too! (Photo courtesy Emmie Stevens)



11
23

On Nov. 3, Jess Waltman (SMBHC 13) and Courtney Gayle Taylor (SMBHC 14) visited with SMBHC students interested in law school. Waltman earned a degree in accountancy and graduated from the UM law school. He focuses on commercial litigation with Gordon Arata in New Orleans. He also serves on the Honors Leadership Council. Taylor graduated from the Croft Institute for International Studies and earned her law degrees from the University of Ottawa and American University Washington College of Law. She is an international trade attorney with Amazon in D.C. Our students appreciated the opportunity to learn about the various paths in and after law school. (Photo by Jennifer Parsons)

CAC SPOTLIGHT

Jackson McARTHUR



Each fall and spring semester, honors students volunteer at least 10 hours. The SMBHC refers to this volunteering requirement as the community action challenge, or CAC, as we challenge our students to become agents of change and make a difference in communities near and far. Honors students may complete their CAC hours in Oxford, in their hometowns or in other countries. They may work with an individual in need of assistance, a service-learning or community-based experiential course, or through any venue that matches their capabilities with someone else's needs.

This past spring, Betsy Chapman, Oxford Community Market director, emailed several UM staff and faculty about Jackson McArthur (SMBHC 24), who graduated with a degree in international studies and minored in Russian and will begin his studies at the UM School of Law this fall. The Ocean Springs native dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours to the Oxford Community Market, and we share Chapman's letter as a testament to the ways in which some of our honors students far exceed the CAC minimum.

Dear Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College,

As the director of Oxford Community Market (OxCM), I am writing to inform you of University of Mississippi student Jackson McArthur's extraordinary contribution to our organization during his four years as a student. I have worked with hundreds of UM students and community volunteers over the past decade in my role with OxCM, and Jackson's service far exceeds any effort I have ever seen from either a student or a community volunteer.

Since the start of his freshman year in 2020, Jackson has made an extraordinary contribution to our organization during his time as an undergraduate student at the University of Mississippi. Jackson reached out to our organization in 2020 with an interest in working to reduce food insecurity in the LOU community. He then led an effort to reduce food waste on campus by reaching out to sorority/fraternity houses on campus to package and distribute their food to in-need communities.

Through his extensive work with the Oxford Community Market and outstanding capacity as a student leader, Jackson helped establish the OxCM Flower of Life Volunteer Squad, a community-student collaboration founded in September 2020. This group was originally founded in response to the COVID-19 crisis, to meet basic needs, address food insecurity, build community connections, and provide educational/enrichment activities in underserved communities.

Since establishing OxCM Flower of Life in 2020, Jackson has led grassroots community work days every Friday afternoon during the academic year and has made the following impacts:

- Establishing a Food Rescue program to collect food from Greek organizations and systems to deliver meals, fresh produce and household supplies to neighbors in income-based housing neighborhoods
- Establishing and maintaining a neighborhood garden for income-based housing residents
- Establishing ongoing gardening education programs for children in income-based housing neighborhoods
- Establishing the OxCM Student Leadership Board to expand opportunities for UM students to engage in grassroots community work
- Establishing the OxCM Community Connections Committee to engage residents of income-based housing in grassroots community work

Jackson's hard work and dedication have had tremendous impacts this year alone and have facilitated the following:

- Over 15,000 meals served in three income-based housing neighborhoods
- Over 250 student volunteers engaged
- Over 3,000 hours of collective community-engaged service hours from UM students facilitated by his leadership

Jackson has displayed an uncommon level of initiative, reliability, passion for equitable distribution of resources, and commitment to doing the hard work of building sustainable systems and grassroots coalitions to meet community needs. It is thanks to his innovation and drive that our organization's grassroots community work to reduce food insecurity is made possible. Thanks to this program's development and expansion, many local people located in income-based housing receive food every Friday that school is in session. Jackson cares deeply about all people, as evidenced by his efforts, and truly goes the extra mile constantly to ensure everyone's success. His positive attitude and dependability inspire his peers and mentors.

On behalf of OxCM and our local food community, I ask that you please share Jackson's incredible contribution to our organization and the LOU community in any way you see fit.

Jackson's steadfast work has touched so many lives and fed so many families in need.

Sincerely,
Betsy Chapman
Oxford Community Market Director

OFFICE OF NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP ADVISEMENT

Year in Review

VIVIAN IBRAHIM (Photos courtesy of students pictured except where noted)

University of Mississippi students reached new heights this year in applying for and achieving globally and nationally competitive awards. **We are now nationally recognized as a top-producing institution.** Our students come from diverse backgrounds and study diverse disciplines. They have a range of interests, but their commitment is steadfast.

Our aim at the Office of National Scholarship Advisement, or ONSA, is to promote a culture that emphasizes hard work and process. We work closely with students as they reflect on their goals and gain clarity about how to achieve them. Together, we craft applications, write and rewrite drafts, work on interview preparation and everything in between. The process is long but hopefully fulfilling, regardless of the outcome. As we say every year in ONSA, “This is not something you can wing overnight.” On average, an application takes nine drafts and many months of work. This year, we ended up with 114 submitted applications, 68 semifinalists and 31 awardees.

ONSA held 71 outreach events including specific workshops and sessions for the various awards. We ran a Fulbright online boot camp throughout May, June and July to prepare students for applications. We held “pizza and polish nights” for the Fulbright, Marshall, Goldwater and Truman awards, where we worked late into the night on final drafts.

In the fall and spring, we held two “I clicked submit” parties to celebrate the students who committed to the process. In May, we held an end-of-year reception honoring all submissions, semifinalists and awardees. All semifinalists and those who completed award application requirements received cords, while all awardees received stoles to wear with their graduation robes.

Join ONSA in celebrating our students highlighted below.

Hopefully they will act as an inspiration for the next cohort of UM students!

BOREN

This year, ONSA endorsed and helped 11 students apply for the Boren awards. The Boren scholarships provide up to \$25,000 to U.S. undergraduate students to study abroad in areas of the world that are critical to U.S. interests.

Ten students won Boren scholarships, placing **UM as the third-highest Boren-producing institution in the nation!**

Six of the recipients are majoring in international studies. **Landon Bradley**, of Laurel, and **Maggie Thomas**, of Atlanta, will participate in the Southeast Asia Foreign Language Initiative program. Bradley will learn Thai in Thailand, and Thomas is UM’s first recipient for Indonesia.

In another first, **Binta Fadiga**, of Cleveland, will participate in the African Flagship Languages Initiative, learning Wolof in Dakar, Senegal.



BRADLEY



THOMAS



FADIGA



HOLMES



NEWTON



REHM



WOODWARD



KOCISKO



BROWN-TALIB



GATTEY

Lee Holmes, of Tullahoma, Tennessee; **Ben Newton**, of La Grange, Texas; and **Sydney Rehm**, of Collierville, Tennessee, will all study Arabic in Morocco as part of their Arabic capstone year and Croft requirement.

Syd Woodward, of Paducah, Kentucky, an international studies and Chinese major, and **Jonah Kocisko**, of Fort Myers, Florida, an engineering and Chinese Flagship major, will study at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California.

Jena Brown-Talib, of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, will study Hindi in India and aspires to become a health development officer for the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Jonah Gattey, of Tracy, California, a forensic chemistry major and our only sophomore recipient, will be studying Swahili in Tanzania.

Boren recipients spend two days in Washington, D.C., at the Boren convocation. (From left, back) Jena Brown-Talib, Benjamin Newton, Landon Bradley, Binta Fadiga, Sydney Rehm and Jonah Kocisko (From left, front) Jonah Gattey, Maggie Thomas and Sydney Woodward (Photo by Maggie Thomas)



CDC FELLOWSHIP

The Summer Public Health Scholars Program, organized by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, is designed to increase undergraduate students' interest in and knowledge of public health and biomedical science careers. This year, two UM students are undertaking public health coursework at Columbia University.



BUCKLEY



HARRISON

Anna Buckley, of Jackson, and **Rod'Kendrick Harrison**, of Batesville, will gain hands-on field experience and immersion in a diverse, economically disadvantaged urban environment. They will attend seminars and lectures with public health leaders, get mentored by faculty members, and gain exposure to the breadth and importance of public health as a career option.



SCHOEN

CONGRESS-BUNDESTAG YOUTH EXCHANGE

Kumali Schoen, of The Woodlands, Texas, has been named alternate for the CBYX. This one-year program is an intercultural partnership between the U.S. Congress and its German counterpart, the Bundestag. Schoen is a double major in international studies and German.

To learn more about national scholarships, visit onsa.olemiss.edu.

Interested in applying?
Email ONSA@olemiss.edu.

Back left: Whitney Woods,
assistant director, ONSA

Back right: Colin Mathison,
graduate assistant

Front: Vivian Ibrahim,
director, Office of National
Scholarship Advisement



DELTA SCHOLARS

The Delta Scholars program is a two-part academic and community engagement program for talented and socially conscious college students interested in moving Mississippi and the multistate Delta region toward a brighter, more just tomorrow. We had four awardees this year:

Bre'Anna Coleman, of Drew, has been selected as a Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health scholar. She is the incoming Black Student Union president and was a UM Truman Scholarship nominee. **McKenzie Cox**, is a Stamps scholar and integrated marketing communications major from

Concord, North Carolina. **Mackenzie Knighten**, of Sunflower, is a public policy leadership and African American studies major interested in the inequality in the public school system. **Yasmine Ware**, of Madison, is a Stamps scholar majoring in international studies and Chinese.



COLEMAN



COX



KNIGHTEN



WARE

ERASMUS MUNDOS

This year, we had our first Erasmus Mundus awardee: **Jonathan Dotson**. This is an international master's, jointly designed and delivered by a group of higher education institutions. Dotson, from Mobile, Alabama, will complete a degree in precision medicine. He will study computer-based medicine for chronic diseases at the European Scientific Institute and then move on to a year in Italy.



DOTSON

FULBRIGHT

We've had an exceptional Fulbright year. This year, we had 27 applications, 19 semifinalists, seven awardees and six alternates!

Since 1950, UM has had 66 Fulbright awardees. Exactly one-third of all these awardees have been named since 2020. ONSA is committed to making UM a top-producing institution, and we are well on our way.

The Fulbright is the lengthiest of our national scholarship process. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program provides students with the opportunity to teach (English teaching assistant, or ETA), study or conduct research in over 130 countries worldwide.

Over the summer break, we ran a series of one-month Fulbright boot camps online that guided students through the process of writing a compelling and competitive application. After multiple drafts, we had 27 fantastic Fulbright completions. The students underwent the rigorous process of internal interviews and submitted their entire applications in October. Next was the long wait! In early January, we found out we had 19 semifinalists. This is the highest number we've had at UM.



BRADLEY



FABIEN



FADIGA



JIRA

We ended the season with a whopping seven Fulbright awardees and a further six alternates.

Our awardees are:

Landon Bradley, of Laurel (also awarded the Boren), is an international studies and Spanish major. He was awarded the ETA to Colombia.

Samantha Fabien, of Omaha, Nebraska, graduated from UM in 2023 as a business major and minored in entrepreneurship and Chinese. She was awarded an ETA to South Korea.

Binta Fadiga, of Cleveland, (also awarded a Boren), is an international studies major with a minor in Korean and intelligence studies. She was awarded an ETA to South Korea.

Violet Jira, of Cleveland, is a Stamps scholar and a journalism and philosophy major with a minor in English. She was awarded a research Fulbright for young professional journalism for her project titled “Challenges Faced by Germany’s ‘Invisible’ Black Population,” based at the University of Leipzig.

Paola Leon, of Corinth, is an international studies major with a minor in Korean. She was awarded the ETA to South Korea.

Regeana Peeler, of Oxford, is a psychology major with a minor in American Sign Language interpretation. She is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces and served in Afghanistan. Peeler was awarded the Fulbright ETA to Uganda.

Matthew Travers, of Chesterfield, Missouri, graduated from UM in 2021 with a double degree in international studies and Chinese and a minor in Swahili. Having been awarded the Yenching scholarship in 2021 and the Boren in 2019, he has now been awarded the Fulbright ETA to Taiwan.

Congrats to our alternates:

Eesha Gudiseva, of Memphis, Tennessee, Fulbright ETA, North Macedonia

Londyn Lorenz, of Perryville, Missouri, Fulbright Study, University College Dublin

Evan Morrissey, of Jackson, Fulbright ETA, Mexico

Hattie Sergent, of Milton, West Virginia, Fulbright Study, Ghent University Award

Maggie Thomas, of Lilburn, Georgia, Fulbright Study, Ghent University Award

Ally Watrous, of Lexington, Kentucky, Fulbright Study, University of Helsinki Graduate Award



LEON



PEELER



TRAVERS

GOLDWATER

The Goldwater is one of the oldest and most prestigious national scholarships in STEM. It supports exceptional sophomores and juniors who show promise in becoming the next generation of research leaders in these fields. This year, 438 scholarships were awarded from a pool of 1,353 undergraduates nominated by 446 institutions. Following an internal UM application process, four UM students went through to the national stage. This year, two UM students were awarded the Goldwater.

George Taylor, from Southaven, is a junior biomedical engineering major. He has worked in assistant professor of chemistry and biochemistry Eden Tanner’s lab, looking at the specific interactions between various blood components and ionic liquid-coated nanoparticles.

Lyle Tobin, from Montgomery, Texas, is a triple major in biology, classics and biochemistry. Tobin is UM’s first-ever M.D./Ph.D. Goldwater recipient. He has worked in a range of labs and ultimately wants to develop novel therapies against cancer and other diseases.



TAYLOR



TOBIN

MARSHALL

In a first for the University of Mississippi in over 20 years, **Jilkiah Bryant** was named UM’s third-ever Marshall scholar. Bryant, from Macon, graduated in 2023 with a degree in public health and health sciences. She was the 2022 Truman scholar for the state of Mississippi. The Marshall funds two years of graduate study leading to a degree in any field at a U.K. institution. The award covers university fees, tuition, books, a thesis grant, research and daily travel, plus fares to and from the U.S. Bryant will spend her first year at University of Sheffield, obtaining a Master of Public Health in international development.



BRYANT

NSF GRFP

The National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program supports STEM students who are pursuing research-based master’s and doctoral degrees at accredited U.S. institutions. The five-year fellowship includes three years of financial support including an annual stipend of \$37,000 and a cost of education allowance of \$12,000 to the institution.

Ally Watrous, from Lexington, Kentucky, was awarded the only NSF GRFP for UM. Watrous was a Goldwater recipient in 2022. She is our star applicant for awards this year. She was a finalist in Boston for the Gates-Cambridge award, which covers full costs to the University of Cambridge. In addition, she was our first finalist for the Hertz Fellowship, which is awarded annually to the nation’s most promising graduate students in science and technology.

Noah Garrett, from Madison, was awarded Honorable Mention and is a 2023 Goldwater recipient.



WATROUS



GARRETT



PICKERING

The Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Graduate Fellowship Program provides 45 graduate fellowships of up to \$42,000 annually for a two-year period for tuition, room, board, books and mandatory fees for completion of two-year master's degrees. The aim is that Pickering fellows fast-track into the U.S. Department of State while also interning at an embassy in the summer between their graduate degree. **Claire Sullivan**, from Tampa, Florida, is an international studies alumna and former Boren awardee. She will begin her degree at Georgetown in the fall.

TRUMAN

This year, **Christian Boudreaux** was awarded the Harry S. Truman Scholarship for the state of Mississippi. Boudreaux, from Oxford, was a Goldwater scholar recipient in 2023 as well as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, Hollings scholar. As a dedicated marine biologist, he is interested in making scientific research accessible to the public to inform data-driven policy at the highest level. Boudreaux is an active member of the UM community, founding AquaCulture, a student organization that works to maintain and preserve aquatic environments through projects such as invasive species removal and water quality monitoring. As a freshman, he served as president of Hill Country Roots, a student organization that focuses on preserving Mississippi's forests and native trees.

Truman scholars receive up to \$30,000 for graduate or professional school, participate in leadership development activities, and have special opportunities for internships and employment with the federal government.



U.K. SUMMER FULBRIGHT

Braylin Hill, a freshman from Smithville, is an alternate for the Fulbright U.K. Summer Institute for Glasgow. Hill is a Grove scholar and in the Center for Manufacturing Excellence program.

A special shoutout to our semifinalists and finalists. We are so proud of you!

Logan Baggett, semifinalist, Fulbright ETA, Portugal

Jena Brown-Talib, semifinalist, Fulbright ETA, Rwanda

Jilkih Bryant, semifinalist, Fulbright Study Award, University of Sheffield Award

Cami Dougherty, semifinalist, Fulbright ETA, Czech Republic

Lauren Mein, semifinalist, Fulbright Study Award, University of Lancaster

Nya Thomson, semifinalist, Fulbright Study Award, Frederick and Anna Douglass Award – Ireland

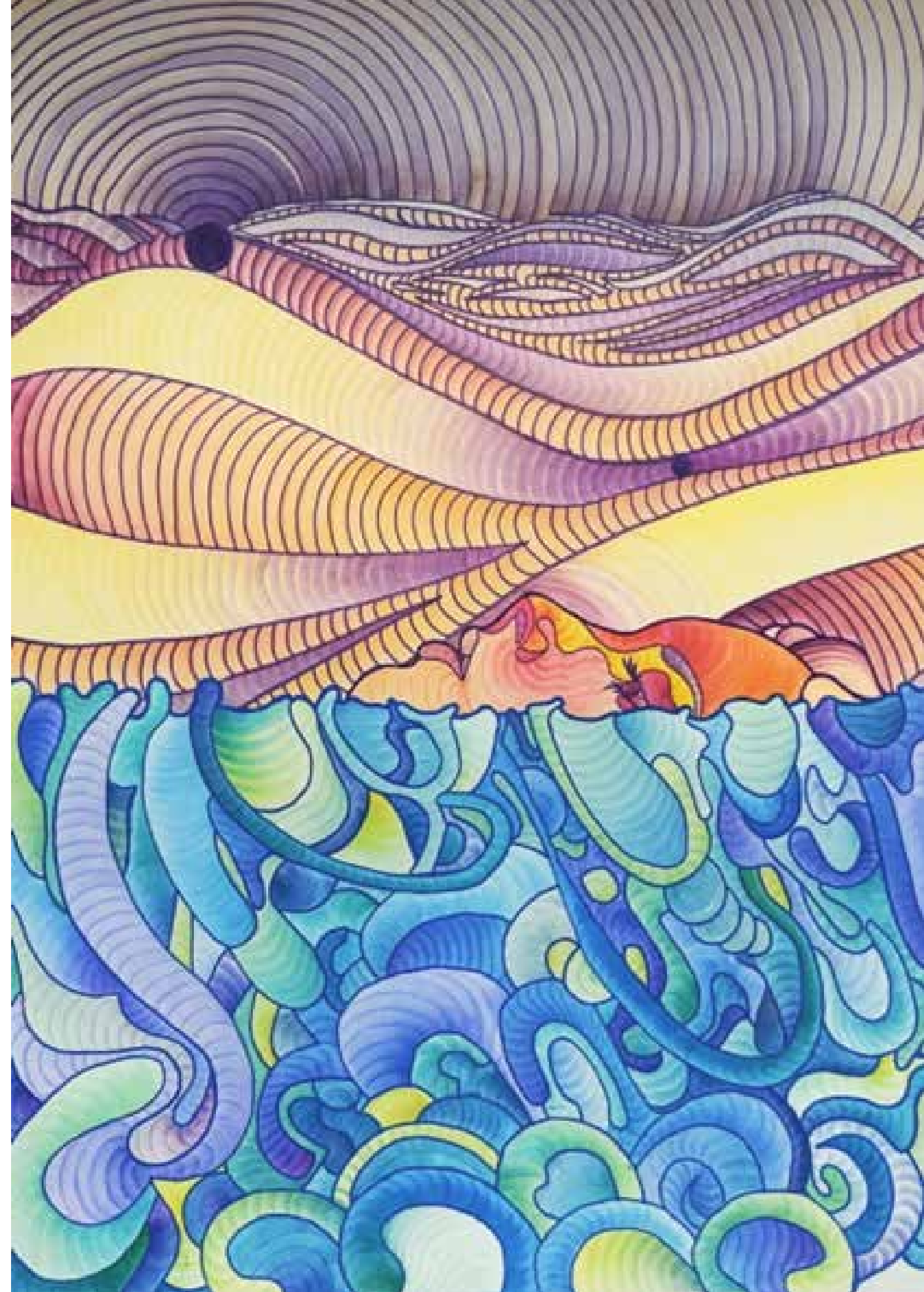
Jilkih Bryant, finalist, Rhodes Scholarship

Madeleine Dotson, finalist, Rhodes Scholarship

Brandon Kriplean, finalist, Rhodes Scholarship

Ella Lawson, finalist, Mitchell Scholarship

Ayanna Norman, finalist, Voyager Scholarship



'Dea Ex Duplicitas'
2024; 18" x 24"; brush pen illustration on paper
by Amber Malone

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS

Professor of philosophy Neil Manson taught PHIL 326: Biomedical Ethics as a Study USA wintersession course, and his class traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with policy specialists, advocates and stakeholders. They ‘developed an understanding of current topics in health care ethics, including beginning-of-life and end-of-life medical decisions, the allocation of health care resources and the patient/doctor relationship.’



01
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Professor Manson (back, left) and his class dined with bioethicist Jonathan Moreno (middle, right) of the University of Pennsylvania. (Photo courtesy Neil Manson)

The class spent one morning at the offices of U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.). (Photo courtesy Neil Manson)



Professor Manson and his students applied for a chance to tour the White House and were accepted! (Photo courtesy Neil Manson)



2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS



Honors scholarship holders gathered for a group photo after sharing a meal with Dean Scurlock and members of the SMBHC team on Feb. 20. (Photo by Jennifer Parsons)

02
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Lindee Wilson (left), Addie Bell and HG Biggs presented at the annual Mississippi Honors Conference, hosted this year by Mississippi State University in Starkville. Wilson showcased her poster ‘Modeling Collagen Beam Deformation in the Posterior Eye in Response to Increased Intraocular Pressure.’ Bell shared her poster ‘Organic Vapor Jet Printing of Griseofulvin on Hydroxypropyl Methylcellulose for Increased Solubility in Vitro’ and won third place in the STEM poster category. Biggs discussed ‘Nawashif’ in the Creative Works category and won first place. (Photo by Jennifer Parsons)

03
24

Adam Soltani (SMBHC 25) presented at the third annual Undergraduate Research Symposium. (Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay)



2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS



03
24

On March 6, the SMBHC held its third annual Undergraduate Research Symposium followed by the Honors Spring Convocation, featuring keynote speaker and novelist Jeff VanderMeer (right). Thirty-one students presented, and over 300 attendees walked through the symposium. Hundreds more attended the convocation at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts. Dean Scurlock (at podium) introduced Caroline Wigginton, chair and associate professor of English. Wigginton is on the HON 101/102 teaching team and recommended VanderMeer's novel *Annihilation* for a core text in HON 102. (Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay)



03
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The sixth annual Spring Honors Showcase took place at the Powerhouse and featured artwork by SMBHC students, faculty and staff and Oxford High School students along with performances by Bruce Levingston, the Rebel Clefs, Isabella Brewer and Izzy Arthurs, as well as spoken poetry by Bre'Anna Coleman and Benjamin Tabor. Ross Cohen (SMBHC 25) began planning eight months in advance, and the participation, attendance and venue were the largest to date. Other significant individuals who made the event possible were Angel Morgan, Bruce Levingston, Chris Eckert, Minahil Iqbal, Penny Leeton, Brady Bramlett, Tiffany Hershfelt, and the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council. (Photos by Jennifer Parsons)

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS





Congratulations

SMBHC CLASS OF 2024

BY JOHN SAMONDS AND JENNIFER PARSONS

Celebrating the SMBHC Class of 2024, the Honors Commissioning Ceremony took place May 9 at The Sandy and John Black Pavilion at Ole Miss. These graduates were unable to celebrate their high school accomplishments in person due to COVID-19, so this ceremony proved particularly tender and special for them and their loved ones.

Abigail Metcalf served as class marshal. The Jackson native graduated from the Croft Institute for International Studies and Arabic Flagship program with a perfect GPA. She is now abroad in Morocco, where she is deepening her linguistic and cultural proficiency.

HG Biggs won the Dean's Prize for earning the most honors hours in her class. Biggs took 71 honors hours while earning her bachelor's degree in Mandarin Chinese as a member of the Chinese Language Flagship program and taking minors in chemistry and intelligence and security studies. She has an extensive photojournalism portfolio that includes her work with the Associated Press, Ole Miss Athletics, The Chautauquan Daily and the SMBHC. After completing a visual journalism internship with the Kansas City Star, Biggs will pursue her master's degree in visual communications at Ohio University.

The SMBHC Class of 2024 nominated Kresha Patel, Nya Thompson and Daneel Konnar to speak at the Honors Commissioning Ceremony.

"We have a sense of camaraderie that transcends all barriers, which cannot always be said for our greater campus community," Patel said during her welcome. "This camaraderie is precisely what makes the Honors College such a special place."

Patel is from Ridgeland and majored in international studies with a concentration in global



HG Biggs wins the Dean's Prize for earning 71 honors hours, more than any other member of the Class of 2024. (Photo by Thomas Graning)

economics and business, and minored in Spanish and general business on the pre-law track. She served the SMBHC in various roles throughout her undergraduate tenure, including as an honors ambassador, a student worker and director of the Honors Senate. She is now pursuing her law degree at Vanderbilt University.

Thompson is featured on page 8 (Journey to Commencement story) and delivered this year's main address. Chancellor Glenn Boyce introduced Thompson at the podium and emphasized that

The student party platform, back row, from left: Azurrea Curry, Daneel Konnar, Racheal Embry, Nya Thompson; first row, from left: Ally Watrous, Kresha Patel and Abigail Metcalf. Curry represented the Honors College Minority Engagement Council. Embry sat on stage on behalf of the First-Generation Student Network. Watrous, along with Thompson and Embry, represented the Honors College Ambassadors. (Photo by Jennifer Parsons)



Above: Elementary education major Lauren Biando receives her SMBHC medallion from Chancellor Glenn Boyce.



Right: Dean Ethel Scurlock recognizes John Samonds, associate dean, for more than 25 years of service to the SMBHC. (Photos by Thomas Graning)

after she completes her master's degree in education, culture and society from the University of Pennsylvania, she will return to teach high school students in Mississippi.

"The amount of mindful advocacy, purposeful involvement and genuine selflessness instilled in the scholars who sit among us today showcase the fruits of their four years of labor," Thompson said during her address. "My peers not only push me, but we push each other on the days when it

still feels slightly surreal to know so many intelligent people who are so much more than intellect alone."

Konnar closed out the ceremony with a charge to the SMBHC Class of 2024. Near the end of his remarks, he encouraged, "Let us help those who can't help themselves, speak for those who have no voices, fight for those who have no power. Let us leave this world better than we found it. Let us love and embrace different backgrounds and

LET US HELP THOSE WHO CAN'T HELP THEMSELVES, SPEAK FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO VOICES, FIGHT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO POWER. LET US LEAVE THIS WORLD BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT. LET US LOVE AND EMBRACE DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND IDEOLOGIES,

AND FOSTER RESPECT AND DIGNITY FOR THE PEOPLE AROUND US.

DANEEL KONNAR

ideologies, and foster respect and dignity for the people around us."

Konnar held many leadership positions on UM's campus and earned his degree in public policy leadership. He will spend a gap year working before beginning law school in 2025. Read about his undergraduate tenure in the Journey to Commencement series on page 23.

While celebrating the SMBHC Class of 2024, Dean Scurlock shared with everyone, "Graduating from our Honors College is a challenge in every season; however, this class has had to overcome especially tough obstacles on their journey. Their freshman year began remotely due to COVID-19.

The ones that sit before us today did not just survive — they thrived. They are graduating at the top of their class. Friends and families, please stand to your feet and help me give these students the standing ovation they deserve."

Of the 446 freshmen who joined the SMBHC in fall 2020, 246 of them graduated in May, four graduated last year, and 11 will graduate from the SMBHC in 2025. We also celebrated the good work of our 53 Honors Scholars program 2024 graduates, who joined us after freshman year. This year's honors graduates have proved themselves time and time again, and we look forward to seeing their good works throughout the world. **HR**



Amya Franklin, classics and African American studies double major, hugs Molly Pasco-Pranger, her honors capstone adviser and UM chair and professor of classics. (Photo by Thomas Graning)

FOR THE LOVE

BY TIMOTHY YENTER AND JENNIFER PARSONS

Every student who graduates from the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College completes a capstone. A capstone is a research, creative, pre-professional or community-transforming project that is carried out over multiple semesters. During the capstone experience, students work independently or in a group to research, create, design or work in their community.

For most students, the capstone is the experience that most directly prepares them for life after college. Whether they start their career, go to graduate school or medical school, or anything else, working on the capstone gives students the experience, knowledge, skills and confidence that prepares them for whatever comes next.

Most students do a capstone in their major so that they are prepared for the work to be done during the capstone and so that the work on their capstone can help meet the requirements of their major. The honors capstone usually requires more of a student than a capstone, senior seminar or senior design project required by a major. If a student has more than one major, they only have to do one capstone.

Almost 20% of our SMBHC Class of 2024 focused on some area of Mississippi for their honors capstones. From conducting comparative analyses of water crises between Mississippi and Michigan to offering solutions to mental health care issues in the Mississippi Delta, these students went from simply residing in Mississippi to benefiting Mississippi.

Anne Cafer, associate dean for research, scholarship and graduate education and associate professor of sociology, advised at least seven honors students for their capstones this year. She often works with students who are passionate about tackling issues in Mississippi. When reflecting on her interactions with her capstone advisees this year, Cafer wrote the following:

“I find most of the students I work with are interested in solving or speaking to real-world problems that impact their families and communities. This year was no exception. Each of these projects allowed the student to engage with real-world data, problem solve in partnership with community organizations and understand their work in a larger socio-economic and political context.

“Most of the work this year was health related. Some students responded to recent policy changes within the state with practical, well-researched solutions to the care gaps these policies left; another helped evaluate unexpected outcomes in a food prescription program, while still another student worked to help a state agency identify implementation changes needed to maximize federal supports for our most vulnerable populations.

“Students got to explore these challenges, mostly related to health from their own perspectives, while incorporating a range of disciplinary tools (social science, natural science, and policy). For most of these students, they’re headed into the medical field — the work they did through these honors theses will support their development as companionate care providers, help them to

OF Mississippi

understand the systems and structures their patients navigate (and how that impacts their health and well-being outcomes) and see their field from a different perspective. My hope is that it is also teaching them to be open-minded about working across disciplinary boundaries and thinking creatively about the problems they help their patients navigate!”

Melissa Bass, associate professor and undergraduate coordinator in the Department of Public Policy Leadership, also advises several capstones each year, and she worked with at least five honors students this past semester who focused on Mississippi:

“Should Mississippi eliminate its income tax? Why do Mississippians have such high levels of medical debt, and what should we do about it? How well do nonprofit and public assistance programs address rising housing insecurity in Oxford? Why might students in two Mississippi school districts, just miles apart, score so differently on state tests?

“These are just a few of the questions my thesis students grappled with this year, employing a wide range of research methods. They learned a lot, taught me more and contributed to meaningful policy work. They are citizen scholars, every one of them.”

The following list includes SMBHC Class of 2024 graduates who completed an honors capstone by exploring or researching some facet of Mississippi. The parentheses denote their majors, followed by their capstone adviser and their capstone title.

UNIQUE STORIES

Allison Paige Barnett (English),
advised by professor Tom Franklin
“Hollywood, Mississippi”

Bryce Montgomery Barrett (physics,
French), advised by professor Joel Mobley
“The Soundscape of the Grove: The Acoustic
Environment of a Visual Landmark”

Bailey Boyett Beaird (allied
health sciences), advised by
professor Cade Smith
“Are We Ready: Envisioning an Inclusive
Higher Education Program for Individuals
with Intellectual and Developmental
Disabilities at the University of Mississippi”

Matthew William Bee (biochemistry),
advised by professor James Cizdziel
“Occurrence and Characteristics of Tire
Wear Particles and Microplastics in Urban
Stormwater Runoff in Oxford, Mississippi, USA”

Professor Anne Cafer hugs Jaycee
Pilcher at the Honors Commissioning
Ceremony. (Photo by Thomas Graning)



Emillie Grace Burgess (public
policy leadership), advised by
professor Joseph Holland
“The Impact of Small Mississippi Farms Upon
the Future of Sustainable Agriculture”

Jonathan Vance Clayton (film production),
advised by professor Michael Tuxhorn
“A Tale from the Porch: Producing a
Motion Picture in Mississippi”

Laney Catharine Cornelius (political
science, Spanish), advised by
professor Anne Cafer
“Distribution Barriers in Combating
Mississippi Food Insecurity”

Sarah Caroline Crall (journalism),
advised by professor Andrew Harper
“Into the Wild: A Journey Paddling the Lower
Mississippi with Quapaw Canoe Company”

Collin Earl Wayne Crawson (biological
science, biochemistry), advised
by professor Anne Cafer
“Evaluation of Seizure Recognition and First Aid
Training Course and Improving Self-Efficacy
Related to Medical Emergencies in Mississippi”

Ryan Matthew Cummings (accountancy,
public policy leadership), advised
by professor Melissa Bass
“Analyzing the Feasibility and Implications
of Repealing the Individual Income
Tax in Mississippi: A Comparative
Case Study of Mississippi, Alaska,
Tennessee and Washington”

Savannah Gray Davis (political science),
advised by professor Marvin King
“Compliance, Equity and Title IX; Women’s
Athletics at the University of Mississippi”

Nicholas Tyler Dean (pharmaceutical
sciences), advised by
professor Erin Holmes
“Knowledge and Perceptions of
Pharmacogenomics Among
Mississippi Pharmacists”

Grace Elizabeth Doody (law
studies), advised by professor
Stephanie Showalter-Otts
“The Water Crises in Flint, Michigan, and
Jackson, Mississippi: A Comparative Analysis
of the Public Water System Failures”

Aaliyah Lajayce Gates (psychology),
advised by professor Kirk Johnson
“Pathways to Mental Health Care for African
American Women in the Mississippi Delta”

Elizabeth Grace Hanaway
(biological science), advised by
professor Timothy Yenter
“Development of a Training Protocol for the
Animal Care Staff and Animal Researchers
at the University of Mississippi”

Anna Katherine Herrington (biological
science), advised by professor Anne Cafer
“Evaluation of Seizure Recognition and First Aid
Training Course and Improving Self-Efficacy
Related to Medical Emergencies in Mississippi”

Ashlyn Paige Hinton (public policy
leadership, integrated marketing
communications), advised by
professor Melissa Bass
“We Get to Live Here?: Housing Insecurity and
Assistance Availability in Oxford, Mississippi”

Alice Ann Hollingsworth (English),
advised by professor Debora Wenger
“A Journalistic View of Mississippi’s
Escalating Climate Challenge”

James Logan Hudson (film production),
advised by professor Sarah Hennigan
“The Nature of Camp Lake Stephens”

Carrol Trent Imbler (management),
advised by professor Jennifer Ethridge
“Bursting at the Seams: An Examination
of Enrollment Changes at the
University of Mississippi”

Benjamin Jackson (civil engineering),
advised by professor Hunain Alkhateb
“Loading Analysis and Preliminary
Structural Design of a Convenience
Store in Olive Branch, Mississippi”

Emily Frances Jenkins (science education),
advised by professor Matthew Reysen
“Morality in Mississippi Science Education: The
Impact of Instruction on Moral Conviction
and Learning about Genetic Engineering”

Violet Kwekwe Jira (philosophy,
journalism), advised by
professor Timothy Yenter
“Local Perspectives, National Context: A
Study of News Media in Mississippi and Its
Alignment with National News Trends”

Professor Melissa Bass places a stole on
Daneel Konnar at the Honors Commissioning
Ceremony. (Photo by Thomas Graning)



Daneel Konnar (public policy leadership),
advised by professor Melissa Bass
“Two Districts, Five Miles Apart: A Comparative
Analysis of the Lauderdale County and
Meridian Public School Districts”

Alexandra Sara Ladner (biological science),
advised by professor Debora Wenger
“The Impact and Implementation
of the Revolutionary Mississippi
Medical Cannabis Program”

Amelia Jane Ladner (biological science),
advised by professor Anne Cafer
“Understanding COVID-19 Vaccine
Hesitancy Among University of
Mississippi College Students”

Elyse Littleton (journalism), advised
by professor William Berry
“Students Deserve a Guardian: An Examination
of Mississippi Senate Bill 2079”

Robert Taylor Love IV (biological science),
advised by professor Jason Hoeksema
“Responses of Waterfowl to Water Management
on Agricultural Fields in the Mississippi Delta”

Grace Elizabeth Massengill (integrated
marketing communications), advised
by professor Jack McClurg
“An Overview of the Product Development
Process for a Lounging Grove
Chair: The Rebel Lounge”

UNIQUE STORIES

Mia Maureen McKey (psychology),
advised by professor Marcos Mendoza
“Coastal Resilience: Environmental
Hazards, Development and Insurance
in Southern Mississippi”

Hanna Elizabeth Mitchell
(pharmaceutical sciences), advised
by professor Meagan Rosenthal
“Assessing the Efficacy of the Title X Clinic
Program in Relation to Mississippi Women’s
Reproductive Health Care, a Scoping Review”

Kala McKinsi Nance (journalism),
advised by professor Debora Wenger
“Climate Change in Mississippi: A Journalistic
Exploration of Education and Activism”

Benjamin Thomas Oliver (public
policy leadership), advised by
professor Zachary Vereb
“Moral Arguments for Water Justice
and the Jackson Water Crisis”

Jaycee Sue Pilcher (biological science),
advised by professor Anne Cafer
“Policy Brief: Decreasing Unintended
Pregnancy Rates in Mississippi”

Kiersten Brooke Rickard
(pharmaceutical sciences), advised
by professor Erin Holmes
“An Examination of Products That
University of Mississippi Students
Consume for Managing Their Stress”

Axel Soto Lopez (public policy
leadership, biochemistry), advised
by professor Melissa Bass
“Examining Health Care Access and
Outcomes Among Mississippi Immigrants
and Low-Income Residents”

Nya Janet’ Thompson (English education),
advised by professor Joshua Eyler
“Exploring the Advancement Via Individual
Determination (AVID) Program’s Efficacy
in Intrinsically Motivating Students in a
Northern Mississippi Middle School”

Andrea Lee Udziela (biochemistry),
advised by professor Jennifer Venable
“Reproductive Justice in Mississippi: A
Call for Reform and Acknowledge”

Caroline Addie Villemarette (public
policy leadership), advised by
professor Melissa Bass
“Student Sugar Consumption at the
University of Mississippi”

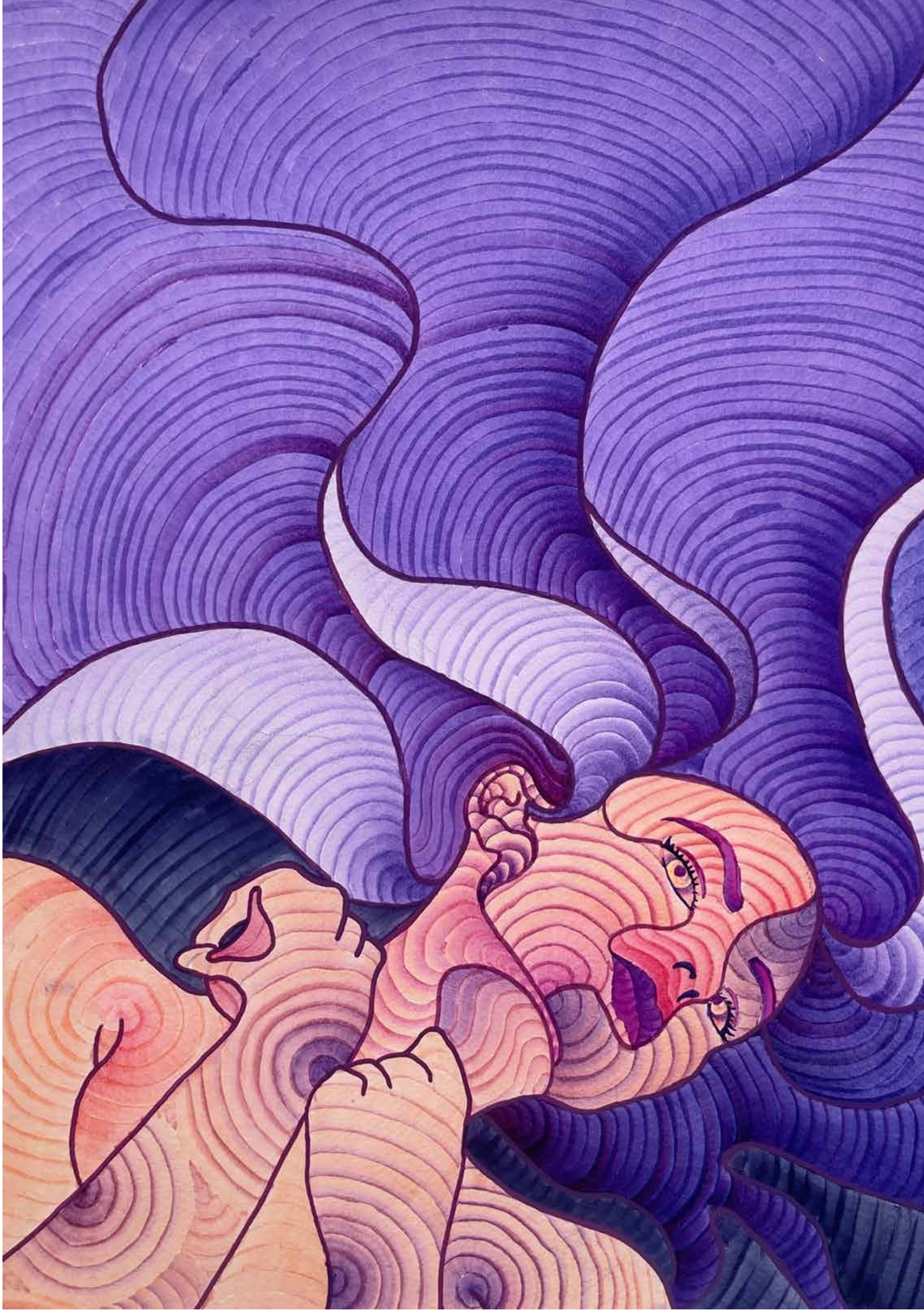
Audrey Lynn Wilson (biological
science, law studies), advised
by professor Colin Jackson
“Exploring the Denitrification Potential in
Mississippi River-Connected Lakes for
Mitigating the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia”

Daniel Robert Zuckerman (biological
science), advised by professor Anne Cafer
“Evaluation of Seizure Recognition and First Aid
Training Course and Improving Self-Efficacy
Related to Medical Emergencies in Mississippi”

EACH OF THESE PROJECTS ALLOWED THE STUDENT TO
ENGAGE WITH REAL-WORLD DATA, PROBLEM SOLVE IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND

**UNDERSTAND THEIR WORK IN A
LARGER SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL CONTEXT.**

ANNE CAFER



‘Dea Ex Desideria’
2024; 18” x 21”; brush pen illustration on paper
by Amber Malone

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS

On Earth Day, students in the HON 399 course 'Forever Chemicals' & Mississippi Drinking Water: Law and Policy Responses to Protect Human Health, taught by professors Kristie Willett and Stephanie Showalter-Otts, shared their findings at the Earth Day PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) Poster Session in the SMBHC Great Room. Participating honors students were Kamdyn Holt, Sophie Smith, Sykes Connell, Jana Abdrabbo (pictured), Kaley LeCroy, Anna Buckley, Eron Hendrix, Jamiya Mason and Brooklyn Hall. (Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay)



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The SMBHC participated in the annual Mississippi Day at the University of Mississippi, where academic departments and student programming units populated tables in the Circle, and attendees stopped by and learned about UM. From left: Ally Watrous (SMBHC 24), Dymond Mitchell (SMBHC 26), Byron Swetman (SMBHC 25) and Penny Leeton, assistant to the dean for administrative support. (Photo by Jennifer Parsons)



From the SMBHC halls to the UM Hall of Fame! Congratulations to the UM 2023-24 student Hall of Fame members (back row, left): Zynub Al-Sherri, Clark Etzel, Caleb Bohannon, Emmie Burgess, Madeleine Ryan and Daneel Konnar; (front row, left): Azurrea Curry, Bailey Beard, Caitlyn Horton and Genevieve Wilson. (Photo by Thomas Graning)

2023-24 HIGHLIGHTS



Senior Dinner

On April 24, honors staff and the SMBHC Class of 2024 enjoyed a delicious meal at The Inn at Ole Miss. (Photos by Bill Dabney)



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Year in Review

Honors College Minority Engagement Council

BY AZURREA CURRY

The last year was particularly special for the Honors College Minority Engagement Council. Over the past few years, the group has continued to flourish post-COVID. Our number of members and active participation continue to increase.

In May 2023, at our first meeting of the 2023-24 HoCoMEC executive board, we set a few goals. Joy Faith Jennings, HoCoMEC vice president, and I began by discussing how we wanted to ensure that HoCoMEC was a space where we not only empowered one another, but where we felt brave in our identities, expressed our opinions about our common and shared experiences, and most importantly to us, that it was a space that felt fun and full of life. We wanted HoCoMEC to be a group of scholars and friends, as this was the culture of our freshman year when Joy Faith and I first met. The rest of our amazing executive board agreed, and we spent the rest of that meeting breaking the ice and getting our ideas for the year on paper.

Another goal the executive board emphasized was the want to collaborate with organizations and engage HoCoMEC outside of the Honors College. Each member of the executive board stepped

out of just their own roles, and their dedication allowed for an exceptional year that I believe not only met but exceeded our original goals.

We kicked off the fall semester by participating in Honors College Welcome Week with an event led by three members of exec, Jana Abdrabbo, Emily Suh and me. Here, incoming freshmen painted koi fish while hearing a presentation about the organization's mission. Following the presentation, we passed around a fish bowl full of "get to know you" questions and talked, while listening to a special playlist made just for HoCoMEC on Spotify. We sang, talked and painted the week away. Emily, our social media & marketing chair, made sure to hype up our Instagram! Our roster increased by 40 awesome freshmen.

October was a huge month for us! We started off the month with our beloved, annual "Dinner with the Dean" event. We ate a fantastic lasagna dinner and had the opportunity to sit in camaraderie with our lovely dean, Dr. Ethel Young Scurlock and our rock-star adviser, Dr. Jennifer Parsons. The vibes were set with our HoCoMEC playlist of course, dinner was served, and we spent the evening both laughing and sharing any concerns



Above: HoCoMEC members enjoying dinner before the Honors Fall Convocation. (Photo by HG Biggs)

Left: Jalon Hightower (left), Aaliyah Gates and Yasmine Ware at a HoCoMEC dinner before the Honors Spring Convocation. (Photo by Azurrea Curry)

and experiences we have had as minority students in the Honors College. It was certainly a special night of bonding.

Later in the month, we held two collaborative events. The first was a game night of Lotería with the Latin American Student Organization. LASO joined us in the Honors College for a night full of this traditional Mexican board game while we ate food from a locally owned restaurant, Taco Shop — which is arguably one of HoCoMEC's favorite meals. For our last event of the month, we decided to make our annual Pumpkins, Pizza and Painting event a collaborative one throughout the Honors College. We joined forces with HoCo Ambassadors, First-Gen and Honors College Senate to organize a night of pumpkin painting.

In December, our phenomenal community service chair, Jana Aburshaid, planned one of our favorite service projects with the Salvation Army. General body members signed up to ring the red kettle bell in the Oxford community, raising hundreds of dollars.



Jackelyn Facio (SMBHC 26) talks with her peers over dinner. Members of HoCoMEC dined with Heather McTeer Toney, keynote speaker, environmental activist and author, before the Honors Fall Convocation. (Photo by HG Biggs)

We wrapped up the fall semester with a collaboration with Grove Grocery planned by our external outreach chair, Jana Abdrabbo. Grove Grocery provided us with snacks to make goodie bags to put out for finals week. The Saturday before finals week, Jana, Joy Faith and I gathered to organize snacks and write notes to put into the goodie bags. Notes included silly and kind remarks, like "Good luck, good lookin'" and "HoCoMEC and Grove Grocery believe in you." The goodie bags were a hit!

The spring semester kicked off with one of our recurring events, the group dinner before Convocation. Just as we did in the fall semester, HoCoMEC gathered before Convocation and enjoyed a meal from South Depot. Following dinner, we hopped in cars and found seats at Convocation together. We would like to extend a special thank you to Ms. Penny Leeton for always organizing the best dinners for us; we couldn't do it without her!

In March, we collaborated with the Center for Community Engagement for a voting rights-themed trivia night in the Honors College. For about a month, Jana Abdrabbo, Emily Suh and Minahil Iqbal engaged in meetings with the center to effectively plan this event. In April, HoCoMEC collaborated with Oxford High School for the Festival of Nations. HoCoMEC volunteers helped set up for the event. HoCoMEC members Jana Aburshaid and Zynub Al-Sherri tabled for the Palestinian Arts and Culture Club at the university.

We wrapped up spring semester with a collaborative event with the UM Clinic for Outreach and Personal Enrichment, or COPE, thanks to the ideas of one of our events and programming chairs, Jasmine Sanders. COPE came to the koi pond and talked with HoCoMEC about de-stress techniques and stress management in preparation for finals week. Following COPE's presentation, we painted rocks as a de-stress activity and placed a few of them around the Honors College for other students to find a little happy.

Our mission statement for HoCoMEC states that we aim to "foster an environment that promotes

interconnectivity, cultivates greatness in academia, and generates a respectful community that opens dialogue for minority students within the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College." In honor of this, I would like to acknowledge that this year has been one that pushed many of our members to balance academic pursuits with the weight of political unrest, personal challenges and humanitarian crises across our world. This is no easy feat, but the determination of our members in the face of adversity remains inspiring.

HoCoMEC reminds us that we are not alone, that our experiences, cultures and voices matter and make a difference. The presence of our advocates and members, such as Zynub Al-Sherri, Jana Aburshaid, Ami Ba and Jalon Hightower (just to name a few), continue to enrich our academic community. I am thankful for members such as these, who remain unmovable forces for change and good. They are representatives of our mission as HoCoMEC members, citizen scholars and human beings.

HoCoMEC has been a large part of home for me over the past four years at this university.



HoCoMEC members dined together before walking over to the Honors Spring Convocation. Back, from left: Khusi Patel, Ariane Sanchez, Tiffany Nhek and Jack Facio. Front, from left: Numa Maryam and Jana Abdrabbo. (Photo by Azurrea Curry)



Follow the Honors College Minority Engagement Council
@UMHOCO_MEC



Above: HoCoMEC members paint pumpkins together. (Photo by Jana Abdrabbo)

Left: HoCoMEC executive members Joy Faith Jennings (left), Azurrea Curry and Shiven Patel at the SMBHC senior celebratory dinner. Emily Suh (not pictured) also served on the executive board and graduated this year. (Photo by Abby Kate Boyer)



HoCoMEC hosted an Honors Welcome Week section wherein current members hosted potential new members, and all painted koi. (Photo by Azurrea Curry)

From having Zoom conversations with inspiring HoCoMEC leaders like Carson Schmitz (SMBHC 21) and Nakiyah Jordan (SMBHC 21), to the joy I have found engaging with members at our events, I will always hold HoCoMEC close to my heart.

To wrap up, I would like to extend a special thank you and a big hug to our executive board, Joy Faith Jennings, Shiven Patel, Gurkirt Sandhu, Emily Suh, Jana Abdrabbo, Aabha Mantri, Minahil Iqbal, Jasmine Sanders and Jana Aburshaid. Each of these members shines in their own ways, and it has been a joy working with them. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Jennifer Parsons for being a humble, kind and willing adviser over the last year; we couldn't ask for anyone better.

Jana Abdrabbo, incoming president and former external outreach chair, looks forward to the 2024-25 academic year, stating: "Stepping into the role of HoCoMEC president, I am profoundly grateful for the strong foundation laid by previous presidents, executive members, faculty and students. Watching Azurrea and Joy Faith lead this organization with so much grace has been an inspiration to myself and so many others. My sincere hope for the upcoming school year is to embody even a fraction of their commitment and leadership, continuing their remarkable legacies and building upon their achievements.

"Looking ahead, I am eager to see HoCoMEC expand its outreach on campus. This past year, we had the pleasure of fostering connections with organizations such as LASO, COPE, Grove Grocery, the Center for Community Engagement, Honors Senate and HoCo Ambassadors. We have also established valuable partnerships with the local Oxford School District, providing bilingual tutors and volunteering at Oxford High School's annual Festival of Nations.

"My goal for this upcoming school year is to strengthen these collaborations while also

2024-25 HoCoMEC Executive Board

President: **Jana Abdrabbo**
Vice President: **Gurkirt Sandhu**
Secretary: **Minahil Iqbal**
Treasurer: **Jackie Lin**
Internal Outreach: **Haneef Adebisi**
External Outreach: **Ami Ba**
Community Service: **Lindsey Cole & Jamiya Mason**
Events & Programming: **Jalon Hightower & Diya Patel**
Social Media: **Numa Maryam**
Faculty Adviser: **Jennifer Parsons**

Past Presidents

Azurrea Curry (2023-24)
Edrei Peña and **Deshauna Lee Vaughn** (2022-23)
Kelly Li (2021-22)
Ajah Singleton (2020-21)
Nakiyah Jordan (2019-20)
Swetha Manivannan (2018-19)

reaching out to other campus organizations like Period@UM, BSU, NAACP, ASB, various religious groups and more. Additionally, I envision HoCoMEC attending a convention this year to elevate our profile on a national scale and expand our network with other minority councils across the country.

"I also see HoCoMEC growing even further, potentially reaching 1,000 followers on our Instagram and becoming a recognized name not only on campus but throughout the Oxford-Lafayette community. Above all, as an organization committed to service, I am dedicated to ensuring we uphold our Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College citizen-scholar reputation through our esteemed minority engagement council." **HR**

HONORS FELLOWSHIP *Recipients*

BY JOHN SAMONDS

The Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College continues to support its citizen scholars who study abroad or participate in unpaid internships and other experiences. This support is made possible by the generosity not only of major supporters such as Jim Barksdale, Lynda Mead Shea and McCarty Architects, but also from donations to the Honors College from many of you. From fall 2023 to summer 2024, the Honors College provided over \$32,000 to the 31 students listed below:

John Henry Amburgy , international studies and Chinese, study abroad through the International Chinese Language Program, or ICLP, in Taiwan, summer 2024
Addie Bell , biomedical engineering, Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship, or SURF, Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, summer 2024
Amber Cecil , engineering, University of Mississippi Medical Center, January Shadowing Program 2024
Margaret Close , mechanical engineering, study abroad through the Council on International Educational Exchange, or CIEE, in Barcelona, Spain, summer 2024
Jordan Cochran , mechanical engineering, support for Center for Manufacturing Excellence, or CME, trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Ross Cohen , accountancy and public policy leadership, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Caitlyn Culpepper , Spanish and biochemistry, study abroad through International Studies Abroad, or ISA, in Seville, Spain, summer 2024
Hannah Dear , international studies and Spanish, study abroad at Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador, fall 2023
Ava Fichtel , civil engineering, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Maria Haywood , international studies and Chinese, study abroad at National Taiwan University, spring 2024
Mason Hayworth , international studies and Chinese, study abroad through ICLP in Taiwan, summer 2024
Edward Hunter , political science, internship with Rep. Trent Kelly's Washington, D.C., office, summer 2024
Anna Kang , exercise science and biology, UMMC January Shadowing Program 2024
Olivia Mardis , accountancy, American Institute for Foreign Study, or AIFS, Abroad internship, Milan, Italy, summer 2024
Jacob McMahan , accountancy, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024

Abigail Moeller , biomedical engineering, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Caroline Grace Parish , international studies, study abroad at National Taiwan University, spring 2024
David Phillips , biological science, study abroad in Florence, Italy, through Study Abroad Italy, or SAI, summer 2024
Kharley Redmon , international studies and Arabic, journalism, study abroad through China Educational Tours, or CET, Jordan, fall 2023
Madeleine Ryan , international studies and Chinese, study abroad at National Taiwan University, fall 2023
Emily Stahlman , general business, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Emma Stokic , psychology, study abroad through the Institute for the International Education of Students, or IES, in Rome, summer 2024
Julia Stradinger , accountancy, study abroad in Florence, Italy, through SAI, summer 2024
Lane Taylor , physics, internship at MissionTech at Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico, summer 2024
Grayson Thomas , mechanical engineering, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Piper Thomas , mechanical engineering, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Jack Walker , public policy leadership, study abroad in Florence, Italy, through SAI, summer 2024
Jensen Ware , public policy leadership, internship in Sen. Marsha Blackburn's D.C. office, summer 2024
Thomas Wasson , chemical engineering, study abroad at CIEE Amsterdam, wintersession 2024
Tabitha Webster , accountancy, support for CME trip to Japan, May intersession 2024
Hassell Wilkinson , integrated marketing communications, study abroad through CIEE in Barcelona, Spain, summer 2024

The Honors College also awarded over \$11,000 to 17 students who presented papers or posters at conferences around the country.

William Logan Baggett , international studies and Spanish, Southern Anthropological Society, Newport News, Virginia, "Global Drag Culture and Cultural Capital"
Kailey Bell , chemistry, American Chemical Society Conference, New Orleans, "Formation of Magnesium Oxides from Water and Magnesium Hydrides in the Interstellar Medium"

<p>Mary Hazel Bellan, biochemistry, 2023 South Central Regional Chapter Meeting, New Orleans, “Evaluating Changes in Cardiac and Pulmonary Collagen Levels Following Gunshot Residue Exposure in RAGE Knockout and Wild-Type Mice”</p>
<p>Brianna Cupp, exercise science, Southeastern American College of Sports Medicine, Greenville, South Carolina, “Effect of Ultrasound Probe Pressure and Tilt on Artery Size Measurements”</p>
<p>Aashish Dhakal, computer science, HarvardHacks, Cambridge, Massachusetts</p>
<p>Racheal Embry, psychology, Mississippi Psychological Association Convention, Tupelo, “Crying All the Time? The Relationship Between Executive Function and Effortful Control in Toddlers” and Cognitive Development Society Conference, Pasadena, California, “Examining Commonalities Between Executive Function and Effortful Control in Toddlerhood”</p>
<p>Aaliyah Gates, psychology, Delta Scholars Boston Week, Boston, “Barriers to Mental Health Services Among African American Mississippians”</p>
<p>Rebekah Heintz, chemistry, American Chemical Society Conference, New Orleans, “Permeation of Choline-based Ionic Liquid Nanoparticles through Porcine Nasal Mucosa”</p>
<p>Minahil Iqbal, computer science, Harvard College Project for Asian and International Relations, Boston</p>
<p>Elizabeth Johns, communication sciences and disorders, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Convention, Boston, “MOCA Normative Data on Young Adults Using an Adapted Version and Remote Administration via Zoom”</p>
<p>Mia McKey, psychology, 2024 Planet Forward Summit, Washington, D.C.</p>
<p>Simran Patel, biology, Mississippi Academy of Sciences, Hattiesburg, “Novel Tests for Motor and Spatial Deficits in Zebra Finches Verify a Role for Aromatase and Estradiol in Improving Spatial but Not Motor Outcomes Post-Cerebella Lesion”</p>
<p>Ishan Pathak, computer science, HarvardHacks, Cambridge, Massachusetts</p>
<p>Gwendolyn Pfrenger, art history, Classical Association of the Middle West and South, Greensboro, North Carolina, “The Kylix Conundrum: A Study on an Early Red-Figure Symposium Kylix from the David M. Robinson Collection”</p>
<p>Colin Richardson, international studies, I-CAN Hiroshima Academy, Hiroshima, Japan, “Nuclear Nonproliferation”</p>
<p>Riley Roberts, biology and biochemistry, American Chemical Society Conference, New Orleans, “The Search for Natural Product Inhibitors for Indoleamine-2,3-Dioxygenase”</p>
<p>Heath Stevens, biomedical engineering, Biophysical Society Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, “Effects of a Cardiac Myosin Activator on Actin-Myosin Ensemble Coordination”</p>



‘Dea Ex Proditio’
 2023; 14” x 17”; brush pen illustration on paper
 by Amber Malone

First-Generation Network

Year in Review

BY RACHEAL EMBRY

The First-Generation Student Network, better known as “First-Gen Network,” encompasses students, faculty and staff dedicated to supporting, celebrating and cultivating a community for first-generation college students on the University of Mississippi campus (i.e., those individuals whose parent(s) or guardian(s) did not complete a four-year degree).

Beginning with only a few students and the desire to foster a community where first-generation students could

feel fully welcomed, fully supported and fully themselves, our founder Ainsley Ash began the First-Generation Student Network during fall 2020. Since then, our membership has exploded and our ability to support the first-gen population has matured through the creation of programming and events designed to supplement the lack of information about college processes and honor the resiliency of first-gen students.

Within the past year, our community has flourished into a network of over 180 first-generation students

across campus from a variety of backgrounds, interests and majors.

The fall semester was busy as we hosted a number of meetings to ensure our members received information about programs and engaged with opportunities on campus. We began with our “How to College” series, which welcomed our first-gen freshmen and presented information on how to be successful during their first year on campus. We partnered with a variety of organizations such as the Honors College Senate, Honors College Minority Engagement Council,



Jennifer Sanford (middle) looks on during the First-Generation Student Network’s Evening of Excellence. (Photo by Srijita Chattopadhyay)



Left to right: First-gen president (2023-24) Racheal Embry speaks to graduating students. Edward Hunter, First-Gen Student Network president for the 2024-25 academic year. Aaliyah Gates speaks to a room of graduating first-generation students. (Photos by Srijita Chattopadhyay)

Honors College Ambassadors and Alpha Lambda Delta throughout the semester as we participated in a game-day tent, HoCos Pocus and a finals week pizza party.

We had the privilege of hearing from speakers including Elijah Bratsch-Prince and Hema Patel who spoke about study abroad opportunities and Anne Cafer, associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts,

who spoke about on-campus research options.

In November we held our fourth annual First-Gen Celebration Week, and this year was especially exciting as it served as the unveiling of Flagship First Gen to recognize the first-generation college student population at UM. Victoria Green, Ainsley Ash, Paul Gebeline and Ajah Singleton returned to campus to share their

experiences both as college students and now alumni of the university on a first-gen panel. We continued the celebration through a Party at the Plaza where first-generation students, faculty and supporters gathered to network, share their experiences, and enjoy games and pizza. Our week wrapped up with a Q&A session with the Graduate School to facilitate conversation

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 ”

RACHEAL EMBRY

surrounding graduate school opportunities for first-gen students and ways to prepare for the next steps following their undergraduate career.

The spring semester was equally as exciting. We heard from Barbara Howard who presented on the Ronald E. McNair Program, from Study USA, and from our member-at-large, Lily Martin, who hosted a “College Student Guide to Retirement.”

The spring semester also marked the inauguration of UM’s chapter of Alpha Alpha Alpha (Tri-Alpha), the National Honor Society for First-Generation College Students, and the first chapter in the state of Mississippi. Over 100 students and faculty were inducted into Tri-Alpha to recognize and encourage their academic success.

The year concluded with our third annual Evening of Excellence to honor first-generation college students graduating with their bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral or law

degrees. Incoming president Edward Hunter hosted the event that highlighted the accomplishments of the graduating seniors and celebrated their bright futures.

Our events throughout the year were made possible by the ongoing support of entities across campus including the Center for Student Success and First-Year Experience, Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement, SMBHC, Graduate School, College of Liberal Arts, Office of the Provost and School of Pharmacy.

Looking forward to the upcoming academic year, Hunter (SMBHC 26) said he hopes to continue spreading recognition about the first-generation college student population on campus and sharing valuable information about scholarships, internships and opportunities. He also said he hopes to “stress the importance of postgraduate plans by making sure members are networking and connecting with people through LinkedIn and networking events.” **HR**

2023-24 Executive Board

President: **Racheal Embry**
 Vice President: **Edward Hunter**
 Community Involvement Chair: **Noah Watts**
 Student Success Coordinator: **Jonathan Dabel**
 Treasurer: **Citlali Cosme**
 Secretary: **Savannah White**
 Communications Chair: **Emily Lin**
 Member-at-Large: **Lily Martin**
 Faculty Adviser: **Ashleen Williams**

Follow the First-Gen Network
 @firstgen_network



THE Elsie Hood Award

Timothy Nordstrom Named 2024 Outstanding Teacher

Timothy Nordstrom, professor of political science and long-standing professor of honors classes, is the University of Mississippi’s 2024 Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

The Elsie Hood award is given to an Ole Miss assistant, associate or full professor who exhibits excellent teaching and makes a positive impact in the classroom. It is the highest teaching recognition the university bestows on its faculty members.

Madeleine Dotson (SMBHC 24) is one of many who nominated Nordstrom for the award. After taking a few courses from him, including his study abroad course in Switzerland and Austria, Dotson attested, “Dr. Nordstrom is easily one of the best professors I’ve had in my college career, and he will have a lasting impact on myself, my career goals and on countless other students.”

In 2018, Nikki Sullivan (SMBHC 20) penned a Professor Appreciation story about Nordstrom for that year’s

Honors Report. She wrote, “Along with creative assignments, Dr. Nordstrom provided an atmosphere for engaging discussion. Though he was faithful to point out underlying assumptions or biases, he never made students feel ashamed or embarrassed. He might not have always validated our arguments, but he always validated us as people. He truly created an environment in which students could feel safe to explore the most important questions in life.” **HR**

Nordstrom has taught HON 101/102 since 2006, and his impact on SMBHC’s students and alumni is immeasurable. He’s known to meet up with former students for a chat as he did at Square Books in 2018. Front row, from left: Elly Welle, Nikki Sullivan, Tim Nordstrom, Jennifer Lauriello, Claire Gershon and Kameron Shook. Back row, from left: Caroline Bailey, Ann Kelly Patrick, Marli Bryant, Ridge Brohaugh and Josh Thweatt. (Photo courtesy Nikki Sullivan)



Stamps Dinner

(1) Stamps scholar Lindsey Cole (SMBHC 27); (2) Stamps scholars (from left) Amber Amis (SMBHC 26), Ethan Roberts (SMBHC 26), Dymond Mitchell (SMBHC 26) and Binta Fadiga (SMBHC 24); (3) Provost Noel Wilkin addresses graduating Stamps scholars; (4) Stamps scholars Class of 2024 (back row, from left): Aaliyah Gates, Azurrea Curry, Tatiana Davis, Ronnie Cunitz, Madeline Dotson, Nya Thompson, Binta Fadiga, Joseph Crum and Bryce Barrett; (front row, from left): Fernando Arellano, Genevieve Wilson, Desiree Roby, Violet Jira, Madelyn Jarjoura, Hattie Sergent, Isen Furr, Abigail Moeller and Evan Morrissey. (Photos by Amy Howell)



Chancellor's Scholars Day

(5) Stamps scholar Carolena Graham (SMBHC 26) talks with Nyja Wilson, of Madison. Wilson has committed to UM and the SMBHC and will pursue an exercise science degree. (Photo by HG Biggs); (6) Stamps scholar Bailey Bonds (SMBHC 27) visits with Nicholas Shaw during the Chancellor's Scholars Day welcome reception. Shaw has committed to UM and the SMBHC and will major in allied health studies. (Photo by HG Biggs); (7) Stamps scholars Josie McCarey (left), Margaux Whitcomb and Sneha Vuyyuru during Chancellor's Scholars Day. All three have committed to UM and the SMBHC. (Photo by Bill Dabney)

STAMPS IMPACT PRIZE WINNERS

Eight honors students won the inaugural Stamps Impact Prize in fall 2023, and seven honors students won the SIP for the spring 2024 cycle. The SIP awards each recipient up to \$5,000 to support a project related to the student’s passions, academics, community engagement and/or experiential learning pursuits. The awards are made possible through the Stamps Family Foundation.

Spring 2024 Winners

Ross Cohen
Majors: accountancy, public policy leadership
Faculty mentor: Michael Barnett, chair and professor, Department of Theatre & Film
Project title: “Connecting the Dots: Exploring the Interdisciplinary Nature of the Arts Through Community Events”

Athan Gregory
Major: biochemistry
Faculty mentor: Jason Ritchie, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry
Project title: “Synthesis and Conductivity Behavior of mPEG-Based Electrolytes”

Eron Hendrix
Majors: public health, public policy leadership
Faculty mentor: Ashley Jones, postdoctoral research associate, health, exercise science and recreation management
Project title: “University of Mississippi Periods in Prison Project”

Abigail Hogue
Major: mechanical engineering
Faculty mentor: Samrat Choudhury, associate professor of mechanical engineering
Project title: “Exploration of Graph Neural Networks for Enhanced Materials Design”

Audrey Koltz
Major: biology
Faculty mentor: Michel Ohmer, assistant professor of biology
Project title: “Using Artificial Reproductive Technologies to Improve Amphibian Conservation”

Anna Nowell
Major: biochemistry
Faculty mentor: Peter Zee, assistant professor of biology
Project title: “The Intersection of the Biological and Chemical: Genomic Resource Use Efficiency in Bacteria”

Gwendolyn Pfrenger
Majors: art history, English
Faculty mentor: Jeannie Speck-Thompson, university archivist and assistant professor
Project title: “One Student’s Classroom: Mayfield’s Time at Ole Miss”

ALLISON LAVENDER joined the SMBHC team in January as the inaugural assistant to the dean for student engagement. She will be engaging with and creating programming for the SMBHC scholarship holders as well as Stamps scholars.

Before joining the SMBHC, she served as an academic mentor with the Ole Miss Women’s Council for Philanthropy.

Lavender is originally from Columbus and received her bachelor’s degree in music education from the University of Mississippi in 2007. After graduation, she moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where she taught string orchestra in the city school system for over 13 years. Fun fact: Lavender began playing violin at age 5. During her time as an orchestra director, she was responsible for teaching middle and high school students and taught 160 students daily.

Lavender received her Master of Education in school counseling from the University of West Alabama in 2019. In 2020, she and her husband, Paul, and their three children moved back home to Mississippi.

She enjoys spending time with her family, attending Ole Miss sporting events, traveling, and playing violin at Christ Presbyterian where she is a member.



Fall 2023 Winners

Izzy Arthurs
Majors: English, French
Faculty mentor: Bruce Livingston, Chancellor’s Honors College Artist in Residence and holder of the Lester Glenn Fant Chair
Project title: “From Poem to Performance: The Professional Production of an Original Studio Album”

Logan Baggett
Majors: international studies, Spanish
Faculty mentor: Marcos Mendoza, associate professor of anthropology
Project title: “Comparing Drag Performance in the Americas: Rio de Janeiro, Guadalajara, and Oxford”

Emma Cochran
Major: exercise science
Faculty mentor: Chip Wade, research assistant professor of biomedical engineering
Project title: “The Impact of the Menstrual Cycle Phases on Upper Extremity Injury Risk in Female Athletes”

Rod’Kendrick Harrison
Major: public health and health sciences
Faculty mentor: Hannah Allen, assistant professor of public health and health sciences
Project title: “Empowering Minority College Students for Mental Health Well-being: A Mental Health First Aid Initiative”

Phoebe Johnson
Major: mechanical engineering
Faculty mentor: Damian Stoddard, assistant professor of mechanical engineering
Project title: “Ballistics Characterization of Graphene-Infused Lunar-Inspired Concrete”



Angel Morgan
Major: art
Faculty mentor: Brooke White, professor of art
Project title: “Skin to Skin: A Photographic Investigation into Identity and Collaboration”

Anna Owens
Majors: biomedical engineering, general business
Faculty mentor: Thomas Werfel, assistant professor of biomedical engineering

Project title: “Drug Delivery Device for In-Vitro Fertilization”

Autumn Payne
Major: film production
Faculty mentor: Sarah Hennigan, associate chair and assistant professor of film production
Project title: “Autistic Women: An Overlooked Community”



Taking a Break
(8) (Front row, from left): Allison Lavender, Olivia Bacon, Dymond Mitchell and McKenzie Cox; (back row, from left): Carolena Graham, Ethan Roberts, Andrew Nichols, Ryleigh Johnson and Amber Amis meet at the Oxford Creamery for a sweet treat. (Photo courtesy Allison Lavender)

Honors Senate:

YEAR IN REVIEW

BY KRESHA PATEL

We all come to college hoping to find a “home away from home.” For many of us at the University of Mississippi, the Honors College is precisely that. Students from diverse backgrounds form a tight-knit community bound by a shared passion for mindful advocacy, purposeful involvement and genuine selflessness. Whether this manifests by engaging in spirited debates in our Honors 101/102 classes or collaborating on research findings for senior capstones, there is a palpable sense of belonging for every student within the Honors College.

With the support of dedicated faculty members, staff and our dynamic student body, the Honors College Senate has flourished in fulfilling our duties. Our key responsibility as the Honors Senate is to represent the voices of the honors students and present findings to faculty and staff. With that in mind, we reached out to the HoCo student body to let them know we were ready to listen to any idea or concern they had through student concern forms and feedback forms. We also hosted “Coffee and Concerns” in the SMBHC lobby so that students could drop by and visit honors senators about any ideas or concerns they had about their honors experience.

An event that the Senate always looks forward to hosting each year is the \$5 Feast in November.

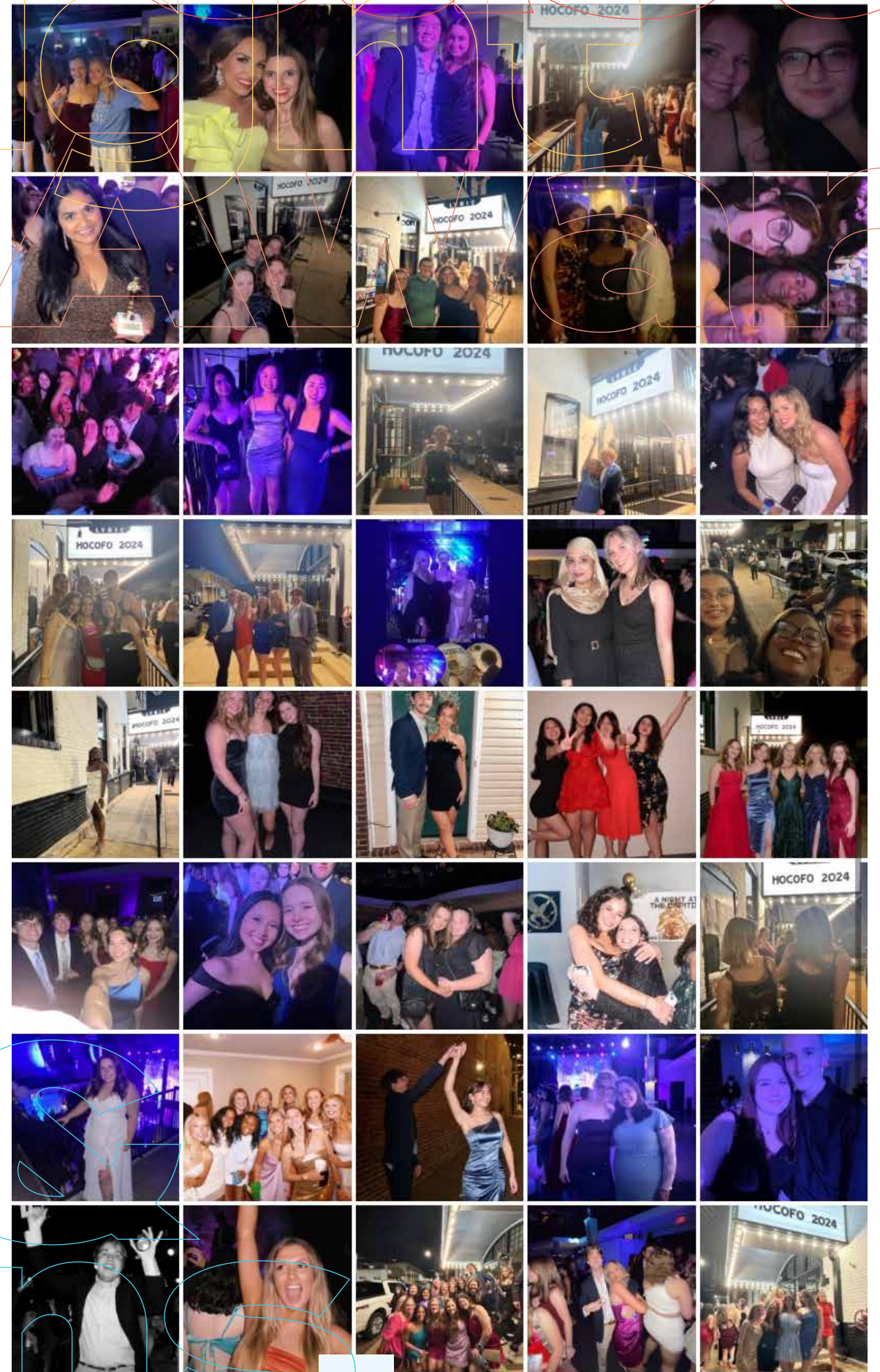
Last fall, we enjoyed a delicious meal catered by Taylor Grocery, and the \$500 we raised benefited the local Boys and Girls Club of North Mississippi.

Trivia Night was another successful Honors Senate event, and teams of five or fewer students enjoyed friendly competition, answering questions from a variety of categories. Each student paid \$3 to play, with 50% of the profits donated to RebelTHON and 50% donated to the Palestinian Children’s Relief Fund, both organizations benefiting children!

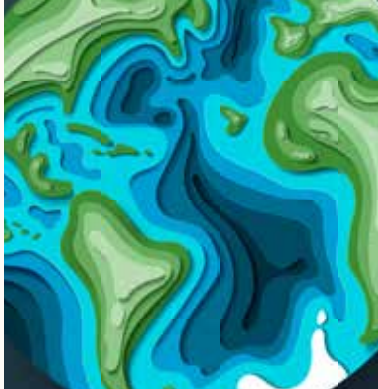
HoCo students usually look forward to our most anticipated event of the year — our cherished Honors College Formal, which takes place at The Lyric. Hundreds of honors students dressed up for our Hunger Games-themed event and danced the night away to a DJ. Halfway through the night, the Sally Awards were announced for nearly a dozen students to claim their trophies and superlative titles on stage.

Our year ended with a great appreciation for the Honors College and the opportunities we had to foster a community within the program. This past year with the Honors Senate was one of growth, determination and perseverance. Our events continue to lift the energy and spirits in our community, and it is a significant aspect of why the Honors College is our “home away from home!” **HR**

Photo collage of the Honors College Formal by Jennifer Parsons



Follow the Honors Senate
@umhocosenate



CITIZEN SCHOLARS IN THE WORLD

1995

Effective July 1 of this year, **Amy Herring**, who earned a B.A. in English and a B.S. in mathematics at the University of Mississippi, became chair of the Department of Statistical Science at Duke University.

2006



Marc E. Walker, M.D., MBA, FACS, is a double board-certified plastic surgeon and hand surgeon. In fall 2023, Walker was named chair of hand surgery and founding director of the Jabaley-Songcharoen Center for Hand, Upper Extremity and Nerve Surgery at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where he serves as fellowship program director for surgery of the hand and associate professor of plastic surgery and orthopaedic surgery. He also recently received the Alumni Early Impact Award from the University of Mississippi College of Liberal Arts. Walker lives in Jackson with his wife, Dr. Caroline A. Walker (Stanford 04); his daughter, Catherine; and their Great Dane, “Blue.”

2007



After taking over the longstanding successful speech and debate program at Oxford High School, **Scotty Jimenez** (SMBHC 07, MA 09) was named new coach of the year for the Magnolia District at the Mississippi High School Activities Association state tournament in April. This past spring break, he accompanied seven of his AP Spanish students to Costa Rica. He strives to maintain alumni ties with the SMBHC and Croft to connect OHS and Ole Miss.

2008



After years of working successfully as an editorial director for a magazine and book publishing company, **Anna Golson Hartzog** left in fall 2023 to launch her own editorial firm, Village

Editorial. Hartzog’s team focuses on moving books from ideation to final product as it ushers products from concept, through writing and editorial phases, and into design and print stages. Hartzog is proud of her company’s growing client list and is excited for what the future holds.

Bob Lynch accepted a position with the Foreign Service at the U.S. Department of State, and in July, he began his career as an economic affairs officer and likely will be posted in an embassy or consulate abroad by summer 2025. Lynch married last summer, and he and his family are excited for the opportunity to live abroad.

2009



Catherine Servati (BA 09, JD 13) is one of four new members appointed by the Mississippi Supreme Court to the Access to Justice Commission.

2010



Elizabeth Vowell Blades and photographer Rick Portier received the prestigious, national Edward R. Murrow Award for feature reporting in 2023. Their report told the stories of four nurses on the front lines of COVID-19 through letters they wrote to their past selves.



Since finishing his residency, **Ryan Speights** (BA 10, MD 14) works as a hospitalist physician at North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo. Starting in fall 2025, Speights will train resident physicians at NMMC, and his new position will include academic medicine and advising in the hospitalist residency program. Speights is married to Amarette Aube, who graduated from UM and Mississippi College School of Law and runs her own law firm specializing in

real estate. Speights and Aube have two “great” kids: Atticus, age 7, and Georgiana “Georgie,” age 4.

2011



Earlier this year, **Stacey Holmes** began serving as director for student affairs at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science.

Virginia Drago Kinnier gave birth to her second child during a hurricane evacuation from New Orleans and wrote about it for *Garden & Gun*. You can read “Voodoo Pizza and the Hurricane Baby” by visiting gardenandgun.com/articles/voodoo-pizza-and-the-hurricane-baby.

2013



Jess Waltman (BAccy 13, JD 16) is an attorney with the law firm Gordon, Arata, Montgomery, Barnett, McCollam, Duplantis & Eagan LLC, in New Orleans, and his practice focuses on complex commercial litigation. Waltman serves on the board of governors

of the Human Rights Campaign and as a member of the Diversity Committee of the Mississippi Bar. He is licensed to practice law in Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana and Mississippi, and is admitted to practice before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and the Supreme Court of the United States.

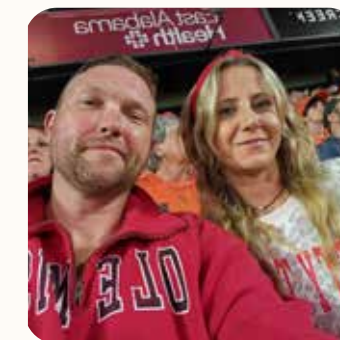
2014

Effective January of this year, **Susanna Rychlak Allen** was elected to the partnership of Yetter Coleman LLP, a boutique litigation firm in Houston, Texas. She celebrated the news with her husband, Will Allen (BA 13), and their new baby daughter.

Rose Ann (Foster) Mullet accepted a humanities teaching position at All Saints’ Episcopal School in Fort Worth, Texas, beginning this fall.

This past spring, **Hunter Nicholson** (BA 14, BAccy 14) graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a Ph.D. in systematic theology. He serves as a pastor in Columbia.

2015



Making a trip from their home in Jupiter, Florida, **Joshua Horton** (BA 15, JD 17) and Natalia Kumar married at The Inn at Ole Miss on May 19, surrounded

by family, friends, UM alumni and mentors such as DSG. Horton is a lawyer who fights for clients experiencing substance use disorder, poverty and consumer fraud. In the next few years, he hopes to move his new family to Oxford. Read more about Horton in “‘No matter what’ Florida attorney returns to Ole Miss to marry,” published in The Oxford Eagle and available online.

Lauren Rackley Ray and her husband, Nick Ray, welcomed their daughter, Jane Margaret, to the world in January. Ray was recognized as one of the 100 Successful Women to Know 2024 by Gulf Coast Woman magazine.

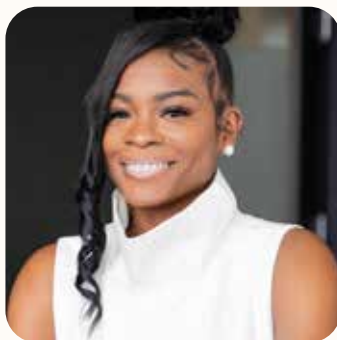
2016



Emily Richmond Dumenil welcomed son Louis (pronounced Louie) with her husband and was promoted to senior manager of accounting for RND.



This year, **Amber Malone** accepted a position as senior coordinator of external and government affairs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp., where she helps increase the visibility of and support for the organization as the nation’s booming climate tech hub and net-zero, sustainable manufacturing. On the creative front, she recently exhibited her watercolor illustrations at Artexpo New York, New York City’s oldest art exposition showcasing emerging artists, including everyone from Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg to Yayoi Kusama and Mr. Brainwash. Malone is this year’s featured artist for the 2024 *Honors Report*. Read more about her on p. 7.



After spending six years in the education sector, **Debra Whitley** transitioned back to marketing and communications in 2023 as a senior communications specialist for an industry-leading financial services company. She was recently

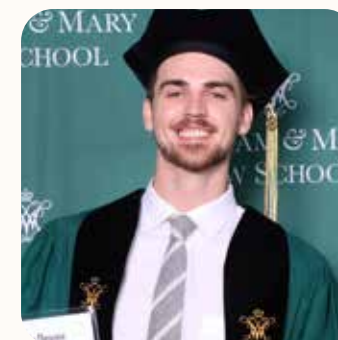
promoted to corporate communications manager. Whitley would like to extend her gratitude to everyone who supported her along the way, with special thanks to the School of Journalism and New Media, Ole Miss Athletics, the SMBHC, Black Student Union and especially to the Ole Miss Women’s Council for Philanthropy. “Your guidance and encouragement have been invaluable,” she wrote.

2018

Sydney Shamblin Anderson was admitted into candidacy for her Ph.D. in English at the University of Miami in May. She serves as president of the university’s English Graduate Organization and vice president of the Graduate Student Association. She is a founding member of the Shakespeare Association of America’s Graduate Student Committee. This year, she was awarded a fellowship with the University of Miami’s Center for the Humanities and a grant from the Arthur F. Kinney Fund. Anderson plans to complete her dissertation on early modern drama in 2025. In June 2023, she married her college sweetheart and the love of her life, Trevor Anderson, in Oxford. He has supported her through many years of countless long nights writing her undergraduate thesis in Oxford and her dissertation in Miami — she couldn’t imagine doing any of this without him.

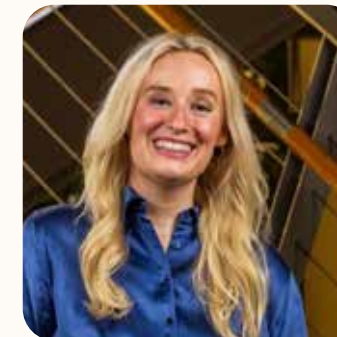


Using the problem-solving methodology he learned during his mechanical engineering studies at UM, **David Biggs** pivoted his career to software engineering. He completed all modules on freecodecamp.com and Amazon hired him. He was promoted to Q1 earlier this year and felt validation after teaching himself software engineering. “Ole Miss prepared me and nurtured the critical-thinking skills that I needed to solve problems in any subdiscipline as an engineer,” Biggs said. He also developed an app to teach kids perfect pitch, and the website launched in June: usepitchpal.com.



Allen Coon graduated from William & Mary Law School in 2022. Thereafter, he served a term as law clerk for the Hinds County Chancery Court in Jackson, clerking for judges Denise Sweet Owens, Crystal Wise Martin and Tametrice E. Hodges. Coon works as an enforcement attorney for

the Federal Election Commission in Washington, D.C. He is licensed to practice law in Mississippi and the District of Columbia. He would also like to share his admiration for the late Willa Mathis Johnson, who passed away in November 2022. “As a respected scholar of Judaism and genocide and a professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, professor Johnson was the first Black woman in the history of the University of Mississippi to ascend from adjunct instruction to full professor. I will forever remember her as a beloved mentor and friend, and it is in her honor that I call on all members of the UM community to condemn the U.S. war machine and its complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza.”



Amber Dupree started a new job as associate general counsel for the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services after working as a litigation attorney at a boutique firm in Ridgeland.

2019



In what may be the sweetest alumni update, **Brandon McDaniel** would like to congratulate his wife, **Jordan (Healy) McDaniel**, for graduating medical school and securing her internal medicine residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The McDaniels met in the SMBHC and both graduated from UM in 2019.

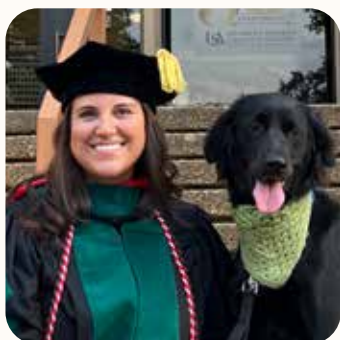


AB Shrestha graduated with an MBA from University of California, Berkeley’s Haas School of Business, a top 10 MBA program in the country.



Elaine Smith graduated from medical school and began her OB-GYN residency at the University of Rochester Medical Center. She's thankful to see patients and explore her interests in family planning and gynecologic oncology.

2020



Tarran Carrasco graduated from the Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama and matched into an OB-GYN residency at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York.



Andrew Groneck graduated from the University of Missouri School of Medicine and will be in residency

training in anesthesiology at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.



On May 16, **Amelia Haydel** graduated from the LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans and is training as a pediatric resident physician at Children's Hospital.



Meg Hayslip graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine and will begin her emergency medicine residency at Carolinas Medical Center.

Trip Johnson is in his third year at Vanderbilt Law School, and in January 2025, he'll publish research about misleading recycling claims.

Alexandra Loddo graduated medical school and started a residency in pediatrics at Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.



Licamied Macklin is completing her second-year pharmacy residency at CommUnity Care in Austin, Texas. She is specializing in ambulatory care and has plans to obtain her board certification in ambulatory care at the end of this year. She also got engaged to the love of her life in April!

Meagan Mandabach Olivet graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine and matched into a dermatology residency at UAB.

2022



MyKayla Williamson graduated from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, with a master's in archaeology. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in anthropology at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. **HR**



For most of the 2023-24 academic year, the SMBHC recruited the college's Class of 2028 without a coordinator of recruitment and admissions staff member. The honors ambassadors are a critical part of our recruiting efforts every year, but this year, they demonstrated a work ethic and dedication unmatched. The SMBHC deans and staff stepped up and met with several prospective students and their families, and traveled across the state for college fairs and recruiting dinners, but we would not be welcoming a record number of honors freshmen this year (540!) without the tireless efforts of the honors ambassadors. We are thankful for every ambassador who wrote letters, replied to emails, participated in recruiting events, led tours, kept a smile on their face and made Sally proud. The honors ambassadors team worked hard and efficiently thanks to the leadership of the 2023-24 executive council: Racheal Embry, Byron Swetman, Nya Thompson, Meredith Whited, Ally Watrous, Macey Ross, Helen Phillips and Kate Nevils.



ALUMNA COMMITS MAJOR GIFT TO HONORS COLLEGE

BY TINA HAHN

Janet Jones Pilko, of Houston, Texas, and Park City, Utah, is investing a \$1.5 million planned gift in the future of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi.

Pilko, with her husband, George, announced their planned gift on the first day of the April 9-10 Giving Day event, which is an annual online, social media-driven fundraising campaign. The fifth Ole Miss Giving Day lasts one day, eight hours and 48 minutes, in honor of the university's founding year of 1848.

"The Honors College is the goal toward which the university has been striving for decades — starting with the University Scholars program, the Honors Program and, finally, the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, thanks to the generosity of the Jim Barksdale family," said Jan Pilko, a 1975 graduate in mathematics and English.

"The Honors College helps the university attract the best and brightest students, faculty and staff, benefiting the university as a whole. A rising tide raises all ships, and the Honors College is our rising tide."

The estate gift is directed to the Excellence in STEM Scholarship Endowment that



George and Janet Pilko with Brady Bramlett. (Photo by Bill Dabney)

Pilko previously established with a \$100,000 gift. The endowment is designed to assist students pursuing degrees in the areas of science, technology, engineering or mathematics.

Eligible recipients must be members of the Honors College whose background, achievements and experience demonstrate a commitment to contributing to the advancement of women in STEM, regardless of the recipients' gender or gender identity.

"I was blessed to receive a Carrier Scholarship as an incoming freshman, allowing me

to pursue a four-year degree at Ole Miss," Pilko said. "My education was outstanding, of course, but also the opportunity to gain leadership and social skills was simply priceless.

"I want more young Mississippians to have the same incredible opportunity that a degree from the University of Mississippi provides and do not want financial issues to be what stops a gifted young scholar from achieving that goal." **HR**

Full story by Tina Hahn: libarts.olemiss.edu/alumna-commits-major-gift-to-honors-college

Giving Day 2024

The Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College raised over \$1.54 million from 248 gifts during the fifth annual Ole Miss Giving Day in April.

- Thank you, **Janet and George Pilko**. The Pilkos, of Houston, Texas, and Park City, Utah, invested a \$1.5 million planned gift for the SMBHC. The estate gift is directed to the Excellence in STEM Scholarship endowment the Pilkos previously established with a \$100,000 gift to assist honors students pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering or mathematics.
- Thanks to these honors students who solicited \$5 donations from their peers in the SMBHC lobby: **Ben Foster, Case Kennedy, Elsa Allmendinger, Finley Eidem, Holley Jean Garrison, Jana Abdrabbo, Jana Abuirshaid, Jesús Ramirez, Kayla Smith, Lauren Day, Layla Ashley, Lily Kruse, Maddie Sugden, Madison Washington, Olivia Usie, Robert Cascio and West Sepko**.
- Honors students who donated their time and treasure entered their names into a drawing for a "Finals Week Study Room" in the SMBHC. **Elsa Allmendinger** won!
- Thank you, **Jess Waltman** (SMBHC 13, JD 16) for pledging \$2,500 during Giving Day. We unlocked Waltman's gift once 15 gifts were made.
- Thank you, **Amy and Brian Lee** (BA 94), of Birmingham, Alabama! Every 25 gifts unlocked \$2,500 from the Lees, and thanks to all who participated. The Lees donated \$25,000 to the SMBHC.
- Thank you, **Sue and Charlie Winstead**, of Oxford, for your \$2,000 gift!
- Thank you, **Brady Bramlett** and **Dean Scurlock** for creating a fun and engaging video that garnered donations on Giving Day.

Sally's Squirrel Squad raised
\$1,549,390



Sally's Squirrel Squad by Madelyn Parsons

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Arts and Humanities Support

PHILANTHROPISTS HONOR ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE BRUCE LEVINGSTON WITH GIFT

BY JONATHAN SCOTT

A generous gift from Warren and Harriet Stephens through the Warren A. Stephens Trust of Little Rock, Arkansas, honors Bruce Levingston, the Chancellor's Honors College Artist-in-Residence and holder of the Lester Glenn Fant Chair at the University of Mississippi.

The holder of the Fant Chair is allowed "to bring leading figures in the arts and humanities to the University of Mississippi, to encourage broad appreciation for the importance of creativity and imagination to all fields, and to promote deeply informed critical thinking among our students and citizens."

The Stephenses are among the nation's leading supporters of the arts. The couple, who recently led the redesign of the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts in Little Rock, said they made the \$50,000 gift to UM because of the positive impact the arts and humanities have on all segments of society.

"The arts and humanities enrich our lives and thinking," said Warren Stephens, chair, president and CEO of Stephens Inc., a privately held investment bank. "We see that enrichment firsthand in Little Rock, where the arts help unite us, reveal commonalities, celebrate our differences and shape new experiences."

Harriet Stephens added that the couple's gift honors their



Bruce Levingston with philanthropists Harriet and Warren Stephens
(Photo courtesy Warren Stephens)

friendship with Levingston, his many achievements and his passion for sharing his knowledge with students in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at Ole Miss.

Levingston is an internationally renowned concert pianist and recording artist.

"Bruce performed at the museum's grand opening gala and put together a program for that evening that was really special," she said. "His support and generosity meant a great deal to us."

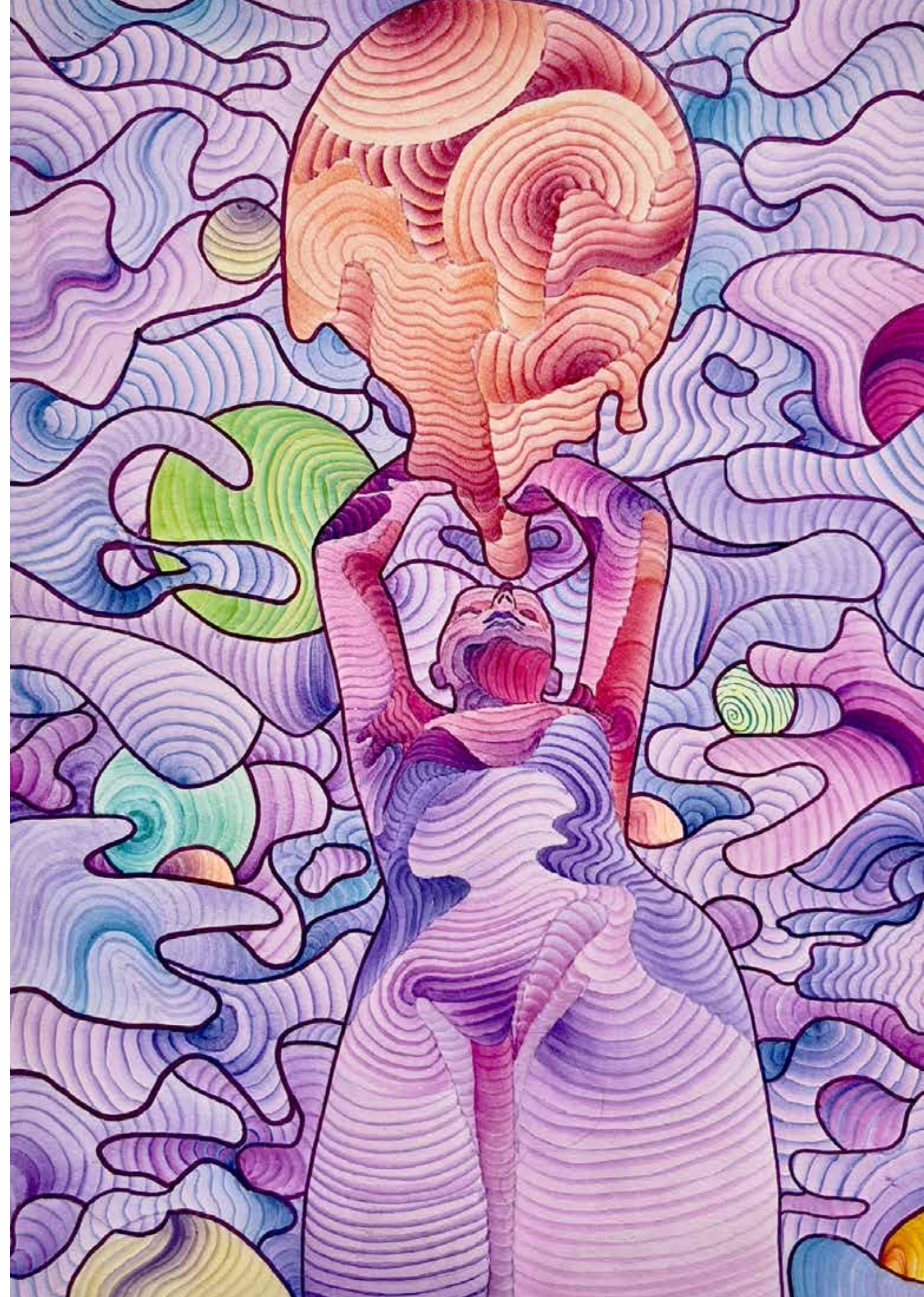
When trying to determine how their appreciation and support of Levingston could have the most impact, the Stephenses got some

advice from their friend, Archie Manning, the legendary Ole Miss alumnus and football star.

"Archie was so kind by helping to direct our gift in Bruce's honor to the most appropriate home, the Lester Glenn Fant Chair-Chancellor Honors College Artist-in-Residence Support Endowment," Warren Stephens said.

UM Chancellor Glenn Boyce said the university appreciates the Stephenses' generous support that will touch the lives of so many members of the community. [HR](#)

Full story by Jonathan Scott:
[nowandever.olemiss.edu/
stories/supporting-the-arts-and-
humanities-at-ole-miss/](https://nowandever.olemiss.edu/stories/supporting-the-arts-and-humanities-at-ole-miss/)



'Dea Ex Ambitio'
2024; 18" x 24"; brush pen illustration on paper
by Amber Malone



Mia McKey (SMBHC 24) and Ross Cohen (SMBHC 25) secured nearly \$4,000 during their Re-Rebs Ignite campaign, which supports clothing donation bins for UM residence halls. They aim to put clothes in the hands of local organizations, keeping them out of landfills. (Photo by Brady Bramlett)

A Greener Community

Student project aims to stem clothing waste

BY REAGAN COLLINS

What began as a University of Mississippi class project has evolved into a campuswide initiative to keep discarded clothing out of landfills and into the hands of people who need it.

Through an Ignite Ole Miss crowdfunding campaign, Mia McKey (SMBHC 24) is seeking financial support for her project, Re-Rebs. The campus-enrichment project was spawned in McKey's Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College public policy leadership course.

Re-Rebs, which places clothing-donation bins in residence halls, is already making a positive impact on Ole Miss and its surrounding community.

"We hope the implementation of permanent bins will help divert the average 82 pounds of clothing waste the average American consumer throws away every year into the hands of those in need," said McKey, of Oxford, who graduated from the University of Mississippi in May with a B.A. in psychology.

Re-Rebs began with cardboard boxes placed around campus, but McKey hoped to raise \$3,500 to install new steel anti-theft bins in Martin, Stockard, Crosby and Pittman residence halls and in the Luckyday Residential College. Each bin costs \$480.

The Ignite Ole Miss campaign has reached over 100% of this goal, with \$3,988 in gifts. Ultimately, the goal is to install donation bins in all 15 residence halls across campus.

The idea for Re-Rebs began when McKey noticed large amounts of clothes being discarded by students in her sorority.

"I wanted to work with sorority houses to redirect this clothing not only from the landfill but away from national donation companies to local organizations to better support the Oxford-Lafayette-University community," she said.

To determine whether such an initiative was needed, McKey conducted a campuswide poll that revealed 50% of students or their friends threw away used clothes rather than donating them. Additionally, 96% of students responded they would be more likely to donate clothes if designated bins were accessible on campus.

Motivated by the compelling statistics, McKey said she was convinced the project would succeed. She placed boxes in residence halls and sorority houses, and students used them. McKey then collected the donated clothes and gave them to local organizations that would reuse them.

McKey appreciates the support she received throughout the process.

"First off, every student in the PPL course played an integral role in making this project a reality," she said. "Ross Cohen has continued working on this project with me following the conclusion of the class. Joseph Holland, the professor of our course, has been a mentor and encourager throughout the process.

"Furthermore, the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, Center for Community Engagement, Career Center and the Office of Sustainability have all offered their support and encouragement." **HR**

Full story by Reagan Collins: olemiss.edu/news/2024/01/student-project-aims-to-stem-clothing-waste

Brady Bramlett (Photo by Tracy Bosworth)



Dear Friends of Sally,

Did you blink? If you did, it's OK because we did too, and the fall semester is already here. I promise this isn't "Groundhog Day," and I'm not Bill Murray!

What an incredible time to be a part of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College. The University of Mississippi campus has experienced record-breaking growth, including in the Honors College. Our students continue to impress beyond our imaginations. Our alumni know that the Honors College cultivates excellence that creates change makers and the leaders of tomorrow. Our students graduate top of their classes, publish articles and stories in prestigious publications, and win national scholarships year after year.

Growth also presents its own challenges, and that's where we need YOU. The SMBHC funds opportunities for our students all through the year, and not one student ever has to pay a fee to be a part of the Honors College. I challenge you to be a change maker in a student's experience. Your gifts fund travel opportunities for our students to participate in groundbreaking research and attend internships in Washington, D.C., and across the world to influence policies that affect our nation. Your gift toward a scholarship provides the opportunity for a student to change the trajectory of their family by being a first-generation college student.

As we close Now & Ever, the campaign for Ole Miss, we have a lofty goal that I know we as an Honors College can achieve. I challenge each of you to create a philanthropic goal for yourself and encourage you to include the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College in that goal. I'm here to help when you're ready to take the next step in funding the future of the SMBHC.

Brady Bramlett
Director of Development

Thank You

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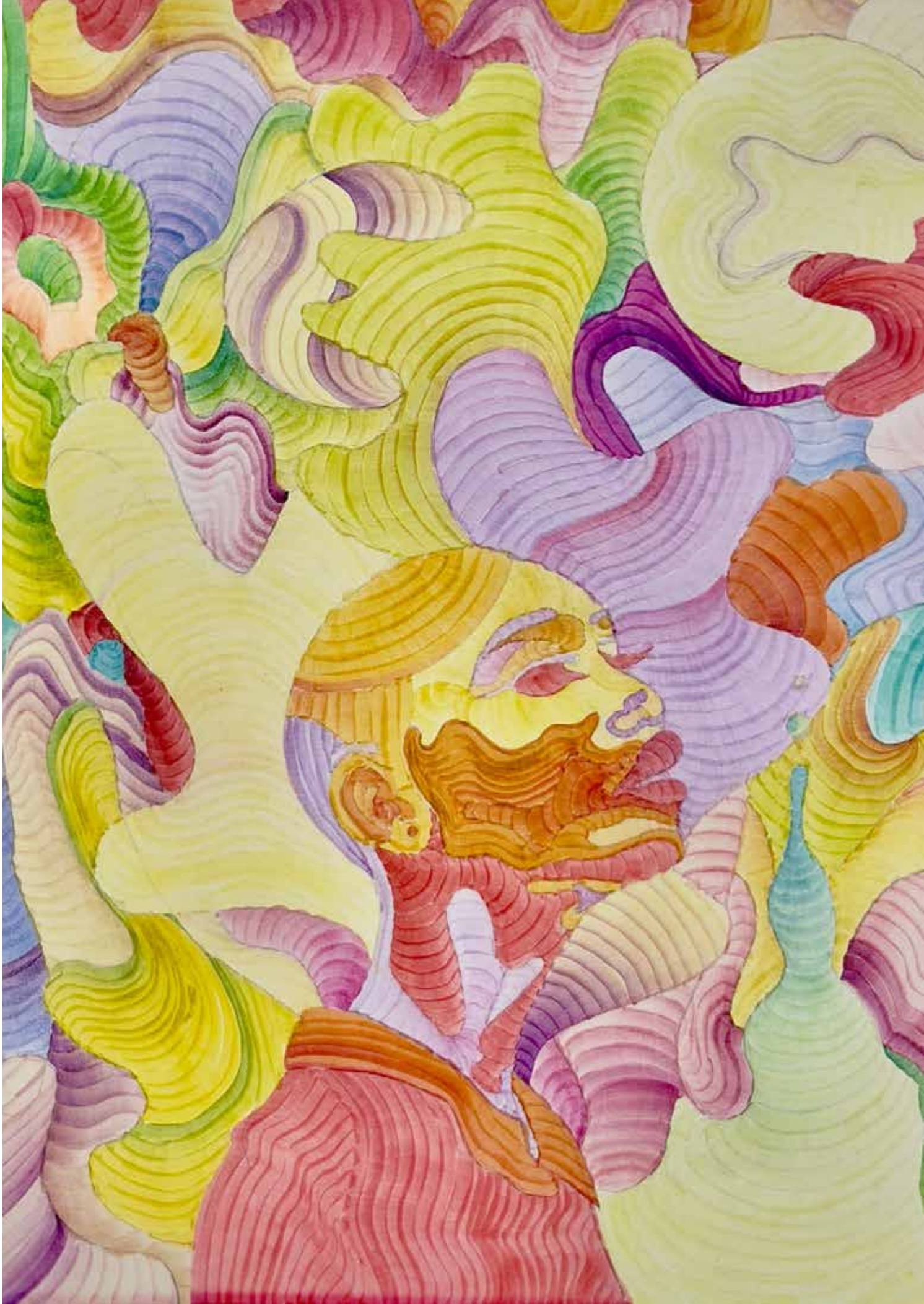
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Anne J. Wilbourne
Julia L. Wilbourne
Kristie L. Willett and Jason E. Ritchie
Jude C. Williams
LeaAnne and Al L. Williams
Stephanie R. and Ryan J. Williams
Catherine E. Williamson
Ravonda Willis
Julie M. and Paschal P. Wilson Jr.
Skyla J. Wilson
Sue B. and Charles Winstead
Nancy O. and Zebulon M. Winstead
Brady J. Wood
Whitney D. and Derek J. Woods
Blair Wortsmit
Peggy Yancey
Kecia and Eugene J. Yelverton III
Nicole L. and Timothy P. Yenter
Gingia and W. Swan Yerger
Charlotte S. and John T. York
Abigail G. Young
Miriam E. Abadie and Anthony K. Yuen

Is your name missing, or would you prefer your name listed in a different way? Contact Brady Bramlett, director of development, at bradyb@olemiss.edu.



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‘Dea Ex Colore’
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You're Invited!

Honors Fall Convocation with David Magee

Tuesday, Sept. 17
7:30 p.m., Ford Center

Bestselling author
of *Dear William:
A Father's Memoir of
Addiction, Recovery,
Love and Loss* and
forthcoming
memoir *A Little
Crazy*, a sequel to
Dear William.

