Education Edge 2018

University of Mississippi. School of Education

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Making Marks
How SOE students and alumni partner with the Marks Project in the Mississippi Delta
The connection between education and economic impact is an important one. Without educational opportunity at all levels, communities dwindle and children miss out on chances to learn and become productive, engaged citizens. So needless to say, we are proud of the impact our alumni and students are making through our partnerships with the Marks Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in a Mississippi Delta town just 45 minutes from UM. It’s amazing what this small nonprofit has accomplished in terms of educational opportunity in a few years. Our students have just been a piece of the narrative, but we are happy to be part of the momentum. When we sat down with our art team this fall to talk about the cover of this year’s Education Edge, we knew the challenge was to show the intersection where educational and economic advancement go hand in hand. We hope you enjoy this edition. Cover design by John McCustion
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Find out how SOE alumni and students are helping the Marks Project increase educational opportunity in one small town in the Mississippi Delta.

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Meet the students and faculty who are making waves at the SOE!
Dear Friends,

Welcome to the sixth annual issue of Education Edge magazine. I hope you will take the time to read through this issue and learn more about the alumni, faculty and students who are raising the bar for what it means to be part of the University of Mississippi School of Education family.

Flipping through the pages of this year’s edition, you will see a lot of important faces. Odds are that you will recognize a few. You will learn about people such as SOE Assistant Dean Ann Monroe, the 2018 winner of the Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher Award, UM’s highest teaching honor. You may also recognize people such as Hall of Fame inductee Thomas C. Meredith, a 1971 alumnus who has served as the head of three different university systems, or Dorothy “Dot” Henderson, UM’s first full-time African-American faculty member in education who was also inducted into our Hall of Fame this year posthumously.

You will have the chance to read about work by our students, who are already making their mark on the world. Please take the time to read this year’s cover story, “Making Marks,” and learn about how our students and alumni are dedicating their time and talents to the Marks Project, a nonprofit that is helping to create educational opportunities for children and community members in the small Delta town of Marks, Mississippi. I never cease to be amazed at the ambition and drive of some of our students who want to use their time and talents to make the world a better, stronger and more equitable place through teaching.

As you finish reading through this magazine, I hope you will pause for a minute and consider the importance and impact of what it means to be part of our multigenerational commitment to excellence in teaching, learning and leadership. Behind each of the faces you see here is an unknown number of students who benefited from having a professional who was trained at the University of Mississippi to make a positive difference in the world.

Sincerely,

David Rock, EdD
Dean, UM School of Education
rock@olemiss.edu
The School of Education established its Hall of Fame in 2015 and Practitioner of Distinction awards in 2016. The purpose is to honor outstanding SOE graduates who have dedicated their lives to excellence in the education profession for a lifetime of service and at earlier stages of service.

Through these awards, the School of Education strives to elevate and celebrate teaching and learning for generations to come. Great alumni help make the SOE the impactful institution it strives to be. Among our 2018 inductees, we have a former Mississippi commissioner of higher education, UM’s first full-time African-American faculty member, a retired faculty member from the SOE and a former president of the Mississippi Council on Economic Education. We hope you enjoy reading more about our 2018 inductees.

**KATHLEEN GRIGSBY**
*Jackson’s change-agent principal*  
BAEd 98, MEd 99

Kathleen Grigsby isn’t afraid of a challenge. In fact, she has a long record of being one of Mississippi’s top change agents. She also is the youngest person to be inducted into the SOE’s Alumni Hall of Fame with just 20 years of experience in education.

The principal of Barack H. Obama Magnet School (formerly Jefferson Davis Magnet School) in Jackson, she helped lead the school to be ranked No. 1 in Mississippi in 2017. Before starting her current post, she helped Marshall Elementary School in Jackson to rise from an F-rated to a C-rated institution in just three years. Before stepping into her first principalship, she also demonstrated excellence as an assistant principal, literacy specialist and first-grade teacher.

The daughter of two deaf parents, the Louisiana native learned as a child to focus on both academic excellence and empowering others. Because she and her parents moved frequently during her childhood, Grigsby finished her high school requirements in just three years and started college at Ole Miss at 17 years old. She jokes that her official high school diploma from the state of Louisiana didn’t show up until her sophomore year.

Grigsby believes in educating the whole child and leads educational transformation by identifying assets and gaps with specific recommendations to help children prosper both academically and socially.

She also teaches sign language and is the volunteer swim coach for Murrah High School. Her American Sign Language class is so popular that there’s always a waiting list to get in.

“At when you love what you do, it’s like a hobby,” Grigsby said. “I do photography and I swim as hobbies, but I also do education as a hobby. I get excited about going to conferences because of the content — not the location. There’s so much work to be done in education, and I can’t do it by myself, either. We have to be forward-minded thinkers to push education to where it needs to be. The challenge of that is what motivates me.”
DOROTHY “DOT” HENDERSON
First full-time African-American faculty member of the SOE, inducted posthumously
MA 69

Even after Dorothy “Dot” Henderson’s death in 2015 at age 82, her legacy continues to make an impact on the students and community members who knew her. Henderson was UM’s first full-time African-American faculty member in education and a motivator and safety net to thousands.

When asked what three words best describe Henderson, Deborah Gipson, Henderson’s eldest daughter, is quick to say, “Elegance, tenacity and strength.”

“Her philosophy was that it takes a whole village to educate a child,” Gipson said. “What she meant by this was that everyone had to encourage and nourish each other to bring about a better society.”

For more than half a century, Henderson was a beloved and respected figure in the Lafayette-Oxford-University community. She was an active member of numerous local and state organizations including the Second Baptist Church, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, the Oxford School District board of trustees, the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, the Mississippi Early Childhood Association, Head Start, Mississippi Humanities Council, the YWCA, Church Women United and League of Women Voters.

A native of De Kalb, Henderson moved to Oxford in 1963, when she and her husband, Robert Lee Henderson, who was also an educator, took faculty positions in local schools. The Hendersons raised six children in Oxford. Over the decades, their family grew to also include 15 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

“She believed in bringing education to everyone, especially the African-American community,” Deborah Henderson said. “Coming to Ole Miss was a way of opening doors for students to walk into the field of education.”

At Second Baptist, Henderson held multiple leadership positions, including serving on the church’s board of trustees and missionary board. She also taught Sunday school and sang in the choir. Before joining the LOU community, Henderson held teaching positions at elementary schools in Heidelberg, Meridian, Lexington and in Memphis, Tennessee. She also served as director of education at the Institute of Community Services in Holly Springs before joining the UM faculty as an instructor in elementary education. Her community service with Head Start and young children would continue throughout her university career.

“Dot was always a real go-getter,” recalled Fannye Love, a longtime colleague of Henderson’s and UM’s first African-American to obtain the rank of tenured, full professor in education. “We presented multiple papers and attended multiple conferences together, and I remember that she had a great knowledge based on how teachers should be prepared to work with children. She was always involved with so many people across the campus and community.”

Henderson was a published scholar in her field and received many awards and honors for her teaching and service during her Ole Miss tenure. She was her high school salutatorian and held a bachelor’s degree from Jackson State University, a master’s degree from UM and an education specialist degree from Mississippi State University.

Dorothy Henderson Memorial Scholarship Fund

The LOU community is striving to set up an endowment to honor Henderson’s legacy by beginning a scholarship fund for students of the UM School of Education. Contributions to the Henderson endowment can be made online at umfoundation.com or via check to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 401 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655, and designated for the Dorothy Henderson Memorial Scholarship Fund. For more information, email wlcrews@olemiss.edu.
Although Thomas C. Meredith has held some of the highest positions in higher education in three states, he is quick to tell you that the most meaningful position he has ever held was his first job as a high school teacher in Kentucky.

“I’ve loved every position I’ve ever held, but the one that was most impactful to me was the time I spent teaching high school,” Meredith said. “When I first started teaching, since I was a new college graduate, my students were only a few years younger than I was. One year, the student council president was giving his speech before voting, and he used phrases and ideas that I had said in class. I realized that the impact of a teacher was far more than I thought.”

After several years at the high school level as a teacher, coach and principal, Meredith packed up his car and headed for Mississippi — a state he had never visited — to further his education as a doctoral student at Ole Miss. From there, he became the associate commissioner of Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and then later a professor and vice chancellor at UM from 1984 to 1988.

Meredith left Mississippi to serve as president of Western Kentucky University from 1988 to 1997, then went on to become chancellor of the University of Alabama System and the University System of Georgia. He returned to Mississippi to serve as commissioner of higher education for Mississippi’s eight public universities in 2005.

“You’re a little closer to the action when you are (at the university level),” Meredith said. “(As a professor, vice chancellor and president), I dealt with students and faculty face to face every day. When I was the head of a system, I had plenty of worries with each institution, but they weren’t at my door every day. When I was on a campus, I learned that I not only had to live with my decisions, but I also had to face them along with everyone around me.”

After Meredith’s 46-year career in education, he and his wife, Susan, moved to Oxford — for the third time in their lives.

“I hope people realize how important teaching is and how important being an administrator is for education, whether it’s for kindergarten or at a university level,” Meredith said. “It’s an opportunity that people in industry do not get to experience. We have something that no one else has — the opportunity to change lives. It doesn’t get any better than that.”
Shelton, a 25-year educator, did not originally envision herself as a teacher, but today, she wouldn’t have it any other way.

As UM director of pre-college programs, Shelton wears many hats. As administrator of UM’s online high school, she works with students who have military families, are chronically ill or do not do well in traditional schools. Under her leadership, the school has grown from 60 to 1,500 students in recent years. An advocate of writing, due to her background as an English teacher, she also mentors and encourages K-12 teachers to include writing in their classroom through the UM Writing Project, which she has directed for more than 16 years.

Among her other responsibilities, she is an avid grant writer. Shelton has landed more than $600,000 in grant money in the past five years, which has been used to educate student teachers.

Shelton holds a bachelor’s degree in English from Hendrix College, as well as a master’s degree in English and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from UM. She is a National Board-certified teacher and a past winner of a Milken Educator Award from the Milken Family Foundation.

Before her career with UM, Shelton taught at the high school level for 15 years. Once she began teaching in a rural Mississippi high school in the ’90s, she realized not everyone had the same opportunities and support in education as she had.

“College wasn’t even on the map for most of the students I taught in impoverished areas,” Shelton said. “In our state, there are a lot of kids who don’t get to visit campuses or see college in their futures because they didn’t have the same model I had growing up.”

Because of this realization, Shelton has helped establish programs through the UM Division of Outreach and Continuing Education, including summer camps for students who meet reduced or free-lunch criteria on UM’s campus.

“If we can help students see a future on a college campus, preferably the University of Mississippi, then what a difference we’re going to make in this state,” Shelton said. “That, to me, is really exciting and what gets me up in the morning.”

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**At a Glance**
- Director of the University of Mississippi Writing Project
- Director of Pre-College Programs through the UM Division of Outreach
- Administrator of University of Mississippi High School
- 2003 Milken Educator Award winner
- 2006 Teacher of the Year for Tupelo Public Schools
- National Board-certified teacher
- Former World Class Teaching Program mentor
PAMELA SMITH
Former teacher, public affairs leader and champion of economic education
PhD 01

Pamela Smith’s resume is filled with honors that many aspire to, including being named one of Mississippi’s 50 Leading Business Women. But, without the skills she learned in her own classroom, she says her career would not have played out the same.

“My classroom teaching prepared me for the planning and presentation skills and relationships with my public affairs jobs,” Smith said. “Learning how to write made a big difference too.”

Smith dedicated her life to education from the beginning of her career when she worked as a secondary education teacher and counselor. From 1980 to 1995, she served in several roles with the Illinois Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities, including executive assistant, director of communications and associate vice chancellor for public affairs and development. She then served as the chief public affairs officer at the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. Smith later earned a Ph.D. in higher education from UM in 2001.

From 2004 to 2010, she also served as president of the Mississippi Council on Economic Education. From 2004 to 2017, she served on the UM School of Education alumni advisory board, including serving as president from 2012 to 2014.

Through her experience as president of MCEE, Smith was able to provide resources teachers needed to effectively teach economics in high schools by implementing certification programs for teachers and providing lesson plans and supplies. During her tenure in this position, MCEE saw a 400 percent increase in funding.

“Most high school teachers aren’t trained on how to teach economics, even though everyone needs to know how to think and reason about economics and finance,” Smith said. “At first, I was fearful of the fundraising portion of the job because I had never done anything like that before, but we ended up becoming very successful through the support we had from people in business.”

How To Nominate Members of the Hall of Fame

All alumni of the UM School of Education are eligible to be nominated for induction into the School of Education Hall of Fame. The purpose of the Hall of Fame is to recognize alumni who have made outstanding contributions to the field of education and perpetuated the distinguished name of the School of Education.

Nominations for the 2019 class of Hall of Fame inductees will be accepted prior to March 17. Once nominations are finished, the alumni advisory board selects the inductees.

1. Visit education.olemiss.edu/hall-of-fame.
2. Enter the nominee’s information including name, address, email and phone number.
3. Enter the reasons and supporting information for why your nominee should be inducted such as his or her accomplishments and how he or she has honored the School of Education.
4. Enter your name and email.
5. Click submit.

At a Glance
- President, Mississippi Council on Economic Education
- Assistant commissioner for public affairs and development, Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning
- Associate vice chancellor for public affairs and development, Illinois Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities
- President, UM School of Education alumni advisory board
Bob and Sylvia Ferguson have dedicated more than 66 years to public education in Mississippi; however, their service did not end at retirement. Together, they have helped award more than $12 million in college scholarships, with 114 UM students receiving more than $2 million.

Each year, the Hall of Fame honors select nonalumni for their service to the state in education with its Outstanding Service Award. Bob and Sylvia Ferguson are the 2018 winners.

In 2000, the Fergusons formed the Tri-State Educational Foundation, which is funded by Riverhills Bingo in Iuka. A total of 98 percent of income from their bingo hall operation goes to helping students make it through school.

“A couple of years after retiring, we were approached by some civic-minded people in Iuka,” Bob Ferguson said. “We were informed that there were several bingo halls in town, and all of the money was leaving the area and going somewhere else.”

The Fergusons, high school sweethearts who have been married for more than 57 years, saw a problem they could fix and decided to open a bingo hall that would fund what they dedicated their lives to for so long — education. By awarding students who needed extra help to get through school, they could not only support local citizens but also make an economic contribution to the region.

“We get letters from kids who have gone on to do some really great things, and we really like seeing that,” Sylvia Ferguson remarked.

She began teaching home economics in 1962 in Kansas City, Kansas. From there, she became an elementary and secondary school teacher. Bob Ferguson began his career as an art teacher and football coach (also in Kansas City) until he and Sylvia moved to Corinth, Mississippi, where he served as principal at Corinth High School and progressed in roles across the state including superintendent of Long Beach School District on the Gulf Coast.

“Education has been good to us,” he said. “We have had a lot of experiences and a lot of fun together. I’m glad we’re able to give back.”

**At a Glance**

**Bob Ferguson**

- Bachelor’s degree, Delta State University
- Master’s degree, University of Kansas
- Principal, Corinth High School, 1967
- Principal, Columbia High School, 1970
- Superintendent of Long Beach School District, 1983
- Superintendent of Tishomingo County Schools
- Former state president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- Former adjunct professor for William Carey College and the University of Mississippi
- Outstanding Administrator Award winner, Mississippi Alliance for Arts Education
- Philanthropist of the Year, Mississippi Economic Council

**Sylvia Ferguson**

- Bachelor’s degree, Delta State University
- Master’s degree, University of Southern Mississippi
- Certified in elementary education through the University of Kansas
- Certified in gifted education from the University of Southern Mississippi
- Certified in vocational child care through the University of Mississippi
- Outstanding Teacher Award winner, Pass Christian School District
- Leo W. Seal Innovative Teacher Award winner
Kevin Allemand’s life changed when James Meredith visited UM’s campus to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the school’s integration. Seeing the civil rights icon in person sparked Allemand to learn everything he could about the movement.

“That event inspired me to march right up the steps of J.D. Williams Library and find what they had about the riot at Ole Miss,” Allemand said. “It motivated me to become a consumer of civil rights history.”

Allemand developed a class, titled Historical Research, the equivalent of an undergraduate college course, on the topic of the American civil rights movement at Hancock High School. The course includes a two-day research seminar at the Department of Archives and History in Jackson, Mississippi, for students to dive further into the specific topics they individually choose to study. Toward the end of the course, the students write a research paper with the knowledge they obtained from the trip.

“What I have found most meaningful in my career are the field trips and academic competitions that happen outside of the classroom,” he said. “I try to provide students with memorable learning experiences — I think those will be what they remember decades from now.”

He has also created a four-day spring break trip where students visit Mississippi “hotspots” in the state’s antebellum, Civil War, civil rights, music and literary history, along with various college campuses. The trip is aptly titled “A Look around Mississippi.”

Allemand’s educational philosophy is not focused on memorizing dates and names or assigning grades but rather to create informed, active citizens. Through his enthusiasm for the material, the rest falls into place.

Along with his other outside-the-classroom ventures, Allemand regularly takes his students across the state and Washington, D.C., to compete in history competitions.

“My advice to future teachers is to be bold and persistent with learning initiatives,” Allemand said. “Education is not about the teacher(s) and their level of expertise as much as it is about making connection with their students.”

At a Glance
- 2018 Hancock High School STAR Teacher
- Secured chapters of Rho Kappa national social studies honor society and National History Club
- Creator of Hancock High School’s “A Look around Mississippi” trip
- Developed a Historical Research course for his students
LaTonya Robinson
Sardis principal empowers teachers
BAEd 98, MEd 99

When LaTonya Robinson looks at a school, she sees opportunities for teachers to shape curricula that will help teachers to empower students through learning.

Robinson, who is in her second year as principal of Green Hill Intermediate School in Sardis, Mississippi, is all about teacher empowerment.

“I try to be the administrator that I would have wanted to have as a teacher,” Robinson said.

Through that mindset, Robinson set a pace of achieving measured success as an educator.

In 2016, her colleagues elected Robinson as Administrator of the Year for the Oxford School District, the same year OSD was ranked No. 1 in the state. During this time, she was principal at Della Davidson Elementary in Oxford.

Raised in Clarksdale, Mississippi, by her grandmother, Robinson said she lacked confidence before she came to Ole Miss. Through the support she received from her professors at the SOE, she was able to gain the tenacity she needed to be an effective teacher.

“When I left from Ole Miss, I was ready for the world,” Robinson said. “I was prepared, and I was going to teach fifth grade and do it with fidelity. I felt very assured that if something went wrong, I had several phone numbers I could call and talk through it. The confidence that Ole Miss gave me was immeasurable. I still harbor some of it today.”

She began as principal of Green Hill Intermediate in 2017. A D-rated school, she hopes to transform it into a high-performing school by providing support and an optimum school environment for her teachers and students.

Robinson expressed that more beginning teachers should be less afraid to teach in critical-needs school districts in the state.

“If a teacher can teach in a high-poverty area, they can teach anywhere,” she said.

Because her students experience “adult-like” stressors outside of school, she makes sure they can be children when they come to her building by spreading her infectious brand of happiness. She also tells her teachers not to worry about students’ test scores because that is her job. She just wants them to do what they love — teach.

Robinson was shocked when she learned she was receiving the award because, to her, she was just doing her job.

“One of the hallmarks of my personality is that I am always trying to figure out how to make things better,” Robinson said. “That’s important for education because it’s always evolving. I try to stay in front of those changes so that my children feel less of the brunt of anything that could fall down on them.”
Whitman Smith learned a necessary truth when he was a UM education major — his future didn’t lie in the K-12 classroom. Luckily, he found a career that combines his passion for young people and education at the UM Office of Admissions for the last 28 years.

“I had a friend who was a teacher,” Smith said. “On the first day she was in her classroom, I asked her how it was. She said she spent hours writing lesson plans and organizing and moving the classroom around. I realized that I’m not good at that stuff. I love children and telling stories and playing, but teaching isn’t playing.”

As director of admissions since 2013, Smith has seen numerous milestones in applications, admitted students and matriculating students. He is responsible for all areas of admission, including applications and processing, orientation, campus tours, and communications with prospective students and their families.

Since starting work at UM in 1990, Smith progressed in roles from a recruiter, to director of orientation and parent affairs, to director of recruiting and enrollment services, to his current position of director of admissions.

“I wasn’t sure what to do after college, so I went back to the university to apply for a job as an admissions counselor,” he said. “Many of my family members are college educators, so I became a college educator, not in the classroom but in the admissions realm. It was perfect for me since I have a great love for the university. Through orientation and student counseling, I have taught students about leadership and how to shake hands and all sorts of important lessons.”

When Smith was asked how he has convinced thousands of students to attend UM, he explained that he does not sell the university as a product but rather as an option. His main goal is to make prospective students feel comfortable during their visits here.

“Instead of only telling prospective students how old a building is and what’s inside of it, we try to build connections with them through conversation,” he said. “That’s what people remember — how they feel here.”

He also made it clear that without his colleagues, he would not have been able to have an impact on students the way he has done for nearly 30 years.

“An institution is defined by its people, and we have such great people,” Smith said. “When you’re surrounded by colleagues like them, you never really work.”

At a Glance
- Director of admissions, University of Mississippi
- Co-author of personal finance chapter in *The Ole Miss Experience*
- Chairman of orientation committee
- Member of Mississippi Alliance for Minority Participation
- Founder and chair of Fall Convocation
- Welcome Week coordinator and chairman
- Thomas Frist Student Service Award winner
- International Friendship Award winner
Patrick Wilcher
Making math exciting for Mississippi Gulf Coast students
BAEd 03, MEd 04

Patrick Wilcher is quick to cite Dean David Rock for his love of mathematics. “In Dean Rock’s math education classes, we talked about (the) Archimedes and Monty Hall simulation problems,” Wilcher said. “It was always interesting to learn how the subject matter came about. I’ve carried that over into my own lectures. A lot of students think that mathematics is kind of modern, but it’s actually been around for thousands of years.”

A math instructor at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College since 2006, Wilcher enjoys seeing freshman and sophomore students transform and gain confidence before they enter a university setting.

Wilcher mentioned Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham, his nominator and professor of curriculum and instruction, as having a large impact on his career after he worked as her graduate assistant while pursuing his master’s degree. “Dr. Oliphant wasn’t in the mathematics field, so we were kind of an odd couple,” Wilcher said. “But, she put a lot of responsibility on me and allowed me to run with projects and really grow. That’s something that has stood out for me over my entire career. She trusted me with assignments, and it worked out for me really well.”

An assistant men’s basketball coach at MGCCC for 10 years — in addition to his teaching role — Wilcher has helped 42 players progress to four-year universities. During his coaching tenure, the men’s basketball team won several regional, divisional and state championships, among other awards his players received.

Wilcher is also vice president of the Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics board of directors, a role in which he frequently presents at MCTM conferences. “Sometimes we take for granted that as educators, we get the chance to help people achieve and create dreams,” Wilcher said. “We experience and facilitate many positives, but sometimes we let the negatives take over. But, there’s always more positives. It channels from my students to their careers. There’s a whole pipeline of influence that I have the opportunity to impact. It’s hard to put that into context compared to any other career.”

At a Glance
- Mathematics instructor, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- Adjunct mathematics instructor, Martin Methodist College, Pulaski, Tennessee
- Former assistant men’s basketball coach, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and Martin Methodist College
- Vice president on the board of directors for the Mississippi Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- Member of National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- UM Outstanding Master’s Student for Secondary Education
- UM Elaine Dees Mullin’s Outstanding Secondary Mathematics Educator Award winner
Willie Price Lab School earns national accreditation
Pre-K facility recognized by national early childhood organization

The SOE’s Willie Price Lab School is now accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a highly prestigious designation that recognizes top standards in early childhood education.

To earn NAEYC accreditation, Willie Price, which serves local 3- and 4-year-old children, went through an extensive self-study and quality-improvement process, followed by an on-site visit by assessors. The renewable accreditation lasts for five years.

Less than 10 percent of programs nationwide hold this accreditation — roughly 7,000 institutions — according to NAEYC data. In Mississippi, 24 programs are accredited.

To earn the accreditation, schools must meet 10 research-based standards, which range from instructional techniques to safety, nutrition, staffing and community engagement. Throughout the process, Willie Price staff worked to meet and document hundreds of criteria within these standards and received support from UM’s Graduate Center for the Study of Early Learning to work with an accreditation consultant.

One result from this process is that Willie Price staff now keep an individual portfolio to assess and document the development of each child. The school serves more than 70 children.
2018 GRADUATE RECEIVES FULBRIGHT AWARD
Mulrooney to teach English as a second language in South Africa

Maria Mulrooney (MA 18), an SOE higher education graduate, was accepted into the highly selective Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program to serve as an English teaching assistant in South Africa next year.

Mulrooney is among more than 800 students selected for the program nationwide. The Palm City, Florida, native was selected for her essay in the application process and her academic achievements, as well as a record of service and leadership in education.

“I will teach English to either high school or college students for 25 hours a week and help the teachers with instruction and supplemental materials,” she said. “I can also meet with students after class and help them with language development. Then, in my spare time I can volunteer through other organizations.”

FLECK WINS OWENS SCHOLARSHIP
Gift supports future social studies educators

Social studies education major Emily Fleck received the 2018 Harry P. Owens Secondary Education Opportunity Scholarship.

Created in 2017 by SOE donors Bill (BAEd 78) and Ginny Street of Alabaster, Alabama, the endowment awards a $1,000 scholarship to an SOE secondary education major each year. The endowment was created in honor of Harry P. Owens, a longtime UM history professor and American Civil War scholar, who taught at UM for more than 35 years. Bill Street, a senior vice president at ServisFirst Bank, was a student of Owens and started his post-college career as a DeSoto County teacher in 1978.
Teachers help students ‘Fuel to Learn’
Faculty collaborates across departments to create nutrition curriculum

Several north Mississippi fourth-grade teachers are taking part in a UM study that aims to help children learn more about nutrition while also learning mathematics and English language arts.

Called “Fuel to Learn,” the project is funded by a grant from the Mississippi Center for Obesity Research at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson and led by Ole Miss faculty, including Melinda Valliant and Kathy Knight of the School of Applied Sciences, and SOE assistant professor Alicia Stapp.

Thirteen teachers are participating in the pilot program. In each lesson, students will learn a math or English language arts skill while also learning about healthy eating. For example, one lesson requires students to measure the grams of sugar in multiple beverages and then break that number down into milligrams.

The lessons are centered on five “key messages”: hydration, portion size, fruits and vegetables, dairy and healthy snacks.

During a meeting last summer at Ole Miss, Knight, Stapp, Valliant and recent UM graduate Sarah Howell trained the teachers — who hail from Myrtle, New Albany and Potts Camp — to implement the curriculum, which provides ready-to-go lesson plans.

Knight also explained that research on school breakfast programs shows that children who eat full breakfasts perform better academically.

Each Fuel to Learn lesson is aligned with Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards as well as learning objectives in individual subject areas. Developers hope that besides helping students learn, increased literacy in nutrition will improve long-term educational outcomes.

From September through January, teachers will teach a minimum of two lessons a month and upload their results to an online portal. The pilot curriculum includes 10 lessons in math and 10 in English language arts. Each teacher received a kit of teaching materials for their classrooms, as well.
JESSICA MUÑOZ RECEIVES ANDREW P. MULLINS SCHOLARSHIP

Teacher Corps alumna pursues doctorate in modern languages

Jessica Muñoz (MAT 18) is the third recipient of the Andrew P. Mullins Jr. Mississippi Teacher Corps Alumni Scholarship.

The award, which is designed to support Teacher Corps alumni who wish to pursue advanced graduate study at UM, will provide $2,000 in financial support for Muñoz, who will begin her Ph.D. studies in Spanish at UM. The award was endowed at UM in 2016 by Teacher Corps co-founder Andrew P. Mullins Jr.

The endowed scholarship is available to Teacher Corps alumni and may be awarded twice to individuals. Recipients may pursue an advanced degree in any field of their choosing on UM’s Oxford campus. The inaugural recipients of the scholarship award were husband-and-wife Derek and Kelly King, who first received the award in 2016.

MUSGROVES ENDOW NEW SCHOLARSHIP

Endowment supports students with financial need

Elementary education major Lindsay Roe was the first recipient of the Ronnie and Melody Musgrove Scholarship in 2018.

Ronnie Musgrove, former Mississippi governor, and Melody Musgrove, SOE associate professor, created the scholarship to support undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. The scholarship awards a $1,000 scholarship each year to a full-time, rising junior or senior education student. Recipients must meet all the requirements for entering the SOE’s undergraduate education program and have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher.

Muñoz and MTC co-founder Andrew P. Mullins Jr.

The Musgroves with Roe
The sixth cohort of METP has an average ACT score of 29.4.

**METP ADMITS 28 UM FRESHMEN**

_Sixth cohort of scholarship program hails from 11 states_

The sixth cohort of the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program at the University of Mississippi School of Education consists of 28 outstanding freshmen from 11 states, with an average high school GPA of 3.88 and ACT score of 29.4.

The program, which was originally designed for secondary education majors but now includes elementary and special education majors, is financially supported by the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation and provides up to four years of tuition, housing and living expenses, study abroad and more.

Established in 2012 with nearly $13 million, the scholarship was renewed in 2016 with more than $28 million for five years of funding. The program is designed to help stimulate Mississippi’s economy by recruiting top-performing students into the state’s education workforce.

The new cohort includes 10 elementary education majors, seven English education majors, five math education majors, three science education majors and three special education majors.

The incoming freshmen are Julia Alexander of Union; Olivia Arnold of Vancleave; Matthew Bailey of Sedalia, Missouri; Victoria Bamburg of Haughton, Louisiana; Madeleine Biddle of Brandon; Anna Kate Broussard of Covington, Louisiana; Parker Connell of San Antonio, Texas; Natalee Dixon of Hudson, Wisconsin; Kaylee Dupree of Tampa, Florida; Modena Edwards of Hernando; Andee Huskey of Ridgeland; Austyn Jones of Jackson; Margaret Lewis of Lake Forest, Illinois; Margaret Massengill of Brookhaven; Julianne May of Memphis, Tennessee; Georgia McGahee of Little Rock, Arkansas; Katherine Mobley of Coppell, Texas; Natallie Noel of Biloxi; Lilian Null of Corinth; SeLane Ruggiero of Southaven; Hannah Saizan of Pass Christian; Evelyn Smith of Oxford; London Smith of Wildwood, Missouri; Kathryn Spiers of Picayune; Kate Stalcup of Overland Park, Kansas; Katlin Third of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida; Caroline Underwood of Birmingham, Alabama; and Hannah Witherspoon of Southaven.
‘NOT A QUITTER’
Alumna Bettye Butler receives UM diploma at 87

When 87-year-old Oxford resident Bettye Butler (BAEd 18) decided she was going to finish her bachelor’s degree after a 38-year hiatus from UM, she picked up the phone one morning to ask about her remaining few credits.

“I’m not a quitter,” she said in a phone conversation.

After a little digging, Butler learned that due to shifts in university curricula since her last enrollment in 1979, she was no longer 6 credits short of qualifying for a bachelor’s degree in education and that School of Education Dean David Rock could authorize her graduation.

“This is truly an amazing story,” Rock said. “When we decided to take a look at her transcripts, I got a call from our director of academic advising, and she said, ‘I think you need to look at this,’ because, it turned out, she actually had more than enough credits for her degree.”

Last fall, Butler was presented her Ole Miss diploma by Rock at a private ceremony in Guyton Hall with her children and friends by her side. The presentation of Butler’s degree brings the total number of UM degrees in her immediate family to eight.

“It’s almost impossible to describe this feeling; I didn’t know it would mean this much to me,” Butler said at the ceremony. “There was always that little voice in the back of my head saying ‘go for it,’ but I didn’t ever think this would come true.”

The Butler family has deep roots in Oxford. Bettye and her husband, Jim, the former director of UM’s Alumni Association, who died in 2013 at age 86, first came to Ole Miss in 1961.

Jim Butler — who had played football for the Rebels in 1944 before serving in the U.S. Army during World War II and returning to UM to finish bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education — was returning to UM to begin a career in the Alumni Association.

Before joining the LOU community, the Butlers ran a restaurant in Pontotoc and later moved to New Albany, where they started a family and Jim worked as a teacher, coach and principal.

In 1962, the Butlers bought a house on Bramlett Boulevard — the only house for sale in Oxford at the time, Bettye points out — and raised three children: Carole, Mitzi and Lance.

The Butlers were an inseparable pair during their 64 years of marriage. During Jim’s tenure as UM alumni director, the association grew by more than 7,000 members and the Butlers traveled the nation as a team, visiting almost every state.

Following her ceremony, Bettye said she would hang her diploma on her wall beside multiple other UM degrees earned by the Butlers.

Butler received her diploma at a private ceremony in Guyton Hall.
PRINCIPAL CORPS INDUCES 10TH CLASS

Mississippi teachers begin career-shaping journey

Fourteen educators from across Mississippi make up the 10th cohort of the Principal Corps, UM’s elite program in K-12 educational leadership.

Over the past decade, the program has produced 107 graduates, nearly 90 percent of whom are serving in leadership roles in school districts in Mississippi and beyond.

In June, the group gathered for the first time at UM to begin the 13-month program. The Principal Corps uses both graduate course work in educational leadership and two full-time internships during the fall and spring semesters, which allow recruits to gain hands-on leadership experience under the supervision of experienced mentors.


Each graduate will earn either a Master of Education or Specialist in Education degree in educational leadership from UM. This degree, along with passing the School Leaders Licensure Assessment, will qualify them for a school administrator’s license. More than 80 percent of Principal Corps graduates pass the SLLA on the first attempt.

ALUMNA APPOINTED TO TENNESSEE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Higher education graduate takes public service role

SOE higher education alumna Amanda Walker (BA 01, MA 10) was appointed to the Tennessee Regional Planning Commission for the Clarksville-Montgomery County region in 2018.

Walker, who was nominated for the position by Clarksville Mayor Kim McMillian, serves as director of career services at Austin Peay and previously served as a recruiting coordinator at UM’s Career Center. During her tenure at Ole Miss, Walker also served as Staff Council president. She will serve a four-year term on the commission and provide leadership in the economic and physical development of the Clarksville-Montgomery County region.

“This commission appointment allows me the opportunity to provide oversight for our regional growth while following zoning and ordinance regulations in accordance with the regional growth model,” Walker said. “At the end of the day, the Tennessee Regional Planning Commission wants to make sure any future developments are in the best interest of our citizens, our community and our economy. It is an honor to serve not only my home state of Tennessee but also to serve the place I now call home, Clarksville, Tennessee.”
Some teachers make a lifelong impact on their students. Ann Monroe (MEd 02, EdD 07) is one of those teachers.

The 2018 winner of the Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher Award — UM’s highest teaching honor — Monroe is the SOE’s assistant dean and an associate professor of elementary education. Each year, the Hood award honors one Ole Miss faculty member who represents the highest standard of teaching excellence and student engagement. Students and faculty submit letters of nomination for the honor.

“I am shocked and honored,” Monroe said. “I think that, to me, the most touching part of this award is the fact that the nominations came from students who took away something meaningful from their experience with me and had the willingness to take the time to share it. For me, that’s very special.”

An educator for more than 21 years, Monroe identifies herself as a third-grade teacher who is preparing future teachers for the classroom. On the wall of her office in Guyton Hall, Monroe has framed photos of her third-grade classes from her first teaching job at Thrasher Elementary School in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, which she started in 1997.

Monroe still keeps up with a few of her first students — at least one has even crossed her path as an Ole Miss student. She estimates that she has taught more than 5,000 students in her career.

“When I left my third-grade classroom, it was a bittersweet moment, but I had to do it to come here,” Monroe said. “I still miss the opportunity to be in a third-grade classroom sometimes, but working at the university level, I don’t just impact 25 students at a time. I get the chance to impact future teachers who go on to inspire thousands.”

Monroe’s teaching philosophy centers on building relationships. Her students describe her as “passionate,” “dedicated” and “enthusiastic.”

“Teaching is not a one-way relationship,” Monroe said. “There needs to be back and forth because your students are not going to learn from you if they don’t know you.”

Monroe moved to Oxford in 2001 with her husband, Stephen Monroe, UM chair of writing and rhetoric, and started at the SOE as a master’s student.

“Stephen received a fellowship to study Faulkner at Ole Miss, and I wasn’t about to let him go alone,” she said. “When I arrived in Oxford, I met with Dr. Fannye Love, the SOE associate dean at the time, and she offered me an assistantship on the spot because I already had teaching experience. We knew after our first year that we wanted to go all the way here.”

In her effort to “go all the way,” Monroe has held a series of roles at the school including teaching assistant, graduate instructor, instructor, doctoral student, visiting assistant professor, assistant professor, associate professor and, most recently, assistant dean.

Science education major Carly Rock of Oxford is one of the students who nominated Monroe for the award.

“(Dr. Monroe) is setting the ultimate example of what we, as future teachers, should strive to be,” Rock wrote. “One way I look at this award is that all of the previous recipients are outstanding professors in their content area for so many reasons, but they all have one thing in common ... they started out in a classroom being taught by a teacher who inspired them. Dr. Monroe is that teacher who inspires us to change the world one student at a time.”
ALUMNA APPOINTED TO MISSISSIPPI AUTISM BOARD
Doctor of Education graduate applies dissertation research in new leadership role

University of Mississippi higher education alumna Krystal Thurman Berry (EdD 18) has been appointed by Gov. Phil Bryant to the Mississippi Autism Board for a four-year term, ending June 30, 2022.

Thurman Berry, who also serves as assistant director for training and professional development for the Mississippi Community College Board, will serve as the parent/family member representative of the autism board, which licenses applied behavior analysts and assistant behavior analysts in the state.

“This board has a narrow but important purpose geared toward helping some of our most vulnerable Mississippians receive the services they need,” Thurman Berry said. “I’m looking forward to offering my perspective as a parent and scholar-practitioner to further the board’s mission.”

Thurman Berry earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration from Arkansas State University. Her dissertation topic at UM was titled “Experiences of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Mississippi Community Colleges.”
COPE provides mental health services for the LOU community.

COPE CLINIC RELOCATES TO SOUTH OXFORD CENTER
Growing clinic serves LOU community, provides training for counselor education students

UM’s Counselor Education Clinic for Outreach and Personal Enrichment has moved to a new location at the university’s new South Oxford Center.

Previously located at UM’s Insight Park, COPE moved to 2301 S. Lamar Blvd., due to the clinic’s need for more space. Part of the UM School of Education, COPE offers mental health counseling services for children, adolescents, college students and adults.

COPE is open from noon to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

“It’s as though the space was built for us,” said Alexandria Kerwin, COPE clinic coordinator and assistant professor of counselor education. “In addition to serving UM students, we also provide services to the community. The location makes us more accessible to the public.”

The clinic also trains master’s and doctoral students enrolled in UM’s counselor education program.

“We are excited about COPE’s new location,” said Mandy Perryman, associate professor and coordinator of counselor education at UM. “As our students become counselors-in-training, they have a wonderful facility to use. There are several spacious counseling rooms and playrooms, as well as offices and a conference room. Clients can easily find us and park without any trouble.”

COPE has grown significantly in scope since opening in 2015 and recently experienced an influx of referrals. COPE provides services for the benefit and convenience of the local public and sets its fees on a sliding scale based on income. UM students may use the COPE clinic free of charge.

ALUMNUS NAMED STATE EDUCATION BOARD CHAIRMAN
Former UM staff member familiar with leadership roles

University of Mississippi School of Education alumnus Jason S. Dean (MA 99, PhD 03) was named chairman of the Mississippi State Board of Education in August 2018.

Dean will serve in this position for two years. A former UM assistant dean of students, Dean is vice president of Tenax Aerospace, based in Madison, Mississippi. Previously he worked as vice president of the Mississippi Economic Council and was a policy adviser to former Gov. Haley Barbour. He is a former White House Fellow.

“After completing my degree at Ole Miss, I began my career in education at the university as the assistant dean of students and then visiting professor,” he said.

“I went to Jackson to serve as Gov. Barbour’s education policy adviser hoping to only serve for two to three years, but Hurricane Katrina changed that plan.

“I went to work in Washington, D.C., and later came back home to work for the Mississippi Economic Council. So when Lt. Gov. Reeves nominated me to the state board, I felt it was a great opportunity to do my part in improving student achievement and the future of our state.”
Guyton Hall: A Brief History

by Liz McCormick

In recent years, Guyton Hall and its surrounding grounds have undergone a dramatic renovation, including the construction of an annex. But the School of Education’s home is no stranger to renovation and construction. Guyton Hall has found itself meeting the needs of many different departments and programs throughout its 81-year history.

In 1928, the University of Mississippi secured a grant for $1.6 million from Mississippi Gov. Theodore G. Bilbo, to be used for a campus development program. One of the most important expansions in this program included a medical building to be used as a student hospital with new laboratories.

At a cost of $125,000, construction began in the early 1930s. The Classical Revival-style building was named after the first dean of the UM medical school, Dr. Billy Sylvester Guyton. Due to lack of funds, the interior of the building was not completed, so the medical building sat idle for several years. By 1937, the “B.S. Guyton Building” was finally completed, and the new laboratories were furnished with state-of-the-art equipment.

After the School of Medicine was moved to Jackson in 1956, Guyton was occupied by the Student Health Service, Air Science Tactics and the departments of Aerospace Studies and Military Science. In 1967, James Mann established the Research and Training Center for the Handicapped, originally housed in the Old Chemistry building. When the Old Chemistry building underwent renovation, the center moved to Guyton Hall until 1994.

Guyton Hall was fully renovated in 2003 and has been home to the School of Education since 2004. Today, with its new exterior, Guyton is home to nearly 1,500 education students.
Through partnerships with the Marks Project, SOE students are raising awareness of educational opportunities in the Mississippi Delta

by Christina Steube

Just 45 miles west of the University of Mississippi, the small Delta town of Marks in Quitman County faces many complicated socioeconomic challenges. Decades of economic decline have affected many aspects of life, causing educational resources to suffer. Children have little-to-no recreation or afterschool programming. Adults have few employment opportunities. But, some help is on the horizon.

UM School of Education students and alumni are working with the Marks Project, a multifaceted 501(c)(3) initiative aimed at improving the quality of life for the people of Marks and Quitman County. The project aims to bolster opportunities through education, economic development and recreation.

Quitman County has a population of about 7,300, but that number is declining, especially its percentage of younger residents, according to U.S. Census data. More than 32 percent of the county is living in poverty.

“The Marks Project is one great example of service to the state of Mississippi and to communities that have been impacted by economic change over time,” said David Rock, SOE dean. “It’s important for our students to have a sense of what’s going on in rural America and to have the opportunity to work with children who need the same educational investment that children everywhere deserve. I think it’s exciting how our students want to get involved and make a difference.”

Since 2016, multiple SOE-affiliated groups have worked with the Marks Project to positively affect the lives of children through tutoring and other aid. Student volunteers from Jumpstart, which is coordinated through the UM Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction, visit preschool classrooms at Quitman County Elementary School to read to children and work on kindergarten readiness. SOE students in the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program, or METP, also travel to Marks to tutor middle school children in mathematics and language arts.

These efforts are just a part of something bigger happening within the Marks Project. But the results from programs like these are already starting to make a difference. Last year, Quitman County Middle School improved its rating from an F to a D school, the first of hopefully many educational achievements from the Marks Project.

Charles Ross, Marks Project committee chairman and UM director of African American studies, said the SOE has been extremely supportive of the project by providing resources and educational opportunities for students from the community.

“There are numerous efforts and programs that are trying to provide educational support for students in Marks

“We truly appreciate the willingness of the [UM] School of Education to be directly involved in trying to help young people who are in a crucial stage of their academic journey.”

— Charles Ross
Marks Project committee chairman
Director, UM African American studies

and Quitman County,” Ross said. “We truly appreciate the willingness of the School of Education to be directly involved in trying to help young people who are in a crucial stage of their academic journey.”

The Marks Project was co-founded by Oxford banker Mitch Campbell, whose eyes were opened to the situation in Marks when a friend, whose father was a farmer in Marks, told him to go see the community for himself. While there, he
visited with multiple local leaders, including former Quitman County Middle School principal Cortez Moss (BA 12).

As Campbell spoke to more people, a narrative started to emerge.

“The message was consistent,” he said. “It was child-related: ‘What can we do to catch these kids earlier?’ The fact was that there was no playground or organized sports, nothing. The first thing we did was to reach out to Cortez Moss. He said that if I had the resources to provide afterschool tutoring, he could move the students from here to there academically.”

With this opportunity in mind, Campbell and leaders from the Marks Project reached out to multiple entities at UM, including the SOE with the thought that sustainable change in Marks had to start with education.

Making an Impression in Middle School

In 2016, 53 Quitman County Middle School students participated in Saturday visits to the Ole Miss campus for the first time. These visits involved tutoring sessions in reading, language arts and math taught by Ole Miss education students participating in METP, one of the nation’s most competitive scholarship programs for aspiring teachers. The program recruits top-performing students from around the country to come to Mississippi and study education and make a commitment to teach in the state for five years after graduation.

Blake Adams, METP program coordinator, quickly observed during these visits that the Quitman students were interested in college life, some having never seen a college campus, though they live roughly an hour from the state’s flagship university.

Adams, a native of the Mississippi Delta, said the Marks students face many challenges as they try to become successful in their academics.

“Not only have the vast majority experienced academic growth through the tutoring program,” Adams said, “but they have also been exposed to thinking about their next step whatever that may be — four-year university, community college, trade school or even just getting through high school.”

The Marks tutoring project has continued to grow. Last fall, METP students traveled to Quitman County twice a week to provide in-school assistance, and even more middle school students participated in campus visit sessions this spring.

METP student Breanna Comley said working with the Marks Project over the past two years was a rewarding and humbling experience.

“I have watched this school district grow with collaboration from the community,” said Comley, a Belleville, Illinois, native. “But I think the most rewarding aspect of the Marks Project is the students. Their potential and hunger for learning is unmatched. I hope to stay involved as we grow the Marks Project and make even more of an impact on the Mississippi Delta.”

But these visits haven’t been all work and no play. After the tutoring sessions at UM, students participated in activities such as scavenger hunts arranged by UM Campus Recreation and art workshops at the UM Museum.

Delta native Khadijah Fisher, an AmeriCorps VISTA worker in the SOE, also works to sustain the partnership by connecting low-income students with resources in the SOE and coordinating campus visits and tutor travel to Marks.

“We’re trying to bridge the gap for educationally disadvantaged students,” she said. “These students just need a little extra time with a variety of people. Some students learn differently, and the Ole Miss students can offer them a better understanding from a different point of view.”

The tutors not only educate but also inspire middle school students. In just one year, test scores show most students participating in tutoring sessions have improved significantly in English and math.

“Every scholar who has participated in this program has not only begun to think more deeply about college, but this has also translated into incredible growth of students in math and English language arts.”

— Cortez Moss

Former Quitman County Middle School principal

“The tutors have a big influence on the students, which leaves them thinking, ‘If they can do it, I can do it,’” Fisher said. “For the SOE students, they get to experience the Delta and see how impoverished it really is.”

Moss, who was principal of Quitman County Middle School from 2016 to 2018, said he’s seen major transformations through the partnership, including increased interest from students in learning and a desire to talk about college more.

“Every scholar who has participated in this program has not only begun to think more deeply about college, but this has also translated into incredible growth of students in math and English language arts,” Moss said.

Moss graduated from UM in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in public policy leadership. After participating in Teach for America, the Calhoun City native wanted to make a difference in the Mississippi Delta. Quitman County provided him with that opportunity.
Moss became the Mississippi Department of Education’s director of talent acquisition July 1. He will work on teacher recruitment and retention and developing programs to help educators grow professionally. He is also working on a doctoral degree in educational leadership at UM.

The Marks Project has helped one SOE alumnus in particular. Drew Hall (BAEd 18), a Houston, Texas, native, graduated in May with a degree in secondary English education and will begin teaching seventh grade at Quitman Middle this fall. Hall said that in his work with the Marks Project during his junior year, he was able to work with teachers and administrators in Quitman County.

“I feel very fortunate that the School of Education has so many opportunities like the Marks Project, to get its students involved with the surrounding communities,” Hall said. “My professors and courses focused on more than just learning how to be a decent teacher but how to go above and beyond by showing empathy and putting the students first.”

SOE students have worked on other educational initiatives within the Marks Project, including the High School ACT Boot Camp. In a partnership with Madison S. Palmer High School in Marks, SOE students volunteered to conduct a half-day workshop to prepare nearly 40 students to take the ACT last year.

**Investing Early**

Jumpstart, a national early childhood education organization, operates its Mississippi chapter out of the SOE’s Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction. Its mission is to recruit and train college students to serve preschool children in low-income communities through language and literacy skills. Starting last spring, UM sent volunteer teachers to Marks during the school year.

Olivia Morgan (BAEd 12, MEd 13), the Mississippi program manager for Jumpstart, sent seven UM student volunteers to preschool classrooms at Quitman County Elementary School twice a week last year.

These students hail from multiple majors and use songs, poems and hands-on activities to promote language and literacy.

“Our members definitely noticed growth in alphabet knowledge and vocabulary over the semester,” Morgan said. “The purpose is to prepare kids for kindergarten so they are able to learn to read.”

By the end of the year, 4- and 5-year-old students were able to tell if something was translucent or opaque, vocabulary words they had never been previously introduced to, as a result of student volunteers working with them.

“We expose them to new things through different learning activities,” Morgan said. “For example, we bring a hair dryer to the classroom and items like feathers and rocks to show students the difference between light and heavy. These children have really responded to our methods.”

This opportunity has also positively affected UM’s student volunteers. For education majors, this collaboration is beneficial because they gain hundreds of hours of hands-on experience.

“I am a freshman this year, so I was eager to get involved in the SOE as soon as possible,” said Mary Moore, an English education major from Flower Mound, Texas. “I saw that Jumpstart was looking to fill positions, so I applied. Now, I love going to see the kids every week and building meaningful relationships with them. My favorite thing about serving in Jumpstart has to be the opportunities it has provided me. Because of my service, I have made an impact on many children.”

Some student volunteers who are not education majors felt called to the field, as well.

“My favorite part about serving is seeing the impact my team and I have on our kids’ lives,” said Randarious Cooper, a marketing and corporate relations major from Lexington, Mississippi. “They always welcome us with warm hearts and smiles stretched across their faces. Also, spending time with the kids makes you appreciate the little things in life.”

**Looking Forward**

This fall, SOE students will return to Marks. Jumpstart will continue its partnership with Quitman County Elementary School, and METP students plan to work specifically with students who are nearly proficient in English and math with the goal of raising their performance levels.

These sessions typically have one tutor for every four-to-five students, allowing them to spend more time helping each student individually. UM on-campus tutoring sessions will also continue next spring, as more students will travel to UM to get exposure to new ways of learning and college life.

In addition to Quitman County Middle School’s rise in rankings, other signs show the Marks Project is creating change there. In the last year, a local playground has been reopened to children, thanks to a private donation to the Marks Project. The project has also helped reopen a local fitness center and is working with UM to offer nutrition classes.

FedEx recently presented the Marks Project with a grant to assist with enrichment programs for children, and the city of Marks has provided land, which the project will use for a ballpark and playground.

Campbell also hopes to partner with community colleges to provide specialized job training in Marks.

He said everything happening there needs to be measurable and sustainable.

“We are going to keep working with 3- and 4-year-olds, because that’s our (long-term) investment,” Campbell said. “But we also want to take on creating opportunities for the 18- and 19-year-olds, too, and work on job training. We’re really trying to develop a future there.”

Christina Steube is an SOE alumna (MA 18) and a UM communications specialist.
ALICIA STAPP, EdD
Assistant professor, wellness and physical activity
Hometown: St. Cloud, Florida

Stapp is the SOE’s 2018 Outstanding Teacher Award winner. Stapp helped create UM’s Wellness and Physical Education endorsement. Her mission is to educate and develop the whole child through academic, physical and emotional growth by bringing movement and music into the classroom.

Wellness Connection
“When I was teaching elementary school, I started wondering why teachers weren’t incorporating at least a small amount of movement throughout the day. Kids sit all day long and are being tested, but we are not allowing connections to be made to the content through movement. So, that’s how the idea of our Wellness and Physical Activity program began.”

On Teaching Wellness
“Even though I love what I’m doing, it’s not about me. It’s about the impact I can have on children because they are our future generation. It’s our responsibility as adults to lift up and change the trajectory of health through academics. I teach future teachers because I know they will have impact on thousands. I only get to directly impact 30 students in each course that I teach, but each of those students will go out and impact 30 students a year for the next 25 years.”

Looking Ahead
“I’m always thinking 100 years ahead. The long-term impact that I know these types of classroom strategies can have on children makes my career worth it. Also, knowing that there are hundreds, maybe even thousands, of pre-service teachers who will be making such a difference in the lives of kids every single day encourages me to do my job well.”
HUNTER TAYLOR, EdD
MA 08
Clinical assistant professor and recruiter, Mississippi Teacher Corps
Hometown: White Oak, Texas

Taylor is the SOE’s new recruiter for the Mississippi Teacher Corps. The Texas native recently completed the Presidential Leadership Scholars Program, during which he had the opportunity to meet Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Teacher Corps Alumnus
“I’m in a special position to have graduated from the MTC and to now be back with the program. I think it helps with empathy, knowing how difficult the program is.”

Presidential Leadership Scholars
“The program does a great job at fostering camaraderie, even when we all came into this with different backgrounds. We came from different parts of the country, different races, different genders, different occupations, and when we had our last module together, there were tears because our time learning together was over.”

Meeting Presidents Clinton and Bush
“Meeting both presidents was incredible. Interacting with President Clinton was like talking to a great professor. For every point he made, he cited sources and followed up with a personal narrative. His responses could last 20 minutes, but you were hanging on every word. President Bush utilized humor and vulnerability. Everyone who had time with him was grinning from ear to ear, and then we all watched a different kind of emotion come out when he spoke to us as a group about the harrowing events of 9/11 and the war that followed. The experience gave me a deep appreciation and respect for the (weight) of the office. Both are remarkable men.”
CUTTING EDGE
COUNSELOR EDUCATION

DARIUS WATKINS
BA 13, MEd 16
School counselor at KIPP Collegiate Middle School, Memphis, Tennessee
Hometown: Southaven, Mississippi

Watkins is a graduate of the MEd in counselor education program. His experiences at Ole Miss led him to be an effective leader in his field and to pursue his doctoral degree.

Counseling Philosophy
“A lot of students look up to you as a counselor. They look to see how you handle conflict and see what you do on a daily basis. If you are consistent day in and day out, they will believe in you. Consistency, compassion and empathy are my philosophy.”

Role Model
“My grandma is my role model. She is someone who treats everyone with respect and kindness. She taught me empathy, which helps me be a good counselor.”

Professional Advice
“I was never a big talker until I decided that I wanted to pursue counselor education. You have to open up more and be more vulnerable if you want to have an impact in this field. You have to be completely open and honest with the kids.”

Research Focus
“My research focus is on college readiness for students with ADHD or special needs. So right now I’m focusing on state testing scores because they do have a correlation — to a certain degree — with college readiness.”
DENISE SOARES, PhD
Assistant chair of teacher education and associate professor of special education
Hometown: Houston, Texas

Soares is the SOE’s 2018 Outstanding Service Award winner. Nominated by her students, one noted that “Dr. Soares is the personification of the word ‘service’” and a “powerhouse of leadership” due to the great lengths she goes to mentor students and support her colleagues.

Research Focus
“Connecting my research to what I teach pre-service teachers is extremely rewarding to me. Special education teachers leave the profession at double the rate of general education teachers. Using research, I am trying to determine what I can do to help this statistic; if I can teach pre-service teachers about the reality of teaching, it will hopefully prepare them to be more successful and stay teaching.”

Career Journey
“When people ask me why I went back to school to get my master’s degree in administration and supervision, I tell them as a teacher, I could impact every student in my own classroom, but as an administrator, I could impact every student that came through the doors of the school. I worked in administration for a while and enjoyed it, but I knew there had to be more I could do. So, I went back to school and got my doctorate so I could impact more students by training teachers.”

Classroom Philosophy
“I have always worked with students with severe social, emotional and behavioral needs. As a teacher, I started every morning with my students by reminding them that today was a clean slate. It didn’t matter what happened yesterday or last month, today was a new day.”
Jay Cossey
EdD Candidate
Principal, Pope School, South Panola School District
Hometown: Corinth, Mississippi

Cossey is finishing his EdD in educational leadership from the SOE. Through this program, the school leader has learned how to apply his dissertation research to improving student learning at his own school.

Choosing Ole Miss
“I was previously an assistant principal in the Tupelo School District. I loved what I did but knew that I needed something that made a difference: a difference in my practice, in the way that I thought about things and that gave me the opportunity to build a professional network of people that I could count on. This program has been very practical and very beneficial. It’s helped me move from the assistant principal role to principal role and hopefully one of the leaders in principalship.”

Aha! Moments
“As a teacher, you always look for that ‘Aha!’ moment that kids experience in the classroom. In leadership, you still look for those ‘Aha!’ moments with the kids, but really what you want to see is that ‘Aha!’ moment in your faculty. It’s that ‘wow’ moment when your staff sees the big picture. It’s about making a difference in a child’s life.”

EdD Experience
“My favorite aspect of this program is the cohort mentality. I typically like to work alone; I’ve always felt that I can handle the world by myself. In this program, I learned that where other people are strong, it complements the areas where I need additional support.”
DEIDRA JACKSON, PhD  
MA 95, PhD 18  
Hometown: Columbus, Mississippi

Jackson is a recent PhD graduate in higher education and a former UM faculty member in journalism. Today, she combines these experiences as a contributing writer for Inside Higher Ed.

**PhD Experience**

“I really enjoyed being able to have a camaraderie with my professors. They were our professors first, then later mentors, then later colleagues, which I really appreciate. Their willingness to take a step further to help us excel was really great. It was great to work with peers who maybe knew something that I didn’t know, or saw something that I didn’t see.”

**Looking Forward**

“I see myself teaching still, and continuing to write. I see myself probably, if not on a college campus, affiliated in some way with higher education. I hope to be publishing my research and definitely writing in some capacity.”

**Higher Ed versus Journalism**

“My philosophy toward higher education stems back to when I was in journalism. I’ll always have a love and a respect for the basics, the foundations of journalism. For higher education, I think it’s the same. There are some basic foundations of higher education. I don’t think the basics and foundations of higher education should be sacrificed for the sake of innovation, the shiny bells and whistles. I think both have a place.”
ARIELLE HUDSON  
BAEd Candidate  
METP fellow, orientation leader  
Hometown: Tunica, Mississippi

Hudson is a fellow in the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program, majoring in secondary English education. Her own educational experience in the Mississippi Delta inspired her to pursue a career in teaching, and she hopes to return to the region to make a difference in the classroom.

When Teaching Calls  
“I’ve known I wanted to teach since I was a little girl, playing school with my cousins. Eventually as I got older, I became a peer tutor, and I saw firsthand the impact that I had on my peers in their educational journeys.”

Delta Roots  
“I think my passion for teaching comes from my own educational experience. Growing up in the Mississippi Delta, I always faced a lack of resources and lack of teachers who truly cared about student success. Having gone through that experience, I can see that having someone who truly cares about you in your educational journey can inspire or motivate you to do well in school.”

Her Motivation  
“My favorite part of the education field is seeing students actually grasp and understand a concept. Kids light up when they finally understand what you’re trying to teach them. So you can see how you’re actually making a difference in their lives.”

Five-Year Plan  
“I definitely see myself in the classroom. I would like to go back to my hometown to teach or an area where I can make a difference in.”
Burhanettin Keskin, PhD
Associate professor, early childhood education
Hometown: Erzurum, Turkey

Keskin received the SOE’s 2018 Outstanding Research Award. Since joining UM in 2013, he has published 10 scholarly articles, three of which appeared in widely read journals this academic year, including SAGE Open.

Teaching Philosophy
“One of the most effective approaches to get the material across to my students is to grab their attention before I start lecturing. The best way to do that is to choose something mundane and take a closer look at it from a unique perspective that the students have probably never been exposed to. Suddenly, they are all ears. That’s how I teach — to look at something seemingly mundane with a different perspective.”

On Research
“I don’t really see much separation between teaching and research. When I am preparing for my teaching, I have to read extensively, which gives me ideas for research. Just like when I’m in the classroom, if a student makes a comment that turns a light on in a dark corner of my mind, I get ideas from them. So, I respond to them in the same way they respond to me. We both share new ideas with each other.”

Making Connections
“We’re all connected one way or another, regardless of the different backgrounds we might have. But, there’s something in all of us that’s similar. When you tap into that, the environment becomes an optimum place to learn. First, you see those similarities and then build from there and expand your knowledge from the differences. That’s why I love teaching. I love to be in that environment.”
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