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Graduate School

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

Kristen Hymel

Scholar Embraces Family Ties

Kristen Hymel got goose bumps the first time she stepped on the University of Mississippi campus as an undergraduate. Her family has a strong connection to the University; she is a descendent of Dr. Andrew Armstrong Kincannon for whom Kincannon Hall was named and of Senator J.Z. George for whom George Hall was named. With the mentoring of Dr. Kenneth Suftka and the support from her mother, she continued her education at Ole Miss and will be receiving a Ph.D. in Psychology.

Research:

Hymel helped to develop a model for anxiety using chicks. She has not only studied the biological and physical effects of the disorder but also worked with the Thad Cochran Center to develop new drug therapies.

Achievements:

Hymel was involved with the Graduate Student Council for four years. She worked to better graduate student life on campus. She was the national director for outreach for the National Organization for Graduate Professional Students. Throughout her graduate career she has been a teaching assistant and taught undergraduate students. She has also presented her research at the National Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience.

Future Plans:

Hymel will be a post-doctoral fellow at Torrey Pines Institute of Molecular Studies in Port St. Lucie, Florida. She hopes to later work for a university so she can pursue a career teaching and continue researching.

What Does Earning A Ph.D. Mean:

“It is the largest accomplishment I’ve ever had or succeeded with; five years of brutal pain, but worth every minute of it.”

Graduate School

Valeria Beasley-Ross

Against All Odds

Valeria Beasley-Ross arrived at the University of Mississippi with a high school diploma and began a job as a senior secretary. With the support of her friends and family, she has climbed the academic ladder and will be receiving a Ph.D. in Higher Education.

Motivation for Furthering Education:

Ross's educational journey began with her mother, who stressed the importance of education not only to Ross, but to her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her life partner, who pushed her to apply to graduate school, reinforced her strong support base. Ross's desire to obtain a terminal advanced degree was not just a personal quest. She was determined to make a better life for her daughters and inspire them to continue in their own education.

Achievements:

Ross obtained a Ph.D. while working in the Office of the Dean of Students as the Assistant Dean of Students for Multicultural Affairs and Volunteer Services. She is the advisor to the Black Student Union, African Caribbean Student Association, National Pan-Hellenic Council, the University of Mississippi Gospel Choir and supervises the Americorps Campus Link Team. While working at the University she has been honored by numerous student organizations.

Future Plans:

Ross hopes that her degree will help with her pursuit of an upper level administrative position in higher education, but more importantly she hopes this will help with the future academic successes of her family. She is now in the position to motivate and inspire her daughters to continue their educations. With her degree, she will increase the quality of life opportunities for her family.

What Does Earning A Ph.D. Mean:

"It means that I have demonstrated the ability to conduct and report research, to problem solve, to think critically, to use intellectual ideas, and theories. I also think (and hope) it demonstrates for me, that I

appreciate the people and educational resources that the university affords to me as a member of the institution's community."

Graduate School

UM Strikes First

Sumedhe Karunaratne

When looking for a graduate school Sumedhe Karunaratne applied to nine universities. The University of Mississippi was the first university to send him an offer, so he accepted. He never missed a single lecture and he enthusiastically taught undergraduates, while maintaining a perfect GPA. His academic dedication has led him to a Ph.D. in Physics.

Research:

Karunaratne studies and develops models of the initial break down pulses and stepped leader propagation of lightning. His group is the first to find the location of initial break down pulses in a storm.

Achievements:

Karunaratne maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout his graduate career while serving as an instructor. He was awarded the 2011 Graduate Instructor Excellence in Teaching award. He is also a member of Phi Kappa Phi Honors Society and was chosen as Class Marshal for 2013.

Future Plans:

Karunaratne will continue down the path of education by experimenting with discovery teaching. He will continually learn more in hopes of improving the world around him.

What Does Earning A Ph.D. Mean:

“Everything!”

Graduate School

UM Accountancy School Programs Ranked Nationally

By Tyler Carter

Dr. Mark Wilder is the Dean of the Patterson School of Accountancy here at the University of Mississippi. Wilder graduated with his bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama, obtained his M.B.A. from the University of South Alabama, and his Ph.D. in accounting from Florida State University. Wilder is a Certified Public Accountant and has served as the Dean of the Patterson School of Accountancy since 1993. Wilder teaches classes as well as balances the day to day operations within the school.

In the most recent annual national rankings of accounting programs (released in late August 2013), all three of the University of Mississippi's accountancy degree programs were ranked number one in the SEC and in the top 10 nationally. The undergraduate program was ranked fourth in the nation; the Master's program was ranked fifth, with the Ph.D. program coming in at number 8. Wilder is very pleased about the strides the School is making and attributes the success, in large part, to the many efforts of the faculty in being committed to having a top rate program. He noted, "What cannot be emphasized enough is the great work of our faculty in helping our program and students. They work together towards our common goal and vision of having one of the top programs in the country."

Wilder noted that in addition to great faculty, other factors have contributed to the rise of the program. One of these has been the growth in private support over the past 15 years or so. The School of Accountancy's endowment has grown substantially in recent years and plays an extremely important role in providing support for faculty and scholarships for students. In addition, just over a decade ago the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) located their library here effectively creating the National Library of the Accounting Profession on the University of Mississippi's campus. Several other top universities were in contention for the AICPA library, but the University of Mississippi was chosen to serve as its new home. Wilder also said that having the AICPA library on the Ole Miss campus significantly enhanced the national visibility and reputation of the School of Accountancy.

Some of the core values of the school for many years have been a strong commitment to high quality teaching and helping students. In addition, the school's research profile continues to get stronger each

year. Wilder noted that in his eyes, “The school needs to continue on our current path of enhancing our research reputation, but doing so while maintaining the steadfast commitment to excellence in the classroom that has been the hallmark of the University of Mississippi’s accountancy program for decades.”

Students who graduate from the University of Mississippi’s accountancy program are either working for large accounting firms, CEOs, CFO’s, executives, or either starting their own businesses. This can be attributed to the foundation they received here. Jessie Austin, former accountancy student spoke highly of Dr. Wilder and his staff.

“Dean Wilder and his staff really do take an interest in your success in the classroom and in the work field,” said Austin. “My professors pushed me throughout my undergraduate career and they encouraged me on into my graduate program.”

The accountancy program here is one of the best and that can be seen by the ranking each level of education earned. Wilder knows that great strides were taken before his tenure and simply wants to continue moving in the right direction.

“We have a great foundation of success that was started here decades ago,” said Wilder. “We have outstanding professors who are thoroughly committed to teaching and mentoring students. Our students are also outstanding and work hard and go on to have successful careers. And our alumni generously support our efforts and are extremely loyal. All these things work together to help us have one of the top accounting programs in the nation.”

Two Degrees, Same University

By Tyler Carter

Jessie Austin is a 24-year-old recent University of Mississippi graduate from Jackson, Miss. Austin obtained his Bachelor of Accountancy degree here in 2011 and recently completed his Master's degree in Taxation degree in May of this year. Austin was thoroughly involved both academically and socially during his tenure here from 2007-2013. He was a member of the Ole Miss Class of 2011 Student Hall of Fame, an Orientation Leader, a member of the Columns Society, a Resident Assistant, Director of Student Involvement for the Associated Student Body, president of the Minority Affairs Leadership Council, and the chairman of Rebels for United Way. Austin was also a member of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, a Roger Friou Accountancy Scholarship recipient and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Austin talked recently about his experiences at the University of Mississippi and after.

"Life at Ole Miss was exciting for me," Austin said. "I made long-lasting connections and met several friends from different walks of life.

"The mentors and role models I met here really took me in and made me feel that I could accomplish anything I wanted to. The idea of Ole Miss still fascinates me; it is great yet small, historic, beautiful, and friendly but still competitive. My experience at Ole Miss was exciting. I remained busy and goal-oriented and if I had an opportunity to try anything new, I went for it."

Austin returned to obtain his Master's Degree from the Patterson School of Accountancy. He talked about why and what was it about his professors and environment that made him want to return.

"Deciding to return and continue into graduate school at Ole Miss was an easier decision due to my professors. In the Patterson School of Accountancy, Dean Wilder and his staff really do take an interest in your success, in the classroom and in the work field."

Austin felt that his professors pushed him throughout his undergraduate career and they encouraged him on into his graduate program. They gave him the sense of it not being an 'if' he was going to pursue his master's degree, it was 'when.'

Austin is currently an associate at the Dixon Hughes Goodman accounting firm in Memphis, TN. He has some advice for current undergraduate and graduate students.

“My advice to those interested in pursuing graduate education at Ole Miss is to prepare and plan ahead,” said Austin. “This will allow you time to not only obtain competitive qualifications for the programs but to also network and make connections with faculty in those programs. Networking and building that support system is essential in graduate school.”

“I encourage all undergraduates to pursue graduate assistantships, which not only help with your financial needs of graduate school but can help provide great work experience for your future career,” said Austin. “To all current graduate students, I challenge you to push yourself now. Be eager and dive deep into your research or curriculum. The Ole Miss faculty and staff will be there to support all the way.”

Graduate School

Dean of All Trades

By Tyler Carter

Dr. John Z. Kiss is not only the dean of the Graduate School here at the University of Mississippi, but he is also an ambassador, scholar, and teacher. Kiss received his B.S. degree from Georgetown University and obtained his doctorate degree from Rutgers University. Kiss then served as a NASA post-doctoral fellow at the University of Colorado and after that venture, he worked as a faculty member at Miami University for 19 years before landing in Oxford, Miss in 2012. He is a Professor of Biology and maintains his active research program in space biology with NASA.

On July 27 through August 8, Kiss traveled to Vietnam to serve as a panelist for the VEF (Vietnam Education Foundation). His duties as a panelist included making recommendations and interviewing top tier Vietnamese students to provide funding to as well as through the VEF to strengthen the U.S. and Vietnamese partnership by educational exchanges in the STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine) fields. Kiss said this about his experience:

“As Dean of the Graduate School, serving on this panel helped me better understand the needs of international graduate students as well as brought University of Mississippi’s name forward with other universities with panelists ranging from Harvard, Johns Hopkins, University of Wisconsin, and the University of Southern California.”

Another thing he took from his experience in Vietnam was some advice for students.

“I would tell our students that it is important to look within and find their own passions. Then, I think they should use that passion to advance their chosen field of study.”