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Fall 2015

## Newsletter Fall 2015

Katelyn Miller

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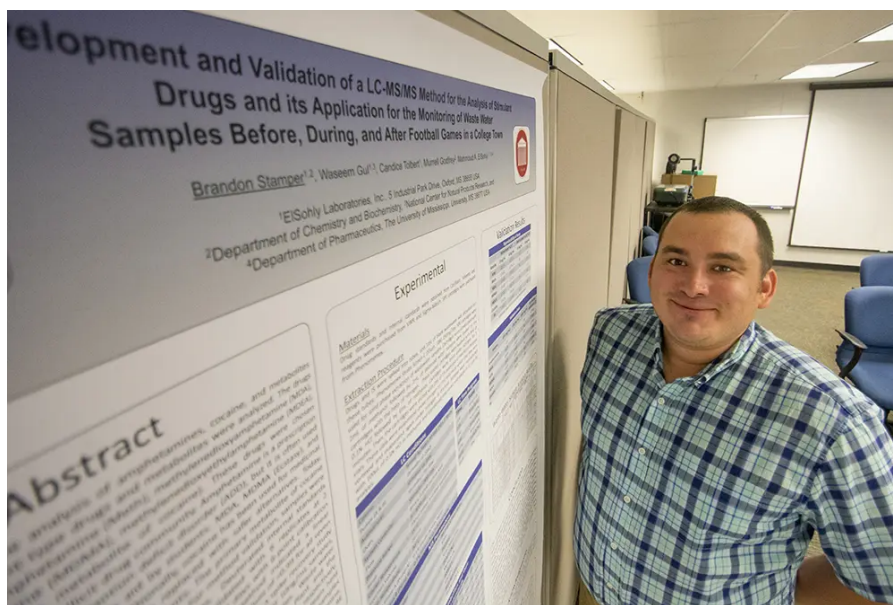
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## Chemistry PhD Student Receives Recognition For Work Detecting Drug Abuse During Football Games



The festivities of Ole Miss football are like none other. The excitement of the Grove, the camaraderie of the game and the parties that follow are unparalleled, regardless of the outcome. For Chemistry Ph.D. student Brandon Stamper, last year's tumultuous season was an opportunity to study what goes on behind the scenes.

"During football games we collected wastewater from the wastewater

treatment plant on campus and then also the wastewater treatment plant for the city of Oxford," said Stamper. "We analyzed that wastewater for drugs of abuse."

Stamper, who received travel grants from the Graduate School and Chemistry Department, presented his project at the American Society of Mass Spectrometry Conference in Tampa, Florida, where he won one of five best poster awards.

"For the initial study there were seven drugs that we analyzed for: amphetamine, methamphetamine, Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDA), **methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA)**, **Methylenedioxyethylamphetamine (MDEA)**, Cocaine and benzoylecgonine (BE). All of these are what we would consider to be stimulant drugs," said Stamper. "We were trying to compare first if the levels of drugs went up during the football games and then also trying to compare between the university and the city to see if being on the campus made any difference."

Stamper monitored the first four home games, and his research showed that amphetamine and BE levels in wastewater rose significantly during football games at the university, and the better the season

got, the more was found. Although there is no way to tell how many people were using these drugs, it was evident that there was an increase.

“It was a pretty miniscule amount. We collected these samples day before, day of game and day after, collected away game and collected two Wednesday to compare with,” said Stamper. “There is no doubt that if we did this on another campus it would have the same kind of results. I can’t say with 100% certainty that it’s not unique to Ole Miss, but I can make an educated guess.”

This is the first time a sewage-based epidemiology study has been applied to a live sporting event. It was first proposed in 2001 and has been done on cities and remote locations, but Stamper is the first to perform it at the location of a special event.

Next, Stamper is planning to use the same samples from last year’s game to test for the amounts of opiates in the water.

Stamper’s project is in collaboration with Forensic Chemistry Professor, Dr. Murrell Godfrey and the Elsohly Laboratories in Oxford. The project was the brainchild of Dr. Waseem Gul from Elsohly labs. Stamper said he was pleased that Gul shared the idea with him.

Although Stamper is continuing to study sewage-based epidemiology, his dissertation is focused on the study of synthetic cannabinoids, which are recreational drugs that are continually modified and thus difficult to detect. These are drugs such as Spice and K2 that link to the same receptor as THC, the active constituent in marijuana.

“The aim of our research is first to develop ways to detect cannabinoids in confiscated samples. Second to identify what the metabolites of the cannabinoid are, and then develop methods for analyzing biological samples for those metabolites. The third goal is to try and come up with some all-encompassing detection method. Something that would let you know that there is a cannabinoid in the sample no matter what the class of the cannabinoid is.”

Stamper plans to graduate in three years with a Ph.D. in Chemistry with a focus on analytical chemistry.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

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## Aziza Barnes to Be Published by YesYes

By Katelyn Miller

Los Angeles. New York. Oxford. Sound like a less-than-logical progression? Not to MFA student Aziza Barnes, whose book of poetry, *I Be But I Ain't*, has recently been accepted by YesYes Books. Based around the ten poems she submitted as her application material for the program, the book has grown to about 60 pages.

In terms of what this acceptance means, Barnes said “You get an approximately two-week book tour, and a release party, which is always fun, and a first print run. I think the real joy is that you get to work with YesYes as a publishing house. My favorite thing is putting the book together and working with the people that run it. They’re just really brilliant women.”

Barnes’s manuscript was nominated for publication by fellow poet Danez Smith, who has previously been published by YesYes, among others.

“He submitted it for me, and I’m forever grateful for that,” Barnes grins. “It was a huge vote of confidence.”

Barnes is also working on her first novel, which is set in Mississippi, and which played no small part in her decision to apply to The University of Mississippi.

“I’ve never lived anywhere like Oxford before, but it’s beautiful,” said the L.A. native and NYU alum. “There are trees! I love the trees.”

Barnes cited the English Department Faculty Member and Poet Derrick Harriell and the current Grisham writer-in-residence, Kiese Laymon as both inspirations for attending The University of Mississippi and other faculty she’s excited to work with.

“I’m working with Derrick Harriell. He’s one of the reasons I applied. I really dig his work, and he was really down to talk to me and put me in touch with other people,” said Barnes. “Working with Kiese is really exciting. He’s another reason I wanted to come here. His work saved my spirit on more than one occasion.”

Harriell said, “Aziza Barnes is a tremendous talent and wonderful soul. Although she’s already an accomplished writer, I truly believe she’s just scratching the surface of her talents. We are extremely lucky to have her as a student in our MFA program.”

Barnes explained that another draw was Oxford itself, precisely because it didn’t fit on a list with cities like L.A. and New York.

She said with a shrug “It was what I needed, what I wanted it to be. Just a quiet place that was different from anywhere I’d ever lived.”

As for what the future holds, Barnes said there are big things to come, both in terms of her literary career and more personal, social goals.

“I’m still working on this novel, but an even more spiritual project is that I want black people from northern cities, western cities, to come to Mississippi and feel like they’re allowed to come to Mississippi,” said Barnes.

She remembered, “Whenever I told people I was coming to Mississippi for my MFA, they’d always make a face. They’d jolt. There was never a non-reaction...I really want, eventually, to make a space for folks, especially black folks who’ve never grown up in a specifically more-trees, more country place. I want them to feel like they’re allowed to be here.”

Still in her first year, Barnes said she already appreciates the supportive space that the university has made for her, as a student and an active writer. So far, her professional career and her academic career have not conflicted, and she credits the English department trusting its students to take their studies seriously, with faculty being encouraging but not overbearing.

“I came down and visited after my acceptance, and it felt instantly like, ‘You’re going to be taken care of if you come to this place.’” She adds, “What I like with the university is that, if you’re doing your thing, you can talk about how all parties will be benefited. They assume you won’t take it lightly.”

Barnes’s book is still in the editing process.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

## Graduate School

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## Meet The 2015-2016 Graduate Student Council

### Alexandros Vasios-Sivvopoulos –President

- I'm from Thessaloniki, Greece – long way from home!
- I'm a PhD student in Economics, currently beginning my 3rd year into the program.
- I got my undergraduate degree from Ole Miss in Economics.
- I joined the Council last year as a GSC senator, after being nominated by my classmates. I worked on resolutions concerning student housing and parking. I ended up enjoying it a lot, and it led to me applying for the President's position for this year.
- I'm looking forward to serving the graduate student population. Last year we had a number of social events that were a major success, I hope we can expand on that!
- Interesting Fact: Every summer for the last 5 years I have worked for the Summer College for High School Students program at the Division of Outreach. I have seen students come here as high school students, then kept in touch with them as they enroll as undergraduates, and now some are thinking about staying for graduate school. It's very rewarding guiding young people through their Ole Miss experience from start to finish. Another fact: When I become a professional economist, I would like to focus on researching the telecommunications sector, high tech industries, or airlines.

## **Brandon Riches – Vice-President**

- I am a third year law student.
- I went to BYU in Provo, UT for my Bachelors of Arts in Philosophy. I also completed a minor in Logic and Political Science.
- I joined the GSC during my first year of Law School as a way to learn more about Ole Miss and to contribute.
- I am excited to see the new senators and to see what each can bring to the table. I hope to establish greater accountability for senators and encourage greater participation.
- Interesting Fact: I lived in South Africa for 2 years and learned to speak Xhosa while there. This is one of the few languages in the world that uses clicks.

## **Paul Pohto – Secretary**

- My degree is a M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- I am from Poquoson, VA and got a B.S. in psychology & human resource development from James Madison University.
- I joined the Graduate Student Council to provide more opportunity and a better experience for all graduate students, regardless of their field of study.
- This year I am looking forward to working with and learning from other Council members. Learning about program specific concerns or skill sets will allow us to provide a better experience for all graduate students.
- Interesting Fact: Last year as a summer job I helped fabricate parts for aircraft carriers and submarines.

## **Bjad Almutairy – Treasurer**

- I earned a bachelor's degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences and am currently seeking a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences with emphasis (Pharmaceutics and Drug Delivery) under the supervision of Dr. Michael A. Repka.
- I'm from Saudi Arabia from the Capital city (Riyadh city). And I earned my undergraduate degree from King Saud University, College of Pharmacy at Riyadh City.
- Graduate Student Council is great environment to gain professional skills starting from involvement and engagement with professional community, practicing advanced communication skills to finally the acquisition of leadership proficiency.
- I am most looking forward to advancing our productivity to meet the optimal satisfaction and complacency.
- Interesting Fact: I am a calligrapher.

## **Sumudo Tennakoon – Director of Academic and Professional Development**

- I am currently a candidate for PhD in physics. I also received my masters (M.A. Physics) from the University of Mississippi in Fall 2013.
- I am an international student from Sri Lanka. I got my BS Physics from University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
- I joined the Graduate Student Council because I am very passionate about organizational work in order to serve the community and I have recognized GSC as an important organization at the university serving our graduate student community that I can be actively involved with. I also served as a senator in the previous academic year.
- I am looking forward to making significant progress on my research project and to reach the graduation goal at the end of this academic year.
- Interesting Fact: I am very interested in the sport of badminton. I was a badminton team player in my high school and undergraduate university and am currently playing with the Ole Miss Badminton Club. I also lead the Ole Miss Badminton club as the club president in last two years.

## **Brian Adams – Director of Student Affairs/Life**

- I am working on my M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- I am from Memphis, Tennessee and received a B.A. in Economics from Hendrix College in Arkansas.
- I joined the Graduate Student Council because I currently work with a multitude of community members, government officials, and University administration on different boards and committees. I saw the opportunity to parlay my experience and current relationships into creating new and comprehensive resources for graduate students.
- I am excited for the opportunity to form productive new relationships across the different departments of our Graduate School as well as developing a resource guide for future incoming graduate students with my co-director, Lyda Phillips.
- Interesting Fact: You would never guess it by my personality, but I won 5<sup>th</sup> place at a national chess championship in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I was almost a grandmaster in terms of chess ratings. It was a trophy that I attempted to hide behind athletic trophies, but my parents would always show it off to their friends.

## **Adam Brady – Director of Communications**

- I am attending graduate school to get the M.A. in Journalism with an emphasis in Integrated Marketing Communications
- I am from Clarksdale, Mississippi, and I received a B.A. in Journalism with an emphasis in Print Media from Ole Miss in 2011.
- I joined the GSC because I really want to be more involved on campus than I was during my undergrad years. Now that I work at Ole Miss, I see what great opportunities there are for students out there, and I



plan to take advantage of them. I feel like my past education and work experience will be an asset to the GSC.

- I'm most looking forward to performing my duties as Director of Communications and getting to know my audience as well as other members of the GSC. Again, I'm looking forward to the involvement and friendships I will make during my graduate education.
- Interesting Fact: I've worked at Square Books since 2007 and would love to continue in the book industry after my education. I love books and think that it is a perfect invention that is not going anywhere anytime soon.

### **Brianna Beesly – Director of Social and Philanthropic Affairs**

- I grew up in Port Gibson, MS.
- I am a chemical engineer and I did my undergraduate at Ole Miss.
- I joined the GSC because I wanted to be a part of the MBA program in a way where I could do more and meet people and really just get involved with everyone in the grad school program.
- I am most looking forward to meeting everyone and making new friends!
- Interesting Fact: When I was thirteen my brother and I were struck by lightning.

### **Yelda McCoy – Director of International Student Affairs/Life**

- I am pursuing my M.A. degree in the Higher Education/Student Personnel program and working at Student Disability Services on campus.
- I am from Denizli, Turkey. I have a B.Sc. in Molecular Biology and Genetics from Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, and a Ph.D. in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology from the Ohio State University in Columbus, OH. I worked as a postdoctoral research scientist for several years before I decided to move into the Higher Education Administration field.
- I joined the Graduate Student Council to especially serve the international graduate student community at the university, since I was in their shoes once and I can relate to their experience. I also see this as an invaluable opportunity to gain hands-on work experience and to learn from my colleagues within and outside the council.
- I'm most looking forward to meeting new people at Ole Miss. Everyone here on campus has a unique life story to tell and I'd like to hear it.
- Interesting Fact: I completed half-marathons in the wheelchair athlete category.

### **Jonathan Howard – Co-Director of Social and Philanthropic Affairs**

- I'm working on a Master's in Higher Education/Student Personnel in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education.
- I am from Round Rock, Texas and graduated from Hendrix College in May 2013 (located in Conway, Arkansas).
- I joined the GSC to engage more deeply with the University of Mississippi and create opportunities for my peers to feel more connected with their graduate student community of peers. The position I pursued will allow me to utilize my strengths and network here at the University to engage graduate students in social and philanthropic programs.
- I'm of course excited about getting to May and graduating! But I can't wait to see all of the opportunities the GSC can make for philanthropic events and programs this year.
- Interesting Fact: I got in touch with my feminine side my senior year of college at Hendrix by participating in Miss Hendrix, an annual drag show beauty pageant. Miss Hendrix was the culminating event in Campus Kitty Week, which is responsible for students' major philanthropic work. The year that I participated in Miss Hendrix, Hendrix students raised just over \$50,000 in a week to support local Arkansas not-for-profit organizations.

### **Lyda Phillips – Co-Director of Student Affairs**

Unavailable for comment

## Journalism Grad Recognized for Outstanding Naval Service



Nicole Sheriff modestly describes her position as Duty Section Leader at Barracks 831, Training Support Center, Great Lakes, Illinois as, “similar to an RA” . By this, she means that her primary duty is the direct oversight and leadership of fellow Sailors, much like a Resident Assistant for university student housing. The United States Naval Service, however, might disagree about the position’s magnitude and level of responsibility. This month, Commander Katie Milligan presented the University of Mississippi grad with a special commendation for her excellent performance while acting as both duty section leader and barracks duty officer. Her responsibilities included direct accountability in the chain of command for 62 of her peers, whether it be for their presence at watch and muster or for their rule violations.

Contrary to what her accomplishments might suggest, Sheriff has only been a Sailor and student in the Navy since May 2015. Prior to her enlistment, she was putting her formal education to good use in journalism in graphic design. Having obtained her undergraduate degree in Communications at Mississippi State and her Master’s in Journalism from Ole Miss, she was well prepared to take on the job world.

Of her earlier education, Sheriff said, “if you build a solid foundation you can only go up from there. The more I’ve worked, I’ve seen more come into play down the road. You may not see it on day one after

you graduate, but you keep working and keep having different experiences, and everything falls into place.”

Sheriff characterized her time at Ole Miss as very rewarding, specifically in the then-new journalism school. “The instructors were extremely helpful. We were the first group to go through the J-School. My thesis advisor was Dr. Nancy DuPont, and she was very influential in my journalism career. I always thought Ole Miss has a very solid department. We got to do some really hard-hitting things and also do some research. DuPont was very patient with students and very understanding. The atmosphere was very welcoming.”

The aforementioned Dr. DuPont remembers her old advisee fondly. DuPont said “I was drawn to Nicole because of her positive, never give up attitude. She was a joy to have in class and was the first one to raise her hand to contribute to the class discussion. I never had to prod her to get her work done on her thesis. I am not surprised to hear about her special commission. She is one of those people who is destined for success.”

While no one who knew Sheriff at Ole Miss might be surprised by her achievements, they might well be surprised at the field in which she is excelling. Her current area of study is a far cry from journalism.

Summarizing her position, she said, “Right now I’m training to be a fire controlman, which is more on the engineering side of things, which works more on the weapons, electronics, and computing things behind it. It’s night and day from what I was doing.”

Considering that one of her previous jobs was doing graphic design for the Delta Democrat-Times, “night and day” couldn’t be more accurate. Of her sudden career change at 27, Sheriff laughed and said, “I was looking for something to challenge me in ways I haven’t been challenged before.”

Sheriff also noted that, while there are things she might change about her time in school, she believes it works to her advantage that she started on this path in her later twenties. Speaking of her academic achievement— she has so far earned a 93.07 GPA in Fire Controlman Advanced Technical Training School— she said, “A lot of it has to do with age and maturity. I’ve gone to school already, and I’m doing better now than I did in school...It doesn’t hit you how much it affects your future going forward until you get older. If I could go back into some of those classrooms, I would do some things differently, even though I did well. It’s a direct link to my career now. It’s setting me up for the future.”

Sheriff plans to maintain this level of performance moving forward through her Navy training. “The next move is just to finish A-School strong...Stay on the same path I am, not just pass and get good grades, but really get a thorough understanding of systems and concepts I’ll need.”

In a formal announcement of Sheriff’s commendation, a Naval representative stated, “...her diligent attitude set her apart from her peers, making her an example for others to follow. Seaman Sheriff’s

exceptional initiative, perseverance and loyal devotion to duty reflected credit upon herself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

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## History PhD Student Awarded Fellowship To Study Fatherhood During The American Revolution



Fatherhood throughout the history of America has been a changing role and the relationship between father and son can become complicated, especially during periods of turmoil. History Ph.D. student Travis Jaquess spent two weeks this summer pouring over books and manuscripts to study the complexities of fatherhood in the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the American Revolution.

“Fathers understood that the revolution meant that sons grew up in a different culture in a different country than they grew up in, so they are going to need different things,” said Jaquess. One of the things that came out of the revolution was that one definition of manhood was independence. We see independence as a major theme between father and son. Fathers want their sons to be independent. It’s the beginning of the American dream, which starts with the birth of the nation.”

Jaquess was awarded a fellowship through the Massachusetts Historical Society and is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to further research his dissertation. He spent two weeks studying in Boston this summer and will continue another two weeks next summer.

“I was thrilled. I was completely blown away,” said Jaquess about receiving the fellowship. “My dissertation is on fatherhood in the era of the American revolution and the Massachusetts Historical Society has one of the largest collections of colonial and early American documents.”

The Massachusetts Historical society is an independent library in Boston full of rare documents and national treasures that tell the story of American history. They award only 20 short-term fellowships each

year to graduate or postgraduate students, which provides them with a stipend for research and unlimited access to documents.

Jaquess began his American Revolution research as a master's student and was able to begin his dissertation research in Boston last year.

"My topic came from my master's thesis which was on Benjamin Franklin. The thesis was on how Benjamin Franklin identified himself as a man," said Jacquess. He explained that Franklin became a patriot while his son remained loyal to the king, thus ending their relationship. "I wondered if other fathers and sons experience, maybe not to that level, but experienced trauma or transformation because of the American Revolution."

Jacquess said that he plans to graduate in 2016 and will use his dissertation research to write a book. After graduation he is also planning to teach.

Jaquess was one of the winner's of last year's Three Minute Thesis competition hosted by the University of Mississippi Graduate School. 3MT gives students three minutes to explain their research topic and significance to a group of non-specialist judges using one PowerPoint slide.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

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## University of Mississippi graduate appointed Chair of Arkansas History Department

By Katelyn Miller



This August, Calvin White, an alumnus of the The University of Mississippi Graduate School, was appointed chair of the Fulbright College History Department at the University of Arkansas. White, who received his PhD at The University of Mississippi, credits the university for reinforcing in him one of the defining elements of his career: the value of mentorship. Mentorship, he said, has shaped his career, not only as a student but as an administrator as well.

“What got me in this position was the fact that people saw my demeanor,” said White. “I’m not a person that gets off on seeing someone fail. It’s always, ‘How can we help?’”

White was in his late 20’s, married and living in Arkansas with his wife when he decided to go back to school for his PhD After sending out several applications and receiving his acceptance letters, he had settled on attending another institution until he received a call from Dr. Joseph

Ward, the graduate program coordinator at the time. Ward asked if White had ever been to Oxford and invited him to visit for the weekend. At the end of the weekend, he asked what it would take to get White to come to The University of Mississippi.



Going out on a limb, White asked for full funding, which he wouldn't be receiving from the university he then planned to attend.

Dr. White explained, "Joe said, 'If we weren't planning on giving you full funding, we wouldn't have brought you out here. What else can we do for you?'"

Ultimately, White received his funding, and Ward helped his wife, a scientist, find a job at the Thad Cochran Research Center. He said after that, he couldn't say no.

"I wouldn't have been in Mississippi if Joe Ward hadn't made that phone call," insisted White.

"What jumped out to me about his application was that his interests matched some of the strengths of our faculty, especially African American History, Southern History, and Religious History," said Ward. "Those of us involved in his recruitment process were very confident that he would thrive here because several faculty members would be able to help him to develop as a scholar."

From day one, White said he received the full support of the history department and the graduate school as a whole. He spent time one-on-one with not only Ward and his major professor, Ted Owenby, but also professors from different historical disciplines.

"That's what was special. They saw the whole me. They saw my potential. They saw something in me I didn't see in myself," said White. "I had people in the history department who worked in other areas, and they took a vested interest in me."

White said the history department faculty also helped shape his specific research, which he would later come to write about in his 2012 book, *The Rise to Respectability: Race, Religion, and the Church of God in Christ*, a Choice Outstanding Academic Title that focuses on the African-American community and Church of God in Christ in Arkansas and the Mississippi Delta.

"I didn't know that was what I was going to write about when I got there...It was a very organic process with no real planning," said White

Toward the end of his Ph.D. studies, White says he was helped in his job search by Elizabeth Payne, a professor that had formerly taught at the University of Arkansas before coming to Oxford. She invited White to attend a conference hosted at the university with her.

"She advocated for me," says White. "The reason I was able to interview here was because Elizabeth Payne went to work promoting me among the faculty there."

White accepted a teaching position at the University of Arkansas, where he encourages history students to look into The University of Mississippi for graduate studies whenever possible.

White said his philosophy is "Here's what was given to you. Now turn around and give that back." As for his students, he said "Everyone comes in with a certain amount of intelligence, but it depends on how that intelligence is fostered, the time you take with them."

Even as he now assumes leadership of the history department, White said he still tries to maintain a mentorship role with students, as well as an active research agenda in preparation for his newest book that will focus on Oscar Stanton De Priest and his time as the only African-American man in Congress.

Ward, who still keeps in contact with White, said “It has been a great pleasure to watch him prosper professionally.”

Reflecting on the course of his career, White said “I was truly blessed to land in a place where I got support from all sides...I am here, I am now the chair of the history department, because of what the University of Mississippi did for me.”