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Graduate School

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Newsletter Fall 2016

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School





Dear Students, Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the Spring 2017 edition of the Graduate School Newsletter! The Spring Semester is well underway and the flowers and trees on campus are beginning to bloom.

In this issue you can read about the accomplishments of some of our students and an alumna. We also highlight two of our nationally ranked graduate programs: Creative Writing and Chemistry and Biochemistry.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and appreciate your support of the Graduate School at the University of Mississippi.

Christy M. Wyandt, Ph.D.

Interim Dean of the Graduate School

Professor of Pharmaceutics

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

Accounting Program Earns Top National Rankings



This year, the Public Accounting Report released its 35th Annual Professor's Survey and named every University of Mississippi Accounting program— undergraduate, master's, and doctoral— in the top ten in the nation. Both the undergraduate and doctoral programs were ranked seventh, and the master's ranked eighth. When the top twenty-five schools were subdivided by region, the University of Mississippi was ranked first in all three programs.

Schools are ranked based on the success of their graduates. Graduate Program Coordinator Dale Flesher cites a number of factors contributing to student success, which in turn contributed to the high rankings: the 100% job placement rate, the growth in enrollment, and the university's accounting library.

The University of Mississippi is home to the largest accounting library in the world— three times bigger than the second largest library. It's known as the National Library of the Accounting Profession, and according to Dr. Flesher, "even if you don't know anything else about Ole Miss, you know about the library."

The university is also home to the Tax History Research Center, established in 1987. Academics and accountants from around the world have come to Oxford to use the library, and the center has its own grants available to researchers. Combined with the Accounting History Library, the Information Technology Auditing Center, and even more campus resources, accounting students have an unparalleled number of resources at their disposal.

The number of students, too, is unparalleled: the accounting program has increased its enrollment for eleven consecutive years. The Accounting program is a dual undergraduate-master's curriculum over the course of five years, and per Dr. Flesher, it's not uncommon for students to come to the University of Mississippi from schools that don't offer an equivalent program to finish their fifth year.

Here, said Flesher, "virtually everybody stays for their master's. To be a Certified Public Accountant, you have to have a master's equivalent."

Five years can add up for many students; fortunately, yet another resource Accounting students have is a plethora of funding. The School of Accounting has the highest percentage of alumni giving of any department on campus, and there are plenty of scholarships available as a result. One reason for the department's generous alumni, Flesher said, is likely their own success, due in part to the support and resources they were given in school. "Our people go into public accounting," he said, "and they're just very successful."

Graduates of the Accounting program have a 100% job placement rate prior to graduation, even by as much as a year and a half. The main employers of graduates are the "big four" accounting firms: Deloitte, Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and KPMG.

"We're a target school for a lot of those programs," said Flesher, and this is no small accomplishment. These firms only recruit directly from thirty to forty schools in the nation, putting the University of Mississippi in elite ranks. Additionally, as a result of this interest from the big four firms, UM graduates are in high demand from other firms as well. Flesher said that smaller regional firms compete to get UM students, because "once you hear that the big four hires ours, well, everyone else wants to hire ours too!"

Sarah Stevens, a fifth-year master's student, can attest to the job placement rate, both as a draw for students and a very real benefit for graduates. About her own application to the university, she said, "I didn't know exactly what we were ranked, I just knew the reputation, and how highly people were placed in jobs." Even though Stevens still has the better part of year left in her program, she already has a full-time job at Deloitte in Atlanta for when she graduates. For this, she gives "one hundred percent credit to program. The interview and the job recruiting were held through the school. I never had to go search for a job on my own, and that's totally because this school gave us the resources to go find it."

Author: *Katelyn Miller*

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

Journalism Alumna Ashley Norwood Continues Film Series



“How can my experience be beneficial to someone else?” This is the question that University of Mississippi Graduate School alumna Ashley Norwood has long asked herself, using it to inspire and inform her work as a documentary filmmaker.

While she was pursuing her Master’s degree in Journalism, an opportunity to benefit others manifested in the form of a class assignment. What started as a written assignment became, through her wealth of information and passion, the subject of her thesis— a project that would soon be seen not only by her classmates, but by students, administrators, and film festival audiences across the country. Drawing on her experience as a member of a National Pan-Hellenic Council sorority, Norwood created “The Fly in the Buttermilk”, a short film

showcasing the NPHC experience on a predominantly white campus.

In her research, Norwood reached out to alumni, past administrators, and other Black Greek Letter Organization members, including charter members. She said, “I traveled as far as Berkeley California...I talked to a lot of ‘more seasoned’ members.”

Additionally, she drew from her own experiences in Greek life at Jackson State, where she received her B.A. in English, and at the University of Mississippi. According to Norwood, at Jackson State and other historically black colleges and universities, BGLOs are a much bigger part of student culture. “Parents and grandparents are members, so children grow up aspiring to be part of these organizations.”

At the University of Mississippi, however, she observed that white organizations are considered the “default”. Norwood remembers a program she once saw on the History Channel about fraternities and Greek life, which featured the University of Mississippi and focused primarily on white organizations. Seeing this lack of information, she created The Fly in the Buttermilk largely to educate those who were curious about BGLOs and show support for current and alumni members.

She described her goal as being “not just a wakeup call for those being negative who may have judgment about the culture of black Greeks, but also for members who might think it’s just the fun stuff... the hard work, the community service, the strength of sisterhood and brotherhood is why these organizations were founded.”

Norwood’s film was shown on campus for about seven hundred viewers and was quickly absorbed into the university canon. This year, it was used as part of Greek Introduction Week and programs at the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, and other institutions. She is justifiably proud that her film is “being used as an educational piece in academic universities.”

One revelation the film brings to its viewers is a view of what the true face of southern BGLOs looks like, which can often be misunderstood by others. Norwood described the confusion, saying, “These groups have different personas regionally, almost like west coast people and southern people. [The film] is bringing a different perspective of Greek life to northern states. It’s satisfying to kind disprove ideas people have about the South.”

In her travels, Norwood has encountered plenty of misconceptions about the South and her alma mater, which she is happy to dispell, sharing stories of the support she found on campus. She recounted, “Every time people ask what my experience at Ole Miss was like, I say, ‘I went to the University of Mississippi.’ The first group I got into was the Black Graduate and Professional Student Organization. They strengthend me in times when I felt like that fly in the buttermilk...I definitely appreciate the university, the organizations, the administrators, and the teachers, because it challenged me in so many ways. I grew independently. It was the first time I was ‘independent’ from my family, not living in the same city.”

Despite its use as an educational piece, her film’s run hasn’t been limited to universities by any means—it was featured at the African World Inaugural Film Festival, which Norwood was gratified to be a part of. Moving forward, she will be hosting a panel and screening in Brooklyn with Reel Sisters on October 5th, and she has also been invited to present at an upcoming film festival in New York. As for the film’s continued performance, Norwood said, “It’s continued to screen in different areas...The number of views has only increased. It debuted this summer online, and I think right now we’re at a growing fifty thousand views.’

For the most part, the film is having the effect Norwood wanted, both at large and at home. She said, “It’s showing change. I’ve seen things change since the documentary came out at the university. It’s being honest and real but that’s what you have to do to create some type of progression. The university is constantly making improvements as far as inclusion...The story was about the University of Mississippi creating more spaces and opportunities to talk about these groups of people, their relevance, their importance, which has never been done before.”

Presently, Norwood works at Mississippi Today in Ridgeland as a reporter. She described the publication as “the state’s first and only non-partisan and non-profit digital news organization....The mission at Mississippi Today is to tell stories that matter, not just who-what-when-where-why.” Since starting work in June, she’s most recently picked up beat for higher education.

Along with her new job, Norwood is still working as a filmmaker: *The Fly in the Buttermilk* is set to become a series of films. The next film’s subject is still a mystery– though she promises to reveal all soon. She plans to release a short promo in the next two weeks, begin filming in October, and release the film next summer. It will not focus on Greek life but will still center on minority experiences.

Juggling both her job and her directorial efforts can be a challenge. Said Norwood, ‘It’s a little rough, as far as time! As a reporter, you’re always on the go.’ Currently, she says she spends easily half the week traveling, primarily to north Mississippi.

Fortunately, her employer encourages her pursuits. “Mississippi Today supports me with everything I’ve got going on. I’m blessed to be working with people who support your passions outside of work and want to support you both ways.”

In the long run, Norwood aspires to direct films, and she feels lucky to have come out of her academic career with something very tangible to show for it. “The number of times people use things they produce in school in life, it’s not that often,” she said.

As for her philosophy on filmmaking, she believes the overall goal is “to use all of our influences and opportunities to tell things in a way that would make people want to do more or research or understand. Provoke some kind of momentum and spirit and morale to make things better.”

Even with the success of *The Fly in the Buttermilk*, Norwood is still often surprised at how far her star has risen. Recently, a hotel manager in Greenwood, Mississippi, recognized her as a filmmaker, and the experience was as thrilling as it was unexpected.

Unsurprised by her success is Dr. Donald Cole, Assistant Provost and Assistant to the Chancellor Concerning Minority Affairs. Norwood described him as one of her first contacts, someone who made her feel at home and offer help if there was anything she ever needed. He was also a major factor in the making of *The Fly in the Buttermilk* thanks to his connections with members of BGLOs and administrators.

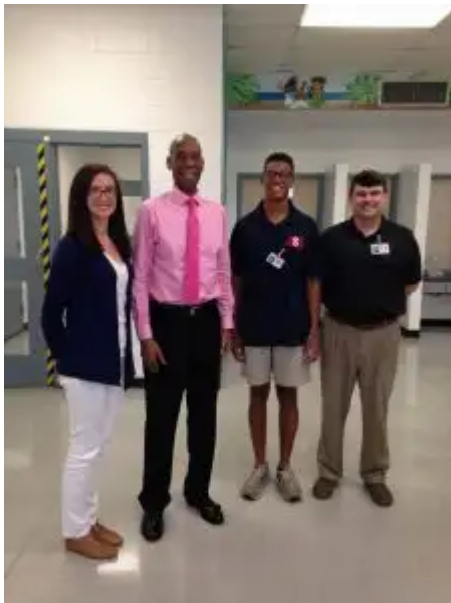
Of Norwood, Dr. Cole said, “Her flight to success on this venue only needed a few contacts and some minor directions before it began to soar far beyond our initial expectations...I am sure that this film will find itself in the annals of the History of the University. This is what we train our journalist to do, and in Ashley’s case, I am pleased that it happened so early in her young career.”

“How can my experience be beneficial to someone else?” Ashley Norwood has already begun answering her own question, but in all likelihood, much like her first film, the full answer will exceed all

expectations.

Author: *Katelyn Miller*

McLean Fellow Implements Entrepreneurial Initiative at Holly Springs Correctional Facility



This summer, Rebecca Bramlett, Legal Studies Master's student, along with her undergraduate partner, Austin Powell, initiated a trial program to instill an entrepreneurial mindset in the inmates of the Marshall County Correctional Facility. With the help of five university professors, they conducted an eight-week class based on the book "Who Owns the Ice House" by Pulitzer nominee and Mississippi native, Clifton Taulbert. The Ice House Entrepreneurship Program is part of the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative, an organization devoted to building an innovated, driven mindset through training and educational programs worldwide. The project was carried out through the McLean Institute, the primary purpose of which is community service and engagement.

Over the eight weeks, the professors— who came from departments as diverse as Criminal Justice, Higher Education, Sociology, Business, and Legal Studies, and all of whom were trained in the Ice House program— each taught roughly two lessons, and they seemed to learn lessons of their own as well.

"The professors learned too," said Bramlett, "just getting out of academia and into the real world— and prison is about as real as it gets. I think it was an interesting exchange of learning...Our job with McLean was to connect the university with the community, and we connected them with a part of the community they would otherwise probably never be exposed to."

Bramlett and Powell were told by the warden that, for the size of their classroom, having about fifteen students would be ideal. The sign-up list, however, had over a hundred names. Of the fifteen inmates they chose for the class, three had life sentences, but the rest will be released in a year or less, making the Ice House lessons exceptionally relevant to them.

Despite the small class size, Bramlett's team was able to expand their reach thanks to the three men with life sentences. Those three acted as mentors and, every week, would take the literature they'd been given and teach the lessons to more people. According to Bramlett, "They asked for documents to share, for their cellmates and others. So we didn't just reach fifteen people— the knowledge really multiplied.

One participant had been in prison for thirty-seven years, and he said, "I've taken every single class they've had here, and this is by far the most usable and most life-changing class that they've ever offered."

One of the eight lessons focused on ideas and actions, and one of the participants found it especially applicable to the plight of an inmate. He said, "All we do is sit here and think. We have millions of ideas!"



Bramlett concluded, "The fact that we're teaching them how to put those ideas into action and take the next steps was valuable to them, I think... There's this concept of bootstrapism— you know, 'pull yourself up by your bootstraps!'— and it is a little flawed, to me, but I think they saw hope in that." She described the entrepreneurial mindset as looking at problems and seeing solutions, seeing problems as opportunities.

Bramlett and Powell would regularly stay behind after the class was over and just talk, about topics as intense as the political system and mass incarceration. "It was interesting to be in a room with people who had committed really heinous crimes and be able to connect with them aside from that," said Bramlett. "We were having these very meaningful and intellectual conversations with people who maybe don't even have a high school degree. So their intelligence is there, their intellect is there, it just wasn't nurtured or developed."

The inmates were acutely aware of how society sees them. One class participant said, "People think we're invisible. People label us as everything but people. And the fact that you're here proves that there are people who care."

The attitude Bramlett and her team took was one of compassion and respect. She believed that the men were all aware of their crimes and were actively paying their debt to society. She said, "It wasn't our job to make them pay even more. It was to help create productive citizens, so when they go back to the community, they can reintegrate in a positive way."

All evidence seems to suggest that the inmates appreciated this attitude and responded enthusiastically. "They would come to class more prepared than any college student I've ever come into contact with," Bramlett said. "They were so thirsty for knowledge... They just wanted to engage so much with people in the outside world who were respected and who treated them as people."

Bramlett hopes that the success of this initiative will inspire and inform others, both as they regard the importance of prisons and the personhood of those incarcerated. The program, she was happy to report, will continue under Dr. Linda Keena.

Author: *Katelyn Miller*

Pharmacy Ph.D. Student Wins \$10K ACT Fellowship



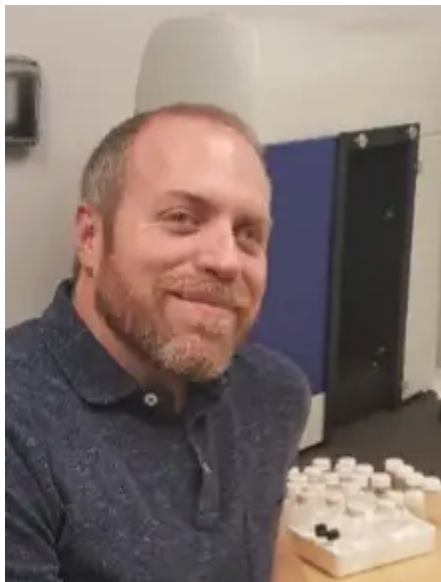
The American College of Toxicology gives only five North American Graduate Fellowships a year, and this year, one of those was awarded to University of Mississippi Ph.D. student Dennis Carty. The award carries a \$10,000 stipend, divided over two years, to help fund the fellow's degree and their trip to the yearly ACT meeting, a valuable opportunity to share research and network with colleagues. And while Carty said he likes to think he was selected because he's awesome, he amended, "it's probably something more trivial like our research or my writing style."

The aforementioned research pertains to the safety of marijuana as a treatment for epilepsy. Carty described it, saying, "As most of us know, recreational and medicinal marijuana use is increasing exponentially in the United States. Also, due to the Schedule I status of marijuana, little research has been conducted to measure the adverse effects of marijuana use. Therefore, to fill this void in our scientific community, our lab studies the adverse developmental and multi-generational effects of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), the most abundant compounds in marijuana. We also study the possible anticonvulsant potential of THC and CBD. One fun aspect of our research is working with zebrafish. Zebrafish are genetically similar to humans, therefore they can give us a glimpse into the positive and/or negative effects of marijuana use in humans."

On the relevance of his research as a contributing factor to his new fellowship, he added, "I suppose what set me apart was the fact that our lab is studying something that is highly relevant in the United States. A large number of children are taking CBD for treatment-resistant epilepsy, however, toxicologists and medical experts alike still have little information regarding CBD's safety profile."

Interestingly, for such a successful aspiring toxicologist, science wasn't always Carty's main focus. Rather, he taught and performed music, conducting private lessons into his twenties, at which point, he felt he needed a break from the routine. He went back to school to study biology at the University of North Texas (UNT), where his organic chemistry professor, Dr. Robby Petros, invited Carty to work in

his lab. Dr. Petros's research was focused on cancer treatment, and Carty got first-hand experience using nanoparticles to kill cancer cells.



He said, "I found a new love working in the lab. It felt like therapy to me. A happy place where I could escape and work through issues in my brain *via* tremendous focus on scientific exploration. I still view working in the lab as very relaxing and peaceful. I suppose, it was at that point when I began thinking about graduate school and research. More specifically, at that time, I was very interested in cancer research primarily because I lost my mom to melanoma in 2003 and when you can study something with personal experience it seems to add more purpose to your life."

Carty was drawn to the University of Mississippi by his advisor at UNT, Dr. Duane Huggett, with whom he was already pursuing his Ph.D. Dr. Huggett informed Carty that he was leaving academia, but softened the blow by adding that he had contacted his old advisor, UM professor Dr. Kristie Willett, and asked if Carty could finish in her lab.

"I had met Dr. Willett once before and was very intrigued with her research," said Carty. "Dr. Willett's research was very interesting to me because she worked with zebrafish, the pinnacle model organism to all aquatic organism research. Also, Dr. Willett's lab focused a lot of molecular techniques which is something I have a lot of interest. Luckily, Dr. Willett was willing to accept me in her lab! I finished up a M.S. in Biology at UNT and quickly moved to Oxford! Hotty Toddy!"

Despite the impromptu nature of his move to Oxford, Carty has since found a home at the university. According to him, "The Department of BioMolecular Sciences is very supportive. In fact, a couple months after I arrived in Oxford, I won a \$10,000 fellowship through our department for an original research project entitled 'Effects of Cannabidiol and Δ 9-Tetrahydrocannabinol on Developing Zebrafish'. I feel like our department supplies the graduate students with ample opportunity just as long as you are willing to put in the effort."

Research and Development chemist Cammi Thornton, who works closely with Carty's research, support his success. She said, "Dennis is a dedicated graduate student and is constantly seeking ways to learn new lab techniques and gain funding. We are excited about the research Dennis has initiated in our lab".

Author: *Katelyn Miller*

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Graduate School

New Hybrid Ed.D. Trains Future University Administrators



One of a university's perhaps most valuable and yet least considered resources is a strong administrator, and the School of Education's two year-old hybrid Ed.D. program is committed to producing just that. It is described by program coordinator Dr. John Holleman as being unique from the department's older doctoral program in two ways: half of the program is conducted online, and rather than focusing on research, it is what he calls a "practitioner program". Specifically, the program is geared

towards someone who aspires to serve as a dean of students, student affairs or financial aid, rather than publish books and articles.

To be admitted to the Ed.D. cohort, students must have two years of work experience at a university, and they must currently be employed as a university administrator. And given that one of the requirements for entry is current employment, Holleman considers the hybrid nature of the program to be a huge resource: "The hybrid part we believe is very helpful and powerful. It's not just a convenience thing for someone who's working full time. It allows them to have time to reflect and access the material on demand...We use technology like Adobe Connect, which allows you to have synchronous meetings. We wouldn't have been able to do this twenty years ago."

The scheduling of in-person classes allows for just as much flexibility. Classes meet every four weeks, half in Oxford and half in Jackson at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The two working campuses have allowed the program to have what Holleman calls a wider "footprint" that expands into neighboring states, including Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana, and he considers it an asset to be able to service a wider area. Cohorts are small at only twenty-five entrants, giving the program only sixty-seven total current students. The small cohort size, however, leads to a high level of cohesiveness and collaboration.

Dr. Holleman said he particularly enjoys engaging with Ed.D. students. “It’s great to be working with folks that are currently in this area,” he said. “To be working with them and not delivering a lecture, working with them on applying what they’re learning...it’s helpful for them to be working adults in this area.”

The Ed.D. program also works extensively with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), which has helped them align with a prestigious national organization and informed their guiding principles and values. Each Ed.D. program, for example, has a signature emphasis. The University of Mississippi’s emphasis is in social justice and equity. Specifically, they are concerned with access for marginalized groups to universities, race relations, and inclusivity, all topics that the university as a whole has been striving to address more and more in recent years.

At the culmination of the three-year program, students will complete their final project, a Dissertation in Practice. Dissertation classes begin as early as the second semester, which Holleman said is to give the students time to observe their own workplaces and opportunities for improvement therein, then let the idea percolate and build. Unlike research-oriented dissertations, the program coordinator described DIPs as “application-oriented, practitioner-driven, and designed to be of value for them as a current administrator.”

Ronda Bryan, a current student, said that the DIP was a draw for her. “What originally attracted me to the hybrid Ed.D. program was that it culminated in a Dissertation in Practice. In this program we consider critical issues within the four identified public agendas for higher education; access, affordability, attrition, and accountability. We are to identify problems of practice and work to find possible solutions. The information we receive through the online and in-class assignments helps us to consider these “critical issues” within the CPED principles of ethics, equity, and social justice. In other words, we are encouraged to consider these higher education problems of practice and the impact they have statewide, nationally, and even globally.”

Author: *Katelyn Miller*

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Graduate School

The Graduate School Congratulates the Fall 2016 Graduate Student Initiates to the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society:



Phi Kappa Phi is the only national honor society that recognizes academic excellence in all disciplines – Liberal Arts, Law, Engineering, Education, Medicine, Pharmacy, Business Administration, Accountancy, Applied Sciences, General Studies – and Journalism at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. These students have been chosen for induction on the basis of superior scholarship and good character.

Mohamed Abouelsaoud Albadry

Anna Elizabeth Archer

James Blackmon

Katie Claire Cayson

Ernest R. Dees

Mary Diltz

Andrew Montgomery Freiman

Nilesh Gangan

Stefanie Goodwiller

Sarah Hamilton

James A. Henegan

Angela Massey Hopper

Emma Corinne Hotard

Surendra Jain

Timothy Leake

Anastasiia Minenkova

Ellienne Therese Planchet

Christina Michele Prince

Mariana Sainati Rangel

Mary Larkin Rumbarger

Pamela Lee Traylor

Samantha Blair Witcher

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