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Graduate Student Council hard at work



On Oct. 22, amid campuswide controversy over the presence of the Mississippi state flag, the University of Mississippi Graduate Student Council Senate passed a resolution in favor of removing the flag from campus. By this time, the faculty had passed a similar resolution, but the Associated Student Body Senate had not.

Brandon Riches, head of the GSC Senate, was pleased not only with the passage of the resolution but also with the collaboration that

brought it about.

“I was impressed to see students from Mississippi and other parts of the country and even the world come together to find a solution,” he said.

Additionally, he addressed some of the logic behind his support of the resolution.

“I think there must be a balance struck between heritage and inclusion. If a particular symbol represents a significant history of hatred toward any Mississippian, I can’t imagine why some would fight to maintain that symbol. Hopefully the Legislature will take official actions to make Mississippi a welcome place for all.”

This belief in the balance of heritage and inclusion is reflected in the language of the resolution itself. A passage of it reads:

... To those who fear that the history and legacy of this place will be forgotten and thrown away, we say that history is a powerful teacher, and we should remember it all, and learn from both the positives, and the negatives. Taking down the flag and the symbol depicted on it does not make this a foreign land with different customs. It does not change its history. There is still so much to champion here in the South, such as Southern hospitality, Southern music, literature, food, and SEC Football. All those things will not be forgotten and thrown away, and everyone, regardless of

the color of their skin, ethnicity, nationality, religion, political affiliation, age, gender, sexuality, and ability should be able to enjoy them to the maximum.

In recent months, the Student Council has been working to make more changes, specifically geared toward the success of graduate students. Chief among these new ventures is the improvement of the way students can receive research grants from the university.

The GSC, Office of Research and Graduate School have been working together to help students fund their research every year, and this year, the goal is to expand the program to include not only research but also what GSC president Alexandros Vasios-Sivvopoulos called “innovation areas, such as, but not limited to, law and business.”

Up to 20 \$1,000 research grants will be available this year. Even if applicants are not selected for the grant, they will be given a score and feedback from the reviewers so that they can craft even better grant applications in the future, making this an opportunity not only for funding but for practical learning as well.

For interested parties, the rough calendar for the grant program is as follows:

- **Dec. 17** – Official announcement and call for interest
- **Jan. 28** – Training workshop to familiarize applicants with the process and the application. There will be an online sign-up for this.
- **Feb. 28** – Applications are due
- **April 15** – Announcement of awards

The GSC also will be sending out emails with additional information on the program.

Finally, the GSC-sponsored Holiday Food Drive wrapped up on Dec. 11. Benefiting the University of Mississippi Food Bank, the event garnered support and donations from various departments across campus. The Graduate School would like to thank all participants for their incredible generosity. The department that contributed the most will be announced in the spring and awarded the annual Food Drive plaque.

Graduate School

Finance alumnus awarded for junior research excellence



Andriy Shkilko is, especially as of late, a man of many accomplishments. His journey, both academic and geographic, has been richly varied, and it began, for the most part, at Ole Miss. In 2000, he moved to Mississippi from Ukraine and jumped right into the business school. With his earlier credits from a Ukrainian university, he was able to graduate in two years and go directly into the finance Ph.D. program.

On his decision to pursue his Ph.D. from the same university he attended for undergrad, he credits Oxford, the friends he made, and the finance program itself.

“I had a couple of offers from other schools, Alabama and Georgia, so other Southern schools,” he said. “But I already knew the area, I liked the school, I had friends here. It just made sense to stay with them ... and in finance, they have an amazing Ph.D. program.”

Additionally, he recalled the support he received from other parts of the university.

“The school is amazing, and I got a ton of scholarships, a ton of financial support. The school and the international office did a lot for me!”

In his graduate studies, Shkilko also found exceptional mentors in professors Robert Van Ness and Bonnie Van Ness, the latter of whom is now chair of the finance department.

“In the year I was entering the Ph.D. program, Ole Miss had just hired them, and they made a huge difference in my life,” he said. “In the Ph.D. program, it’s almost all about your adviser and how much your adviser can do to you, a person who knows nothing, and mold and shape you into a researcher. I was lucky that as I was coming in, they came in, so it happened that I naturally gravitated to them. We have an amazing collaboration coming out of that.”

Bonnie Van Ness remains one of Shkilko’s biggest fans and remembers him as a student not only with great talent and drive but also with great kindness and consideration for others. She recalled one specific occasion on which he showed his character after the birth of her son.

“When Andriy was here, at least early on, we were very space constrained in the School of Business, and only grad students who were teaching had cubicles. ... He had no cubicle, and I let him use my office,” she said. “He would come in and work all night in my office, and the janitorial staff got to know him quite well. Then [after I had my baby], he actually held my office hours for me. I was still teaching, but so that I didn’t have to be there all afternoon, he actually held office hours for me. So he has a special place in my heart. ... He did not have to do that, and I thought it was so terribly kind of him.”

With the aforementioned collaboration, he was able to graduate with two published works, a rare and distinct achievement.

“At that time, it wasn’t common to have publications by the time you graduate,” Shkilko said. “Thanks to them, I was pushed and incentivized enough to work hard and get those papers out and published before getting into the job market. ... Bonnie and Robert just did a lot for me. They taught me everything I know, and I will always be indebted to them for the amount of time they spent on me.”

It was this kind of effort early in his career that helped Shkilko find a place at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, a highly respected research institution in finance. He joked that getting a job there directly out of graduate school was a lucky stroke for him, and his citizenship proved to be a helpful factor.

“You have to spread your search to the whole country and the world,” he said, “and given that I wasn’t a U.S. citizen at the time ... I’d say I had more options than the American students in my program.”

His current position is entirely based around research, as he has received a prestigious federal grant from the Canadian government. Shkilko also serves as a financial consultant to the Canadian and UK governments.

On the subject of his role as a government consultant, he cited the complex, fluid nature of international financial markets.

“You’re regulating this living, breathing organism that’s very smart and can adjust to any regulation you throw at it. You ask, ‘Is this regulation going to work?’, run some tests and see what you get.”

One of his most recent accomplishments includes being chosen for the prestigious position as a Canada Research Chair in Finance, the application process of which was rigorous, to say the least.

Laughing, Shkilko remembered, “To get that appointment, I had to be judged and evaluated by an anonymous panel of researchers from all around the world. It took about three months to write the application – kind of like writing another dissertation!”

On a more local scale, he was also lauded by Laurier with an award for Junior Research Excellence, of which he was the first-ever recipient.

About this new honor, Shkilko said, “I was very grateful and humbled to be the first one to receive it. It’s nice to be recognized because in this field you work on something for years, and after a long road, you

publish, and maybe a thousand people read it. So to be recognized by the university is very gratifying.”

While Shkilko is not currently teaching at the university, he enjoys the opportunity to work with students and pay forward the kind of mentoring he received while attending the University of Mississippi.

“I don’t get to teach with my current position,” he said, “and I do miss the interaction with students. It’s a fun and invigorating experience to share the knowledge that finance has accumulated as a science. Just like Bonnie and Robert did for me, I try to mentor, support, educate and push forward the students here.”

Photo taken from wlu.ca.

M.F.A. program raises funds with unconventional reading



By 8 p.m. on Oct. 13, the Powerhouse Community Arts Center had been overtaken by Oxford's literati: professors, students and locals, all joined by a love of literature. The crowd was easily double what one might expect for a simple, small-town reading, but this was neither simple nor really just a reading; it was a marriage of literature, comedy and performance art courtesy of three of the University of Mississippi's best writers. It was the Literary Death Match.

Beth Ann Fennelly initiated the event when she, as M.F.A. program director, realized that the Barry Hannah Fund for Students could use a top-up. The Barry Hannah Fund is used to ease some of the financial burden on English M.F.A. students, and if there's one thing all graduate students can agree on, it's that more funding is always better.

While the idea to bring the Literary Death Match to Oxford was new, the event itself was not. Its number of shows performed hovers somewhere in the 400s, climbing every few weeks. While these performances originated in New York City in 2006, they've since gone international, finding their way into cities such as Edinburgh, Reykjavik and Hong Kong. In just under 10 years, the Death Match has been welcomed into 16 countries and 57 cities, of which Oxford is now proudly one.

Before the match, the competitors and judges were stowed away backstage as the soon-to-be audience milled around the lobby, looking over tables of books for sale and ordering drinks from the small bar. With the sponsorship of Cathead Vodka, the event boasted a signature cocktail – a sharp concoction of vodka, citrus and mint – that seemed almost an imperative purchase, judging by the number the audience could be seen sipping before and after the show.

At the center of it all were three writers, three judges and one host. Immediately noticeable, as he cut through the cocktail hour in an electric blue suit, was the event's creator and the host of the evening, Adrian Zuniga.

"My great fear in the world," said Zuniga on the inception of the Death Match, "is that a lot of people who sit at home are watching TV and checking the Internet and doing everything but reading a book. And then they go, 'You know what? I should read more.' So then they walk into the bookstore ... and they don't know what book to buy, so they Google, 'best book of all time.' Then they buy that book, and they go home, and after two pages of reading *Ulysses*, they're like, '[Forget] this, I'm going to go back and watch "Breaking Bad" from the start.' Our show is like the gateway drug. These authors are the starting point by which you can ascend to *Ulysses*."

This was not the only time *Ulysses* would come up.

The preliminary rounds consisted of three local authors reading their work: Grisham Writer-in-Residence Kiese Laymon and new English professor Matt Bondurant presented prose pieces; program coordinator Beth Ann Fennelly and two-time Pushcart nominee Derrick Harriell read poetry.

They were judged, with a degree of seriousness that few expected, by three judges in three categories. Mary Miller judged the competitors on literary merit, Damien Walsh on performance quality and Jim Dees on "intangibles."

While all the readings earned the fierce approval of the audience, ultimately only Fennelly and Laymon progressed to the final round. The final round, naturally, was determined not by their skills as writers or performers but rather by a game-show-style competition. Specifically, Zuniga read one-star Amazon reviews of classic novels, and the two authors (along with teammates) competed to guess to which novel the reviews referred. The final answer was, as Zuniga perhaps accidentally foreshadowed in his interview the night before, *Ulysses*, and it was guessed by a member of Fennelly's team. The poet received a medal, produced with little fanfare from Zuniga's pocket, and the Literary Death Match saw its last author left alive.

In addition to raising money for the Barry Hannah Fund, the Death Match had the fringe benefit of making the world of literary readings feel a little more accessible to those not typically involved in the literary community.

"I think it's good to see successful writers lose, and to laugh," said Laymon, "because we're just people who happen to write things. I think the show does a great job of showing that side of us."

On the subject of the match's potential return to Oxford, Zuniga responded enigmatically, "We come back if people show up."

Graduate School

Tennis star returns to earn MBA



Caroline Rohde-Moe is, in a word, driven. As a first-year graduate student, she attends classes, works as a graduate assistant, works with the tennis team and even babysits. Looking at her current schedule, it's easy to be bowled over with how much responsibility she has on her plate. Then, taking into consideration everything she's accomplished, between her undergraduate degree and tennis career, it seems as if this is the kind of environment she thrives in: fast-paced and high achieving.

Prior to attending the University of Mississippi, Rohde-Moe was already a successful tennis player in Norway, ranking as a Norwegian junior indoor and outdoor champion for three years before becoming a senior indoor and outdoor champion in 2010.

She joined the tennis team as a freshman in spring 2011 and hit the ground running. She not only helped lead the team to its third consecutive NCAA appearance, but she also won nine of her first 10 matches and four of her last five. Even with her rigorous training schedule and competitions, she still excelled academically, earning a spot on the Dean's Honor Roll.

By the end of her sophomore year, Rohde-Moe was ranked No. 84 in the nation in singles and No. 4 in the Southern Region. Amid the national and local sports recognition, the academic accolades continued to roll in. She was named an ITA Scholar Athlete, making the SEC Academic Honor Roll and the Chancellor's Honor Roll.

As her junior and senior years progressed, she climbed the rankings, earning the ITA Southern Region Arthur Ashe Jr. Sportsmanship/Leadership Award, an at-large berth in the ITA National Indoor Championships, the Taylor Medal from the University of Mississippi, a finalist spot for the SEC Boyd McWhorter Postgraduate Scholarship, and a Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities distinction. Finally, she graduated with honors in managerial finance and economics.

The next step, following graduation, was to take her skills onto the international stage, where she achieved her career highs in WTA singles and doubles between May and August 2015. But her ultimate

career goals, it seemed, were a little more suit-and-tie in nature, as she returned to UM in fall 2015 to pursue her MBA.

One of the strongest motivators for her return, specifically to UM, she said, was the mentor program.

“They’ll match you with someone doing what you want to do, and it’s really helpful to talk to them and learn from them. And it really helps when you start looking for jobs!”

Currently, she works with a UM alumnus, Brandon Blewitt, who works at KPMG.

Another advantage UM presented was the availability of an assistantship with Tony Ammeter, associate dean for undergraduate programs and associate professor of management and management information systems. Ammeter, naturally, has nothing but good things to say about his graduate assistant.

“Caroline brings together academic excellence and a strong work ethic,” he said. “Her tenacity, intelligence and concern for others earn her the respect of those she interacts with. Her combination of integrity and intellect (and a subtle sense of humor) is consistent with those that I value most highly not only as students but as colleagues. It is a great joy to work with her.”

While Rohde-Moe said she will always love tennis, after getting her MBA, she looks forward to going out into the corporate world and looking for a place to put these new skills to work.

“With the way the MBA program is set up, I don’t think any of us should have a hard time finding a good job!” she said.

Graduate School

3MT Winner: Sarah Crocker-Buta



First-place winner of the annual Three-Minute Thesis competition's master's division is Sarah Crocker-Buta, a master's candidate in biological sciences. Though this was her first 3MT win, Crocker-Buta is no stranger to oral presentations, or, for that matter, winning. Just two years ago, she won first place for her presentation at the annual Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Conference at the University of Alabama, and she's given six conference presentations since 2012, all of which pertained to herpetology.

Crocker-Buta graduated from the University of Alabama in 2013 with a Bachelor of Science degree. During her undergraduate career, she worked with Steven Secor, associate professor of biology, researching the digestive system of corn snakes (*Pantherophis guttatus*). The study was her first published work, appearing in *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology Part A* in 2014, and related topics in corn snake digestion were the subject of her award-winning presentation at the URCA Conference.

Currently, Crocker-Buta works under Christopher Leary, University of Mississippi assistant professor of biology, examining how the social-acoustic environment and circulating glucocorticoid levels interact to influence the expression of alternative mating tactics in the green tree frog (*Hyla cinerea*). Specifically, the alternative mating tactics in question refer to satellite males: smaller male frogs that do not produce mating calls and parasitize calling males, mating with female frogs that respond to the call.

Two of her previous conference presentations have pertained to tree frog mating habits, and in addition to the satellite males, Crocker-Buta has also studied the effect of stress on mating males.

"It's funny," she said, "we thought it was hormonal, like stress was changing something internally. But really, stress affects their body condition, making the males less attractive to the females."

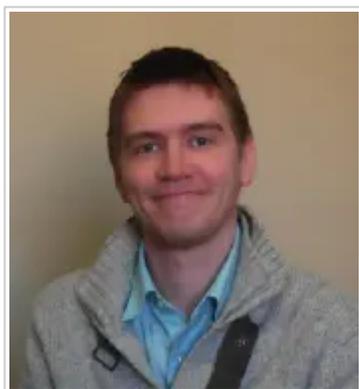
On her choice of research subjects, Crocker-Buta said, "I always knew I wanted to work with animals, but it turned out that I'm allergic to pretty much anything with hair or dander. So, I started looking into herpetology. ... Luckily, I've never really been afraid of frogs or snakes!"

Her fearlessness has come in handy, working in the Leary Behavioral Neuroendocrinology Lab, as research there involves getting up close and personal with reptiles and amphibians regularly. As with most biological research, Crocker-Buta's work requires a significant amount of fieldwork.

Leary referenced her excellence in fieldwork as one of the reasons behind her success, saying, "Sarah is an outstanding student that loves what she does. She is determined to learn all that she can about how hormones regulate reproductive behavior in frogs, and she really enjoys getting out in the field and working with these animals in their natural environment."

Graduate School

3MT Winner: Mark McCauley



First-place winner of the annual Three-Minute Thesis competition's Ph.D. division is Mark McCauley, a Ph.D. candidate in biological sciences, focusing on coral reef ecology. His presentation pertained to soft coral and how changes in global warming, soft coral and ocean ecology are linked.

McCauley graduated with honors from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland in 2011 with a B.S. in zoology with a focus on marine mammal ecology. While at St. Andrews, he spent a year as an undergraduate researcher at the University of Richmond, studying what he describes as, "how some sponges can harbor intracellular dinoflagellates and testing their symbiotic thresholds."

Early on, McCauley was largely interested in working with marine mammals, as reflected in his undergraduate degree and his time spent researching dual directional calls of mother and pup Antarctic fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*) while at St. Andrews. However, after graduating, he began looking more closely into coral reefs and decided to refocus his academic efforts in their direction, specifically toward soft coral.

"People know about coral reefs," he said, "but when you think of coral, what you're thinking of is hard coral. There's a whole other type, and people really don't know much about it, but it's still very important."

In 2013, he traveled to Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México to participate in coral-specific workshops, including "Light and Photosynthesis in Coral Reefs" and "Coral Reproduction to Reef Restoration." Both of these workshops included technical training, as coral-related field work is largely dependent on diving.

At the University of Mississippi, McCauley works with Tamar Goulet, professor of biology, who remembers a specific diving-related incident fondly.

"While conducting field research in Mexico, [McCauley] texted his then fiancée, now wife, that a shark attacked him. She was at her wit's end before he explained that, actually, a whale shark had bumped into him. Whale sharks," she explained, "eat plankton, small shrimp-like creatures."

Goulet has also worked with McCauley on a study called “UVR: A synergistic stressor for Caribbean gorgonian corals?”, which they presented at Symbiofest in Georgia.

Ultimately, McCauley’s research is geared toward examining how global warming affects soft corals and, in turn, their ecosystem.

“By focusing on dominant yet understudied corals, I am attempting to provide baseline data for the Caribbean and its species that will be severely affected as a result of increasing ocean temperatures,” he said.

McCauley said he hopes this research can be useful in guiding policy for environmental interaction and conservation.