

University of Mississippi

eGrove

---

University of Mississippi News

---

4-26-2018

## 3 Alumni Honored with Engineering Awards

Edwin B. Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

---

### Recommended Citation

Smith, Edwin B., "3 Alumni Honored with Engineering Awards" (2018). *University of Mississippi News*. 77.  
<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/77>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

## 3 Alumni Honored with Engineering Awards

**Albert Hilliard, Jeff Rish III and Catherine Grace Norris received recognition at awards banquet**

APRIL 26, 2018 BY EDWIN B. SMITH

**FaTvLiErCtSMPrSr**



Albert L. Hilliard (left) accepts the 2018 Engineer of Distinction award from UM School of Engineering Dean Alex Cheng. Photo by Clay Cavett/UM Alumni Affairs

Three **University of Mississippi School of Engineering** alumni were honored for their hard work, service and humanitarianism during the annual engineering awards banquet in April.

Albert L. Hilliard, IT/OT services program manager at ExxonMobil, was presented the Engineer of Distinction Award. Jeff W. Rish III, retired from federal service as technical program manager at the U.S. Naval Surface Warfare Center, received the Engineer of Service Award. The Gregory Gomez IV Humanitarian Service Award went to Catherine Grace Norris, a 2017

graduate who works as a Peace Corps volunteer.

"Once a year, we have this warm gathering to celebrate the accomplishment of our students, alumni and faculty," said Dean Alex Cheng. "I am pleased that over and over again we see the highest level of creativity and service demonstrated by this group. This is a wonderful and proud Ole Miss family."

The recipients reflected upon their honor.

"I was surprised since I didn't know I was even being considered," said Hilliard, who is responsible for digitally transforming ExxonMobil's industrial IT environments around the world. "I felt so honored to be included in such a distinguished group of University of Mississippi alumni engineers. This is a dream come true."

The Hernando native, who earned his bachelor's degree in computer science from the university 35 years ago, said it is very gratifying to be recognized by the school that launched him on his successful path as a computer scientist/engineer.



Jeff Rish III (center) receives the 2018 Engineer of Service award from Dean Cheng (right) and is congratulated by David Carroll, 2016 Engineer of Service recipient. Photo by Clay Cavett/UM Alumni Affairs

"I grew up poor in rural Mississippi and was a first-generation college student," Hilliard said. "I entered the University of Mississippi with raw talents/skills, strong family support and dreams of making a difference. The University of Mississippi helped mold me into a computer scientist, helped me to focus and challenged me to make a difference as a computer scientist and responsible citizen."

Hilliard also has a master's degree in computer science from the University of Dayton and an Executive MBA from Baylor University. His wife,

Harriet, earned her bachelor's degree from Ole Miss and her medical degree from the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The couple has two sons.

Rish said he was gratified to learn that he had been selected to receive the Engineer of Service Award. He was a member of the UM Engineering Advisory Board from 2004 to 2014, and interacted with the school on a number of topics and issues during that time.

"This award is personally meaningful to me because it says I impacted leadership within the School of Engineering, and the EAB believes that my involvement impacted the school in a positive way," Rish said.

Rish earned bachelor's degrees in both civil and mechanical engineering, a master's degree and a Ph.D.

## Follow us on social



## Campus Briefs

### Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)

## Thank You To Our Donors

### Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)

## Ole Miss In the News

### Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

in engineering science from the university. A Pontotoc native, Rish is a member of the adjunct faculty at Florida State University's Panama City campus, where he teaches Engineering Thermodynamics. He has been teaching this undergraduate course there since 2005.

He and his wife, Patricia (or "Patti"), reside in Lynn Haven, Florida, but maintain strong ties to his alma mater and Mississippi roots.

A 2017 general engineering graduate, Norris joined the Peace Corps and works in Zambia. Her work has involved meeting with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, a rice nongovernmental organization, to discuss hosting a workshop in Luapula Province. She frequently hosts demonstrations on how to make compost fertilizer and smaller projects involving animal husbandry, women's empowerment and hydrogeology.

Like Hilliard, Norris said she was surprised by the award.

"I have been living very disconnected from the U.S. and didn't know I was eligible for such an award," she said. "I am both humbled and elated to accept this reward. Peace Corps has been an idea of mine for almost 10 years, and thanks to the engineering school and especially Ms. Hank (Ducey), I've gotten to achieve something I feel is truly great.



Catherine Grace Norris, a Peace Corps volunteer in Zimbabwe, was presented the 2018 Greg Gomez IV Humanitarian Award in absentia. Hank Ducey, administrative assistant in the engineering school, accepted the award on Norris' behalf. Photo by Clay Cavett/UM Alumni Affairs

"I have always been heavily involved in volunteer work, and being a Peace Corps volunteer, riding on buses, in the backs of cars, down dangerous roads, has become a way of life. Hearing about Gomez and how his story and passions are being honored is beautiful. ... He has set a great example, and I hope fellow Ole Miss students and alumni can follow it."

Also honored at the awards banquet were Lei Cao, Outstanding Faculty of the Year; Alex Yakovlev, Senior Faculty Research Award; Esteban Urena-Benavides, Junior Faculty Research Award; Adam Smith, Faculty Teaching Award; Hunain Alkhateb, Faculty

Service Award; and Aubrey Bolen, Staff Award. The school also honored Harleigh Huggins with the Mississippi Engineering Society Outstanding Senior Award.

Five students received the Engineering Outstanding Senior Award. They are Huggins (mechanical engineering), David Rozier (chemical engineering), Colbert Lehr (electrical engineering), Zach Mitchell (general engineering) and William Garrett (mechanical engineering). The David Arnold Engineering Award was presented to Colbert Lehr. Farzin Rahmani (chemical engineering) and Amrit Kharel (electrical engineering) received Graduate Achievement awards, and 15 engineering students received the Taylor Medal, the university's most coveted honor.

FILED UNDER: [ENGINEERING FACULTY NEWS](#), [ENGINEERING NEWS ARCHIVE](#), [IN PROGRESS](#), [SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING](#)

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)