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A 'Gentle Insistence on Excellence'

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A ‘Gentle Insistence on Excellence’

Nancy Dupont to retire from UM School of Journalism and New Media after spring semester

FEBRUARY 24, 2021 BY LAREECA RUCKER

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Archive photo: Nancy Dupont teaches UM students in Farley Hall during a Journalism 102 class. Dupont, who joined the UM faculty in 2006 after spending 17 years as a broadcast journalist and 13 years as a journalism educator, will retire after the spring semester. Photo by Nathan Latil/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – At the end of the spring semester, Nancy Dupont retires from the **University of Mississippi School of Journalism and New Media**. She has been a vital part of the school since 2006, teaching across a wide swath of the curriculum and playing a critical role in the growth and achievements of the broadcast journalism program.

While the entire faculty will miss her, that absence will be strongly felt by Interim Dean Debora Wenger, who has worked with Dupont in one way or another for more than 30 years.

When Wenger moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, to produce the 11 p.m. news more than 30 years ago, Dupont was the 6 p.m. producer, supervising the station’s hourlong show.

“Despite the fact that she was under an incredible amount of pressure in that role, Nancy was always funny and fun to be around,” Wenger said.

Wenger’s responsibilities included coming into the station about 2 p.m. and monitoring news feeds from the network and other sources so she could alert Dupont about any great video she should include in her show. She also helped write breaking news stories for the 6 p.m. news and led the production of the late show.

“My first impression (of Nancy) was that she was good at her job, and that I could learn something from her,” she said. “My second impression is that she was someone I wanted to be friends with because she sure knew how to make people laugh and to like her.”

Not much has changed, Wenger said.

“After 30-plus years of knowing Nancy, I still learn things from her, and I still enjoy being her friend,” she said. “When my husband, Mitch, was interviewing for a job at the University of Mississippi, Nancy was the first person to put my name forward as a candidate for an open position in the then-Department of Journalism.

“Once I got the job, she was a huge help in getting me settled into my new role – and for the past 10 years, she has been a source of great ideas for making our program stronger, and she has been a great advocate for me always.”

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Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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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

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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



Nancy Dupont

For many years, Dupont was the faculty adviser for “**NewsWatch Ole Miss,**” and Wenger said Dupont deserves immeasurable thanks and credit for taking the program to a higher level. She was also a key driver behind the curriculum development that has made the broadcast program a much more relevant and robust component of the school, Wenger said.

Dupont has served as chair of the Electronic News Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and was twice named chair of the news division of the Broadcast Education Association. In 2019, she was elected to a two-year term on the Broadcast Education Association board of directors.

Dupont’s scholarship is extensive. She co-authored “Journalism of the Fallen Confederacy” (Springer, 2015) and has authored a dozen or more book chapters. She also has been a prolific presenter at national and international conferences.

“I got an education at Loyola University in New Orleans and set out to be a reporter,” Dupont said. “I soon tired of that, because the producers boss people around all day, and I wanted to be a producer.”

Dupont joined the Ole Miss faculty in 2006 after spending 17 years as a broadcast journalist and 13 years as a journalism educator. She earned a doctorate from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1997.

Wenger said one of the things she has learned from Dupont is to keep her love of breaking news alive.

“Whenever a big story emerged in the state, Nancy was always the first person on the phone to me saying, ‘Who can we send,’ she said. “A ‘go-get-’em’ journalist’s heart is alive and well in Dr. Dupont, and she’s helped to keep it beating strong in me as well.”

Dupont said Wenger is the “smartest person I have ever known.”

“She has such confidence in herself,” Dupont said. “She can do anything. She taught me how to be a good producer. ... She taught me to take the challenge.”

Wenger said Dupont has been a role model, someone who exemplifies what it means to be a teacher first.

“Though she was an excellent researcher and contributed countless service hours, she has always focused on students,” Wenger said. “That’s why I’m so glad that one of the ways we will honor her is by naming the **Mississippi Scholastic Press Association** Broadcast Adviser of the Year Award after Nancy.”

The MSPA board of advisers unanimously approved a request by the Ole Miss journalism school to rename its Broadcast Adviser of the Year award in honor of Dupont.

“Dr. Dupont is a highly-decorated journalism educator and the longtime faculty adviser for the award-winning ‘NewsWatch,’ UM’s daily live student-run news broadcast,” said R.J. Morgan, MSPA director. “Throughout her career, Dr. Dupont has been a friend to scholastic journalism and a mentor to generations of young communicators.

“As such, she embodies both the spirit and substance of those educators our adviser of the year awards seek to honor, and I think I speak for the entire board when I say we are incredibly excited to have her name attached to this honor going forward.”

The award, which honors the state’s best high school broadcast adviser, will be awarded at the spring convention, to be held virtually April 9, Morgan said. Dupont will be involved in the judging process.

According to some of Dupont’s colleagues, naming the award for her could not be more fitting.

Professor Charlie Mitchell said when he visited “NewsWatch” in action, it was clear that students were “at work” as opposed to “in a class.”

“This is not insignificant,” he said. “In all your teaching, I saw you set the highest standard of professional journalism practice, and the ‘students’ responded to that in ways that will be rewarding for them all through their careers.

“Your gentle insistence on excellence has been inspirational to me, too. While you engaged in serious

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Debora Wenger, interim dean of the UM School of Journalism and New Media, has worked with retiring professor Nancy Dupont in some capacity for more than 30 years. Photo by Robert Jordan/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

scholarship, you also organized Broadcast Day and attracted every news director in Mississippi and several from Tennessee to visit campus and meet with students each year. This was truly service above self and, again, something to admire.”

Samir Husni, founder and director, professor and Hederman Lecturer of the **Magazine Innovation Center**, said the only silver lining after the horrors of Hurricane Katrina was that it provided the opportunity for the department to hire DuPont.

“Her combination of professionalism in the newsroom and classroom is unmatched,” he said. “From day one, she put both skills into the service of our students, and she excelled as a mentor and as a teacher.

“I’m very proud to have had the honor of working with her as a colleague and to also call her my friend. I wish her the best in her retirement.”

Iveta Imre, a UM assistant professor of journalism, said she is sad Dupont is leaving.

“Your endless energy and passion have been amazing to witness during the short time I have had the pleasure to work with you,” she said. “I was always amazed at your dedication to work with ‘NewsWatch’ students day in and day out for hours on end, to help them grow into budding journalists and support them on their journey.

“You are leaving big shoes to fill.”



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