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Alumnus Backs Opportunities for Business Graduates, Student-Athletes

UM graduate's gifts support job placement for students, improved facilities

APRIL 9, 2022 BY **BILL DABNEY**



Visiting in front of the Douglas Family Gate at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium are (from left) Ken Cyree, dean of the School of Business Administration, Dean Douglas, Keith Carter, vice chancellor for intercollegiate athletic and Matt McLaughlin, assistant athletics director for major gifts. Photo by Bill Dabney/UM Foundation

OXFORD, Miss. – After a career spanning more than 30 years across the telecommunication and information technology industries, including leading four companies as CEO, Dean Douglas is giving back to the university he credits for his success.

With gifts totaling \$250,000, the 1978 graduate of the **University of Mississippi School of Business Administration** established the Dean Douglas Business Student Preparation Endowment and the Dean J. Douglas Business Advisory Board Business Connect Program Endowment.

The funds will work in tandem to support an initiative designed to make the business school a go-to source for companies recruiting new executives, meaning graduates will be better prepared to be hired by top companies in global business.

“When I talked about Ole Miss to others at **IBM** and many other companies, I realized that University of Mississippi graduates weren’t on the top of their recruiting lists, and that bothered me,” said Douglas, who is retired, living in Oxford and teaching a sales class within the school.

“I understand that there’s a 90% placement rate for our students within six months but I’m not sure that they’re getting the best jobs. I want to help make certain they do.”

Douglas explained that he hopes his gift will be used to support the development of software or artificial intelligence tools to drive a stronger job-placement result for Ole Miss business graduates.

“Having our graduates placed in the best global companies is a focus of our advisory board, on which Dean serves, and it is good for our students, for our school and for the university,” **Dean Ken Cyree** said.

“I am extremely grateful to Dean for his perspective on this situation and for his generous gifts. Dean brings deep, real-world experience home to our students, and that kind of knowledge creates outstanding educational opportunities for our students.”

Most recently, Douglas served as CEO and president of **Syniverse**, a software firm focused on telecommunications. Previously, he was president of the enterprise segment of CenturyLink, a division

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Campus Briefs

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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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

that accounted for \$10 billion of the company's \$16 billion in revenues; he was the core transformation leader at a crucial time for the company.

He formerly was CEO of Unify, where he led a conversion to a provider of software-based, enterprise-unified communications.

During his career, Douglas also served as CEO of the Westcon Group and LCC International, held an executive role at Motorola and lived abroad for many years, leading international business ventures for his employers.

Besides his gifts to the business school, Douglas supports **Ole Miss athletics**; his most recent gift of \$500,000 is designated to the Vaught Society and the Champions. Now. campaign.

"I'm a big fan of Ole Miss both academically as well as from a sports-on-the-field standpoint," Douglas said. "It just seemed to me that this would be a nice way to help out going forward as plans were being put in place to expand athletics facilities."

Keith Carter, vice chancellor for intercollegiate athletics, expressed gratitude for Douglas's generosity, which will bolster facilities and programs for student-athletes.

"We are extremely grateful for Dean's longtime support and desire to see our student-athletes succeed in their particular sports, in the classroom and in life beyond college," Carter said.

Douglas attended DePaul University in Chicago for two years before transferring to Ole Miss, where he joined Phi Kappa Psi fraternity.

"My fraternity brothers laughed when I told them I was going to IBM because I was not the most technical guy," Douglas remembered. "I have an aptitude for it, but it's deeply hidden. I focused on verbal skills. I went to law school here for a year and was not interested in technology.

"Then I was given the opportunity to work in the Reagan administration or continue with IBM, and I opted to continue with IBM, which was a really solid move in hindsight. Leadership thought pretty highly of me.

"So in my early 30s, I was vice president of sales and marketing of a joint venture with Blockbuster that really taught me the value of technology, not only in terms of computers but also with applications in the telecom space."

Douglas credits his UM education, both academically and socially, for his numerous professional achievements.

"There's no question my education at Ole Miss helped prepare me for my career path," he said. "Inside the classroom, the business degree I received aided a great deal in understanding how businesses work, understanding how to approach those businesses and sell.

"Outside the classroom, being on a very social campus taught me a lot about empathy and how to interact with people. At 24, my job required me to talk to the CEOs of these multibillion-dollar companies. The fact is that I became very comfortable with that dynamic as an Ole Miss student made me sort of fearless."

Individuals and organizations can contribute to the Dean Douglas Business Student Preparation Endowment, by mailing a check, with the fund noted in the memo line, to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655, or give online at <https://give.olemiss.edu>.

To learn more about supporting the School of Business Administration, including its student preparation and Business Connect Program, contact Angela Brown, director of development, at browna@olemiss.edu or 662-915-3181.

To support Ole Miss athletics, visit <http://givetoathletics.com> or contact Fowler Staines, CEO and CFO, at fowler@olemiss.edu or 662-915-1143.

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