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## Alumnus Plans Ahead to Spur Growth, Improvement at UM

**Whitehead's gift will support generations of student-athletes**

JANUARY 17, 2017 BY **BILL DABNEY**

**FaTvLiErCcSMPrSt**



UM alumnus Greg Whitehead, left, meets with football Coach Hugh Freeze. Whitehead has established an endowment to provide ongoing scholarships for Ole Miss student-athletes. Courtesy photo

OXFORD, Miss. – The Tampa Bay Ole Miss Club was fairly inactive when **University of Mississippi** alumnus Greg Whitehead became president two years ago. Today, with 121 active Alumni Association members, the Florida club is thriving.

**"The Ole Miss Alumni Association** has had a club in the Tampa Bay area for several years, but it has taken off over the past two years," said Port Kaigler, assistant director of alumni affairs. "We knew we needed to increase our presence in the Tampa Bay area and we have started to, thanks to Greg's leadership and the work of his board."

Board members of the Tampa Bay club are UM alumni Frenchie Barron, Jessica Gillum, Elizabeth McConnell, Erin and Ryan Pew, and Hayden Sutherland.

The owner of a Tampa-based sales and marketing company in the wholesale home furnishings industry, Whitehead likes to have a hand in improvement whenever possible. He knew he could help make the alumni club better, just as he constantly strives to enhance his own life by staying in shape and by expanding his knowledge through books, music and travel.

Now, he hopes to help improve athletics and, ultimately, academics at

Ole Miss.

Whitehead has agreed to donate a portion of his estate to establish an endowment that will provide ongoing scholarships to Ole Miss student-athletes. This planned gift awards Whitehead membership in the 1848 Society, which recognizes generous donors who thoughtfully provide for the university through planned and deferred gifts.

"I want to give back to my school that I love," said Whitehead, a Zion, Illinois, native who moved to Mississippi with his family during high school. He played baseball for Itawamba Junior College for two years before transferring to UM, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration.

"I fell in love with Ole Miss," he said. "It has a special quality that can't be put into words, something spiritual or even mystical. In addition to being the most beautiful campus in the country, it has a charm that can't be quantified. It's a place that keeps calling you back.

"Ole Miss is my family, so I've earmarked this amount for athletics because I believe a strong athletics department helps esprit de corps and reputation, which in turn help to increase enrollment, improve academics and foster growth and achievement in many areas."

Whitehead's gift sets an example for others to follow, said Keith Carter, senior associate athletics director for development and executive director of the **Ole Miss Athletics Foundation**.

"Many people feel the need to give to Ole Miss athletics in the present, and we are very grateful for those gifts, but it's also important to know that a planned gift for athletics is another viable way to provide support," Carter said. "Generations of our student-athletes will receive the return on this particular investment. Greg should feel very proud of that."

For information on including the university in long-term estate and financial plans, visit <http://www.umfoundation.planmylegacy.org> or contact Sandra Guest, UM Foundation vice president, at 662-915-5208 or [sguest@olemiss.edu](mailto:sguest@olemiss.edu).

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