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## Andrea Hickerson Named Dean of School of Journalism and New Media

Respected administrator brings expertise in 21st century practices, research into deepfakes

MAY 19, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



Andrea Hickerson, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of South Carolina, as well as associate dean and professor, is the new dean of the UM School of Journalism and New Media. Hickerson is a respected researcher, educator and administrator whose vision for the school involves preparing students to succeed in an evolving modern media landscape and deal with ongoing technological and social changes. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – Andrea Hickerson, an internationally renowned researcher, educator and administrator, is joining the **University of Mississippi** as dean of the **School of Journalism and New Media**.

Her appointment was approved Thursday (May 19) by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning board of trustees at its May meeting. Hickerson begins her new role July 1.

"The appointment of Dr. Hickerson resulted from a national search that attracted a well-qualified pool of applicants," said Noel Wilkin, UM provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs.

"She is an accomplished researcher and scholar with experience studying deepfakes and issues facing international journalism. She is also an accomplished administrator, having served as a director at two universities."

Hickerson earned her bachelor's degree in journalism and international relations at Syracuse University, master's degrees in journalism and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Texas, and a Ph.D. in communication at the University of Washington. She has served on the faculty at both the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of South Carolina, where she most recently was director of the USC School of Journalism and Mass Communications, associate dean and professor.

The new dean said she is "incredibly positive" about coming to Ole Miss and Oxford.

"I love the setting and the history," Hickerson said. "When I visited campus, I felt a great energy and sense of mission from faculty, staff and students. I was excited by their drive to serve local, state, national and international communities in creative ways.

"I thought we would make great partners and thrive off of each other."

Hickerson has been a principal investigator, co-principal investigator or investigator on projects generating more than \$1.6 million in external support from a range of sources that include the National Science Foundation, U.S. State Department, philanthropic foundations and news networks.

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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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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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#### 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

Hickerson said her vision for the school is to prepare students to meet the challenges of evolving modern media and deal with ongoing technological and social changes.

"A short-term goal is to enhance the things the school is already great at, like supporting student media and creating opportunities for experiential learning," Hickerson said. "To do this, I look forward to listening to and learning from faculty, staff, students and alumni.

"I'm especially interested in traveling across the state and meeting current and future employers of the school's graduates."

Hickerson said she wants to make sure that the school is setting students up not just for their first job, but for successful careers.

"I also want to make sure our curriculum is well-rounded and has the right blend of skills classes and topical courses so our students can engage critically with key challenges facing citizens, especially those with backgrounds who differ from their own," she said.

A long-term goal of Hickerson's is to increase the school's expertise and reputation as central to community problem solving.

"A pet peeve of mine is when people equate communication with 'messaging' or 'publicity,'" she said. "Communication experts know how to listen, assess needs, contribute to solutions and communicate them to public and private audiences."

The incoming dean said she hopes to accomplish this goal by prioritizing interdisciplinary projects and research, including grant-funded research.

"I also hope to achieve this through proactive programming and events that bring experts from different fields to campus to address a common problem," she said. "I believe that if we take this initiative – creating spaces to discuss and iterate on problems – we can easily demonstrate our centrality to its analysis and solutions."

A prolific scholar, Hickerson is the author or co-author of more than 25 peer-reviewed journal articles. She has also been a presenter at numerous national and international conferences, as well as at professional development training seminars.

Hickerson said her strong background in research – particularly on deepfakes, manipulated videos that can make it appear that a person said something that they did not – should be especially useful in her new role.

"My research on deepfakes is an example of how journalism and communication can be paired with tech fields to solve a community problem; in this case, fighting misinformation," she said.

"Also, at the heart of this research is a deep commitment to verification. No matter how we challenge and create new storytelling forms, verification is a central practice."

Hickerson has received many awards for her teaching and research. One of the most meaningful for her is the University of South Carolina's Educational Foundation Research Award from Professional Schools. The award is one of the university's highest research honors.

"I'm proud of it because it recognized how my research impacted the overall practice of journalism, particularly through my deepfake research," she said.

Hickerson said she is also proud of and grateful for being asked to serve on the advisory board for a community-based research project concerning media portrayals of race in Rochester, New York, in 2018 and again in 2021.

"Both the results of those reports and the community members working on it taught me to question traditional journalism practices and to reconsider who tells community stories and even the definition of 'newsworthy,'" she said.

Her professional activities and memberships include the editorial board for the **Journal of Global Media and Diaspora**, the **Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication**, the **International Communication Association**, and the **International Association for Media and Communication Research**.

Hickerson will bring "a thoughtful and measured approach" to leading the school, said Debora Rae Wenger, interim dean and professor of journalism.

"Dr. Hickerson appears to think deeply about the role that communication can, does and should play in our society," Wenger said. "Under her leadership, I think we can reimagine the ways in which our school can contribute to the big conversation taking place around credibility, authenticity and accuracy of news and information in today's tech-mediated world."

Wenger said Hickerson's plans to take the time she needs to understand the culture and to build

abate. The Federal Reserve's

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strategically on past successes are also welcome.

"It's always good to bring in fresh ideas and new approaches," she said. "Dr. Hickerson's previous administrative experience offers us the opportunity to grow."

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