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5-11-2016

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Recommended Citation

Hahn, Tina, "Bancroft Fund Enters \$5 Million, Five-Year Commitment to UM" (2016). *University of Mississippi News*. 531.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/531>

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Bancroft Fund Enters \$5 Million, Five-Year Commitment to UM

Funds will help university's Croft Institute continue to prepare global leaders

MAY 11, 2016 BY [TINA HAHN](#)

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Croft Institute Executive Director Kees Gispén, third from left, visits with Croft students, from left, James DeMarshall of Mantua, New Jersey; Miller Richmond of Madison; Katherine Livingston of Clarksdale; Henry Stonnington of Perkinston; Erica McGraw of Franklin, Tennessee; and Amber Malone of Madison. The Joseph C. Bancroft Charitable and Educational Fund has made a new \$5 million commitment to the institute. Photo by Bill Dabney

OXFORD, Miss. — A record 276 applications have poured in from students across the nation and from several other countries vying for 70 freshman slots in the [University of Mississippi's Croft Institute for International Studies](#), signaling the prominence the demanding program has gained as it nears its 20th anniversary.

The continuing increase in high-ability students seeking degrees from the Croft Institute is one of several reasons that prompted the Joseph C. Bancroft Charitable & Educational Fund — which has invested more than \$44 million into the program — to provide a new \$5 million commitment, ensuring students are equipped

with knowledge and perspectives to embrace opportunities on the world stage.

The support from the Bancroft Fund — established as a nonprofit organization by the estate of Croft Metals founder Joseph C. Bancroft — will span the next five years, with the university matching the gift dollar to dollar. The Bancroft Fund agreement also stipulates the prospect of another \$5 million in support being granted at the end of that period.

"We are pleased that the Bancroft Fund has the ability to provide this financial support to the university, and we continue to be impressed with the amazing achievements of Croft students," said Tom A. Abdalla of McComb, chairman of the Croft Institute's board of trustees. "Provost Morris Stocks' interactions and work with our trustees ultimately led to this new commitment.

"To witness the manner in which the university has grown over the last few years has been really incredible, and we believe the Croft Institute for International Studies has played a pivotal role in attracting students and strengthening the university's academic reputation."

Looking to this fall's incoming freshmen, the Croft Institute will enroll its largest cohort to date, with students' average overall ACT increasing to 31.2. Forty-five percent will be Mississippians and 55 percent are from 20 different states, Australia and Japan. Besides the institute's faculty, staff and alumni being heavily involved in student recruitment, Croft Ambassadors meet with prospective students, take them on campus tours and write letters urging them to choose the international studies program.

While thanking Bancroft Fund board members for their support, UM Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter notes how crucial it is to prepare graduates to understand the relationships between politics, economics and culture at the international level.

"We have an important mission at the [University of Mississippi](#) to advance international understanding and appreciation as a key component of our learning environment," Vitter said. "We are deeply grateful for the Bancroft Fund's continued commitment to expanding exceptional educational opportunities that ultimately have a powerful impact on our state and nation.

"Croft Institute alumni and current students are proving their mettle, making tremendous contributions in an array of fields. This exceptional program has strengthened the global presence and outreach of our university, which, in turn, benefits all of our students."

Kees Gispén, the institute's executive director and a professor emeritus of modern European history, agrees with that assessment.

"The Croft Institute, together with the [Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College](#), the [Chinese](#)

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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'

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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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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

Flagship Program, Lott Leadership Institute and other strong programs, have served as a catalyst to transform the university's culture, bringing strong, diverse student scholars to our campus," said Gispén, who has led the institute since 2007 and is retiring this summer.

"There is a heightened recognition nationally that the University of Mississippi is a serious academic institution."

Overall Croft enrollment is limited to ensure classes are small, fostering discussion and analysis, and the program helps keep some of the best and brightest students in Mississippi.

Alex Martin, a junior from Madison, said she was attracted to the program's "academic excellence and firm commitment to language acquisition and significant study abroad experiences."

"The Croft Institute helped me go to Morocco for a semester to study Arabic and French, one of the most rewarding experiences of my life," Martin said. "Croft has encouraged and guided my interdisciplinary studies in fields such as mathematics and economics. None of the Croft faculty or advisers ever wavered or doubted me when I said I also wanted to obtain a B.S. in mathematics and complete extensive coursework in economics; they just said, 'Let's figure it out.'"

"After graduation, I intend to complete doctoral studies in economics. Already, my Croft advisers have put me in touch with several outstanding alumni who have helped to make me the most competitive and knowledgeable applicant possible when I begin the process in the fall."

Croft freshman Jarvis Benson, of Grenada, is pursuing a major in Spanish.

"What I found different and unique about the Croft Institute was the emphasis the program puts on not only just learning the foreign language you choose but also being totally immersed in classes on the history, politics and social culture that comes with it. I came into college knowing that I wanted to learn the Spanish language, and Croft has given me that opportunity and so much more.

"One of the greatest experiences I've had here at the university has been the Croft retreat that the faculty provided for incoming Croft students at the beginning of the academic year. It was so amazing to be surrounded by such wonderful, intelligent and thoughtful global thinkers."

Consider examples of recent alumni, student and program achievements:

- Patrick Woodyard – a 2010 Croft graduate and co-founder of a company that provides fair wages and classes in English and financial literacy to its workers in Peru and Kenya – landed on the prestigious Forbes 30 Under 30 list for 2016. The 29-year-old Nashville, Tennessee, social entrepreneur helped found Nisolo, with some 200 workers producing shoes and accessories sold in all 50 states and 50 different countries.
- Twaun Samuel, a 2006 Croft graduate and a UM law alumnus, provides leadership as chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.). Leading up to this role, Samuel served as legal fellow, legislative assistant and legislative counsel, managing Waters' Judiciary Committee portfolio.
- Arpi Grigoryan, a 2014 Croft graduate, recently participated in an intergovernmental commission to sign an agreement of cooperation between Armenia and Iraq. She provided assistance during negotiations and edited the agreement. Grigoryan works for a Yerevan, Armenia, think tank Regional Studies Center focusing on the South Caucasus.
- Croft senior Maggie Hall, of Greenwood, has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Germany for the 2016-17 academic year
- Croft seniors Maia Coteló, of Oxford, and Elizabeth Wicks, of Ocean Springs, are among 10 students in the 2016 Student Hall of Fame. Coteló is a triple major in international studies, economics and mathematics and plans a career in the nonprofit sector. Wicks is an international studies and French major who includes medical school in her future plans.
- This spring, 14 Croft students were inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, and seven were selected to join Phi Kappa Phi. Six Croft students were awarded Taylor Medals, the university's highest academic award recognizing those with at least a 3.90 grade-point average.
- Sophomore Margaret Dykes, of Brandon, also a member of the Chinese Language Flagship Program, is the fourth Croft student to win a Chinese Government Scholarship for the 2016-17 academic year. The award provides tuition, housing and a monthly stipend for a year's study in China.
- The Korea Foundation is funding a tenure-track position in Korean studies. A national search will fill this permanent position, jointly at the Croft Institute and in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.
- The Croft Institute has developed a joint program with the university's Patterson School of Accountancy, enabling students to graduate in five years with two degrees: international studies and accountancy. The accountancy school's programs are ranked in the nation's top 10.

"Focusing on international studies was the furthest thing from my imagination when I first talked with university leadership 19 years ago about the Bancroft Fund supporting a new program," said Gerald M. Abdalla of McComb, CEO and president of Croft LLC and a Bancroft Fund director instrumental in establishing the institute.

"The university made a case for international studies, and we decided to support that idea. We only have

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to look at the strength of the faculty and the credentials of the alumni and students to know that we made the right decision.”

Croft scholars select East Asia, Europe, Latin America or the Middle East as areas of regional concentration. Many who choose East Asia enjoy a close association with UM's Chinese Flagship Program, and all students in the institute select a global theme to emphasize. Many Croft students receive top scholarships at the university.



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