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Shea Stewart

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## Blair McElroy Named Senior International Officer at UM

Ole Miss alumna brings global perspective, experiences to role

SEPTEMBER 10, 2018 BY SHEA STEWART

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Blair McElroy, UM senior international officer, signs a memorandum of agreement with the National University of Civil Engineering in Vietnam for student and faculty exchanges and research collaborations in May. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – During the 2017-18 academic year at the [University of Mississippi](#), Blair McElroy watched over 877 international students as interim senior international officer.

In that position, she served as an advocate for those students, ensuring their education at UM went as smoothly as possible, while also championing international education on campus by organizing international collaboration agreements, assisting faculty in their teaching-abroad opportunities and creating new partnerships with international universities.

She even served as principal of the North Mississippi Japanese Supplementary School, a UM school where Japanese families and students settled in the area can maintain their education and culture.

This academic year, McElroy will continue her work in international education – while maintaining her concurrent role as director of the [Study Abroad Office](#) – but no longer with the interim tag. McElroy, a 2002 graduate of UM's [Croft Institute for International Studies](#) and the [Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College](#), has been named senior international officer at UM after holding the interim title for about a year.

"I see the Office of Global Engagement as a resource for the university in expanding its already prominent global footprint," McElroy said. "OGE's faculty and staff are incredible resources for opportunities such as faculty exchange, student exchange, joint research projects, supporting international students on campus and leading study abroad programs.

"Our forthcoming new website will host opportunities for global engagement for constituents on campus and in the community."

McElroy joined the Ole Miss staff in November 2006 as a study abroad adviser after graduating from the [UM School of Law](#). She was named director of the Study Abroad Office in July 2015.

"Blair brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the position, which has enabled her to be a stabilizing force in the Office of Global Engagement," Provost Noel Wilkin said. "For many years, she has demonstrated her ability to navigate the issues and advance the initiatives within the office.

"This background and experience prepared her well to work with faculty, staff and students to help us pursue a global Mississippi."

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## Campus Briefs

### Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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## Thank You To Our Donors

### Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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## Ole Miss In the News

### Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.



Blair McElroy

A native of Jackson, Tennessee, McElroy majored in international studies, minoring in Chinese and French, at UM. She also studied abroad in Beijing for a semester, and at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

She also worked in the Study Abroad Office as an undergraduate student worker and while in law school.

Don Dyer, co-director of UM's **Chinese Language Flagship Program** and **new Arabic Language Flagship Program**, has known McElroy for about 15 years and worked with her in several capacities.

"I have great admiration for her as an administrator on this campus," said Dyer, who also serves as associate dean for faculty and academic affairs in the College of Liberal Arts and distinguished professor of Russian and linguistics. "She is someone who sets her mind to a task and stays with it to its completion."

In an effort to strengthen UM's international bonds, **McElroy spent two weeks** this spring at an International Education Administrators seminar in South Korea. The trip was made possible through a Fulbright award.

While there, McElroy visited 12 South Korean universities on a whirlwind tour, learning about South Korean history and culture. Her visit also boosted the university's program offerings in Korea by structuring strategic partnerships in academic areas and deepening institutional connections to Korea through meetings with faculty, administrators and government officials.

"It was an amazing experience," she said. "Not only did I learn more about the Korean culture, history and people, but also how to better support Korean students on our campus. I can also happily and knowledgeably encourage study abroad in Korea."

"I would love to host information sessions focusing on study in Korea throughout the academic year and reach out to our Korean students. Having met many of their advisers during our visits, the connections will hopefully help them feel more at home here at UM."

As director of the Study Abroad Office, McElroy oversees the recruitment of outgoing and incoming study abroad and exchange students – a task that includes being a risk and crisis manager, which can lead to some restless nights.

UM sent 685 students overseas in the 2017-18 academic year through its study abroad programs, a 22 percent increase from the previous year.

With so many students overseas – either for a year, a semester or a summer – crises arise, whether it is students eating bad street food or natural disasters or political unrest. Through it all, the Study Abroad Office is there for students.

Difficulties aside, the experience of studying overseas is invaluable, McElroy said.

"The things you learn about another country, another culture and yourself still resonate even 20 years later," she said. "I still remember the uncertainty and excitement of traveling to another country for an extended period of time, and I want to make the transition to another country smooth, enjoyable and educational for our students."

"Having been an international student myself in China and the United Kingdom, I remember how it feels to know no one and learn to be resourceful and independent. But I also remember the kindness of people abroad who were hospitable and helpful, and I hope that we are fostering that kind of environment here on our campus for our international students."

So McElroy's advice when it comes to studying overseas? Do it.

The real world following graduation might not afford many opportunities for travel, and UM offers several programs for study abroad, she said. Plus, scholarships and financial aid apply, so students can often find a program that fits their budget and academic needs.

And if students cannot go abroad, opportunities are plentiful on campus to engage with international students through the **Office of Global Engagement** or by participating in UM's International Education Week activities in early November.

"Regardless of how a student interacts with people from other cultures, the opportunity to do so creates global citizens, people who understand that there exists a world community and know their place within it," McElroy said.

"People who use the tools they have learned by 'walking in other people's shoes' to become more empathetic, learn intercultural communication skills, learn what they value and can contribute positively to a local, national and global community, and the effects of their experience resonate forever."

"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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