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Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity faces hazing allegations, lawsuit



KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

The university's Pi Kappa Alpha chapter has been sanctioned, including restrictions on social activities and anti-hazing education, following an alleged hazing incident last fall.

Members sprayed pledges with chemicals, lawyer alleges

KENNETH NIEMEYER
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Adam Peavy, an attorney representing a university student, is planning to file a civil lawsuit in connection to an alleged Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity hazing incident that occurred last fall.

James Bowes Higgins was charged with aggravated assault by the University Police Department on Nov. 17 in connection with the incident. During the incident, bleach or cleaning fluid was allegedly sprayed onto blindfolded pledge members who were squatting against a wall, according to the Associated Press.

Higgins could not be reached for comment and a Twitter account associated with his name was deactivated.

SEE HAZING PAGE 2

University commits to mold testing

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The University of Mississippi has released its student housing strategic plan for the next six years, which addresses, in part, "student misperceptions around mold and mildew in traditional residence halls."

As recently as 2018, residents of Crosby Hall — the largest residence hall on campus — have reported becoming sick from mold growing in the rooms, showers and bathrooms, and poor air quality. The university addressed mold issues in 2018, but it has since repeatedly denied that the living conditions in dorms are a continuing problem.

Over the past two years, students have also reported poor conditions in Pittman, Brown, Stockard, Hefley and Stewart



FILE PHOTO: KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

halls, including several ant infestations.

The plan also states that the university will develop a plan to address the ceilings in Crosby Hall by 2024. While the university report did not provide details specifying the problem with the ceilings, Crosby residents have reported seeing spots of mold

SEE MOLD PAGE 3

COLUMN

UM has golden opportunity against Arkansas

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Big-time programs need big-time wins, and Ole Miss baseball will have a golden opportunity during this upcoming weekend series to snag a major win against a top team.

The No. 2 ranked Arkansas Razorbacks are coming to Swayze Field this weekend for the first time in three years, and the series will be especially exciting due to the current state of each team. Arkansas and Ole Miss are tied 7-2 in SEC play, hitting a .285 and .280. Both went 3-0 in the Texas Tournament, and have stayed in the top-5 since the beginning of the season. This series will prove who is king of the SEC West, and it will de-

SEE OPPORTUNITY PAGE 9



KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Josh Mallitz winds up to pitch the ball against North Alabama. The Rebels recovered from their loss to Florida over the weekend with their win against UNA.

HAZING

continued from page 1

tivated on April 7. According to Peavy, members of the fraternity blindfolded his client and sprayed chemical cleaner into his mouth after asking him if he wanted water. Peavy said his client Jackson, whose last name has not been released, is still suffering from problems with his esophagus six months after the incident.

“No parents send their kid to college thinking they’re going to get blindfolded and poisoned ... It’s unconscionable,” Peavy said.

Peavy has not determined who will be named as defendants in the lawsuit, but he said the university chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha, the national organization and the student who allegedly sprayed the bleach in Jackson’s mouth are possible defendants.

Peavy also noted the March 6 death of Bowling Green University sophomore Stone Foltz who died after a Pi Kappa Alpha hazing event and suggested that the fraternity has a national problem with hazing.

“It’s just unacceptable,” he said.

Peavy said ingestion of Clorox bleach leads to chemical burns in the stomach and the esophagus.

“Luckily, the esophagus can heal over time sometimes, but sometimes it doesn’t,” Peavy said. “In Jackson’s case, it’s been months and months, and (his weight) keeps going down.”

Peavy described Jackson as “larger than life” before the incident occurred, standing at over six-foot and 250 pounds. Now, Peavy said he’s lost 50 pounds and vomits much of the food he eats.

“(Jackson’s) mom has explained to me something about cutting out portions of the esophagus or having to redirect the esophagus to the intestines,” Peavy said. “But you know, he eats, (and) he vomits.”

He said Jackson’s mother also says the incident has had a psychological impact and has left him with depression.

“You can ask his mom. He’s a glorified foodie,” Peavy said. “He loved pizza night with the family, and he loved to eat, and he just can’t do it.”

According to Peavy, Jackson has not dropped his membership with Pi Kappa Alpha despite the alleged hazing incident, though he anticipates that he may do so soon.

Charlotte Fant Pegues, interim chancellor for student affairs, said in a statement that the university has “supported” the victim and his family in various capacities over the past few months and will continue to offer support.

“No parents send their kid to college thinking they’re going to get blindfolded and poisoned ... It’s unconscionable.”

- Adam Peavy
Lawyer representing Jackson

However, Peavy said only Chancellor Glenn Boyce reached out to Jackson via phone call recently, but Jackson did not respond to the chancellor’s messages. They hope to set up a meeting soon with the university to talk about the incident, and Peavy said acknowledgement was what the family has wanted from the beginning.

“I do believe one of the individuals who was responsible for poisoning Jackson has been suspended or expelled. That’s a good start,” Peavy said.

According to the Associated Press, the university’s Pi Kappa Alpha chapter has been sanctioned including restrictions on social activities and anti-hazing education.

The Daily Mississippian attempted to speak with Arthur Doctor, director of fraternity and sorority life, for this story, but he could not be reached for comment by the time of publication. After two phone calls to Doctor’s office, a reporter went to his office in person where Doctor said The Daily Mississippian could email questions to be answered with university communications.

After multiple phone calls to university communications officials, a reporter went to the university communications office to request a conversation with Doctor given the seriousness of the allegations in the story. The reporter was told that Jim Zook, chief marketing and communications officer, was “on the phone” and would be unavailable for an unspecified amount of time.

When The Daily Mississippian emailed questions to Doctor, university communications responded with a statement from Fant Pegues that was already given to the Associated Press and said it would be the university’s only comment at this time.

Fant Pegues said she was outraged by the allegations. She said the university learned of the “severity of the incident” last fall and referred to the University Police Department.

According to Fant Pegues, the university placed Pi Kappa Alpha on interim suspension and is working with their national organization to hold students responsible and accountable, which has resulted in the suspension of one student from the university and

Sanctions placed on Pi Kappa Alpha:

- **Membership review by PIKE national organization**
- **Social probation with limits on events through Spring 2022**
- **Three mandatory anti-hazing speakers or programs**
- **Host an anti-hazing program open to the university community**
- **New member education program**
- **New accountability process**
- **All members of Executive Board attend program delivered by the William Magee Center for Wellness Education**
- **Alumni Advisory Board training**
- **All new members must sign an anti-hazing agreement**

other sanctions against the chapter. Those sanctions were not specified in the statement, but a university communications official sent a followup email after publication with a list of the sanctions.

“Hazing and other behavior that places the health and safety of our students at risk will not be tolerated,” she said. “We will continue to take these matters seriously and address any violations within our community.”



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MOLD

continued from page 1

growing on their ceilings. “I definitely feel like the ceilings should be fixed now and not be pushed off until 2024,” Emma Grace Kelly, a freshman integrated marketing communications major who currently lives in Crosby Hall, said. She complained of frequently being sick and having several spots that appear to be mold on her ceiling.

Mold is a health hazard, and one that dorm residents have alleged for years. Exposure can cause headaches, nose bleeds, upper respiratory issues, rashes, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and fatigue. In those with impaired immune systems, mold can cause more serious infection, and long-term exposure can lead to allergy and asthma problems.

“When I am home for a certain period of time, I feel completely normal,” Kelly said. “I have several friends in Crosby who get sick at college and feel normal at home. One of my friends got so sick that she went to urgent care and tested positive for mold in her system.”

Students have complained about how living in Crosby has negatively impacted their health over the past several years.

“I have been sick since August,” Kendra Ingram, a student who was living in Crosby at the time, told the Daily Mississippian in October 2018. “When I went into the university Health Center in August, they knew I lived in Crosby right away and said that was the reason I was getting sick.”

Ingram experienced a sore throat and cough and was diagnosed with bronchitis. She also said the portable air filter in her dorm turned the color black.



ILLUSTRATION: KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

In 2019, the Oxford Eagle reported that a student living in Crosby Hall and her roommate

Niger, a form of black mold, had grown in the kit.

In September 2019, Student

“One of my friends got so sick that she went to Urgent Care and tested positive for mold in her system.”

- Grace Kelly
Freshman Crosby Hall resident

were experiencing nosebleeds due to mold. The student’s mother, Brittany Musser, said her daughter was diagnosed with an upper respiratory infection.

After seeing photos of the ceiling in Crosby, Musser instructed her daughter to buy an at-home mold testing kit. Her daughter exposed the petri dish to the air in her dorm room for one hour. After a 48 hour wait time, Aspergillus

Housing director John Yaun denied the presence of mold in any of the university’s residence halls in a letter sent to Crosby residents.

“The Department of Student Housing has seen no evidence of active mold growth in any residential environment within Crosby Hall or other residential buildings across campus,” Yaun said in the letter. “Please be assured that we are committed to providing and

maintaining safe, healthy facilities for all of our students.”

The most recent Crosby Hall air quality report from September 2019 concluded that 23 rooms in the building had “visible stains” on the ceiling perimeter. It also found a water leak above the tenth floor janitor’s closet.

Surface sampling found that five rooms in Crosby Hall had rare or low concentrations of mold spores, while one room on the eighth floor had a medium concentration, and one fifth floor room had low, medium and high concentrations. Bathrooms on floors four and six had rare, low or medium concentration of mold spores in the shower areas. The report noted that housekeeping should be informed and the showers should be cleaned.

Anne-McLain Herbert, a freshman integrated marketing communications major, currently

lives in Martin Hall and says her health has been negatively impacted by the condition of the dorm. Since moving in, she’s experienced a consistent dry cough, stuffy nose and sore throat.

“Everyone I know is always sick, and they blame it on ‘Martin air,’” Herbert said. “I think putting students in an environment like this is not fair for the amount of money we are paying. The air we breathe should be the first thing that is focused on.”

Herbert taped an air filter over the vent in her dorm room in an attempt to minimize her symptoms, but she said the filter started turning black 24 hours after installing it.

“It was completely dirty after two weeks. The air filters are for homes and are supposed to last two months,” Herbert said. “I also have an air purifier that is supposed to be changed every 2 years, and I had to change it after my first semester.”

When Herbert vacated the dorm for several weeks over winter break, her sickness subsided. She relapsed immediately upon her return.

“I was not sick even once, and as soon as I returned to school, I went to the clinic twice in one week,” Herbert said. “I had a sinus infection.”

Now, the new student housing strategic plan says the university will facilitate mold testing each summer in Crosby, Martin and Stockard halls. This year, they plan to benchmark other SEC institutions and practices to gather information.

The university report also says officials intend to review air testing findings annually with department staff and publish the findings of air test results on the website each year.

State receives \$20 million in mental health funding

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The Mississippi Department of Mental Health has recently received millions in federal funding from two grants. In total, the state will take in over \$20.5 million in order to provide resources to mental health and substance abuse services.

Health Services Block Grant (MHBG), totaled at over \$7.5 million, is aimed toward “adults with serious mental illness and children with serious emotional disturbances.” The other \$12 million comes from the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG), which goes to fund services that help pregnant women, dependent

children, intravenous drug users and primary prevention services.

“This funding will allow the state to increase access to services, particularly increasing access to mental health and substance use needs as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic,” DMH Executive Director Wendy Bailey said. “There is no doubt that the

pandemic has impacted our overall mental health, whether from losses we have endured over the past year or the isolation and social distancing measures we have taken to limit the spread of this virus.”

According to the Department of Mental Health, calls to the DMH helpline and calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline have increased

over the past year. From July 2020 to December 2020, the DMH helpline received approximately 5,004 calls. In the same period during the previous year, there were around 2,000 less calls.

Calls to the Mississippi call center for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline increased by 875 during the same period in 2020 compared to 2019.

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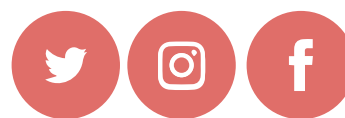
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University installs Class of 2021 alumni bricks



HANNAH GRACE BIGGS
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The University of Mississippi installed personalized senior bricks for the Class of 2021 on campus on Wednesday. The bricks are placed in the Circle in front of the Lyceum, grouped by class year, and the tradition has persisted for decades. Students typically include their name, class year and organizational involvement on their bricks. Graduates each year have the opportunity to receive a personalized brick by joining the Ole Miss Alumni Association. The Ole Miss Alumni Association aims to connect members of the university community across the globe by hosting networking events, publishing the Ole Miss Alumni Review quarterly and offering a monthly newsletter. The group claims to have connections among over 130,000 University of Mississippi graduates.

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How Will Cook transformed Southside Gallery

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While Southside Gallery director Will Cook never considered himself an artist, he has always loved art.

Working as the director for the past 17 years, Cook uses his gallery to promote both local and regional artists. Many of the artists he showcases are from Mississippi. On the Southside Gallery's website, he shares all artists who the gallery has featured.

Cook personally selects each artist that gets to exhibit work in the gallery. Currently, Andrew Blanchard and Charlie Buckley — classmates of Cook's from when they all attended the University of Mississippi together — are currently on display in the Southside Gallery.

However, Cook said he does not play favorites with artists displayed in his gallery.

"I love all the art that comes through, but because we knew each other and our careers grew with each other, both Drew and Charlie have a special place for me," Cook said.

Cook feels he has a bond with all the artists he displays, not just Blanchard and Buckley. Carlyle Wolfe and William Dunlap are



KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Will Cook goes to hang a new vinyl sign on the window of the gallery.

other notable artists who have been featured at the gallery.

According to Cook, Dunlap — who has art on display on the second floor of the gallery — has done a lot to help his gallery stay open.

Southside Gallery experienced troubles like many other local businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Cook.

"Right as spring break ended and the reports about COVID came out, nobody came to the gallery. Everyone was scared and unsure what the long-term effects were," Cook said. "I had to find ways to showcase art in a time of chaos."

As a result, he came up with other ways to showcase exhibits. He allowed people to come by following the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention guidelines, but soon, he had to close because of lockdown restrictions.

"My gallery is not considered essential, so when the lockdowns came, the gallery was also closed," Cook said. "I wish my work was considered essential, but I understand."

While he was unable to show the work of the local artist or sell paintings, Cook did find ways to

show off art. After trying different ideas, he decided to use the entrance window as his solution and have drive-by shows.

Cook thinks art is essential for a place like Oxford, but visual art has yet to catch up to literature.

"For a while, visual art took the back seat to literature, but over the past years, visual arts has really started to grow," Cook said.

He is unsure if visual arts will ever catch up to literature, but remains hopeful and optimistic. Cook says there are many famous painters from the city. Artists such as Theora Hamblet and Carlyle Wolfe rival the great writers.

"It's hard to compare the two," Cook said. "The two arts are so different it is just going to take more time and exposure for growth."

Art is and will always be a part of Cook's life. He grew up loving art and now has spent years working in the industry. Cook said he is doing what he loves and interacting with people who share the same interest as him. He believes art is crucial for everything.

"It is really important for our culture and civilization," Cook said. "It may not be for everyone, but I think if art were not here, our lives would be a lot emptier."

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University supplies Greek organizations with Narcan

WILL CARPENTER
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Early last month, the university gave Greek organizations on campus doses of Narcan, the over-the-counter drug meant to reverse effects of opioid overdoses. Members also received training on how to administer the drug. Having the drug in every sorority house was a part of an Associated Student Body initiative with the goal of preventing drug overdoses in the university community and destigmatizing discussions around student substance abuse.

Substance abuse has been a growing issue in the United States over the past few years. In June 2020, the CDC stated that 13% of Americans reported starting or increasing substance abuse to cope with stress caused by the pandemic. Its effects have even been felt here in Oxford, with a recent increase in DUI and drug overdose rates. Still, effects on the college community are often overlooked.

“I think that we have to be reactive, and ideally, we want to be in a place that’s proactive, so that’s why we ended up with the Narcan initiative,” Gabby Hunter, outgoing ASB Judicial Chair, said. “It was spurred by events in Oxford that were very close to the university’s hearts, but we wanted to make sure that we were preventing any other deaths or any other harm to students in the future as much as we could.”

Hunter is the founder of the Drug and Alcohol Policy committee in ASB, a group of six members that push for student drug sanction reforms, mental health and substance abuse education.

Narcan, chemically known as naloxone, is an over-the-counter nasal spray that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. Even one spray can delay

a reaction long enough for an ambulance to arrive and administer another dose, though the effects of Narcan can wear off after several hours.

Originally, the idea was not bound to only Greek organizations, but student housing as well. After exploring possibilities and working with administration, it became evident that the most accessible step would be to test their plan with Greek houses first. After presenting the ideas to the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, the plan was greenlit and has been implemented.

The initiative, though beginning with Greek organizations, is not targeting a problem specific to fraternities and sororities, according to Hunter.

“The Greek community has dealt with a lot of these issues in the past. They’ve seen the effects,” Hunter said. “This is not a problem unique to the Greek



ILLUSTRATION: KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

2022 school year.

“We are in the process of evaluating the feasibility of having Narcan in other campus housing facilities, and we hope to make strides in that over the course of the next term,” Fortenberry said in a text. “If approved, this would require training staff members to ad-

capable of pulling an individual out of overdose symptoms in as quick as two minutes after a single dose, depending on the amount of substance consumed. Training centered on how to identify an overdose, how to administer the drug and its effect, eventually opening up to a greater conversation around mental health.

For McKissick, the need to start a more personal narrative with those seeking help is crucial, as sometimes the greater general discussion may not break through to someone who truly needs help with substance abuse.

Having doses of Narcan on campus also serves as an acknowledgment of substance abuse on the college campus.

“It’s kind of like car insurance. Hopefully you never have to use it, but it’s really good to have it if you have a wreck,” Melody Madaris, assistant director at Communicare Oxford, said.

Communicare, a north Mississippi mental health and wellness center, was the key partner in getting the Narcan initiative off the ground. The group covers a wide range of services, one of them being substance abuse treatment.

Typically Narcan runs at \$150 a dose, and houses will have multiple doses. Because of Communicare’s involve-

ment, Narcan was supplied for free, funded completely by a substance abuse and mental health administration grant.

Madaris worked closely with campus organizations and UPD to assemble the program, helping to run the hour long training courses conducted through Communicare.

“Nobody was sitting there scrolling through their phone. They were actually very engaged in the training, Madaris said. “I enjoyed it, and I really appreciate all the engagement.”

When given the chance to lead a session, she took the time to address suicide rates among college students, particularly those caused by opioid abuse. Most overdoses are caused after the consumption of substances most commonly laced with the illegally manufactured drug fentanyl. University student Jack Holiman died last fall of a fentanyl overdose.

According to Madaris, 50% of students will be offered an opioid by the time they are a sophomore.

“Society in general, has always swept that under the rug, and we don’t want to talk about it, we don’t want to admit that it’s happening,” Madaris said. “The more it stays under the rug, the more shame that’s associated with it, which in turn causes people not to reach out for help.”

“It’s kind of like car insurance. Hopefully you never have to use it, but it’s really good to have it if you have a wreck.”

-Melody Madaris
Assistant director at Communicare Oxford

community at all.”

Though Hunter is leaving her position and said she cannot address anything specifically, she hopes that the initiative progresses to where Narcan can be distributed in student housing and other places on campus.

The Drug and Alcohol Policy committee will continue to push the initiative to the rest of campus as junior Autumn Fortenberry assumes her role as Judicial Chair for the 2021-

minister Narcan and educating residents on its purpose or how to access the drug.”

While the university is not yet introducing Narcan to university facilities, Grace McKissick, the Panhellenic Council president, echoed a wider scope of goals for the initiative.

“I think ASB and (CPH) would both love for Greek houses to be the place it begins, but not the place that it ends,” McKissick said.

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Graduation to comply with health guidelines

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The University of Mississippi is allocating tickets for the Classes of 2020 and 2021 commencement ceremonies to remain in compliance with current government orders and public health guidance.

According to the university's commencement registration form, each 2020 graduate will receive an allotment of tickets based on the total number of RSVPs received by the April 1 deadline. However, 2021 graduates' ticket al-



HANAH GRACE BIGGS / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Bricks bearing the names of members of the Class of 2021 were installed in the Circle on April 7.

lotment will be based on the total number of graduates in each school.

Both commencement ceremonies will be live streamed, though the university has not released any information about how to view either event.

Venue capacities can change depending on COVID-19 restrictions and protocols, according to the commencement frequently asked questions.

COVID-19 procedures, including masks and social distancing, will be followed

during both ceremonies.

Graduates and children under 2 years old do not need a ticket to enter either ceremony. However, children and under will be required to sit in an adult's lap.

Commencement for the class of 2021 will be held April 29 to May 2, and commencement for the class of 2020 will be held May 6 to May 8. Both ceremonies will be held in Vaught-Hemingway Stadium.

Convocation will be held on May 1 and May 8 at 8 a.m. for each ceremony.

Walmart employees report lack of COVID-19 enforcement

KATE KIMBERLIN
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While the City of Oxford Board of Aldermen voted to lift its mask mandate on March 2, many businesses around Oxford have continued enforcing masks indoors. Walmart is one store that has a corporate policy that differs from regional mandates, but some Walmarts do not enforce their policies in stores.

Walmart's current national policy requires all customers to wear masks while in stores and all employees to wear masks in all stores, distribution and fulfillment centers. The policy has not been updated on their website since Feb. 18. Walmart also stated in a press release on the website in July that associates will be trained on how to deal with customers who are not required to wear a mask.

"We know it may not be possible for everyone to wear a face covering," the article read. "Our associates will be trained on those exceptions to help reduce friction for the shopper and make the process as easy as possible for everyone."

However, an employee at a local Walmart, who was granted anonymity to protect her employment, said this is not the case. She said since the lifting of the state and local mask mandates in



KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

An employee at Walmart on Jackson Avenue unpacks a box of laundry detergent. Walmart's official corporate policy is still to require masks in all of their stores, but many customers are allowed to enter the store without wearing a face covering.

March, new employees have not been trained on how to handle customers who are not wearing a mask.

"We have not been told to enforce it, but some greeters will try and enforce it if they feel strongly about the topic," the employee said.

The employee is also a sopho-

more at the University of Mississippi, and said the only altercations she has seen over wearing masks have been among individual customers, but not between associates and customers.

"There was an older customer that saw a younger customer not wearing a mask, and she tried to get her to wear one because it

could put her health, as well as others her age, at risk," the employee said.

Another part of Walmart's national policy is that all employees are required to answer health screening questions and get their temperatures checked before clocking into their shifts. The policy also describes the role of a

health ambassador in all stores, who "(reminds) customers about safety standards as they enter the store," including reminding customers to wear masks. The employee did not mention whether Oxford's Walmart has someone in this position.

"Our only way to really enforce our policy is to wear the mask ourselves," the employee said.

Abby Sartin, a freshman from Anna, Illinois, is also employed at a Walmart in her hometown. She discussed the same employee and customer policies as the Oxford employee, but she said that masks were more important for employees to wear on shift.

"At my store, the employee requirement was enforced very well, as a mask became part of our uniform," Sartin said.

However, Sartin believes the inconsistencies in the policy have caused problems to an extent. As a cashier, she says there have been lots of communication issues, as well as an overall difference of opinion when it comes to wearing masks in the first place.

"With living in a small conservative town, some customers wore their masks religiously while others refused to wear one altogether, so that would create tension among customers," Sartin said.

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Tennis teams look to finish season

BARRETT FREEMAN

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The Ole Miss men's and women's tennis teams had busy schedules this past weekend, with the men splitting their weekend matches 1-1 against Auburn and Alabama, and the women beating in-state rivals Mississippi State, 4-1.

Both teams look to finish the last stretch of the regular season strong, as the men will travel to Lexington, Kentucky, and Nashville, Tennessee to face the Wildcats and Commodores on Friday and Sunday, while the women will stay at home to face the same teams on Thursday and Saturday.

The men will look to bounce back after splitting their tour of Alabama. Last week, the No. 9 ranked Rebels started out the weekend by defeating Auburn 4-3. While the team split the singles matches 3-3, the team rose above in its doubles matches (2-3) to clinch the overall win.

Senior Brady Draheim and junior Simon Junk continued to cruise in their duo groove as they defeated Auburn's top pair, 6-3. The pair has won four of their last five doubles matches together and will look to carry their success into the weekend.

In singles, freshman John Hallquist Lithén, who was

crowned SEC Freshman of the Week last week, didn't let up as he won his singles match. Sophomore Nikola Slavic claimed his first win as the No. 2 seed for the Rebels to bring the team over the top.

However, the victory over Auburn was short-lived, as the Rebels faced the Alabama Crimson Tide two days later and lost 3-4 overall.

The team continued its stride in winning doubles, but could not bring the victory home, as Alabama won four out of the six singles. Slavic and senior Finn Reynolds both won their individual matches, bringing the singles matches all tied up at 3-3, but junior Jan Soren Hain ultimately fell short in his singles match to lend the Tide the overall win.

This weekend on the road, the Rebels will hope to tune their singles play, as they need a little more consistency in order to prepare for a deep postseason run, which is right on the horizon and starts on April 19.

Meanwhile, the women had a win of their own against the Mississippi State Bulldogs over the weekend. Unlike the men, the women found strength in their singles rather than their doubles.

The No. 1 senior doubles pair Alexa Bortles and Anna Vre-



HANNAH GRACE BIGGS / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Jan Soren Hain receives the ball during the last set of his match.

benska dominated their game, winning 6-2, but the other two doubles teams were not enough to overtake the Bulldogs. However, through a trio of very close singles games where all three were decided in deuce after being tied 6-6, the sixth-seeded singles

player freshman Reka Zadori was the backbone for the team whose 6-1 win brought the Rebels above Mississippi State for the overall match win.

The women will stay at home to round off the regular season at the end of this week, facing Van-

derbilt on Thursday, April 8 and Kentucky on Saturday, April 10. The men will hit the road to Lexington and face off against the Wildcats on Friday, April 9, and will stop in Nashville on the way home to compete against the Commodores on Sunday, April 11.

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OPPORTUNITY

continued from page 1

termine which fans have the bragging rights.

I was asked last week what part of the game makes Ole Miss so successful. Is it the plethora of fantastic pitching? Or does head coach Mike Bianco rely heavily on the hitting? I think it's a little bit of both. Rebels pitching has been fantastic this year, and actually, it was the reason for a lot of wins. The earned run average for pitchers this season is 3.54, including SEC games.

While it's still early in the season, early is a great place to be. It's possible that it could change, but the weekend series rotation has been very disruptive so far this season. Juniors Gunnar Hoglund and Doug Nikhazy and sophomore Derek Diamond look to be the trio moving forward after a few injuries in this season that changed things up. Arkansas hits a .280 with six players hitting over a .300 on the season. In order to win the



KATHERINE BUTLER / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Kevin Graham bats against North Alabama on Monday, April 5. The Rebels had two straight wins following the series loss to Florida and will go on to play No. 1 ranked Arkansas in a series this weekend.

series, the Razorback batters have to be contained.

While the pitching is crucial, you can't win a game without at least one hit. The

Rebels have won 22 games so far this year — with 14 of those wins coming from three runs or more than their opponent. Senior Tim Elko has been a

key piece for the team and easily the most dominant hitter for the Rebels this season. Unfortunately, Tim Elko tore his ACL in a midweek game

against North Alabama, and it is still unclear whether Elko will return this season.

Ole Miss will be desperate for another leader in the lineup to take charge, as well as bring in a few RBI's.

I'll go ahead and say it. It's going to be difficult to beat Arkansas this weekend. Although, there are some advantages to playing the Razorbacks a little bit early on in the stretch of SEC games. The Razorbacks have not played in front of a full capacity crowd in over a year, and Ole Miss is sure to be packed each day of this series.

With a win over Arkansas, a victory would put the Rebels at a very good spot in the SEC West, and would be a huge confidence builder for the remainder of the season. The Rebels have two back-to-back rivalry series matchups coming up, and they're going to need the confidence.

I say the Rebels will do it. They win the series but lose a close game. It's going to be a tough matchup, but it is sure to cause some stress and excitement.

Softball continues season against South Carolina

BARRETT FREEMAN
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The Ole Miss softball team might be back to winning. After losing a series to the LSU Tigers last weekend, 2-1, the Rebels stepped up to defeat the University of Central Arkansas Bears on Tuesday, April 6 with a final score of 4-1.

On Tuesday night in Oxford, the Rebels clashed against a hot Central Arkansas team that had won its last eight games in a row. An early error by the team caused the Bears to score a run early, but the Rebels rallied within the inning and scored three straight runs thanks to sophomore Paige Smith's double and freshman Blaise Biringier's stinger up the middle.

Biringier later hit a within-the-park home run to give the Rebels insurance, and thanks to junior Savannah Diedrich coming in the mound to re-



HANNAH GRACE BIGGS / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

No. 16 Sydney Gutierrez makes a catch at first base to get Gerogia's No. 24 Ellie Armistead out.

lieve senior Anna Borgen in

pitching, Ole Miss came away on top of the Bears. This gave Diedrich her first save of the season, and Ole Miss won, 4-1.

During the LSU series, the pitching mound for the Rebels performed quite well. On Friday, Borgen pitched for over seven innings with only nine hits allowed. The bats couldn't rally, and the game went into an extra inning as LSU loaded the bases and hit a single

that would bring the only run home for the Tigers, winning 1-0.

On Saturday, the pitching continued to be fairly decent as Diedrich only allowed three runs on six hits, with four strikeouts in her pocket. However, the bats still couldn't find their stride in Baton Rouge.

On both Friday and Saturday, the Rebels left ten base

runners out in the field and couldn't find a way to bring enough of them back home to prevail against the Tigers. LSU went on to win a tight battle, 3-2.

Though the series was lost, Ole Miss showed heart on Sunday as they used an electric rally late in the game to take one game win home with them and stop the Tigers from getting the sweep. Tied up at 4-4 at the bottom of the seventh, the team went into an extra inning with a chip on their shoulder. The Rebels scored an impressive five runs in the top of the eighth inning which proved an insurmountable lead for LSU to try and keep up, giving Ole Miss the 9-4 win.

The win on Sunday and the rally on Tuesday are very notable for this Rebel team. Winning on the road in the SEC is tough, especially in Baton Rouge against a top-15 team. Preventing a sweep on Sunday with a win is worth keeping their heads up with the team continuing to be excited for the rest of their season.

The Rebels will be back home this weekend and will look to get back to their winning ways, with their first pitch in their series against South Carolina coming at you Friday, April 9 at 6 p.m., televised on the SEC Network.

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- ACROSS**
- 1- "Filthy" money;
 - 6- Pitch;
 - 9- Razor sharpener;
 - 14- Atoll unit;
 - 15- Actor Vigoda;
 - 16- Fields;
 - 17- Capable of being instructed;
 - 19- Gaucho's rope;
 - 20- Dreyer's partner in ice cream;
 - 21- The third man;
 - 22- A trainee in a profession;
 - 23- Cover with earth;
 - 25- Lustful deity;
 - 26- To a greater extent;
 - 29- Contented sighs;
 - 31- King Minos, for one;
 - 32- Put into a list or an inventory;
 - 36- Woe ____;
 - 37- Language ending;
 - 38- Say it ain't so;
 - 40- Drilling result;
 - 43- Cream cake;
 - 45- Eyeball;
 - 46- Cedex;
 - 47- Conductor Solti;
 - 50- Designer Christian;
 - 51- Earthenware pot;
- DOWN**
- 1- Lo-cal;
 - 2- Pre-owned;
 - 3- Pottery material;
 - 4- VCR button;
 - 5- Old verb ending;
 - 6- Domestic cat;
 - 7- Word that can precede bodied and seaman;
 - 8- Film spool;
 - 9- Bitter derision;
 - 10- Pay for;
 - 11- Not hesitant;
 - 12- Western;
 - 13- H.S. exam;
 - 18- Biblical brother;
 - 23- East Indian pepper plant;
 - 24- ____ Today;
 - 25- ____ loves you;

SOLUTION TO 4.1.21 PUZZLE

yeah, yeah, yeah";
26- AT&T rival;
27- About;
28- Do followers;
29- Bridal path;
30- Supped;
33- Do-nothing;
34- Fervor;
35- The wife of Geraint in Arthurian lore;
37- Building annex;
39- Decade divs.;
41- Employees;
42- The fruit of a hen;

43- Checking out;
44- AFL partner;
47- Elegance;
48- Red fluorescent dye;
49- Eight singers;
50- Falls;
51- Voucher;
52- Auction site;
53- Yorkshire river;
54- Rotisserie part;
55- At the drop of ____;
56- Unit of force;
59- Sleep stage;
60- Actress Gardner;

Crossword puzzle provided by BestCrosswords.com (www.bestcrosswords.com). Used with permission.

Track and field races to stay hot at Joe Walker Invite

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The Ole Miss track and field program is preparing to host its second outdoor track meet of the season with the Joe Walker Invite this weekend. Before this season, the Rebels has not hosted a meet at home in two years. This will also be their third meet of the outdoor season.

Track and field last saw action at the Ole Miss Classic in Oxford over the weekend of March 26. The Rebels are hoping to build more momentum after an outstanding showing in that meet, where they gathered a total of 15 event wins and had three multiple event winners.

Results from the Ole Miss Classic include impressive first-place performances from sophomore Brandee Presley in the women's 100 and 200-meter dashes, senior Kieshonna Brooks in the women's 100-meter hurdles and long jump and junior Cade Bethmann in the men's 800-meter race.

Presley improved her time in the 100-meter dash for the second consecutive week by running 11.38 (+0.1). The sophomore's time currently ranks No. 3 nationally in outdoor competition. The All-American followed that sensational performance with another win in the 200-meter with a time of 23.80 (-0.3), and she ranks at No. 9 in the NCAA.

Brooks, who has seen lim-



HANNAH GRACE BIGGS / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN
Kieshonna Brooks took first place in the women's 100-meter hurdles.

ited competition in the last year, ran away with two wins in the hurdles and long jump. Brooks jumped a season-best at 6.14m/20-01.75, which landed her in the NCAA rankings at No. 13. In the 100-meter hurdles, Brooks ran a wind-legal 13.70 (+0.7) and outran second place by more than half a second.

On the men's side, Bethmann cruised to victory in the 800-meter race posting an impressive early season time of 1:48.93. Bethmann currently ranks No. 4 in the NCAA with this time.

Freshman Marcus Dropik and sophomore Jacob Lough also raced their way to fourth place and fifth place respec-

tively. Their times of 1:51.17 (Dropik) and 1:51.32 (Lough) place them in the top-25 of all NCAA 800 runners.

Other impressive performances included first-place junior Orianna Shaw (54.72) in the women's 400-meter dash, another women's first-place finisher Cate Tracht (4:29.78) in the 1500-meter race, and men's 400-meter dash winner James Burnett with a time of 47.03.

The Rebels will host the Joe Walker Invite on Friday, April 9, with all-day events continuing through Saturday, April 10. Field events will begin at 12 p.m. on Friday while running events will start at 6:30 p.m. the same day.

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OPINION

What UM should learn from Lil Nas X

SPENCER HEITMAN
 thedmopinion@gmail.com

If Lil Nas X was so eager to go to hell, maybe it's time we ask why.

On March 25, the rapper took the internet by storm with the release of a music video for his song "MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)." Descending to hell on a stripper pole, Lil Nas X gave Satan a lap dance, broke free of the chains that had been placed around his wrists and angered much of the public along the way. The University of Mississippi could learn from this. It's time we break the chains, and if people are upset, so be it. Despite the immense back-

lash it received, Lil Nas X's video remains an insightful commentary on the inclusivity our society alleges itself to value yet often fails to uphold. Because of his sexuality, the rapper knows what it's like to be told that a good place is not for him. This is true of the heaven to which he is told he lacks access, and this is true of the music industry in which he makes a living.

This begs the question: if heaven is a place where you aren't allowed to be yourself, why is it so good? What makes hell look so bad?

This process whereby desirable places are reserved for those who fit a certain mold hits close to home in the uni-

versity community. On a campus where a large percentage of students are Greek-affiliated, Lyceum offices are given to "good old boys," and even some diversity and inclusion teams are bastions of whiteness and wealth, we must ask the questions begged by MONTERO. How can a place claim to be heavenly when it restricts the self? How can a place claim to be open and diverse — as we do in our UM Creed — when it fails to uphold openness and diversity?

The answer to these questions is rather simple: it cannot. We cannot. As a university, we lack a legitimate claim on the label of "open and diverse environment" that we

grant ourselves. Yet, hope is not lost. We may become what we allegedly aspire to be, but this will require a change in outlook. Rather than relegating people who do not fit the "Old Southern mold" to secondary places, we must give them priority in our university environment. We must uplift, and if that seems hellish, then it's time to dance with the devil.

Again, there will be backlash, and university administrators know this. Perhaps this is why they denied Garet Felber's \$42,000 study and struggle grant; perhaps this is why they acted swiftly with state auditor Shad White against James Thomas's sug-

gested Scholar Strike. As the names of our buildings and sources of our funds indicate, becoming the place we claim to be could hurt our bottom line. But these are the opportunity costs of progress, and it's time we pay up.

While I hate to evoke the language of the enemy, perhaps LSU fans were right this once. Go to hell, Ole Miss. You could learn a thing or two.

Spencer Heitman is a sophomore public policy leadership, English and philosophy major from Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Where the pandemic leaves the current freshman class

ABIGAIL MYERS
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When the university announced back in February that fall 2021 classes will return to a pre-pandemic structure, the Oxford community let out a collective sigh. It seemed as though things would be back to normal next semester, and the struggles current UM students were facing would be erased. For the current freshman class, though, returning to the "new normal" is anything but normal.

While it's great that students will get the full college experience next semester when classes are all in-person, the university needs to provide some kind of transition, as they lost the normal freshman transitional period to COVID-19 and online classes.

For most members of the current freshman class, the end of their senior year of high school was spent entirely online, and their freshman year

was mostly online with a sparing amount of in-person classes mixed in. These Zoom classes came at the expense of key transitional events for freshmen.

Before coming to the university, I missed out on my high school senior year internship, which would have provided me with leadership and responsibility skills that would have better prepared me for college. My two-day mandatory freshman orientation that would have allowed me to become acquainted with my peers was instead a disconnected, Zoom-based event.

When I actually arrived on campus, I found my freshman year experience to be very isolating due to all of the social events that were canceled or moved online because of COVID-19. Most of the clubs that I signed up for were canceled, and the ones that continued had Zoom meetings that did not allow for the same level of connection that in-person events would have. I also missed out on quintessential UM events — such as foot-

ball season in the Grove — that would have provided me with a great opportunity to bond with my peers.

In addition to struggling with academics and extracurriculars, COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing requirements have negatively impacted mental health. According to a fall 2020 survey of nearly 33,000 students by a Boston University researcher, nearly 70% of college students are struggling with loneliness and feeling isolated." This research shows that the loneliness and isolation did not just end with me, but rather, those sentiments were a universal experience across college students.

This pandemic has destroyed the normal freshman experience, and the university needs to do more than simply move on and make classes in-person next semester. The administration needs to provide the current freshman class with the transition they deserve during their sophomore year.

In a study by College Data, when asked what they were most looking forward to in life after COVID-19, 21% of students said in-person classes, and a whopping 25% said socializing in-person/human connection. The university needs to provide the human connection to sophomores next year that they would have normally provided to the current freshman.

Since the freshman missed out on the two-day, in-person orientation that they would have gotten the summer before their freshman year, the university should provide another two-day, in-person event before the

start of their sophomore year to try to make up for what was lost. The university also needs to dedicate more funding to social events for students to build relationships with their peers and try to catch up on the socializing that did not occur because of the pandemic. All in-person classes are a great start, but that is all they are: a start.

Abigail Myers is a freshman majoring in English and psychology from New Orleans, Louisiana.

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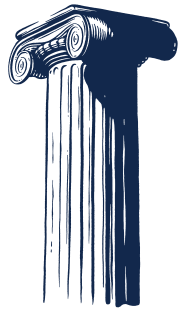
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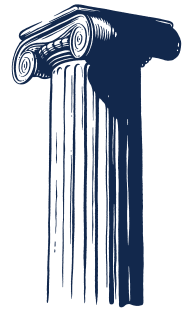
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