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A town of many colors: Oxford Pride

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All the colors of the rainbow will collide on April 24-30. Oxford Pride, organized by the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, is hosting a whole week of LGBTQIA+ events.

From a Pride Interfaith service on April 24 to a parade and drag show on April 30, Oxford Pride will host many inclusive activities to provide a sense of community throughout Oxford.

In 2016, Matt Kessler, then a graduate student at the University of Mississippi, proposed implementing more queer community activities in Oxford.

“I loved Oxford, but the thing that really struck me was there were (no) gay bars or spaces for queer people to hang out,” Kessler said.

The first event Kessler organized with the Isom Center was a screening of “Small Town Gay Bar,” a documentary centered around two small gay bars in Meridian and Shannon, Mississippi.



FILE PHOTO: BILLY SCHUERMAN / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Zamareyah Dawn puts on her feathered wings before her performance at the Mississippi United in Pride Drive-thru Drag Show on Nov. 21, 2020.

Kessler, along with other members of the Isom Center, decided to make the event even more entertaining and hosted a drag show at Lamar Lounge, which has since closed.

“You know, like there was a decent turnout for the documentary screening, nothing

too crazy, but like an hour before the drag show started, Lamar Lounge started filling up fast,” Kessler said. “There was a line out the door, down the street on Lamar. It was really, really packed. It was a really wonderful evening with just a lot of positivity, positive vibes.”

From that moment on, the Isom Center and Kessler worked to create even more events to include everyone.

“Matt had been instrumental in creating other queer events in Oxford, including Code Pink. Once he secured a parade permit, we started working with him

and others to plan a weekend full of events. Oxford Pride has grown to where it extends to an entire week,” Kevin Cozart, Isom Center operations coordinator, said.

Once Kessler graduated, Jonathan Kent Adams and Blake Summers took over, and have been hosting similar events for the past four years or so.

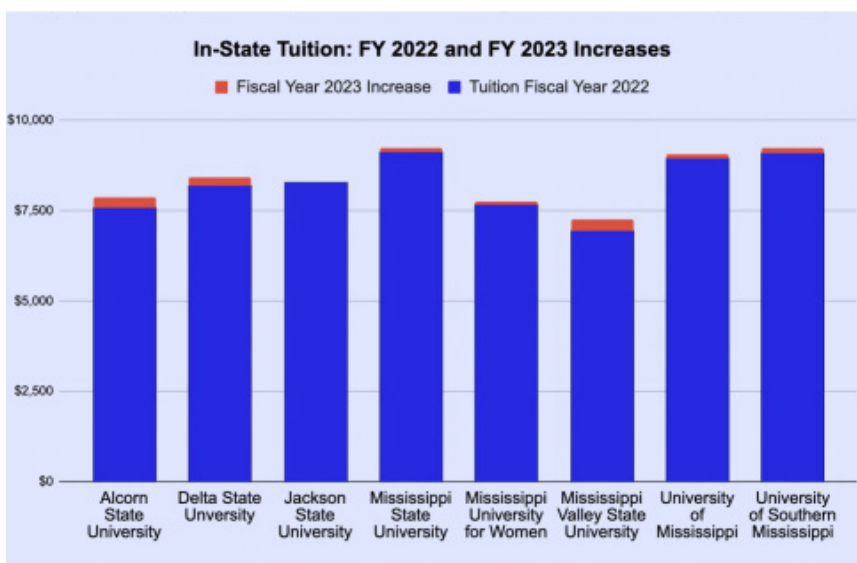
The purpose of these events is to create a sense of queer visibility. Before these events were hosted, many members of the LGBTQIA+ community had no place to openly be themselves and amongst others in the community.

“You know, I do want to say we did create the events, but there was a growing demand,” Kessler said. “I think that’s because of a lot of cultural forces. I feel like the community was coming, the community needed these events.”

For Jamie Harker, the director of the Isom Center, these events became increasingly important when House Bill 1523 was passed into law. The House

SEE PRIDE PAGE 3

UM students face tuition increase



GRAPHIC: VIOLET JIRA / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Next fall, tuition for both in-state and out-of-state students will increase at the University of Mississippi and six more of Mississippi’s public universities.

SEE TUITION PAGE 2

The system that keeps Oxford moving



FILE PHOTO: NATALIE PRUITT / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

On any given day in Oxford, blue buses circle the roundabouts and wind the city’s corners. But how much do you know about Oxford-University Transit?

SEE OUTBUS PAGE 6-7

Pride on the Plaza celebrates Oxford Pride

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Oxford Pride, in coordination with the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, will present Pride on the Plaza, serving as part of a festive conclusion to Queer Worldmaking Week, which lasts from April 24-30.

On April 30, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., participants can gather at the union plaza and learn about local and regional organizations, in addition to enjoying local art/food vendors, and music.

This year's Pride on the Plaza event will build on the widespread success of last year's Out in the Grove event, which marked a historic and symbolic transition for LGBTQIA+ awareness at the university, taking place on the campus's central stage.

"Last year, as people began getting (COVID-19) vaccinated, we aimed to have an event for June to commemorate Pride Month," Kevin Cozart, operations coordinator for the Sarah Isom Center, said.

"It presented a challenge. After several years, we knew how to hold parades and drag shows, but we began to ask ourselves 'how do you do something in the Grove?'"

In constructing Out in the Grove, Cozart also sought to replicate Issue Alley, which occurred concurrently with the university's hosting of the 2008 presidential debate.

Issue Alley allowed national organizations and student groups to gather in the Grove and set up information tables.

"One of the few student groups set up that day was the Gay-Straight Alliance — the precursor to Oxford Pride — which I was the advisor for," Cozart said. "We had a pride flag hanging from the tent and we were not sure what kind of reaction we would receive."

Luckily enough, the reaction was positive, with Howard Dean, Democratic National Committee Chair at the time, detouring to speak exclusively with the members of the Gay-Straight Alliance, which greatly inspired Cozart to continue

organizing queer-led/queer-emphasized community events.

When it came time for Out in the Grove, Cozart led the initiative.

"Until last year, no LGBTQIA+ event like that had ever been done in the Grove. Most past events on campus included club meetings, academic lectures, or ceremonial events, such as opening receptions for pride month, Lavender Graduation, etc.," Cozart said. "To put drag queens in the Grove was an entirely new thing. It had to be memorable."

Despite several logistical battles in coordinating the event, the Sarah Isom Center was successfully able to raise an unprecedented amount of funding.

"I started reaching out to contacts and the university partners came through in a truly unexpected way," Cozart said.

Out in the Grove proved to be a massive success Cozart said, and Oxford Pride and the Sarah Isom Center hope Pride in the Plaza will bring an



FILE PHOTO: CHRISTIAN JOHNSON / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

The City of Oxford held its annual pride parade in 2018. The parade was one of many events during pride weekend to celebrate the LGBTQIA+ residents of the Oxford area.

even greater level of attention.

Pride on the Plaza will allow participants to learn about Oxford Pride, as well as simply have fun following other Queer Worldmaking Week events, which include the

Glitterary Festival on April 29 and the Oxford Pride Parade on April 30, to name a few.

For more information, you can visit the OxfordPride website or follow the organization on Instagram @oxfordmspride.

UM students face tuition increase

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Tuition for both in-state and out-of-state students will increase this fall at the University of Mississippi and six more of Mississippi's public universities. The increases come at a time when the accessibility of higher education — especially with respect to the cost of attendance — is becoming more concerning.

Jackson State University is the only state university where students will not see a tuition increase.

For in-state students at the University of Mississippi, tuition will increase from \$8,934 to \$9,072, up \$138 or 1.54%. Out-of-state tuition will increase from \$25,776 this fiscal year to \$26,292 in fiscal year 2023, an increase of \$516 or 2%.

The decision was made by the

Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees in their monthly meeting on April 21.

The Mississippi state legislature increased its appropriations in education and general funds to state universities to approximately \$411 million, a significant rise from last year. Despite this, students will still see a tuition increase.

"Trustees, I do want to point out that if it had not been for the generous increase in appropriations we received from the legislature, the institutions would have had to raise tuition even higher," Commissioner of Higher Education Alfred Rankins said.

Students at the University of Mississippi are, naturally, opposed to the increases.

Paige Epplin, a freshman pharmacy major and out-of-state student, pays more to attend college at the University

of Mississippi than her in-state classmates. She is not pleased about the increase.

"As an out-of-state student, tuition is definitely something I keep in mind. I'm already paying a lot as an out-of-state student, and it's definitely not beneficial to be paying more, and I wish it wasn't increasing," she said.

Traditionally, out-of-state tuition is more expensive than in-state tuition. This is because non-resident students and their guardians have not paid tax dollars to the state — which funds public universities — like in-state residents have.

Ramani Nguyen is also a freshman pharmacy student. Unlike Epplin, he does not pay to attend school at the University of Mississippi — receiving enough scholarship funding to fully cover his cost of attendance. However, he does not think it is fair for students to have to pay more.

"While I have tuition paid for, I still find it unfair that other students will have to pay for an increase," he said.

Many students offset the cost of tuition at the University of Mississippi with both need and merit based scholarships.

However, some state-funded need based scholarships, like the Higher Education Legislative Plan, are in jeopardy after Mississippi's post-secondary board voted to recommend significant changes to it and two other programs. The changes, which are to be considered in this legislative session, could mean losses in the thousands, particularly for low-income students.

These changes, coupled with an increase in tuition could make higher education even less accessible for low-income Mississippians.

Both Nguyen and Epplin see viable ways to make college more

affordable for everyone. Epplin pitched an idea of her own:

"Not necessarily making tuition free, but perhaps a tuition freeze," she said. "Like the amount you pay your freshman year is the amount you pay all four years."

This is a policy that is already in place in other states, such as Illinois.

Statewide, in-state tuition remains the highest at Mississippi State University where tuition will increase 1.5% to \$9,248 for in-state students. For out-of-state students, the increase is 2% to \$25,294. The largest dollar increase for in-state students will be at Mississippi Valley State University where students will pay \$346 more.

Overall, tuition at the state universities will increase an average of \$177 for in-state students and \$516 for out-of-state students.

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PRIDE

continued from page 1

Bill reads, “The sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions protected by this act are the belief or conviction that:

(a) Marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman;

(b) Sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage; and

(c) Male (man) or female (woman) refer to an individual’s immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at time of birth.”

This bill also allowed business owners to refuse sales to same sex couples.

“The creation of inclusive spaces is central to our mission,” Harker said. “We wanted the LGBTQ+ community in Mississippi, especially queer youth, to know they are valued and loved. This continues to be important as a new wave of anti-trans legislation is sweeping the nation.”

With all the debate and weariness around the bill, the Isom Center continued to educate students on the diversity and resilience of the LGBTQIA+ community. Oxford Pride hosted its first parade in 2016, the same year House Bill 1523 was passed.

“The state was kind of in the national news, and then we had this big parade, which was the first parade that drew a lot of attention,” Kessler said. “It was really fun, but it was not proposed as a response

to the bill. It just happened to fall (around that time).”

In addition to the parade, which will be held on April 29 this year, Oxford Pride will hold a professional drag show featuring Trinity the Tuck, season four winner of the TV show “RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars”, and hosted by local queen Fendi LaFemme.

“For the uninitiated, drag performance may come off as shocking, over-the-top, dripping with innuendo and sometimes downright crass. That is by design. Drag performance has a long history in the LGBTQ community, first being performed by trans women and gay men in small bars and at extravagant balls across the country since at least the early 20th century,” Harker said.

Drag shows are very

important to the LGBTQIA+ community and create an atmosphere that is welcoming to all, no matter how one identifies.

“Drag is purposefully transgressive, pushing the envelope in order to satirize what is acceptable to normative society. Drag kings and queens seek to expose the ridiculousness of gender roles and sexual repression through their performances,” Harker said.

Harker also noted that it’s important to let the audience know what they are going to experience before each drag show because the performance may not be for everyone.

“But consider letting drag take you out of your comfort zone for an evening. We don’t always have to push the envelope, but sometimes it’s a little fun,” Harker said.

For the most part, these events have been welcomed in Oxford. The only recorded backlash was in 2016, when a group of six to eight protestors showed up to an event.

“People from outside the region generally assume that living here is uniformly wretched for the queer community. There are certainly challenges — specifically, the tendency of politicians to pass anti-LGBTQ+ legislation,” Harker said. “But as a result, the LGBTQ+ community is inventive, and resourceful, and inclusive and it tends to embrace the entire community in a network of care. To be queer in Mississippi is to be part of a vast and glorious tribe, one I am proud to claim.”

First-Gen students celebrate success at inaugural Evening of First-Gen Excellence

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The UM First-Gen Student Network, Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement, Center for Student Success and First-Year Experience, Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and the University of Mississippi Graduate School hosted the inaugural Evening of First-Gen Excellence on April 25 to celebrate the accomplishments of graduating first-generation students. First-generation undergraduate and graduate students took the stage to receive honors and congratulations from Chancellor Glenn Boyce.

“This is our first celebration of first-generation college students graduating and getting to this stage,” Ashleen Williams, advisor to the First-Generation Student Network, said. “This is a chance to also celebrate their families and acknowledge the important role that they play.”

Sha’Cori Ruffin, a senior accounting major and first-

generation college student, spoke at the event, sharing her experiences and the challenges she overcame over the course of her college experience.

“We left our families behind in hopes of pursuing a better life for ourselves and them, with a deep desire to make them proud and happy,” she said. “The pressure was always there. You are left questioning, should I be here? But through this, you have to remember that you are the first. You will make them remember your name and the legacy you create.”

First-generation college students often face more challenges than students with families that attended college, as their family members are often unable to impart crucial knowledge about the inner workings of college life before they step foot on campus.

“Having a first-generation support network is important to our campus, not just for the students, but also for helping our campus understand that students come here and they face many challenges,”

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Noel Wilkin said.

“We want all of our campus community to embrace them, help them to understand what the path forward may be for them and ensure they have the support they need to complete their degrees.”

Aside from undergraduate students, many of the first-generation students honored at the event celebrated the completion of their graduate programs and thesis assignments.

“In the graduate space, it can feel like everybody knows exactly what they’re doing. There’s a lot of pressure to make it seem like you know everything, and so it can be a particularly challenging and isolating experience,” Dean of the Graduate School Annette Kluck said.

A strong sense of pride and gratitude was palpable throughout the entire event as students honored and thanked their mentors and family members for supporting them



HAL FOX / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Senior accounting major Sha’Cori Ruffin shared her experiences as a first-generation college student at the Evening of First-Gen Excellence.

throughout their college careers. “I am proud to be a first-generation student. I am proud to go back and tell my family about my experiences and my achievements, and to see the smiles on their faces as they see the smile on mine,” Ruffin said.

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AXO sorority coming to campus

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After two years of delay due to COVID-19, Alpha Chi Omega sorority will establish a chapter at the University of Mississippi in the fall of 2022.

First established in 1885 at DePauw University, Alpha Chi Omega has 146 chapters across the United States. The sorority champions “Real. Strong. Women.” providing members with lifelong connections and opportunities for leadership and growth.

“For me, ‘Real. Strong. Women.’ is more than a tagline. It embodies what it means to be an Alpha Chi,” Bella Barney, an Alpha Chi Omega recruiter, said. “Each woman I meet throughout this organization has her own passions and causes she is dedicated to — Alpha Chi Omega equips all of us with the skills and confidence we need to make a real difference.”

In the fall of 2022, Alpha Chi Omega, commonly known as Alpha Chi, will participate in Primary Panhellenic Recruitment as a part of the university’s Greek Day and will continue its individual recruitment over the course of three weeks. Primary Panhellenic Recruitment is scheduled to take place between Aug. 13-20.

“We’ll host interest sessions, philanthropy and service events, as well as an invite-only event,” Barney said.

Barney also encourages potential new members to schedule a coffee date with herself or another consultant to learn more about their sisterhood.

According to Barney, Alpha Chi is looking for women who are “leaders, and change makers” and who “want to leave a legacy on the campus of Ole Miss.”

In order to establish a chapter within the university community, the College Panhellenic Council must first vote in favor of an organization’s establishment. If the vote passes, UM administration, staff, delegates, National Panhellenic Council staff and an organization’s headquarters must work together to “make the establishment process a success,” according to Jordan Freeman, university director of Fraternity and Sorority Life.

“From there, a sorority’s expansion team works alongside FSL staff and the College Panhellenic Council to promote the sorority to students,” Freeman said.

The Panhellenic community at the university, as well as fellow Alpha Chi Omega sisters, look forward to the establishment of this new sisterhood — the 11th total.

“Greek Life has impacted me so positively,” Claire Reynolds, freshman member of Alpha Omicron Pi, said. “I would love for every woman to have the opportunity to find her home in our community. I think the addition of another



VIOLET JIRA / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Alpha Chi Omega sorority will establish a chapter at the University of Mississippi in the fall of 2022.

chapter will enhance sorority experience at Ole Miss overall.”

An important facet of sorority life at the university is the relationships between chapters.

“It will kind of give us the opportunity to grow and learn from,” Reynolds said. “Having another sisterhood on campus would only give us further resources and tools that we can use to improve our own chapter... encouraging more relationships and learning opportunities between organizations.”

Alpha Chi Omega’s Epsilon Upsilon chapter was established at Mississippi State University in the fall of 2021. Fellow Mississippi Alpha Chi sisters greatly anticipate having another chapter of sisters in the state.

“The Epsilon Upsilon chapter is looking forward to having more sisters so close by,” Anna Grace Bizzle, a founding member of Alpha Chi Omega at MSU, said. “I can’t wait to watch Ole Miss go through the establishment process and see how their ‘Real.

Strong. Women.’ flourish.”

Although the establishment process can be difficult, Bizzle assures her future sisters that becoming a founding member will be well worth it.

“Everything you put into this sorority, you will get back tenfold,” she said. “The relationships you build and the reputation you cultivate will last long past your time at college. There’s no greater reward than working hard to bring a new chapter together and seeing it become real.”

Changes to commuter parking beginning fall 2022

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Starting in the fall of 2022, some faculty, staff and students who commute to campus will no longer have to use parking passes, including hangtags or decals. With new technological developments, rearrangements of parking zones and increases in pricing, the University of Mississippi Department of Parking and Transportation has big changes in store.

While residential permit holders will continue to use parking decals, commuters, faculty, staff and Pavilion Garage permit holders will not. New license plate reading technology (LPR) will be utilized by the university in order to scan license plates, eliminating the need for parking decals in surveillance areas. The new LPR technology will also allow commuters and permit holders to register up to two cars on

one parking account, which will alleviate the need to switch the hangtag from car to car.

“We’re hoping these updates will make finding and paying for parking more convenient,” Sam Patterson, director of Parking and Transportation, said.

As for vehicle owners who prefer to back into or pull through parking spots, the Department of Parking and Transportation will release a new University of Mississippi vanity license plate that can be used on the front of the vehicle, which will go on sale at the same time as parking permits.

Along with the new implementation of LPR, the university will also experience a new shift in parking zones, including a new pricing structure. The commuter parking categories will be divided into Commuter Blue lots, lots closer to the center of campus, and Commuter Red lots, lots farther away from the center of campus.

The Department of Parking and Transportation has adjusted prices to reflect the parking lots’ proximity to the center of campus.

In addition to a restructuring of parking lots, there will be more lot options available for commuter parking, including lots at the following campus locations: the Manning Center, Village North, Jeanette Phillips, Gillom/Tuohy and Insight Park.

The Department of Parking and Transportation expects a modest increase in prices of all parking permit categories as they transition into a new system of parking throughout the year. The increased prices will help pay for upkeep and improvements to parking lots, garages, and transportation services.

“Our goal is always to increase the flexibility and ease of parking on campus,” Patterson said.

New information on permit pricing and other

frequently asked questions can be found on the Department of Transportation website. Parking registration will begin July 5 for faculty and staff.

Student permit holders will be able to apply beginning July 11-21, depending on their permit category.



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Electric performances at Double Decker light up the Square

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Andrew Gardner plays the fiddle with local Oxford band Happy Landing.



Troy "Trombone Shorty" Andrews plays a trombone solo during his performance on the second day of Double Decker.



Above: Three young fans watch mesmerized as Brett Young performs on the first night of Double Decker.

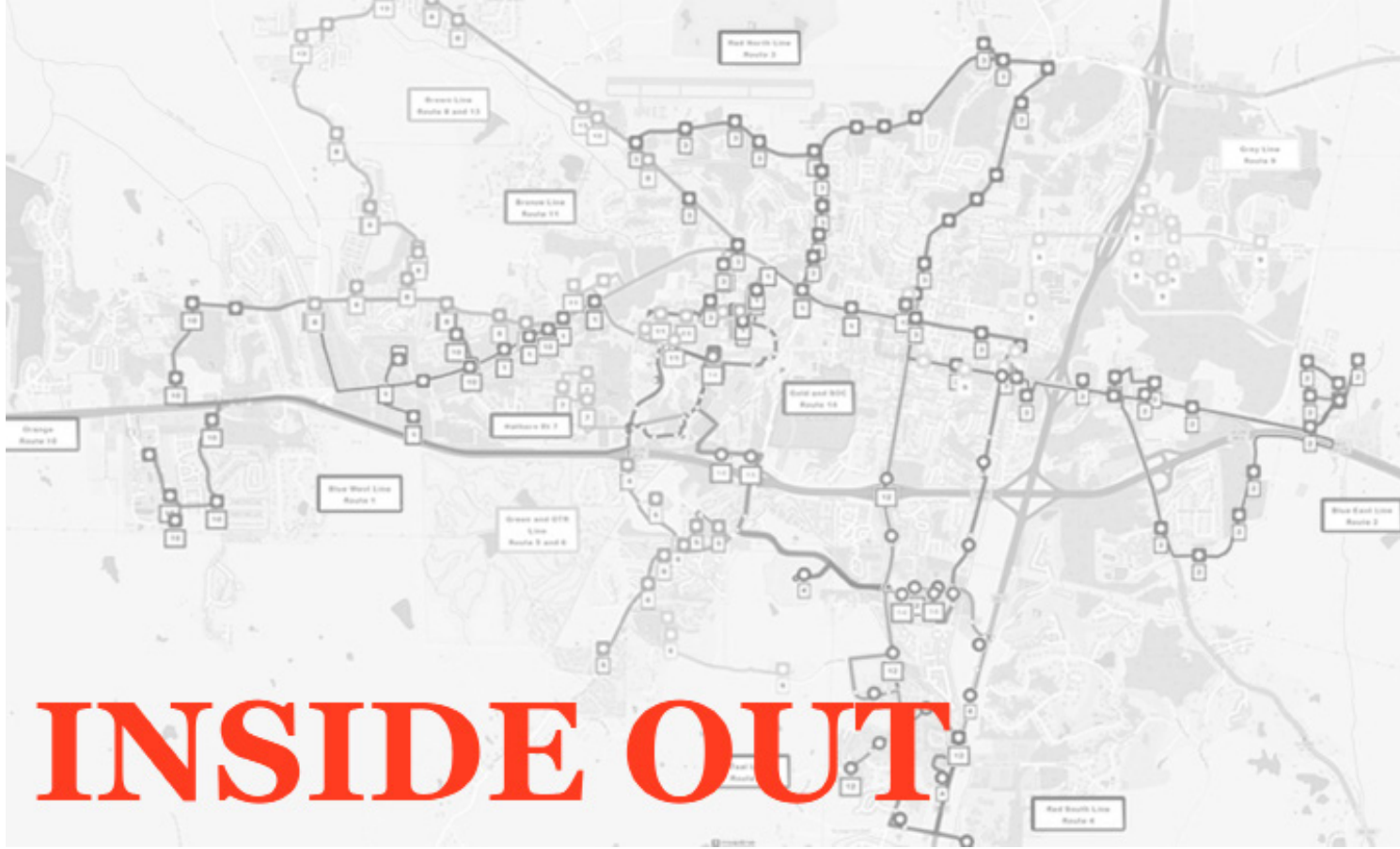
Background: 49 Winchester performs on the first night of Double Decker.



David Shaw, lead vocalist for The Revivalists, leans out toward the crowd.

The system that keeps Oxford moving

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GRAPHIC : SAVANNAH SHOOK / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

INSIDE OUT

INSIDE OUT:

For Yersaiyn Yerkin, a freshman international student studying mechanical engineering, the OUT bus is a lifeline.

Thousands of miles away from his home country in Kazakhstan, Yerkin does not have a personal vehicle to get around Oxford. For essentials — getting to and from class, to the grocery store —Yerkin relies on the services of Oxford-University Transit.

“I think mostly I ride the bus to go to Walmart. I’m an international student, so I don’t have a car,” he said. “I usually go to Walmart on Saturday. Usually, the blue east will come every 30 minutes.”

Aniston McClellan is a senior pursuing a bachelor’s in multidisciplinary studies. She has a car but doesn’t use it to get to and from campus. Unable to secure a commuter parking pass and wary of the environmental cost of driving herself back and forth daily, McClellan started taking the bus and never looked back.

“Just this semester, I decided, well, actually, I didn’t decide. I kind of had to ride the bus when they ran out of commuter passes,” she said. “And then I realized that I liked riding the bus better. I felt like it was better for the environment and just didn’t have to pay the commuter pass.”

These two students are just a slice of the students, faculty, staff and Oxford citizens who use Oxford’s public bus system. Before the onset of the

COVID-19 pandemic, OUT served as many as 1.4 million riders in the city of Oxford in a year. Since the pandemic, the charge for non-students and faculty was eliminated, making the service free for everyone. Beginning operation in 2008, the system has grown tremendously over the course of a decade and into this year.

For the 2021-2022 year, OUT’s combined budget was \$5,253,662. Operating a fleet of 34 buses — some of which operate from early in the morning to 10 p.m. — along 19 routes, the system is incredibly

sophisticated. According to OUT General Manager Donna Zampella, the main goal of OUT is to provide these riders with the best service possible.

The system is uniquely situated — most bus systems operate in cities that are significantly larger than that of Oxford. This comes with both rewards and challenges. The largest flaw in the system — according to both riders and management — is finding your bus.

“Sometimes they can have delays in their time of being here. Sometimes you can time them. And they’ll be there around that time,” graduate student Angela Stevens said. “And then other times, maybe they have a delay or maybe I miss this bus. Maybe the bus came through and you weren’t there. So you have to wait 20 minutes for the next one.”

McClellan describes her experience with the OUT bus system as overwhelmingly positive, despite the occasional inconveniences.

“Every once in a while if you’re in a rush or anything like that, it’s kind of inconvenient,” she said. “But for the most part, I’ve had a pretty positive experience with it.”

As simple as it may seem, getting information about the location of buses to riders is a rather complex

task, and something OUT has been trying to get right since the system’s inception.

Initially, riders were given information based on a schedule through a company called NextBus. However, determining location based on a schedule is inherently flawed: If your bus was scheduled to arrive at 10:30, this system would tell you your bus was there even if it wasn’t, failing to account for things like traffic and other delays.

OUT then joined other Mississippi Department of Transportation providers in moving to a system that had been in place until recently. This system, QRide, used live tracking, however, it could only be accessed via a web page — and in 2022, no one really wants to go to a webpage to find anything. Additionally, OUT’s fixed route system is relatively complex. When they realized QRide wasn’t working either, OUT management began to look elsewhere.

At the time of the interview in late February, Zampella shared with The Daily Mississippian that OUT was in the process of negotiating contracts with TransLoc.

In addition to an app interface, TransLoc will provide improved live tracking and an overall simpler user experience: If you are at Walmart and need to get to the union, the app will tell you exactly which buses to take and when they are arriving. Users also have the option to receive a notice when their bus is approaching. Zampella is hoping to have this new system in place by fall 2022.

“So, that’s a grand thing. We’re hoping now that works the way we want it to work. It’s technology, you know? Not everything is 100%,” she said. “But know that we are not out of touch with what’s going on in the city and the university.”

While OUT seems to be constantly making

changes to improve rider experience, there are a lot of things they are doing right.

Junior psychology major Cade Smith, too, has had issues with tracking and wait times. But to Smith, they aren’t enough to tarnish his overall experience.

“On pretty days like this, I don’t mind the wait,” he said.

Smith is perpetually impressed by the kindness of the bus drivers.

“Usually the bus drivers are really nice, and if you’re down or something, most drivers tend to be really kind and respectful,” he said.

Stevens shared that sometimes the buses are crowded, and that occasionally she has concerns about cleanliness. Overall though she is content with the service OUT provides.

“The bus drivers are always super nice. Super nice,” said McClellan. “I’ve had a few bad experiences, but nothing that would ever keep me from riding the bus. I’m glad we have it.”

As of April 2022, Oxford-University Transit is now in the testing stages of implementing the TransLoc system. The new OUT tracker is available for use at outtransit.com and on their app.

“Oxford University Transit just added recently TransLoc for the bus tracking software is a big improvement and is being used at the University of Virginia, NC State, and Mississippi State among many others,” said University of Mississippi Director of Parking and Transportation Samuel Patterson.

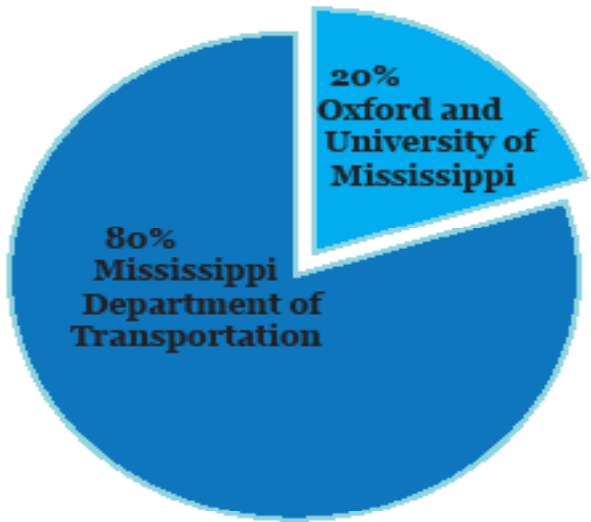
BEHIND OUT:

Situated along one of McElroy Drive’s many winding corners is Oxford University Transit. Not the buses, but the building.

Not many people pay attention to the two-story metal structure. Similarly,

SEE **OUTBUS** PAGE 7

Administrative and Capital Funding



GRAPHIC : SAVANNAH SHOOK / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

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OUTBUS

continued from page 6

not many people know the woman who sits behind a desk inside it. Through a jovial workspace and up a narrow set of stairs is the office of Donna Zampella, general manager for Oxford-University Transit.

“I started in September of 2016, as office manager/HR manager with the intention of doing just that, and biding out the rest of my time until I decided to retire. But things kind of changed,” she said.

When Zampella initially began working at OUT, the system was managed by Ronald Biggs, who passed away in late 2018.

In the two years Zampella spent working with Biggs at OUT, he imparted knowledge to her beyond the duties she had initially been hired for, leaving her perfectly poised to become the next general manager and director of the OUT Commission.

But this is not where Zampella’s transportation leadership experience began. Her knowledge stretches as far back as the 2000s:

“One of the things that I have learned in my life is that no one, and I mean no one, is indispensable. Everyone has the capability of being downsized, outsourced or flat out replaced. Ms. Zampella however is as close to being indispensable as I have seen,” the Oxford School District wrote about her in 2006. “Ms. Zampella has a keen sense of fairness and will fight for drivers and any employee when she thinks they are right. Donna is in the driver’s corner and stands up for what is fair. Donna speaks with years of experience and from the heart.”

Wielding many years of experience, Zampella stepped into the metaphorical driver’s seat herself. Though the system was doing well, flourishing, even, Zampella had observed that there were things that needed to be changed and set about changing them.

“I had seen there were a lot of things that needed to be changed while I was sitting at a different position,” she said. “When I got into this seat, we began looking at different

things. Looking at the routes, trying to make them a little more accessible and feasible and make a little more sense.”

Over four years later, Zampella continues to be more than aware of the issues that are important to OUT riders. In fact, the OUT website’s live chat button — a place for riders to express gratitude, issues and concerns — connects directly to her phone, which she almost always answers herself. If not her, someone at her office is there to help.

That seemed to be the overarching point Zampella emphasized during our interview: They are aware of issues and complaints and are working to be better.

“Know that we are not out of touch with what’s going on in the city and the university. We aren’t just sitting up here and trying to make life difficult for everyone. We are really working hard to put things together that will help us communicate with our riders and so that they know exactly what’s going on,” Zampella said of the ongoing live-tracking issue.

Moving from interim to permanent general manager in March 2019, Zampella experienced only one “normal” year before the pandemic began. Despite a slump in ridership due to COVID-19, she and the OUT team have championed a number of victories.

They have kept the buses free for UM employees and students and made the buses free for city riders. Additionally, as many people were losing their jobs because of the pandemic, OUT did not lay off any employees.

OUT has proved to be an indispensable service, and behind it all stands an indispensable team and one indispensable woman.

FUTURE OF OUT:

The navy blue buses that wind Oxford’s many streets and roundabouts are so commonplace now, it’s difficult to imagine the city without them. These days, the only time you will encounter city streets free of Oxford-University Transit buses is in the dead of night.

But there was a time when Oxford did not have any kind of public transit. And as Richard Howorth, mayor of Oxford from 2001 to 2009 and an early advocate for the

system, will tell you, it was no easy task establishing one.

“I did two terms (as mayor), and every time I tried to bring up the idea of a public transit program, some of the aldermen would say, ‘No, no, no, no, no. Oxford’s too small. It’s not going to work. It’s a waste of money.’ There was a fair amount of doubt about the viability of doing this,” he said.

Howorth explained that the impetus behind the OUT system was a larger, Vision 2020 plan. Essentially, city leaders were envisioning what they wanted Oxford to look like by the year 2020, and one of the “visions” was a public transit system.

To achieve this and other parts of the Vision 2020 plan, Oxford hired a city planner by the name of Tim Akers. Akers, who still sits on the OUT Commission today, had a hand in developing Jackson’s public transit system. His knowledge, coupled with the university’s willingness to partner with the city on OUT, financially catalyzed the system’s conception.

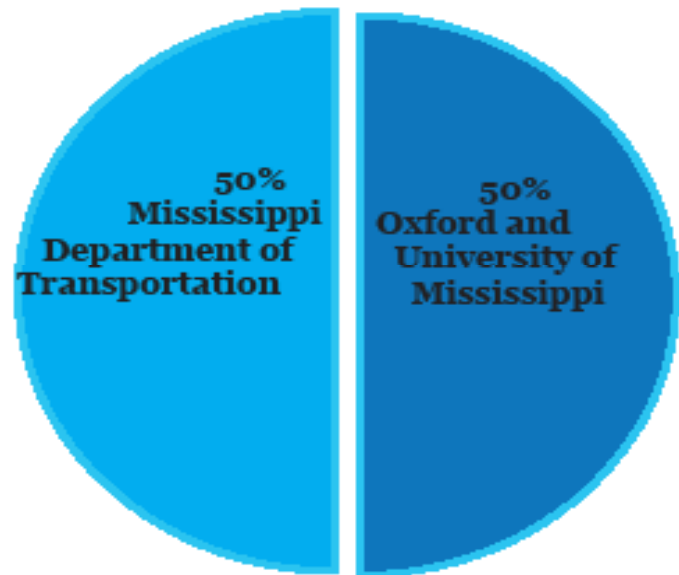
Foresight, on the parts of both the city and the university, was a large part of why the system was to be created. At the time, the city lacked sidewalks in lots of areas for people to walk. On the university side, unless you’re building up, parking space is nearly fixed.

A transit system would mean fewer cars and less need for parking spaces. By the time a vote was called, aldermen who had previously opposed the creation of a public transit system had been persuaded, and measures to create the system passed.

“I can’t remember exactly what the vote was. It was probably — by the time we actually voted on it — it was probably seven and nothing, but there was a long time where I don’t think we could have gotten a majority of the ultimate votes to get the thing started,” Akers said. “But once we did our homework and understood precisely our plans and costs, it became a lot easier.”

Before Lafayette County pulled out of the transit agreement, the system was called Lafayette-Oxford-University Transit. According to the City of Oxford’s minute book 58, Oxford-University

Operations Funding



GRAPHIC: SAVANNAH SHOOK / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Transit was coined in official documents for the first time on May 6, 2008.

Over a decade later, and two years removed from the Vision 2020 plan, OUT is consistently considered among the best public transit systems in the state — a feat considering Oxford’s size. But foresight remains important, and the system plays an integral part in shaping the future of Oxford, Lafayette County and its citizens.

Since OUT’s creation, the City of Oxford has annexed many of the portions of Lafayette County that were left out when Lafayette County pulled out of the transit agreement. However, there are still parts of Lafayette County that remain outside of where OUT operates, with residents who cannot use the service.

The Lafayette County Board of Supervisors recently voted to approve the creation of the Lafayette-Oxford-University Transportation Improvement Commission in February of this year, so that could be poised to change.

If so, OUT General Manager Donna Zampella would embrace the expansion.

“We are wanting to expand past the city limits of Oxford. We have spoken several times with the supervisors and hope that we can continue this conversation and hopefully we’ll be able to offer transit not only just within the city, but also to the farther parts of the county that need transit, probably more so than our city people need it,” she said.

On the university side of things, the prospect of a closed campus, where vehicular transportation is almost exclusively limited to buses, has been discussed, but no plans are in the works for such a change.

James Knickrehm is the associate director of transportation services — transit for the University of Alabama’s bus service, Crimson Ride. Unlike OUT, Crimson Ride services the university exclusively, operating routes for students, faculty and staff within campus and to off-campus destinations like apartments and supermarkets. Crimson Ride is one of the primary ways to get around the University of Alabama’s campus, alongside cycling and walking.

“The university’s transit system is designed to operate

out of a central Hub. This system allows its riders several opportunities to reach their destinations on time.

Specific routes are assigned specific stops to minimize ride time,” he said. “The system is designed for most routes to be 15-20 minutes. However, the realities of traffic in the Tuscaloosa/Campus area sometimes impact the spacing and separation between buses arriving at specific stops. The challenge for many of our riders is that they have specific individual transportation needs; the university operates the system to support all 38,000 plus students. In other words, an individual may have to adjust their schedule to get to their destination to avoid congestion at peak times.”

Such a bus system works well, but it isn’t perfect. And, as Knickrehm explains, it has its limits.

“The university’s student population is growing, in addition to the physical footprint of the campus; however, there is a point of transportation saturation that the road infrastructure can share along with our pedestrian and cycling communities. We continually work to balance the needs of our riders with all aspects of commuting in and around the campus,” he said.

The University of Mississippi Director of Parking and Transportation Samuel Patterson says that the university is best suited for multimodal transportation, and will remain that way.

“Our department believes in a multimodal philosophy of vehicles, buses and bikes, and Ole Miss is very much a pedestrian-friendly campus. Although there have been changes over the years with gates on campus to assist pedestrian or bus access (Galtney Lott Plaza, All American) there are no plans for a closed campus limited to buses,” he said.

In the fall, the existing Red and Blue OUT bus lines, which operate around the main campus, will continue to operate with improvements.

“It’s important like other universities with active bus lines to normalize the campus circulator, and the addition of adding more buses to increase frequency will be a big improvement to increase ridership,” Patterson said.



FILE PHOTO: HG BIGGS / THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

Donna Zampella is the general manager of Oxford-University Transit.

Lavender LLC debuts this fall

MARY BOYTE

thedmnews@gmail.com

The Lavender Living Learning Community (LLC) will debut during the fall 2022 semester. The LLC will serve as a safe place for Ole Miss's queer students to interact and learn together. The purpose of a living learning community is to give students with shared interests a common living experience.

For Jaime Harker, the director of the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, the reasoning for the Lavender LLC comes down to visibility. According to Harker, data shows feeling alienated can be a factor in LGBTQ+ students dropping out of college. The Lavender LLC is an effort to provide an inclusive environment where students can thrive, especially in the South.

"This is not something that's tragic. This is something that's remarkable, and we need to connect (the students) with the folks who will let them know how special and remarkable they really are," Harker said.

Sarah Piñón, the assistant director for cross cultural engagement and programming, expressed similar hope that the LLC will become a visible beacon for the queer community on campus.

"Even if they themselves don't want to live there, maybe they know someone else who does and they can share it because people know it's something that exists here at this university," Piñón said.

The LLC will join a growing list of outlets designed to make LGBTQ+ students feel seen within

the university community. These include Oxford Pride Week, Lavender Graduation and the Lavender Lounge.

According to Harker, the Lavender LLC can provide a built-in support network for students who may not benefit from the networks of sororities, fraternities or other organizations.

The Lavender LLC has been in the works for the past few years. After planning and proposals, the backend logistics are giving way to a concrete community. In the fall, students in the Lavender LLC will live in Campus Walk Apartments, a university-owned complex just off campus. There are plans to move the LLC to Residential Hall 2 in the fall of 2023.

Those who choose not to live in the Lavender LLC can still benefit from its programming. Students in the LLC will share a curriculum centered around learning about inclusion. Fall classes include Introduction to Gender Studies, The Freshman Year Experience with a special gender and sexuality section and Writing 101. Spring classes include Introduction to Queer Studies and LIBA 102: First-Year Seminar.

In the years to come, Harker and Piñón, along with the rest of the Lavender LLC team, plan to recruit in high schools. They plan to connect with local Gay-Straight Alliances in order to let students know about opportunities early in their college careers.

In the near future, there will be an LGBTQ+ coordinator to help facilitate the programming of the LLC. The position currently sits vacant. Piñón currently serves

as the interim coordinator.

"(We are) creating a visible support network for folks to study and think about gender and sexual diversity, those who may identify on the LGBTQ+ spectrum to find community in their first year instead of just stumbling on it if you get lucky," Harker said.

Harker emphasized that this community is not just for students who identify within the LGBTQ+ community.

"It's for anyone who cares to understand and celebrate gender and sexual diversity and understand that makes us all better. It makes Mississippi a better place to be," Harker said.

Harker feels the urge to create a space that reflects her own experience with the queer community in the South.

"When I moved here — when I got to know the queer community in Mississippi — I just fell in love with it. It's just such a supportive, hilarious, resilient, creative space," Harker said, "But you have to know how to enter it."

The Lavender LLC is a visible way to enter that space. Harker and Piñón both expressed their hope that this will become a cemented Ole Miss organization in the years to come.

"I just ultimately hope it becomes really embedded into the fabric of campus and it's something students don't have to search too hard to find," Piñón said.

Students interested in applying to the Lavender LLC can apply on the Sarah Isom Center website. The application includes a personal statement answering the question, "What would being a part of the Lavender LLC mean to you?"



PHOTO COURTESY: UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI STUDENT HOUSING

The Campus Walk Apartments are located on Hathorn Road on the perimeter of campus. The apartments are connected to campus via the Campus Walk Trail.

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ON MAY 2

Hickerson selected SOJNM dean, pending IHL approval

VIOLET JIRA
 thedmnews@gmail.com

Andrea Hickerson has been selected to serve as Dean of the School of Journalism and New Media. Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Noel Wilkin announced that Hickerson accepted the position in an email to SOJNM employees. Her appointment to the position will be effective once approved by the Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees. "I'm absolutely thrilled. I fell in love with the people and the campus is beautiful, too. I think that's well known," Hickerson said. "I was really struck by the energy and enthusiasm of the faculty, staff and students, and I left just feeling like it was something I really wanted to be a part of, and I'm excited to be there and figure out what we can do together."

Hickerson was offered the position after a nationwide search which yielded many qualified candidates. She has an impressive background in teaching, administration and research. She has earned a Bachelor of Arts in both journalism and international relations from Syracuse University. She also earned a Master of Arts in both journalism and Middle Eastern studies from the University of Texas at Austin and a doctorate from the University of Washington in communications. "She is an accomplished researcher and scholar with experience studying 'deepfakes' and issues facing international journalism," Wilkin said in the email. "She has been a principal investigator, co-principal investigator or investigator on over \$1.6M in external support from a wide range of sources that include the

National Science Foundation, U.S. State Department, foundations and news networks. She is also an accomplished administrator, having served as a director at two universities." Prior to accepting the dean position at the University of Mississippi, Hickerson was the Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications and an associate dean in the College of Information and Communications at the University of South Carolina. Hickerson will succeed Debora Wenger, who has served as interim-Dean of the SOJNM since the resignation of Will Norton in 2020. Hickerson's appointment to the position will become official once approved by the IHL Board of Trustees, which they will likely consider at their next board meeting, scheduled for May 19.



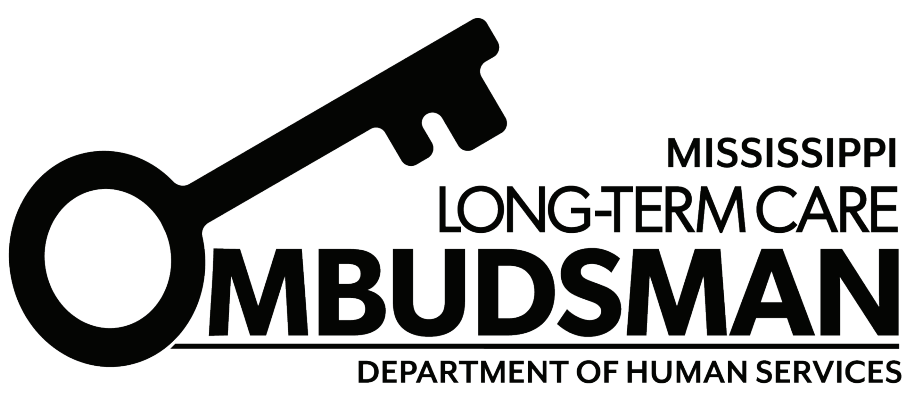
Andrea Hickerson.

PHOTO COURTESY: ANDREA HICKERSON

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Ole Miss defeats Mississippi State in Governor's Cup

DILLON CADER
thedmsports@gmail.com

Ole Miss won the annual Governor's Cup game against Mississippi State in Pearl, Mississippi, by a score of 5-2 to even the season series against the Bulldogs.

The Rebels bounced back

from their series loss to the Bulldogs over the weekend and were able to get back on the winning side of things as they head into the final stretch of the season.

Junior starting pitcher Drew McDaniel went five innings on the mound while giving up only one earned run on two hits and secured the win.

Freshman pitcher Mason Nichols held the Bulldogs scoreless in three innings of relief, and senior closer Brandon Johnson picked up his fourth save of the year.

The Rebels struck in the top of the first inning with an RBI triple from Jacob Gonzalez and a groundout from senior first baseman Tim Elko that allowed Gonzalez to score, giving Ole Miss an early 2-0 lead. After collecting the first two outs in the bottom half of the inning, McDaniel allowed two Bulldogs to reach scoring position and gave up a two-run single that tied the game at two after one complete inning.



PHOTO COURTESY: JOSH MCCOY / OLE MISS ATHLETICS

Kevin Graham celebrates after getting on base during a game against Mississippi State on April 22.

Elko broke the tie in the fifth with a two-run single that was followed by an RBI double by senior left fielder Kevin Graham that extended the Rebel's lead to 5-2. The scoring would stop there as neither the Bulldog nor Rebel hitters were able to get anything else going at the plate for the remainder of the game.

Ole Miss improves its record, 23-17, on the year, and

while the game doesn't go down on the record as a conference game, it's still seen by the NCAA tournament committee as an SEC win. This means that the Rebels' path to making the NCAA tournament has gotten a little more doable, as finishing the SEC schedule on a 7-5 run should get them in the tournament.

It will still take an impressive

run for the Rebels to sneak into the tournament, but they've made it a little bit easier on themselves with this win.

Their next action will come in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where they will take on the fourth-ranked Arkansas Razorbacks in a series that they desperately need to win. The series begins on April 29 at 6:30 p.m. CST on SEC Network+.

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ACROSS

1- Chooses;
5- Sao ;
10- Advocate forcefully;
14- Underlying cause;
15- Goose genus;
16- Friends;
17- Glow;
18- Point in the desired direction;
19- Worry;
20- Playwright;
22- Peace goddess;
23- " ___ had it!";
24- Ambient music pioneer;
25- Edible seed parts;
29- Put in the ground for growth;
33- Lend ___;
34- Bedouin;
36- Very small;
37- Sprinted;
38- "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina" musical;
39- Agnus ___;
40- Future doc's exam;
42- Cravings;
43- Long;
45- Map books;
47- Christmas item;
49- Atlantic food fish;
50- Thrice, in prescriptions;

DOWN

1- Toward the mouth;
2- Rain hard;
3- When said three times, a 1970 war movie;
4- Staying power;
5- Soft subdued color;
6- Opposed;
7- Employs;
8- Internet writing system that popularized "pwn3d" and "n00b";
9- Eight-time Norris Trophy winner;
10- Candid;
11- Hard to find;
12- Secluded spot;
13- Ferrara family;
21- Affirm solemnly;

SOLUTION TO 4.21 PUZZLE

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R	A	V	A	S	I	A	S	I	A	S	I	H									
B	A	S	I	A	S	I	H														

22- Actress Balin;
24- Exile isle;
25- Destiny;
26- Perform or portray;
27- Kidney-related;
28- Rescues;
29- Sucker;
30- Wave-related;
31- Diciembre follower;
32- Like some arts;
35- Oysters ___ season;
38- Looked at;
41- Diplomatic;
42- Primordial substance; one;
44- Most strange;
46- Brillo rival;
48- System of social perfection;
51- Enervates;
52- Words of understanding;
53- ___ song (cheaply);
54- Attention getter;
55- Nota ___;
56- Tapered seam;
57- Final Four org.;
58- ___ extra cost;
59- A pitcher may take

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Puzzles by KrazyDad

3	1	6						2
5		7				8	6	
			3				9	1
				4			1	9
	4	5	9		2	6	7	
2	7			6				
4	6				5			
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5						7	3	4

HOW TO PLAY

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

EASY

4	3	7	1	8	9	2	5	6
6	5	9	3	2	4	1	8	7
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5	4	3	8	6	1	9	7	2
8	7	6	2	3	9	5	4	1
9	1	2	7	4	5	8	3	6
1	9	5	6	7	3	4	2	8
3	6	8	4	1	2	7	9	5
7	2	9	4	5	8	6	1	3

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OPINION



The shame of Confederate Heritage Month

JUSTICE ROSE

thedmopinion@gmail.com

Gov. Tate Reeves' proclamation of Confederate Heritage Month made headlines last week, for good reason. Surprisingly, this has actually been a running tradition among governors for the past 30 years. For about 25 of those years, the practice flew under the radar and enjoyed a less contested social climate. When it was uncovered in 2016 that Gov. Phil Bryant had quietly declared April as Confederate Heritage Month, the floodgates broke loose.

Tate Reeves' time in office has been controversial, to say the least. To be fair, he assumed office right before the outbreak of a pandemic and since has had to make some really difficult decisions. Changing the flag was a decision that shouldn't have been so hard, but was made out to be. An emblem of prejudice stamped on the flag that represents our state? How about changing that to something a little more progressive and rational? When the state legislature voted to change the flag,

Reeves promptly signed the bill. Despite this, he ran on a platform promising to preserve the history of the state, and was wishy-washy on his stance for years prior.

The summer of 2020 was contentious and will be remembered by history for many different reasons. The Black Lives Matter movement touched corners of the country nobody could have predicted. People were hurt, and there was plenty of conversation regarding the institutions that have tolerated, encouraged and promoted a multi-generational attack. Racist subtleties were no longer so subtle. Whether or not Gov. Reeves took this into account, he finally authorized the changing of the state flag that summer. After signing the bill, he was vocal in his uncertainty regarding the impact such a change would hold.

Since changing the flag, it seems like Reeves has done everything to please his base, notably his support of the critical race theory ban in schools. Reeves was a vocal proponent of the bill; he released a three-minute video

explaining why it was necessary.

Declaring April as Confederate Heritage Month directly contradicts the ban and shows a willingness to favor one history over another. It's obvious pandering. Confederate Heritage Month unnecessarily spites Black History Month.

Ever since I was little, I've heard full-grown adults question the purpose of Black History Month. They never said too much, given that I was a Black boy. I retroactively listen to those conversations between two white adults and distinctly remember them questioning the lack of a "white" history month. Going through Mississippi's public school curriculum for 13 years, I can safely say that every month was white history month. Strangely, my Mississippi studies course barely touched on topics that explore and explain the Black experience in Mississippi. Some may argue that's not the purpose of the class. I disagree; to study Mississippi, you have to understand the dynamic between race and class the state is built upon.

Legislation banning

critical race theory addressed a "problem" that didn't really exist in the classroom. If it did exist, it was sparse and with good intent, contrary to what some would lead you to believe. Any public school that teaches critical race theory is at risk of losing funding. Interestingly, the bill is somewhat vague in composition and does not tightly define critical race theory. This could be good or bad depending on interpretation. Hopefully, there are teachers and professors who will essentially break the law and commit the heinous crime of contextualizing history.

Confederate Heritage Month contributes to the romanticization of the Civil War and the "Lost Cause"

sentiment. Yes, every veteran that has fought in war deserves to be commemorated, but they have already been honored all across the state. Statue removals have been a hot topic, with some suggesting it's the erasing of history. I guess Confederate Heritage Month will serve to preserve that history. I hope it never becomes popular, though. I can only imagine a Confederate history parade...maybe I shouldn't give them ideas.

The banning of critical race theory and the declaration of Confederate Heritage Month in the first half of 2022 are just two stones on Reeves' infinity gauntlet of ignorance. What's next? Ultimately, this is a step in the wrong direction.

Opinion Policies:

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Luke Altmeyer helps secure a victory for the Red team in the Grove Bowl

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The Red team defeated the Navy team 48-36 in Ole Miss's annual Grove Bowl on Saturday.

Leading the way for the Red team was sophomore quarterback Luke Altmeyer. Altmeyer played a good game, throwing for 182 yards and no interceptions. He also rushed for 77 yards on five attempts and ran in for two touchdowns.

Although he did have great numbers on the ground, Altmeyer didn't look very sharp through the air, posting just a 41% completion percentage, however, he did show flashes of how accurate he can be when he threw a strike to junior running back Ulysses Bentley IV for a 42 yard gain in the first quarter.

"I think I've just gained so much confidence," Altmeyer said when asked where he's improved the most since last season. "I think confidence for a quarterback is the biggest asset, and I think last year I lacked a lot of it, just being new and being around a bunch of new guys."

On the other side, the Navy team was led by sophomore quarterback Jaxson Dart. Dart didn't have the best game, throwing for 166 yards and two interceptions with a 36% completion percentage, while overthrowing his receivers with the deep ball multiple times in the first half.

"Not a very good first half," head coach Lane Kiffin said about Dart's performance. "I

thought he was trying to win the job instead of just playing quarterback and forcing balls and not being very consistent."

Kiffin went on to say, "I just talked to him before the half about calming down and taking it one play at a time, and I thought he did some better things in the second half."

The quarterback battle still seems to be very close, with a slight edge towards Altmeyer getting the starting job in the fall. But it's still up in the air as to who Kiffin will choose at the end of the day.

Dart did throw for a couple of touchdowns, one towards sophomore tight end and Dart's former USC teammate Michael Trigg.

Trigg had an outstanding game, and Ole Miss fans should be really excited to see him shine in the fall.

Trigg had seven catches, three touchdowns and a catch on a two-point conversion for the Navy team. The Red team's defensive backs had a lot of trouble preventing Trigg from scoring in the red zone.

"He's just very unique; ball skills, catching range," Kiffin said about Trigg. "And basically what we saw today, he's done whenever he's been healthy."

However, the Red team's defense was quite impressive, wreaking havoc in Navy's backfield as they posted six sacks. Two came from junior defensive tackle JJ Pegues.

The Red team also came up with two interceptions, one



PHOTO COURTESY: JOSH MCCOY / OLE MISS ATHLETICS

University of Mississippi quarterback Luke Altmeyer fakes a hand off during the Grove Bowl on April 23.

being a 73-yard pick-six by sophomore safety Tysheem Johnson in the second quarter.

"It happened kind of quick, honestly," Johnson said about his thought-process during

the pick-six. "I was reading (Jaxson) Dart and I looked; the ball hit my hands. I saw one player and I said, 'I've got to take this for six.' That's kind of how it happened."

It was a very exciting and high-scoring Grove Bowl that should convince Rebel fans that they have a lot to look forward to this coming season.



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