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Ethel Scurlock Named Honors College Dean

First female African American dean brings administrative expertise, new vision to role

JULY 25, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH

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Ethel Scurlock, new dean of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, hopes to recruit more rural Mississippi students, serve more total students and build an endowment to ensure that the Honors College continues to serve future generations. Photo by Tenola Plaxico

OXFORD, Miss. – Ethel Scurlock has always been a trailblazer, and in her new role as dean of the **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College** at the **University of Mississippi**, she hopes to exceed everyone's expectations – even her own.

After serving a year as interim dean, Scurlock is the first African American to lead the Honors College in its 25-year history. Previously, the associate professor of English and African American studies served as senior fellow of the **Luckyday Residential College** and chair of the **Department of African American Studies**.

Scurlock said she is grateful to inherit an Honors College that is growing and bustling, thanks to the leadership of founding director Elizabeth Payne as well as the vision of Douglass Sullivan-González, who served as dean for almost 19 years. Building upon the achievements of her predecessors, Scurlock hopes to leave a quantifiable legacy of her own.

"I hope that people will be able to say that I treated every honors student, staff member and faculty member with care and concern," Scurlock said. "I want to be able to deliver measurable increases in our enrollment, our graduation rates, our national rankings amongst honors programs and our endowment.

"More than anything, I hope that we will work to create a deep sense of belonging for all of our constituents, so that we all understand that we play a crucial role in making sure the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College is able to serve future generations."

Scurlock said she appreciates the support the program receives from Chancellor Glenn Boyce and Provost Noel Wilkin, saying they are committed to "ensuring our Honors College has the resources we need to continue advancing our community of citizen scholars."

Scurlock is a trusted and experienced leader who understands the importance of creating outstanding academic programs for students, Wilkin said.

"This is a historical moment that is important to our university, and Dr. Scurlock is to be commended and congratulated for being the first Black female to hold the title of dean on the Oxford campus of the University of Mississippi," he said.

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Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

"She knows that challenging programs require compassionate approaches and has the ability to meet students where they are and help them reach their next levels of achievement and success."

Scurlock outlined her goals for the Honors College:

- Advance the university's national reputation in honors education.
- Increase the capacity to serve more students in the Honors College by adding student-facing staff members.
- Recruit more students from rural areas of Mississippi.
- Create opportunities for more students to get involved in undergraduate research.
- Strengthen alumni ties.
- Be more intentional about DEI in every aspect of honors education.
- Build an endowment to make sure that future generations can reap the benefits of the Honors College.

The new dean said she considers herself fortunate to work with a team that collaborates to identify strategies to meet each goal.

"We are all working to recruit the best students from our state and across the globe," she said. "Every person on our staff understands the importance of individualized contact with students to help them advance and ultimately graduate in honors."

The Honors College is challenging a generation of students who interact with the world in such a different way, Scurlock said.

"The faculty members who teach in honors represent the best scholars at the University of Mississippi," she said. "They work to meet students where they are, challenge them to think deeply about issues and often invite students to participate in research that results in published works."

The university is a better place thanks to Jim Barksdale's transformative gift that established the Honors College in 1997, Scurlock said, noting that she is honored to be a steward of Barksdale's investment and the gifts of many other stakeholders.

Scurlock joined the Ole Miss faculty in 1996. Among her many accolades, she was named the College of Liberal Arts Outstanding Teacher of the Year and UM Humanities Teacher of the Year in 2003 and the Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher Award in 2011.

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