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Ethiopian Airlines Graduate Cohort Flying High with Master's Degrees

Partnership puts 17 employees through integrated marketing communications program

JANUARY 13, 2022 BY MICHAEL NEWSOM



Zebiba Miftah, manager of group advertising and sales promotion for Ethiopian Airlines, recently completed her master's degree in integrated marketing communications at the School of Journalism and New Media. Miftah, who is based at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, said she uses the knowledge and insights gained from the program on a daily basis in her job. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – Though they're rising stars working for Africa's largest airline and already have impressive resumes, 17 integrated marketing communications students soon will be able to add master's degrees from the [University of Mississippi](#) to their qualifications.

The cohort is the fruit of a partnership between the [UM School of Journalism and New Media](#) and [Ethiopian Airlines](#). The students began the program in 2019 and have continued their studies during the pandemic, and several of them have finished their coursework.

UM Chancellor Glenn Boyce shared how this partnership and the students' achievements are helping the university meet its mission of offering enriching and life-changing educational opportunities.



Debora Wenger, interim dean of the School of Journalism and New Media, said the collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines has created new opportunities for the school and its students, as well as for the airline and its employees. Photo by Robert Jordan/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

"At the University of Mississippi, we're committed to increasing educational access and opportunities," Boyce said in a video message of congratulations to the cohort. "We're also committed to making sure that our students are prepared to compete in a global economy.

"Our collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines – and your success in the IMC online graduate program – reflect that commitment."

The program has many benefits, said Debora Wenger, the journalism school's interim dean. The cohort brings together seasoned professionals with their own experiences to interact with the other students in the IMC

master's program.

"They are already highly successful professionals who realize that to help their company thrive, they

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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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

need to do a different kind of marketing and communication, and our IMC program is ideal for this group," Wenger said.

"These are top executives in the largest airline in Africa. They get stationed all over the world. The exponential reach of our program through them is something we think is incredibly valuable."

Zenebe Beyene, UM assistant professor and coordinator of international programs for the School of Journalism and New Media, and Marquita Smith, the school's assistant dean for graduate programs, lead the program.

The partnership has provided the university with a group of enrolled students who were eager for "one of the best educations," Beyene said. The cohort has exposed other students to their cultures and added to the diversity of the program, while gaining skills to help their company reach the next level.

Beyene is from Ethiopia. When he was a student at the naval academy there in 1990, he found himself captured by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and became a **prisoner of war**. He has deep ties to the region, which has helped the program succeed, Wenger said.

The chancellor noted that many in the cohort managed a full-time job, family obligations and the challenges of distance learning, all during a global pandemic.

"You are to be commended for your perseverance, hard work and focus, all of which led to your graduation," Boyce said. "The invaluable insight, experience and knowledge that you have gained from the program will yield tangible outcomes for yourself, your employer and your career."

"The skills you have acquired will enable you to take Ethiopian Airlines to the next level."



Zenebe Beyene, a native of Ethiopia and assistant professor and coordinator of international programs for the School of Journalism and New Media, co-leads the master's program collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines. Submitted photo

Samson Arega, the airline's area manager for Canada, is among those who have completed the program. He said it has given him greater confidence in his academic prowess and also in his ability to move into positions of leadership.

Since enrolling, he's helped his company through the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused business to decline severely.

"You can easily imagine how challenging it was with the existing new company responsibility, and being a dad of two little boys who need a lot of their parents' cuddling, and at the same time, pursuing my studies at Ole Miss," Arega said. "So, I had to develop new skills to manage multiple tasks at once, and now I know how persistence, passion and hard work pays off."

Tadesse Tilahun, who lives in Addis Adaba, Ethiopia, has been with the airline for 20 years. He said he was initially unsure what he would gain from the program, but after a few classes, he clearly saw its potential to help anyone working in sales or marketing.

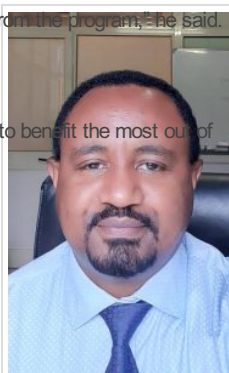
"I became highly interested and enjoyed all the readings and exercises," Tilahun said. "The knowledge I gained from the program and the ideas and experiences shared with my classmates gave me the confidence to work as an IMC professional, which I hope will be applicable in my job."

Tilahun said he came away impressed with the breadth of the skills he has mastered.

"I never expected that I would be able to get this much practical knowledge from the program," he said. "The program gave me a number of opportunities to grow and explore my skills."

"I really enjoyed the two years in the program and I have done my level best to benefit the most out of it."

Zebiba Miftah, the airline's manager of group advertising and sales promotion based at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, just completed her studies. She said she understands that she must read constantly to stay on top of ever-changing market trends and always be aware of the needs of her target audience, while having a good handle on the relationship her brand has to its customers and the media.



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She has seen her value to her company grow, she said.

"It has been quite an experience for me to see as the knowledge and insights gathered from each course added value to my daily activities and decision-making process," Miftah said. "Now, I can contribute to the organization I am in or anywhere in the field of marketing with the knowledge and insight from the master's program.

Tadesse Tilahun, a 20-year veteran employee at Ethiopian Airlines, credits the Ole Miss master's program in integrated marketing communications with opening doors to grow as a professional and explore new skills. Submitted photo

"I feel like a marketing expert, and it is a great feeling."

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