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Graduating Senior Lends Social Work Skills to Local Treatment Facility

Mikala Turner helps Mississippians battling drug, alcohol addiction

MAY 13, 2019 BY SARAH SAPP



Drew Lefmann (left), UM coordinator of advising, recruitment and retention for the Department of Social Work announces Mikala Turner's name as she is granted her bachelor's degree Saturday (May 11) at graduation ceremonies for the School of Applied Sciences. Photo by Sarah Sapp/School of Applied Sciences

OXFORD, Miss. – According to recent data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, almost 20 million American adults battle a substance use disorder each year.

In the months leading up to graduation at the **University of Mississippi**, senior social work major Mikala Turner, of Bruce, has spent eight hours a day working to decrease that number through a local residential treatment facility, under the supervision of a licensed clinical social worker.

For Turner, it was learning about her father's battle with addiction that ignited her passion for practicing clinical social work with those suffering with drug and/or alcohol dependence.

"I suppose it was sort of him guiding me to addiction services when I got my internship at Haven House because I know that I would not want to do anything else now," Turner said. "(It's strange) because I did not know for sure he had an addiction until after I started there. I just knew something was guiding me and pulling me into that field.

"Everything that I have learned about addiction and recovery has made it clear that this is the field that I want to specialize in. I would not want to be anywhere else."

Faculty in the **Department of Social Work** praise Turner for her dedication to the field and her dependability as a student.

"She has a very bright future ahead of her," said Patricia Digby, a visiting instructor in social work. "I cannot wait to see how far she will go. Any client who is lucky enough to receive services through her as a social worker will be very fortunate."

Na Youn Lee, an assistant professor in social work, praised Turner as a gifted thinker and writer.

"Mikala can comprehend large bodies of knowledge and make logical arguments on complex social phenomena," Lee said. "Her insights and analytical abilities far surpass many of her peers."

Turner explained that Digby, Lee and assistant professor Sajjun Zhang had the greatest impact on her academic career. While Digby taught her how to put what she learned in the social work classroom into practice with clients, Zhang helped her discover her aptitude for research.

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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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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



Mikala Turner

“Without his class, I would not understand just how important research is to social work practice,” Turner said. “Without research-based practices and policies, we would be in the dark about what tactics work for people in specific cases and which ones do not work.

“Research helps social workers give our clients the absolute best possible result.”

Outside the classroom, Lee was instrumental in Turner’s work with the Voter Empowerment Project this year, along with teaching her social work policy.

“(Social work policy class) helped me to understand how the government impacts people every single day,” Turner said. “These policies that are passed have influence on people’s lives, and as social workers, we should be at the forefront of making and changing those policies to be better, equal and just.

“The Voter Empowerment Project taught me where these policies really begin, with voters. Together, this project, as well as the policy class, gave me more understanding about how to make a real change in the world.”

Turner looks forward to beginning her career with Communicare and continuing her education in the **Master of Social Work** program at Ole Miss to become a licensed clinical social worker, so she can begin working independently with clients in addiction services.

The School of Applied Sciences, home of the Department of Social Work, offers professional preparation programs that integrate academic study, clinical training, creative research, service-learning and community outreach, leading to the development of leaders whose professional endeavors will improve health and well-being.

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