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Helping a Proven Program Get Even Better

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Helping a Proven Program Get Even Better

Gift will expand Ole Miss faculty support, grow RMI program

OCTOBER 16, 2021 BY MARY STANTON KNIGHT

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Archive Photo: Brown & Riding president and CEO Jeff Rodriguez visits with an Ole Miss student at a 2018 career fair on campus. Rodriguez credits a 10-year partnership between the RMI program at the UM School of Business Administration and the company as being beneficial to both organizations. Photo by Megan Wolfe/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – A major new commitment from Brown & Riding Insurance Co. will further expand faculty support for the **University of Mississippi's** nationally recognized **risk management and insurance program**, helping ensure professors have the resources needed to effectively teach and prepare students.

B&R is increasing an initial gift to the RMI program establishing the Brown & Riding Faculty Support Endowment in the **School of Business Administration** to a \$500,000 total commitment.

B&R's president and CEO Jeff Rodriguez said the 10-year partnership between the company and the business school program has resulted in growth and expansion for both organizations.

"The Ole Miss RMI program has gained more recognition in recent years as graduates of the program have performed well and ascended in the industry on a national level," said Rodriguez, of Dallas. "I have enjoyed seeing the program's success build and believe it is a direct result of the strong efforts and strategic initiatives of professors Andre Liebenberg and Stephen Fier.

"Not only is it good to see hard work pay off for their efforts but, as the largest employer in the program, Brown & Riding has directly benefited by adding a large number of graduates to our company over the past decade."

The Ole Miss program is ranked among the largest RMI programs in the U.S. and is one of only 34 Global Centers of Insurance Excellence recognized across 11 countries. It is also one of the oldest programs nationally among higher education institutions.

"On behalf of the university, let me express my deepest thanks to Brown & Riding for this generous increase of support and for its continued partnership with us," Chancellor Glenn Boyce said. "The RMI program is part of what makes our School of Business Administration a powerhouse.

"Its designation as a Global Center of Excellence indicates its role in advancing insurance education, enhancing industry research and intellectual development, and building connections between the insurance industry and top-tier academic programs and faculty."

"As the state's flagship university, the relationship between Brown & Riding and RMI is an example of

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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

how partnerships between industries and academic programs can create educational opportunities for our talented and driven students that give them a tremendous professional starting point.”

With more than 50 employees from Ole Miss, B&R is the largest employer of RMI graduates and a leading employer across disciplines at the university, said Liebenberg, associate professor of finance and the Gwenette P. and Jack W. Robertson Chair of Insurance.

“We are grateful for the strong relationship we have with Brown & Riding,” Liebenberg said. “Jeff Rodriguez has taught a class, spoken to our students and mentored many of them. To have a top 10 wholesale broker spend time on campus and recruit our students is outstanding.”

That dedication to students and their career opportunities is one of the reasons B&R established the Brown & Riding Endowment, which provides income to recruit and retain faculty for the program.

“The intent of our ongoing investment in the RMI program is to see long-term stability, an expanded facility dedicated to the program and more students enrolling and graduating from all walks of life,” Rodriguez said. “I believe the insurance industry offers tremendous merit-based opportunities for those of us fortunate enough to have discovered insurance as a career.

“I am very impressed with the mindset of Chancellor Glenn Boyce and Dr. Liebenberg, who have both agreed to focus energy to help create insurance educational opportunities for a broad spectrum of people that I believe will result in excellent diversity outcomes by attracting people from different socioeconomic, geographic and ethnic backgrounds.”

Liebenberg said B&R and the university are exploring ways to increase the reach of the RMI program.

“We are interested in creating a center that will coordinate outreach to both high school and university students to increase the diversity of our program and the industry,” Liebenberg said. “Jeff, Steve and I know how transformational the insurance industry can be and how impactful expanding the RMI program’s opportunities can be for the state of Mississippi and beyond.”

Risk management and insurance touches every aspect of business, and a recent internal survey found that the average salary for the program’s recent graduates exceeds \$50,000.

Fier, holder of the Liberto-King Professorship in Insurance and associate professor of finance, credits industry partnerships with firms such as B&R for giving students experience in the field.

“We award up to six hours of course credit for internships, and our capstone class requires our students to conduct an in-depth risk analysis of a firm, write a report which communicates their primary findings and recommendations, and concludes with each student presenting the results of their analysis to a panel of industry experts,” Fier said. “This course allows students to apply what they have learned in their RMI courses and to replicate some of the work they might be required to produce once in the industry.

“Our program is successful because of the industry partnerships with CEOs like Jeff Rodriguez who enable those internships and visit campus to judge the capstone projects as well as have monthly luncheons with our students. It gives them firsthand experiences and keeps our professors in step with what is being done in the industry.”

Rodriguez is vocal about the quality of RMI graduates and believes investment in the program will benefit countless others.

“The Ole Miss program is exceptional in that its graduates tend not only to be academically strong but also ready to bring practical knowledge and a strong work ethic to positions,” he said. “As a result, we are able to invest in them confidently and they are able to progress rapidly in their careers, resulting in an incredible long-term retention rate that eclipses industry standards.”

The Brown & Riding Faculty Support Endowment is open to accept gifts from individuals and organizations. To contribute, send a check, with the fund noted in the memo line, to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655, or give online at <https://give.olemiss.edu>.

For more information about supporting the School of Business Administration, contact Angela Brown, senior director of development, at browna@olemiss.edu or 662-915-3181.

For more information on the university’s industry engagement efforts, contact Hughes Miller at hughes@olemiss.edu or 901-490-0622.

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