

University of Mississippi

eGrove

University of Mississippi News

3-27-2020

Helping Student-Athletes Go from Jerseys to Suits

Bill Dabney

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

Recommended Citation

Dabney, Bill, "Helping Student-Athletes Go from Jerseys to Suits" (2020). *University of Mississippi News*. 2288.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/2288>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Helping Student-Athletes Go from Jerseys to Suits

Major gift helps Ole Miss competitors win a first job

MARCH 27, 2020 BY BILL DABNEY

[Fa](#) [Tv](#) [Li](#) [Er](#) [Co](#) [SM](#) [Pr](#) [St](#)



Dr. Billy Long (right) and wife Rebecca have given \$125,000 to the Vaught Society to provide senior student-athletes with new business suits to support the university's Jerseys to Suits Networking Night and to help them get jobs after their playing careers are completed. Photo by Bill Dabney/UM Foundation

OXFORD, Miss. – An act of kindness given years ago by his mother coupled with a recent tour of the **University of Mississippi's** FedEx Student-Athlete Academic Support Center inspired Dr. Billy W. Long to make a gift that could help Ole Miss student-athletes win jobs.

Long's \$125,000 gift to the **Vaught Society** will support the university's Jerseys to Suits Networking Night by providing student-athletes with a new business suit to wear to the event and then keep for job interviews. The first suits will be distributed before the fall 2020 event.

The Jerseys to Suits Networking Night is part of the NCAA's Life Skills program – a collaboration between the national office, the 1,200 member institutions, affiliate organizations and conference offices. The program is committed to the early and total development of student-athletes, preparing them with life skills that are useful throughout the college experience and after graduation.

"When we're preparing our graduating senior athletes for their professional career after college, we want them to be able to make a great first impression with potential employers," said Jennifer Saxon, associate athletics director for student-athlete enhancement.

"Part of that process is looking their best. So we always have a real need for support in this area."

Long, a retired gastroenterologist from Madison and a 1973 graduate of the **UM School of Medicine**, said he considered a different designation for his gift: an international travel stipend for student-athletes who want to study abroad.

But meeting with Saxon jogged a memory that changed Long's mind: his mother once donated one of his suits to a high school student who needed proper attire for graduation.

"When Jennifer brought up this need, it just struck a chord with me," Long said. "It's not going to get me a seat on the 50-yard line or anything, but it's a real need. I felt that if I could give the student-athlete center predictability, so they know the support is coming in every year, maybe that would be a big help."

Long's wife, Rebecca, said they wanted to help student-athletes in particular because they know firsthand the level of intense commitment students give to their sports.

Their son, David, played football at Stanford University, graduated from UM School of Law in 2012 and later obtained a master's degree in business administration from Vanderbilt University. The Longs' older son, Scott, attended Pepperdine University, took classes on UM's Oxford campus and graduated with a

Follow us on social



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

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Thank You To Our Donors

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

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

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

degree in medicine from UMMC in 2010.

"It's not just 40 hours a week; it's even more, counting their rigorous academics," she said. "We wanted this to be a gift that would not only affect the students' lives once, but would also be a long-term benefit for them."

This is not the first time the Longs have helped youth succeed professionally. Billy Long serves on the board of Sunnybrook Children's Home in Jackson, which recently started a transitional education program for its residents who need their GED, vocational training or higher education.

"I see that as transformative too," he said. "You take a kid who would otherwise be homeless or incarcerated or whatever, and now you've given them a life path.

"So it's all connected, trying to help people change their lives for the better."

The Longs also have made major gifts in support of the university's Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts.

"When we talk about preparing student-athletes to succeed both on the field and off, Billy and Rebecca fully understand that mission," said Matt McLaughlin, assistant athletics director for development. "It has been a pleasure getting to know the entire Long family over the years, and I am thrilled to see them make such a direct impact in the lives of our student-athletes.

"Their generosity will provide the perfect kick-start as our student-athletes make the transition to working professionals."

A student-athlete who wished to remain anonymous said she is excited that she will be given a custom business suit.

"It's a game changer to not have to worry about finding appropriate clothing for opportunities that could change our lives for the better," she said. "Now, we know when we walk in the room, we will look great and we'll be better prepared to find a company that best suits our life goals."

To support Ole Miss athletics with a gift to the Vaught Society, contact McLaughlin at mclaug@olemiss.edu, call 662-915-7894 or [click here](#).



FILED UNDER: [ALUMNI NEWS](#), [ATHLETICS](#), [NEWS RELEASES](#), [UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI FOUNDATION](#)

abate. The Federal Reserve's

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)