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KPMG Establishes Chair of Accountancy at UM

Big Four firm commits to top level of faculty support

 AUGUST 5, 2014 BY **TINA HAHN**

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Mark Wilder, dean of UM's Patterson School of Accountancy, from left, visits with KPMG partners Tom Avent of Atlanta and Chuck Walker of Nashville, along with Morris Stocks, UM's provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. Big Four accounting firm KPMG has established a prestigious endowed chair-level faculty position in the accountancy school.

OXFORD, Miss. – Big Four accounting firm **KPMG LLP**, through the KPMG Foundation, has elevated the KPMG Professorship in Accountancy at the University of Mississippi to the prestigious chair level that carries a \$1.5 million commitment.

The new chair is the first established by an accounting firm at the nationally ranked Patterson School of Accountancy and the second new chair announced for the school in just under a year. UM Provost Morris Stocks has named Mark Wilder, dean and KPMG Professor in the school, as the holder of the KPMG Chair of Accountancy.

The major gift comes from a firm that has built a strong legacy of support at the university through contributions to undergird the Patterson School and through its recruitment of Ole Miss graduates. Several KPMG partners established a lectureship endowment in 2002 and later were joined by other colleagues to elevate the faculty position to the KPMG Professorship in 2008.

"We recognize that state funding for higher education has decreased across the country," said Tom Avent of Atlanta, KPMG's Southeast partner in charge of mergers and acquisitions-tax and a UM alumnus. "To maintain a world-class program at a public university, you've got to have private support. We are dedicated to helping strengthen Ole Miss and assisting the School of Accountancy in its continuing efforts to produce top-tier accounting graduates who can excel in any specialty or environment.

"As a top employer of Ole Miss accountancy students, we wanted to be the first firm to have a named chair-level faculty position there. The establishment of the KPMG Chair at Ole Miss is a dream come true for us and is attributable to the combined efforts and generosity of our partners, employees, alumni and, of course, the KPMG Foundation."

Something "outstanding" has happened at the accountancy school in recent years, due in part to generous gifts from alumni and friends. All three of its programs are ranked nationally in the Top 10 by the Public Accounting Report. Recently, UM programs reached all-time highs with the undergraduate program at No. 4, graduate program at No. 5 and doctoral program at No. 8. This places all three programs at No. 1 in the Southeastern Conference.

"When we initially sat down with leadership to discuss the greatest need for the School of Accountancy, it was made clear that faculty support was very important," said Chuck Walker, national partner in charge of alternative investments-tax at KPMG and a UM alumnus. "Today, we can see a direct correlation between the incredible faculty talent assembled, the quality of the students graduating and the school's rapid climb in national rankings."

Avent also praises the school's rankings.

"We are proud of the national prominence the Patterson School has achieved," he said. "It was certainly a compelling factor in making the case for directing private support to the Ole Miss accountancy program. I believe the best schools attract the best students, and the accountancy faculty members are always concerned about their students being prepared for great career opportunities. The professors have a love for their students, for the program and for the university."

Audit, tax and advisory firm KPMG LLP is the U.S. member firm of KPMG International Cooperative. KPMG International's member firms have 145,000 professionals, including more than 8,000 partners, in 152 countries.

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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

Walker credits the faculty for the great number of successful graduates.

"We are all grateful for the legacy of excellence left by former professor Gene Peery, which has continued to be forged through Jimmy Davis, Dale and Tonya Flesher, and so many others," he said. "I am very proud to be a graduate of the School of Accountancy at Ole Miss, and it is a privilege and pleasure to give back, hoping in some small way to continue that legacy."

Avent agrees. "We feel Ole Miss graduates are very well-prepared for professional careers, from their technical accounting skills to their ability to develop relationships with clients, network with business colleagues and conduct themselves in social situations. Ole Miss is a school that imparts that type of individual development."

UM Chancellor Dan Jones calls KPMG an important stakeholder.

"The University of Mississippi's goal is to transform lives through exceptional educational opportunities, and providing the most outstanding professors to teach our students is absolutely critical to that goal," Jones said. "Clearly, KPMG understands and appreciates this priority, as evidenced by its deep commitment to help provide our students with the best accounting education possible."

Wilder says the firm's support carries a powerful impact.

"We appreciate so much all that KPMG is doing for our students, faculty and program," he said. "The remarkable thing is that the KPMG partners who are alumni of our program are leading by example by contributing to faculty support, but they also are ensuring all Ole Miss alumni in the organization understand that they also need to be part of the firm's commitment. These partners have established a goal to have 100 percent of KPMG Ole Miss alumni giving to this endowment. The KPMG Foundation continues to be instrumental in providing generous matching funds for employees' contributions."

The Patterson School has six fully endowed faculty positions, and others are being expanded. Named and endowed chairs, scholars, professorships and other esteemed positions are usually held by faculty members whose accomplishments indicate national and international leadership in their field.

Wilder, who has taught at UM since 1993, is a certified public accountant whose primary teaching has been in financial accounting. He has conducted research in a variety of areas, including earnings forecasting, financial reporting and issues facing the profession. He has been instrumental in the development of the school's highly successful internship program. Wilder has also been active in the Mississippi Society of CPAs, previously serving as president of the Northeast Chapter, as state treasurer, appointee to the Board of Governors and chair of the Awards, Education and Scholarships Committee.

The dean has received the top two campuswide faculty awards at Ole Miss: the prestigious Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher Award in 2005 and the Faculty Achievement Award, an all-around faculty award recognizing outstanding teaching, research and service, in 2004. In 2006, Wilder was honored as the Mississippi Society of Certified Public Accountants' Outstanding Educator and was also the university's HEADWAE Faculty Honoree for 2006. He is also a two-time winner of the Patterson School's top faculty honors, the Outstanding Teacher and Outstanding Researcher awards.

Individuals and organizations interested in learning more about supporting faculty in the Patterson School of Accountancy can contact Brooke Barnes, development officer, at bbarnes1@olemiss.edu or 662-915-1993.

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