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## New Fund Aims to Create Opportunities for Engineering Upperclassmen

Young alumni 'pay it forward' with O'Haver Scholarship

NOVEMBER 21, 2020 BY JONATHAN SCOTT

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As undergraduate students in the UM School of Engineering, Alex and Joanna Harrelson were lab partners. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – By creating the Dr. John O'Haver Chemical Engineering Scholarship, two **University of Mississippi** graduates are expressing their appreciation to a beloved professor and the generous donors who provided the financial assistance they enjoyed.

Joanna and Alex Harrelson, 2013 Ole Miss graduates, said the scholarship they established also serves as a way to “pay it forward” for students who need help making their educational dreams a reality.

“Dr. O'Haver was an exceptional teacher for us as students, and he served as a mentor when we were at Ole Miss and since we've left the university to begin our professional careers,” Alex Harrelson said. “And, he is also a great friend.”

“We were both tremendously blessed with scholarships provided by the generosity of Ole Miss alums and donors,” Joanna Harrelson said. “We want to do what we can so that current and future students can receive similar blessings.”

For O'Haver, who is affectionately referred to as “Dr. O,” having a scholarship established in his name is “truly humbling.”

“I don't know what else to say about this unexpected honor,” O'Haver said. “I have never done my job for the recognition, but for the students. I teach because I like to see students learn, and for those who are open to it, we get to be friends. I tell incoming students that we are family in chemical engineering.

“I am thrilled that this scholarship will be there to help future generations of chemical engineering students long after anyone remembers who I am.”

The Harrelsons, who met as freshmen, came to admire their chemical engineering professors and the exceptional quality of the education provided by the **School of Engineering**.

“During our final year at Ole Miss, we agreed that we wanted to share the blessings we received with future students in the engineering school,” said Alex Harrelson, originally from Tupelo.

Joanna Harrelson, who is from Natchez, added: “Because of the scholarships we received at Ole Miss, we were able to graduate without the financial burden of having to repay several student loans. This allowed us to pay it forward quicker than we had initially anticipated.”

O'Haver Scholarship recipients will preferably be students who need financial assistance in their fourth or fifth year of undergraduate studies, especially if they've taken advantage of the **cooperative education program** offered by the engineering school.

The cooperative education program, or co-op, allows students to gain real-life engineering experience. Through this program, students get an opportunity to take a one- or two-semester break from classes to work full time with seasoned engineers and other professionals.

Shortly after they were introduced, the Harrelsons found themselves in the same study group in O'Haver's Intro to Chemical Engineering course. Early in their academic careers, the couple were lab partners and in their final year, senior partners. Today, they are life partners, married in 2013, the year they graduated.

“We often joke that marriage has been a breeze compared to engineering school,” Joanna said. “Another aspect that Alex and I share in our personal, academic and professional lives is

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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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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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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

Dr. O'Haver.

"He was a tremendous mentor to both of us, inside and outside of the classroom. He demonstrates genuine care for his students and is a true servant leader. He challenged us to become better versions of ourselves, both personally and professionally. He is bold in sharing his Christian faith and he has inspired us on our own spiritual journeys."

When it came time for their nuptials, O'Haver served as a member of the wedding party and read a few passages from the Bible during the ceremony.

"Alex and Joanna are among the many wonderful people that I've gotten to know while being a teacher, first as a high school teacher in Oklahoma and now as a professor here at Ole Miss," O'Haver said.



Alex and Joanna Harrelson enjoy returning to campus as often as they can to visit friends, including Tony the Landshark, the Ole Miss Rebels' on-field mascot. Submitted photo



John O'Haver

"Some of my students become very good friends. In addition to discussing a variety of chemical engineering topics, Joanna and Alex and I had many long conversations about faith and life's challenges."

After graduation, the Harrelsons landed engineering jobs and live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with their rescue dog, Archie Manning.

Alex Harrelson recently made a career change, moving from being a project engineer to a real estate agent. Joanna Harrelson is a retail fuels territory manager for ExxonMobil. The company matched the couple's gift creating the O'Haver Scholarship, which will assist students in perpetuity.

"The School of Engineering is fortunate to have alumni and friends who understand the multiplying effects of scholarships," said David Puleo, UM

engineering dean.

"To see young professionals such as Joanna and Alex 'pay it forward' so quickly after they graduated from the university is particularly gratifying. This is an outstanding testament about them, professor O'Haver and the [Department of Chemical Engineering](#)."

O'Haver has touched the lives of generations of Ole Miss engineering students, and the new scholarship will allow him to continue doing so, said Adam Smith, chair of the chemical engineering department.

"The generous gift by Alex and Joanna recognizes the extraordinary teaching, mentoring and friendship Dr. O'Haver has provided to so many students over his career," Smith said. "By setting up the O'Haver Chemical Engineering Scholarship, the Harrelsons have ensured that Dr. O'Haver will continue to impact the lives of students for many years to come."

To make a gift to the Dr. John O'Haver Chemical Engineering Scholarship, send a check, with the scholarship name written 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 on supporting the School of Engineering, contact Greg Carter, development director, at [gjcarter@olemiss.edu](mailto:gjcarter@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-1849.

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