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Red and Blue Celebration of Achievement Set for May 9

Edwin B. Smith

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Red and Blue Celebration of Achievement Set for May 9

Inaugural event to recognize 32 UM staff for earning degrees while working

MAY 7, 2018 BY EDWIN B. SMITH

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OXFORD, Miss. – **University of Mississippi** staff who earned degrees while working will be recognized for their accomplishments Wednesday (May 9) at the inaugural Red and Blue Celebration of Achievement.

Thirty-two employees who are receiving either a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree during doctoral hooding on Friday (May 11) and at Commencement on Saturday (May 12) will be

honored. The celebration, which is free and open to the public, begins at noon in Auditorium A of the Jackson Avenue Center, 1111 West Jackson Ave.

Co-sponsors include the **Office of the Provost, Division of Outreach and Continuing Education, Office of University and Public Events**, and the **UM Staff Council**.

"This is an opportunity for the university community to come together and honor staff members who have successfully navigated the college experience while simultaneously working as an employee at the university," said Anne Kligen, who co-organized the event. "During the ceremony, we will honor graduating seniors and graduate students with red-and-blue cords and a reception."

The event was conceived after orientation for new Staff Council members in April 2017. Kligen and Kevin Cozart, operations coordinator in the **Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies**, began discussing ideas about how to recognize staff member achievements.

"As someone who has earned more than one degree while working full time for the university, I understand the unique challenges that staff members face while on the path to a degree," Cozart said. "I thought that it was time for graduating staff members to receive special recognition of their efforts."

"The Red and Blue Celebration and the red-and-navy honors cords are just a small way of achieving this goal."

The cords will be presented by Donna West-Strum, chair and professor of **pharmacy administration**. Other program participants are Gazel Giles, immediate past president of the Staff Council; Je'Lisa McGee, Staff Council treasurer; Premalatha Balachandran, Staff Council scholarship coordinator; Deetra Wiley, Staff Council marketing coordinator; and Cozart, a Staff Council member.

Departments with graduating employees who have registered to participate are Applied Sciences/ Outreach, Athletics, Campus Recreation, Center for Student Success and First-Year Experience, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Ford Center, Health Professions Advising Office, Marketing and Fan Experience, Office of Admissions, Office of the Chancellor, Ole Miss Athletics Foundation, Office of Information Technology, Sports Production, Student Disability Services, Technology and Interactive Video, Graduate School, The Inn at Ole Miss, UMMC-Office of Academic Affairs, University Communications and University Police Department.

Several of the graduating employees shared their stories.

"It was very challenging trying to work, go to school and be a full-time single mom with two boys," said Sirena Morgan, senior secretary for the chemistry department who will receive her Bachelor of Business Administration in Human Resources with an emphasis in entrepreneurship. "You have to find a balance in it all.

"I was so determined to get my degree, so I made it work. I would work eight hours a day, and after work, I would take care of my other responsibilities. It took a lot of discipline, but I did it."

Learning to balance work, school, family and outside activities also was a challenge for Rebecca Lauck Cleary, a senior staff assistant at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture who will be receiving a

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

Master of Arts in Southern Studies.

"I tried to focus on projects one week at a time so I never felt overwhelmed with anything," she said. "Luckily, everyone I work with has been extremely supportive, which is nice."

Completing a terminal degree, career advancement opportunities and a desire to make their families proud were all motivations for Sovent Taylor and Peter Tulchinsky, who receive their doctorate in higher education.

"My job isn't always just 8 to 5," said Taylor, assistant director of the Health Professions Advising Office. "I have student organizations that meet at night and recruitment events on the weekend. My children are involved in travel sports, so my time after work was spoken for as well."

To overcome his challenges, Taylor worked during lunch, often late at night and during holiday breaks writing his dissertation.

"I am blessed to have a wife that helped pick up the slack while I was writing," Taylor said. "She also had to deal with an exhausted husband quite often."

Tulchinsky, director of campus recreation, agrees.

"I wanted to set an example for my kids," he said. "I encourage them to do their personal best academically, and I felt that I could role model that expectation by going back to school and acquiring my terminal degree.

"It means a lot that they can call me 'Dr. Dad' and that I've been able to show them that you can accomplish your goals through effort and commitment."

Having a great support system at home and at work is what helped Shayla Love McGuire complete requirements for her bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

"A big motivation for me to complete my degree was for my children to see me being successful," the UPD patrol sergeant said. "This degree will help me achieve promotions at work, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to finally graduate."

For Jennifer Phillips, who receives her doctoral degree in higher education, writing her dissertation was her biggest challenge.

"Much of the Ph.D. is on your own after written comps," said Phillips, assistant director for retention in the Center for Student Success and First-Year Experience. "It was incredibly difficult to find the personal motivation to continue, especially when I also had trouble nailing down a topic."

Phillips said she went to her adviser, Amy Wells Dolan, to quit last year after almost nine years of work.

"She inspired me to keep going by simply telling me she would not let me quit," Phillips said. "Two weeks later, I had 25 pages written."

Wiley, an applications analyst and business communications specialist who will be hooded and receive her Doctor of Education, said the opportunity to earn her terminal degree at no cost while working full time was worth the hard work, determination and commitment.

"This is probably the most rewarding policy/program that any institution or place of work can provide to its employees," Wiley said. "To God, I give the glory and honor. I give great thanks to the University of Mississippi for its further education policy."

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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