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Ron Rychlak Honored with Top Research Award

UM law professor renowned for his scholarship and creative activity

MAY 11, 2019 BY SHEA STEWART

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Josh Gladden (right), UM vice chancellor for research and sponsored programs, presents the 2019 Distinguished Research and Creative Achievement Award to law professor Ron Rychlak during the university's 166th Commencement ceremonies Saturday (May 11) in The Pavilion at Ole Miss. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services.

OXFORD, Miss. – When Ron Rychlak joined the faculty of the **University of Mississippi** School of Law in 1987, law giants roamed the halls of Lamar Hall, the school's home.

The faculty included Robert Weems, for whom the law school's main auditorium is named; Guff Abbott, who went on to be president of the Mississippi Bar; George Cochran, for whom the law school's Innocence Project is named; and John Bradley, for whom a major law student award is named. Carolyn Ellis Staton, who would later serve as the university's provost, and Robert Khayat, who later became chancellor and for whom the new law school building is named, also were faculty members.

"They were great teachers, and they all had a hand in taking this school to new levels of national importance," said Rychlak, professor of law and Jamie L. Whitten Chair of Law and Government. "Part of that was by encouraging new faculty to publish widely.

"Today, our faculty publish in quality journals around the globe, and they write impactful books."

Rychlak is one of those law professors expanding the scholarly output of the school through his research, writing and publishing. He's author, co-author or editor of 11 books and a nationally and internationally renowned scholar researching and writing across an array of disciplines, including criminal law, gambling law, environmental law, international law and the study of religions in times of war.

He also has written more than 90 academic papers, covering topics from baseball and the law to crimes before the International Criminal Court.

It's that dedication to his craft and more that earned Rychlak the University of Mississippi's Distinguished Research and Creative Achievement Award during the university's 166th Commencement ceremonies Saturday (May 11) in The Pavilion at Ole Miss.

"There are so many amazing people doing great work here at the university, **from studying microorganisms in space** to innovations in medicine, engineering and the liberal arts," Rychlak said. "I am blessed to live and work in such an intellectually rich community, and it is quite an honor to have my work considered alongside projects like those."

Created in 2008, the annual award recognizes a faculty member who has shown outstanding accomplishment in research, scholarship and creative activity. Applicants are nominated by their peers

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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

and reviewed by a committee of past recipients.

"During more than 30 years of service to the university, Ron Rychlak has earned numerous accolades and gained wide respect for his contributions to the legal community and the university as a whole," Interim Chancellor Larry Sparks said. "This award is a well-deserved recognition of Ron's leadership and creative accomplishments."

Previous winners of the **Distinguished Research and Creative Achievement Award** are Sam Wang, Larry Walker, Charles Reagan Wilson, Dale Flesher, Atef Elsherbeni, Mahmoud ElSohly, Robert Van Ness, Charles Hussey, Ikhlas Khan, Alice Clark and Marc Slattery.

"Professor Rychlak is a nationally and internationally recognized scholar in an expansive range of legal subject areas," said Josh Gladden, UM vice chancellor for research and sponsored programs. "He has earned decades of respect as an exceptional professor, all the while making enormous contributions to his field.

"These contributions, in turn, have brought recognition to the university and its academic excellence, served as a model to student scholars and enriched the School of Law."

Rychlak performs all three areas of his job – teaching, research and service – extremely well, said Susan Duncan, UM law dean.

"His students love him, scholars in his field highly respect him and he performs amazing service for this university and the world beyond," she said. "He is a servant leader and seeks no recognition but his many achievements warrant this public recognition.

"This award illustrates the wonderful scholarly activity that occurs daily at the **School of Law**. We have a highly productive faculty publishing in top journals, writing books and contributing to the development of the law. Our students also publish in our own journals and journals across the nation and the world at a far higher rate than law students at other schools.

"Professors like professor Rychlak mentor and guide our students in these efforts. This award acknowledges the hard work our faculty and students do every day."

While Rychlak received the award, he is quick to share the acclaim with numerous others in the School of Law who either inspire him with their scholarly pursuits or with whom he has collaborated.

"I am very happy to see the law school recognized in this way," he said. "I have wonderful colleagues who have been doing marvelous work for many years. I think a lot of people know about the very impressive service and clinical work that we do, but there is so much more, including important research and impactful publications."

A 1980 graduate of Wabash College – where he also was student body president and played varsity baseball – with a degree in economics, Rychlak earned his Juris Doctor from the Vanderbilt Law School in 1983. He served as a judicial law clerk to Judge Harry W. Wellford of the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and later joined the law firm Jenner & Block in Chicago before becoming an Ole Miss faculty member.

It was his parents who instilled in him a desire and willingness to pursue the truth wherever it may be found, Rychlak said. His father, Joseph, was, as his son says, a "hard-working college professor," who spent more than four decades in university classrooms teaching psychology.

That dedication in the classroom carried over to the son.

"Teaching is the flip side of learning," Rychlak said. "It is not a 9-to-5 job, at least not if you want to do it right. Every day is like going to court; you have to be prepared.

"I am always impressed by my colleague Larry Pittman (UM law professor and Ray and Louise Stewart Lecturer). I often go home late, but he is usually there later. He is known for working his students hard, but he works himself even harder. That is what it takes."

During his Ole Miss law career, Rychlak has taught a number of classes, covering topics from the First Amendment to evidence to international security. In 2017, Rychlak received the Ben Hardy Faculty Excellence Award from the law school.

A portion of Rychlak's nomination package for the Distinguished Research and Creative Achievement Award included nearly three pages of praise of Rychlak from past students, a fact that he is "deeply honored" to learn. But those students also are inspirational, Rychlak said.

"They continually come up with new ideas and hard questions, and they write papers that are often on the cutting edge of legal developments," he said. "About 50 students have published articles based on papers that they wrote for my seminars, and most of them were in refereed journals.

"That speaks very highly of the intellectual ability of our students. I have to study, write and publish just to keep up with them."

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Beyond his classroom and research duties, Rychlak also serves as the president of the Southeastern Association of Law Schools, secretary of the Southeastern Conference Executive Committee, and as a Vatican delegate to meetings of the United Nations' International Law Commission.

Outside of law, Rychlak has since 2007 served as the university's faculty athletic representative and chair of the University Standing Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics. He also serves on the Athletics Diversity Committee and the Athletic Compliance Committee, which he chaired for almost 10 years.

"I attend many sporting events to cheer on the Rebels," he said. "Working in and around athletics has been a good thing. ... I have made many close friends in athletics, and I try to take their positive attitude to my work in the law school."

Sleight-of-hand magic is another of Rychlak's pastimes. For more than 35 years, he has been a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Rychlak and his wife, Claire, whom he thanks for his success, have been married 33 years and are parents of six children: Joseph Rychlak, an Ole Miss law alumnus who works for a bankruptcy judge in Shreveport, Louisiana; Lindsey Rychlak Wilkins, a UM alumna who is a third-grade teacher in Virginia; Susanna Rychlak Allen, a lawyer in Washington, D.C., who received her undergraduate degree from UM; Mary Helen Rychlak, an Ole Miss alumna who teaches third grade in Atlanta; Sally Rychlak, who received her bachelor's degree in business from UM on Saturday; and Olivia Rychlak, who plans to enroll at Ole Miss in the fall.

"My mom, Lenora Rychlak, lives next door to us, and our sons-in-law, Richard Wilkins and Will Allen, also graduated from Ole Miss," Rychlak said. "As you can see, we are 'all in' with the University of Mississippi."

This year's Distinguished Research and Creative Achievement Award is sponsored by the Abidi Foundation, a nonprofit foundation started by Syed Abidi, who earned a doctoral degree in pharmaceuticals in 1980 from UM and is the CEO of Pharmaceuticals International Inc.

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