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1-16-2013

Students Harness Power of Verbal Communication

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Recommended Citation

Cleary, Rebecca Lauck, "Students Harness Power of Verbal Communication" (2013). *University of Mississippi News*. 4963.

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Students Harness Power of Verbal Communication

Speaker's Edge winners earn awards, scholarship money

JANUARY 16, 2013 BY REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY



OXFORD, Miss. – Nervousness, sweaty palms and butterflies in the stomach were common at the Speaker's Edge competition at the University of Mississippi, but at the end of the two days, students were more confident in their public speaking abilities.

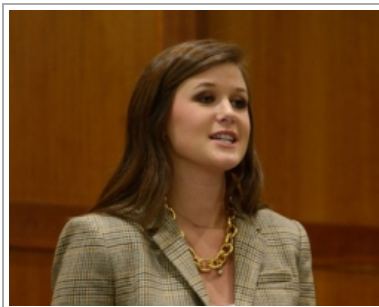
The competition recognizes that communication is a vital part of the business world and features a six-to-eight minute informative speech; a six-to-eight minute marketplace pitch, in which MBA students share their best business ideas with industry leaders; and an "ethical dilemma," for which they have 30 minutes to prepare a seven-minute speech. This year, graduate accountancy students also participated.

"When MBA students write their application essays, Speaker's Edge is one of the reasons they want to attend Ole Miss," said Bethany Cooper, UM director of corporate relations and MBA/MHA services. "Employers have contacted me and wanted to judge, so that they can match a face with a name and see what they have to offer. This is a great way for students to get in front of business leaders and potential employers."

Mollie Mellon was named the overall Speaker's Edge champion, earning a \$2,000 scholarship and a \$200 gift certificate to City Grocery restaurant, and she also took third place in the informative category.

Wayne Matthews won first place in the ethical dilemma category, Emily Faust won first place in informative and Jennifer Urban won first place in the marketplace pitch. Those three students each won a \$1,000 scholarship and a \$100 gift certificate to City Grocery.

Winners of the Most Improved Award were Patrick Merriman and Albert Vaiani. Winner of Best Peer Coach Award was Hunter Day.



[Click the image to enlarge](#)

For Mellon, the event was challenging, exciting, transformative and fun all at the same time. Winning the competition was an added bonus, she said.

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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

"When I learned that accounting students could participate in the program, I really wanted to take advantage of it," said Mellon, a native of Bolton who earned a Bachelor of Accountancy from Ole Miss. "It was such an honor to be chosen as the overall champion. I consider this a huge achievement because everyone I was competing against was so talented. The caliber of students in this course was outstanding; it made for a really dynamic and exciting learning environment."

Urban, originally from Littleton, Colo., said Speaker's Edge is her favorite part of the MBA program so far.

"All of the coaches and professors spent countless hours helping us prepare and coming up with very new and exciting ideas for us to include in our speech," said Urban, who graduated from UM with a degree in public policy leadership and political science. "While I have always enjoyed public speaking, I never realized how much I needed to or could improve. I also enjoyed watching my peers improve and seeing the difference from their first day speeches to those during the competition."

It used to be the only one of its kind for MBA programs across the United States.

"The University of Alabama saw our success and this year launched a version of the Speaker's Edge program, which is flattering, but we started it here and it's going to be our legacy," Cooper said.

Matthews, a native of Pearl, said Speaker's Edge was a great experience.

"I learned so much about myself during this course from each judge," said Matthews, who earned a degree in computer engineering from Jackson State University. "Being in the finals in the ethical dilemma category was nerve-racking at first. I had no idea that I had done as well in the first two rounds. But once I was on stage, I did what my coaches told me to do and was successful."

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Video by Mary Stanton

More than 60 business and community leaders participated as judges, and their feedback and encouragement is critical to the learning process.

Bill Bates, a retired physician and entrepreneur from Nashville, Tenn., was a first-time judge.

"Having been an executive in a corporation, I know the importance of communication skills," Bates said. "So many engineering schools and business schools really do not teach communication skills. To make your way up the corporate ladder, so to speak, or advance anywhere, it's how well you communicate, and you are teaching this at the ground level. It's not just a speaker's edge, it's an advantage edge for Ole Miss."

For the second year, the competition expanded to include students in the UM Center for Manufacturing Excellence. The overall winner of the CME Speaker's Edge was Shelby Williams.

The event was co-hosted by the university's [School of Business Administration](#) and [Lott Leadership Institute](#), and corporate partner Extreme Arts and Sciences. Sponsors include Area Marketing Associates, Argent Trust, Atlantix Global System, Baptist Memorial Healthcare Corp., Extreme Arts and Sciences, FedEx, FNC Inc., Rich Gemert, City Grocery Restaurant Group, Delta Business Journal, Chick-fil-A, Gallien Global Vision, Iroquois Capital, J. P. Turner, L-3 Communications, Madewell Home, Randy Watkins Golf Group, Regions Bank, Renasant Bank and Andrew Waites.

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