

University of Mississippi

eGrove

---

University of Mississippi News

---

11-12-2018

## History Makers: Three UM Students, 1 alumna among Rhodes Scholarship Finalists

Michael Newsom

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

---

### Recommended Citation

Newsom, Michael, "History Makers: Three UM Students, 1 alumna among Rhodes Scholarship Finalists" (2018). *University of Mississippi News*. 5235.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/5235>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

## History Makers: Three UM Students, 1 alumna among Rhodes Scholarship Finalists

Jarvis Benson, Jaz Brisack, John Chappell, Chinelo Ibekwe set to compete for coveted award

NOVEMBER 12, 2018 BY MICHAEL NEWSOM



Jarvis Benson

OXFORD, Miss. – For the first time ever, the University of Mississippi boasts four 2019 finalists for the prestigious Rhodes Scholarships, which draw students from around the world to study at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

Jarvis Benson, Jaz Brisack and John Chappell will compete for Rhodes Scholarships in meetings Nov. 16-17 in Birmingham, Alabama. In addition to those current UM students, Chinelo Ibekwe, a 2018 Ole Miss chemical engineering graduate from Lagos, Nigeria, was named a finalist in the Rhodes Scholarships for West Africa program. She will interview Dec. 1 in her category.

UM has had 25 Rhodes Scholars and many Rhodes finalists in its history, but never four finalists in one year.

Having four finalists is a testament not only to the students, but also to the university's faculty, said Douglass Sullivan-González, dean of the university's **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College**, where Benson, Brisack and Chappell are students.

"Our pride and joy are immeasurable," Sullivan-González said. "That our university has produced four finalists for the prestigious Rhodes scholarship means that our faculty and staff have worked with some incredible scholars who have stood up to the questions of the day, and the world has taken notice.

"Once again, our flagship university produces an intellectual nexus to challenge and provoke, and our students engage this moment with verve. What a great time to be working at the University of Mississippi."

The Rhodes Scholarships, which were created in 1902, bring outstanding students from many countries to the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. Besides "intellectual distinction," the selection committee seeks excellence in qualities of mind and of person, which combined offer the promise of effective service to the world in the decades ahead.

Rhodes Scholars receive tuition, travel, room and board, and a stipend for two years of study at Oxford University, with the possibility of being renewed for a third year.

Benson, a senior Croft international studies and Spanish major from Grenada, serves as president of the **UM Black Student Union**. He has worked on civil rights, voting rights, immigration and education and was a 2018 Truman Scholarship finalist for Mississippi. He's looking forward to representing the university.

"To be selected as a Rhodes finalist is surreal," Benson said. "I am so blessed to have the chance to represent the university. While I am very excited for the opportunity to further my education at Oxford, I am more excited to show that people who look like me are able to attend and thrive in academic environments.

"To be selected as a finalist, I hope, is to show that it is possible."

Brisack, a senior general studies and journalism major from Oxford, is the 2018 **Truman Scholar** for Mississippi and has a long history as a champion for human, civil and labor rights in Mississippi. She is president of the College Democrats, a frequent contributor to **The Daily Mississippian** and was a teacher-adviser for the Sunflower Freedom Project in 2016.

"The U.K.'s historical dominance on the world stage, and Oxford's position as that empire's center of

### Follow us on social



### 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

[Read the story ...](#)

#### More Posts from this Category

### Thank You To Our Donors

#### 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

[Read the story ...](#)

#### More Posts from this Category

### 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.

intellectual thought, make this school and this degree program the perfect place to deepen my understanding of how power structures emerge, evolve and can best be influenced or fundamentally altered,” Brisack said. “Interacting with professors and other students who are engaging with these issues from myriad global perspectives will give me the opportunity to critically challenge my own ideas and learn from others’ ranges of experience.”

Chappell, a senior international studies and Arabic major from Albuquerque, New Mexico, co-founded Mississippi Votes and works on international human and civil rights. He is a 2017 **Barksdale Scholar**.



**John Chappell**

He said he’s thrilled to be in the competition with Brisack and Benson, both of whom he said are friends and partners in community organizing and coalition building at Ole Miss. Being selected is a testament to the people and communities who have made him who he is today, Chappell said.

“I absolutely could not have come this far without the support of the Croft Institute, Honors College and broader university community, as well as the people who have helped me create homes away from home in Mississippi and abroad,” Chappell said. “My family and hometown community of Albuquerque also make me who I am, and I hope to make them proud in my future career.”

Last year, Ibekwe was a semifinalist for the Rhodes Scholarships for West Africa program , which was unveiled in 2017 to support innovative young leaders in West Africa. Ibekwe was a SMBHC student.

Her long-term goal is to serve as Nigeria’s minister of health. She is particularly passionate about introducing advanced technology into the country’s health sector, as well as reforming maternal and child health care policies.

“As Africa is viewed as the last frontier in development, it is important that the next generation of leaders and policy makers – Rhodes Scholars – understands Africa’s cultural and political landscape,” Ibekwe said. “I look forward to tapping into the diverse perspectives in the Rhodes Scholar community to prepare myself for the challenges that I may experience on the journey to prosperity for Africa.”



**Jaz Brisack**

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

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)



**Chinelo Ibekwe**

FILED UNDER: [COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS](#), [CROFT INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES](#), [NEWS RELEASES](#), [SALLY MCDONNELL BARKSDALE HONORS COLLEGE](#), [SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING](#)