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Whitney Woods

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## Two Mississippi Students Awarded Truman Scholarships

**Jilkiah Bryant and Andy Flores, both UM juniors, chosen for prestigious national honor**

APRIL 14, 2022 BY WHITNEY WOODS



UM juniors Jilkiah Bryant, of Macon, and Andy Flores, of Ocean Springs, have been named 2022 Truman Scholars by the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation. Photos by Logan Kirkland/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – University of Mississippi juniors Jilkiah Bryant and Andy Flores recently got life-changing news: both students in the university’s Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College have been awarded prestigious Harry S. Truman Scholarships.

This is the first time since 2013 that the Truman Foundation has awarded two scholarships to the state of Mississippi and the first time ever that both Mississippi awards have gone to the same institution. The awards were announced Thursday (April 14).

UM is among only six institutions that have multiple Truman Scholars this year, joining Columbia, Harvard and Stanford universities, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the U.S. Air Force Academy.

“These outstanding and brilliant Mississippi students are to be commended for this tremendous accomplishment of being named the university’s 16th and 17th Truman Scholars,” Chancellor Glenn Boyce said. “Andy and Jilkiah have reached an elite pinnacle, and we’re proud of how they are making a difference through their scholarship, leadership and service.

“It is incredible to see how our supportive and invigorating campus environment fuels our students’ passions and prepares them to be competitive on a national stage.”

Truman Scholarship awardees demonstrate outstanding leadership potential, a commitment to a career in public service and academic excellence. Each Truman Scholar receives up to \$30,000 for graduate studies, leadership training, career counseling, and special internship and fellowship opportunities within public service organizations.

“I am still in disbelief that I have been chosen as a Truman scholarship recipient,” said Bryant, a public health and health sciences major from Macon. “My heart is full with appreciation and gratitude, but it also serves as a reminder that there is still work to be done.

“I want to continue to affect change in Mississippi by using this opportunity to learn how to better serve and influence my community and the state.”

Flores, a public policy leadership and philosophy major from Ocean Springs, expressed a similar desire to improve life for fellow Mississippians.

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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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### 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

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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.

"I've always felt that my purpose was to unite people and provide others with the compassion and resources I wished my family could have received when I was younger," he said. "No award or scholarship has ever represented me or what I want to do as much as the Truman Scholarship, so it's the honor of my life to be named a Truman Scholar."

Bryant, who also is completing a minor in mathematics, aims to spend her career fighting for affordable and accessible health care in rural Mississippi. She is already working toward this goal as a Catalyzing Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Initiative Innovation Scholar with the university's McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement.

As a CEED Scholar, she began to demonstrate her commitment to public health in underserved Mississippi communities by organizing the bilingual Pontotoc community health fair, held earlier this month.

"Jilkiyah was the first student I ever met who had started a nonprofit before enrolling in college," said Laura Martin, associate director of the McLean Institute. "Jilkiyah has always worked intentionally and intuitively to connect mission-aligned organizations that are working to make a difference in Mississippi."

"Her contributions have enriched the work of the McLean Institute's CEED and M Partner initiatives, and I am overjoyed for Jilkiyah in earning this well-deserved honor."

Bryant also participated in the CDC Undergraduate Public Health Scholars Program, where she completed a 10-week summer training program that focused on public health coursework and immersive experiences at Columbia University. This experience solidified her passion for breaking down barriers to access to health care in underserved areas.

Ethel Scurlock, interim dean of the Honors College and professor of English and African American studies, said she is "most impressed by Bryant's ability to excel in the classroom and use information gained from her coursework to understand the complex matrix of issues that impact Black communities in Mississippi."

"She is deeply dedicated to making Mississippi live up to her promise for all citizens, and I am confident that her continued efforts will be of national and global import."

Flores said he wants to help ensure that all students receive equal educational opportunities in public schools and institutions of higher learning.

"Andy leads by example," said Melissa Jones, associate director of the UM Trent Lott Leadership Institute. "He thoroughly invests in our campus as well as the state of Mississippi."

"His commitment to improving access and opportunity for those around him is palpable in his daily endeavors. He seeks to further understand the ideas and beliefs of those around him in the efforts of being a unifier of people."

At Ole Miss, Flores has consistently fought to eliminate barriers to education for his fellow students. As co-founder and president of UM's First-Generation Network, he has worked to create networks and provide resources for first-generation students on campus.

"I am so proud of Andy and his efforts to support first-generation students," said Ainsley Ash, communication and impact project manager at Woodward Hines Education Foundation. "I cannot wait to see him continue to effect change as a Truman scholar."

He also has been instrumental in uniting students across campus behind HelpSaveHELP to lobby against the overhaul of the "One Grant" financial aid for Mississippi students.

Flores plans to use his Truman Scholarship to attend law school at the University of California at Berkeley. This program will give him the tools necessary to fight for equitable education for marginalized and at-risk youth.



**Jilkiyah Bryant plans to use the Truman Scholarship to pursue a master's degree in public health in health systems at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and then work to improve rural health care conditions in Mississippi and address the core causes of health inequalities. Photo by Logan Kirkland/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services**

"With the Truman Scholarship, I hope to pursue a law degree and become an attorney who works at the intersection of education, civil rights and community-building," he said. "I'm particularly interested in advancing education reform and finding solutions to problems that disproportionately affect low-income households

and communities of color."

"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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**Andy Flores plans to use his Truman Scholarship to attend law school at the University of California at Berkeley and then work to advance education reform and help solve problems affecting low-income households and communities of color. Photo by Logan Kirkland/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services**

Bryant plans to pursue a master's degree in public health in health systems at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. There, she will gain academic and hands-on experience needed to improve rural health care conditions and address the core causes of health inequalities.

Bryant said she believes that her Truman Scholarship "will actually improve my life in the best possible way. In a community of scholars who embody change, I will be pushed to become the greatest version of myself and to learn how to implement change through my aspirations and interests.

"I am enthusiastic and ready to be the difference I want to see in the world, and I can't wait to do it with the Truman Scholarship's help."

Bryant and Flores are among 58 new Truman Scholars selected from 705 candidates nominated by 275 colleges and universities. They were recommended by 17 independent selection panels based on the finalists' academic success and leadership accomplishments, as well as their likelihood of becoming public service leaders.

Established by Congress in 1975 as the living memorial to President Harry S. Truman and presidential monument to public service, the Truman Scholarship carries the legacy of the 33rd president by supporting and inspiring the next generation of public service leaders.

This year's 58 awardees join a community of 3,442 Truman Scholars named since the first awards in 1977.

For more information on the Truman Scholarships and how to apply for them, contact the Office of National Scholarship Advisement at [onsa@olemiss.edu](mailto:onsa@olemiss.edu) or make an appointment at [calendly.com/onsa](https://calendly.com/onsa).

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