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Two UM Faculty Members Appointed as Distinguished Professors

Arunachalam Rajendran and Ron Rychlak honored for research, teaching excellence, service

MAY 8, 2020 BY SHEA STEWART



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 of Mississippi's 166th Commencement ceremonies in May 2019. Rychlak recently was named a Distinguished Professor at the university. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – An engineering professor and a law professor are the two newest Distinguished Professors appointed by the **University of Mississippi**.

The two honorees are Arunachalam Rajendran, chair and professor of mechanical engineering, and Ron Rychlak, professor of law and Jamie L. Whitten Chair of Law and Government.

The Distinguished Professor appointment is an honorific title started by UM in 2018 that recognizes the best faculty with sustained excellence at the university. The award was created in response to the university's strategic initiative to develop a post-professorial recognition.

"The Distinguished Professor award recognizes our most outstanding faculty members," Provost Noel Wilkin said. "The accomplishments of the university are really the accomplishments of its people.

"Professor Rajendran and Professor Rychlak have distinguished themselves by making contributions to their fields and to society at large. We value their commitment to excellence, the incredible contributions that they have made in their fields and the contributions they make to our community of scholars."

Rajendran joined the university in 2008 after earning his bachelor's and master's degrees in aeronautical engineering from institutions in India and his doctorate in aeronautics and astronautics at the University of Washington in 1981.

He worked at the University of Dayton, the U.S. Army Materials Technology Laboratory and the Army Research Laboratory before joining the Army Research Office as a chief scientist (engineering sciences) in 2000. He worked there for eight years before coming to UM, where he is serving his third term as chair of mechanical engineering.

While at UM, Rajendran has been awarded the School of Engineering Faculty Teaching Award in 2011, been named the School of Engineering Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 2016 and received the Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching and Mentoring from the Graduate School in 2018.

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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



Arunachalam Rajendran, chair and professor of mechanical engineering, has been named a Distinguished Professor at the University of Mississippi. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

Rajendran has taught a wide range of courses at the university, from ME 101: Introduction to Mechanical Engineering to engineering fracture mechanics. He serves as an adviser to all undergraduate mechanical engineering seniors and has served on 18 master's thesis committees and five Ph.D. committees.

During his Ole Miss tenure, Rajendran has been the principal investigator or co-principal investigator for research funding that has explored topics such as bio-inspired composites for hazard mitigation and resistant nanomaterials in space applications.

He is a fellow of the Society of Engineering Sciences, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Army Research Laboratory, along with serving as a reviewer for numerous journals and as a member of several scientific and engineering societies.

Rajendran also has organized more than 150 technical and scientific workshops, authored hundreds of publications, given presentations across the country and around the world, and served on dozens of boards, committees and panels.

Internationally known for his contributions to the field of impact dynamics, Rajendran's scholarly work has made transformational contributions in the field, along with contributions in the area of blast

dynamics of both ductile and brittle materials. The "Rajendran-Grove" model is widely used for determining shock effects on ceramics.

"With pleasure, I wholeheartedly support the nomination of Professor Arunachalam 'Raj' Rajendran," wrote Dave Puleo, dean of the **School of Engineering**, in his recommendation letter. "He has brought and will continue to bring distinction to our university.

"Professor Raj's students laud him for his dedication to their success in the classroom and beyond the classroom. ... I believe Professor Raj is eminently qualified and highly deserving of the honor."

A 1980 graduate of Wabash College with a bachelor's degree in economics, Rychlak earned his Juris Doctor from the Vanderbilt Law School in 1983. Before joining the **UM School of Law** in 1987, Rychlak served as a 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.

While an Ole Miss faculty member, Rychlak has taught several classes, covering topics from the First Amendment to evidence to international security. In 2017, he received the school's Ben Hardy Faculty Excellence Award.

He's the 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 100 academic papers, covering topics from baseball and the law to crimes before the International Criminal Court, and given more than 90 presentations to U.S. and international audiences.

Rychlak's writings on the history of the Catholic Church in World War II have been labeled as definitive by Vatican scholars.

His academic writing has been published in prestigious law journals such as the *UCLA Law Review*, and in *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications. He also has made numerous media appearances on TV networks such as ABC and CNN.

Last year, **Rychlak received the Distinguished Research and Creative Achievement Award**, the university's highest research award, which recognizes a faculty member who has shown outstanding accomplishment in research, scholarship and creative activity.

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

Outside of law, Rychlak has since 2007 served as the university's faculty athletics 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.

In her recommendation letter, law school Dean Susan Duncan wrote that Rychlak "is an outstanding professor who warrants this award."

"The quality and volume of Professor Rychlak's scholarship have helped the law school achieve and maintain a strong national and international reputation for academic excellence," she wrote.

No more than 5 percent of eligible faculty can be appointed as a Distinguished Professor.

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Each school and college has its guidelines for nominations, but the university requires that nominated faculty have at least six years of service at the highest rank of professor, along with exemplary accomplishments in research and creative achievement, teaching and service. Also, it is expected that awardees will have achieved a significant degree of national or international recognition.

The recommended appointment nominees are made by a committee chosen by the Faculty Senate and the provost, and the committee has representatives from across campus.

The **inaugural Distinguished Professors in 2018** were John Daigle, Donald Dyer and Ikhlas Khan. **In 2019, the three professors appointed** were Charles Hussey, Karen Raber and Michael Repka.

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