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UM Alumnus is First Mississippian to Land German Chancellor Fellowship

Deeneaus Polk plans to use yearlong opportunity to study workforce and vocational educational systems

 JUNE 2, 2015 BY [CHRISTINA STEUBE](#)



OXFORD, Miss. – Deeneaus Polk, a 2011 **University of Mississippi** graduate and Pascagoula native, has been selected for an exclusive German Chancellor Fellowship that will take him to Germany for a year of study and research on a project of his own creation.



Deeneaus Polk is the first Mississippian to receive a German Chancellor Fellowship.

The fellowship is a program created by the German chancellor and is managed by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The opportunity is available to individuals from Brazil, Russia, India, China and the United States interested in leadership in the areas of politics, economics, media, administration and culture. Polk is among 50 fellows worldwide this year and is the first Mississippian to be chosen for this fellowship.

"To be the first to receive this fellowship from Mississippi is an honor and a pleasure I can't quite put into words," Polk said. "It'll be my job to ensure that I'm not the last Mississippian to receive this fellowship."

Polk is a graduate of Pascagoula High School. He earned a bachelor's degree in international studies at UM and was a member of both the **Croft Institute for International Studies** and the **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College**. Also in 2011, he was awarded a yearlong Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Germany.

"I have always been very interested in bringing the world to Mississippi in ways that will change lives," Polk said. "This opportunity represents a way for me to do that."

He added that his previous experience in Germany changed his life and allowed him to experience a different culture.

Polk's selection is a triumph for both the university and for the entire state, said Douglass Sullivan-Gonzalez, dean of the Honors College.

"The SMB Honors College takes a great deal of pride in nurturing the citizen scholars who will be changing Mississippi and the world, for the better," Sullivan-Gonzalez said. "Deeneaus Polk has courage, intelligence and a bone-deep commitment to that change. What a great coup for him and for all of us at the University of Mississippi!"

Polk said his motivation for applying for the program is to make a difference in Mississippi.

"The time I spent at Ole Miss really exposed me to a side of Mississippi I'd never seen before," he explained. "I came to realize that Mississippi, where magnolia trees sway gracefully to the silent whisper of gentle morning flurries, is also heavily defined by gaps. These gaps come in many shapes and sizes.

"There are racial gaps that continue to persist long after the end of slavery. There are wealth gaps within which the divide between the rich and poor continues to grow. An education gap also exists, which calcifies the cyclical nature of poverty. It was during my Fulbright year in Germany that I came to believe that Mississippi is capable of much more and decided to endeavor to make these hopes and dreams a reality as well."

Polk will be researching the German workforce and vocational education systems, hoping to return with knowledge of concepts and principles to develop a similar system in Mississippi through the analysis of agriculture, manufacturing, logistics and transportation.

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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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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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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 am absolutely delighted for our 2011 alumnus Deeneaus Polk and very proud of this fantastic award, one of the most prestigious and competitive fellowships in the world for young leaders," said Kees Gispen, executive director of the Croft Institute. "It is a great honor for him – and also for us – that he was selected for the German Chancellor Fellowship. Deeneaus is an exceptional individual with superb leadership potential."

Gispen said Deeneaus has been recognized before for his potential. In 2008, he was the recipient of a Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship and received a fellowship from the Institute for International Public Policy while studying at Croft.

"Anyone who really knows him won't be too surprised by this latest recognition of his talents, for Deeneaus has not only a great deal of charisma but also the vision and determination to help move the state forward," Gispen said. "This is great news for Deeneaus, for the university and, most importantly, for Mississippi as a whole."



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"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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