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UM Band Getting Bigger, Better Practice Field

Chancellor Glenn Boyce announces \$3.5 million commitment from the university, donors

APRIL 28, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



The Pride of the South marching band performs at halftime of the 2021 Ole Miss-Arkansas football game in Vaught-Hemingway Stadium. The university announced Wednesday (April 27) that it is moving forward to construct a new practice field for the band. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – Seeking to expand and improve outdoor rehearsal conditions, the **University of Mississippi** is committing \$3.5 million to build a bigger, better practice field for its award-winning **Pride of the South** marching band.

Chancellor Glenn Boyce made the announcement late Wednesday (April 27) afternoon at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts to Ole Miss band students, faculty and staff. The university's commitment will pair with various gifts and major donations to the project from Helen Overstreet, Sumner and Risa Spralding, Cora Mitchell, and Alex and Linda MacCormack totaling approximately \$330,000.

"At Ole Miss, we're committed to supporting and fostering the success of our students," Boyce said. "We're thrilled to see this moment that we have been working towards for years come to fruition for the Ole Miss band. Our students deserve this investment in them."

The new practice field will have proper drainage structures and lights, a new director's tower, a storage building and proper field access. Construction is slated to begin in August and be completed by summer 2023.

The project was initially proposed at a Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning board meeting nearly five years ago. At that time, a design fee of \$65,000 was approved and the design professional was appointed. The project lay dormant until the university submitted a new request for a revised budget of \$3.5 million, which the board approved last week.

"The new practice field is a great way to demonstrate our commitment and appreciation to the 300-plus dedicated and talented band members who work hard every day to contribute to the university's pride and passion," Boyce said. "Our aim is that this new field will also



Chancellor Glenn Boyce announces that the university has committed funding for a new practice field for the Pride of the South marching band. Construction on the project, which includes storage, draining and a new director's tower, is set to begin in August. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

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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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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.

enhance the meaningful opportunities and experiences that our students gain as members of the band.

"More broadly, this is an exciting and rewarding development for the entire Ole Miss community as the Pride of the South is an essential part of our spirit, enthusiasm and excellence."

UM music faculty, staff and students enthusiastically received the news and gave Boyce a standing ovation.

"The new practice field will enhance band practices and performances in many ways," band director Randy Dale said. "The students will be able to work and learn in a safe and comfortable environment every day. The instructors will have everything they need to successfully train members, detect and correct problems, and facilitate efficient practices.

"Visitors and prospective band members will see a beautiful facility that will hopefully entice them to return to Ole Miss, hopefully many of them as a member of the Pride of the South."

The funding for the new practice field is just one example of how the university is showing support for both its programs and its people, said Nancy Maria Balach, chair and professor of music.



Members of the Pride of the South marching band react to news that the university is moving forward to construct a new band practice field. Photo by Thomas Graning/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

"The new field will be used by band students who come from all across campus and will have great benefit to our growing department and established recruiting efforts," she said. "We sincerely thank UM's administration for enabling the band and the **Department of Music** to achieve new heights."

Band members said that they are looking forward to rehearsals on the new practice field.

"I'm really grateful that we're getting it so soon," said Jaquavious Lee, a sophomore percussionist from Olive Branch. "The two years I've been

here, we've practiced on a grass field that gets muddy and attracts bugs when it rains. I'm really excited about practicing on a better field."

Brandon Mitchell, of Meridian, said the news almost seemed surreal.

"The idea of a new practice field has been talked about off and on the entire six years that I've been here," said the graduate assistant, who will receive his master's degree in music education at the May 7 Commencement ceremonies. "This is my last semester, so I won't be around to enjoy it. Still, I'm happy for everyone behind me and that it's finally happening."

Dean Lee Cohen said the **College of Liberal Arts** acknowledges and appreciates the efforts of all involved and are proud of the growth that is occurring in the Department of Music.

"The Pride of the South marching band is integral to the University of Mississippi experience," Cohen said. "This dedicated ensemble enhances the academic, cultural and athletic atmosphere for students, faculty, alumni and the community."

Naming opportunities for the new practice field remain available. For more information and to make a donation, contact Rob Jolly, UM development officer, at rjolly@olemiss.edu.

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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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