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UM Hosts Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Warrior Week

Student veterans, programs on display during visit from Robert L. Wilkie Jr.

NOVEMBER 9, 2018 BY JUSTIN WHITMORE



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie Jr. speaks with UM public policy students Nov. 2 at the Trent Lott Leadership Institute. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD – The **University of Mississippi** hosted U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie Jr. last week during the university’s observance of Warrior Week.

Wilkie, a member of the U.S. Cabinet and an officer in the Air Force Reserve, spent time meeting with members of the **Student Veterans Association** on campus Friday morning (Nov. 2) at the Veterans Resource Center. There, he heard questions and concerns from student veterans on a variety of topics.

“I was here to tell them that the VA is a place for them as they move on in life,” Wilkie said. “That it is more than just a hospital or a clinic. We have a lot of educational services that ensure, in most cases, that young veterans have the funds to go to school.”

As the student veteran population gets younger – for the first time since the 1970s, more than half of U.S. veterans are under age 65 – Veterans Affairs hopes to cater its services toward younger beneficiaries, Wilkie said.

Wilkie’s visit offered Ole Miss students and leaders an opportunity to showcase the commitment being made to veteran and military personnel.

Andrew Newby, assistant director for **Veteran and Military Services**, said he was proud to show Wilkie that Ole Miss is making strides in improving the lives of student veterans across campus.

“His visit shows the student veterans of Ole Miss that, as an institution, we have gained invaluable support from the top down, and it is incredibly important to each and every one of them,” Newby said. “It is wonderful to have Secretary Wilkie on campus because we are working to become the standard for caring for student veterans on a college campus.

“Having the leader of the Department of Veterans Affairs on campus gives us the ability to showcase our progress.”

Wilkie is no stranger to the university – his ties to Ole Miss go back generations. Somerville Hall was named after his great-great-grandmother, Lucy Somerville Howorth. His great-grandfather, Abram Somerville, used to walk him around campus in the 1970s.

“I have seen (Ole Miss) through the eyes of a child, and it is great to be back,” Wilkie said.

Wilkie, who served as counsel and adviser on international security affairs to former Senate Majority

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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.

Leader Trent Lott, spoke with students at the **Lott Leadership Institute** on Friday and also visited the Mississippi State Veterans Home in Oxford.

Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter touted Wilkie's appearance on campus during a welcoming event at the Lyceum.



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie Jr. presents a Department of Veterans Affairs coin to Ole Miss Wish Kid Benjamin Clark and his father Caleb Clark Nov. 2 at the Lyceum. Wilkie met the Clarks while visiting Ole Miss for Warrior Week. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

"We are very honored to have our Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie here, especially with this week being Warrior Week and Military Appreciation Weekend," Vitter said.

On Friday night, Wilkie attended the inaugural **Veterans Alumni Gala** and participated in the pre-game coin toss at Saturday's Ole Miss football game.

Wilkie said he enjoyed his trip to Oxford and admired the improvements the university has made since he visited as a child.

"The last time I came to a game here, (Johnny) Vaught was still here," Wilkie said. "It's changed a lot since then."

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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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