

SPRING 2015

# VISIONS

For Alumni & Friends of The W



BRINGING STUDENTS INTO FOCUS



# The Long Blue Line

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# VISIONS

SPRING 2015  
MAGAZINE

MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY for WOMEN

## FEATURES



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Check out Visions  
magazine online at:

[www.muw.edu/visions](http://www.muw.edu/visions)

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Mississippi University  
for Women

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



### Our students: our core mission

What is it that draws students to The W? We've asked them—in focus groups, in surveys and in conversation. The answers are remarkably consistent: quality academic programs, caring professors, small classes, personal attention and family atmosphere.

Today 75 percent of our students work full or part-time, many study entirely online, while others live on campus. This is the changing face of higher education and The W is a leader in providing the same high quality educational experience for all of our students.

In the last several years, we have paid even more attention to our mission of providing students an education that sends graduates into the world well-rounded and fully prepared for their careers. This issue of Visions will highlight some of those efforts.

With leadership from the Division of Student Affairs, and with the expert counsel of Noel-Levitz, a nationally recognized enrollment management consulting firm, we have refined processes, examined data to better understand our student population and launched stronger recruitment and retention programs. The W not only wants students to enroll for classes; we want to ensure they have the tools to successfully complete their studies. We are starting to see the fruits of our efforts.

You'll read an overview of major initiatives undertaken in the last two years, including our emphasis on a safe, ethical campus. You'll also meet some of our students: traditional-age, nontraditional, international, female and male. The W provides a home and an opportunity for a diverse student population.

You'll learn about improvements made to campus to enhance The W experience and meet the needs of many students. These range from improving the "curb appeal" of the already beautiful landscape to providing upgrades in residence halls that are historic, iconic buildings. We've also created more opportunities for students to visit our campus and experience what The W is all about.

One of our new initiatives is the establishment of the Student Success Center, designed to help students navigate their academic pathways from beginning to completion. Under the leadership of a new director, Dr. David Brooking, we have named navigators for each college to assist students in areas ranging from study skills to time management. Navigators are a student's personal contact and support system, helping guide them on an academic path toward a degree. You'll meet these four navigators and learn why their roles are important.

Our entire campus has been involved in these efforts by providing time, suggestions and participation in all aspects of strengthening our commitment to our students. We see the results in increased retention, in our exceptional record of graduating students and in student satisfaction surveys. I thank our faculty and staff for the work they have done.

As a new year begins, I'm more optimistic than ever about the future of this wonderful institution. And, I'm more convinced than ever that those students who leave our campus as members of The Long Blue Line will have incredible contributions to make in Mississippi and beyond.

Sincerely,

# kudos

FACULTY  
& STAFF

## Nursing faculty to present at national conference in June

Three nursing faculty members and one doctor of nursing practice student will do podium or poster presentations for more than 5,000 colleagues at the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) 2015 National Conference held in New Orleans, La.

The three members of The W's graduate nursing faculty selected are Dr. Lorraine Gaddis, graduate nursing assistant professor; Dr. Teresa Hamill, graduate nursing instructor; and Dr. Shonda Phelon, graduate nursing instructor. Alena Lester, a current doctor of nursing practice student, also will present at the AANP Convention.

Phelon will deliver a podium presentation titled, "Suicide Assessment and Prevention: A Clinical Practice Guideline" that will discuss suicide protocols that were developed by Phelon.

"I am excited to represent Mississippi University for Women, present my project and network with other nurse practitioners," said Phelon. "By presenting my Suicide Clinical Practice Guideline at the largest convention of nurse practitioners in the country, I hope to continue to bring attention to the problem of suicide."

The AANP 2015 National Conference will be held at the Ernest N. Moral Convention Center June 9-14, 2015. During the national convention, more than 5,000 national and international registrants are expected to attend the



Gaddis

Hamill

Phelon

conference. Over the three-day period, AANP will have podium presentations and poster sessions each day.

"To have three faculty and one current doctor of nursing practice student chosen to present at the national American Association of Nurse Practitioners Conference is an honor and a significant recognition by a major national nurse practitioner association," said Dr. Shelia Adams, dean of the College of Nursing & Speech-Language Pathology.

In addition to giving their presentations, they will network with nurse practitioner colleagues from around the world. They also will attend other educational sessions and skill enhancement workshops related to their roles as nurse practitioners and faculty.

The American Association of Nurse Practitioners was formed by combining the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and the American College of Nurse Practitioners to increase visibility of the nurse practitioner role nationally.

## Professors perform at NACUSA

Three W music professors performed their original compositions at the annual conference of the National Association of Composers USA (NACUSA).

Drs. Valentin Bogdan, Richard Montalto and Julia Mortyakova presented their compositions at the national conference at Georgia State University in Atlanta in November.

Bogdan performed his solo piano work titled "Etudes," while Montalto and Mortyakova performed Montalto's original work "Cantus," written for wind controller and piano.

NACUSA hosts new music concerts all over the United States and an annual conference attended by composers and musicians from around the world.



Montalto, Bogdan and Mortyakova

Founded by Henry Hadley in 1933, NACUSA is one of the oldest organizations devoted to the promotion and performance of American concert hall music.

## Stockton's article published in Choral Journal

Dr. Phillip Stockton, assistant professor of music education and director of choral activities at The W, was published in the Choral Journal, a peer-reviewed music publication funded by the American Choral Director's Association.

Stockton's article gives teachers a fast and efficient way to audition and place students with changing voices in a group setting.

"Classifying Male Adolescent Voices" was published in the October 2014 edition of the Choral Journal.

"Many teachers spend an inordinate amount of time classifying or testing changing voices. This is often done on a one-on-one basis and creates a time backlog for large programs," said Stockton. He suggested that teachers use Irvin Cooper's method of group classification using familiar songs that the students already know. "This allows the teacher to quickly and efficiently



classify the changing voices at the beginning of the school year."

Dr. Stockton hopes that teachers will use this information gleaned from previous successful choral directors as a "new to them" way of classifying voices. Stockton's graduate research focused on the Cambiata Concept, a methodology created by Irvin Cooper in the 1950s in Canada. Stockton said, "Cooper was the first music educator that described the adolescent changing voice and also developed a methodology (Cambiata Concept) to guide boys through the voice change. He was extremely influential to later voice change researchers."

He added, "It is imperative that we give teachers as many tools as possible to be successful with students with changing voices. Historical pedagogues still offer viable techniques when teaching in the modern classroom. It is our responsibility as researchers to make this information relevant in today's classroom."

Stockton has been a faculty member at The W since 2013. He has a bachelor's degree in music education from Auburn University, a master's degree in music education from Florida State University, and a doctorate in music education from the University of Mississippi.

## Berglund nominated for CFLE of the Year

Dr. Dorothy Berglund, associate professor of family studies at The W, was nominated for Certified Family Life Educator of the Year.

The CFLE of the Year is awarded to the person who has demonstrated commitment to the CFLE program through national committee involvement and publication of articles related to the CFLE.

Berglund currently serves on the National Council on Family Relations Certified Family Life Educator Academic Program Review Committee and has had lesson plans included in the CFLE lesson plan handbook. More recently, Berglund and W students were published in the CFLE Network, the quarterly newsletter for the CFLE, about their experiences in her human sexuality course.

"It is kind of surprising to me, I am really not looking for some sort of recognition in this way. I think the CFLE program



is important because it gives a nice framework for developing college curriculum in family studies programs, and because the program really does prepare students to work in their field upon graduation," said Dr. Berglund.

Berglund also has presented papers on incorporating CFLE content and activities in college classrooms and conducting community partnerships research with respect to family violence policies and programs. She has been a member of the CFLE for more than 15 years and an NCFR member for 22 years. Since arriving at The W in 2006, Berglund has worked with her fellow colleagues to refine curriculum in the family studies program.

She has enjoyed working at The W "due to the small class sizes that allow everyone to work closely with our students to ensure their success and to really get to know them as people."

"This closeness can really help when they start asking questions about where they should intern or what type of job or grad program they should be looking at when they finish," Berglund said.

## Acker first advanced certified hospice, palliative nurse in state

Dr. Kristi Acker, doctorate of nursing practice instructor at The W, is the first Advanced Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse (ACHPN®) in Mississippi and one of 10 in Alabama.



Palliative care is emerging as a specialty, according to Acker. “With the restructuring of health care, anyone that has a life threatening or serious illness should be able to access palliative care services. Even patients who are in curative situations can benefit from the services offered through a palliative care program,” Acker explained.

According to the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association, advanced practice registered nurses are a subset of nurses prepared at the graduate level to provide patient care with licensure and credentialing reflecting this advanced preparation. APRNs, who have specialty preparation care through education and/or clinical practice, function as palliative care experts in the clinical nurse specialist or nurse practitioner roles. Certification as Advanced Practice Hospice and Palliative Nurse validates this specialization.

“Ninety million people are diagnosed with chronic and life-threatening illnesses. This number is only expected to grow,” said

Acker. “I knew this was an area where I wanted to grow as a health care provider.”

In a 2011 report card released by the Center to Advance Palliative Care, Mississippi received an F, while Alabama received a D when states were graded by their percentage of hospitals with a palliative care program with more than 50 beds. The Center to Advance Palliative Care also found that only 20 percent of Mississippi’s hospitals offer palliative care.

“The health care culture concerning palliative care must change” said Acker. “In our DNP program we are creating future nurse leaders. I feel that finding your niche and developing your expertise in order to promote evidence-based change is what the DNP program is all about. I felt that as an instructor, I must continue to model what we teach our students.”

Acker received her bachelor’s of science in nursing from the University of Alabama in 1992. In 1998, she completed her MSN and the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at The W. She then went on to be a part of the inaugural University of Alabama at Birmingham DNP graduating class in 2009.

She currently serves as co-coordinator of The W’s Doctor of Nursing Practice program and maintains clinical practice as a nurse practitioner with certification as an Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner and Advanced Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Nurse.

## Alexander named director of campus recreation

LeAnn Alexander of Starkville was named director of campus recreation at The W in October.

As director of campus recreation, Alexander oversees the Stark Recreation Center, which includes a 5,300 square foot strength and conditioning room and a 157,560-gallon pool. Alexander also will be responsible for campus recreation event planning, facilities management, intramural sports and maintaining an emergency action plan for the recreation center.



“This is an amazing opportunity. I have come full circle. I worked every position in the rec center during my undergraduate years. Now I am here working in a position that I once admired,” Alexander said.

Since April 2014, Alexander served as the interim director of campus recreation. Previously, she had served as assistant director of campus recreation since July 2013. During this time she supervised the front office and employees and day-to-day operations.

Sirena Cantrell, dean of students, said, “We are excited to have LeAnn Alexander serve in this capacity. She is a great asset to our team. I look forward to working with her and her passion that she has for working with college students.”

Getting students connected and keeping students active are the two main goals that Alexander has for campus.

“Everything serves a purpose. We want students to remain active and live a healthy lifestyle,” she said.

Alexander graduated with a master of science degree from Mississippi State University in counselor education with an emphasis in student affairs in 2013. She earned her bachelor’s degree in family studies from The W in 2011.

# CREATING A **SAFE** CAMPUS CULTURE

by Maridith Walker Geuder

**S**ade Meeks is committed to her role as a student leader and to the responsibilities she holds. That's why when she joined fellow student association presidents for a regular meeting in Jackson, she was one of the first to see the potential in an idea presented to all student leaders by the Institutions of Higher Learning staff.

"We heard about the national 'It's On Us' campaign emphasizing the importance of what students can do to educate their campuses about sexual assault and prevention," said the senior culinary arts major. "I knew that was something we would be interested in."

Over last summer, she participated in a number of conference calls with the White House task force spearheading the national campaign, and by the fall semester, The W's Student Government Association had its plan in place. "We have probably been the most engaged university in promoting this," Meeks said. "I'm really proud that The W is in the vanguard of raising awareness about the issues surrounding sexual assault, bullying, and hazing."

The issue is an important one nationally, but it's also important closer to home, Meeks said. "Nationally, studies show that one in five undergraduate women experience sexual assault and four percent of men do. While The W is a safe environment, no campus is immune. We want students to be aware of the risks and what they can do. When we leave college, we'll encounter other situations and be better prepared. It's about changing a culture."

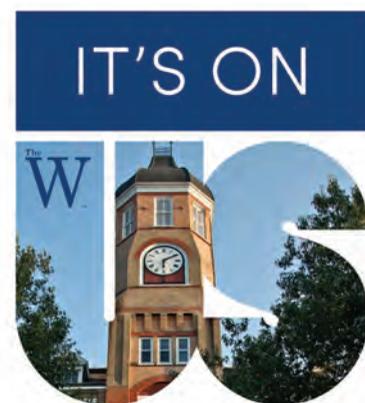
In October, The W's Student Government Association launched its efforts with a Pledge Week, inviting students to visit the national "It's On Us" (<http://itsonus.org/>) website and take the pledge. "Our goal was to make campus aware of the campaign and what it's all about," Meeks said. "We are trying to encourage

everyone to be accountable—not only for themselves, but for friends who may be at risk. Bystander intervention is an important part of the effort."

With cooperation from University Relations, the students produced a video that was simultaneously rolled out on display monitors around campus, and W-designed "It's on Us" buttons were handed out to students. "We had a tremendous response," Meeks said. "I still see the buttons on student backpacks around campus."

The "It's On Us" educational effort also included a National Conversation Week to encourage dialogue and to raise awareness of the campaign. The Student Government Association sponsored an Empowerment event that included presentations by Karen Clay, university general counsel, on reporting and Title IX requirements; Sarah Beth Honsinger on the realities of sexual assault; and faculty member Susan Ficken on self-defense techniques. "The event encouraged students to become engaged and proactive," Meeks said.

A final component of the SGA campaign was introducing students to "Circle of Six," a free phone app that lets users identify six friends they can immediately call for help. With a tap on the app, those needing help can send a friend a pre-written message such as "Come and get me. I need help getting home safely." The app will send a GPS location to show where the user





*SGA President Sade Meeks*

is. Or, if the user is in an uncomfortable situation that needs defusing, there's a message that says "Call and pretend you need me. I need an interruption."

Through all of these efforts, Meeks said the goal is to highlight an issue that transcends The W campus. "Regardless of whether you're directly involved, you can help reduce the numbers by being aware and being accountable," she said. "We're trying to change the way people see sexual assault. It's everyone's responsibility."

It's also a legal responsibility campuses nationwide face, said General Counsel Karen Clay. With recent amendments to the federal Title IX legislation, there is a mandate to end sexual discrimination in all aspects of education—K-12, community colleges and higher education. Enforced by the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the law can have implications for any educational institution receiving federal funds. Title IX, as well as the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, "are changing campus cultures on awareness, education and reporting," Clay said.

In response, The W is reviewing and revising its policies to create a safe culture in general, and especially for reporting issues of sexual harassment or assault, Clay said. Sirena Cantrell, dean of students, has been appointed Title IX

coordinator, and deputy investigators have been trained to assist when issues are reported. Cantrell has been speaking to campus groups about Title IX issues and the reporting requirements.

"Student Affairs also sponsored a national speaker, Mike Domitrz, founder of the Date Safe Project," Cantrell said. "He spoke to a standing-room only audience about issues of sexual assault and personal intimacy. Using humor and interactive situations, he got students engaged in a discussion of what constitutes inappropriate behavior. He talked in particular about consent and bystander intervention," Cantrell said. "We hope to be able to bring him back. The students really related to his presentation."

In addition, Student Affairs has done extensive programming surrounding issues of hazing, which can constitute another form of harassment. Through programming, training and awareness efforts, the goal is to create a campus in which individuals feel safe and know what to do if they feel threatened or harassed. "We want to extend the safe environment beyond our campus," Clay said. "We want to know our students are prepared when they leave The W."

And wherever students are, Cantrell said, her message is simple: "If you see something, say something."

Ensuring a safe, ethical campus is a top priority for President Jim Borsig, who emphasizes this goal in many campus presentations and correspondence. Especially concerned for the number of hazing incidents reported last fall, he called on the entire university community to become involved in recognizing and stopping hazing behaviors. Student Affairs began an educational process to remind students of the university's policies.

"We want to maintain cherished traditions while still fostering an environment of inclusion and respect," Borsig said. "Hazing endangers and diminishes our university community."

Encouraging the university family to look out for each other, Borsig said, "I ask you to be willing to intervene and use your power to stop behavior that is wrong or dangerous and be willing to report it. Sexual assault, harassment, stalking and domestic abuse, as well as hazing and bullying, diminish each of us. I am calling on the Long Blue Line to be willing to act."

That action—"saying something"—may mean a difference in someone's life. And it's on us to do just that. 



# LISTENING. ANALYZING. ACTING.

## The W refocuses its student emphasis

by Maridith Walker Geuder

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**I**t started in September 2012 with listening. A lot of it.

Six campus dialogue sessions, facilitated by Pensacola-based branding and communications firm idgroup, provided insights into how stakeholders view The W and what they value about the university. Some very important messages emerged.

Idgroup president Mona Amodeo presented the findings in a public session attended by several hundred and said that The W is unique in the marketplace. “It appeals to students and faculty attracted to a more intimate, personalized four-year educational experience usually characteristic of private institutions. It offers a challenging learning environment for those who seek to distance themselves from the complexity of large institutions,” she said.

That became the beginning point for a reexamination of how—and what—The W communicated with all of its constituents: prospective students, current students, and alumni and friends. It was the beginning of detailed analysis, close self-examination and a lot of hard work by many. To facilitate a deeper understanding, President Jim Borsig set into motion strategies to collect data on which to base resource decisions and institutional priorities.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



19%

Total male enrollment, up from 17% since 2012



37%

African-American enrollment



90%

In-state students



MS counties represented



States represented



Countries represented



Average age of students

### Understanding the marketplace

One of the first goals was to understand the higher education demographic landscape, both immediate and long-term. National higher education consulting firm Noel-Levitz began a series of campus meetings to outline the state of recruiting, best practices across the country and potential strategies for The W. At the same time, The W began to collect, organize and analyze detailed data about itself, the first step in what Borsig labeled “the democratization of data.” “Everyone should have access to information that drives decision-making,” he said.

Like institutions nationwide, The W finds itself facing stiff competition in recruiting new students among a shrinking number of traditional-age students.

In 2013-14, there were 27,582 high school seniors and 52 institutions of higher education in Mississippi, both two- and four-year. Not all graduating seniors will continue their studies, and not all who do will study in the state. It is, in a very real sense, a ‘buyer’s’ market. Institutions face increased pressure to prove their value and define their core strengths while keeping higher education affordable for their students.

At the same time, there are significant shifts anticipated in ethnicity of college-age students, with growing numbers of both Hispanic and African-American students projected in Mississippi. While many are college-able, they are not always college-ready, increasing the demand for services that help ensure completion and success. The higher education landscape is vastly different than it was a decade ago.

### Understanding our students

To further define core strengths and core mission, Dr. Jim Borsig first turned to the Office of Institutional Research to learn more about students The W serves. The results were published in fact books available on The W’s website.

One thing the university community learned from the data is that The W’s student profile is unique in the state system of public higher education. The average age of a W student is 26, a reflection of the fact that many working and older adults turn to the university for their educational opportunities. Some 37 percent of the student population is African-

American, similar to the ethnic breakdown of the state as a whole. Male enrollment has grown from 17 percent in 2012 to 19 percent in 2014. Nearly 90 percent of those enrolled are Mississippi students, with 78 Mississippi counties, 25 other states, and 11 countries represented. The College of Nursing and Speech-Language Pathology is The W's largest, with more than 1,000 enrolled in programs ranging from the associate of science in nursing to the doctor of nursing practice.

Importantly to Borsig, The W has the highest completion rate of any public university in Mississippi. "We are graduating students at a significantly higher rate than most state institutions," he said. The W graduates 31.6 students per 100 fulltime students, while the IHL average is 20.3. "Clearly, our personalized learning environment is helping students reach academic milestones," he said.

Survey instruments such as the National Survey of Student Engagement also gave university officials an objective look at the student population and how they perceive their experiences at The W. NSSE annually collects information from freshman and senior students at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about student participation in programs and activities the institutions provide for learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college, according to NSSE.



## THE W GRADUATES

**31.6** STUDENTS

PER 100 FULLTIME STUDENTS



THE IHL AVERAGE IS

**20.3** STUDENTS

In the most recent assessment, freshman students at The W rated the university significantly higher than peer institutions in higher order learning, collaborative learning, discussions with diverse others, effective teaching practices and supportive environment.

Seniors at The W reported significantly higher development than peer institutions in eight of 10 engagement indicators, including all indicators for experiences with faculty and campus environment. In addition, The W was significantly higher in higher order learning, reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies and discussions with diverse others.

"These surveys give us a snapshot of how students perceive the quality of a W education, and NSSE consistently confirms the high calibre academic experience, as well as the level of support our students receive," Borsig said.





# W KEY MESSAGES

.....

- QUALITY INSTRUCTION
- PERSONAL ATTENTION
- AFFORDABLE COST
- A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

## Beginning steps

With the data to support it, the university began to market core strengths reflected by listening sessions, internal analyses, and surveys. Key messages included quality instruction, personal attention, affordable cost and a family atmosphere. These messages were articulated by students in early focus groups and have been reinforced in subsequent follow-ups. Marketing materials supported student recruitment as well as increased awareness of The W brand and included billboards, TV commercials, print advertising and a variety of direct-mail publications. At the same time, the university's web presence was redesigned with a focus on students, student life and academic programs—a two-year process.

Continuing its work with Noel-Levitz, Student Affairs restructured on-campus visits, providing more opportunities for students to engage with faculty and support staff. “We discovered that having a student on campus makes a significant difference in their decision,” said Dr. Jennifer Miles, Vice President for Student Affairs. “Students fall in love with The W once they're here. We designed more events to welcome students and parents.”

Shelley Moss, director of admissions, said the approach is beneficial for all. Based on Noel-Levitz recommendations, her office restructured campus visits to designate consistent daily time slots. “Before, folks could just drop in and we'd try

to accommodate,” she explained. Now, at designated times, the staff tries to ensure that visiting students meet with a staff member, faculty member and a student. “We've had increased campus visits, and this approach allows us to be better prepared,” Moss said. It also allows visitors to get a greater feel for all aspects of campus, including financial aid, student life and academics, she added.

Financial aid also was restructured according to Noel-Levitz recommendations. “We have a very inclusive approach,” Moss said. “We weigh ACT scores and grade point equally, taking into account that not all students test well.” Students received awards automatically based on these criteria, and were notified within three to five days of their admission to The W. “It's broadened financial aid opportunities for students who attend,” Moss said. More than 1,300 students, including freshmen and transfers, received awards for fall 2014. Out-of-state tuition waivers, which had applied to selected Alabama and Tennessee counties, were expanded to include the entire state, providing additional financial incentives for students in adjacent states.

In addition to on-campus events, Admissions hosted four meet-and-greets around the state and one in nearby Tuscaloosa. “We held these at ‘fun’ restaurant venues and used it as another opportunity to introduce The W to prospective students,” Moss said.





### Enrollment Management Council

To provide an overarching structure for enrollment strategies, one key initiative was the formation of an Enrollment Management Task Force. Headed by Dr. Miles, it included representatives from the faculty, staff and all Student Affairs divisions. That committee now has been formally constituted as a standing council to continue its work.

“This committee involves all constituencies of the university in setting our admission and retention strategies,” Miles explained. “It’s important to have every member of

our university community be a part of the recruitment team and a part of helping our students stay in school, succeed academically and complete their degree. We all touch students’ lives, and we all can make a difference in their experience at The W.

“One advantage of a council such as this one is that we all see the data and the opportunities,” Miles said. “Recruitment and retention efforts cross administrative and academic areas. We are all recruiters, and we’re all part of the larger effort to help our students progress and graduate.”



### On-campus enhancements

Historic residence halls present both challenges and opportunities in creating a welcoming atmosphere for students who live on campus. Upgrades during the last year have enhanced buildings that, in some cases, date to 1860s. Beginning with the oldest, Callaway, there was a phased effort that included a furniture replacement plan, new window treatments in selected buildings, enhanced lounges, improved Internet access and replacement of microfridges, said Sirena Cantrell, dean of students.

“Our goal is to create a welcoming, fresh environment for our students, both current and prospective,” she said.

“We also introduced a standardized color palette that is equally at home in our historic halls and our newer halls,” she said. To reinforce the W’s color palette, residence halls received new awnings in the university’s signature blue, as well as W-branded welcome mats. These were phased in to other campus buildings as well.

As part of the enhancements, Housing and Residence Life added standardized exterior signage for the residence halls. All residence halls now have fire suppression systems, and a landscaped green space adjacent to Kincannon, begun last spring, is now complete and in frequent use.



OFFICIAL W  
COLOR PALETTE

### Academic and student life support

To support the university’s strategic goal of helping students advance successfully toward degree completion, the Student Success Center is playing a key role in ensuring students access to the resources that help them stay at The W and graduate, Borsig said.

“The redesign of the former Center for Academic Excellence grew out of a year-long campus-wide effort,” he said. “I’m especially grateful for the work of Dr. Kate Brown as interim director over the past year and her role in leading the successful implementation of the recommendations.”

The university named Dr. David Brooking as the new director of the center. Brooking, who came to The W from Enterprise State Community College in Alabama, has about 13 years of experience in higher education at both the community college and university levels. He holds a doctorate in higher education from The University of Alabama.

The Student Success Center serves as a resource for both students and faculty, Brooking said. It offers services such as learning skills courses, career planning, developmental instruction and tutoring, among others.

“We want our campus colleagues to know that our center works with all students,” Brooking said. “We will help them at any point in their studies. We want to help good students become better and provide resources for those who need additional support.”

Brooking said he sees the center as a partner with faculty in ensuring student success. As part of that partnership, each of the four colleges now has a navigator whose role is to be a resource for students and faculty in academic advising and in supporting retention. Navigators report both to the dean of their respective college and to the Student Success Center director.

The philosophy of the center is simple, Brooking said. “It shouldn’t be challenging for students to find help. The only thing that should be challenging is their academic classwork.” By helping students focus their time and studies toward timely completion, Brooking said the university is also helping students make the best use of their resources. “The less time they spend completing the degree, the more they’re able to minimize what they spend. We believe we’ll be helping them move more quickly into their career fields.”



### Putting it together

Starting two years ago with campus dialogues, many members of the campus community have had a hand in redefining student recruitment, retention and campus life. The foundation has been laid and many of the pieces are in place. The work is beginning to pay off in increased visibility, increased enrollment and a revitalized on-campus living experience. “We’ve come a long way,” said Borsig, “and I’m proud of all we’ve accomplished. We have strong building blocks for the future.” 



# the **LINE** starts here

by Tyler Wheat

## Sayonara Jones

Sayonara Jones returned home to Columbus in 2006 looking for family and a new style. She would find both at The W.

Jones started her career as a stylist. After 15 years of working in the business, in both Georgia and Mississippi, she decided it was time for a change. This is when she decided to visit The W.

“I became interested in The W because of its broad communication department, which touches on all aspects of mass communications,” said Jones. “I made my final decision once I visited the campus. The staff was so friendly and eager to answer all my questions, and the campus was really nice.”

The senior communications major still remembers her official campus tour and meeting with her admissions counselor. She can still recall how beautiful the campus was that very day.

But, not much has changed since that day for Jones.

“I love the environment at The W. All the professors treat you like family and are genuinely concerned about your performance educationally and professionally,” stated Jones.

Not only does Jones appreciate the beauty and relationships that have been made on campus, but the drive it has given her to be the best she can. She especially credits Dr. Melissa Smith, assistant

professor of communication, with having a huge influence on her career.

“She taught me the meaning of hard work by never accepting any excuses, never accepting anything less than my best, and she is always encouraging and truly concerned that each of her students has the tools that they need when they leave the communication program. What you got from Dr. Smith, you earned!” explained Jones.

Jones currently works as a student worker in the Office of University Relations and is expected to graduate in May. During her time at The W, she has continued to raise two teenage girls. Her oldest is a senior at Columbus High School and is expected to graduate this May as well. Her youngest, 15, is a varsity basketball player and straight A student. Jones will also be interning with the City of Columbus’ Main Street Association this spring.

“By being able to go to school and raise my daughters, I am able to show them that hard work pays off and no matter your age, you can do it,” commented Jones.

After graduation, Jones hopes to gain experience and continue to work in public relations. Her ultimate goal is to one day start her very own agency.





# Allon Collins

“It’s the closest thing to home to me,” said freshman Allon Collins.

Many people dream of sunny California. Maybe the glamour of Hollywood, the roses of Pasadena or cruising down Rodeo Drive, but not Collins.

When you ask Collins where he is from, he smiles and says, “Los Angeles.”

During his senior year of high school, he began to research different universities to attend. The first universities that came to his mind included the University of Southern California and the University of California, Los Angeles. After looking at both universities and realizing that both have an enrollment of 40,000 students plus, he realized they were not the place for him.

Collins was looking for a university that could provide a quality education, personal attention and a place where he would not be distracted from his education.

He began this quest by talking to family and friends. This would lead all the way to the Mississippi Delta, Indianola to be precise. It wouldn’t take long before The W was brought to Collins’ attention.

At first he thought, “A women’s school?” But he looked closer.

“I don’t trust Wikipedia, so I went straight to the university website and learned the history of MUW,” said Collins as he described his research process. “I knew I could learn at The W. The faculty-to-student ratio was small. I could see the professors one-on-one.”

When Collins arrived on campus, he found just what he expected.

“Campus is peaceful, friendly and family oriented,” said Collins. “The professors here are exceptional in their fields of study. I learn a lot from them.”

While at The W, Collins is majoring in general business with the hopes of one day becoming a chief executive officer. But before he becomes CEO, he hopes to start working in the local community to build local relationships. Being a freshman, there are many aspects of his life plan still in the works. He does plan on continuing on to graduate school, though he has not determined which one.

“Los Angeles is radiant and full of life, but I may stay in Mississippi,” replied Collins when asked where he hopes to live. He does point out that the biggest difference is the climate. It’s not always sunny and 75 in Mississippi.

“Everybody here is just friendly,” said Collins to sum up his college experience.

# Sadhana Thapa

Sadhana Thapa's mother's dream was to educate her daughters and see them grow to be strong and intellectual women. Being married at the age of 13 and having three children by the age of 20, this was one dream she could not accomplish for herself.

Being from Nepal, Thapa's journey of education began with a one-hour walk to school every day. She estimated the walk to be about three-kilometers one-way.

"We had a government school in our village, but the standard was not the best. So, Mother would send me, my elder sister and my younger brother to the next village to attend a private school together," said Thapa.

Thapa's greatest motivation would not come from the classroom, but from an early childhood friendship with Kabita that would go against everything in her culture and the values of her family.

"I did not know that I could not make friends with people from the lower caste. I cannot remember how we met. I just knew that she was very nice and we became good friends," stated Thapa.

When Thapa would bring her friend to meet her family, her grandmother would warn her that her friend was an untouchable. Thapa's mother continued to encourage her, stating that with time and education these things would change.

At the age of 13, Thapa established a children's club where everyone could meet to play games, write poems and make art at the local temple. Thapa's friend would join her at these club activities. During their club meetings, Thapa would teach others about the importance of the clean environment and show them how to make paper bags from old newspapers—a skill taught to her by her mother. Local shops would take the paper bags initially to replace plastic bags, but later rejected them because they knew the same paper bags were made by the low caste girl in the club. Thapa's effort of turning the village into a "plastic-free zone" failed.

One unforgettable Saturday, the club gathered and Thapa witnessed her friend being beaten by the village's religious leaders to send the message that her friend didn't belong and could not enter temple

premises. After that day she would never see Kabita.

"I was just helpless. I was very sad at that time," she said. "If I were to save her, I would be punished too."

Years went by. Anytime Thapa was asked to write for school, she would write about the friendship she once knew. One day, determined to see her friend, she ventured to her friend's village. She would learn that day that her friend was no longer living and passed away from an illness.

"My friend died never seeing school. I was disturbed with this reality for a long time during my school life. Now, I have this opportunity to have a university education that I can utilize to uplift lives of the underprivileged women back home who do not have access to education."

Thapa shares her mother's dream of education, more specifically an education in America.

"I know that having an American education would gain me respect in Nepal. It would give my words value."

Later, while studying at the University of Texas at Arlington, Thapa consistently heard about The W from a friend who was attending Mississippi State University.

"The name of The W is important to me. I want to motivate women in Nepal," said Thapa. "Since arriving at The W I have become more aware of women's status in America. I want to build a good society between men, women and different classes."

She attributes her success at The W to unlimited support she has received from the faculty and campus community, especially Dr. Bridget Pieschel and Dr. Erin Kempker. Thapa is currently doing independent research on her home country of Nepal. With the help of the faculty, she has been able to research the caste system and women's roles in Nepal.

"Professors are family and they treat you like family," she said, describing W life as energizing—so much that she is tentatively making plans to extend her time at The W by pursuing her master's degree.

Thapa hopes one day to receive her doctorate degree and return to Nepal to make an impact.





# Liz Kennedy

It is rumored that things are bigger in Texas. But, Liz Kennedy already knew that bigger didn't mean better. From a young age she heard stories about The W from her grandmother, and it wouldn't take long for her to discover some things never change.

A W leadership day first brought the senior communications major to The W all the way from Rogers, Texas. Once arriving to the friendly campus, she realized it was just the way her grandmother Frances Hairston described. Kennedy immediately fell in love with the atmosphere of the university and everyone she met.

Francis Hairston first graduated from The W-- then named Mississippi State College for Women--in 1961. She would later return to her alma mater and earn another degree in 2013.

"She tells stories of how they loved The W so much, and students love it now just like they did," described Kennedy. "We just don't have the rules, like having to be in the dorms at 11, like she did."

At first, it was the affordability that really piqued Kennedy's interest in The W. She knew that going to a university or college outside of Texas could provide some challenges, but quickly found answers with the scholarship opportunities at The W.

Kennedy was grateful for all of the answers that the admissions office provided her. She

remembers that Cassie Derden was always friendly and willing to help. Derden was the director of admissions at that time, but has since retired.

"They answered any questions that I had, whether it was about financial aid, tuition or helping with classes."

From being a member of the Revelers Social Club to being involved with the Baptist Student Union, Kennedy has made many connections and friendships on campus. But, the ones that have meant the most have come from the faculty.

"I appreciate Dr. Melissa Smith for providing real-life experience, Dr. Brian Anderson for the ability to have sit-down conversations and Dr. Paul Mack for just knowing my name even after I finished his class," she explained.

Kennedy plans to graduate in May. She hasn't decided on whether she will stay in Columbus or not, but said she will probably continue with her self-described nomadic ways and move on. Until graduation, she looks forward to exciting spring classes, interning at GHS graphics and working in The W's Writing Center.

"I am most excited about my upcoming senior seminar class where all my work comes together and I put together my very own portfolio," she said.

# Nick Crump

A career in nursing has always been the goal of W junior Nick Crump. Whether inspiration came from his mother, who is a former nurse, or his enjoyment of helping others, Crump has always known the path for him.

Crump's college career started at Holmes Community College where he enrolled to complete his basic courses. Knowing that he would need to be well-trained and knowledgeable in the field of nursing, he began searching for a university that could equip him for success. "I knew that The W was the best in the state and was at the top of the list," he said.

"With the NCLEX pass rate being 98.95 percent, it really drew me in," said Crump. "The NCLEX is a big deal."

Crump first visited The W with his family on an official campus tour. Crump recalled meeting with admissions counselor Timothy Hopkins and touring campus, finding everyone friendly and welcoming.

"Coming here, at first, threw me off. I have always liked big, big, big. But, because The W is small, I've gotten to know the students and

professors. You create a bond with each other because you see the same people every day," said Crump.

Not much has changed since his first tour, except he is now an ASN nursing student. He still finds faculty welcoming and most importantly caring for his success and future. Crump realizes that nursing school is challenging, making him find his inner drive and improve his study habits. But, this has not slowed his academic work ethic. He continues to challenge himself by taking trigonometry while being in nursing school this semester.

"Going to the hospitals to work with patients, showing them compassion and using my skills is what I enjoy the most," answered Crump when asked his favorite part of nursing school.

The Brandon native hopes to return home after graduating. He has the ultimate goal of completing his bachelor of science in nursing and going on to become a nurse practitioner after a few years of practice. Crump hopes to use his nursing skills in a hospital with the goal of helping others.



# MARCHING FORWARD

by Anika Mitchell Perkins

**O**n May 9, Daysha Humphrey will proudly walk across the stage of Rent Auditorium to accept her degree in communication.

This story sounds commonplace, especially on the campus of Mississippi University for Women, but just four years ago, Humphrey's life took a drastic turn.

The then 17-year-old West Lowndes High School senior was president of the Beta Club, playing basketball and volleyball and a member of the track team. It also was the same year she learned that she was expecting.

"It was very hard being a single parent. I was considered the sweet kid in the school," Humphrey said.

While her mother, Shelia Henry, was disappointed about the news, Humphrey said, it was her mother who pushed her and helped her through high school.

"I'm here for you no matter what," she recalled her mother saying, noting that her mother picked up her class work and took care of her daughter when needed.

After Humphrey's daughter, Carmen, arrived, she found new motivation. "I put all of that aside and worked harder than before."

"I wanted to be like my mother and be there for my child no matter what," Humphrey added.

Her determination paid off. The same year, she was named valedictorian of her senior class.

In fall 2011, Humphrey entered The W's nursing program as a freshman. While The W was the perfect fit for her, Humphrey decided that nursing was not her calling and changed her major to communication.

"I've always loved writing, and realized this was the perfect major for me," she said.

However, almost two years into her studies, Humphrey was concerned about the timing. "I thought it was going to be a setback. I felt down about the situation," she added.

Humphrey kept pushing forward. She took classes through what is now known as the Student Success Center. During fall 2011, she took the learning skills class along with other intermediate courses. The following semester, she started taking general education core classes and passed all of them by using study techniques taught during the learning skills class. Humphrey realized that taking summer classes also would help, so she took three to 12 hours per term.

"I worked closely with Daysha by making sure she kept up with her assignments by writing down the due dates in a planner. She would color code each class and used the MUW planner to keep up with this information," said Rosamund Claudia McDavis, retention specialist. "She also learned in Learning Skills how to read and mark her text. This too she color coded and used sticky notes. She would come by my office after her classes when she was preparing for tests. We would organize the material on note cards and she would rewrite her notes."

Humphrey said she knows she would not be where she is today without the help of God. Also, as part of the process, Humphrey said she learned "To never give up and be patient. You don't know what you can do until you put your mind to it."



*Daysha Humphrey is pictured in the office of The Spectator, the campus newspaper. Humphrey enjoys writing and shares this talent with the paper as campus editor.*

Humphrey's story is one of the many coming out of The W's Student Success Center, which started July 2014.

The center, led by Dr. David Brooking, is focused on retaining and graduating students. It also offers learning skills courses and seminars, career planning, developmental instruction, peer tutoring and other support services.

In addition to the director, a retention specialist, a career specialist, student success specialist, an assessment specialist and navigators are a part of the Student Success Center team. There are four navigators, one for each college, who have dual responsibilities with the center, as well as their respective college. Their goal: to support students from admission to their programs through completion of their degree.

"The navigators are really able to focus and connect with the students and guide them to the resources available to them." Brooking said. "I think we will see a lot of positive things from these relationships."

An Early Alert system, which warns students about unsuccessful behaviors, is one of the many ways The W keeps students connected to the university. An enhanced process now includes the navigators, who are able to help close the loop and resolve student issues, according to Brooking.

"It's a great system. I think it's going to have a great impact just from the personal impact they have with the students," Brooking said.

Humphrey is well on her way. Earlier this semester, she was invited to become a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success and she took the Graduate Record Examinations. She will be applying to the University of Alabama with hopes of earning her graduate degree in journalism. 📖

*For more information about the Student Success Center, visit [www.muw.edu/ssc](http://www.muw.edu/ssc).*

# Meet the

Connector. Director. Supporter. The W's new Student Success Navigators wear many hats. Navigators represent a direct link between the Student Success Center and each college as the university removes barriers to student retention. Ultimately, their goal is to guide students to the many resources available to them. Meet The W's navigators who are ready to help students move from registration to graduation.



**Ashley Matthews** Education has always been a passion of Ashley Matthews, who is now the Student Success Navigator for the College of Education and Human Sciences.

For six years, Matthews worked in K-12, teaching special education and serving as the lead teacher at Columbus High School. Now, she will help guide the lives of college students.

"The position of Student Success Navigator is all about getting to know students and building relationships. This is also an important aspect of being a successful educator and the part of my work that I have always enjoyed the most.

"I love helping students problem solve and seeing them achieve success. The feeling you get when you help a student achieve their goal is one that is not easily duplicated. I felt that this position would give me the opportunity to directly impact student success," she said.

The most rewarding part of the job is knowing that she has had an impact on a student's life.

"It is so exciting to open an email from a student that says, 'I did it,' or when they come to my office to share the joy of their success with me. But it is also rewarding to see students who may have fallen short of their goal pick up and try again. Helping students stay determined and focused is equally rewarding," Matthews said.

The Columbus native earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from Mississippi State University and earned an endorsement in special education. She has a master's degree from The W in educational leadership.



**Megan Occhipinti** This W graduate is no stranger to building relationships. For two years, she worked as an admissions counselor at the university.

July 2014, Occhipinti was hired as the College of Nursing and Speech-Language Pathology's student success navigator.

"Initially, I was interested in the navigator position because it allowed me the opportunity to work in a master's degree level position. Upon further research and my interview, I gained a much deeper understanding and appreciation for the navigator positions," she said. "We are retention specialists, but it is so much more than that. I love that I am able to build relationships with my students through academic advising, mentoring, career coaching and skill building."

Occhipinti said it is a joy getting to know the students.

"I have been working with one student in particular for much of the semester, and she told me, 'Thank you so much for everything you have done for me. I have always had people care about me, but I don't think anyone has cared about me and wanted to help me as much as you and my professors have at The W. I am so glad I came here,'" Occhipinti said. "Moments like that are why I wake up every morning excited about coming to work."

Originally from Forest, Occhipinti earned her associate of arts degree from East Central Community College. She transferred to The W in 2007, earning her bachelor of science degree in speech-language pathology and a minor in psychology. She recently earned her master of science degree in counselor education with a focus in student affairs in higher education.

# NAVIGATORS



**Ashlee Hill** Nav•i•ga•tor—a person who directs the route or course of a ship or some form of transportation. In Ashlee Hill’s case make that a person who directs students. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Hill serves as the Student Success Navigator for the College of Arts and Sciences.

She said having a background in academic advising and retention sparked her interest in the position.

Hill attended the University of Dayton, completing a bachelor of science in education. She earned her master of education in higher education from the University of Toledo.

She has held positions in multicultural affairs at the University of Toledo and John Carroll University, in academic advising at Bryant & Stratton College and career counseling at the Cleveland Job Corps.

“The whole purpose of my position is to retain students through graduation,” Hill said, adding she is able to develop relationships with students, mostly freshmen, and make meaningful connections.

“When they step foot on campus their first day, they know someone is already in their corner, rooting for them to hit the ground running in achieving their educational and career goals.”

The most rewarding aspect of her job is actively participating in guiding students through their development.

“Seeing a student walk across the stage after four years of triumphs and challenges is pure joy. Knowing that a student pressed through all of the external factors piling up on them in order to achieve their goal, a college degree, is all the reward I need to know I selected the perfect career,” Hill said.



**Jessica McDill** Working at The W is just a natural fit for Jessica McDill. She and a few of her family members are W alumni.

As the College of Business and Professional Studies Student Success Navigator, McDill is excited to work hands-on with the students and steer them along the right path.

“I have family and friends who had trouble navigating their way through college, not because they were not intelligent, but because they did not have someone to advise them and explain how to get back on course. Many of these people never graduated college as a result,” she explained.

“The most rewarding part of my job is when I talk to a student who is stressed and confused and does not know what to do in a situation,” McDill added. “I am able to guide them or point them to the various resources on campus to help them be successful.”

In addition to working with students, McDill enjoys the family-like atmosphere on campus.

“I also wanted to work for The W because my grandmother, aunt and cousin used to work here and they always talked about what a great environment it was to work in,” she said.

Originally from Florida, McDill moved to Columbus in 2000 to attend The W. She earned a bachelor of science in elementary education, a bachelor of science in legal studies and a master’s in gifted education.

Prior to joining The W as a navigator, McDill worked an office job to complete her legal studies degree and taught elementary students in the Columbus city schools.



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 H O M E

by Sayonara Jones

**Y**ou eat there. You sleep there. You study there. You also make lifelong friends there. Just as much learning takes place there as it does in the classroom.

Welcome to your residence hall, an integral part of the college experience, which offers cultural, recreational, social and academic growth.

“Moving on to campus was the first move I have ever made away from my parents’ home, and I was both excited and scared of the change,” confessed Dalton Dogan, a senior business major from Greenville.

Dogan explained that “dorms” were known as a place to sleep and store your belongings, but a residence hall is a place that you can live, grow and learn.

“Living on campus exposed me to all kinds of people that I would have never met living in a small town. I made so many new friends,” he said.

Gone are the days of living in a box, dating back to the 1960s. Today’s residence halls offer amenities, ranging from suite-style living to kitchenettes and laundry facilities.

The W announced this past summer a phased residential facility enhancement plan to improve on-campus living, bringing together historic and recently constructed buildings.

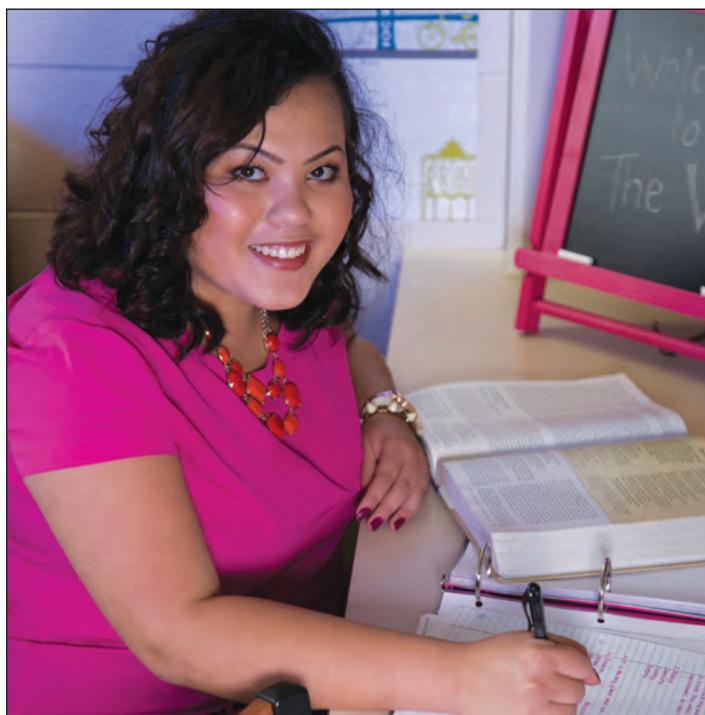
“The plans are going quite well with the enhancements and we have plans for so much more to come,” said Sirena Cantrell, dean of students.

As part of the enhancement plan, furniture was replaced, new window treatments were installed, microfridges were replaced, lounges enhanced and speedier Internet is now available in Callaway and Grossnickle halls.

A standardized color palette was introduced to the residence halls, as well as new awnings and W-branded welcome mats, in the university’s signature blue.

The W has six residence halls, offering a variety of amenities and housing options.

Callaway Hall is the oldest building on campus, erected in 1860, and is located on North Campus next to Cochran Hall. It was named in honor of Mary



*Student Janna Ingan pictured in Kincannon Hall*

J.S. Callaway, a professor of mathematics from 1885-1900. Callaway Hall is for upper-class female residents and is known best for its high ceilings and antebellum atmosphere. With its study lounges, vending machines, laundry facility and television lounge, Callaway hall is a suite-style residence hall.

Columbus hall is a recently renovated historical building. The five-story building is named in honor of the city of Columbus. Columbus hall is home to The W's upper-class male residents. It has all the amenities that Callaway has and is also a suite-style residence hall.

Grossnickle Hall was renovated in 1996 and was named in honor of R.L. Grossnickle, a former head of the department of mathematics. Grossnickle is coed and houses the residential honors program. It is located behind Painter Hall. Every suite has a living room/kitchenette space and has its own individual bathroom. The hall also has the same amenities as the other halls, but also includes a computer lab.

Hastings-Simmons Hall was originally named for Olivia Hastings, an early leader in the movement to establish a state supported college for women. The building was then rededicated in October 1994 as Hastings-Simmons Hall in honor of Miriam Q. Simmons, MUW alumna who served as a member of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and a member of the Mississippi House of

Representatives. Hastings-Simmons houses The W's upper class female residents, has a living room/kitchenette space and its own individual bathroom. It has all the amenities as Grossnickle including a computer lab.

Jones Hall was named after Richard W. Jones, the first president of the university and is home to upperclassmen female residents. Jones is a suite-style residence hall, and the hall also has study lounges, computer lab, vending machines, laundry facility and television lounge.

Kincannon Hall was named in honor of Andrew Kincannon, a former president of the university, and provides the freshman population with focused support and development tools to help with the transition to university life. It is a suite-style residence hall that comes with all the amenities.

A project of particular interest to Cantrell is the green space adjacent to Kincannon.

"My favorite project here on campus was changing the space that used to be the old tennis court into a lovely open green space the students can enjoy," she said.



*Kincannon Green Space*

She also added, "The arrangements for this summer's enhancements are already mapped out and will be focusing on Columbus and Hastings-Simmons halls."

In addition to being an architecturally significant campus with more than 23 buildings listed on the National Register Historic of Historic Places, The W is located in the heart of the Columbus historic district.

Walks on campus are convenient, with most buildings being within a 10 minute walking distance of each other.

Austin Rayford, a senior communication major at The W and resident assistant, said "I enjoy all of the benefits of living on campus from not having to pay to do laundry to the night involvement you gain in social clubs on campus. I have a pretty cool social life from living here on campus."



## W receives gift of more than \$2 million in support of scholarships

Ann Coleman Peyton, granddaughter of W founding mother Annie Coleman Peyton, has provided a bequest gift of more than \$2 million to support scholarships for W history students.

W President Dr. Jim Borsig presented the Mary Lou Peyton Scholarship to the university and then assisted in unveiling a portrait of Annie Coleman Peyton.

“Generous private support such as this from the Peyton family allows us to provide meaningful academic opportunities for students who seek their education at The W,” Borsig said. “It is a significant gift for us, and perhaps even more so because of this gift’s historical connections to our earliest days.”

The Mary Lou Peyton Scholarship will be awarded to qualified students who are majoring in history. The scholarship funds may be used to help cover expenses for history majors who are participating in internship programs or The W’s study-abroad program. If in a given year, the funds available to be awarded exceed the scholarship needs of history majors, the scholarship may be used to support students whose course of study includes a substantial history component.

“The College of Arts and Sciences is honored and excited to receive this generous bequest from the Peyton family,” said Dean Brian Anderson. The history faculty will work diligently to employ the funds in ways that maximize the program’s



*A portrait of Annie Coleman Peyton was unveiled at a major gift announcement on campus. Faculty and administrators looking on are Dr. Bridget Pieschel, from left, Dr. Amber Handy, Derek Webb, Dr. Brian Anderson, Interim Provost Tom Richardson, Dr. Jonathan Hooks and W President Jim Borsig.*

educational mission: through development of the Mary Lou Peyton Scholarship program for history majors who are strong academic performers, and, in particular, those with limited financial means to support their studies.”

Mary Lou Peyton was one of two children of Annie Coleman Peyton and aunt to Ann Coleman Peyton.

She attended I.I. & C and later taught part-time at The W from 1938-1945. Her mother, Annie Coleman Peyton, for whom Peyton Hall is named, was one of I.I. & C’s founders and taught history there from 1891-1898.

## SACS 10-year reaffirmation

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges has reaffirmed the accreditation of The W for another 10 years.

The decision represents years of planning by faculty and staff to document and demonstrate the university’s compliance with regional and national standards of excellence.

“This is an extremely rigorous process that looks at every aspect of the institution and requires extensive analysis and documentation,” President Jim Borsig said.

“The W is committed to quality enhancement through assessment and continuous improvement, and I commend the hard work of countless faculty and staff members who contributed to the effort.”

As part of the reaffirmation process, SACSCOC requires institutions to develop a five-year Quality Enhancement Plan to improve student learning. The W’s QEP titled, “Think Outside

the Books,” has an overarching goal of cultivating intellectual curiosity and was developed by a QEP team that consisted of faculty, staff and student representatives.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is the regional body for the accreditation of higher education institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America that award associate, baccalaureate, master’s and/or doctoral degrees.

According to the SACSCOC website, when an institution has earned accreditation by the Commission on Colleges, it signifies that it has “a purpose appropriate to higher education and has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that purpose.”

## CRI essay contest winners



*Chelsey A. Collins, Rain Gerteis, Shreya Ghimire*

Winners of The W's Common Reading Initiative essay contest were officially recognized at the opening of the annual Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium.

The creative essay contest was open to all full-time students and contest topics were designed to prompt personal reflections which have a connection to themes in this year's CRI book, "The Secret of Magic" by Deborah Johnson.

First place went to Rain Gerteis, the recipient of \$250. Gerteis is a junior English major and history minor from Brooksville. The second place winner and the recipient of \$150 was Chelsey A. Collins from Meridian, a freshman history major and a member of the Honors Residential Learning Community. Shreya Ghimire from Kathmandu, Nepal, was the third place winner and the recipient of \$100. She is a freshman biology major. The cash prizes were made possible through the Dorothy Clark Hobson Essay Awards. Hobson, a class of 1941 alumna, was honored by a generous donation by her family who want her to be remembered as a person who loved creative endeavors and always supported intellectual curiosity.

## Energy use down on campus

Mississippi University for Women has reduced its energy use by 28 percent with an estimated cost avoidance of \$1,957,900 over the past eight years.

Adding controls to six buildings on campus, replacing halogen lights with LED track lighting in the Art and Design Building and installing energy efficient pulse boilers to take the place of steam manufacturing plants to eight buildings on campus are some of the ways The W has ensured greater efficiency of resources.



With the help of the Tennessee Valley Authority, The W replaced 75 metal halide lamps with T5 high bay fluorescent bulbs in the Pohl/Stark gymnasiums and added occupancy controls to provide additional savings. The W will soon begin a project to install building controls in Cromwell Communications Center to improve energy efficiency while making the building more comfortable for students, faculty and staff. This project is partially funded with a \$150,000 grant from TVA.

The W's current efforts to continue to be an energy efficient campus can be attributed to the Sustainability Committee and Energy Management Subcommittee that works to promote and create programs such as Earth Day, the New Energy Conservation Program and on-campus recycling. The W's Physical Plant also contributed to the energy efforts by lighting retrofits with energy saving bulbs and fixtures, replacing mechanical equipment with new energy-efficient designs and seeking new funding and grants to complete larger on-campus projects.

## Scholarship fund gets boost from Columbus business organization

With service in mind and a mission to provide opportunities for women, the Columbus American Business Women donated \$500 to the Dr. Delene Willis Lee Scholarship Fund.

The check was presented to Andrea Stevens, executive director of development and alumni, by Columbus American Business Women President Jo Ann Ferguson and Vice President Leslie Webber.

The organization's mission is to bring

together businesswomen of diverse occupations and to provide opportunities for them to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally through leadership, education, networking support and national recognition.

In 2008, an anonymous donor endowed the Dr. Delene Willis Lee Scholarship Fund to assist other non-traditional students living in a 40-mile radius of The W with preference given to students from Lowndes County.



*Ferguson, Stevens, Webber*



Photo: Ben Hillyer  
Natchez Democrat Photographer

## MUW Chamber Singers perform at chapter meetings

by Anika Mitchell Perkins

Alumni who have not been delighted by the voices of the MUW Chamber Singers will have an opportunity to hear them this spring at Homecoming.

An auditioned mixed ensemble made up of music majors and non-music majors, the MUW Chamber Singers will perform Saturday, March 28 at Convocation from 10-11:30 a.m. in Rent Auditorium, Whitfield Hall.

The choir will perform Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. with the Columbus Choral Society, which will sing “Chronicles of Blue and Gray,” a work that weaves numerous American folk songs, spirituals, rallying and battle cries with tunes and lyrics from the Civil War era. The performance will be held in Rent Auditorium. This is a ticketed event but is free and open to the public.

Last year, the MUW Chamber Singers partnered with the Office of Development and Alumni to sing at various alumni events, including Pensacola, Fla.; New Orleans, La.; Mobile, Ala.; Memphis, Tenn.; Ocean Springs; Natchez; Jackson; Starkville; and Columbus. Their repertoire ranged from Renaissance to modern 21st century compositions.

Dr. Phillip Stockton, director of choral activities and music education at The W, said, “It was really exciting to see the alumni so engaged and make connections with students.”

He added that the experience, made possible through the MUW Foundation, was great as an educator. “Each place we went to, Andrea Stevens, executive director of MUW Foundation, was determined for the students to gain some type of cultural experience as well.”

Nathan Bickford, a junior business administration major from Starkville, joined the choir his freshman year, with a bit of nudging from a friend who was already a member.

“I’ve always been interested in music, and I have played the piano since I was 6,” he said. “It took choir to a new level—learning how to sing in a choir and how to sight read. “It is a really fun and nice course to take every semester,” he added.

And if Stockton and Bickford have not convinced you to check out the MUW Chamber Singers at Homecoming, just ask alumna Mary Clare Lovorn Zelenka, ’78, of Mobile, Ala., who has seen them perform three times.

The first time was a cappella at the Fairhope Yacht Club in Alabama. “When they belted out the first note, we were so surprised,” Zelenka said.

“It is a fabulous performance—very impressive,” she added. “They are a talented group of students.”

a message from

# MUW Foundation



Dear Alumni and Friends,

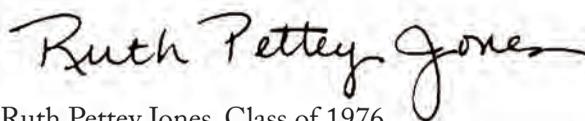
When my husband and I first married, we moved to Pennsylvania. I saw more snow that first winter (and into the spring!) than in all my time growing up in Mississippi. During the four years we lived there, I learned a few things about a foot of snowfall above the Mason-Dixon Line. Unless a major storm is predicted, the falling of snow does not constitute a run-on panic for bread and milk. Folks still go to work. Children still go to school, however unwillingly. Thanks to snowplows and road salt – if not grim determination – it is indeed possible to drive icy roadways without landing in a ditch. And sometimes, snow stays on the ground for weeks – or months – turning a charcoal gray before it finally melts.

Living with the often harsh realities of snow never changed my fascination with watching the white flakes drift from the sky. One flake alone is nothing – a showy drop of crystalized water. But when the atmosphere is right and billions of them fall, snowflakes transform a bleak landscape into a wonderland. Given the right conditions, individual snowflakes combine in a way that forms something solid, robust, strong. Think of snow forts and snowmen, igloos and avalanches.

Snowflakes are like your contributions to Mississippi University for Women. One dollar alone can't do much. But combined with the dollars from other donors, each gift becomes something more. Something solid, robust, and strong. MUW's Foundation has been in existence for fifty years now. Its assets have grown from two initial gifts of \$1,000 to more than \$48 million dollars. In the past ten years, we've provided over \$10 million in scholarships. Giving is up this year compared to FY2014, and I thank you for each and every dollar.

Like a single snowflake, each dollar given to the W is important. One dollar unites with another and still another, creating a snowball effect so forceful it can transform a single life into something monumental. Your support makes a tremendous difference, not only in the lives of our scholarship students, but in the communities where they will live and work once they graduate. I know these students are grateful for your generosity. I am, too. Your generosity turns the dream of a college education into a dream come true. Together, we can do amazing things!

Warm regards,



Ruth Pettey Jones, Class of 1976  
Chairman  
MUW Foundation Board

a message from

# MUW Alumni Association



Dear Alumni and Friends:

Whether your days on campus were 50 years ago or you are one of the newest members of The Long Blue Line, mark your calendar now for Homecoming at The W, March 26-29. This not-to-be-missed weekend on our historic campus will be alive with activity!

Friendships will be renewed and new ones will be made. We will honor our alumni and faculty with awards, showcase some of our alumni in a talent and art show and raise money for our Legacy Scholarship at the annual Long Blue Line Silent Auction. A Spring Fling picnic will offer the opportunity to get to know the students, and of course there will be lots of food, fun and laughter. We will also pay tribute to our Golden Girls, the class of 1965, as they celebrate their 50th reunion.

Be a part of all the fun this weekend has to offer, and share old memories while making new ones. Brochures are in the mail outlining the weekend events. You may register by mail or online by going go to [longblueline.muw.edu](http://longblueline.muw.edu).

It's been my honor and pleasure to serve as president of the Alumni Association. We have accomplished so much in the past few years, and yet there is still much to be done. As our Association continues to grow, I encourage you to become involved. You can make a difference by sharing your time, talent and treasure.

This year I was invited to attend the commencement ceremonies. There were three! As we all know it is a special time, not an end but a beginning, a new chapter. Dr. Borsig's inspiring remarks held meaning not just for those graduating at that time, but for all of us who are proud members of The Long Blue Line. He has kindly allowed me to share with you.

"And now, in this moment, the torch is being passed to you. You have the knowledge. You have the skills. You are the best prepared this university has ever produced. You have been exposed to the ageless lessons and the benefits of an outstanding liberal arts education. These have stood the test of time and enable you to go forth and bless by light. And today is a beginning, your commencement. We celebrate with you the new and unknown opportunities and successes yet to come. We will miss you, but this university will always be with you. And you with her. You have made a difference. You are a part of the rich tapestry of The W. We expect great things from you and for you. And we hope you will 'pay it forward' for those who will come after you. We express to you our gratitude and love, for your presence here has made us all the richer. So hail to Thee!"

Join me at homecoming as we celebrate The Long Blue Line!

With Heartfelt Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Katool". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light grey circular background.

Jenny Katool, Class of 1978  
President  
MUW Alumni Association



## Getting Involved for Alumni Chapter Success

The MUW Alumni Association held a chapter development workshop in January offering informative sessions on establishing and growing alumni chapters. Jenny Katool, '78, current MUW Alumni Association Board president, and Katy Canion Pacelli, '00, MUW Alumni Association Board secretary, coordinated the day's activities with the Office of Development and Alumni.

Represented among the 31 participants were the Atlanta Mag Chain Chapter, Jackson Metro Chapter, Gulf Coast Chapter, Lowndes County (LOCO) Chapter, Oktibbeha County Chapter, Mid-South (Memphis) Chapter and Nashville Chapter along with the Northeast Mississippi area, East Mississippi area, Vicksburg area, Birmingham area and Florida Panhandle area.

Following a campus tour, a general session for all participants included information on the ways in which University supports chapters and information on admissions initiatives involving alumni. Presenters were Andrea Nester Stevens, '92, executive director of development and alumni; Lyndsay Blackburn Cumberland, '07, director of alumni relations; and Shelley McNees Moss, '04, director of admissions.

Katool and Pacelli provided an overview of chapter guidelines, chapter fund management and chapter reporting

during the chapter basics session. Katherine Shell Benson, '03, hosted the fundraising event session on organizing effective events to raise money for endowed chapter scholarships.

During the social media session, Elizabeth Yoste Whittington, '00, and Rich Sobolewski, '04, director of web communications, presented information on maximizing chapters' social media outreach. The past president of the MUW Alumni Association Board, Cheryl Jackson Cooper, '82, led the send-off party session on chapter events welcoming incoming W students in their areas.

President Jim Borsig gave an update on the University while workshop participants gathered for lunch. He expressed his appreciation for all who work with the MUW Alumni Association and the Office of Development and Alumni to create avenues for meaningful alumni engagement.

Alumni chapters and alumni events provide opportunities to connect with more than 28,000 alumni around the world. For more information on growing or establishing an alumni chapter in your area, please contact the Office of Development and Alumni at (662) 329-7295 or [developmentandalumni@muw.edu](mailto:developmentandalumni@muw.edu).

Additional information is available on the website, [longblueline.muw.edu/alumni/chapters](http://longblueline.muw.edu/alumni/chapters).

## Reunited in Louisville

Nine members of the class of '59 met at Lake Tiak-O'Khata in Louisville in October. They are Mary Belle Spivey Lundquist of Jackson; Margaret Thomas Pickering of Ellisville; Suzanne Calvert of West Point; Pat Rogers Langston of Tupelo; Charlotte Henderson Ray of Maben; Shirley Nelson McPherson of Columbus; Patricia Reese of Jacksonville Beach, Fla.; Rena Pittman Temple of Slidell, La.; and Janice Kelly Flynt of Mt. Olive.



## Tales From the South

Jimmie Meese Moomaw '58 shares one of her stories at the live taping of "Tales from the South" in Little Rock. The syndicated weekly radio show features true stories by the southerners who have lived them. Moomaw's story, "The Embalming Room Door," was a big hit with the Halloween crowd. "Tales from the South" partners with AY (About You) magazine, and a story by a Tales presenter is shared each month in the magazine's online version. In November, Moomaw's story "Hot Perm" was selected and is available at [www.aymag.com/November-2014/Hot-Perm](http://www.aymag.com/November-2014/Hot-Perm).

## Welty Preview Events



Mid-South Gathering



Jackson Metro Gathering

## Pratt and Grant garner MHA awards

Baptist Memorial Hospital-Golden Triangle took home four Maggie Awards and Best of Show at the 27th annual Maggie Awards presented by the Mississippi Hospital Association during its gala reception in Madison in November.

The Maggie Awards program honors outstanding work of communication professionals from the health care sector in Mississippi. The awards are sponsored by the MHA's Society for Health Care Marketing & Public Relations.

This year, there were 75 entries from hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations from across the state. Only the top two entries in each category won awards, either a "Maggie" award or an Award of Excellence.

Baptist Golden Triangle took home four Maggie Awards and Best of Show. They were in the following areas:

- Special Video Production—Produced externally for Health Talk With Baptist spots
- TV Advertising—Over \$15,000 for Baptist's 2014 Service Line Commercials
- Writing—External Writing for a press release about Baptist winning Hospital of the Year (more than 100 beds) by the Mississippi Nurses Association
- Special Events—Fundraising for Baptist's Sweetheart Basket Fundraiser for Lowndes County Relay for Life
- Best of Show—In the electronic category for Health Talk With Baptist sponsorship spots

"I am very proud of our team. These are all projects that originated from within our hospital. We appreciate the support



*Donna Grant and Megan Pratt*

from our CEO, Paul Cade, and the rest of senior leadership," said Megan Pratt, director of marketing.

"Your support allows us to produce our best work that brings a positive reflection on Baptist Golden Triangle, not only with our peers in hospital marketing and public relations, but also in the community," she explained.

Accepting the awards on behalf of Baptist were Pratt, who graduated from The W in 1981 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a double minor in economics and political science, and Donna Grant, community relations coordinator, who graduated from The W in 1994 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and public relations and received her master's degree in health education in 2005.

## Class Notes

### 1970s

**Linda Thorsby Bynum '72** was named by the Mississippi Business Journal as one of the Top 50 Leading Business Women in Mississippi.

### 1990s

**Jennifer Ackerman David '95** was named principal at St. Patrick Catholic school in Meridian.

**Melody Crane Poole '95** has been named administrator of the newly organized Department of Organizational Performance at North Mississippi Health Services. Poole joined North Mississippi Medical Center the first time in 1991.

### 2000s

**Whitt Foster '08** has joined Children's Clinic of West Point. He is a board-certified pediatric nurse practitioner. Foster earned his bachelor's degree in nursing from The W and his master's degree in nursing from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He previously worked at North Mississippi Medical Center-West Point as a registered nurse for the medical-surgical unit, Intensive Care Unit and Emergency Department.

**Mark Eakes '09**, a native of Philadelphia, has opened Old 82 restaurant in Columbus. Old 82 offers fresh coastal cuisine. Eakes graduated from The W with a degree in culinary arts.

**David A. Prestwich '09, '12, '14** joined the practice of Dr. John Stewart at Stewart's Ear, Nose & Throat in Starkville.



## Weddings

### 2000s

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**Sherita Howell '03** and Robert Taylor of Booneville were married Oct. 10, 2014.

**Michael Ann Wilemon '09 and '11** and Jim Tally of Aberdeen were married Oct. 25, 2014.

**Kristina Anderson '11** of Indianola and Justin Christian of Ripley were married Oct. 25, 2014.

**Shaneika Roberson '11** and Kaleb Shelton of Columbus were married Sept. 20, 2014.

**Kimberly Blackwell '12** of Louisville and Justin Redmon of Douglasville, Ga., were married Nov. 1, 2014.

**Chelsea Faulkenbery '12** of Ashland and Michael McCreary of Baldwyn were married Sept. 13, 2014.

**Laura Gunn '14** of Forest and Jesse Lang of Lake were married Oct. 25, 2014.

**Kayely Kinard '14** of Louisville and Cody Vowell of Noxapater were married Oct. 11, 2014.

**Amy Tolleson '14** and Tyler Covington of Meridian were married Oct. 25, 2014.

## Births

### 2000s

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**Rhonda Smith Kavan '00** and Brad Kavan of Nashville, Tenn., announce the birth of their son, Eli Preston Kavan, on April 21, 2014.

**Sheila Humphrey Kowalewski '09** and Kevin Kowalewski of Ocean Springs announce the birth of their daughter, Anna Camille, on Aug. 3, 2014.

## Deaths

### 1930s

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**Mary Sanford Graham Myatt '32** of Memphis, Tenn., Oct. 21, 2014.

**Frances Jenkins Whitehead '34** of Madison, Nov. 11, 2014.

**Christine Wilder Herring '36** of Brandon, Oct. 19, 2014.

**Anna Dear Jones '36** of Hattiesburg, Oct. 19, 2014.

**Mary Kirkpatrick King '39** of Oxford, Nov. 10, 2014.

**Margaret (Madel) Morgan Stringer '39** of Ridgeland, Nov. 12, 2014.

### 1940s

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**Dorothy Smith Lovejoy '40** of Memphis, Tenn., Oct. 1, 2014.

**Helen Stone Butts '42** of Lakeland, Tenn. Jan. 10, 2013.

**Frances Lowe Love '44** of Indianola, Oct. 25, 2014.

**Helen Freeny McDill '44** of Loveland, Co. Oct. 31, 2014.

**Mary Wilburn Smith '44** of Canton, Feb. 15, 2013.

**Mary Patterson Childers '45** of Holly Springs, Sept. 8, 2014.

**Martha Searcy Rice '45** of Henderson, Nev., Aug. 2, 2014.

**Mary Holland Wylie '45** of Greenwood, Oct. 15, 2014.

**Barbara Wylie Bryant '46** of Newport News, Va., Aug. 16, 2014.

**Nancy Dickerson Jones '46** of Brandon, Aug. 12, 2014.

**Hilda Hill Stewart '46** of Northfield, Mass., Oct. 5, 2014.

**Gene Ray Ewing '48** of Dallas, Texas, Oct. 27, 2014.

**Martha Moe McQuinn '48** of Jackson, Jan. 23, 2014.

**Evelyn Hand Thompson '48** of Brandon, Aug. 16, 2014.

**Alice Mason Elston '49** of Atlanta, Ga., March 20, 2014.

**Barbara Johnston Gilmore '49** of Cramerton, N.C., April 21, 2014.

### 1950s

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**Peggy Bennett Campbell '50** of Vallejo, Calif., Sept. 1, 2013.



**Marcie Jenkins Davant '50** of Jackson, July 19, 2014.

**Joyce McCrary Miller '50** of Shannon, Oct. 2, 2014.

**Nancy Pennington Timm '50** of Columbus, Jan. 10, 2014.

**Jo Ann Mamelli '53** of Memphis, Tenn., Aug. 13, 2014.

**Sylvia Green '55** of Dallas, Texas, Oct. 29, 2014.

**Yvonne Parr Campbell '56** of Marion, Ark., Sept. 24, 2014.

**Frances Habig Davis '58** of Wilsonville, Ore., Nov. 5, 2014.

**Emma Martin Sanders Shelton '59**, Oct. 11, 2014.

## 1960s

**Margaret Ogletree Ware '60** of Memphis, Tenn., June 25, 2014.

**Sarah Andrews Younger '60** of Columbus, Aug. 31, 2014.

**Beverly Lieurance Weatherall '61** of Houston, Texas, Sept. 13, 2014.

**Suzanne Eaton Jordan '62** of Taylorsville, Nov. 7, 2014.

**Juliaette Wise Sharp '63** of Columbus, Sept. 29, 2014.

**Jeanette Henderson Barksdale Stockman '63** of Carrollton, Ala., Oct. 22, 2014.

**Dorothy Sample Shawhan '64** of Tupelo, Dec. 21, 2014.

**Barbara Lambert McCollum '65** of Hattiesburg, Oct. 25, 2014.

**Patsy A. Smith '69** of Southern Pines, N.C., Nov. 21, 2014.

## 1970s

**Linda Bryan Gay '70** of Athens, Ala., July 20, 2013.

**Sondra Griffin Foti, '71** of Hot Springs, Ark., Oct. 26, 2014

**Teressa (Terri) Fortenberry '78** of Brandon, Sept. 27, 2014.

## 1980s

**Deborah Lynn Tate '80** of Virginia Beach, Va., Oct. 5, 2014.

**Yvonne Wideman Funderburk '87** of Okolona, Sept. 13, 2014.

## 2000s

**Kerry Heinz '07** of Oxford, June 21, 2014.

## Faculty & Staff

**Frances Ayers** of Columbus, June 24, 2014. She retired from The W after 31 years of service.

**Jane Fry** of Columbus, Dec. 17, 2014. She retired from The W after working as a secretary in home economics, communications and religious activities from 1975-1986. She also took pottery classes.

**Okeva McCrory** of Springhill, Tenn., Oct. 7, 2014. McCrory served at the credit union for many years.

**Dr. Walt Porter** of Columbus, Dec. 17, 2014. He taught psychology courses.

**Dr. Charles Rueff** of Columbus, Nov. 14, 2014. Rueff was a retired professor of education and psychology.

**Sarah Andrews Younger** of Columbus, Aug. 31, 2014. Younger was a magna cum laude graduate of MSCW in 1960 and also received her AAA education specialist degree. She retired after teaching 17 years at the Demonstration School.

**Tell us your news or news about a friend!**

Have you been promoted? Earned another degree?  
Have you married or had an addition to the family?  
Send us your news, comments and suggestions to:

Office of Development & Alumni  
Mississippi University for Women  
1100 College St., MUW-10  
Columbus, MS 39701-5800  
or e-mail to [developmentandalumni@muw.edu](mailto:developmentandalumni@muw.edu)

1. The fountain in the Legacy Garden was transformed into a beautiful ice sculpture in January as temperatures plunged into the low teens.

2. The Mississippi Theatre Association awarded William “Peppy” Bidy with the 2015 Cowboy Maloney Award, named in honor of former MTA president and former owner of Cowboy Maloney’s Electric City and Appliance Centers in Mississippi. The Award is MTA’s highest award. Bidy was recognized at the MTA Festival held in Oxford for his outstanding service to the Mississippi Theatre Association and theatre in Mississippi.

3. Graham Young junior theatre major, and Allison Jones, sophomore theatre major, were cast in the Department of Theatre’s production of *Lysistrata* in October.

4. Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant spoke at the December 2014 Commencement ceremony.



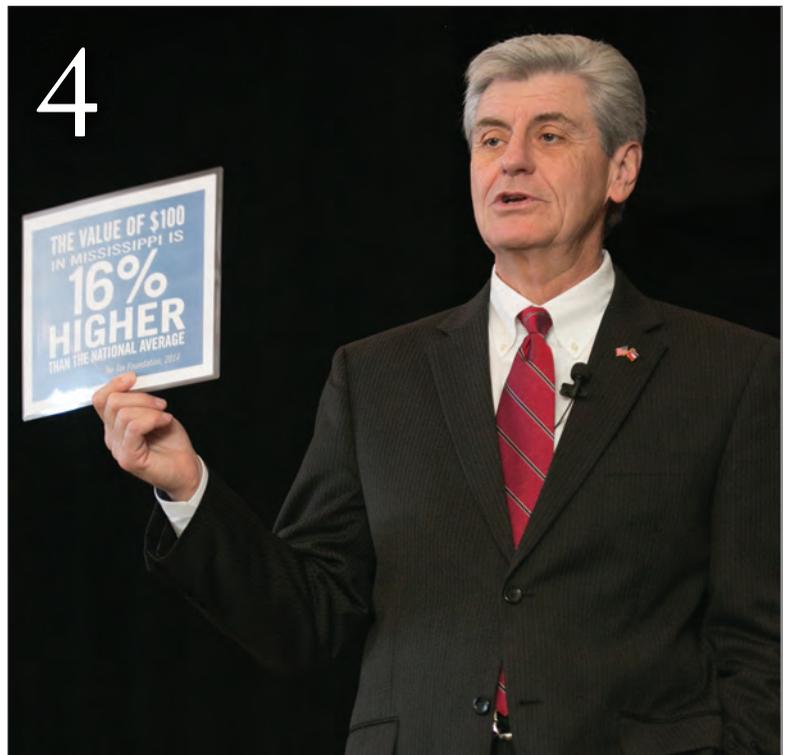
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## SNAPSHOTS



5

5. Taylor Vick, junior psychology major, earns volunteer hours by participating in a community service day at The Salvation Army.

6. Dan Meyer is a speaker and educator who is helping to drive a new conversation in terms of how we approach mathematics education in America. Meyer, whose TED talk has almost 2 million views, was the keynote speaker at the CHAMPS (Creating High Achievement in Mathematics and Problem Solving) Mini Conference in January.

7. The MUW Chamber Singers entertained the crowd at The W's annual Wassail Fest in December.



7



6

# A MESSAGE TO THE W FAMILY



Dear W family:

It is with mixed emotions, but with great pride in this institution, that I write to tell you I have been named the new Commissioner of Higher Education by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning. I am leaving a job I dearly love to serve a System of higher education I believe in, and to work to advance Mississippi.

Over the next few months, I will be making a transition into the new role, while continuing to be a presence here on campus and fulfilling presidential duties as we move into a new phase of The W's life. The work of a great University is never done and presidents serve for just brief moments. I cherish my opportunity to serve as steward of this incredible institution. It has been the highlight of my professional career and I have enjoyed every moment.

The W is a special place, and among our faculty, students, staff, and alumni there is a sense of loyalty I've experienced at few universities. No one could have asked for greater support or greater willingness to work collaboratively to move our university forward.

Since I arrived, I've said that I'm in love with The W's future, and I say that again to you today. Together, we have strengthened our beloved university, and the credit is yours. You have embraced opportunity and worked across the campus to refocus our efforts to increase enrollment, improve retention, and to establish new and expanded academic programs. The W is poised to realize even greater things.

My decision was made only after great introspection, prayer, and serious thought. There will be new challenges and new opportunities to help shape the future of our university system to the benefit of all Mississippians. The W will continue to be integral to that goal and I look forward to our continued work together.

Thank you for 'blessing with light' my work with you, and I look forward to visiting with as many of you personally as I can over the next few weeks.

Sincerely,

Jim Borsig, Ph.D.  
President

# RADICAL THINKING

The W was founded on the radical thought of broadening access to education. In the 21st century, The W is even more committed to providing educational opportunities of the highest quality to students. The W experience depends on your unrestricted giving to The W Fund. Your gifts enable students to realize their academic potential, learn from inspiring faculty, and connect with the world beyond the campus all while advancing The W's founding principles.

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For more information, contact Brandy Williams at [bmwilliams@muw.edu](mailto:bmwilliams@muw.edu) or 1-877-462-8439, ext 7148.

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## *Making a Difference, One Student at a Time*

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Have you ever really thought about the difference YOUR gift to your class scholarship makes in the life of a student?

Class endowed scholarship funds can make the difference in whether or not many deserving students are able to attend The W and benefit from The W experience.

From our students:

*"I will only have to work one job instead of two."*

*"I will have less student debt to pay back."*

*"I can purchase the books I need."*

*"I can concentrate on school instead of stressing about how I'm going to live."*

*"I can enjoy more of the once-in-a-lifetime college experience."*

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