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Matt O’Keefe to Lead Center for Manufacturing Excellence

Expanded undergraduate program, new graduate program among goals for new executive director

NOVEMBER 29, 2017 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



Matthew J. O’Keefe has been hired as the executive director of UM’s Haley Barbour Center for Manufacturing Excellence. Submitted photo by Sam O’Keefe/Missouri S&T.

OXFORD, Miss. — With decades of professional and research experience, Matthew J. O’Keefe was named the new executive director of the Haley Barbour Center for Manufacturing Excellence at the University of Mississippi.

A Rolla, Missouri, native, O’Keefe will start at CME Jan. 1. In addition to administrative oversight of personnel, facilities and operations, he is responsible for leading the academic unit of the CME (including curriculum development), providing leadership and strategic guidance for the center, and developing strong relationships within the university and with industry to enhance opportunities for students and faculty.

“I was very honored and grateful for the opportunity to be associated with such an outstanding program and university,” said O’Keefe, who earned his bachelor’s and doctoral degrees (both in metallurgical engineering) from Missouri University of Science and Technology and the University of Illinois, respectively.

William Nicholas, UM assistant director of Insight Park, who chaired the search committee, shared how important it was to find someone of O’Keefe’s caliber to lead the CME, which is a recognized asset for the future growth of advanced manufacturing in Mississippi.

“Matt O’Keefe brings exceptional experience and skills to ensure that the CME continues developing synergies with the business community resulting in long-term economic impact,” Nicholas said.

O’Keefe began his career as a manufacturing engineer at AT&T Microelectronics. He transferred to AT&T Bell Laboratories, where he conducted applied research and development for manufacturing locations. O’Keefe earned his Ph.D. while working for the Air Force Research Laboratory and continued in-house research and program management before taking a faculty position at his undergraduate alma mater.

Before joining UM, O’Keefe was an academic department chair, a research center director and assistant vice chancellor supervising the campus distance education program at Missouri S&T.

“In many ways, each of these positions have prepared me to lead CME,” O’Keefe said. “I applied for the position for many reasons, but the main one was that it is a unique program that provides an opportunity for students in accountancy, business and engineering to learn and work together in an area of national need: manufacturing. The curriculum that CME students experience provides a breadth to their major degree program that prepares them to have successful careers and enhance the manufacturing industry.”

O’Keefe’s goals include augmenting the existing program by increasing undergraduate student participation and developing a graduate program focused on helping to develop the local, state and national manufacturing professional workforce.

“People are the most important asset of any organization, and for educational institutions it is the success of students that is paramount,” he said. “To achieve student success and grow the undergraduate program, as well as initiate a graduate program, will take additional staff and faculty along with keeping the facilities state of the art.”

UM administrators are pleased to welcome O’Keefe to the university.

“Dr. O’Keefe is an accomplished engineering faculty member and administrator who brings valuable

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Campus Briefs

Students Learn ‘Real Politics’ in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates’

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve’s

perspectives to the Haley Barbour Center for Manufacturing Excellence,” said Noel Wilkin, provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs. “We are fortunate to have him as the leader of this center, which has outstanding faculty and staff. We look forward to the CME reaching the next level of success under his leadership.”

“Over the years, the unique CME program has attracted and graduated many outstanding engineering students who are equipped with not only the traditional technical skills, but also the practical manufacturing experiences and business and management knowledge,” said Alex Cheng, dean of the School of Engineering. “It has been one of the most important resources that raised the quality of engineering education at the university. I am pleased that Dr. O’Keefe, a highly experienced educator and administrator, will take the helm of this important organization to further raise its level of success.”

CME was established in June 2008 to provide unique opportunities for students interested in manufacturing. The opportunities developed are considered distinctive to the CME and are not available to undergraduate students at other universities in the United States. The CME is developing interdisciplinary educational opportunities within an innovative academic learning model that provides students with the practical experiences, fundamental knowledge and creative skill sets needed to lead the world of modern manufacturing.

Though he has received many professional honors and awards, O’Keefe said he is most pleased to have received those that were student nominated or selected.

“It is great to be recognized by your peers, professional societies and institution, but student recognition is the most enjoyable and rewarding,” he said.

O’Keefe and his wife, Laura, have two married sons: Patrick (Megan) of Kansas City, Missouri, and Sam (Shelby) of Rolla, Missouri, and two grandchildren: Kennedy and Will. O’Keefe’s hobbies include golf and following sports. He is a lifelong St. Louis Cardinals’ fan.

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