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## NCAA Honors Jones, Bjork with New Diversity Awards

Recognition is first of its kind to be awarded by NCAA

JULY 8, 2015 BY NCAA



Outgoing UM Chancellor Dan Jones, Carver Phillips and family, Coach Billy Brewer and Ole Miss AD Ross Bjork pose with the sign that will be posted along Chucky Mullins Drive. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Communications

A new NCAA initiative recognizing individuals who support diversity and inclusion has selected outgoing UM Chancellor Dan Jones and UM Athletics Director Ross Bjork as its first honorees.

The NCAA announced the awards Wednesday in the following release:  
An NCAA committee is introducing a new initiative to spotlight individuals who are working to support the interests of ethnic minorities and other underrepresented populations.

The Champions of Diversity and Inclusion recognition was created by the Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee, comprised of athletics directors, faculty members, college athletes and others affiliated with NCAA member schools. The committee is Association-wide, which means it is not affiliated with an NCAA division but instead deals with issues relevant to the entire NCAA.

The first individuals whose work will be highlighted by the program are both from the University of Mississippi. Both Jones and Bjork worked as part of the university's efforts to modernize and add historical context to cultural symbols on the Mississippi campus.

Specifically, Jones last year announced a comprehensive action plan for fostering an environment of inclusion on the Mississippi campus. In it, he outlined plans to create a vice chancellor-level position for diversity and inclusion and rename a campus street called Confederate Drive. Bjork, meanwhile, has supported these initiatives from an athletics perspective, including naming a space in an athletics facility after the first two black football players at Mississippi.

China Jude, chair of the committee and athletics director at Queens College in New York, said the committee seeks "athletics administrators of influence, who have provided significant support to underrepresented populations," including ethnic minorities, the disabled, and the LGBTQ community.



UM AD Ross Bjork, UM Chancellor Dan Jones, Archie Manning, and executive vice president of Market Development and Corporate Communications for FedEx Corp. Mike Glenn. Photo by UM Photographer Kevin Bain

Those recognized as Champions of Diversity and Inclusion have created opportunities for those in underrepresented populations to advance into senior leadership positions; demonstrated longevity or consistency in their support; or initiated or coordinated cultural change in an athletics department or at an NCAA member school in matters related to college sports.

Jude announced the initiative in conjunction with Bernard Franklin, NCAA chief inclusion officer and executive vice president of education and community engagement.

"We believe that it is important to identify individuals who are making sincere efforts to support underrepresented populations," Franklin and Jude said in a letter to its first honorees. "Your stance ... speaks volumes to the current social climate in which we live. We understand that your process will be long and challenging; however, it is necessary as this country grows more ethnically diverse."

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