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UM Enrolls Nearly 22,300 Students for Fall Semester

State's largest university also sees surge in freshman ACT scores, student retention

SEPTEMBER 9, 2013 BY MITCHELL DIGGS

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Members of the largest freshman class in Mississippi history took the field Saturday, Sept. 7 to participate in the University of Mississippi's Rebel Run, an annual event that takes place before the first home game of the football season. UM's record enrollment topped more than 22,000 students, up 3.5 percent from last year.

OXFORD, Miss. – Led by dramatic growth in its schools of **Engineering** and Journalism and New Media, the University of Mississippi recorded another record enrollment this fall, registering more than 22,000 students for the first time, a 3.5 percent overall enrollment increase and more than 7 percent growth on the Oxford campus.

Preliminary enrollment figures show a total unduplicated headcount on all the university's campuses of 22,286. That's up 758 students from last fall, or 3.5 percent.

Nationwide, college enrollments are declining, dropping some 500,000 students in 2012,

according to U.S. Census figures released last week. The continued growth at Ole Miss, which has recorded increasing student numbers for 19 straight years, is a testament to the quality and diversity of the university's academic offerings, Chancellor Dan Jones said.

"High school students and parents across Mississippi and throughout America are evaluating universities more closely than ever, and they're focusing on four attributes: nationally-recognized academic excellence – which translates into a diploma that will be recognized and valued everywhere – exciting careers after graduation, a competitive price and a collegiate experience they'll treasure for a lifetime," Jones said. "That's the definition of value in higher education today.

"By choosing the University of Mississippi in historic numbers, parents and students are validating Mississippi's flagship university as one of America's academic leaders, as an incredible value, as a place to connect with great careers, and as a collegiate experience admired coast to coast. Their trust in Ole Miss is a great honor for our faculty, our staff and every Mississippian."

The figures include 18,423 students on the Oxford campus, up 7.4 percent over the previous year. The student body includes 3,579 new freshmen, up 6.1 percent from last fall's class of 3,373, making this the largest freshman class for any university in Mississippi history.

"It all starts with a great group of university recruiters," said Will Norton, dean of the university's **Meek School of Journalism and New Media**. "They are organized and really work effectively."

Student retention also jumped dramatically, with 85.5 percent of last year's freshmen returning to campus this fall. That improvement reflects significant emphasis on first-year programs to help freshmen adjust to the rigors of higher education.

About two-thirds of Ole Miss students are from Mississippi, but the university attracts students from across the nation and world. Overall, the student body includes representatives from every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and 93 foreign countries.

This year's freshmen are better prepared for college coursework, with an average ACT score of 24.1, an all-time UM record, compared to an average of 23.8 last fall. Their high school GPA increased too, from 3.43 to 3.46.

Minority enrollment totaled 5,399 students, or 24.2 percent. African-American enrollment is 3,439 students, or 15.4 percent of overall enrollment.

The student body is diverse in age and national origin, ranging from a 14-year-old student who is dually enrolled at Oxford High School and the university to an 86-year-old pursuing a bachelor's degree in French. The youngest full-time freshman is a 16-year-old accountancy major from Brandon, and the

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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

youngest graduate student is a 17-year-old from China who is pursuing a Ph.D. in pharmaceutical sciences.

The schools of **Accountancy**, **Applied Sciences** and **Business Administration** all enjoyed healthy growth this year, but the schools of Engineering and Journalism and New Media both recorded extraordinary increases. Engineering grew by 21.2 percent, from 1,059 students last fall to 1,284 this year, while the journalism school increased from 708 students in 2012 to 885 this year, a jump of 25.0 percent.

Alex Cheng, the university's engineering dean, attributed his school's growth to its rising academic reputation. The school has not advertised or recruited intensively, he said.

"Word of mouth seems to be the biggest contributor to our growth," Cheng said. "They heard from other students who told them that they can receive an outstanding education here."

Michael Daves, a freshman civil engineering major from Mobile, Ala., chose Ole Miss over Auburn and Mississippi State.

"When I gave Ole Miss a serious look, I obviously fell in love with not only the Grove and the location, but also the people of Oxford," Daves said. "Everyone here is so accepting in many ways and extremely friendly. After that box was checked, I looked into the engineering department, which had been growing very rapidly.

"However, it was not like some schools, where you have a massive number of students and you are just another brick in the wall. Here, you are well taken care of and have more than a teacher to go to if you are in need of just about anything. The engineering group at Ole Miss has shown that it will make sure you come out with a job and good experience, also while making sure you come out a better man or woman with numerous friends."

In the journalism school, much of the growth is attributable to the success of the integrated marketing communications major, launched in fall 2011, Norton said. Few universities offer the IMC major, he said.

"Students Google for IMC, and Ole Miss pops up," he said. "One very successful corporate COO came with his daughter last year, saw the curriculum in IMC and said, 'This is what I should have taken when I was in school.' His daughter is a freshman majoring in IMC."

"They see our website. They visit the campus. Then they talk to faculty, and they want to come here," he said. "We have faculty who know traditional subjects. We have faculty who have worked at the highest levels in new media. The combination of faculty with significant experience in traditional media and faculty with significant new media experience is quite a combination."

Debra Whitley, a sophomore IMC major from Natchez, first learned about the IMC program during a campus visit.

"It has proven to be everything I could ever hope to have a career in one day and more," Whitley said. "IMC attracted me because it is not your regular study; it incorporates all aspects of marketing communications like sales promotion, advertising, new media and several others. There are so many opportunities to be found relating to marketing communications.

"I have an internship with Ole Miss Athletics Marketing Department this year. If not for the skills I have learned through taking classes with the Meek School, I do not think that I would have been sufficiently prepared to take on such a position."

Meanwhile, the **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College** continued to expand, enrolling 1,142 students, up from 1,050 in 2012. The acclaimed Honors College has 358 incoming freshmen, its largest class ever, with 60 percent being Mississippi residents. This fall's new honors freshmen have an average ACT of 30.3 and an average high school GPA of 3.96.

To help accommodate the growing demand for classes, the university opened the first phase of the renovated Lamar Hall this fall. By reconfiguring much of the former law school, Ole Miss added 15 new general classrooms, plus faculty offices and study spaces. UM also added two new water wells and a new water treatment facility to its infrastructure. A new Central Mechanical Plant, which provides steam and chilled water for campus heating and cooling systems, is coming online this semester.

A record 2,860 students are enrolled at the **UM Medical Center** in Jackson. That's an increase of 126 students (4.6 percent) over last fall, with the largest increases coming in the School of Nursing (27.8 percent) and School of Medicine (5.0 percent).

The fall 2013 Ole Miss student body, in addition to the 2,860 at the Medical Center, includes 16,677 undergraduates, 2,072 graduate students, 445 law students and 232 students in the Doctor of Pharmacy program. Enrollment at the university's regional campuses was 730 at Southaven, 735 at Tupelo, 118 at Grenada and 66 at Booneville.

For more information on enrollment and programs at UM, go to www.olemiss.edu.

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