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UM School of Education Honors 2018 Practitioners of Distinction

Four education alumni recognized for providing exemplary service

JUNE 20, 2018 BY KATHLEEN MURPHY



Patrick Wilcher (left), LaTonya Robinson, Kevin Allemand and Whitman Smith. Submitted Photo

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi School of Education recently honored four alumni as 2018 Practitioners of Distinction.

This is the second year UM's education school has recognized Practitioners of Distinction, early-to-mid-career professionals who have demonstrated measurable and positive service in education. The UM Education Alumni Advisory Board selected honorees from nominations submitted earlier this year.

The 2018 honorees are Kevin Allemand, a teacher at Hancock High School in Kiln; LaTonya Robinson, principal of Green Hill Elementary School in Sardis; Whitman Smith, director of admissions at the University of Mississippi in Oxford; and Patrick Wilcher, a mathematics instructor at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gulfport.

"We call them the Practitioners of Distinction awards to recognize early-to-mid-career impact performers, providing exemplary service in the field of education," said David Rock, UM education dean.

Allemand received his bachelor's degree in education from UM in 2005. He is completing his 13th year at Hancock High School teaching U.S. government, economics, Mississippi studies, world history, geography, ACT preparation and advanced placement U.S. government and politics.

He distinguished himself as an exemplary alumnus by creating an undergraduate-level research seminar on the American civil rights movement and instituting a "Look Around Mississippi" trip for students. The event is a four-day trek across 20 Mississippi towns and cities to see firsthand antebellum, Civil War, civil rights, musical and literary landmarks.

"I come to Ole Miss close to 10 times a year from the Mississippi Gulf Coast," Allemand said. "It still feels like home every time. Being honored by the School of Education is almost like your family saying you have made them proud."

Robinson received her bachelor's degree in education from UM in 1998 and her master's degree in 1999 and is in UM's **Doctor of Education in educational leadership program**. She began as an elementary school teacher early in her career and then advanced to become an award-winning principal at Oxford Elementary School and Della Davidson Elementary School in Oxford.

She was named the district's Administrator of the Year in 2016, the same year her school was in the No. 1 ranked school district in the state.

In 2017, she began as principal of Green Hill Elementary School in Sardis, a D-rated school that she hopes to transform into a high-performing school through her exemplary leadership skills.

"Being honored by this award has been overwhelming," Robinson said. "It's amazing. You don't really expect to be doing something that other people pay attention to. I have just been doing what is right and doing it for the children. I'm very humbled."

Smith, UM director of admissions, received his bachelor's degree in education in 1989 and his master's degree in higher education in 1994 from UM.

During his tenure, he has led record application, admission and enrollment growth, and conceptualized and implemented the new student convocation at the university.

"I'm humbled and floored and still surprised that I have been honored by this award," Smith said. "There are so many people that are School of Education alumni who have very accomplished careers. It means

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Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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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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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

that somebody feels that I represent the University of Mississippi and the School of Education that other people can look to as an example. It's a huge deal."

Wilcher received his bachelor's degree in 2003 and his master's degree in 2004 from UM. He has been a mathematics instructor at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College since 2006.

While he was an undergraduate at Ole Miss, the UM faculty named him Outstanding Student in Mathematics Education, and he was later honored as Outstanding Master's Student in Secondary Education. Wilcher also served as a basketball coach for 10 years, but then decided to devote his career full time to teaching in 2016.

"I'm not sure if there's anything more special than being honored by your alma mater," Wilcher said. "It's very humbling that after 14 years, I still mean something around here – especially in education because we kind of have to be the unsung heroes a lot."

The School of Education Practitioners of Distinction award was established in 2017. Its charter class included Shelley Clifford of Atlanta, Jessica Ivy of Starkville, Jay Lewy of Canton and Wanikka Vance of Chicago.

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