

# THE *Medallion*



*Southern Miss*  
**HONORS COLLEGE**  
SPRING 2025





# LETTER from the DEAN

## Dear Alumni and Friends,

There are a lot of changes happening in our world, and now perhaps more than any other time, I am glad to be part of a community that embodies curiosity and a desire to make positive change. It is an honor to serve as dean of the Southern Miss Honors College, and I am excited to share this year's edition of *The Medallion* with each of you so that you can see the effects of this curiosity and action in the lives of our students.

This year, we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of University Forum, the University's premier speaker event—and what an amazing lineup of speakers we had! From Pulitzer Prize-winning science journalist, Ed Yong, to U.S. Poet Laureate, Ada Limón, our students and community had the opportunity to learn from important voices of our time. And, of course, let's not forget that we celebrated the official anniversary in October with Southern Miss Honors College alumna, Kathleen Koch, who spoke about perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity. What an honor it was to toast 50 years of University Forum speakers and the important conversations they have inspired in our community, with Koch here to

remind us of what it means to be from Mississippi and to come home and share what you've learned.

We are also excited to announce that the Southern Miss Honors College was selected to administer a Beckman Scholars Program grant, the most prestigious scholars program for undergraduate STEM scholars. We are the first university in the state of Mississippi to receive a Beckman Scholars Program grant, and we are excited to collaborate with Dr. Sabine Heinhorst, T.W. Bennett Professor Emerita and former dean of the Southern Miss Honors College, to bring this opportunity to our students.

In addition, next year we will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Honors College, and I hope you will all consider joining us as we remember the early days of the Honors College and also look forward to what it continues to become. We want you to see our students in action, so our 50<sup>th</sup> celebration will coincide with the Undergraduate Symposium on Research and Creative Activity in spring 2026. Alumni will have the opportunity to serve as guest judges, to attend student panels (and some special anniversary panels), to attend the keynote luncheon and hear from Dr. Chris Anderson ('95), and to attend the Arts Showcase. Mark your calendars for April 17-18—we can't wait to celebrate with you!

Always,



Dr. Joyce Inman  
Honors College



## New Staff INTRODUCTION



LAURIE BENVENUTTI SUTPHIN, ED.D.  
*Assistant to the Dean*

Laurie, a native of Bay St. Louis, Miss., joined the Honors College staff as the assistant to the dean in November 2024. Prior to moving to the Honors College, Laurie spent nearly a decade in the Southern Miss Office of Admissions as the assistant director for events and telecounseling, where she planned and implemented on- and off-campus recruitment events for incoming freshmen and transfer students, as well as high school counselors and community/junior college partners. An employee of the university for 14 years, she has also worked in the Southern Miss Alumni Association and the Eagle Club.

“Having spent so many years working with students on their journey *to* Southern Miss, I am excited to now work with students on their journey *through* Southern Miss. Seeing students experience a whole new level of learning through Colloquium classes their freshman year and listening to them present their research, to watching them walk across the stage at Commencement, then spreading their wings to fly into graduate school or the career field, it is the honor of a lifetime to have the opportunity to watch them grow and flourish,” remarked Laurie.

A proud alumna, Laurie holds bachelor's degrees in business administration and Spanish, a master's degree in business administration, and a doctorate in higher education administration, all from The University of Southern Mississippi. In her free time, you can find Laurie gardening with her husband, Brent, also a Southern Miss alumnus, reading, and spoiling their three cats, Mr. Pretty Kitty, Pat the Cat and Plonkers.

Since fall 2009, our Honors College  
has had over 1,600 approved theses  
from our graduating scholars.



Honors Carnival  
Kickoff



# Year in REVIEW



Puppy Bowl



Honors Carnival Kickoff



University Forum 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Sophomore Showcase



Fall Graduation Reception

TIMELINE CONTINUES →

## AUGUST

Honors Freshmen  
Move into Vann Hall  
**CONVOCATION**  
**HONORS CARNIVAL KICKOFF**



Convocation

## SEPTEMBER

Coffee and Convos  
Thesis Crunch  
Honors  
Advisement Begins

## OCTOBER

**UNIVERSITY FORUM 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
**PUPPY BOWL**  
Fall Bash  
**ACTIVE LEARNING TRIPS**

Active Learning Trips



## NOVEMBER

Honors Day  
**SOPHOMORE SHOWCASE**  
Thesis Submission Day  
**FRIENDSGIVING**



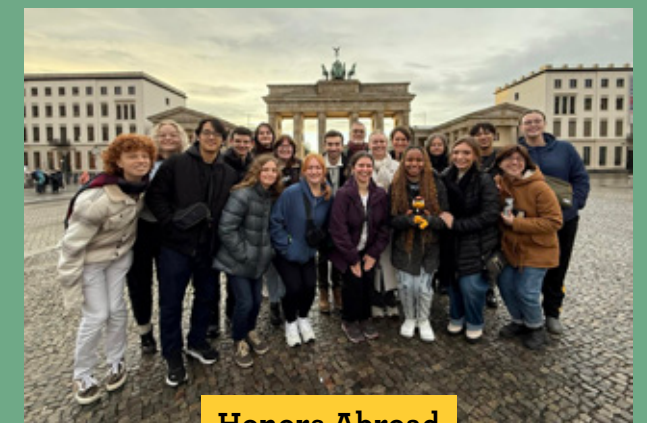
Friendsgiving

## DECEMBER

Final Exams  
**FALL GRADUATION RECEPTION**  
Fall Commencement

## JANUARY

**HONORS ABROAD GERMANY TRIP**  
Snow Day!



Honors Abroad Germany Trip



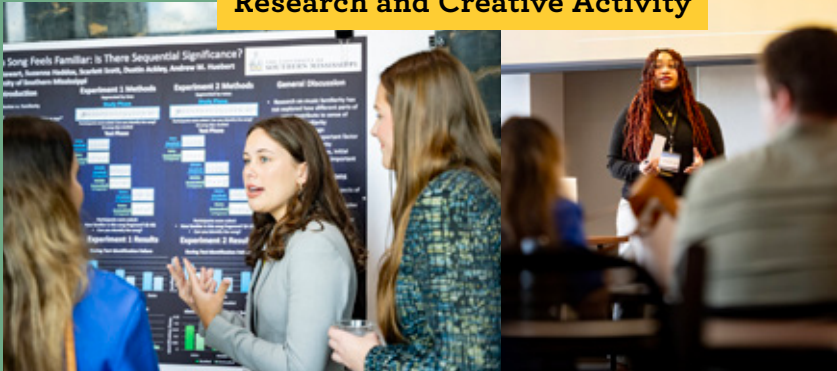
# Year in REVIEW *cont.*



Valentines in Vann



Undergraduate Symposium on Research and Creative Activity



Spring Commencement



Scholarship Orientation

## FEBRUARY

VALENTINES  
IN VANN  
Honors  
Advisement Begins  
Phi Kappa Phi  
Initiation

## MARCH

Thesis Crunch  
Join Honors

## APRIL

Thesis Submission  
Day  
Spring Fling  
UNDERGRADUATE  
SYMPOSIUM ON  
RESEARCH AND  
CREATIVE ACTIVITY

## MAY

Colloquium  
Conference  
Spring Graduation  
Reception  
SPRING  
COMMENCEMENT

## JUNE

SCHOLARSHIP  
ORIENTATION

## JULY

Keystone  
Offers Made  
Honors College  
Staff Retreat  
Freshman  
Orientation

Oh, the places  
we've been!

Over the last five years, our  
students have taken a total of  
**288 study-abroad trips**  
while part of the Honors College.

COUNTRY	TRIPS
UK + France	16
Ecuador	3
France	63
United Kingdom	70
Spain	26
United States: Hawaii	5

COUNTRY	TRIPS
Peru	1
Ireland	3
Italy	16
Austria	8
Ireland + UK	14
Germany	47

COUNTRY	TRIPS
South Korea	3
Belize	7
The Netherlands	1
Costa Rica	1
Greece	1
Japan	3



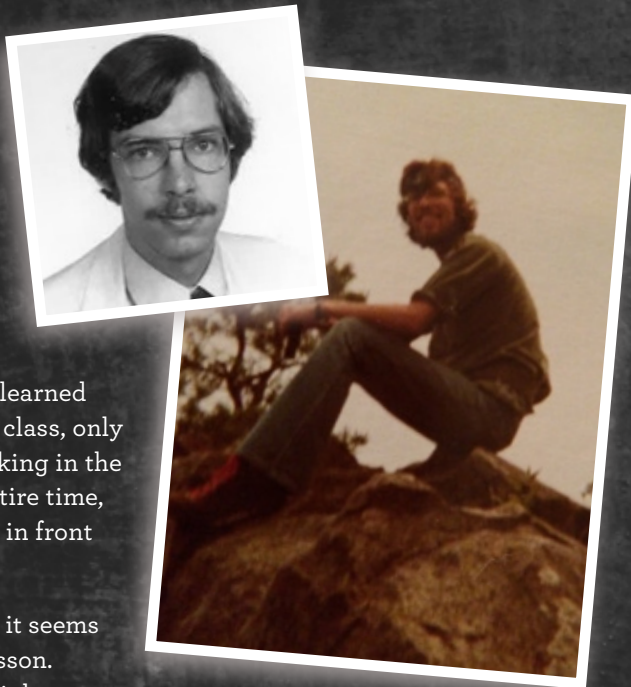
# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## RICHARD MCCARTHY

Dr. Richard McCarthy, from Columbia, Miss., is a Southern Miss Honors College alumnus ('74), who aspires to the motto, "Everything you read informs your world view." As he reflected on his time at Southern Miss, McCarthy talked with fondness and deep appreciation about the learning opportunities afforded to him by the Honors College, quoting Shakespeare and talking about Nietzsche. In fact, listening to him talk about the value of an Honors education would inspire even the most reticent of first-year students.

McCarthy told a story about the lesson he and his classmates learned when they were charged with finding insects for their biology class, only finally to be told by their amused professor that they were looking in the wrong places—they had been looking in the open areas the entire time, when all they needed to do was look beyond the empty spaces in front of them and venture to the trees and bushes farther away.

Given his professional pursuits and his extensive world travels, it seems safe to say that McCarthy took this particular lesson as a life lesson. McCarthy says he always knew he wanted to be a doctor. As a high school student, he worked in the X-ray department at his local clinic, assisting with the transport of patients, and he came to Southern Miss in 1971, in part, because the dean at the time, Dr. Wallace Kay, attended McCarthy's high school graduation at Columbia High School and informed him that he wanted him to come to Southern Miss and be a part of the Honors program. McCarthy accepted this invitation, interviewed with the Honors committee, and was awarded a Presidential Scholarship. He maintains to this day that this moment was life-changing, as he knew he could not afford college, and the only way he would accomplish his goals would be if someone not only believed in him, but also invested in him and his education.



*Torres del Paine, Chile*

*Machu Picchu, Peru*

Some of McCarthy's most memorable moments from his Honors College experience involve his course work, the opportunity to take smaller classes, and the encouragement to read and think beyond his chosen discipline of study. He recalls studying Greek and Roman history in his Colloquium class, and McCarthy noted that his advice to all students—and particularly to students interested in medical school—is to be adventurous in their studies and to learn to appreciate literature, music and art because it makes for more well-rounded thinkers and humans. He suggested that his curiosity and desire to continuously



*Ziplining in Toledo, Spain*

learn made him a better doctor, one who could relate to patients and communicate with them more intentionally. Indeed, after medical school and residency, McCarthy practiced radiology for 40 years, retiring in 2022.

McCarthy has had a successful and fulfilling career; he raised three wonderful daughters; he has continued to satisfy his curiosity about the world through travel; and he has chosen to give back to Southern Miss and the Honors College. When asked why he has continued to be involved at Southern Miss, McCarthy said it was simple. He felt the need to give back because others chose to give to and invest in him.

As we approach the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Southern Miss Honors College, we want to take a moment to thank the university administrators, faculty and staff who saw the need for Honors programming that would invigorate and excite our students. And we want to thank our friends and alumni who, like McCarthy, have made the intentional move to give back and ensure that others have similar opportunities to be curious and adventurous while making their own ways in the world.

*In the last year, the Honors College awarded \$260,979 of donor-funded scholarships to 29 students for a total of 31 individual awards.*



*2024-25 Honors College Leadership Council Ambassadors*



*Active Learning Trips*





## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

# Where Are They Now?



### Amy Donhauser International Studies BA French BA, 2005

At our 2025 Undergraduate Symposium on Research and Creative Activity, we hosted nearly 150 student presenters and Arts Showcase participants, 70 faculty judges, 25 graduate student moderators, and a host of additional faculty mentors, administrators and other supporters. We also heard a deeply moving address from our keynote speaker, Southern Miss Honors College alumna, Ms. Amy Donhauser (International Studies BA, French BA, 2005), who is now the director of global programs at We Care Solar.

Amy shared with us the lessons learned from her long career working in the global nonprofit and governmental world, including at Amnesty International, the Peace Corps, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the UN's International Organization for Migration, and now We Care Solar, which is committed to helping women around the world give birth with

dignity and light in frontline medical facilities. We Care Solar's solar suitcases have helped medical workers provide a higher standard of care, minimize unnecessary delays to treatment, and reduce maternal mortality in remote settings across the globe. Both inspired by and reflective of her decades-long humanitarian work, Amy emphasized to UGS students, faculty, staff and administrators that "you cannot treat what you cannot see."

Amy stressed the importance of careful research as crucial to helping to diagnose and remedy the challenges facing our world today. She highlighted the practicality of observation and careful listening as tools for diagnosing a problem and then applying rigor to the research process to craft a solution. She also pointed to the importance of drawing together diverse people and groups, recognizing the value of lived experience and expertise, and walking with humility while pursuing one's research passions. We are so honored that Amy was able to share her wisdom with us all at UGS 2025.

### John Caleb Grenn Chemistry BS, 2013

**Location:** Jackson, Miss., and moving to Corpus Christi, Texas, in summer 2025

**Current role and organization:** Assistant professor of internal medicine and pediatrics at The University of Mississippi Medical Center, practicing hospital medicine

**Tell us a little about your life now and how you like to spend your time when you aren't working.** I live with my wife, two daughters and three dogs in a little house in Jackson. I spend my time either playing with all of them or reading. I write book reviews for the *Clarion Ledger* and *Hattiesburg American* and on my Instagram @jcgrenn\_reads. I'm heavily involved with both the Mississippi Book Festival (where I've led author panels and was the featured artist in 2024) and the National Book Foundation in New York City, for which I've helped coordinate some national online events.

**What is your favorite memory from your time in the Honors College?**

One night after a football game, we discovered that someone had left the door at the very top of Johnson Science Tower unlocked. GREAT view of the town. USM has some of the best rooftops available for climbing up on in the middle of the night, if you're sneaky.

**How did your experience in the Honors College prepare you for your current career path?** My time with Sabine Heinhorst and Faqing Huang in their biochemistry courses prepared me specifically for the rigorous

academics of medical school, but in retrospect, I appreciate the opportunities afforded me to broaden my horizons offered in events like Honors Forum much more in my mid-30s than I did at the time. I remember so many specific authors and jurors who I was able to interact with (Jimmy Santiago Baca, Justice Antonin Scalia, etc.), only because I was a part of the Honors College.

**For current Honors College students aspiring to enter your field, what advice would you give based on your journey since graduation?** The medical field has changed rapidly and drastically since 2020, and I don't think it's slowing down any time soon. It's demanding, often exhausting, yet immeasurably rewarding.

Medicine is a field that asks and asks and asks of you until you learn to say, "No more," but I feel like so many people currently in their late teens and early 20s are so much better at professionally and politely standing up for themselves and saying, "No." This is a skill that can't come soon enough if you're hoping to go into a field that will ask everything from you. Also, read everything you can get your hands on, including difficult literary stuff. The more you read, the better you'll be at skillfully and compassionately connecting with people, which, when the science runs out at the end of the day, is what being a physician really is all about.





## Joshua Bird

### Economics BS, 2007

**Location:** Los Angeles, Calif.

**Current role and organization:**

Managing director and general counsel at Hawkins Way Capital

**Tell us a little about your life now and how you like to spend your time when you aren't working.**

I live in Los Angeles, Calif., with my wife Briana and my four-year-old daughter Nola. Bri grew up in Jackson, Miss., too – a Belhaven graduate. We've been in LA for 15 years now, and over that time have managed to develop a great circle of friends, settle into a comfy neighborhood, and make moves in our careers such that our daily challenges are really fulfilling. The real estate development and student housing company where I work has grown from a smaller shop into an institutional player over the eight years I've been there, and it's been great to contribute to that progress. Having gotten in on the ground floor, there also creates some flexibility in how I can engage to move the ball forward, and I try to take advantage of that space by turning my energy toward Mississippi where I can. In LA, I get to ride my bike to work (takes 10 minutes – a super nice way to start the day), attack challenging and novel problems alongside smart and engaged coworkers, and play tennis, hike and ride my electric bike in great weather most days of the year. Both being from Jackson – although we don't have much family nearby, we're fortunate to not have to split the idea of “back home.” Considering that, we try to get back to Jackson once a season for what is always a very nice change of pace. Bri and I can stay up to speed on the latest with friends and family, while Nola gets to live some of the Mississippi life—learning what it's like to know all your neighbors and to run around with them until the lightning bugs drive you in for the night. I'm incredibly grateful for this setup and don't take any parts of it for granted.

**What are some current projects or initiatives that you are working on that you're particularly excited about?**

Recently, I've been working on bringing my student housing expertise to Mississippi to help the universities here develop housing that is affordable, modern and set up to provide activities and support that benefits students in this exciting and dynamic period of their lives.

**What is your favorite memory from your time in the Honors College?**

Our trip to the Delta as part of my Mississippi studies class—a bunch of thoughtful folks in



a 15-passenger van, out in the wild, walking through the sites that we'd been learning about in books for the last decade or so. I see this experience as the start of my real understanding that the lessons we were learning were truly tied to the real world and that our future outcomes would also exist outside of the pages of our books and the rubrics of our evaluations.

**How did your experience in the Honors College prepare you for your current career path?**

My advanced economics class developed in me a good perspective on how happenings out in the broader world had a tangible impact on whatever an individual business is looking to accomplish in its day-to-day. My experience as editor of the undergraduate research journal showed me that you can do anything, however foreign or new to you – if you (i) start and then (ii) keep going until the job is done. The lesson feels simple now, but my perspective was expanded once I understood how much of a successful result turns solely on diligence/grit.

**For current Honors College students aspiring to enter your field, what advice would you give based on your journey since graduation?**

To start, the goal should be exposure to the real estate development and management process. I didn't get this until after law school but would recommend it as early as you could manage. Pay attention to all the pieces of projects from start to finish at whatever scale you have access to so that you can develop perspective on (i) how the home/duplex/apartment complex, etc. is evaluated prior to purchase, (ii) how it is managed during the ownership period and what works to add to the performance and what doesn't (or has neutral impacts), and (iii) how the sale process runs. Learning from other folks' experiences will save a lot of headaches (and heartaches) down the line and will help you identify what you don't know you don't know. While you're doing this and after you have a *basic* understanding of the process and pitfalls, it's important to not be afraid to jump in and actually start engaging with projects directly yourself. These can be small and simple to start (and probably should be), but taking the theory and third-party perspective and turning them into practice generates a mindset change that makes the other learning and attention-paying 10 times more effective. Continue to do both for your entire career – (i) learn from others and (ii) have your own projects that you can apply your learning to and which help you develop questions and identify holes in your knowledge. Finally, never stop learning. Know that you never know it all and never will, so always have your eyes peeled for access to better understanding or more complete perspectives.

## Caroline Bradley-Kenney

### English BA, 2018



**Location:** Jackson, Miss.

**Current role and**

**organization:** Associate attorney at Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP

**Tell us a little about your life now and how you like to spend your time when you aren't working.**

I currently work as an associate attorney doing civil defense work. When I am not working,

you will usually find me spoiling my dog Scout, who is a rescue from Hattiesburg. Locals may remember her from the City of Hattiesburg's Facebook page. You can also find me getting into anything and everything with my husband, Cameron, who is also a Southern Miss and Honors College alumnus. I also enjoy playing pickleball and soccer in local leagues, and I just crossed the finish line of my first half marathon—Run the Rainbow! As an English major at heart, I'm still an avid reader. Right now, I'm diving into *The Bright Sword* by Lev Grossman.

**What are some current projects or initiatives that you are working on that you're particularly excited about?**

I'm currently collaborating with one of my former law professors on an article exploring the Fourth Amendment and how emerging technologies are reshaping the legal landscape of searches and privacy. It's been an incredibly insightful and thought-provoking process, diving deep into how the law must evolve to keep pace with rapid technological advancements.

**What is your favorite memory from your time in the Honors College?**

During my freshman year, I took Honors English 102 with Dr. Inman (now dean!), and it was a class I'll never forget. The course revolved around Disney, but instead of simply reveling in the magic, we dug deep into the characters and narratives to uncover their deeper meanings. One of the highlights was a trip to New Orleans, where we met the real-life inspiration for Tiana from *The Princess and the Frog*. That class left a lasting impression on me and sparked the idea for my Honors thesis, which explored Disney

villainesses through the lens of disability studies. This topic also gave me the incredible opportunity to present at a conference at Southern Miss, alongside PhD candidates—a first for me! Looking back, it's amazing how Dr. Inman's class laid the foundation for my entire Honors College journey.

**How did your experience in the Honors College prepare you for your current career path?**

Writing my honors thesis was an experience that truly highlighted the value of good writing and meticulous research. The process taught me how to dig deep, think critically, and communicate complex ideas clearly—skills that are invaluable in the legal profession. Just as I had to carefully craft every argument and back it up with solid evidence for my thesis, I now apply the same approach to legal writing and research. Whether it's drafting a brief or analyzing case law, the attention to detail and clarity I honed during that time continues to shape how I approach legal work today.

**For current Honors College students aspiring to enter your field, what advice would you give based on your journey since graduation?**

There's no one-size-fits-all path to law school! When I first started college, I thought I needed to be a political science or pre-law major to make it, but I ended up choosing English because I genuinely loved the classes I was taking. Looking back, it was the best decision I could have made. Not only did I get to study something I was passionate about, but it also led to great grades and meaningful relationships with my professors—both of which were key when it came time to apply to law school. I ultimately attended the University of Florida School of Law, where I met classmates from all kinds of backgrounds, including philosophy, polymer science, math, accounting and communications. The takeaway? Don't stress about fitting into a specific mold for law school. Choose a major that excites you, because when you're passionate about what you're studying, you'll do better, enjoy your classes more, and still have plenty of opportunities to get into a great law school.





# UNIVERSITY FORUM 50TH ANNIVERSARY

## Celebrating a Milestone and Passing the Torch



*Thanks, Dr. Haley, for serving as  
University Forum director!*

Since 1974, University Forum has brought thinkers, writers, activists, way-makers, scientists and artists to Southern Miss. These guests have begun conversations in Bennett Auditorium that students, faculty and community members continue long after the doors close on a Tuesday night. On October 10, 2024, University Forum, supported by the Office of the President and the Honors College, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In her reflection on the role that University Forum has played in her own life, Professor Emerita and former Honors College Dean Maureen Ryan explained the value of Forum: “First, it brings the community to campus to hear the likes of Watergate journalist Carl Bernstein or novelists like Kurt Vonnegut. But, over the years, I think I’ve become increasingly convinced that the real value is with the students, especially undergraduate students, who are, we hope, at their most intellectually curious and open to new and challenging ideas.” In today’s world, where we are both too connected and insulated, Forum provides an important opportunity for students to participate in conversations that have real-world implications. It seems fitting that, while celebrating a milestone, University Forum closed one chapter and began another in its ongoing story of bringing the world of ideas to our students and community.

In 2015, Forum’s future was uncertain amidst budget cuts and irregular event schedules. Dr. Andrew Haley, who often had sat in the audience and dreamed of the guests he would invite to campus if he had the chance, proposed a new budget and newly revised event schedule to help save Forum. On September 22, 2015, Dr. Haley brought to Forum his first guest, author Rick Bragg, who had just written a book about Jerry Lee Lewis. For the next decade Dr. Haley served as director and breathed new life into Forum. Under his leadership, Forum has brought guests like lawyer and social justice activist Bryan Stephenson, multi-National Book Award and Carnegie Medal of Excellence winner Jesmyn Ward, and Lieutenant Colonel and former United States Representative Adam Kinzinger. As Forum celebrated its golden Anniversary, Dr. Andrew Haley celebrated his final year as director, deciding it was time to pass the torch and move in a new direction. The fact that Forum was able to celebrate such a milestone is, at least in part, due to Dr. Haley’s excellent leadership. As he reflected on his time with Forum, Dr. Haley said, “Universities serve their students, but they also play a vital role in our communities, prompting discussions and encouraging debates. Forum creates a big, open classroom where we all participate collectively in the most fundamental mission of the university, to educate. To be a part of that for nearly 10 years was a tremendous honor.”

In January 2025, Forum kicked off a new year under new leadership. As a “long-time attender and supporter for Forum,” professor of ecology and Honors Faculty



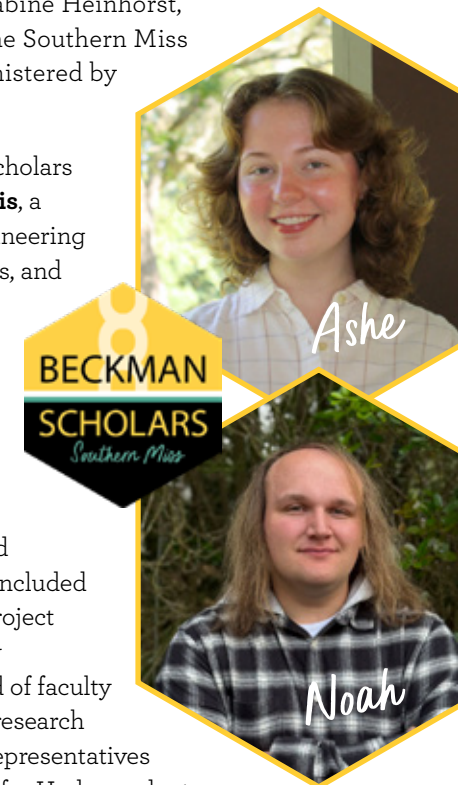
Fellow, Dr. Mac Alford, has always encouraged his students to think about and to ask the “big questions.” When he was asked to serve as director of University Forum, Dr. Alford was eager to begin creating a list of speakers and learning from colleagues and students “who *they* think are the leading voices of our time.” For Dr. Alford, University Forum is important for students and faculty because it provides connections between the world and classroom. He explained, “Because the presenters are so diverse, Forum also gives us an opportunity to make interdisciplinary connections. For example, our first University Forum speaker this semester, Ada Limón, Poet Laureate of the U.S., did not merely do a poetry reading; she hit upon big themes in family life, psychology, trauma, conservation biology, music, politics and even botany. It was a great opportunity for me as a botany professor to talk about poetry in class.” University Forum has no doubt played an important role at Southern Miss by starting conversations, making connections, and marking history. These moments begin at Bennett Auditorium on Tuesday nights throughout the academic year, but they continue to have people talking for years to come. To find out more about University Forum and to find the 2025 speaker schedule, visit [usm.edu/honors/forum-schedule.php](http://usm.edu/honors/forum-schedule.php).

## Southern Miss BECKMAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM

This year, Southern Miss was invited by the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation to submit a proposal for the Beckman Scholars Program—arguably the most distinguished and selective privately funded program supporting outstanding undergraduate researchers in life science fields of study. Former Dean and T.W. Bennett Distinguished Professor Emerita, Dr. Sabine Heinhorst, successfully proposed the Southern Miss BSP, and it will be administered by the Honors College.

The 2025-26 Beckman Scholars are sophomore **Ashe Davis**, a polymer science and engineering major from Ocean Springs, and junior **Noah Williamson** of Hattiesburg, a double major in biological sciences and geography. Davis and Williamson were chosen from four finalists following a rigorous application and selection process, which included research proposals and project presentations. The review committee was composed of faculty members with extensive research mentorship experience, representatives from the Drapeau Center for Undergraduate Research, and the dean of the Honors College.

Ashe’s research project, mentored by Dr. Tristan Clemons, investigates the suitability of peptide-targeted protein degradation methods to treat Parkinson’s Disease. Noah’s project, mentored by Dr. Kaitlin Baudier, focuses on the Florida Harvester Ant (*Pogonomyrmex badius*), an imperiled species east of the Mississippi River that plays a vital role in seed dispersal and soil aeration. Good luck, Ashe and Noah! We are delighted that you will represent Southern Miss in this prestigious program!





# STUDENT FEATURES

The Honors College is a community of exceptional students who strive for academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, and meaningful engagement with the world around them. These scholars challenge themselves with rigorous coursework, engage in research and creative projects, and contribute to the community through service and leadership. We are excited to showcase some of the exceptional achievements and experiences of our Honors College students, highlighting their diverse passions, goals and aspirations. Whether pursuing careers in STEM fields, the humanities or the arts, our students are poised to make a positive impact on the world, and we are proud to feature their stories!

## LIAM CRONIN (Freshman)

Liam Brady Cronin is an Honors College Discovery Scholar from Clinton, Miss., and is double majoring in political science and Spanish with an applied economics minor. He is a freshman at Southern Miss; a Luckyday Scholar; member of the Honors College, Phi Theta Kappa, Southern Miss Speech and Debate Team, soccer and basketball intramural teams, SAA, NSLS; a Spanish tutor in the Language Hub; and a lead instructor for the English Connect ESL program. Liam, a merit-based scholar, is heavily awarded in speech and debate, recently earning the Top Speaker Award out of 60+ competitors and named champion in several categories at the state debate tournament.

Liam shares that his most memorable experience so far is the fall active learning trip to Nashville, Tenn., where he, along with his classmates, got to line dance, cook out, and visit the zoo and museums. Liam continues, “We walked around downtown with our class and Dr. Weinberg, to whom we so endearingly gave the name, ‘Dad.’ I would most definitely say that out of all the school-related trips I have gone on, this one was one of the best. It really gave me the opportunity to connect with those in my class and with my professor, whom I admire greatly.”

When asked about his Honors experience, Liam explains that as a student a little older than his classmates, he was nervous at the beginning, but his Colloquium class made all the difference in the transition. “From carnivals to road trips with my classmates, peers and professors, it has been such an amazing first year. Those who I have had the opportunity to interact with during this transition period truly have changed my life, and I can tell that they will all play important roles in my remaining time here at Southern Miss and in my professional life that will follow graduation.” Liam mentions that his Colloquium class has given him the opportunity to research various topics, like human instinct, language acquisition, with tax law-language extinction being the most attention-grabbing. “My dad is deaf, so I always have been an advocate of language access, and part of that is how one learns and retains information.”

Upon graduation, Liam, whose passions include learning, serving, interpreting and spending time with his family, plans to attend law school and work domestically and internationally in the financial world, crossing both the English and Spanish language barriers. “Serving others will remain a large part of what I do...I plan to remain involved in the English Connect program and collaborating with locals in the community to benefit the lives of as many people as I can. Family will also play a large role in my future, and I have high hopes of being a father and watching my family grow.”



## KALEB FAVALORO (Sophomore)

**Major:** Hydrographic Science

**Awards**

- USM President’s List (2023-Present)
- Certified NOAA Student Hydrographer
- Outstanding Freshman of the Year Award Finalist (2024)
- Sun Belt Conference Commissioner's List (Athletes with 3.5 GPA or Higher)
- Golden Eagle Welcome Week Ogletree House MVP
- Freshman Academic Excellence Scholarship
- Valedictorian Scholarship
- Honors College Scholar Award
- THSOA - Southeast Chapter Scholarship Award
- SGA Outstanding Freshman Associate Member Award

**Passions:** Nature/oceans, zoology, history, paleontology, video games, archeology and travel

**Involvement**

- SGA Freshman Associate
- SGA College of Arts and Sciences Senator
- Southern Miss Track and Field (Lettered Freshman Year) - Long Distance Runner (3k - 5k)
- GEWW Crew Leader
- Student Representative for Committee on Revising Course Evaluations
- Sexual Assault Prevention Ambassadors (SAPA)
- History Club

**Tell us about your experience in the Honors College:**

My experience in the Honors College has been such a positive experience for me, especially as a student that came in knowing almost no one. It was a built-in set of like-minded people that I could have deep discussions with or just have a good laugh with. My colloquium and seminar experiences have expanded my horizons of what research can entail. My fall seminar class was indicative of this discovery because we learned how to use archives as unorthodox sources for study.

**What is your most memorable experience in the Honors College?**

Though there have been numerous fun experiences (kayaking trip with my colloquium class, hearing amazing speakers at Forum, etc.), I would be lying if I said Honors Abroad isn’t the most memorable. Being immersed in a different

country across the world was an amazing learning experience. We were all able to have nuanced conversations about how Germany has dealt with and currently deals with its past atrocities. We were able to talk about these heavy subjects while also exploring a place new to us in so many ways. We had snowball fights, amazing food and new friendships formed that I will cherish for a long time.

**What have you become passionate about researching during your time in the Honors College?**

Though my major is not one specifically geared around biology, I am still extremely interested in it. I have been from a young age. The natural world has always fascinated me, and in our attempt to explore it, we learn new, amazing things about it. The oceans are full of mysteries to uncover, and I am interested in how new deep-sea species can be discovered through the use of ocean-mapping. In the deep parts of the oceans, seamounts are often spots of high biodiversity. I would be interested in showcasing the effectiveness of finding these seamounts and how many new species can be uncovered this way.

**What is your plan after graduating?** I want to be on a boat for the job, but I’ve only really had a week’s worth of being out at sea constantly. This summer will be the indicator of whether I want to manage/be a part of multi-week studies and surveys because I hope to go on a few research trips that will span for weeks at a time. No matter what, I would like to have the ocean to be front and center in what I do. I want to help expand the knowledge we know about the oceans.

**Favorite Quote:** “Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.” - Abraham Lincoln





# MARCUS KIRKLAND (Junior)

**Major:** Marketing

## Awards

- Bill Smith Marketing Scholar
- Bill and Marilyn Sirmon Scholar
- Richard C. Vreeland Marketing Scholarship Endowment
- Academic Excellence Scholarship
- Donald Drapeau Research Award
- Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Scholarship Program
- Afro-American Student Organization's Celebration of Scholastic Excellence
- School of Social Science and Global Studies (SSGS) Best Paper/Project of the Year Award

**Passions:** I am very passionate about the advocacy work we do in Generation Action, bringing awareness to important causes and being a facilitator of progressive social change on our campus. I am also driven to pursue higher education past my BSBA in marketing; as a first-generation student, I want to break the glass ceiling of education in my family.

## Involvement

- Southern Miss Sales Team
- E.A.G.L.E. Scholar
- Generation Action Officer
- Honors College
- McNair Scholars Program

## Tell us about your experience in the Honors College:

Honors College has been a transformative experience that has opened doors and provided opportunities I never could've imagined for myself. This program further strengthens my want to pursue a PhD later in life and research in a field I am greatly interested in. I've cultivated lasting relationships with faculty and peers that I will value and cherish for years to come.

**What is your most memorable experience in the Honors College?** The most memorable experience was my first time ever presenting at the spring 2024 UGS. As a sophomore, I never thought I would be doing or could do something like that, but it turned out to be a great experience. I ended up placing second in my category, Consumer Behavior, and from that moment on, I knew that this was the right place for me.

## What have you become passionate about researching during your time in the Honors College?

I began my research journey through the McNair Scholars Program, where I developed a strong passion for research, focusing on consumer activism among Southern Miss students. For my Honors thesis, I aim to expand on this study by exploring the attitudes and perspectives of sales professionals working for companies whose ethical practices do not align with their personal values.

Specifically, I want to examine how such misalignment impacts their productivity, mental health, and overall relationship with their company. This idea stems from my experience on the sales team and a newfound interest in pursuing a potential career in sales. By merging my interests in consumer behavior and sales, I hope to create a study that not only contributes meaningful insights to the field, but also has personal relevance to my career aspirations.

**What is your plan after graduating?** I plan to pursue a master's degree and eventually build a career in sales, potentially as an account manager for the research and advisory firm Gartner. After gaining industry experience, I intend to transition into academia and pursue a PhD. My goal is to become a marketing and sales professor, using my professional background to develop a well-rounded curriculum that prepares the next generation of marketing students for success.

**Special Note:** I hope that anyone who has ever questioned their sense of belonging or felt uncertain about the future understands that all it takes is the courage to take the first step. As long as you work hard and stay true to yourself, the puzzle pieces will eventually fall into place.



# JIMENA PAREDES (Senior)

Jimena Paredes, one of our very own 2025 Spring Commencement standard bearers, is a senior Discovery Scholar majoring in strategic communication and minoring in graphic design. Jimena, who currently serves as the VP of the Honors College Leadership Council Ambassadors, is a resident assistant as well as an RA Advisory Board member, a member of Southern Style, a Black-Eyed Susan (Women's Leadership Honorary), and a StratCom Week Ambassador. She won several awards at the 2024 Annual Art and Design Student Show, received the Frank Buckley Scholarship Endowment, and has held her spot on the President's List for seven straight semesters.

Jimena's most memorable experience in the Honors College is the 2022 Honors Abroad trip to Germany. "From start to finish, this trip was full of memorable experiences that I still talk about to this day. I learned so much about Germany, ranging from its gastronomy to their ways of learning from and coping with their history. We visited beautiful museums, read important books and articles, and reflected on their development as a country. Thanks to this trip, I dream to someday live in Europe, maybe even Germany, to be able to frequently go back to these meaningful places."

When discussing her current research, Jimena explains, "As the topic of my thesis, corporate activism has become a concept I am extremely passionate about. I genuinely look forward to reading about all the advances in the field, from looking at corporations interacting with social movements to analyzing new indicators of brand

authenticity. My research is specifically filling a gap in the literature where we analyze the authenticity of corporations holding other corporations accountable based on cost and sacrifice. A few semesters ago, I would have never believed I was so passionate about my thesis, or that I even found a topic to do it on!" Jimena was the recipient of a DCUR Eagle Spur grant, as well as a Discovery research grant, and was able to present at the 2024 Society for Marketing Advances conference in Tampa, Fla., what she describes as a fantastic experience that was incredibly motivating.

After graduation, Jimena, whose passions are designing, painting and creating art, plans on pursuing a master's degree in communication at Southern Miss. "I want to expand my knowledge in an area of study adjacent to my current one while I take small steps to achieve a bigger goal. I then plan to pursue a second master's degree in Europe with a more specific concentration relating to advertising and graphic design. The end goal is to work in creative advertising for companies that are passionate about social justice issues and are willing to make a change in society."

"The past four years in the Honors College have taught me more about myself than I could have ever imagined...I remember being a freshman who was terrified for the future, attending my first HCLC event and submitting my first Colloquium assignment. I never thought I would be in the place I am right now, being the vice president of HCLC's Ambassadors Committee and a few months away from submitting my thesis. All my accomplishments have been backed up by guidance and support from my Honors College peers and staff, who I have looked up to from the start. My experience in the Honors College has been one of the most rewarding of my college career, and I cannot wait to enter the next stage of my life with all the lessons that I have learned from making the most of this experience."





# LOVING SOMEWHERE

## COLLOQUIUM HIGHLIGHT



Before Honors students are swept up by classes in their majors and writing their theses, they choose one of eight interdisciplinary Honors Colloquium classes to take during their freshman year. During Colloquium, they spend long hours reading, writing, and building community with their peers. But what makes Colloquium most impactful is the reinforcement of classroom discussions with experiential and active learning. For the 2024-25 academic year, Honors students and faculty explored the theme of “Sense” across disciplines and traveled to the Mississippi Gulf Coast; Vicksburg, Miss.; Chattanooga, Gatlinburg and Nashville, Tenn.; St. Louis, Mo.; and Cocodrie, La. Whether they were traversing new cities or imagining familiar places in new ways, each class was able to connect outside of the classroom and apply in-class discussions to real-world experiences.

Dr. Clay Tucker, a geography professor, chose the theme “Sense of Place: Loving Somewhere” for his class. Tucker designed his active learning trip around exploring how the human environment (cities, crops, football teams, etc.) is driven by the physical environment (rivers, soils, plants, etc.). Dr. Tucker remarked that, more than anything, “I wanted to bring my students outside.” Tucker’s class turned their focus to the physical and cultural geography of Southeast Louisiana. For three nights, the class stayed at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), a scientific research facility equipped with a cafeteria, teaching spaces, laboratories and dorms. While there, they explored the coastal fishing community of Cocodrie, La. People have gathered in Cocodrie for centuries to exploit abundant resources in seafood, oil and gas and waterways. Because small communities like Cocodrie

have not undergone the same level of development and globalization as larger towns and cities, Tucker’s students were able to learn how physical geography impacts the daily lives of the residents as the environment fights back against their efforts to tame the landscape and exploit its resources.

In places like Cocodrie, where the human history seems long, the coastal land itself is young and vulnerable. Towns sink into the ocean, hurricanes destroy schools and homes, and livelihoods are threatened by the growing gap between local business and larger global industries. Many people have moved away from Cocodrie, and those who remain are predominantly from out of town. This reality had an impact on one student, Annaliese Dreesen, who explained, “Visiting Cocodrie, La., was like going back to the run-down mall in my hometown. It doesn’t seem special until you actually step inside and smell the familiar Auntie-Anne’s pretzels and remember how packed it used to get before people started moving and businesses started shutting down. Although I don’t have any fond memories of Cocodrie before people started to move away – like I do with my hometown – I still had an overwhelming sensation of how full of life it used to be.”

But some things about the landscape have remained the same, which another student, Jacob Staten, realized when he discovered that “... the roads swerving through the marsh today take the same path as the cattle did centuries ago because this was the highest point on the landscape.” In this way, Tucker’s class was able to learn that a “sense of place,” even when threatened by globalization, is a strong connection that can persist and evolve through even the most extreme cultural, political and environmental changes.



Our current  
Honors College  
student body  
comes to us from...

Alabama 29 • Arkansas 3 • Germany 2 • California 1 • Delaware 2  
Florida 8 • Georgia 2 • Illinois 2 • Pakistan 1 • Indonesia 1 • Kentucky 2  
Louisiana 56 • Missouri 5 • Mississippi 327 • North Carolina 3  
Nebraska 1 • Ohio 1 • Oklahoma 1 • Pennsylvania 1 • South Carolina 1  
Tennessee 4 • Texas 2 • Utah 1 • Wisconsin 1 • Turkmenistan 1  
South Korea 1 • Uzbekistan 2 • Bangladesh 4 • Nigeria 6 • Saint Lucia 1  
Nepal 17 • Honduras 1 • Ukraine 1 • Phillipines 1





# SEMINAR HIGHLIGHT

## EINSTEIN, CIVIL WAR NUTRITION, AND CULTS: *Exploring Archival Collections and Research*

Each semester, our Honor faculty plan unique Honors Seminar courses. These classes have various topics, ranging from musical theater to artificial intelligence. This year, Jennifer Brannock, professor and curator of Rare Books and Mississippiana in the McCain Library at Southern Miss, and her class delved into the collections at McCain Library and Archives to explore a new approach to research and learning. The title of the class itself, “Einstein, Civil War Nutrition, and Cults: Exploring Archival Collections and Research,” highlights the wide range of topics that an archive can hold and the exploratory nature of this class.



The interdisciplinary Honors curriculum highlights the fact that research can take many different forms, and Professor Brannock’s course showcases the unique approach to research that archives require. From understanding and creating finding aids to creating their own personal archives, students learned and applied many different types of research methods unique to archival research. Given that archival research can be technical, Professor Brannock planned projects that would combine the personal and academic to give students better ownership of their work.

The course also presented students with many opportunities for active learning. After studying how an archival exhibit is created, students began working to construct their own exhibit using the materials in the archives. After researching their topic and identifying appropriate resources, students synthesized them all together to answer their research questions. This process includes not only writing about the items and their relationship to one another, but also physically arranging the items in the exhibit case, requiring that students think not just about research in the more traditional written format, but also about how someone viewing

the exhibit engages with it on a physical level through the arrangement of the archival items. Students noted the creativity and flexibility that the archives gave them, given the scope and number of items in the collections.

One of the final projects of the class required the students to create their own personal archive to mirror the archival collections that they’ve been working with throughout the semester. As much of an academic project as it is a personal one, the personal archive required students to reflect on themselves as individuals and their belongings by selecting the ones that they feel best represented them while adding to the cohesive

whole within their collections. By writing a finding aid and organizing their collections following archival standards, they applied the research and skills that they’ve been learning and practicing all semester.

Throughout this class, students learned much about the archives and research, but also about themselves and their own lives, which helped to create community among the class. The students ended the classes with a tradition started by Professor Brannock: going to the Junior Food Mart across from the archives, getting a snack, and eating it by the dumpster behind the gas station.



# NCUR Conference



In April, five Honors College students headed to Pittsburgh for the annual National Conference on Undergraduate Research, where they presented their cutting-edge research alongside 4,500 undergraduate students from around the country. The Honors College was able to significantly subsidize the travel costs for students who attended NCUR. In addition, Honors College associate dean and Drapeau Center for Undergraduate Research co-director, Dr. Rebecca Tuuri, also attended the conference in support of the students.

Junior Joseph Serio (Biological Sciences, BS) presented his research, "circRNA Accumulation on Neurodegeneration and Fitness in *Drosophila melanogaster*," which examines the impact of circRNA on neurodegeneration in fruit flies. Senior Sadie Pitre’s (ACS-Certified Chemistry, BS) project, "Using WebMO to Introduce Computational Chemistry at The University of Southern Mississippi," explores how chemistry instructors at Southern Miss can use a visualization program to better teach chemistry at the university. Both Alexis Papp (Elementary Education, BS) and Cali Reinhart (Elementary Education, BS) conducted research on education with the help of their mentor, Dr. Stacy Reeves, who also attended the NCUR. Papp’s "The Effects of COVID-19 on Educators in South Mississippi" researches the impact of COVID-19 on elementary education. Reinhart’s "Implementing Storytelling into the Elementary School Classroom: A Best Practice Guide with Adaptable Lessons," introduces a curriculum for more effectively teaching reading through storytelling. Kaelyn Hunter (Music Education, Choral Licensure, BMEd), who graduated in fall 2024, not only presented her project, "Exploring the Collegiate Choir Participant's Values Within Ensemble Performances," but is also now putting aspects of her research into practice as a music educator in Alabama.



“I am so proud of not only the high quality of research that our students showcased, but also their professionalism while delivering their presentations and beyond,” Dr. Tuuri shared. “They represented our university, Honors College and research programs very well.”

Students also commented on how valuable this opportunity was. “Traveling to the NCUR and presenting there was a tremendous experience,” said Serio, who is also the recent winner of a highly prestigious Goldwater Fellowship. “First, I gained experience disseminating the findings of my research to a general audience, and this differed from the more field-specific audiences I share with more frequently. Additionally, I was able to make several connections with representatives from various institutions who provided details about their respective graduate programs. As I prepare to apply for graduate school, those contacts and the information they shared are likely to be highly valuable. On a more personal level, I met dedicated undergraduate researchers throughout the conference. These interactions inspire me to continue working diligently on my own projects and excite me for the future that will be built by these researchers.”

Papp also commented on how valuable the trip was for her. “Traveling to NCUR in Pittsburgh was an unforgettable experience,” she said. “It was my first time visiting the city, which made the trip even more exciting. What made it truly special, though, was the opportunity to engage with undergraduate researchers from a wide range of disciplines. I learned so much by hearing about their work and perspectives, which broadened my understanding beyond my own field.”

Papp, along with Reinhart, also traveled with her Honors thesis mentor, Dr. Reeves, who has recently won the 2025 Honors College Mentor of the Year award for her longstanding commitment to mentoring Honors students in education. Papp continued, “Being able to share this experience with my advisor, Dr. Stacy, was especially meaningful. She has poured so much into supporting my thesis, and having her there to witness and celebrate this milestone with me was incredibly rewarding. This experience was truly one of a kind, and something I will always treasure.”

The Honors College is proud of its role in helping to sponsor such a life-changing opportunity for such promising young scholars.





THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI**

Honors College  
118 College Drive #5162  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406



*Students at the University Forum  
50th Anniversary Celebration*

## HOW TO STAY CONNECTED!

*Interested in connecting with us  
and supporting the Honors College?  
There are many ways to do so!*

### **HONORS COLLEGE**

Honor House  
118 College Drive #5162  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406  
honors@usm.edu | 601.266.4533

**f** Southern Miss Honors College

**@** HC\_SouthernMiss

### ***Want to support the Southern Miss Honors College as we approach our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary?***

Our work with Honors Scholars and the University community at large is greatly enhanced by the generous contributions of our donors, and no donation is too small to be meaningful. Prior to our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, our goal is to raise \$50,000 to endow the Gold Anniversary Fund, to bring in 50 new donors, and to raise a total of \$500,000 in donations and pledges in contributions to any Honors College fund. You can support students who seek financial assistance to study abroad or advance their research agendas; fund educational costs for students through scholarship endowments; and increase the impact of the Honors College for students across the institution. For more information on how to support the Honors College, call 601.266.4533 or visit [usm.edu/goldenanniversary](http://usm.edu/goldenanniversary).

### ***Are you an Honors College graduate who wants to update your information?***

Use this QR code to access our  
Honors College alumni form.

