‘I feel as though I never left.’
Alum returns home to lead UM Foundation
by Elaine Pugh

During his employment with Price-waterhouseCoopers, Wendell Weakley has worked and lived in several cities. But if home is where the heart is, then he’s been in Oxford the whole time.

“Ole Miss is where my heart is, and my wife and I have many close friends here,” Weakley said. “In some ways, I feel as though I never left, and the university fosters that connectivity.”

Last summer, Weakley left his position as a partner at Price-waterhouseCoopers to become the second president and CEO of the UM Foundation. He accepted the leadership baton from Don Frugé, who recently retired.

Weakley, who has been an active alumni leader for years, takes on the challenge of fueling the unprecedented momentum the university has experienced in private giving over the last decade. Alumni and friends give approximately $50 million annually in private support, and the university endowment stands at almost $415 million.

“Identifying an exceptional leader to fill the foundation position was absolutely crucial considering higher education’s constant need for private support to provide a margin of excellence,” said Chancellor Robert Khayat.

“For years, we have called on our academic leaders to guide our foundation and develop private gifts, and their efforts have been phenomenally successful. Wendell brings the added dimension of corporate-world experience to foundation activities, as well as a deep commitment and understanding of university needs from his longtime involvement as an active alumnus.”

Roger Friou, a Jackson businessman who led the search committee, said he had been impressed with Weakley’s leadership as chairman of the Advisory Council in the School of Accountancy.

“When Don Frugé announced his retirement, I contacted Wendell immediately, and he expressed interest in joining the foundation as its CEO,” Friou said. “I am very pleased..."
Dear Accountancy Alumni:

As usual, things are busy here at the Patterson School of Accountancy. Our enrollment is at an all-time high, with approximately 600 undergraduate students and 100 graduate students. Also, we are extremely proud to report that the Patterson School was recently recognized by the Public Accounting Report. Our undergraduate program is ranked 22nd nationally (up from 23rd a year ago). Our graduate program is in the rankings for the first time ever at 23rd.

But there have been other changes, as well. It is with mixed feelings that I report to you that Chancellor Robert Khayat promoted Dean Morris Stocks to senior vice chancellor for planning and operations. Dr. Stocks has provided outstanding leadership as dean of the Patterson School for more than four years, and I am honored to succeed him as interim dean. While we are sad to see Dr. Stocks move to the Lyceum, we are grateful for his service to the accountancy program. Morris plans to continue to teach a class for us each semester, and also to be involved in our research and service activities.

We are pleased to welcome Erin Miller as the new assistant to the dean. An Ole Miss graduate, Erin has worked for several years here in the Office of Admissions. In the Patterson School, she will advise students, as well as provide administrative support with scholarships, internships and student recruitment. She replaces Dr. Billy Rhodes, who has been promoted and will assume full-time teaching and advising responsibilities primarily at our DeSoto Center and Tupelo campuses. We thank Dr. Rhodes for his years of service as assistant to the dean.

Many of these developments are covered in this issue of Ole Miss Accountant, which contains articles on the successes of our students and the generosity of our alumni. Wendell Weakley is one of the alumni we spotlight in this issue. Wendell assumed the role of president/CEO of the University of Mississippi Foundation on July 1, 2006. We also feature Randy Graves, chief financial officer of Ducks Unlimited in Memphis. Randy has been an extremely active supporter of our accountancy program for many years.

Please visit us when you are on campus. Mark your calendar for Accountancy Weekend, which is scheduled for April 26-28, 2007. The weekend begins with our Accountancy Awards Banquet (slated to be held in the Indoor Practice Facility) on Thursday, April 26. The weekend coincides with Oxford’s Double Decker Festival and a home baseball series with Mississippi State. Look for a schedule of events very soon. It will be a great weekend, and I hope you will join us. Also, the Beta Alpha Psi golf tournament is tentatively scheduled for Friday, May 4. We had a great turnout last year and hope you will plan to be a part of the event this year.

We consider it a true privilege to serve you and our students. Your involvement and support are immeasurably important to us. We appreciate your past support of our efforts in the Patterson School and trust that you will remain committed to these efforts.

Sincerely,

W. Mark Wilder
Interim Dean

Stocks promoted to new UM post; Wilder chosen as interim dean

Mark Wilder, KPMG Lecturer and associate professor, has been named interim dean of the Patterson School of Accountancy. He was appointed Oct. 1, following Morris Stocks’ departure to serve in the newly created position of senior vice chancellor for planning and operations for the Oxford campus.

Wilder joined the Ole Miss faculty in 1993 after completing doctoral studies in accounting at Florida State University. He holds an MBA from the University of South Alabama and a bachelor’s degree from the University of Alabama. His numerous honors include the MSCPA Educator of the Year Award in 2006, the campuswide Elsie Hood Outstanding Teacher Award in 2005 and UM’s Faculty Achievement Award in 2004.

Meanwhile, in his new role as senior vice chancellor, Stocks will be instrumental in helping Ole Miss adapt to its phenomenal growth. Since 2001, enrollment has soared 21 percent, and the budget for the Oxford campus and the Medical Center in Jackson has risen 37 percent.

“Our growth necessitates additional administrative leadership to provide for a vital, continuing planning process for both on-campus and off-campus academic programs,” said Chancellor Robert Khayat. “Clearly, we need someone who will be devoted full time to helping the university prepare for the future.”

“Dr. Stocks has a distinguished record as a member of the faculty and brings enormous administrative experience, having served as associate provost as well as dean,” Khayat said. “We are fortunate he is willing to take on this important responsibility and begin work immediately.”

Morris Stocks
Every student in the Patterson School of Accountancy is learning the craft at one of America’s top accountancy schools. Likewise, every student in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College receives a special blend of creativity, academics and a call to service. Perhaps that’s why accountancy students in the Honors College feel inspired to excel on every level.

“The Honors College has given me so many opportunities to broaden my horizons and learn more about the different ways I can apply my skills to make a difference in my community, whether it be through a chosen career path or through social service,” said Rebecca Lo, a junior from Corinth. “It has provided me with many tools—24/7 computer labs, one-on-one time with honors faculty and staff, peers who also have high goals and expectations. [All of these factors] push me to better my education.”

Among Lo’s most enriching experiences was a trip to Seattle with 40 other sophomore students to perform various acts of service. Such trips are fully subsidized by the Honors College.

“My group went to Northwest Harvest, a hunger-relief agency that distributes food to about 300 food banks around the state of Washington, where we bagged enough frozen peas to feed around a thousand families for a couple of weeks. “Knowing I was a part of helping so many people’s lives, and enjoying the outcome of all the time it took to plan the trip, really made an impact on my life,” said Lo, who said she hopes to obtain her master’s degree in accountancy and become a CPA, then “work with a great company that prides itself on excellence in work and in ethics.”

SMBHC students are immersed in a campus community that allows them to enjoy intellectual novelty and critical thinking. They are encouraged in their pursuit of varied interests and a fuller understanding of the world around them, including a commitment to public service. They come from across the nation, representing all majors. This stunning array of talented students is transforming student culture campuswide, challenging their peers less by competition than by modeling.

Warren Pate of Gallatin, Tenn., said he especially values the personal relationships that he has forged with his professors and with other students as an Honors College student.

“These relationships have had a

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that he will be leading the foundation, and I look forward to working with him.”

Throughout his 29 years with PricewaterhouseCoopers, Weakley advised clients in the banking, manufacturing, distribution and retail industries. His extensive SEC filing experience encompassed numerous initial public, secondary and debt offerings, as well as mergers, acquisitions and special SEC filings. Weakley also has served as a consumer and industrial products and services partner with a retail emphasis, and as a risk management partner.

“Accounting is a people business,” Weakley said. “I’ve learned so much from building close professional relationships with my clients—particularly in regard to seeing different points of view. That experience certainly will impact my relationships with alumni and friend donors as I work to understand their goals and objectives.”

Through the years, Weakley has remained involved with the university, serving as a member of the UM Foundation Board of Directors and as chair of the Accountancy Advisory Council. A member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, he is a CPA in Tennessee and Mississippi.

“Wendell Weakley’s expertise in financial matters is exceptional,” said James Davis, Peery Chair of Accountancy and former dean of accountancy, as well as mentor and friend to Weakley. “In addition, his contacts with Ole Miss alumni and friends over the last 30 years prepare him to successfully lead the foundation into the foreseeable future.

“Wendell is the perfect fit for this leadership role. Throughout his outstanding career, he has continued to give back to the university,” Davis said.

Weakley and his wife, Sue, are the parents of three daughters: Allison Weakley Sutherland of Memphis and Sloan Weakley Galloway of Atlanta, both UM graduates; and Elizabeth Weakley, a University of Colorado student.

Weakley said the support and encouragement he received from the chancellor and foundation directors convinced him to “come home” to full-time university service.

“I’ve worked in many cities and with alumni from a large number of schools,” Weakley said. “It’s clear the attachment our alumni feel toward Ole Miss is very strong.”

UM Foundation taps alum as treasurer, controller

Patterson School of Accountancy graduate Lisa Chow (BAccy 94) has joined new UM Foundation President/Chief Executive Officer Wendell Weakley on a leadership team poised to take the organization to the next level.

As treasurer and controller of the UM Foundation, Chow is involved in all aspects of the foundation’s fiduciary responsibilities and operations: financial reporting and management, the audit and accounting systems, short-term and long-term investment of foundation funds and financial consultation with donors.

When she joined the foundation in fall 2003, one of her goals was to create a financial reporting program that generates monthly, quarterly and annual reports systematically. This strategically placed program now generates timely, concise reports that are geared toward specific users’ needs. “Wendell, foundation VP Sandra Guest and I bring diverse business experience and different perspectives to the table,” Chow says. “I think we will complement each other as we serve the foundation and the university family. Our goal is to be trusted and competent stewards of resources provided by our donors, as well as effective leaders who help strengthen and expand the foundation. The university’s ability to maintain its phenomenal momentum largely depends upon the private support that flows through the foundation.”

A native of Clarksdale, Miss., Chow earned her accountancy degree in December 1994. She joined the foundation from her position as a certified public accountant and tax manager for Deloitte & Touche in Memphis. Her career experience also includes a similar role with Arthur Andersen in Memphis and a position as an internal auditor for the National Bank of Commerce.

“As foundation treasurer, I am answering to my Ole Miss family, my friends and my colleagues,” says Chow. “I have a personal vested interest in my alma mater. Ole Miss is an important part of my life.”
Debits, Credits and Athletics

by Elaine Pugh

From absorbed costs to zero-based budgets, accounting can be overwhelming. Throw in a sport, like football or track, and it’s easy to understand why maintaining good academic standing can be difficult for some student-athletes.

“Student-athletes face big challenges, in general, in juggling their time with various responsibilities,” said Mark Wilder, interim dean of the Patterson School of Accountancy.

Wilder knows those challenges from his experience as a tennis star at the University of Alabama. “Essentially, student-athletes cannot be normal students,” he said. “They may spend 30 or more hours a week in practice or competition, and, given the fiercely competitive nature of the Southeastern Conference, there is pressure for academics to come second to athletics.”

Several accounting majors are currently Ole Miss student-athletes. They include David Traxler, a 6-foot-6-inch, 285-pound offensive lineman; Neil Tabor, a red-shirt pole vaulter; and Billy Tapp, a red-shirt quarterback. The three agree on the difficulties associated with being a student-athlete.

“It’s always hard balancing academics with football. It’s a handful, but with good time management, it’s doable.’”

—BILLY TAPP

“It’s a challenge to find time for both academics and sports,” said Tabor, a 20-year-old sophomore from Olive Branch. “You have to manage your time.”

A walk-on scholarship recipient, Tabor did not compete last season on the track team due to a head injury he suffered after one of his poles snapped in half.

“I took some time off to recover menta-tally,” he said.

Despite the challenges, Tabor’s “favorite” UM accounting professor, Pascal Bizarro, was impressed with Tabor’s performance in his accounting information systems class.

“Neil had perfect attendance,” Bizarro said. “His commitment and work ethic were evident through his excellent grades.”

Traxler also suffered a knee injury early in the football season. “After the injury, my playing time was limited,” Traxler said. But he maintained a positive attitude toward academics in one of the nation’s top accounting schools. Wilder taught Traxler in his ACCY 303 (Financial Accounting I) course last fall, and recalled a bright, serious and conscientious student who didn’t miss one day of class.

“For David to be able to excel in athletics as well as in a rigorous accounting program is a testament to his abilities, his work ethic and his discipline,” Wilder said.

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From the boardroom to the classroom, Reynolds professor brings national experience

By Elaine Pugh

Bringing his national professional experience to Ole Miss accounting students computes into job satisfaction for Rick Elam.

Elam joined the UM faculty in 2000 as the inaugural Reynolds Professor of Accountancy. The position, created to attract someone with national experience in the accounting profession, was funded as part of a $16.5 million gift from The Reynolds Foundation honoring E.H. “Pat” Patterson, a 1955 Ole Miss accountancy alum.

“My experience fit very well with the objectives of the professorship, so I was offered the opportunity,” Elam said. “I’m really proud that I have been able to leverage my experiences with accounting on a national level and bring them into the classroom. I’m glad to help students prepare for life in the accounting profession.”

Peery Chair of Accountancy James Davis, who was dean of accountancy when Elam was hired, said Elam was an outstanding candidate for the prestigious post.

“Rick Elam’s professional achievements are many, and he has helped us gain recognition, as the recent ranking reflects, in the top 25 programs in America,” Davis said. “He is a great asset, and our faculty view him as an outstanding colleague and our students respect him highly.”

Elam, a nationally respected authority on accounting education, joined the UM faculty after serving as dean of the College of Business at Middle Tennessee State University, one of the nation’s largest accredited business schools with 3,000 majors and 111 faculty.

From 1989-1995, he was the education vice president of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, where he was involved in the management of three divisions:
• the Examinations Division, which prepares the Uniform CPA Examination
• the Academic and Career Development Division, which influences the academic community and the public to attract highly qualified people into the accounting profession and ensure they receive the highest quality pre-certification education
• the AICPA Library, which serves the information and research needs of AICPA’s 325,000 members

Among his proudest accomplishments since joining the Ole Miss faculty has been helping bring the AICPA national library to the Oxford campus.

“It’s a big deal that the library has been entrusted to Ole Miss,” he said. “We had a real team effort to bring together the necessary evidence that, because of the quality of our existing library and the quality of the Patterson School of Accountancy, Ole Miss was the right place to house the library of the accounting profession.”

Prior to joining the AICPA in 1989, Elam was dean of the School of Business at Rutgers University (Camden). Previously, he was professor and director of the School of Accountancy at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Elam said he is proud to be associated with UM, one of the best accountancy schools in the nation.

“Our school of accountancy has been a major leader nationally in schools fully focused on preparing people to become CPAs,” he said. “My whole career has been focused on quality education for students entering the accounting profession. It is great to be with a school that attracts such incredibly high-quality students, and to watch those students be aggressively recruited by the accounting profession.”

Elam teaches an accounting policy course, a graduate-level accounting infor-

My experience fit very well … .
I’m glad to help students prepare for life in the accounting profession.’

— RICK ELAM

of Business at Middle Tennessee State University, one of the nation’s largest accredited business schools with 3,000 majors and 111 faculty.
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ing into New York City for years, life here
commuted to work in the Northeast and commut-
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boats,” he said. “I was so happy to see the
involved in the maintenance and care of
Missouri and have always loved being

Elam said that the change of pace from

“Teaching the honors classes is a real treat because the students are all so great,”
he said. “But the students really need to
have more honors classes, so we will offer a
new one in the spring semester, and that
will keep me busy.”

Elam said that one of the challenges of
being a professor is staying up to date on
new technology in the field for his accounting
information systems class.

“That class is heavily based on technol-
ogy and preparing students for the types of
new technology they will see out in the
workplace,” he said. “Technology is rapid-
ly changing, so keeping up with that
requires a lot of work.”

Elam has written numerous profession-
al articles and participated as a speaker at
many national and international educators' conferences. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and economics from Culver-Stockton College and master’s and doctoral degrees in accountancy from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

He is a member of the Mississippi State Board of Public Accountancy, appointed to that position by Gov. Haley Barbour. The board issues CPA licenses and helps regulate the accounting profession. He is also involved in the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy.

Outside of work, Elam enjoys enter-
taining family and friends on his 52-foot
houseboat.

“I grew up around boats on the lake in
Missouri and have always loved being
involved in the maintenance and care of
boats,” he said. “I was so happy to see the
new marina they put in Sardis Lake. We
really enjoy entertaining there and spending
time on the houseboat.”

Elam said that the change of pace from
city life to the bucolic atmosphere of Oxford
has been a welcome respite.

“My wife, Karen, and I enjoy the overall
quality of life in Oxford,” he said. “After hav-
ing worked in the Northeast and commut-
ing into New York City for years, life here
is so much better.”

New assistant in dean’s office to help with advising, internships

by Elaine Pugh

The Patterson School of Accountancy welcomes Erin Miller (BA 03) to fill the new position of
assistant to the dean. A Jackson native, Miller previously served as assistant
director for communications in the Office of Admissions.

“I’m excited about my new job,” said
Miller, who assumed her new post on
Nov. 15. “I love it here, and I like having
contact with the students.”

Miller works with accounting stu-
dents as an academic adviser, helping them enroll in classes, as well as assisting
them with planning internships and
preparing résumés. She also coordinates
department course schedules and per-
forms administrative duties.

“On her very first morning on the
job, Erin advised probably a dozen
accounting students,” said interim dean
Mark Wilder. “She is a quick learner who
is enthusiastic and has a positive attitude.
She has done a great job in her previous
university experience, and we expect her
to be an outstanding assistant to the
dean.”

As an Ole Miss student, the former
Erin Findley was a liberal arts major who
studied English, music and Southern
studies. She sang first soprano in the
Women’s Glee Club and Concert Singers,
and still enjoys singing in church and at
weddings. Last May, she married fellow
singer and Ole Miss graduate Ryan
Miller, a second-year law student at UM.

In her spare time, Miller enjoys
cooking and traveling. Last November,
she spent a week in Paris with family and
friends, where she says she was “bitten
by the travel bug.” She said she fell in
love with France, and would like to visit
other European countries, such as Italy
and Ireland.

Erin Miller

by Kevin Bain

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“The Ole Miss accounting program is
nationally recognized,” said Traxler, a 21-
year-old junior from Jackson. “It’s a lot of
work, and you have to set your priorities.
School comes first, but once you graduate,
there are many options for CPAs.”

Tapp said supportive professors, such as
Dave Nichols, are always a blessing:
“Accounting is a real challenge, but Dr.
Nichols is able to relate the material to us.
He makes the class fun and interesting,
and he’s never afraid to give a student
extra help or time if needed to help us
grasp the material.”

7
University of Mississippi professor has co-authored the latest edition of a best-selling preparatory manual for the certified management accountant examination.

Dale L. Flesher, Arthur Andersen Alumni Lecturer and associate dean in the School of Accountancy, and Irvin Gleim completed the 13th edition of *Gleim’s CMA Review* (Gleim Publishing, Inc., 2006). The four-volume series, which totals 2,360 pages, was released in October. An online course, software and other learning tools are also available.

“Irvin Gleim initially asked me to co-author the *CMA Review* when it began in 1984,” Flesher said. “A retired professor from the University of Florida, Dr. Gleim is well-known for writing and producing certified public accountant review materials.”

Gleim said that Flesher gave him feedback regarding the first edition of the publication. Flesher offered him a number of suggestions to improve the book and expressed an interest in co-authoring it, Gleim added.

“Dr. Flesher has a well-established career of excellence in accounting research and scholarly productivity,” Gleim said. “More importantly, he is extremely conscientious, accommodating and resourceful. One couldn’t ask for a nicer co-author.”

Flesher said the latest edition of the publication marks the first time in its 22-year history that all four volumes have been released in the same month. Subject areas include business analysis, management accounting and reporting, strategic management and business applications.

“The exam itself is administered online in four parts,” Flesher said. “The first three parts consist of 110 multiple-choice questions each. Students who take the examination have three hours to complete each part. Their results are available immediately.”

Students must succeed in passing the first three parts of the CMA before they can take the fourth part, which consists of essay questions, Flesher said. Grades on that part are usually available within two or three weeks, he added.

While Flesher is a veteran researcher and well-published author, he said compiling the *CMA Review* is challenging.

“I have become a jack-of-all-trades when it comes to keeping up with the latest developments in every field of business and accounting,” Flesher said. “There are always changes in tax laws and short-lived fads that have to be included. It’s a constant job keeping up with it all.”

Flesher said the review is usually updated every two to three years, but that

“*The Gleim/Flesher CMA Review* is the leading CMA review program largely due to Dale Flesher. He not only understands the big picture, he also follows through on all the details.’

—IRVIN GLEIM, CO-AUTHOR

“*The Gleim/Flesher CMA Review* is the leading CMA review program largely due to Dale Flesher,” Gleim said. “He not only understands the big picture, he also follows through on all the details.”

Flesher joined the UM faculty in 1977, following four years at Appalachian State University. He received both bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Ball State University and earned a Ph.D. in accounting from the University of Cincinnati.

These new editions bring Flesher’s total catalog to 41 different titles in 75 editions. He has also authored more than 400 articles in more than 100 different journals. The professor holds CMA certificate No. 178—with a Certificate of Distinguished Performance for one of the 10 highest scores in the nation. He also holds CPA, CIA, CFM, CFE and CGFM certificates.
‘Must love ducks’
As CFO for Ducks Unlimited, UM alum strives to save wetlands

by Lee Eric Smith

Many people spend a lifetime searching for their purpose, their life’s calling. Randy Graves found his life’s calling as a 3-year-old on a duck hunting trip with his dad.

“He would sit me in a tree and let me watch,” said Graves, (BBA 73, JD 75). “I’ve been in love with the outdoors ever since.”

Now, as chief financial officer for Ducks Unlimited, Graves plays an instrumental role in the not-for-profit organization’s crusade to preserve and restore America’s wetlands, where he spent so much of his childhood. “Our mission is to save wetlands across North America,” Graves said. “They serve as the world’s kidneys, filtering out impurities in the water and in the air. Wetlands are good for wildlife and people both.”

Ducks Unlimited was established in 1937 by a small group of duck hunters during the Dust Bowl droughts of the 1930s, when waterfowl populations came close to being wiped out. These days, Ducks Unlimited boasts about 800,000 members and is the world’s largest private waterfowl and wetlands conservation organization.

“We work in every state of the Union and every province of Canada,” Graves said. “We’re working to help recreate coastal wetlands, including those in Louisiana and Mississippi. Of every dollar we raise, 85 cents goes straight back into wetland conservation.”

If Graves sounds passionate about his work, it’s because he is. He volunteered with Ducks Unlimited during high school in West Memphis, Ark., and stayed active while at Ole Miss.

“DU was my favorite charity next to church. I was always involved,” he said. “It’s been a passion and love of mine since high school.”

It was during high school that Graves got his first taste of Ole Miss. “My sister was there when I was deciding,” he said. “I came to football games and fell in love with it.”

Like so many other alumni with successful accounting careers, Graves studied under faculty legends Gene Peery and James Davis. “I had no idea what I was going to major in,” he said. “But they took me under their wings, and I fell in love with accounting and went on to law school.”

But it would be a while before Graves landed his dream job. After leaving Ole Miss in 1975, he spent 15 years with Ernst & Young, which was the accounting firm for Ducks Unlimited. In the early 1990s, Graves caught wind of DU moving its headquarters to Memphis.

“I talked with the managing partner and asked to be the on-site partner,” Graves said. “Shortly after, DU made me a ‘Godfather’ offer I couldn’t refuse. They asked me to come and work on the staff as the chief financial officer.”

Graves, of course, leapt at the opportunity. He now oversees both the accounting and legal departments, and an annual budget of $200 million.

“I have not had a single day that I have not wanted to come to work in the past 16 years,” Graves said. “Saving the wetlands and waterfowl is just a pure passion for me, plus I get to utilize the skills I learned at the university.”

He still gives back to the university he loves so much, serving as co-chair of the H. Eugene Peery Chair endowment, and giving personally to the James Davis Scholarship endowment. “I credit both of them with a lot of my success,” Graves said. “It’s because of Jimmy Davis that I’ve been on the accountancy advisory board for so many years.”

And as personally rewarding as his current career is, he recommends students follow a tried-and-true path to success before leaping into the not-for-profit sector.

“Go with a reputable accounting firm for at least five years, until you get your CPA certification,” Graves said. “If you want to work for a not-for-profit, it has to be your passion. If you get hooked up with one like I have, it is a great and rewarding experience.”
University of Mississippi doctoral candidate in accounting has received a national dissertation fellowship from the Academy for Government Accountability.

Annette Pridgen of Jackson was presented with one of two inaugural Dr. Mortimer Dittenhofer Dissertation Research Awards during the American Accounting Association’s Government and Non-Profit Sector Luncheon last year in Washington, D.C.

Mark Wilder, interim dean of accounting, said, “It is a tremendous honor for Annette to receive the Dittenhofer Dissertation Research Award. She has great potential for teaching and research in the governmental accounting area. She is a hard worker with a great attitude. We are extremely proud of her accomplishments.”

The award is named after 93-year-old Mortimer Dittenhofer, a retired professor of accounting at Florida International University, who was on hand to present the awards. Dittenhofer, a full colonel in the U.S. Army, retired from government service before spending nearly three decades in academia.

“Winning the Dittenhofer Dissertation Award is indeed a great honor,” Pridgen said. “Dr. Dittenhofer is a pioneer in advancing government financial management and accountability. As one of the first award recipients, I was especially honored to have Dr. Dittenhofer present the award in person.”

Pridgen’s dissertation research on “Analyzing Government Financial Condition” furthers her personal goals, as well as the academy’s. She plans to complete her doctorate this summer at the Patterson School of Accountancy, with her studies supported by the $12,500 Dittenhofer fellowship.

“‘I love the academic environment, and teaching is my passion.’”

—ANNETTE PRIDGEN

DITTENHOFER DISSERTATION FELLOW

UM doctoral candidate Annette Pridgen (center) is congratulated on receiving the Dittenhofer Dissertation Research Award by UM professor Dale Flesher (left) and the award’s namesake, Mortimer Dittenhofer (right).

Congratulating Pridgen on being chosen for the award, Sridhar Ramamoorti, a partner with Grant Thornton, LLP, and chairman of the AFGA, said, “The entire academy board of trustees wishes you well in your future endeavors, as we move forward in promoting government accountability and transparency.”

Pridgen was selected by Ramamoorti and the academy’s distinguished board of trustees. The board includes members such as Samuel Mok, CFO of the U.S. Department of Labor and vice chairman of the academy; Robert Attmore, chairman of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board; Charles Bowsher, retired comptroller general of the United States; and University of Texas Professor Michael Granof, who led the Dittenhofer selection committee.

“As the academy’s chairman, I was personally very thrilled with the selection,” Ramamoorti said. “The time, the place, the topic and even the stars seemed to have aligned clearly, and maybe it was just meant that Ole Miss was just the place to find the right person to receive this honor.”

An authority on government and internal auditing, Dittenhofer dedicated his entire career to the same objectives as the AFGA: supporting research and education initiatives in bringing transparency and
In memory of Johnny Williams (1950-2006)

Johnny Williams, the university’s longtime chief financial officer, died October 8, 2006, after a long illness. He was 56.

As vice chancellor for administration and finance, Williams supervised the university’s Accounting, Budgeting, Bursar, Human Resources, Information Technology, Physical Plant and Procurement Services departments, as well as several auxiliary services. He oversaw an annual operating budget of more than $411 million.

“Our university has lost a gifted member of its administrative team,” said Chancellor Robert Khayat. “He was instrumental in helping Ole Miss weather some lean financial times by initiating dramatic efficiencies of operation and innovative programs to cross-train employees.

“But more importantly, we have lost a colleague and a friend,” Khayat continued. “Johnny Williams was respected and admired by everyone from the most junior custodial worker to the members of the IHL board.”

As a member of the chancellor’s cabinet, Williams worked closely with the IHL and other state agencies, and led the university’s management team through a comprehensive process re-engineering. The university’s electric power generation plant was named in his honor in April 2005.

Williams is survived by his wife Carolyn; sons Stephen and Mark, both graduates of UM; and a daughter, Emily, who is currently an Ole Miss student. And while he certainly was a financial wizard, to many others at Ole Miss, Williams was a leader, visionary, mentor and friend.

“He was one of the finest men I’ve ever come in contact with,” said Terron Jones, director of the UM Physical Plant Department. “He has been quite involved in the lives and careers of many people who have worked with him, and involved in the lives of their families as well. He will be missed by his staffs, both here at Ole Miss and at several other institutions around the country.”

In fact, one of Williams’ colleagues will follow in his footsteps. Oxford native Larry Sparks (BAccy 84) was named vice chancellor for administration and finance in December.

“In the past several years, Larry Sparks has provided valuable leadership in helping streamline our operations, as well as working closely with Johnny Williams to find creative solutions to our challenges,” Khayat said. “We are grateful for Larry’s service and look forward to his continued leadership as vice chancellor.”

Sparks, a certified public accountant, earned a master’s of business administration from Mississippi College.

“It’s great to be part of the Ole Miss family; however, I’ve also been fortunate to have experiences with many other institutions, which gives me a broad perspective of higher education,” Sparks said. “There’s no place I’d rather be than The University of Mississippi.”

In 2005, Ole Miss named its electrical plant in honor of Johnny Williams, who was instrumental in the plant’s construction.
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accountability to government financial management and forging relationships among government, business and academia to further such goals.

Dale Flesher, associate dean and Arthur Andersen Lecturer in the Patterson School, accompanied Pridgen to the awards banquet. Flesher has long known Dittenhofer, who provided him with the idea for his own dissertation topic more than 30 years ago, calling him “a legend in India.”

Patricia Patrick of Pennsylvania State University won the award along with Pridgen.

Pridgen spent some 14 years auditing government agencies, which influenced her to pursue research in this area.

“I developed a keen interest in government financial condition,” she said. “There have been major changes in reporting government financial condition over the past few years, and my interest in this topic has increased.”

A graduate of Jackson State University with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting, Pridgen worked from 1986 until 2000 in the Office of the State Auditor of Mississippi, rising from intermediate auditor to manager. She then served for a year as an internal auditor in the Department of Human Services before joining the JSU accounting faculty. She entered the doctoral program in accountancy at Ole Miss in 2004. She has taught the government accounting course at UM’s DeSoto Center in Southaven and Principles of Accounting and Governmental Accounting on the Oxford campus.

She is actively involved in the Association of Government Accountants, American Accounting Association’s Government and Nonprofit Section, and Mississippi Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Pridgen plans to continue her work in the academic field. “I love the academic environment, and teaching is my passion,” she said. “My doctoral program has provided me with the skills needed to succeed in conducting academic research. I am eager to continue to add to the body of accounting knowledge through research.”
positive influence on my life," said Pate, a junior who plans to pursue a master’s in accountancy and possibly enter law school. “The Honors College has provided me with an environment where the standard barriers that exist between professors and students are broken down because the lecture-based approach toward learning is replaced by interactive and stimulating round-table discussions.”

Jeannie Blair, a junior from Dallas, considers the Honors College and the Patterson School of Accountancy a winning combination that has enabled her to accomplish her academic goals.

“The Honors College has been a very important part of my academic career,” Blair said. “It provides students with unique opportunities for strong academics, including smaller, more concentrated classes.

“My classes in accounting have been my most challenging so far, and I have loved it. The professors are one of a kind; they are so knowledgeable in their field and are always available for extra help.”

Blair changed her major after enrolling at Ole Miss.

“I decided to switch my major after I took Principles of Accounting classes and realized that my successes pointed to a possible future job in accountancy,” she said, adding that she wants to become a CPA and pursue a career in accounting, “but my most challenging to date has been a very significant accomplishment,” said Dale Flesher, associate dean and the Arthur Andersen Alumni Lecturer.

The University of Texas and Brigham Young University hold the top two places in both graduate and undergraduate programs, repeating their 2005 rankings. The top-ranked SEC school for 2006 is the University of Florida at No. 13 in both programs. The only other SEC schools ranked higher than Ole Miss are the universities of Alabama and Georgia.

A new national ranking places The University of Mississippi’s undergraduate and graduate programs in accounting education in the nation’s top 25.

The Oct. 30 issue of the Public Accounting Report slots Ole Miss at No. 22 in undergraduate education, up one spot from the 2005 report. Also, UM’s graduate accountancy program cracked the 2006 list at No. 23 after being unranked in 2005.

“We have long known that our program in the Patterson School of Accountancy is among the best programs in the country and produces outstanding graduates who consistently rise to the challenges of professional competition,” said Chancellor Robert Khayat. “Recognition by the Public Accounting Report—the independent newsletter of the accounting profession—is a high compliment for our faculty, students and graduates.”

More than 1,000 schools in the United States offer accounting programs, and about 500 of those, including UM, are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, or AACSB International, as being among “the best accounting and business programs in the world.”

“Being in the top 25 is indeed a significant accomplishment,” said Dale Flesher, associate dean and the Arthur Andersen Alumni Lecturer.

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“The ranking addresses the perception of how well our graduates will perform,” said former accountancy dean Tonya Flesher, the Arthur Andersen Professor of Accountancy. “This perception is based on the success of past graduates, the national reputation of the faculty and the availability of the largest accountancy library in the world.” Flesher was referring to the AICPA National Library of the Accountancy Profession, which is permanently housed on the Oxford campus.
The newest display at Conner Hall is the James W. Davis Scholarship in Accountancy plaque, honoring donors who have generously given at least $5,000 to support the scholarship. Pictured here are Rick Elam (left), Reynolds Professor of Accountancy, and James W. ‘Jimmy’ Davis, who holds the distinguished Peery Chair of Accountancy in the Patterson School and has been a faculty member since 1965. To find out how you can support the scholarship and add your name to the plaque, contact the dean’s office at 662-915-7468.