

THE

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Legacy

EDITION

YEARS

OF TUITION GUARANTEE pg. 2

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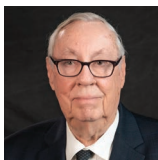
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MCC FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT

Meridian Community College Foundation attracts private investment to the College by fostering individual and corporate philanthropy so the College can strengthen its commitment to excellence.



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► **NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
EMBRACING HOPE:
BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION AND GENEROSITY



Dr. Leia Agnew Hill

While the holiday season has come and gone, the spirit of generosity remains strong.

With the arrival of a new year, I'm filled with a sense of hope and excitement. It's a time for looking back, making resolutions, and recommitting to the values and goals that drive our community forward.

At MCC, we've always been about providing quality education and life-changing opportunities to students from all backgrounds who want a better future.

One of the most powerful ways we can contribute to this mission is by supporting the MCC Foundation. Year after year, your generosity has played a crucial role in making higher education accessible to all, regardless of their financial circumstances. Through your philanthropy, you have empowered countless students to reach for their dreams and achieve their goals.

The start of a new year is a reminder of how much of an impact our contributions can have. When you support the MCC Foundation, you're not only helping individual students but also building a brighter future for our whole community. Your donations directly fund student scholarships, ensuring that talented and motivated students can afford to study at MCC. The positive effects of your generosity are seen in our graduates, who go on to make important contributions in their fields and give back to our community in meaningful ways.

At the heart of it all you will find the Tuition Guarantee program, a program that not only alleviates financial burdens for our local Meridian and Lauderdale County high school graduates but also provides them with the assurance that the cost of their education will remain stable throughout their time at MCC.

As we embrace the possibilities of a new year, I invite you to join us in ensuring the impact of the

Tuition Guarantee program by supporting the Tuition Guarantee Endowment. Your contributions will secure this initiative for generations. Every donation, no matter its size, is a step towards creating an environment where dreams can come true, talents can thrive, and opportunities are plentiful.

In 2024, I also encourage you to explore ways to engage personally in our mission. Your unique perspectives and passions can inspire and uplift our MCC family, making a lasting impact. Together, we are shaping a future where education opens doors to brighter futures and I want to express my sincere appreciation for your commitment to Meridian Community College and the Foundation, which continues to be the driving force behind our shared success.

Dr. Leia Agnew Hill
 Vice President for Advancement
 Executive Director of the MCC Foundation

TUITION GUARANTEE: A GODSEND FOR ONE OF THE FIRST SIGNEES

Twenty-seven years ago, Brandi Cole was one of the first signees to take advantage of a new innovative program offered at Meridian Community College.

"I think it's an honor to be a part of the first year," the then-Meridian High School senior said, referring to the College's newly revealed Tuition Guarantee program. Cole and classmate John Kreutz were the first two students to enroll in the program and were spotlighted in news stories in 1996.

The MCC Foundation agreed to underwrite any part of the tuition not covered by other financial aid for any 1996 graduate of the six Lauderdale County high schools. The guarantee would mean students could pursue an education without the barriers that might have otherwise prevented them.

More than 8,000 students have been helped through Meridian Community College's Tuition Guarantee program since its inception 27 years ago. The MCC Foundation and its board of directors work diligently to raise funds needed for the program.

Today, at 45, Cole is now Dr. Brandi Cole-Myers, living in Columbus, Georgia, working for the Department of Veterans Affairs as a primary care and women's health provider. Her scope of work includes caring for a panel of 1,000 veterans and providing specialized care to our nation's defenders.

She recalled wanting to go to college out of state when she graduated from Meridian High. "However, I found out I was pregnant."

Dr. Cole-Myers added, "There was never the idea not to attend college. I knew we did not have money set aside for tuition. My parents were preparing to borrow money for my education," she said.



Dr. Brandi Myers

"It was a godsend that Tuition Guarantee was available," she said.

Her parents, Sylvia and John Cole, were happy about MCC's program. "It was considered a blessing, and it removed the financial burdens of attending school," she said. "My heart would have been very heavy knowing that my parents incurred debt for my education."

Dr. Cole-Myers received her associate degree in nursing from MCC. Nursing, she said, chose her. "My mother was a nurse. Nurses were synonymous with caring, healing, and love. As a professional, I wanted these attributes to embody the delivery of my time and services," she said.

Climbing the nursing ranks, Dr. Cole-Myers received her doctorate of nursing practice specializing in healthcare systems change and leadership in February 2021 from Chamberlain University with highest honors. "I am motivated to bring and maintain caring in nursing," she added.

Dr. Cole-Myers and her husband, Marblouis, a two-plus decade Army veteran, have a blended family of four adult children. "Angel graduated from Penn State, with a bachelor of arts degree in nutritional science. Daija is a pharmacy technician and embarking upon a career change," she said.

She added, "Mallory graduated with her bachelor of arts degree in radiation technology from Augusta University and her master's degree in informational technology from ECPI

University. Devon is an alum of Howard University and George Mason University. He is a national director with an organization to help suitable candidates pursue political offices across the country and remains a community engagement activist and advocate for social and public policy change."

Dr. Cole-Myers said, "We are blessed beyond measure to serve people through the means God has provided for us."



If you would like to contribute to the MCC Foundation in support of the Tuition Guarantee program, please contact the Meridian Community College Foundation at 601.484.8688 or visit meridiancc.edu/guarantee.

SCAN HERE

COLLEGE'S EAGLES LEADERSHIP CONVOCATION ENTERS SECOND YEAR

WITH NEW CLASS READY TO IMPACT COLLEGE, COMMUNITY



Starting its second year, Meridian Community College's Eagles Leadership Convocation (E.L.C.) is back with a new class of MCCers learning how to impact their college and community.

This in-house professional development and leadership program, sponsored by the MCC Foundation, focuses on building strong leaders throughout the College by concentrating on communication, leadership, and team-building skills to improve MCC and create opportunities for personal growth and success.

Participants are Shaquita Hopson Alfonso, associate director of veterans and military services and C2C coach; Laureta Chislom, executive assistant to the president; Tim Cole, director of custodial and support services; Jamila Brown Coleman, adult basic education instructor; Eric Griffin, commercial truck driving program instructor; Christopher Haralson, athletic trainer and sports information director; Jeanette Howell, support services coordinator; Angie Pickard, human resources director; Erin Richardson, instructional design specialist; and Terrell Taylor, art instructor and Casteel Gallery director.

MCC President Dr. Tom Huebner and Dr. Leia Agnew Hill, vice president for institutional advancement and executive director of the MCC Foundation, are facilitators for E.L.C.

The group meets monthly on campus through May 2024, covering topics including diversity and inclusion, legal issues and human resources, crisis and meeting management, and building relationships and teams. At the end of the year, E.L.C. members will present a group project that spotlights a campus need and their solution for it.

After completing the nine-month program, E.L.C. participants will receive a \$500 stipend.



Christopher Haralson

The E.L.C. Class of 2024 is gaining ground on the program's purpose. "I want to understand our institution better," said Haralson, explaining his eagerness to develop his leadership style and be a member of this group.

"I want to be a part of the team that comes together and solves the institution's problems, not be someone who complains and doesn't take action to improve it," he added.

To broaden her knowledge of the institution, Coleman said she wanted to become well-versed in the College so that when community residents approach her with questions about MCC, she can direct them to the appropriate person and department while building relationships with the community.



Dr. Leia Agnew Hill, left, Tim Cole, Dr. Tom Huebner, Erin Richardson, Jeanette Howell, Jamila Brown Coleman, Angie Pickard, Shaquita Hopson Alfonso, Terrell Taylor, Christopher Haralson, Eric Griffin, Laureta Chislom, and Amanda Bratu.



Larkin Kennedy

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT ON OCHSNER RUSH HEALTH

With a partnership that spans over half a century, Ochsner Rush Health and Meridian Community College continue to join forces to benefit the community they serve, and this collaboration has had a profound impact on the health system, the community, and the local workforce.

“Ochsner Rush Health and MCC have a long-standing history of partnership where education is valued and preparation of the next generation of healthcare providers is a priority,” said Larkin Kennedy, CEO of Ochsner Rush Health.

In 1944, Rush joined forces with Meridian Junior College (now Meridian Community College) and initiated the state's first junior college and hospital nursing program. Since then, Ochsner Rush Health has donated over \$1 million for nursing education and a building for allied health training.

The health system employs hundreds of nurses who received their training from MCC. “Both MCC and Ochsner Rush Health are vibrant economic engines for our community,” Larkin added, “and educating and employing more nurses and allied health professionals will continue to benefit the communities we serve.”





A few of the Ochsner Rush employees who graduated from MCC

The College's Workforce Development Program at MCC has also provided opportunities for certification achievements, continuing education, and personal development for the health system. In addition, the two have delivered customized classes in medical billing, leadership management, computer training, admissions, and customer service.

Ochsner Rush Health is an East Mississippi and West Alabama economic pillar. More than 2,400 people are employed by Ochsner Rush Health, making it one of the largest employers in the Meridian area and one of Mississippi's top 50 largest employers.

The company is also investing in the future workforce, with 373 students currently performing clinical rotations in its facilities. As a system, Ochsner Health is nationally recognized as a top workplace, earning spots on lists such as Becker's Healthcare 150 Top Places to Work in Healthcare, Forbes' 2022 Best Employers for Veterans, and Newsweek's America's Greatest Workplaces for Diversity.



Larkin Kennedy with members of the Eagle baseball team

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Cathy A. McFerrin
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Dan Neely
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Jade Parkes
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Angela Marie Pickard
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Natasha Randle
Ms. Baleigh Michelle Riddle
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Eugenia Moore Roberson
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Myke Shirley
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Mr. Michael Ray Smith
Derrick and Whitney Stevens
Lauren Stokes
Lance Strickland
Mr. Dillon Sudduth
Susan G. Taylor
Martha Thomas
Michelle D. Thompson
Keith Turner
Dr. and Mrs. J. Lee Valentine
Dr. and Mrs. Richard Vise
Martha L. Walker
Oriona Walker
Flora Watts
Ms. Jennifer Pickard Webb
Crystal L. Webster
Christopher Williams
Mrs. Mary Faye Wilson
Samuel Wilson
Margaret S. Womble



C.D. Smith and Hampton Thames



C.D. Smith address the guests



Amanda Bratu, Diane Delk, Theresa Hogan, Dr. Leia Agnew Hill, Brandy Hill, and Courtney Pitts

LIFETIME DONORS, LONG-TIME BOARD MEMBERS CELEBRATED AT ANNUAL GATHERING

The Meridian Community College Foundation welcomed newly inducted honorees with the Lifetime Giving Awards presentation when the Foundation hosted its annual membership celebration at Northwood Country Club.

Also recognized were MCC Foundation Board Members who have devoted 20-plus years of service to the Foundation. "These dedicated individuals have served for over two decades, shaping our mission and inspiring us with their commitment to education and community," said Dr. Leia Agnew Hill, vice president for institutional advancement and executive director of the MCC Foundation.

The board members included Tommy Dulaney, M.L. Waters, Russell Thompson, Gerry Purvis, Alex Weddington, BB Archer, Veldore Young-Graham, Doug Deweese, Robert Smith, Mark McPhail, and Tony Pompelia.

Dr. Hill added, "They've not only invested their time and resources but also their hearts into our cause, transforming countless lives."

This year's celebration marked the third year that individuals and groups were spotlighted for their continued lifetime giving support. Lifetime giving levels are grouped in categories that include the Emerald Circle,

\$1 million-plus; 1937 Society Platinum Wings, \$250,000 to \$999,999; 1937 Society Gold Wings, \$100,000 to \$249,999; 1937 Society Silver Wings, \$50,000-\$99,999, and 1937 Society Bronze Wings, \$25,000-\$49,999.

Members inducted during the 2023 Members Celebration for their lifetime giving were Dart Foundation, Mid-South Welding Supply, Slay Steel, Inc., and Chip and Lisa Taylor, Gold Wings; Community Foundation of East Mississippi, Cooper Meat Packers, Inc., The Ernestine L. Lenoir Charitable Trust, Helen and Harold Meyer Jr., and Joseph Price, Silver Wings; and Allie Cat Run & Festival Fund, Archer Architecture, PLLC, Clearspan Components, Inc., Mississippi Community College Foundation, MarLynne Moore, New South Ford, Fred Poitevent, Howard Sanderford and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wile, Bronze Wings.



Dr. Leia Agnew Hill

Dr. Hill applauded the donors. "We are truly overwhelmed by the impact of so many of you for so long. I know you know this, but your dollars matter. Not only do they impact the lives of real people, they impact our community and our state," she said.



Betty Purvis, Gerry Purvis, and C.D. Smith



Leslie Carruth and William Carruth



Tanya Thompson and Dr. Lela Agnew Hill



Russell Thompson and Diane Delk



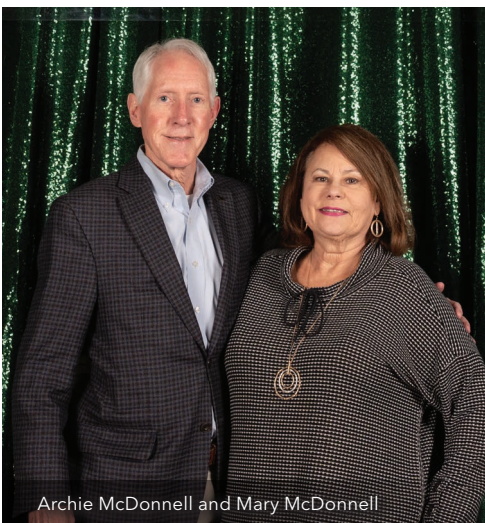
C.D. Smith and Tommy Dulaney



Kajsa Cole



Rebecca Combs Dulaney, Robert Ward, and Candy Ward



Archie McDonnell and Mary McDonnell



Wanda McPhail and Dr. Tommy McDonald



Adrian Tureaud Mosley and Carol Dean



LIFETIME GIVING RECOGNITION

EMERALD CIRCLE

Anderson Regional Health System
 Ochsner Rush Health
 The Phil Hardin Foundation
 David Quave
 The Riley Foundation
 Structural Steel Services

PLATINUM WINGS

Marty and Linda Davidson
 Earnest Workers Circle King's Daughters & Sons Rest
 Home Foundation
 The Emma McCain Trust
 Gene Haas Foundation
 Kim Gianakos
 Hardy Graham, Sr.
 Ann and Eddie Holladay
 Clay and Laura Holladay
 J. Robert and Gloria Malone
 Dudley Maples/Maples Gas Company, Inc.
 The Paul & Sherry Broadhead Foundation

GOLD WINGS

AT&T
 Ann and Jimmy Alexander
 Anderson Support & Development Foundation, Inc.
 Atlas Roofing
 Citizens National Bank
 Mr. and Mrs. James Covington
Dart Foundation
 Glen and Janice Deweese Family
 Estate of Betsy Barrell Weems
 Estate of George Pugh
 Estate of Jean Ellen Winright
 Estate of Lemann H. and Wilma S. Bounds
 Fred Gray

Great Southern Bank
 G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery Foundation
 Kahlmus Family
 KTS Holdings LLC
 James E. McGinnis, Jr.
 Meridian Coca-Cola Bottling Company
 Meridian Star
 Mabel and Carl Merritt

Mid-South Welding Supply
 Mississippi Board of Nursing
 Premier Outdoor Advertising
 Betty and Gerry Purvis
 Regions Bank
 Barbaree and S.A. Rosenbaum
Slay Steel, Inc.
Chip and Lisa Taylor
 T H & Allie R Hobgood Educational Trust
 Valley Services, Inc.
 Vital Care, Inc.
 Waters International Trucks
 Norma Webb
 Frank Charles Winstead

SILVER WINGS

BankPlus
 Ann and Howard Barnett
 George Wade Bates
 Greg Cartmell
 Charles L. Young Sr. Foundation
 Community Bank - Meridian
Community Foundation of East Mississippi
Cooper Meat Packers, Inc.
 Saramel and W.B. Crooks
 D & E Construction Company, Inc.
 Corey and Beth Anne Dickerson
The Ernestine L. Lenoir Charitable Trust
 The Estate of Lou Weddington Hart

Donia and Don Evans
 Jimmie Evans
 Harry Freeman
 Gipson Steel, Inc.
 Maurice Hall
 Henderson Steel Corporation
 Hotel & Restaurant Supply / Jerry and Marilyn Greene
 Kemp Williams Steverson & Bernard, P.A.
 Leading Edges
 Clifton Lee
 Wendy Lerner
 Lisi Inc DBA Nick & Al's New York Style Pizzeria
 Larry and Lisa Love
 Sara Jo and Jack Malone
 MCC Faculty/Staff Association
 Meridian Council of Garden Clubs, Inc.
 Meridian Kiwanis Club
 Meyer & Rosenbaum, Inc.
Helen and Harold Meyer Jr.
 Arthur Nelson
Joseph Price
 Michael Reed and Family
 Mary Ann and Richard Riley
 I.A. Rosenbaum
 Sara and William Scaggs
 Rebekah Toney
 Van Zyverden, Inc.
 The Weddington Family
 Joe and Mary Ann Wilkerson
 WTOK TV

BRONZE WINGS

1st Mississippi Federal Credit Union
 A & B Communications, Inc.
 A & B Electric, Inc.
Allie Cat Run & Festival Fund
Archer Architecture, PLLC
 Arjen Lagendijk Architect, PLLC
 Laura and E.B. Bass
 Billy Beal
 Renee and Greg Boggan
 Bonita Properties, Inc.
 Norma and Tom Bourdeaux
 Margene and Robert Bullock
 Fran Byrd
 CEFCO Convenience Stores
Clearspan Components, Inc.
 Betsy and Leonard Cobb
 Lurline Cook
 Daniels Roofing Company, Inc.
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 Howard Industries, Inc.
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 Hilda and Clarence Roberts
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 Saint-Gobain Corporation Foundation
Howard Sanderford
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 The William Lewis and Mae Carroll Thornton Family
 Trustmark National Bank
 Cary and Faith Vaughn
 Billy Wansley
 Robert F. Ward Family
 Randy and Marcia Sanders West
 Garnett Wilbourn
Fred and Sissie Wile
 Witherspoon & Compton Attorneys at Law
 WOKK FM Radio

NEW FACE TO LIFETIME QUEST: COURTNEY PITTS



Courtney Pitts will admit she's a planner.

It's a skill that serves her well as Meridian Community College's Lifetime Quest coordinator and Alumni Association program coordinator. Pitts, who has worked at the College for five years, came to this Foundation position in July 2023.

Lifetime Quest is MCC Foundation's learning in retirement institute that offers mini-programs, trips, and events created specially for its members. It includes monthly lunch presentations, reading and discussion groups, bingo quests, holiday outings, annual meetings, and more. Members get free access to on-campus Arts & Letters performances.

Pitts takes her planning seriously. "Right now, I have six months in advance planned, and my goal is to have an entire year planned. That way, it gives everybody time to know what's coming up," Pitts said.

Though she's new to the Foundation office, Pitts is a familiar face on campus; she oversaw MCC's College 4 Kids, a two-week summer program for youths ages 6 to 12. "Planning for that program was helpful," she said, adding, "Making connections with the teachers in College 4 Kids helps me with planning classes and events in Lifetime Quest."

Lifetime Quest has over 260 members, primarily retirees aged 50 to 97. Pitts shared, "You don't have to be retired to be a member, but most of our members are retired."

Pitts, who was reared by military parents, has lived in Maine and California and graduated from Enterprise High School. She and her husband make their home in Enterprise with their children Cooper, 8, and Bailey, 4. Pitts is also an MCC alumna; she earned her associate of applied science degrees in Medical Office Technology and Coding and Billing Technology. She also holds a bachelor's degree in healthcare services from Mississippi State University-Meridian.



JOIN OTHER ALUMS

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE - AND THAT INCLUDES BECOMING A MEMBER OF MCC'S ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.

Courtney Pitts, Lifetime Quest and alumni relations coordinator, said there are no fees to join the association. The membership benefits are plentiful, including being informed of College events, networking with other alumni, and advocating for an institution that provides quality education.

To Join - alums can go to www.meridiancc.edu/alumniassociation

There's also a social media channel facebook.com/groups/mccalumniassociation

For details, contact Pitts at MCC at 601.484.8696, or email courtney.pitts@meridiancc.edu

CASTEEL'S LEGACY THRIVES WITH DONATION TO MCC FOUNDATION



Dr. Judith Miller

Painter, sculptor, writer, and teacher Homer Casteel left a legacy that continues to inspire.

Many of his works comprise Meridian Community College's art collection. Thanks to Dr. Judith Miller and her husband Ronnie, another of Casteel's work has been added to the group - a numbered lithograph detailing a bullfighting scene with the words, "The emotion generated in the corrido depends on the interpenetration of two theoretical planes ... Garcia Lorca."

"It's just gorgeous," said Terrell Nicholson-Taylor, MCC art instructor and curator for the MCC Casteel Gallery, when she saw the donation to the MCC Foundation.

The Millers, who now live in Magnolia Springs, Alabama, were long-time residents of Meridian. Judith is an MCC alumna. Ronnie, a speech and theater instructor, retired in 2017 as chairman of the fine arts division. He also retired as executive/artistic director from the Meridian Little Theatre. Judith explained the print was given to her by one of

Casteel's students several years ago; she thought the student may have studied with Casteel while the artist was in Mexico.

Casteel, former head of the art department, taught at the College for nearly two decades until he died in 1972. His work was inspired by Mexican culture, and he met his wife, Concha Marie de la Concepcion Garcia Gonzalez de Aragon, while studying in Mexico in 1949.

Casteel supported native-Mississippian art and was a fan of bullfighting. In his 1953 book, *The Running of the Bulls*, Casteel penned in the preface, "I wrote this book because I like bullfights and I would like other people to like them. I believe most people would if they knew what was happening."

Judith said, "There are probably a lot of other locals who have Casteels. Maybe it (this donation to the Foundation) will kickstart a return home."

SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH EDUCATION

FIVE WAYS TO GIVE TO THE MCC FOUNDATION

President's Roundtable - PRT comprises businesses and individuals committed to supporting MCC's Tuition Guarantee program.

Annual Giving Fund - The Annual Giving Fund consists of gifts from individuals interested in supporting the College through scholarships, program support, or unrestricted funds.

Memorials and Honoraria - Donations are accepted as memorials and as living tributes. Acknowledgments are made using cards depicting a scene from campus.

Endowments - Long-term investment options for those who want to establish a legacy gift. Once the endowment is complete, it is never breached, creating a never-ending source for scholarships and awards.

Planned giving - Bequests, insurance, annuities, and trusts that list the MCC Foundation as the beneficiary.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE



SCAN HERE

MCC'S DR. PAIGE PENNINGTON RECEIVES 2024 CROOKS TEACHING CHAIR TO ADVANCE DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION



Dr. Paige Pennington

To enhance dental hygiene students' education experience, Meridian Community College Director of Dental Programs Dr. Paige Pennington has been awarded the MCC Foundation's 2024 William Crooks Teaching Chair.

The Crooks Chairholder can initiate or refine course or program development, purchase books, materials, and/or equipment to improve a course or program, and/or develop new programs, performances, or events.

Mississippi law now allows dental hygienists to administer local anesthesia. With the passage of the new statute, Dr. Pennington and fellow MCC dental program instructors will focus on teaching students how to administer local anesthesia. The award will support the development of didactic modules and hands-on training, including simulators for students to practice and refine their skills. "It's important that our students feel confident in their technical skills before actually giving an injection to a patient the first time," she said.

The Crooks Teaching Chair, one of the first endowed chairs in any Mississippi community college and among a few endowed chairs in the nation's community colleges, celebrates the life of Crooks, his dedication to education, and the building of community in East Mississippi.

Dr. Pennington, who has been a part of MCC since 2015, shared her excitement upon receiving the award. "We are absolutely thrilled to win this award! We can create an excellent skills lab now," she said, explaining with the support of dental program colleagues Karen McPherson, Kelli Bounds, and Shannon McCharen, they will implement this skill into the Dental Hygiene Technology curriculum, ensuring that students are prepared to meet the profession's standards.

With a strong background in dentistry and education, Dr. Pennington was drawn to MCC by the recommendation of a friend and former classmate, Dr. Jennifer Avara-Lott. The College's reputation for providing a solid educational foundation and a positive work environment for faculty members further solidified Dr. Pennington's decision to come to MCC.

Dr. Pennington teaches core dental sciences such as dental anatomy, embryology, histology, general and oral pathology, pharmacology, dental ethics and laws, and head and neck anatomy, in addition to overseeing the Dental Hygiene and Dental Assistant programs. Her commitment to excellence in teaching was recognized when she received other MCC Foundation awards, the Dr. Clarence W. Roberts Teacher of the Year in 2023, and the MCCer of the Month in April 2021.

She holds a bachelor of arts in biology and psychology from Converse College and a doctor of dental medicine degree from the University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Dentistry.

MCC FOUNDATION TRAVEL DELIVERS DREAM TRIP TO EUROPE



Last summer, Dr. Sarah Abernathy, a seasoned traveler and a member of the Meridian Community College Foundation, traveled with her husband and 29 others through the landscapes of Austria and Switzerland.

“It was phenomenal; absolutely phenomenal. It was like a storybook,” Dr. Abernathy said, recalling the must-do excursion on her ‘bucket list.’

This European trip was one that the Foundation Travel had canceled in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since good things come to those who wait, this venture was tops: they cruised the Danube River, explored Salzburg, sampled wines from the Alps, discovered Berne, Interlaken, and Lucerne, and strolled through medieval castles.

Praising the meticulous planning and attention to detail the MCC Foundation provides, Dr. Abernathy credits Dr. Leia Agnew Hill, vice president for institutional advancement

and executive director of the MCC Foundation, and Tanya Thompson, travel agent, for making the trips memorable. “The details they coordinated - the tour, the location, all the lodging and accommodations, activities - it was just really a well-thought-out trip,” Dr. Abernathy said.

“And we so enjoyed it,” she added. “It was absolutely one of the best travel experiences I have had.”

Dr. Hill said, “Seeing Dr. Abernathy and our fellow travelers enjoy their European adventure was incredibly fulfilling. I think that’s the best part of the program, experiencing these wonderful destinations with a unique group of people. The shared experience is special and has strengthened our determination to continue creating unforgettable journeys for everyone in our community.”

The MCC Foundation Travel program values input from its travelers when planning future adventures. “Many people share with us destinations that have resonated with them; we listen and incorporate those ideas into where we go and the experiences we offer,” Dr. Hill added.

NEW ENDOWMENT HONORS LIFE, WORK OF FORMER MCC COUNSELOR



Margaret Taylor Blalock

"Mom was a single parent, and those parents are dear to my heart and were to my mom, too."

That's how Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, resident Chip Taylor described his mother, Margaret Taylor Blalock. Blalock, who worked at Meridian Community College from 1968-1979, and passed away on March 7, 2022. She was 95.

A dedicated counselor and compassionate mentor who touched the lives of countless students, Blalock

saw helping others as her mission. "Mom was always there for her students, encouraging and helping them reach their educational goals, but also encouraging and counseling them in life," Taylor said.

In a tribute to her and a commitment to support future generations of students in need, the Margaret Taylor Blalock Student Resource Center Endowment has been established by Chip and Lisa Taylor of Oklahoma City, and funded through the MCC Foundation.

Taylor graduated from Meridian High School in 1977 and pursued his degree at the University of Oklahoma.

After learning about the College's food pantry and its role in providing for the needs of students and their families, the idea of expanding it and supporting it long-term seemed ideal for Taylor. "It fits perfectly in a way I could honor my mom and give back to the community that was such a wonderful place to grow up in," he said.

Taylor explained that his mom and dad were teachers and coaches during his early years in Mississippi. When his parents divorced in 1967, "My mom

knew she had to further her education to better support taking care of raising my brother and me," he said. So, Blalock went to Mississippi State University and earned her master's degree in one year. Coming to what was then Meridian Junior College was fate.

"She went to Meridian for a counselor's position at a high school, but while standing in line for the interview, someone suggested that with her credentials, she should go to the Meridian Junior College campus and interview for a position they had. Mom did so, and they hired her on the spot," Taylor said.

In 1979, Blalock left Meridian to join Hinds Junior College in Jackson, where she pioneered a program for displaced homemakers. She continued her career in education until her retirement in 1985 before eventually relocating to Oklahoma City in 2005 to be closer to family.

Described as humble and soft-spoken, Taylor believes his mom would be overjoyed with the endowment in her name. However, he noted that she would likely be modest about the recognition.

OCAMPO'S LEGACY SHINES ON: ENDOWMENT HONORS MCC INSTRUCTOR

Colleagues, students, and friends all agree: When walking into a room where Tanya Ocampo was, they first noticed her smile.

Tanya Renia Ocampo, Meridian Community College Medical Office Management Technology Program instructor, passed away in November 2021. She was remembered for her enthusiastic attitude and passionate concern for her students. "She was so outgoing. Once she was in someone's life, they were in it," said Flora Sumrall, a colleague, MCC instructor, and program coordinator for Accounting

Technology and Business Office Management Technology.

Ocampo, born in California in 1979, received her bachelor's degree in healthcare administration from Mississippi State University. She began working at MCC in 2012.

In addition to her teaching duties at MCC, she was an advisor to the College's chapter of Phi Beta Lambda and served as a medical coder for Rush Health Systems. Ocampo, friends remembered, loved to travel, paint, take photos, and enjoyed social media.



Tanya Renia Ocampo

The Tanya Renia Ocampo Memorial Endowment has been established and is funded through the MCC Foundation to honor the educator's memory. The first Tanya Ocampo Memorial Scholarship will be awarded in Spring 2024.



Mark Gunn

IN MEMORIAM: MARK GUNN

Mark Gunn, the epitome of a gentleman and scholar, is remembered for his teachings and character while leaving a legacy of inspiration, wisdom, and kindness.

Gunn, age 62, of Meridian, passed away Aug. 22, 2023, at his residence. He is survived by his wife, Sherry.

An instructor of American history, world civilizations, and geography at MCC for more than two decades, Gunn wasn't just an exceptional educator; he was a kind and caring soul who touched the lives of his colleagues, students, and everyone he encountered.

Current and former students shared their experiences in Gunn's classroom, remembering their respect for him. "I just took his summer course this summer, and he was such a great teacher; very kind," wrote Vanessa Phillips. Another former student, Laura Lynn Reece, said Gunn was "an amazing history instructor, but he was such a caring person." Reece recalled a day in Gunn's class when he was lecturing. "He said, 'If it's not Baroque, don't fix it!' Then he laughed at himself for like a minute. That was 20 years ago, and I still remember it like it was yesterday," she added.

Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Thompson described Gunn as kind and genuine. "Mark was a dedicated historian and instructor who was admired and appreciated by his students. His impact on the folks at MCC, however, goes far beyond the classroom. He was the type of person we should all desire to emulate," Thompson said.

"Mr. Gunn was here when I started in 2002, just a few doors down from my office," said Dr. Chad Graham, dean of University Transfer. "He immediately became a mentor to me, but over time, he became so much more."

When Gunn was awarded the MCC Humanities Professor of the Year Award in October 2005, he presented a lecture about the common man in his address, "Lost Voices: Past and Present Primary Research." He said, "In my experience in history, the richest histories not only rely on the famous but rely on those who are hard to discover - the common man."

Dedicating his life to education, Gunn held an associate degree from East Central Community College and a bachelor of science and master of arts degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi. After working at the Piney Woods School and R.H. Watkins High School, he came to MCC in 1999 to teach history and geography. At MCC, he was a 2002 Crooks Chair holder and a recipient of the Dr. Clarence Roberts Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in 2007.

IN MEMORIAM: KELLY THOMPSON MCKEE LONG

Often described as "a beautiful soul," Kelly Thompson McKee Long, Meridian Community College English Lab skills coordinator and English instructor, passed away on Sept. 13, 2023. She was 47 years old.

Long dedicated herself to ensuring every student had a strong foundation in a fundamental subject, setting the stage for future successes. Former student Tanner Miley wrote: "She helped me a lot during my first semester at MCC." Another student summed it up this way: "The best English teacher."

This MCC instructor didn't just teach grammar and vocabulary in her classroom and tutoring sessions. She instilled confidence, built bridges of understanding, and celebrated each small victory with her students. Long was deeply committed to her mission, knowing the profound impact that

mastering these foundational skills could have on a person's life. "She truly chose to see the best in people," one person wrote in a tribute.

A former teacher of Long's described her as "beautiful, intelligent, kind, caring; but she always knew what she wanted to do in life. She was an awesome student."

Long was an alumna of MCC; while in high school, she was enrolled in MCC's chorus class and was a member of the former singing group, the Variations. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of West Alabama and her master's degree from Mississippi State University.

Though she considered choosing a path of either secondary or elementary education, it was when she talked to an advisor who suggested she earn her degree in English that she decided



Kelly Thompson McKee Long

on her career choice. One week after receiving her master's degree, she was hired to teach English at MCC.

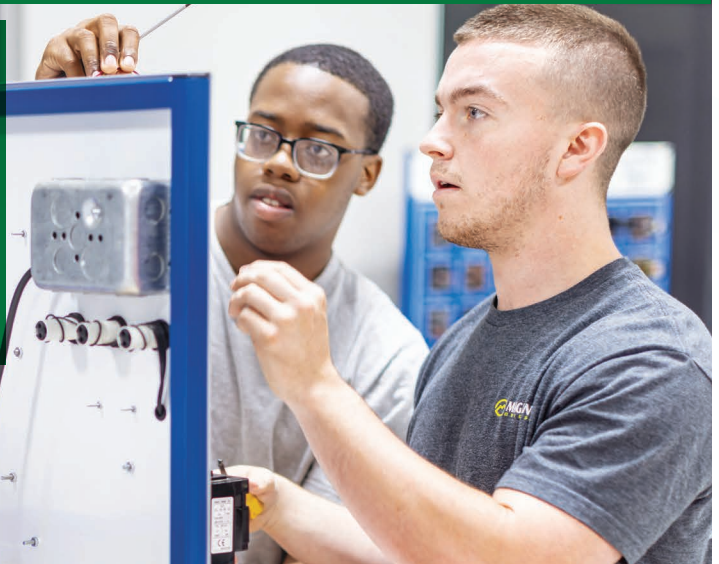
Long worked at MCC for 24 years and earned many accolades, including the Humanities Teacher of the Year award, Dr. Clarence Roberts Outstanding Teacher of the Year award, and MCCer of the Month.

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS



MERIDIAN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP FALL 2023 RECIPIENTS



DONOR DOLLARS AT WORK

Raven Boyd

Cecil Adkins Memorial Scholarship

Tyshika Hawthorne

ADN Donor Scholarship

Ashley Hollman

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Macy Gray

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Erika Nixon

Anderson Support and Development Foundation Scholarship

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Letasha Naylor

Dr. William J. Anderson, Jr. Memorial Scholarship

Marquita Brewster

Dr. William J. Anderson, III Memorial Scholarship

Eboni Alford

Charles Armstrong Scholarship

Eli Collum

AT&T Scholarship

Allyn McCary

Bill Autry Memorial Scholarship

William Mitchell

Bill Autry Memorial Scholarship

Ana Marie Hunt

C. B. Bailey Memorial Scholarship

Luke Ishee

C. B. Bailey Memorial Scholarship

Destiny Chisolm

Beverly Barham Memorial Scholarship

Jamie Blanks

Barnett All-America City Scholarship

Amiya Boyd

Leonard Corydon Barrell Family Scholarship

Cordaisha Jones

Leonard Corydon Barrell Family Scholarship

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Joeje McWilliams

Anna Munn Bennett Memorial Scholarship

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Anna Munn Bennett Memorial Scholarship

Maci Manning

Dr. George W. and Ettamac Bounds, Jr. Memorial Scholarship

Ashley Thomas

Judie Bounds Memorial Scholarship

Marqus Armstong

Dr. Lemann H. and Wilma S. Bounds Scholarship

Ebony Fulford

Dr. Lemann H. and Wilma S. Bounds Scholarship

Cameran Sammons

Thomas and Norma Bourdeaux Scholarship

Payton Alexander

Harry & Vivian Boureau Music Scholarship

Jasmine Smith

Susan Partridge Boyette Memorial Scholarship

Alexa Boger

Margaret F. Butler Memorial Scholarship

Kacey Williams

Fran and Wadell Byrd Memorial Scholarship

Shania Edmonds

Madeline Scott Callahan Memorial Scholarship

Kristen Knost

Carney-Nelson Scholarship

T'Yunna Pierce

Cater's Market Culinary Scholarship

Khadeja Johnson

CEFCO C. E. Fikes Scholarship

Natacha Fortenberry

Mark Chandler Memorial Scholarship

Halle Smith

Alta and Ivan Chisolm Memorial Scholarship

Edward Rackley

Coastal Television Scholarship

Jacob Russell

Justin and Brent Cobb Memorial Scholarship

John Voss

Robert F. Cochran Jr. Memorial Scholarship

Jaeden Carney

Lynn Bruner Combest Memorial Scholarship

Caitlin McDonald

Lynn Combest Memorial Marketing/Photography Scholarship

Justin Pugh

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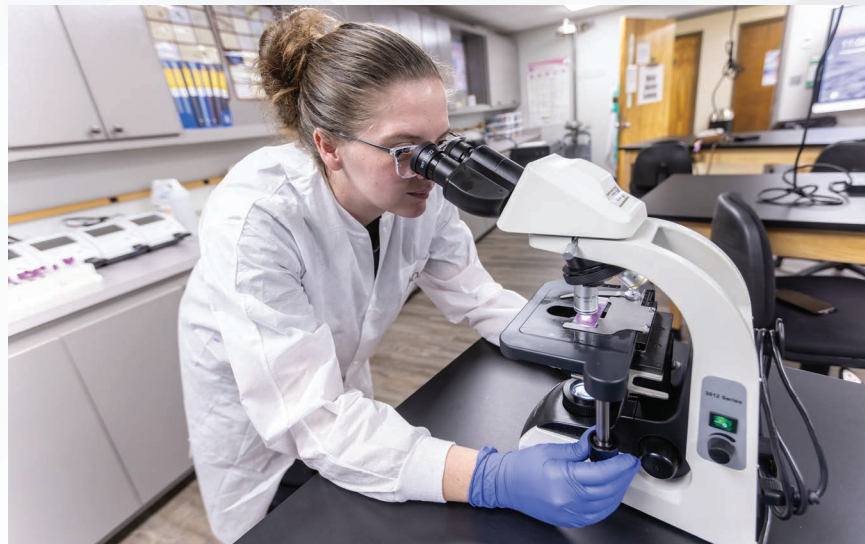
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NAMING NAMES

Is there a notable MCC alum who deserves to be a member of the MCC Hall of Fame? If so, send us their resume and nominate them as part of the MCC Hall of Fame recipients.



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