

## Sandersville Native Shad White Wins Coveted Rhodes Scholarship

Contributed by Andrew Abernathy and Barbara Lago. Video by Mary Stanton  
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Shad White. 2008 Rhodes Scholar. UM photo by Robert Jordan

OXFORD, Miss - Shadrack "Shad" Tucker White Saturday was named the University of Mississippi's 25th Rhodes Scholar and is the first to receive prestigious Rhodes and Truman scholarships.

The UM honors graduate was selected following rigorous interviews in Kansas City earlier today. The academic distinction is shared by some of the world's great leaders and intellectuals of the past century.

The scholarship provides an all-expense-paid opportunity to study for two years at Oxford University in England, one of the world's oldest universities. It is the most coveted academic award for American undergraduates.

"We have not had a more capable student than Shad White," said UM Chancellor Robert C. Khayat. "Shad had already been selected as a Truman Scholar, so we knew he had the intellectual, personal and leadership skills needed to be selected as a Rhodes Scholar. Plus, he is multitalented and keenly interested in enhancing the quality of life in our society.

"Our entire community enthusiastically supported Shad, and we fully expected him to be our 25th Rhodes Scholar."

Since graduating summa cum laude from UM in May, White has been in Washington, D.C., working to improve early childhood education in both Mississippi and the rest of the nation.

White's senior honors thesis - an examination of finance and education in Mississippi schools that called for more accountability on funding issues - landed him a job as an analyst with the U.S. Department of Education, then to a fellowship with Pre-K Now, a nonprofit research and advocacy group.

"My days are filled with analyzing new research that comes out or helping policy analysts," he said. "I split my time between good research and good advocacy."

A Sandersville native, White graduated as a fellow of UM's Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College with a bachelor's degree in economics and political science. Before doing so, he spent a summer working at an impoverished orphanage in San Salvador, El Salvador.

He also organized students to help with voter-registration drives in the Mississippi Delta, provided edgy political commentary in the campus newspaper and helped with various political campaigns, including that of State Auditor Stacy Pickering.

While in the student senate, he persuaded the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning to establish a task force to make textbooks more affordable for students. He also chaired the campus College Republicans and was executive director of the Mississippi Federation of College Republicans.

At Ole Miss, White received Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Beta Kappa honors and was named a Taylor Medalist and Truman Scholar. Recognized as "change agents" with the potential to improve how public entities serve the public good, Truman Scholars receive up to \$30,000 for graduate school.

White plans to finish his work in D.C., then join the postgraduate Enfield program in comparative social policy at Oxford University and study social programs in the United Kingdom.

Reflecting on his time at Ole Miss, White says one important lesson he learned was how to deal with disappointment.

"I think for every success I had, there were probably three failures," he said.

{flv}RhodesWINNER{/flv}

Watch video of Shad White.

For example, White ran for president of the Associated Student Body. He lost the election, but his campaign platform - racial reconciliation on campus - helped him land an internship at UM's William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, where he collected data for the organization's civil rights work. Some of this research helped with his senior thesis.

"He was a delight to work with," said Susan Glisson, the institute's executive director. "He's intelligent, diligent and resourceful."

In his endorsement of White for the Rhodes, honors college Dean Douglass Sullivan-Gonzalez described him as having "perhaps the sharpest intellect in his class and, without a doubt, the most effective leader we had seen in years."

Though he was born and raised in Mississippi, White chose a road to Ole Miss that was not as straight as many students take. In 2004, he was offered a spot in the freshman class of his dream school, Georgetown University. The papers were signed and mailed. However, recognizing White's potential as a leader, a UM recruiter convinced him that the university's honors college was the perfect place for him and offered him a full ride. The scholarships provided enough money for him to send some back home to his family.

"We are just really proud of him," said his father, Charles White. "He would not be here, I believe, without Ole Miss. ... (It) has really opened and challenged his mind."

UM's 24th Rhodes Scholar was Calvin Thigpen, who received the honor in 1998. Since then, the university has produced several Rhodes Scholarship finalists, as well as five Truman, eight Goldwater and six Fulbright scholars, plus one Marshall and one Udall scholar.

Rhodes Scholarships were started after the death of Cecil Rhodes in 1902 and bring accomplished students from around the world to the University of Oxford. The first American scholars were elected in 1904, according to the scholarship's Web site .

Regional committees select 32 American Rhodes Scholars annually from nominees in each state.