

## Jake McGraw Named UM's 13th Truman Scholar

Contributed by Rebecca Lauck Cleary  
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Jake McGraw

OXFORD, Miss. -

Despite the gloomy weather outside, Jake McGraw was all smiles Wednesday morning (March 25) when he walked into the Lyceum and was greeted by a roomful of people congratulating him on being named the University of Mississippi's latest Truman Scholar.

"Jake McGraw

continues a strong tradition at Ole Miss by being selected as a 2009 Truman Scholar," Chancellor Robert Khayat said. "His stellar academic performance, coupled with his involvement in student life, cultural, social and political issues, as well as his leadership skills, have resulted in his selection. We expect Jake McGraw to emerge as a leader of his generation."

McGraw, son of UM Professor Emeritus of Psychology Ken McGraw and Professor of Social Work Jo Ann O'Quin, is a public policy leadership and economics major expected to graduate in May 2010. He is a member of the university's Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College. He holds a Lott Leadership Scholarship, National Merit Scholarship and Robert C. Byrd University Scholarship.

"It was great to walk into the room and see everybody," McGraw said. "This might be the last time the chancellor gets to do this, so I'm very honored to have him congratulate me."

Khayat, who is retiring June 30, told the Oxford native, "This is a tribute and an honor you've brought to your family, your friends and the university."

McGraw was nominated for the Truman by a campus committee and then chosen by the awarding foundation from a pool of some 600 candidates from 300 universities. He is among 60 Truman Scholars overall this year, including four from Southeastern Conference schools.

He is the 13th Ole Miss student to receive the award, which was established by Congress in 1975 to honor the 33rd U.S. president.

The honor provides up to \$30,000 for graduate school. The mission of the Truman Scholarship Foundation is to find and recognize college juniors with exceptional leadership potential who are committed to careers in government, the nonprofit or advocacy sectors, education or elsewhere in the public service; and to provide them with financial support for graduate study, leadership training and fellowship with other students who are committed to making a difference through public

service.

[View a list of UM's national scholars](#)

Douglass Sullivan-Gonzalez, dean of the Honors College, said it's always great to see an Oxford native excel at Ole Miss.

"Jake brings tremendous qualities - academic and social - to our campus, and he's proven himself to be the leader we had hoped he would be," Sullivan-Gonzalez said.

McGraw is an intern at UM's William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. He is a founder and the chief coordinator for One Mississippi, a student organization with the mission of creating a shared experience for all Ole Miss students, "by replacing barriers to cross cultural interaction with opportunities for exchange," according to One Mississippi's Facebook Web page. He also serves on the Mississippi Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

McGraw said he has thought about the Truman Scholarship since he was a freshman. After spending last summer and fall in Colorado as a field organizer for Barack Obama's presidential campaign, he began preparing for Truman interviews in November and had his final interview March 9.

"I think when you come in as a freshman at Ole Miss, you're able to come in as a name and not just a number," McGraw said. "I've been able to pursue things I've been interested in, whether it's racial reconciliation or helping out with the debate and those opportunities to get involved and gain a lot of leadership skills - which is what the Truman values.

Watch video of Jake McGraw.

"I think that's why Ole Miss has such a good track record of producing Truman and Rhodes scholars, because students here have an opportunity to come in and get started on those sorts of experiences from the moment they set foot on campus."

Warigia M. Bowman, assistant professor of public policy leadership who helped McGraw with the mock interview process, said she hopes he will give back to the university community and cultivate other Truman Scholars from Ole Miss.

"The Truman Scholarship is an extremely prestigious national scholarship focused on public service," Bowman said. "It's a big honor for Jake and for the University of Mississippi. As a Truman Scholar myself, I would like to see us getting one every year, which is a completely attainable goal if we make a commitment to our best students."

The quality of classes at the Honors College gave McGraw interaction with top faculty and students on campus, he said.

"You get to interact and debate with other students who are extremely talented and bright," McGraw said. "And the Lott Leadership Institute is able to bring the world to Ole Miss and give you the opportunity to meet and talk with state, national and world leaders on a basis that so frequently you take for granted."

After a period of celebration, McGraw said he plans to finish his semester and possibly join the Mississippi Teacher Corps, with graduate school to follow.

In 2004, UM was named a Harry S. Truman Honor Institution, in recognition of its success in the Truman competition. That year, the university claimed its 11th Truman Scholar, Joel Fyke. Shad White was the university's 12th Truman Scholar, winning the award in 2007.

For more on the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, go to <http://www.truman.gov/> .