

## Faculty, Staff Members Recognized for Outstanding Service to Students

Contributed by Deborah Purnell  
05/05/2009

Ellen Meacham

Annual Frist Awards to be presented May 9 at commencementOXFORD, Miss. - Students at the University of Mississippi are inspired daily by faculty and staff who understand their workday does not end at 5 p.m. This could include a telephone call at 6 p.m., followed by a Facebook posting at 9 p.m. and an e-mail at midnight.

Michael Johansson

For the 15th year, two UM members who have demonstrated unwavering dedication to students have been selected for special recognition. Ellen Meacham, journalism career coordinator and instructor, and Michael Johansson, director of International Programs, are recipients of the 2009 Frist Student Service Awards.

The awards, one for faculty and one for staff, were established with a gift from the late Dr. Thomas F. Frist Sr., of Nashville, a 1930 UM graduate.

"This year's recipients epitomize the Frist Awards, which are given to faculty and staff who make extraordinary commitments to students," said Chancellor Robert Khayat. "Dr. Frist was a wonderful man who made remarkable contributions to health care in America, as well as to the city of Nashville. He had a lifelong, affectionate relationship with his alma mater. Ms. Meacham and Mr. Johansson would have loved Dr. First, and he would have had great admiration for them."

Each spring, the Ole Miss community is invited to submit nomination narratives on individuals who personify extraordinary service. Recipients are selected by a chancellor's committee of faculty, staff and students assessing the nominations.

Watch video of Frist Staff Award winner.

Meacham and Johansson each receive \$1,000 and a plaque and are to be recognized Saturday (May 9) at the university's commencement ceremony.

Nomination letters for the award cite specific examples of how nominees have gone the extra mile in service to students.

A former city news editor for student newspaper The Daily Mississippian, who nicknamed Meacham "The Meacham-nator," wrote: "It's her actions outside the classroom that really make her an outstanding person."

"Ellen was not officially our faculty adviser [in January 2007, Meacham officially accepted the role] and simply visited the student media center on her own time. It was obvious we needed help," the writer continued. "We were flailing, our grades were dropping and we were putting in long hours just to wake up the next morning and be the laughing stock of campus because of a typo in the headline. Ellen saw this and began picking up the pieces, not just of the paper's content, but of the staff's personal lives."

Video: Meacham Frist Faculty Recipient.

The same dedication was reflected in letters of nomination for Johansson. A student wrote: "It is hard to be an international student. Integrating into life of a different country with different customs and people can bring a lot of challenges."

"I was one of many international students who came to Ole Miss from Ukraine. From the first day in Oxford, I was greeted with much care and respect by Michael Johansson and staff," the writer continued. "Michael's doors were always open. No matter how busy he was, he took time from his schedule to listen to my concerns, fears and new experiences."

Meacham, a more than 10-year-career journalist and educator, said she was flabbergasted and honored by the award.

"I benefited from my professors when I was a student at Ole Miss," said Meacham, a 1990 graduate. "I was shy and some professor put their hands between my shoulder blades and figuratively pushed me and challenged me to write for The Daily Mississippian, to put my work in front of 10,000 readers. Next thing I knew, I was hooked. I simply want to do the same for today's students."

Johansson also expressed surprise.

"I thought there would be a recount," Johansson said. "I am greatly honored. I looked up the past winners, and to be in that league is humbling."

"It's not just me, but the staff in International Programs who make everything possible. Our job is to make all students visible; to give students a chance to feel a part of Ole Miss life. Being visible is important, because once you're seen, you have a voice and that's so essential to student growth."

Meacham began her career as a general assignment reporter for The DeSoto Times in Hernando. She later became a staff writer for UM's Office of Media and Public Relations before moving to Charleston, S.C., to work as a reporter for The Post and Courier. She returned to Ole Miss in 2002 and earned a master's degree in Southern studies. A year later, she joined the UM faculty as a journalism instructor and served her first stint as The Daily Mississippian faculty adviser. Since 2004, she has also served as journalism's career coordinator, and from January 2007 to May 2008, she once again served as the DM's faculty adviser.

Johansson, a native of Rockford, Ill., earned a bachelor's degree in education, English/journalism from Illinois State University, and master's in counseling, adult and higher education from Northern Illinois University. Before joining the UM staff in 1998, Johansson taught in Illinois, California and in Russia and Japan. He is a member of NAFSA: Association of International Educators and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.