

First Day on the Job for New Chancellor Filled with Mundane Tasks, Busy Slate of Meetings

Contributed by Mitchell Diggs
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OXFORD, Miss. — For Dr. Dan Jones, Wednesday began in much the same manner as the first day at work for any new University of Mississippi employee: settling into his new office, filling out employment paperwork and meeting his new co-workers.

But beyond the mundane move-in day chores, the university's new chancellor faced a daunting schedule of meetings, conference calls and appointments that already stretches for more than a week.

Jones, who was named the university's 16th chancellor June 15, will remain active in managing affairs at the UM Medical Center, where he was vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine for six years, and in the American Heart Association.

Larry Sparks (right), vice chancellor for administration and finance, briefs Dr. Dan Jones on the budget during his first day as chancellor. UM photo by Robert Jordan.

"We're trying to keep him from being totally overloaded, but he's going to be a busy man," said Shirley Stuart, secretary to the chancellor. "He's pretty booked-up for a while."

Much of Jones' first day as chancellor was spent meeting with the vice chancellors and their staffs in the Lyceum, participating in conference calls and getting a briefing on the university's budget from Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance Larry Sparks. After meeting dozens of UM staff members in just the first couple of hours, Jones sighed and admitted that he can't remember most of the names yet.

"Sadly, everybody remembers my name, so I'm starting out with a pretty big disadvantage," he said. "That's one of those things you face when you start a new job like this, but I'll get everybody's names down."

Thursday's agenda includes more meetings with UM administrators and his first outside engagement as chancellor, attending a farewell reception for outgoing Mayor Richard Howorth at the Oxford Conference Center. On Saturday, he plans to welcome everyone to the Grove at 6 p.m. during the communitywide Independence Day celebration, and next week's schedule includes a trip to Washington to meet with Mississippi's congressional delegation.

Jones and his wife, Lydia, spent Tuesday moving into Carrier House, the chancellor's on-campus residence. The process continues, even though he was up past 10 p.m. unpacking boxes, he said.

The unpacking continued Wednesday in the Lyceum, with assistant Sue Keiser helping unbox books and getting them placed on bookshelves in the chancellor's two offices.

Sue Keiser (left), assistant to the chancellor, discusses items on the day's schedule with Dr. Dan Jones on his first day as chancellor. UM photo by Robert Jordan.

"This one is my most precious," Jones said, unwrapping a faded cloth-bound volume. "It's a first-edition copy of (Dr. Arthur) Guyton's Textbook of Medical Physiology, inscribed by Dr. Guyton. It was given to me on my first day on the faculty back in 1992 by my assistant. There aren't a whole lot of these out there anymore."

Nearby, an Ole Miss golf putter leaned against the wall, a gift for Jones left behind by Khayat.

"Maybe he's sending me a message that my putting needs work," Jones cracked. "If so, that will have to wait. There's not going to be much time for golfing anytime soon."

The new chancellor's close friendship with Khayat was demonstrated when Jones arrived at the office Wednesday. The first item he placed on his bookshelf was a framed photo of the two men taken at a Medical Center commencement ceremony.

"I'm chancellor now, but he's The Chancellor," Jones said. "That's just how it is."

Video by Mary Stanton.