



DR. VAUGHN L. GRISHAM, RECIPIENT OF THE 2019 HONORARY ALUMNI AWARD, RECOGNIZED FOR TRANSFORMING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES

OXFORD, Miss., (October 2, 2019) – In recognition of nearly 60 years of service to the University of Mississippi, Professor Emeritus Dr. Vaughn L. Grisham of Oxford was recognized by his friends and former students for his many contributions to the university and the state with the Honorary Alumni Award from the Ole Miss Alumni Association. A reception and dinner honoring Dr. Grisham on October 3, 2020 at The Mill at Plein Air in Taylor had more than 300 guests in attendance.

Since joining the University of Mississippi faculty in 1961, Grisham taught more than 20,000 students through his affiliations with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College. A native of West Point, Dr. Grisham holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Mississippi State University, and a doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Grisham's teaching honors include being recognized as a master teacher at North Carolina State University, and being selected as an Outstanding Teacher by the University of Mississippi, where he was also the recipient of the Frist Student Service Award. The American Sociological Association named Grisham one of the top 25 outstanding sociology professors in higher education. He served as president of the University of Mississippi Faculty Senate for two terms. In 2017, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation established an award in his honor – the Vaughn Grisham Leadership Award – to recognize and honor individuals who make extraordinary contributions to their community. Grisham was the inaugural recipient of this award.

In 1984, Grisham established the McLean Institute for Community Development to honor the work and legacy of George and Anna Keirseay McLean. George McLean is known for asserting that “it is the responsibility of the people of Mississippi to try to raise the level – economically, educationally, spiritually and otherwise – of all the people of Mississippi. There's nobody else who's going to come in here and do it for us.”

Grisham elevated lessons from ordinary communities producing extraordinary results through his meticulous scholarship, teaching, and workshops. In his book *Tupelo: Evolution of a Community*, Grisham conducted over 2,000 interviews to understand how a small city in one of the poorest counties in Mississippi could create a sustainable economic future. This groundbreaking scholarship continues to have resonance today.

Grisham has supported communities in 33 states and two Canadian provinces to improve quality of life through community development. Grisham's work has been instrumental in establishing local leadership development in over 300 counties in the United States, and his approaches have been implemented by communities in Russia and South Africa.

Grisham's scholarship and teaching have changed lives and entire communities by inspiring hope, leadership, and resilience. Today, the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement has built upon Grisham's legacy by advancing transformation through service at the university and fighting poverty through education in Mississippi. Two advisory board members, Bruce Ware and Phillip Wiggins, served as co-hosts for the reception and dinner on Oct. 3.

Bruce Ware, McLean advisory board member, established the Grisham Fellows program for Newton High School students to gain exposure to higher education through Grisham's legacy of leadership for community development. Phillip Wiggins, founder of Stratford Land, is a former student who chairs the advisory board of the McLean Institute and credits Grisham with his deep involvement with the community engagement mission of the university. Additionally, the McLean Institute is directed by Dr. Albert Nylander, professor of sociology who studied with Grisham during his undergraduate and master's degrees and recognizes Grisham as a seminal influence in charting his path to becoming a faculty member and administrator in higher education.

Grisham retired in 2005, but has continued to teach courses at the Sally McDonnell Honors College and work with programs affiliated with the McLean Institute. Vaugh and his wife Sandy remain ardent supporters of the McLean Institute and its programs that engage students and faculty to improve quality of life in Mississippi communities.

Grisham has been married to Sandy Hooper Grisham for 37 years. They have four children, nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

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The mission of the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement is to advance transformation through service at the university and fight poverty through education in Mississippi. To learn more about the McLean Institute, visit mclean.olemiss.edu.