

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION AND FINE ARTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

# VOICES

SPRING 2024



**OTIS  
SANFORD**  
JOURNEYS IN JOURNALISM



# VOICES

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Spring 2024 • College of Communication and Fine Arts



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**As we navigate the currents of change and growth at the University of Memphis, I am pleased to bring you the latest updates and developments within our esteemed College of Communication and Fine Arts.**

The transitions within our leadership have continued this past year with the arrival of our new provost, Dr. David Russomanno, the appointment of the new chief financial officer, Rene Bustamante as well as a new CIO and VP for Enrollment Management. These changes mark a new era in our institution's leadership, setting the stage for continued progress and innovation.

Under the overarching vision of the University's new strategic plan, "Ascend", our college has crafted a bold and ambitious 5-year strategic plan. This roadmap, a product of collaborative efforts involving students, faculty, staff, alumni and industry partners, will guide us through the challenges posed by a declining high school student population and the implementation of a new budget model at the University of Memphis.

In the midst of these changes, our college is on the cusp of welcoming a new dean. Four outstanding candidates were interviewed in March, and we anticipate making an official announcement soon. This leadership transition comes at a crucial time, and we are confident that the incoming dean will contribute to the ongoing success and evolution of College of Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA).

With a mix of excitement and gratitude, I would like to share a personal announcement: after 11 fulfilling years at the University of Memphis, I have accepted the position of Dean of the College of Creative Arts at Miami University in Ohio. I am immensely proud of the accomplishments we have achieved during my tenure at the CCFA and am confident in the college's potential for even greater success under new leadership. The students, faculty and staff in the CCFA are second to none and our alumni continue to make a tremendous impact on society through their respective disciplines.



**RYAN FISHER**  
INTERIM DEAN



Now, turning to the heart of this issue of "VOICES", I am thrilled to provide a glimpse into the engaging articles and stories that await you.

For this edition of "VOICES", we wanted to highlight the tremendous impact of our college. Our cover story features our beloved Otis Sanford who retired last year from the Hardin Chair of Excellence in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. Sanford is a celebrity in Memphis and, even in retirement, continues to contribute to his field.

We also highlight our highly successful Central to the Arts Festival, which launched last year and will once again welcome thousands of community members to our campus on April 6 to witness the amazing talent of our students. Building on the success of last year, we look forward to featuring even more of our gifted students and including more community arts partners to educate festival attendees on the rich, cultural programming available in our city. This year's issue of "VOICES" also

offers a peek into a few newly developed initiatives within CCFA departments, including an expanded Egyptology program with global reach and the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media's "Pro Day," which offers students a chance to meet and network with real-world media professionals.

Additionally, delve into the cutting-edge research endeavors within CCFA, addressing complex societal challenges and expanding knowledge boundaries. From designing health warning labels for electronic nicotine delivery systems to unexpected collaborations fostering curiosity-driven research, the college remains at the forefront of advancing knowledge and contributing to broader intellectual discourse.

Next, gain insight into the vital financial support sustaining CCFA, with a focus on the crucial role played by grants, endowments and planned giving. These contributions not only enhance facilities but also

support programs and establish funds for graduate students, ensuring a sustainable future for arts and communication education at the University of Memphis.

Lastly, CCFA's many benefits to the community at large are on full display with a look at a multidisciplinary effort with a connection to Hollywood that brings together students from art, architecture and dance.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire CCFA community for your unwavering support and dedication. As we embrace change and look toward the future, I am confident that the College of Communication and Fine Arts will continue to thrive, guided by its rich legacy and a vision for innovation.

With pride and appreciation,



# JOURNEYS in JOURNALISM

Otis Sanford's career as a journalist and educator not only spans more than 40 years - but also stretches across massive "technological eras" in the media.

From typewriters to laptops – from the White and Yellow Pages to Google – from a reporter's notebook to the internet – and from Memphis having two daily newspapers and only four television stations to having hundreds of streaming options to choose from today – Sanford has worked at both ends of the spectrum.

But the craft of journalism, Sanford will tell you, will always be the same no matter how far technology takes us.



**OTIS SANFORD HAS SPENT**

the last 12 years teaching in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media (JRSM) as the Hardin Chair of Excellence in Economic and Managerial Journalism. In 2023, he decided it was time to step aside and retire from the UofM. His heart and his passion have always been journalism. It's the only career he ever wanted to pursue.

But, before he ever got his first break working in a newsroom, his dream was almost crushed by a school administrator.

Rewind to 1971 when Sanford graduated from North Panola High School in his native Mississippi.

"That year was the first year of full racial integration in Mississippi," Sanford said. "I'd spent the first 11 years of my life with people who look like me. So, my senior year it was different."

After graduation, he opted to go to what was then called Northwest Junior College, a two-year school close to home.

It's there he crossed paths with Price Darby, the former superintendent of Panola High, who'd become a guidance counselor at Northwest Junior College.

Sanford says during a candid conversation, Darby acknowledged his academic achievements, but also expressed reservations

about journalism, implying it might not be a path to success given Sanford's "background."

While Sanford said Darby meant well, he stood firm in his passion.

"So, I said, well, thank you. I appreciate it. And I got up, got my paperwork, and walked out," Sanford said. "And I thought about it for all of five minutes. And I said to myself 'When you know, you know.' Well, I knew that I knew – ever since I was in 7th grade."

After junior college, Sanford headed to Oxford, Mississippi, to finish up getting his degree at the University of Mississippi.

During a campus recruitment event, Sanford said he impressed Ray Hederman, the city editor at The Clarion-Ledger, in Jackson, Mississippi.

The paper was historically conservative and known for its racial bias, Sanford said. However, it was also undergoing a transformative phase under Hederman's leadership. Young reporters were brought in from various backgrounds, heralding a new era for the publication.

After only a couple of years at The Clarion-Ledger, Sanford decided to head north.

"In 1976, I got an opportunity to come to Memphis while I was at The Clarion-Ledger and cover the presidential election of '76," he said. "Gerald Ford was in Memphis and my

newspaper sent me up here to cover him, so I covered him. Afterward, I went by The Commercial Appeal and wrote my story [in their newsroom] and sent it back to Jackson. The city editor, Angus McEachran, noticed and was impressed by that. Then, several months later, he called and asked, 'Are you ready to come to Memphis for a reporting job?' And I said, 'Yeah!' - so I did and stayed at The Commercial Appeal for 10 years."

Then, it was on to Pittsburgh to be assistant city editor for five and a half years. Then to Detroit as deputy city editor in charge of local news.

"I was the first person, I don't know, ever, but certainly in recent history to ever get that job from the outside," he said. "They always promoted from within. So that was kind of special and Detroit was unbelievable. I mean, it was a big newspaper. We had unbelievable crime everywhere, but even beyond the crime, it just seemed like everything that happened had a tie to Detroit."

One of the stories he vividly remembers started as a sports story.

During a training session at the 1994 U.S. National Figure Skating Competition, investigators say that an acquaintance of skater Tonya Harding's husband attacked Nancy Kerrigan with a solid-metal baton just

above the knee so she couldn't compete.

"Well, that happened two blocks from the paper," Sanford said. "We wanted the sports people to cover it, but they said it wasn't a sports story. It was crime news. So, I oversaw that story and covered it from start to finish."

After his stint in Detroit, his career came full circle, as he became editorial page editor and managing editor at The Commercial Appeal.

Today, he, like many in the world of news media, is concerned about mass media's trajectory in the 21st century. He says he feels a mix of awe and distress at the rapid transition from typewriters and dominant newspapers in the '70s to the present digital era.

One of the saddest parts, he said, is the decline of local newspapers, especially the impact of dwindling newsrooms on community coverage. He said he empathizes with the financial challenges traditional newspapers face because of the rise of the internet and social platforms like Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter.) He can foresee a time when printed papers go away - leading to all media outlets challenge to adapt and cater to people's demand for quick, real-time information on their smartphones.

While Sanford spent almost of his entire career at newspapers around the country, he said he's had a longstanding interest in teaching, dating back to the '80s when he taught news courses alongside his job. He said the opportunity to impact young minds at the University of Memphis arose during a pivotal moment when he sensed the changing landscape at The Commercial Appeal.

At that point, the lightbulb went off. "I can teach this at the college level, and I can have an impact with these students, so yeah. I saw it then," he said. "I'm really gratified by the fact that I was able to do that for 12 years. I'm thrilled by that."

As are many of his former students.

Redding Jackson is a journalism senior, an officer of the Society of Professional Journalists and a member of the National Association of Black Journalists. Jackson said, "Having [Sanford] for Media, Diversity and Society class was an incredible experience. His insights into the current state of media were not only enlightening but also sparked meaningful discussions. What stood out to me the most was his dedication to building a strong bond with his students."

His dedication to students and the craft of journalism won't end just because he's moving on to the next stage of his career.

The University's Institute for Public Service



Reporting unveiled a new initiative at the beginning of this academic year called the Otis L. Sanford Journalism Incubator.

Its focus is to provide training and mentoring in the field of journalism to students from middle school to graduate school and inspire working journalists looking to hone their skills.

The incubator's roots extend back to 2020 when IPSR director Marc Perrusquia launched a paid internship program for UofM students.

The award-winning program has made a major impact in its first four years.

For example, intern Caleb Suggs won a national William Randolph Hearst Award – the so-called Pulitzer Prize for college journalism – for audio reporting in 2021. He is the only UofM student ever to win a first place Hearst award.

Later, intern Christopher Fulton helped write a historical investigation that led Congress to remove the name of a Klansman from Memphis' federal building.

"Otis is one of the best and most-respected journalists in Memphis and we're proud to have had him on our team," Perrusquia said. "He's so popular, he makes fundraising easy for the Journalist Incubator. The Institute for Public Service Reporting is externally funded, so we live and die by fundraising. Thankfully, we have Otis and his sterling reputation to help us."

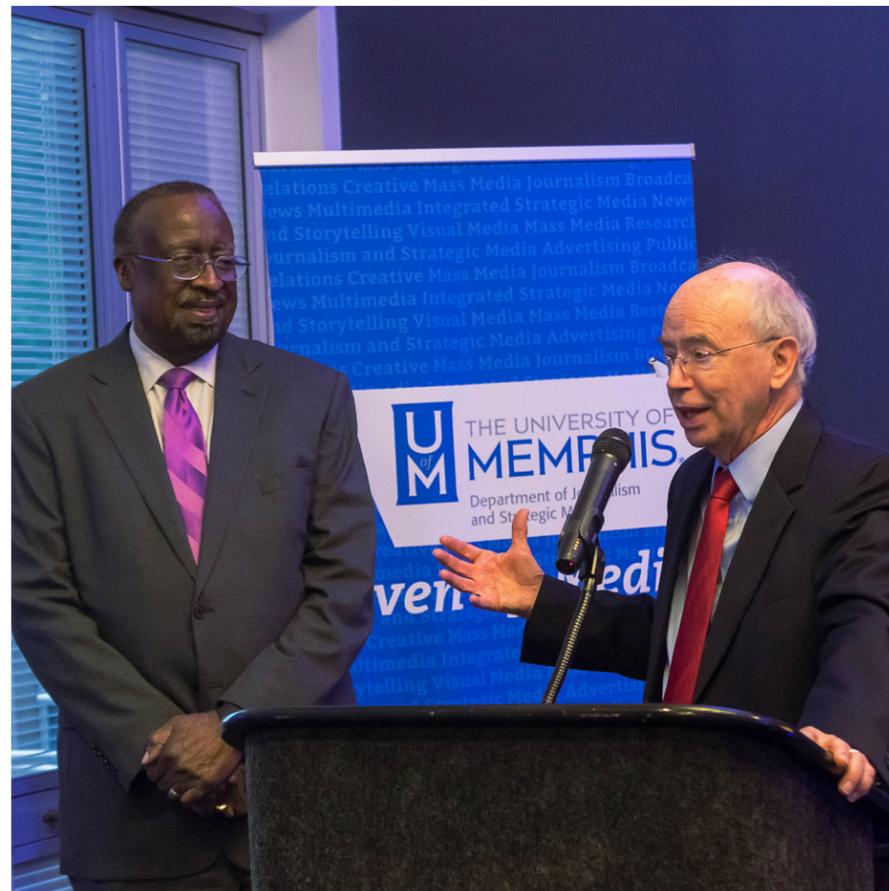
Sanford was also the winner of JRSB's D. Mike Pennington Outstanding Mentoring Award. The award honors Pennington, who graduated in 1972 and is the first mentoring award in the College of Communication and Fine Arts and the first faculty award in Journalism and Strategic Media.

Pennington had a distinguished career serving as a corporate communicator and business magazine journalist, editor and photographer, primarily in the trucking and affiliated industries, and was renowned for his mentorship of his junior coworkers.

Sanford said that while he's stepping away from teaching, he plans to continue working part-time as a political commentator at ABC 24 and WKNO-FM. He also hinted at the potential of writing a book – but he said he's most excited about having the leisure to pick and choose his projects.

Dr. Matthew Haught, the new chair of the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, put it simply - "Sanford is one of the University's all-time greats."

"Otis Sanford is a giant in the journalism community, in Memphis and beyond," Haught told VOICES. "I'm grateful that we can honor him and his legacy of mentorship with this program to help train the next generation of journalists."



# CCFA CARES

**CCFA always accepts non-perishable food and toiletry items. Our goal is to assist CCFA students during days other pantries aren't available. Drop-off and pick-up is in the dean's office on the second floor of the CFA building.**

## How Can You Help?



Spread the Word



Donate Toiletry Items



Donate Non-Perishable Food

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College of Communication and Fine Arts

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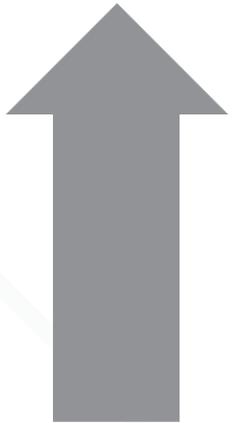


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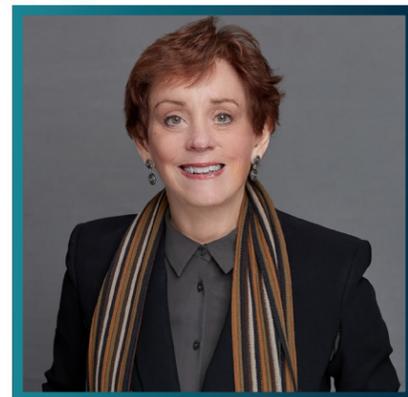
# ONWARD and Upward



**CCFA's Growth and  
Excellence Fueled by  
Grants, Endowments  
and Planned Giving**

# PLANNED GIVING – ONWARD & UPWARD

## ART MUSEUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS



Leslie Luebbers

**If money makes the world go around – grants, endowments and planned giving help CCFA operate day to day. The Art Museum of the University of Memphis (AMUM) is embarking on an exciting chapter of growth and enhancement, thanks to more than \$87,000 of improvement grants.**

The money comes from the Capital Maintenance Improvement Grant program supported by the Tennessee General Assembly and the University of Memphis' Green Fee Program.

The funding is set to support the expansion of the museum's collections storage, a crucial element in preserving and showcasing its invaluable collection of various works of art.

According to AMUM director Leslie Luebbers, the museum is particularly

thrilled about the opportunities this grant affords. The expansion of collections storage not only ensures the safekeeping of the artworks but also provides an expansive workspace for university students, interns and museum staff.

The Green Fee Program, funded by a \$10 Sustainable Campus Fee paid by all full-time students, supports projects that promote energy efficiency, environmental friendliness and sustainability on the UofM campus.

Back in the 90s, AMUM received another shot in the arm with the Huff Endowment.

Luebbers writes, "Twenty-nine years ago, a large envelope landed in AMUM's mailbox. "Dear Director Luebbers," the letter began, and thus was launched a relationship between the museum and William S. Huff of Pittsburgh that resulted in gifts of artwork worth more than \$2.5 million and recently an endowment bequest currently valued at \$1.8 million."

Huff wanted to secure a permanent

museum residence for the artistic legacy of Samuel Hester Crone (1858-1913), a native of Tennessee and a product of Memphis.

Crone and his wife Sarah returned to the United States from Europe in 1913, just before the outbreak of World War I.

Sadly, Samuel passed away shortly after they arrived in Pittsburgh.

Sarah held onto his paintings, drawings, and notebooks until her own passing several years later, severing the link to Samuel's family in Memphis.

Although Sarah sold many paintings and distributed others among extended family members, the drawings remained intact.

They were eventually inherited by Huff's mother and subsequently passed on to William while he was still studying architecture at Yale.

In addition to the Crone Collection, William generously gifted AMUM an extensive array of works from his distinguished career in architecture and design.

This donation included paintings and prints by Josef Albers, an Anni Albers tapestry and a diverse assortment of pieces by artists and designers affiliated with the Bauhaus, the Ulm School and Yale.

Tragically, Huff caught COVID-19 and died in January 2021 at the age of 93, leaving behind a transformative legacy for AMUM through the establishment of the William S. Huff Endowment.

Planned giving is another example of how alumni and friends of the University can help sustain the school in the future.

The idea of planned giving is fairly straightforward. Individuals make charitable donations to colleges through long-term financial planning strategies.

These donations are typically planned in advance and could take various forms such as bequests in wills, charitable trusts, life insurance policies, or gifts of appreciated assets.

Planned giving allows donors to support educational institutions while also potentially benefiting from tax advantages and financial planning benefits.



The Art Museum of the University of Memphis, which is located on the first floor of the Communication and Fine Arts building, recently received an improvements grant that will help with an expansion of its collections storage.

# PLANNED GIVING – ONWARD & UPWARD

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS DEPT. OF THEATRE & DANCE



Since its construction in 1966, the Theatre Building was one of the few on campus not named for a benefactor. But in 2022, James A. Humphreys, a retired real estate investor and local arts philanthropist, made a generous donation to name the Theatre Building in honor of his parents.

Both Bernice and Edward Humphreys attended the University of Memphis and were loyal patrons of the school throughout their golden years.

They were also members of the Columns Society, a group of "generous and visionary individuals who have included the University of Memphis in their current or deferred planned giving."

"We are extremely grateful to [Humphreys] and glad that this gift will bring additional resources to our department to enrich the educational opportunities and programs for our students," Jacob Allen, chair of the Department of Theatre & Dance told

The Daily Helmsman in 2022. "While his intent was to honor his parents, he's in turn supporting the University's mission of quality education."

That's not the only financial boost the Department of Theatre & Dance enjoys.

In a heartfelt tribute to the late Doug Koertge, a distinguished faculty member who dedicated 29 years as a costume designer in the Department of Theatre & Dance, his legacy continues to shine through a generous donation from his brothers. The gift established two funds honoring his passion for costume design.

'The Doug Koertge Costume Scholarship Fund' and 'The Doug Koertge Travel Fund

in Costuming' help aspiring costume designers in the department.

Both funds aim to support students pursuing costume design by providing financial assistance. The travel fund helps pay for an annual trip to New York City, offering students a firsthand experience of fabric shopping in one of the nation's major market centers.

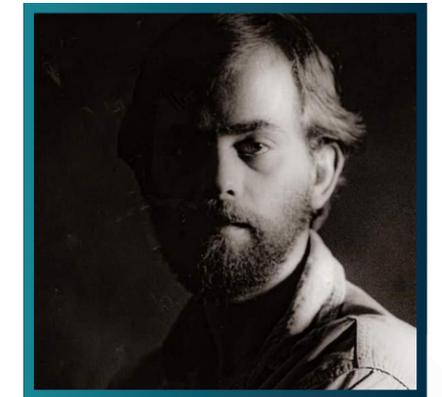
"It's kind of impossible to get anything other than the most basics of basics unless you go to a place like New York," Allen said.

The Department of Communication & Film also has several endowed funds for graduate students.



(Above) (L to R) Dr. Ryan Fisher, interim dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts, the Humphreys family and Dr. Jacob Allen, chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance stand outside the newly-named theatre building,

(Left) UofM dance students perform in a puppet show staged during the 2022/23 school year.



Douglas Koertge

"We have one of the strongest [communication] grad programs in the nation and one of the most diverse," said department chair Wendy Atkins-Sayre. "We are getting included on the list with top programs. It's hard to compete with most of those, but one of the things that allows us to do that is those funds."

The Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music has solidified its place as one of the most comprehensive schools of music in the region after the opening of the new Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center in 2022.

Recently, the school launched "Strike a Chord: Scheidt School of Music Drive for Excellence Fund."

Together, Susan Arney, Rudi Scheidt Jr., Elkan Scheidt and Helen Gronauer, all children of the late Honey and Rudi E. Scheidt, committed, \$500,000 to create a matching fund to secure donations to support students who will be learning and performing in the new Scheidt Family Music Center.

The primary focus of the fund is to provide student musicians with instruments for rehearsals and performances, give students who can't afford instruments the ability to borrow one and enhance the Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center with world-class technology and recording equipment.

"Endowed gifts are everlasting and form a permanent source of funding that connects scholars and learners from many diverse backgrounds with opportunities at the University of Memphis, now and into the future," said Meredith Powers, the director of development for the College of Communication and Fine Arts. "An endowment provides a self-sustaining source of funding that never ends."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
VISIT [MEMPHIS.EDU/DEVELOPMENT](https://MEMPHIS.EDU/DEVELOPMENT)**



The idea for a festival that showcases the University’s artistic flair was years in the making. The plan was to try to create an “arts corridor” down Central Avenue as it passes along campus.

Most commuters probably don’t know, unless they are or were UofM students, that most of the University’s arts buildings line Central Avenue – including Communication and Film, Art and Design, Theatre & Dance and the two music buildings.



A dance performance during the first-ever Central to the Arts Festival in April 2023.



IN APRIL 2023, BOTH SIDES OF CAMPUS ALONG CENTRAL Avenue came alive with a kaleidoscope of art, design, music, fashion, food, interactive booths and numerous performances on outside stages and indoor performance spaces. It was a picture-perfect spring day - and for a brand-new inaugural festival, turnout was strong.

The campus itself became a canvas for student artists to showcase their work, turning it into an open-air gallery of sorts.

One of the most popular parts of the festival was the outdoor fashion show – organized by faculty and students from both Fashion & Design and the Department of Architecture. Student fashion designs were also part of the Festival's Exposé Concert in the new Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center.

Stepping to the beat of music played by a local DJ, the students showed off their couture creativity to a large audience watching on both sides of the area behind the Ramesses statue.

One of the festival's strengths is its commitment to showcasing a wide spectrum of artistic disciplines. From traditional visual arts like painting and music to contemporary digital art and immersive installations, the Central to the Arts Festival is a melting pot of creativity. This diversity ensures that there's something for every artistic taste, encouraging guests to explore and appreciate forms of expression they may not have encountered before.

A core aspect of the festival is an emphasis on supporting local talent. Emerging artists can show off their work, fostering a sense of community pride and encouraging the growth of the city's arts and culture scene.

The festival also features our community art partners like New Ballet, Opera Memphis and others. "This year, we hope to build on the success of last year and include even more outside community arts organizations in the festival," said Dr. Ryan Fisher, interim dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA) and one of the

organizers behind the festival.

The second annual Central to the Arts Festival is scheduled for Saturday, April 6 at 10 a.m. The grand finale includes an Exposé Concert at 2:30 p.m. in the Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center. It'll showcase many of the CCFA's shining artistic students all in one place. For more information, visit the festival website at [memphis.edu/centraltotheartsfestival](https://memphis.edu/centraltotheartsfestival) – or search for #CTAF on social media.



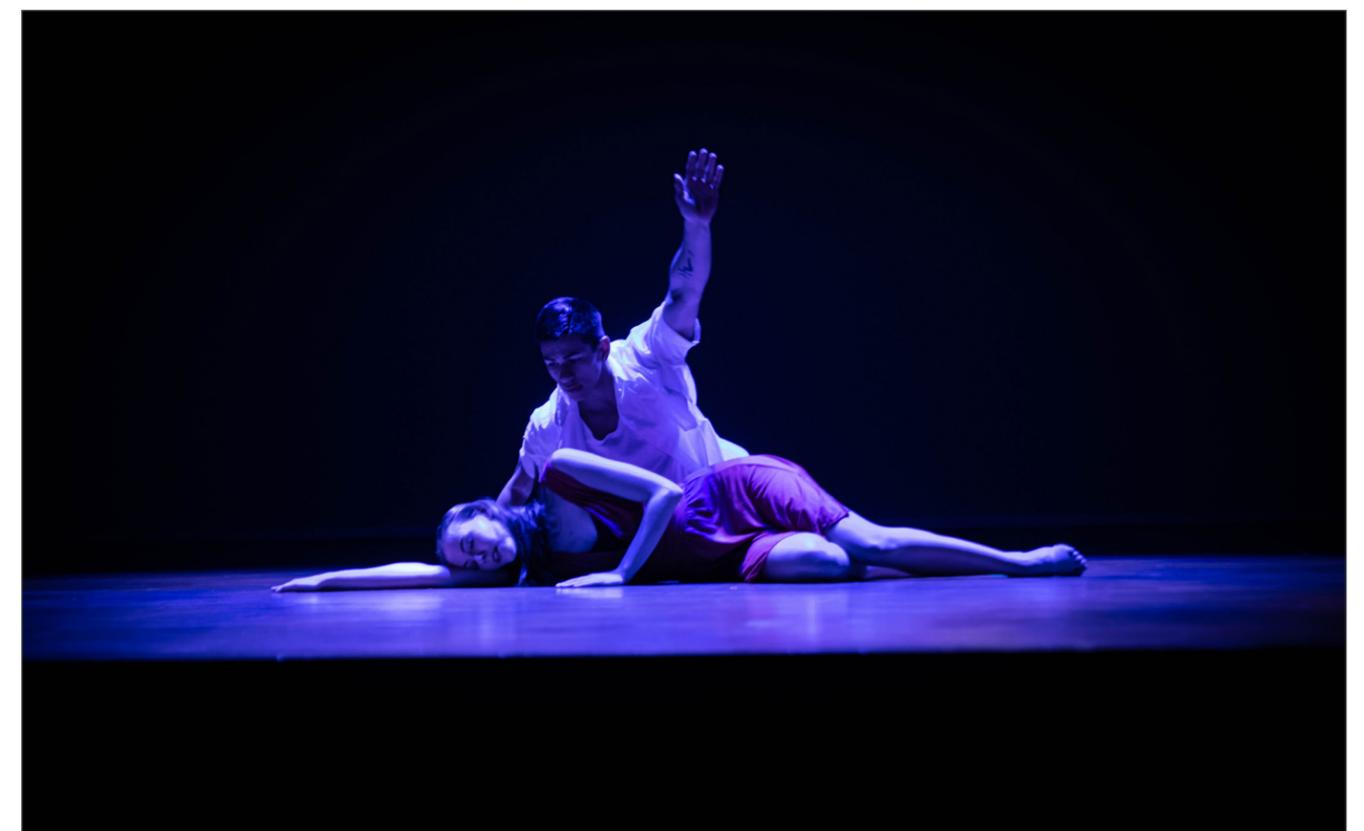
Some of the most popular exhibits at the 2023 festival were the hands-on activities.



Fashion students designed wardrobes and costumes for both an outdoor fashion show and the Exposé Concert in the Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center.



Students from various departments in the CCFA perform during last year's festival during the Exposé Concert at the SFPAC.



Dance alumni Catherine Barkley-Prado and Connor Chaparro perform at the 2023 Central to the Arts Festival. Barkley-Prado currently dances with New Ballet Ensemble and Chaparro dances with Pilobolus.

# Empowering Graduates

Paving the Way for Student Success



College students don't earn their degrees in a vacuum. It "takes a village" of faculty and alumni to help them land on their feet after they finally graduate and go on to snag their first post-university job.

For instance, in the realm where art, history, science and education intersect, the Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies in the College of Communication and Fine Arts marks two decades of shaping the future leaders of the museum profession.

Established in 2003, this program has evolved, leaving an indelible mark on over a hundred students who have successfully blended their passion for their respective disciplines with the intriguing world of museums.

Originating as an in-person certificate program, the curriculum was meticulously crafted, requiring students to delve into two core museum studies courses, undertake two internships for hands-on experience and select two additional courses tailored to their interests with program approval. The aim was clear—to prepare individuals currently enrolled in or graduated from master's or doctoral degree programs for a seamless transition into the multifaceted realm of museum professions.

One distinguishing feature of this program is its interdisciplinary nature. Students from diverse fields — art, anthropology, biology, business, communication, education, music, geology, history and public administration — are not just welcomed but encouraged to participate.

Chantel Drake, who completed the program in 2010, speaks of its diverse coverage and the invaluable network she built through the internships. She now serves as the deputy director of the Birmingham Museum of Art.

"The program touched on a variety of areas in the museum field," said Drake. "The internship requirements were extremely beneficial in expanding my network and giving me hands-on experience. I kept the texts from each course, [which] I continue to reference throughout my career."

Andrew Ross holds a master's of fine arts with a degree in creative writing and a graduate certificate in Museum Studies. He has seven years of experience in the field of museums, working as the project director for the Davies Manor Historic Site and later as its executive director. Today, Ross serves as the director of the Blues Foundation's Blues Hall of Fame Museum.

"Before graduate school, I worked in journalism. Entering the museum studies program changed that by opening an entirely new career path for me," said Ross. "My time in the certificate program allowed me to realize the museum field was where I really wanted to be."

## The Influence of Egyptian Art and Archaeology

Similar success stories are also happening at the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology.

Dr. Lorelei Corcoran, director of the institute, says it has been fortunate in placing students in graduate programs in the U.S., Canada and the UK.

"We are a very young program relative to some of the other universities that have Egyptology programs and yet we have the largest number of Egyptologists on staff as compared to any other university in the United States," Corcoran said.

Because the program is so strong, whenever anyone calls Corcoran for a reference, she says the hiring manager knows Corcoran will give an honest assessment.

"Each one of us, and we know everyone else in the field, so when we give a recommendation for one of our students it's considered very important in terms of being of them being accepted in other programs," Corcoran said. "Recently, I made a list of the number of students whose theses I had supervised over the years and where they had ended up. I was very impressed by the number of students who have now completed their PhDs. at prestigious universities like NYU and the University of California, Los Angeles."



UofM alum Chantel Drake



Katie Mars, a marketing specialist with Pretty Useful Co., shares her expertise with students during the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media's Pro Day event.

## The Success of JRSM's Pro Day

The Department of Journalism and Strategic Media recently began inviting media professionals on campus to meet students on "Pro Day."

"It's so important for the department to create opportunities for our students to connect with industry professionals," said Dr. Robby Byrd, associate professor. "Pro Day is particularly special because it gives students a chance to network with local pros, but it also gives them the opportunity to get feedback on their resumés and portfolios."

Almost every journalism and strategic media career option was represented – from TV newsrooms - to local newspapers – to public relations.

Nearly 50 JRSM students met one-on-one with the pros during the first-ever Pro Day in 2023, and more than 60 met with pros in 2024. The journalism professionals included John Klyce; reporter for the Memphis Business Journal; Soni Halmon, executive producer at Fox13; Christian Fowler, senior writer and content producer for Bluff City Media; David Royer, digital executive producer for WREG TV; Colin Cody, sports reporter for WREG TV; and Lucas Finton, reporter for the Commercial Appeal.

In the public relations field, attending were Beth Wilson, founder and chief PR officer for Wilson PR; Courtney Ellett, owner of Obsidian PR; and Alisha Tillery, public relations director for KQ Communications

In the creative mass media field, attending were Patrick Lantrip, photographer for the Daily Memphian; Vanessa Exernieks, art director for Fox13; Cameron Gray, senior graphic designer for Neon Canvas; and Curt Crocker, creative director for Neon Canvas.

Career Services also provides valuable support for students, offering advice on what to wear to an interview, resume writing and job fair strategies.

In February, the College of Communications and Fine Arts (CCFA) career specialist Erica Shaw orchestrated "The Art of Networking" workshop, helping students interact with hiring managers from diverse companies around Memphis.



# Mummies & Melodies

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How the CCFA Balances Innovative Research, from Ancient Egypt to Today's Choral Classrooms

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**HOW DOES VAPING AFFECT YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE U.S.?**  
 You might already have your own idea of how it does, but there's research going on right now that researchers hope will eventually help design a new health warning label on the packages that are aimed at kids.

Dr. Michael Schmidt, associate professor of Graphic Design in the Department of Art & Design, is a Principal Investigator for the study, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Its acronym is "ENDS" - which stands for "Developing and Testing Health Warnings for Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems."

"We are designing pictorial health warning labels to advance the science on vaping prevention and cessation among U.S. youth," said Schmidt.

The NIH is funding the research with a total reward of almost \$474,000.

"The funding covers the cost associated with running several studies, culminating with a randomized controlled trial in a lab setting," said Schmidt.

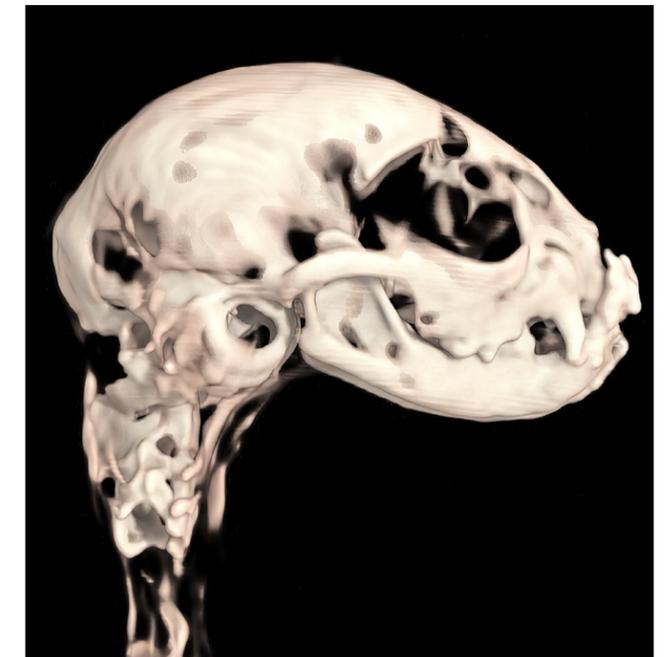
He says the process of securing a grant can be labor-intensive.

But, Schmidt shared an optimistic way of looking at what many Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA) professors do every day.

"While applying for federal grants might seem daunting, our CCFA faculty do work of the same scope all the time. Think of all the work that goes into just the pre-production phase of a film, planning an exhibition or mounting a theatrical production or concert," Schmidt said. "All of those



**Dr. Lorelei Corcoran (center), professor of Art History and director of the Institute of Egyptian Art & Archaeology, worked with Dr. Zachary Abramson (right) at St. Jude to scan one of the cat mummies in the institute's collection and see if there really was a cat under all the bandages.**



things are huge; so, in my opinion, securing federal funding and working with colleagues to execute the work isn't a bigger or more impressive proposition."

ENDS is led by Dr. Taghrid Asfar at the University of Miami and Dr. Wasim Maziak at Florida International University.

Of course, research doesn't always mean applying for grants or working weeks and weeks to compile a study – especially when you're digging into a subject you're excited and passionate about.

For example, an unexpected collaboration brought the UofM's Institute of Egyptian Arts and Archeology together with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. It all started after the institute's director, Dr. Lorelei Corcoran, was quoted in an article in 'The New York Times.' Dr. Zachary Abramson, a radiologist with expertise in 3D modeling for surgical planning at St. Jude, read the article and reached out to see if Corcoran had anything she'd like to see the inside of.

Their first burning question: the institute has a mummified cat, but is there an actual cat inside?

"So, he contacted me and asked if there was maybe anything that we could collaborate on," said Corcoran. "As part of an exhibit, he and I CT scanned the cat mummy. Initially, he wanted to work on a human mummy because that's his expertise. He's a dentist and radiologist. So, he was interested in human skulls. But we limited it to the cat. (It) went through the CT scan, which has a pre-recording that says, 'Now

hold your breath....Now breathe.' and I was like, if that thing breathes and comes to life, we're all in really, really big trouble."

The diagnosis? Indeed, there's an actual cat inside.

Corcoran says the CT scan answered one question she gets asked a lot – which is, are these animal mummies faked and sold in the tourist trade or are they actual mummified animals? She says that even in antiquity priests created false animal mummies to sell.

The hospital was also able to create a 3D-printed model of the cat skull, which Corcoran said made for an interesting addition to the exhibit.

Now, fast forward thousands of years - from unraveling the mysteries of a mummified feline to stepping into the rhythm of the rich tapestry of choral music.

Recently, Dr. Emily Frizzell, who teaches in the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, and Dr. Leah Windsor, of the Department of English, teamed up to investigate what defines a "good" choral performance and discover if there's a universal standard for excellence, or is it all about personal perception?

In teacher preparation programs in the U.S., choral directors are equipped to recognize and teach culturally specific standards of choral tone.

Imagine it's like asking if a student's voice is healthy and if it sounds like it should.

Directors can also assess whether the "vocal instrument" is producing the sound in a healthy manner and judge if the style

aligns with the chosen music.

But there's a twist: despite the training, there's a lack of common standards or language for describing tone.

The gap may inadvertently lead to biases among directors, potentially fueling ethnocentrism and impacting students' self-perception.

Frizzell and Windsor's research led them to one solution - establish a common terminology and provide standardized training through professional organizations.

They say this approach aims to minimize biases and foster a more systematic and precise use of qualitative descriptors for health and appropriateness.

Their research was published in the journal Plos One.

Research - no matter its form - drives innovation, expands knowledge boundaries and contributes to solving complex societal challenges, fostering a dynamic environment that fuels academic and practical advancements.

It also serves as the cornerstone for advancements in various fields, shaping the future of industries, technology and our understanding of the world.

Most importantly, faculty in the CCFA are leading innovative research to explore and understand society's challenges.

# From *Hollywood Glamour* to Community Transformation

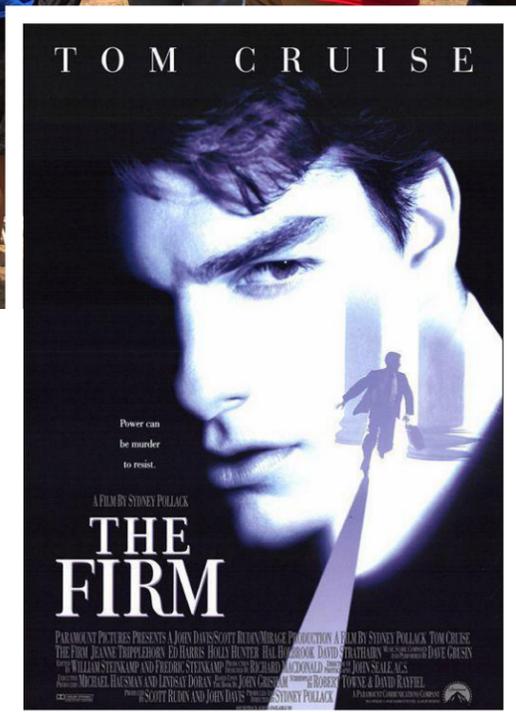
Memphis' Dynamic Fusion of Film, Architecture and Dance



When you think of Memphis, the Three Big 'Bs' spring to mind – the Blues, Beale Street and BBQ. Yet, three decades ago, a new sensation took the city by storm, eclipsing even these iconic elements.

Hollywood descended upon Memphis for the filming of "The Firm," a cinematic adaptation of the novel by none other than Mississippi's second most famous author, John Grisham (some argue he outshines even the renowned William Faulkner of Oxford). At the pinnacle of his literary career, Grisham saw not one but two of his novels, "The Pelican Brief" and "The Firm," transformed into blockbuster movies in the '90s.

The arrival of Tom Cruise, the charismatic protagonist of "The Firm," sent Memphians into a frenzy. The excitement was so intense, "The Commercial Appeal" dedicated a daily text box, guiding readers to the filming locations. Enthusiasts eagerly flocked to the sets, yearning for a chance to witness the magic of production and, if luck favored them, catch a glimpse of the one and only "Mr. Top Gun" himself.



Even former College of Communication and Fine Arts (CCFA) dean Dr. Richard Ranta made a cameo appearance in the movie.

The local film scene has had an indelible impact on the city since then and the University of Memphis' Communication & Film Department's impact extends far beyond the confines of a studio or film set.

"I think that probably every film and video project that happens in the city, we have a student on that crew," said department chair Dr. Wendy Atkins-Sayre. "Probably more than one." The program, it seems, is intricately woven into the fabric of Memphis's burgeoning film scene.

One of the program's notable initiatives is to help foster connections between local filmmakers and students. "We're trying to connect with a lot of local filmmakers, so they feel connected to our program, and I think we've been a big part of that," said Atkins-Sayre. "This collaborative effort



not only strengthens the local film community but also provides aspiring filmmakers with valuable opportunities to learn and grow.”

The department’s online list of where alumni now work is impressive, to say the least.

For example, Chet Leonard has done location sound for films such as "Waking Up in Reno," "A Time to Kill," "In Good Company" and "Lost Highway." And Shannon McIntosh, a senior executive vice president at Miramax. Her credits include producer on "The Hateful Eight;" executive producer on "Django Unchained;" the rap documentary, "Rhyme and Reason;" and "Four Friends and a Movie."

As Memphis buzzes with collaborative energy in its local film community, the Department of Architecture is helping with a transformative vision taking shape on the north side of the city. There, the vision of a local couple is driven by faith, compassion and the desire to transform not just homes — but lives.

Marybeth Conley, a former longtime anchor at WREG News Channel 3, is a woman with a calling that emerged, she said, from a place of deep prayer and an answer she could have never anticipated. Her journey began by using her background in TV to produce an online program that goes beyond the superficial.

She calls it "Flip My Life," a play on the famous cable show "Flip My House."

She said it’s not just about flipping houses though. "It’s more importantly about flipping lives, offering a second chance to those returning from prison, caught in the web of retribution rather than rehabilitation," said Conley.

That sentiment hits close to home since her new husband, who is the contractor for the show, also had a brush with the law.

Rick Woodall robbed a bank in 2008. He spent more than three years in prison, which, Conley said, showed him the inequities of the justice system.

Last summer, Conley and Woodall asked several Architecture students for help with design ideas for a 71-year-old house they

were remodeling in Frayser.

What makes this project unique is its community-driven approach. The couple envisions the house not just as a physical space but as a symbol of hope and transformation for Memphis. The involvement of architecture students added a special touch to the project, ensuring that the renovated house became a beacon of inspiration.

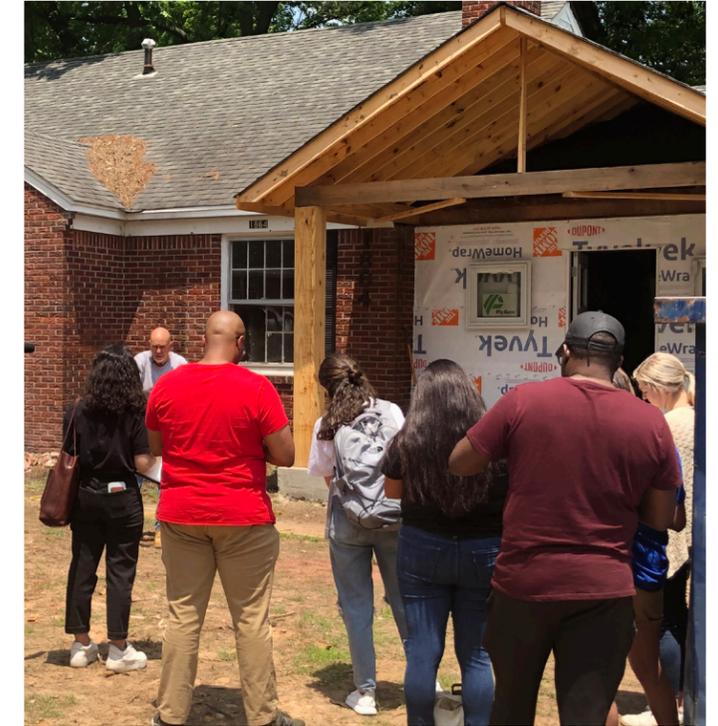
While Memphis has traditionally been associated with music, a thriving dance scene is reshaping the city’s cultural panorama. This upswing in dance activity fosters a mutually beneficial connection between the city and the University of Memphis’ dynamic dance program.

"I think there’s a symbiotic relationship, even if it has occurred without foresight between our program, the City of Memphis and the amount of professional dance in the city," said Department of Theatre & Dance chair Jacob Allen.

The city, known for its remarkably large number of thriving professional dance organizations, extends beyond the renowned Ballet Memphis. Collage, New Ballet Ensemble and other dynamic groups contribute to the cultural tapestry of Memphis. These organizations not only enrich the artistic landscape, they also play a vital role in shaping the dance program at UofM.

According to Allen, these organizations feed the University with incoming students, engage high school programs and foster a continuous cycle of talent. This creates an environment where the city’s support sustains the level of artistry within the University, ensuring the perpetuity of Memphis’s dance culture.

But what sets Memphis apart in nurturing dance as a full-time endeavor? Allen attributes this phenomenon to the holistic view embraced by both the University’s dance program and the city itself. Unlike the perception that dance, like opera, might struggle to survive in a city setting, Memphis thrives on its diverse perspective.



Architecture students work with 'Flip My Life' creator Marybeth Conley (bottom right) to brainstorm improvements to a house in Frayser earmarked for a former prison inmate.

# NEWS & NOTES

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND CCFA



## Architecture

**Michael Hagge**, chair of the Department of Architecture, received the 2023 National American Institute of Architecture Students Faculty Impact Award. Hagge is the faculty advisor for the UofM chapter of the AIAS. Hagge also received the 2023 President's Award from the Memphis chapter of the American Institute of Architects in recognition of outstanding contributions to the profession of architecture. The award was presented by AIA Memphis President Chase Percer (BFA Architecture '10.)

## Art & Design

**Gary Golightly**, professor of Graphic Design, accepted the role of interim chair of the department for the Spring semester. The search for a permanent chair is ongoing.

**Sonin Lee**, an associate professor of practice in Fashion Design, has been chosen as a semi-finalist in the Paper Art Fashion category for the Lucca Biennale in Lucca, Italy, Tuscany this summer. The Lucca Biennale is a unique and singular event that celebrates paper art as a global movement while focusing on its future trends.

**Yangbin Park**, assistant professor for Printmaking, was chosen for a solo exhibition entitled "Border(less)" at the UAH Wilson Hall Gallery, University of Alabama.

**Dr. Rebecca Howard**, art historian in the Department of Art & Design, was awarded a University of Memphis's Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Support Grant – as well as a College of Communication and Fine Arts Faculty Seed Grant - to help cover the costs of image rights and publication subvention fees for her book, *Portraiture and Mnemonics in Renaissance Italy*. She also published an article titled, "Giovio's Impresa: Portrait of the Concetto," in the journal, *Emblematica: Essays in Word & Image*. Howard also partnered with the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art (soon to be the Memphis Art Museum) to provide a series of art history lectures for new docents in training.

**Kate Roberts**, assistant chair and assistant professor of Ceramics in the Department of Art and Design, was showcased at the Indian Ceramics Triennial in New Delhi. She created an unfired clay installation, a large, site-specific, porcelain gate that examines the temporary physicality and meaning of

structures and the spaces they exist within. This structure could dictate a split between class, race, wealth, beliefs and territory, a moment in between. The installation questions the gate's permanence.

**Bryan Blankenship**, a 3D art shop technician, was commissioned by EL Design Studios of Houston, TX to create a three-panel work of art to be displayed in the new patient wing at Tennova North Knoxville Medical Center in Knoxville TN. The work is titled "Lucy's Garden 1-3" It measures 5' X 10'.

**Emily Balton**, visiting assistant professor, designed a large-scale neon sign for the newly redeveloped multi-tenant commercial strip in Memphis, "The Heights." She did the design during her time as a graduate student at UofM. The manufacture and installation should be completed by this spring.

## Communication and Film

"Beyond the Borders: An Artistic Archive of Sundarbans Movement," completed by **Elja Roy**, and GRA Sneha Goswami have been featured in the Environmental Communication Zine. This zine offers a collection of creations, collaborations, and



**Michael Medcalf**, associate professor with the Department of Theatre & Dance, helps students perfect their form in practice sessions.

conversations that exemplify environmental communication praxis. Dr. Catalina de Onís designed and edited this resource, in collaboration with many contributors, whose names and work appear throughout the zine. This project is dedicated to environmental communication teacher-scholar professor Steve Schwarze.

The National Communication Association (NCA) named **Dr. Andre E. Johnson** as the 2023 recipient of the prestigious Orlando L. Taylor Distinguished Scholarship Award in Africana Communication. The award honors a scholar whose body of work demonstrates a sustained commitment to the study of African American and/or the African Diaspora communication and culture.

## Journalism and Strategic Media

**Dr. Matthew Haught** was promoted to chair of the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media. Haught specializes in visual communications and teaching mainly design, photography, creative strategy, and multimedia communications to both undergraduate and graduate students. His educational journey includes a B.A. in Print Journalism and a M.A. in Journalism from Marshall University in Huntington, W.V. He

earned a PhD in Mass Communications from the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

## Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music

**Dr. Kevin Sanders** is leaving the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music to join the Baylor University School of Music as dean. He's been a faculty member at UofM for 14 years. As director, he helped lead the Scheidt School of Music through a transformational time with the planning, construction and grand opening of the Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center, a \$40 million, 82,000-square-foot facility featuring state-of-the-art recording studios, large rehearsal spaces and a 900-seat concert hall.

**Dr. Josef Hanson** secured a \$15,000 grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to complete case study research on BIPOC arts entrepreneurs in Memphis and the Mississippi Delta region. He also received a second round of funding (\$5,000) through the Community of Research Scholars (CoRS) grant program of the Division of Research & Innovation to pursue larger grants supporting the establishment of an arts entrepreneurship research lab at the UofM. And Hanson launched the School of Music's "Tiger Tank" Music Entrepreneurship Pitch

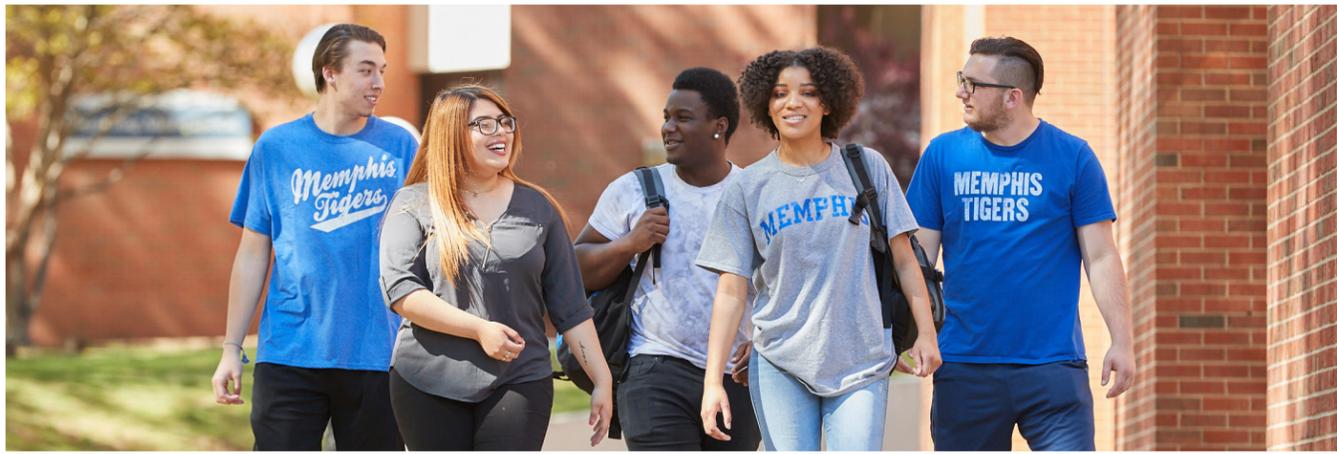
Competition in collaboration with the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship.

**Dr. Francis Cathlina**, director of choral activities, conducted honor choirs in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas, and presented sessions at the Alabama Music Educators Association, Ohio Music Educators Association, and the American Choral Directors Association Southwestern Division Conference. The University Singers, under Cathlina's direction, will be a featured performing ensemble at this year's Tennessee Music Education Association Conference in Nashville. The University of Memphis Jazz Ensemble featuring Delfeayo Marsalis was one of the headline performances during February's Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival in Rockville, Md.

## Theatre & Dance

**Michael Medcalf**, associate professor of Dance and head of the Dance program, was awarded \$2,500 for a Field Work & Archival Research Grant for your project titled "Talley Beatty Field Work and Archival Research."

**Brian Ruggaber**, associate professor of



theatre, and alumnus Dennis Whitehead Darling received first place in Division VIII of the National Opera Association for their production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* by Janáček, which was performed at the Manhattan School of Music. Ruggaber served as the scenic designer and Whitehead Darling directed the production.

### Faculty Retirements

**Dr. David Arant**, JRSM chair, announced he'll be retiring in May after 32 years. He began teaching at the UofM in 1992. Arant says one of his greatest accomplishments at the UofM was recruiting and retaining faculty members who make a difference in the outcomes of JRSM programs and in the lives of students. He says now he and his wife want to focus on their grandchildren who live 700 miles away on the East Coast.

**Anita "Jo" Lenhart**, a professor of Voice and Body Training, Shakespeare, Dialects, Text work and Performance in the Department of Theatre & Dance, announced her retirement this year. Lenhart came to the UofM in 1987. She holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from Eastern Kentucky University and an MFA in Theatre (Directing) from Florida State University. She completed her professional apprenticeship in acting with the Actors Theatre of Louisville. She also holds internationally recognized teaching certifications in Bikram yoga and Kundalini yoga (as taught by Yogi Bhajan).

**Dr. Kenneth Kreitner**, the Benjamin W. Rawlins Professor of Musicology in the Scheidt School of Music has retired from the UofM. He received his PhD in musicology from Duke University in 1990 and joined the faculty at the UofM that fall. Kreitner is a scholar of Spanish Renaissance music,

historical performance and nineteenth-century American amateur bands.

**Dr. Randal Rushing**, professor of Voice in the Scheidt School of Music, retired after 33 years at the UofM. He joined the voice faculty of the University of Memphis in 1990 and served as director of the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music from 2008-15 before returning to full-time faculty status. Rushing received his American training and degrees from the University of North Texas and Arkansas Tech University.

**Dr. Patricia V. Podzorski** was curator for the ancient Egyptian collection of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology at the UofM until 2023. She also taught both graduate and undergraduate courses on ancient Egyptian art and language, in addition to museum studies.

**Dr. Katherine Grace Hendrix**, professor emerita in the Department of Communication & Film, retired in 2023. She received her B.A. in Speech Communication from California State University, Fresno – her M.A. in Rhetoric from the University of California, Davis - and her PhD Speech in Communication from the University of Washington. She says when she grows up, she wants to be a wedding photographer.

### Staff Retirements

**Laurie Snyder**, CCFA's assistant to the dean for undergraduate studies, has retired after 27 years at the UofM. Snyder came to the university in 1997 from the Memphis College of Art. She says now that she has free time, she'd like to spend more time making art. She's also planning to write a novel about her great, great-grandmother.

### CCFA Dean's Office

**Terrell Stanford-Bush** has been promoted to college academic advisor II. For the past three years, she's been a graduation analyst, helping CCFA students achieve their strategic objectives. She says her goal is to create an environment that encourages students to reach their full potential while empowering them throughout their academic journey.

**John W Faulconbridge II** is also a new college academic advisor II in the CCFA's dean's office. Faulconbridge earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in Music Performance at UofM. He started his career in advisement working with freshmen at the University of Southern Mississippi before returning to the University of Memphis to work as a graduation analyst for the College of Arts and Sciences in 2022.

**Dai Bledsoe** is the CCFA's new academic advisor I/graduation analyst. They come to the UofM from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway where they were the Assistant Registrar for Transfer Credit Evaluation and Residence Coordinator.

### In Memoriam

**Dr. Lily Afshar**, professor of Classical Guitar in the Scheidt School of Music, retired in 2023 after 34 years on faculty at the UofM. She's the first woman in the world to receive a doctorate of Music in classical guitar. She received that degree from Florida State University, a master of Music from the New England Conservatory and a bachelor of Music from the Boston Conservatory. She died in October 2023 in her native Iran after a long struggle with cancer.



