

Draft

Origin and History of The University of Mississippi
Alumni Association

Revised in 1984
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University of Mississippi Alumni Association
years of service to Ole Miss alumni and the University community

Only 4 years after the University of Mississippi was chartered, a group of 23 former students reunited on the Oxford campus and formed a group known as the "Alumni Society of the University of Mississippi". The year was 1852. Today, the society is known as "The Alumni Association" and has over 50,000 total members and an active membership of over 15,000.

The objectives of the alumni society, as recorded in minutes of the 1852 meeting, were to "encourage education, promote the cause of literature and science, call public attention to our state university, and annually renew the friendships of early life". A constitution was drafted and the society set out to meet the stated objectives.

For nearly 30 years the association continuously debated membership requirements into the group. For several years, the association allowed membership only to those who actually graduated. The alumni leaders suggested following this strict interpretation based on the fact that Webster's defined an alumnus as "a member of a school or college class who has been graduated". Amendments were approved in 1882 and again in 1918 to allow former students who attended the University for at least one year to be allowed membership into the Alumni Association.

Beginning in 1852 the various graduating classes were "initiated" into the Alumni Society. The graduates were admitted into membership in a ceremony based on the reading of the constitution and their acceptance of the same. By 1857 an initiation fee of \$1.00 was implemented a fee which would develop into an annual alumni dues program.

The functions of the society were carried on without a break until 1861 when they were rudely interrupted by the War between the States. There were no additional recordings in the record book until June 26, 1866. The passage read:

"The alumni met in the chapel on Commencement Day... and proceeded to reorganize the society.... A committee was appointed to organize the construction of a monument on the campus in remembrance of the of the alumni and students who died in the late war."

It was also resolved that the society "pledge our assurance of sympathy to all relative and families of association members who died in the war."

On June 25, 1872, Alumni advanced the idea of "...appropriately celebrating the 25th anniversary of the University in 1873". The next day the society named a committee to correspond with alumni on the matter...It was voted to solicit \$5 from each alumnus to defray the expenses of the celebration. A year later, however, at a meeting of the society with 26 attending, the committee reported that only \$25 had been collected and the idea of the celebration was dropped.

In 1889 the association began a program to provide financial assistance for students in the form of scholarships. The scholarship program was the primary involvement of the association until the end of the century. The association had relaxed its society initiation fees and had little or no funds to finance a variety of activities.

On June 12, 1906, the society members discussed the possibility of implementing a dues structure which would help provide a variety of activities. It was on the basis that athletics be improved that the alumni were willing to approve the dues structure. The plan was not implemented until 12 years later when the first ~~full time~~ Alumni Secretary, Mr. Jeff Hamm, was appointed.

*Hamm = 1924
18 yrs*

Under Hamm the constitution was revised and the dues structure was implemented. Former students could meet membership requirements on the payment of dues which were \$2.50 per year payable in advance. Life memberships were available for \$50.00 ~~for building or loan fund~~

As the years passed, the association did not continue to strongly emphasize the payment of dues as a requisite for membership. None were collected although contributions were solicited, especially for athletics. Monies were also used to supplement faculty salaries, improve the grounds, and provide for scholarships.

Mr. Hamm served as Alumni Secretary until 1947. He had helped to revive the association, and as its first full time secretary, had worked to develop county and community alumni chapters, publish the first alumni magazine, initiate alumni support of university projects, and stage class reunions.

Mr. William S. Griffin became Alumni Secretary in 1947 and served as Director of Alumni Activities from 1967 to 1980. During his tenure, the Association increased its active membership from less than 1,000 to more than 12,000 members. One of the major projects undertaken by the association under Griffin's leadership was the construction of the Alumni House. The original building was completed in 1951 with additions in 1954 and 1968. The Alumni Club program was expanded to all areas of the state. Receptions were held at athletic events including numerous bowl appearances. Griffin considers his greatest accomplishment to have been the formation of the

*Sept 10
18 yrs*

Past President's Club of the Alumni Association. Also, progress was made in organizing alumni of the Medical center.

In 1980, Griffin retired and Mr. James N. Butler replaced him as Director of Alumni Activities. Mr. Butler had served as Alumni Secretary and Associate Director since 1961. Under Butler's leadership the Association is reaching more alumni through a computerized records department and a variety of progressive programs. The name of the department was changed from the Department of Alumni Activities to the Department of Alumni Affairs expressing a more comprehensive designation.

During Butler's tenure nearly 10,000 addresses have been updated. Constituency chapters have been expanded to virtually every school within the University system. A student alumni organization was formed to educate students on the importance of alumni involvement in university affairs. The student organization has expanded into a young alumni program. County clubs have been consolidated into regional clubs to enable greater participation from academic, athletic, and alumni staffs at the University. The Alumni House has been remodeled.

Butler has also initiated programs involving those who support Ole Miss although they may not have attended the University. These groups include parents of students, faculty and staff, and anyone who has come to understand the Ole Miss mystique.

The alumni staff has expanded to meet the growing needs of the Association. The staff now consists of 8 professionals and 12 additional staff members.

The Alumni Review has been upgraded and the mailing system has been modernized with the addition of computer labels and an automatic labeling machine.

From the early days of struggling to implement the dues structure, The University of Mississippi Alumni Association now has the distinction of having one of the highest percentages of dues paying alumni among state assisted institutions. C
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In addition to the traditional responsibilities of updating information and increasing awareness among alumni, the Alumni Association has begun to implement an aggressive annual fund program for the University. Although The University of Mississippi has been described as a "State supported" institution, it is merely "State assisted". The funds appropriated by the State of Mississippi account for only one half of the total necessary operating funds needed to operate the university. The annual fund program is designed to supplement these state funds and make alumni aware that annual giving is necessary in order to insure that the university will continue to offer the quality programs that both students and alumni expect and deserve.

The University of Mississippi ^{Alumni Association} promises a progressive future to complement a proud tradition of service to Ole Miss alumni and The University of Mississippi.