



**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
— AND NEW MEDIA —**
THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

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CONTACT: Debora Wenger
EMAIL: drwenger@olemiss.edu
PHONE: 662-915-7146

UM School of Journalism and New Media establishes scholarship in professor's name

(Oxford, MS – Sept. 3, 2019) The University of Mississippi School of Journalism and New Media has established a scholarship in the name of a journalism professor who spent almost three decades teaching media law and educating students about the First Amendment.

Jeanni Atkins, Ph.D., said the school's dean gave her the good news. "I'm very honored that Dr. Norton wanted to establish a permanent endowment fund in my name that will help Honors College students pay for their education," she said.

The scholarship has been created as a University of Mississippi permanent endowment fund of \$25,000 that will increase over time. Full-time students in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College majoring in journalism or integrated marketing communications will be eligible, and the amount of the grant each year depends on interest earned and additional contributions.

Will Norton Jr., Ph.D., dean of the School of Journalism and New Media, said some of Atkins' former students helped create the fund.

"Dr. Atkins was the intellectual strength of the graduate program here for decades," he said. "She taught courses with rigor, and outstanding students graduated with her as mentor. There are leading media professionals who will tell you that she is the reason they have done so well in the business. The scholarship is in honor of a dedicated teacher who made a difference in students' lives."



Atkins earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Maryville College in East Tennessee where she grew up. She worked as a full-time secretary at the college while taking courses part-time.

She earned a Master of Arts degree and a doctorate from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. While there, she worked full-time as an office manager/researcher for Professor Paul Fisher, executive director of the Freedom of Information Center, a national Freedom of Information clearinghouse in the journalism school. Fisher influenced her career path, she said.

“My experience at the Missouri FOI Center national clearinghouse led to a passionate interest in the First Amendment and the public’s right to know,” she said. “Teaching media law and educating people about their rights of access to government meetings and records and the problems secrecy poses through the work of the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information (MCFOI) made it possible to continue to indulge that passion at Ole Miss.”

Atkins served as editor and publisher of Mississippi’s FOI Spotlight for 15 years and also as executive director.

Atkins said she hopes the scholarship will help students achieve their goals.

“Since I worked my way through college and graduate school, I know how much scholarships can mean to students who can’t afford to further their education without this kind of assistance,” she said. “But a scholarship means more than financial aid because it helps to relieve the stress financial worries impose and bolsters confidence in oneself. My hope is that it will help enable outstanding students to attend Ole Miss.”

To request an interview about the scholarship, contact Assistant Dean Debora Wenger at 662-915-7912 or drwenger@olemiss.edu.