


THE INAUGURATION OF DR. BLAKE THOMPSON


# TWENTIETH

## Distinguished leaders serve as MC inauguration speakers

Blake Thompson and Mark Keenum developed a close friendship beginning decades ago, and those bonds keep growing stronger for the higher education leaders.

The Alcorn County natives will share the same platform when Dr. Thompson gets inaugurated as Mississippi College's 20<sup>th</sup> president. Serving as president at Mississippi State University since 2009, Dr. Keenum will be among the major speakers at March 29 ceremonies on the Clinton campus.

Regina Schofield, a Washington-based administrator for Battelle, an international research giant, will also address inauguration audiences. A native of Bude in Franklin County, Schofield is an attorney and a Mississippi College graduate. The third speaker is David Williams, dean of the College of Engineering at The Ohio State University.

Both speakers are familiar with the success story of 44-year-old Blake Thompson. A former vice president at The Ohio State University for nine years, Thompson succeeded retired President Lee Royce on July 1, 2018. Blake, his wife, Jana, and their three children have received a warm welcome since arriving last summer.

"Dr. Blake Thompson is a visionary leader and a true blessing to



*Special to The Clinton Courier*

*Mr. Mark Keenum*

Mississippi College and all of higher education in our great state," Keenum said in a statement from his office on the Starkville campus. "I am honored to call him a colleague and friend."

Dr. Keenum is pleased to be a part of Thompson's big day. Open to the public, the ceremony on the university's historic Quad begins 4 p.m. that Friday.

"I look forward to his inauguration this month and to working together with him and MC to move Mississippi forward in the years to come," Keenum added.

Growing up in small north Mississippi towns, Keenum in Corinth, and Thompson in Rienzi, they're both graduates of Northeast Mississippi Community College in Booneville.



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*The Honorable Regina B. Schofield, MBA*

But there are some notable differences in their backgrounds.

A former MSU faculty member, Keenum is a Mississippi State graduate with his degrees in agricultural economics. Thompson received three pharmacy degrees at the University of Mississippi, MSU's in-state Southeastern Conference rival. Dr. Thompson earned a master's at Georgetown University's School of Business.

The two Mississippians once worked on the same team in Washington. Keenum served as chief of staff to recently retired U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran from 1996 through 2006. Thompson served on the senator's staff in D.C., and they carried out projects to benefit the Magnolia State.



*Special to The Clinton Courier*

*Dean David Williams*

Thompson worked as Sen. Cochran's legislative director when he chaired the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Keenum served as Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture prior to returning home to lead Mississippi State.

Returning soon to speak at her alma mater, Schofield serves as director of corporate engagement and education outreach at Battelle. She's a former assistant attorney general in the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington. She's played key roles in public and private non-profits.

As a former vice president at Ohio State, Dr. Thompson also worked as a Battelle administrator at its Columbus offices in research, education and philanthropic partnerships.



**Welcome to Clinton, Dr. Thompson and family!**

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