

University of Mississippi celebrates Class of 2020

Press Release

The University of Mississippi will celebrate more than 5,400 candidates for graduation in the Class of 2020 during a live, virtual celebratory event on May 9, 2020. The following local students are candidates for graduation:

- Curtis Delvion Hills, of Lexington, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Arts degree. Hills is a English major in the College of Liberal Arts.
- Anjelica Monique DanYell Redmond, of Pickens, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Arts degree. Redmond is a Political Science major in the College of Liberal Arts.
- Cassidy Nicole Gatson, of Pickens, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Social Work degree. Gatson is a Social Work major in the School of Applied Sciences.
- Dallas Cole Crosby, of West, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Business Administration degree.

Crosby is a Risk Management and Insurance major in the School of Business Administration.

• Steven Rivers Dickerson, of West, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. Dickerson is a Management major in the School of Business Administration.

• Christy Lynn Chambers, of Goodman, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Arts degree. Chambers is a Biological Science major in the College of Liberal Arts.

• Kristel Heckman Thrash, of West, MS, is a candidate for a Specialist in Education degree. Thrash is a Counselor Education major in the Graduate School.

• Maggie Elizabeth Melton, of Durant, MS, is a candidate for a Bachelor of Arts degree. Melton is a Allied Health Studies major in the College of Liberal Arts.

“While we aren’t able to gather in the Grove and at other beautiful venues on

our campus right now for traditional pomp and circumstance, we could not let our originally scheduled Commencement day pass without recognizing the incredible achievements, character and spirit of this class of graduates,” said Chancellor Glenn F. Boyce.

UM leaders continue to evaluate plans to hold an in-person Commencement ceremony at a later date.

“The university remains committed to doing all it can to honor our graduates in person when it is safe for us to come together as a university community,” Boyce said.

The virtual event will begin at noon CDT and can be viewed at olemiss.edu.

As part of the virtual celebration, students - including December 2019 graduates, and May and August 2020 candidates for graduation - received an official cap and tassel from the university, along with other celebratory items.

Main Street America finds up to 7.5 mil small businesses across the country in danger of closing permanently

Press Release

A new report published by Main Street America, founded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, reveals that nearly 7.5 million small businesses across the country are in danger of closing over the next five months as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Of the 149 small businesses surveyed in Mississippi, 62 percent indicated that their businesses are at risk of closing permanently in the next five months. Half of Mississippi respondents have seen their revenue decrease by more than 75 percent since early March.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Businesses is based on the first and most extensive survey to date assessing the impact of the pandemic on small businesses, especially those that employ 20 or fewer people. Nearly 6,000 small business owners responded to the survey, of whom 91% own businesses with staff of fewer than 20 people. Interactive maps with state and local-level data can be found here.

“We remain deeply concerned that many of our nation’s smallest businesses are the most vulnerable to revenue disruption caused by the pandemic, and these businesses are the least able to obtain funds absent a well-developed relationship with an existing lender and/or technical assistance in securing funds,” says Patrice Frey, President and CEO of

Main Street America. “Congress must ensure there are sufficient funds to support all small businesses in need, particularly those with under 20 employees.”

The report also calls on Congress to fund the U.S. Small Business Administration and partner organizations like local Main Street programs and Chambers of Commerce to expand technical assistance to small businesses. These local economic development organizations act as critical connectors and educators for our nation’s smallest employers and can help ensure stimulus dollars reach these businesses.

Similarly, state and local governments must continue to prioritize and fund these essential downtown and city-wide small business support organizations. These programs not only play a vital role in stabilizing local economies throughout the crisis but will expedite the recovery process once the pandemic subsides.

“The Mississippi Main Street Association has been working overtime to help our local communities respond to the impacts of COVID-19,” said Thomas Gregory, State Coordinator for MMSA. “Specifically, we are assisting our local Main Street directors in navigating small business loan programs and we are providing grant funds for community development projects in our Main Street communities,” Gregory stated.

While much focus has turned to supporting e-commerce solutions to help boost revenue while the nation remains in quarantine, troublingly almost two-thirds of the businesses surveyed nationally said they did not have an active online sales component to their business.

In Mississippi, nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated they do not have an active online sales component to their business. The report suggests web development and e-commerce training for

First wave of CARES Act provides funding to students for expenses on course materials, technology, housing, food, health care and childcare

Press Release

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced in April more than \$6 billion will be distributed immediately to colleges and universities to provide direct emergency cash grants to college students whose lives and educations have been disrupted by the coronavirus outbreak. The funding is available through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into law by President Donald J. Trump.

“What’s best for students is at the center of every decision we make,” said Secretary DeVos. “That’s why we prioritized getting funding out the door quickly to college students who need it most. We don’t want unmet financial needs due to the coronavirus to derail their learning.”

The CARES Act provides nearly \$14 billion to support postsecondary education students and institutions. Colleges and universities are

required to utilize the \$6.28 billion made available to provide cash grants to students for expenses related to disruptions to their educations due to the COVID-19 outbreak, including things like course materials and technology as well as food, housing, health care, and childcare. In order to access the funds, the Department must receive a signed certification from the higher education institution affirming they will distribute the funds in accordance with applicable law. The college or university will then determine which students will receive the cash grants.

School allocations are set by formula prescribed in the CARES Act that is weighted significantly by the number of full-time students who are Pell-eligible but also takes into consideration the total population of the school and the number of students who were not enrolled full-time online before the coronavirus outbreak.

The Department is utiliz-

ing the most recent data available from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and Federal Student Aid (FSA) for this calculation.

Institutions will receive all locations and guidance for the institutional share of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund in the coming weeks. Institutions will be able to use these funds to cover costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus.

The funding allocations are part of the nearly \$31 billion Congress allocated to the Department to distribute to students, K-12 schools, and higher education institutions under the CARES Act. The Department, at the Secretary’s urging, is working to make funds available as quickly as possible.

Under the Secretary’s leadership, the Department has taken quick action to support higher education students from the start of the coronavirus outbreak. Colleges and universities were given immediate regulatory flexibility so students’ educations could continue online.

The Secretary also provided student loan relief to tens of millions of borrowers by setting all federally held student loan interest rates to zero percent and allowing borrowers to defer payments for 60 days without interest. The CARES Act extends those benefits to six months.

The Department also stopped all federal wage garnishments and collections actions for borrowers with federally held loans in default.

situation together,” Gregory added.

The report is based on survey responses from small business owners in 48 states and the District of Columbia. Respondents came from more than 1,000 locales across the United States, including big cities like New York and Chicago and small towns like Blairsville, Georgia and Greybull, Wyoming. Nearly 40 percent of the small businesses represented in this survey operate in towns with fewer than 10,000 residents.

Tchula welcomes new fire station, law enforcement gear



The town of Tchula got a new three-bay fire station approximately 3000 square feet with a training room and kitchenette. The station was built and financed by James Wessel, owner of Brindlee Fire Apparatus and Fire Truck Mall in Huntsville, Alabama. The station will be paid for by the fire rebate that Tchula receives each year from the insurance commissioner. MedStat the ambulance service for Holmes County will be on site and will provide service for the Tchula, Mileston, Thornton, Cruger and northern Humphreys County areas. Also, Tchula got a \$6,033.00 grant from the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, the Division of Public Safety Planning, to buy body armor/bullet-proof vests, uniforms and flash lights for the police department. Officer Michael Rush found the source of the grant. Mayor General Vann filed the grant application and was assisted by Rush in gathering the necessary data to qualify. (Photo Submitted)