

SOUTHERN MISS

Athletic Administration



Dr. Shelby F. Thames

PRESIDENT

Dr. Shelby F. Thames is the eighth president of The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Miss. He took office on May 1, 2002, continuing an illustrious career of 40 years at Southern Miss.

His previous administrative positions at Southern Miss were chair of the Department of Polymer Science, dean of the College of Science and Technology, vice president for Administration and Regional Campuses, and executive vice president. In 1970, he was the founder of the Department of Polymer Science and, in 1973, co-founder of the Waterborne and High-Solids Coatings Symposium, an event that has expanded to the annual International Waterborne, High-Solids, and Powder Coatings Symposium, in which he continues as its co-director. He sought and gained approval for the enhancement of the College of Science to the College of Science and Technology by creating several new technology programs.

He was instrumental in the conception and implementation of the "2+2 Degree Program" between Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and Southern Miss Gulf Coast, which provided a bachelor's degree program course work on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in more than 26 subject areas. Another of his many accomplishments involves three entities created to improve statewide economics: Mississippi Polymer Institute; International Coatings and Formulations Institute; and Southern Diversified Products, LLC (a Mississippi University Research Authority company).

Among his numerous honors and awards are the designation as Distinguished University Research Professor of the Department of Polymer Science; recipient of the first Distinguished Professorship by the Southern Society of Coatings Technology, the 1996 Southern Miss Alumni Association Continuous Service Award, the 1998 NUC Wheeler McMillan Award for his work with agricultural products, and the 1999 AAIC Anson Ellis Thompson Career Achievement Award for his career in promoting the

use of agricultural-based materials as industrial raw materials; and inductee in 1998 to the Southern Miss' Alumni Hall of Fame. In 1998, Southern Miss' \$29 million Polymer Science Research Center was named in honor of Thames and is now known as the Shelby Freland Thames Polymer Science Research Center. For bridging the gap between academia and industry and his work in research activities in the area of paint and coatings, Thames has been recognized as the 2002 R&D Person of the Year by Modern Paint and Coatings magazine. In 2004, Thames was recognized as one of South Mississippi's Outstanding Community Leaders by the *Sun Herald* and the Journal of South Mississippi Business.

At the time of his selection as president of Southern Miss, Thames had a research team numbering 50 and supervised five graduate students. Most recently, this team is known for the new environmentally safe paint based on agricultural products, which emitting no odor or harmful properties into the environment. One of the initial uses of the paint, called "American Pride," was used in the reconstruction and repair of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

Thames currently serves on the Board of Directors for Conference USA and the Mississippi Technology Alliance.

Dr. Thames earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from The University of Southern Mississippi in chemistry and organic chemistry, and his doctoral degree from the University of Tennessee in organic chemistry.



Richard Giannini

DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS/ CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE SOUTHERN MISS ATHLETIC FOUNDATION

Since arriving as Director of Athletics in 1999, the impact of Richard Giannini's leadership and vision for Southern Miss athletics has been both positive and dramatic, and the face of Golden Eagle athletics will reflect his vision for the department far into the future.

Culminating an extensive search, Giannini officially assumed his current position June 1, 1999, pledging, "to work tirelessly to provide leadership to produce the best athletic program possible." And now, in his seventh year as a Golden Eagle, the Florida native has been as good as his word.

In the past six years, Giannini has spearheaded efforts to raise more than \$43 million in property, cash and pledges for new facilities, including the development of the Circle of Champions program, which currently has 78 members, who each committed \$100,000.

Construction on the \$11 million Athletic Center to replace an aging Fairchild Fieldhouse has been completed and is in full use. And while this may be the centerpiece for athletic department progress, fans almost need a roadmap to keep track of the many projects and the unbelievable progress that is taking place.

The Rogers, Thames and Welch Baseball Center at Pete Taylor Park, furnished with dressing rooms, coaches' offices, players' lounge and medical training area, was completed in 2002, and that project has paid huge dividends for the baseball program that, during the 2003 season, set school records for single-season victories, won Conference USA regular season and tournament titles and hosted the first NCAA Regional Tournament in school history. A new press box and 12 suites will be added for the 2007 season with construction beginning in spring 2006. In addition, a new women's softball facility has been in use for the past four seasons. Additions and improvements continue at that venue.

A variety of other, less obvious projects, either have been completed, are underway, or are in the planning stages. Those include the recently installed artificial playing surface on Carlisle-Faulkner Field at M. M. Roberts Stadium, improvements to the Joe P. Park football practice facility that included a new lighting system and the addition of new lighting to Roberts Stadium and the softball complex.

In addition, a \$50 million facility upgrade is underway, to include renovation and expand projects at both Roberts Stadium and Green Coliseum. Various phases of these projects are underway. Those include three major phases at Green Coliseum – the first of which has been completed – where a new air conditioning and heating system has been installed; coaches' offices and locker room renovations and additions, set to begin in November of 2005; and, renovation that will follow in 2007 to include luxury suites, concession stands upgrades, the addition of a banquet room, the addition of more chairback seating and more courtside seating, as well as making the building more "concert-friendly."

Other projects in various stages of planning include a new tennis complex, completion of the softball stadium, and a new Olympic Sports Training Center.

Thirty luxury suites have been leased and 400 club seating areas comprise the cornerstone of the



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Roberts Stadium project. That project also will dramatically increase the stadium's seating capacity. The south end-zone project will begin in March of 2006, to be completed for the 2007 season.

During his tenure at Southern Miss, the Golden Eagles have been the only Conference USA program to have won championships in the sports of football (1996, 1997, 1999 and 2003), men's basketball (2001) and baseball (2003).

Giannini also has continued to work at both the conference and national levels. He serves on several Conference USA committees, was chairman of the C-USA football athletic director's committee in 2001-02 and currently serves as the chairman of the Football and Bowl Committee. Giannini recently completed a term on the NCAA Football Issues Committee and begins a four-year term as a member of the NCAA Championships Cabinet. He also is a member of the NCAA postseason football committee which governs the bowl matches and represents C-USA Athletics Directors at BCS meetings.

One of the areas that Giannini is proudest of is the graduation rates and Academic Progress Rates of the Southern Miss student-athletes. Last year, the NCAA graduation rate for all athletes was 67 percent, football was 79 percent and men's basketball 100 percent. The APR rate had every program above the benchmark rate of 925. Southern Miss ranks as an academic leader in the State of Mississippi, the C-USA and the nation.

A tireless and innovative administrator, Giannini brought outstanding intercollegiate athletic experience to Hattiesburg, including five years as director of athletics at one of Southern Miss' longtime interstate rivals, Louisiana-Monroe.

While working for the NCAA in the mid-1970s, Giannini's responsibilities included serving as executive producer of the ABC Football Highlight Shows, as well as NCAA Tournament basketball matches not aired by NBC. He also arranged and produced the first national telecast of the College Baseball World Series for HBO, and produced numerous conference football highlight films. He was also director of licensing for the NCAA.

He served as assistant sports information director at Florida (his alma mater) from 1966 to 1970, was sports information director at Duke from 1970 to 1973, became assistant athletics director at Duke in 1974, and, after working for the NCAA in 1976 and 1977, returned to Florida as senior associate athletics director to oversee external affairs.

He left Florida in 1986 to enter the private sector, taking over as CEO and co-owner of Raycom Management Group in Charlotte, N.C., a subsidiary of Raycom Sports, where he developed numerous sporting events, including the Blockbuster Bowl, the most successful first-year bowl in NCAA history.

Giannini's successes have not gone unnoticed. He recently was inducted into the University of Florida's College of Health and Human Performance Hall of Fame in March of 2004 and the Saint Leo University

Athletics Hall of Fame in February of 2005.

The Golden Eagle athletics director was born Nov. 12, 1942; is a 1961 graduate of Winter Park, Fla., High School; was a track athlete, competing in the weight events, at Furman; and graduated from the University of Florida in 1966.

Giannini and his wife, Gayle, are parents of four daughters—Ansley Stone, Brittney Borbash, Carlyn Linker, and DeLancey, and grandparents of Tori, Parker, Sara, Kelsey, Ryleigh, and Kyle.



Sonya Varnell
**SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
 OF ATHLETICS/OLYMPIC
 SPORTS/SENIOR WOMAN
 ADMINISTRATOR**

Sonya Varnell, senior associate director of Athletics, oversees Olympic Sports and serves as Senior Woman Administrator. Varnell has been at Southern Miss since 1999, after serving as the coordinator for Multicultural Programs for Athletics at the University of Nebraska.

As the senior associate director of athletics, Varnell oversees the Olympic sports programs at Southern Miss, including women's soccer, softball, women's basketball, men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, track and field, cross country and volleyball. She also coordinates athletic housing, letter

awards and the Student Athlete Advisory Committee and community outreach, while also assisting the director of Athletics with women's basketball.

As SWA, she serves as the athletic department's liaison with the University's Gender Equity Committee and is responsible for implementing the gender equity plan for student-athlete welfare. She also represents Southern Miss at Conference USA and NCAA meetings.

In 1997 Varnell was one of 10 Americans to receive a Bundeskanzler Fellowship with the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. She conducted research on politics and sports in Freiburg, Germany.

During her stint at Nebraska, she was responsible for implementing the multicultural education program for student-athletes, coaches, administrative and support staff. Her other responsibilities included academic support services (NCAA eligibility compliance), public relations, and advisor to the Student-Athlete Advisory Board.

In 1991, she served as the Compliance and Academic Affairs assistant at the Southeastern Conference. Her responsibilities included NCAA and SEC rules interpretations, NCAA Special Assistance Fund, SEC Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, and event management at the men's and women's basketball tournaments. She helped to maintain the conference's squad and eligibility list. She designed the computer program to track all monies for the NCAA Special Assistance Program.

Varnell earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in public administration from the University of Mississippi. She earned additional credit hours toward a second bachelor's degree in French and German from the University of Nebraska. She also served as a graduate assistant track and field coach at Ole Miss, where she and six others were the first scholarship athletes to begin the women's track and field program. She earned four letters (indoor and outdoor), set numerous records in the sprints, jumps, and relays, and was on the All-SEC Scholar-Athlete Honor Roll.

Varnell, a graduate of Pearl High School and a native of Brandon, Miss., has a daughter, Sophia, who is a student at Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



David Hansen
*Deputy Director
 of Athletics*



Scott Carr
*Associate Director of
 Athletics/
 External Affairs*



Don Oberhelman
*Associate Director of
 Athletics/ Compliance and
 Student Services*



Dr. Dennis Phillips
*Faculty Representative to
 Athletics*