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College of Education honors outstanding alumni

The College of Education at the University of Montevallo recently honored a number of alumni at a dinner held in conjunction with homecoming activities on Feb. 6. At the annual dinner, the College of Education recognizes one alumnus in each area of study. The following professionals have distinguished themselves in their fields.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Outstanding Alumna Award for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education was presented to **Alissa Helfinstine, who earned her bachelor's degree from UM in 2009. Helfinstine taught in Birmingham City Schools as the itinerant teacher for the district for more than eight years. She worked closely with audiologists at Children's HEAR Center and the Alabama Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as well as students, teachers, and staff at approximately 25 schools. Helfinstine currently serves as a special education teacher at Clanton Elementary School where she works with students with a variety of special needs.**

Nutrition and Wellness

Birmingham resident Erica Tsivourakis, who earned her undergraduate degree in dietetics at UM in 2010, was recognized as the Outstanding Alumna in Nutrition and Wellness. She **completed a master's degree in 2012 at the University of Southern Mississippi and began working for HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital. She then went on to work with Brookwood Baptist Health Systems where she earned two years of clinical experience and is currently in her third year of food service management. She is certified in Patient Programs with Morrison Healthcare, is ServSafe certified and is currently working on the Morrison's Retail Certification.**

Teacher Leadership

The Outstanding Alumnus Award for Teacher Leadership was awarded to Grayson Lawrence, of Birmingham. He earned his Ed.S. in Teacher Leadership at UM in 2016. Lawrence currently serves as assistant principal at Winterboro High School in Talladega County. Prior to becoming assistant principal, Lawrence taught beginning band, junior high band and high school band and was the co-creator of OPUS: a collaborative class combining the 7th grade math curriculum and fine arts at Winterboro from 2007-2014. He was the 2011-2012 High School Teacher of the Year recipient at Winterboro High and received the Middle School Chiquita Marbury Technology Innovation Award in 2014. He is also a charter member of Alabama Winds in Birmingham, Alabama, and plays horn.

Instructional Leadership

Amanda Hood is the recipient of the Outstanding Alumna Award in Instructional Leadership.

She received her master's degree and Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership

from the University of Montevallo in 2003 and 2010, respectively. Hood currently serves as principal at Mountain Brook High School. She has led strategic planning, been instrumental in the expansion of Advanced Placement course offerings, assisted in the implementation of computer science curricula and effectively led a redesign of the professional learning community structure at MBHS. Under her leadership, a 1:1 technology initiative was successfully implemented, providing tools for each student and teacher to support effective and engaging instruction. She has been awarded the Lawrence L. Malone Outstanding Principal Award from the University of Montevallo, the Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals-G.B. Beasley Award for Leadership and served as a member of the Council for Leaders of Alabama Schools Board, as well as serving as the state president of the Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals. In addition, she served as a principal representative on the Alabama State Department of Education Math Task Force.