

Patterson School Launches New Master's Programs

KPMG partnership the driving force in creating two new data analytics master's programs at UM

By Edwin Smith

The University of Mississippi's Patterson School of Accountancy launched two new master's degree programs in fall 2018. The new degree programs include the Master of Accountancy and Data Analytics (MADA) and the Master of Taxation and Data Analytics (MTDA). The school now offers four master's degrees with the others being the traditional Master of Accountancy and Master of Taxation.

The impetus for moving quickly to create new degree programs was KPMG's selection of the Patterson School as a partner in delivering graduate education in data analytics. KPMG LLP is one of the world's largest international professional services providing audit, tax and advisory services to clients globally.

After a rigorous selection process, the University of Mississippi became one of only nine universities in the nation to be selected by KPMG as a partner in this prestigious program in accounting and data analytics. The other schools include Arizona State University, Baylor University, Ohio State University, University of Georgia, University of Missouri, University of Southern California, Virginia Tech State University and Villanova University. The Patterson School is the only university selected by KPMG to team up in the area of tax and data analytics.

KPMG is paying full cost of attendance for 135 students across the country to pursue graduate education in data analytics at one of the nine partner universities. These students will do a four-month internship during the program and have signed contracts to work full time with KPMG upon graduation.

Thirty students who received their bachelor's degrees from universities across the nation are receiving KPMG sponsorship to attend the Patterson School. These students have come to Ole Miss from the following universities: Appalachian State, Baylor, Binghamton, BYU, Cal State San Luis Obispo, Creighton, Fordham, Howard, James Madison, Kansas, Kennesaw State, LSU, Maryland, Missouri State, Nebraska, Ole Miss, Prairie View, San Diego State, SMU, Tuskegee, Utah, UCLA, UMass and Villanova.

"The University of Mississippi's Patterson School of Accountancy and KPMG have enjoyed a tremendous partnership for many years," said Mark Wilder, Dean and KPMG Chair of Accountancy at UM. "We are proud to be offering master's degrees in taxation and data analytics, as well as in accounting and data analytics. It is a high privilege to work with KPMG to provide innovative graduate programs to help develop future professionals for the data age."

"KPMG's expanded investment in the data and analytics program demonstrates the firm's commitment to the future of the audit and tax professions," said Frank Casal, KPMG's U.S. vice chair – audit. "We're pleased to include prestigious institutions like the University of

Mississippi, who share this focus and are equally passionate about their students building advanced skills in accounting, tax and data analytics that they can bring into the marketplace.”

The curriculum in both the MADA and MTDA programs includes three required systems/data analytics courses. These include ACCY 628 (Data Modeling, Mining and Visualization for Accounting and Taxation), ACCY 530 (Accounting Information Processes and Analytics) and ACCY 609 (Current Topics in AIS and Analytics).

The MTDA program requires four tax courses including ACCY 509 (Corporate Income Tax), ACCY 603 (Contemporary Taxation/Multijurisdictional Entities) and ACCY 612 (Tax Research). All of these courses will have projects/modules dealing with the analysis of data. The fourth tax course will be a tax elective or tax data analytics internship. The MTDA also requires core courses ACCY 601 (Financial Accounting Theory and Analytics) and 610 (Auditing Seminar). One elective is offered in the 30-credit-hour degree program.

The MADA has five required courses in addition to the three systems-type courses including ACCY 501 (Internal Audit), ACCY 509, ACCY 601, ACCY 605 (Managerial Accounting and Business Intelligence) and ACCY 610. Two electives are offered in the MADA program.

“I’m very proud that KPMG is joining with Ole Miss in offering this dual degree in accountancy and tax with data and analytics,” said Ole Miss alumnus and KPMG partner Chuck Walker (BA 79), who serves as a KPMG campus executive for the university.

“This innovative program will equip students coming into the accounting profession with the tools to understand today’s cutting-edge technologies, give them hands-on experience with D&A and will incorporate intelligent automation technologies to increase efficiency, reduce risk and add value. We believe these skills represent core competencies for business professionals as we look into the future.”

The *Public Accounting Report* has ranked the Patterson School of Accountancy among the country’s top accounting programs for a number of years. The new rankings for 2018-19 were released in mid-August, and for the eighth consecutive year, one or more Ole Miss accountancy degree programs have been ranked in the top 10 nationally and first in the SEC.

The market for professional master’s degrees is expected to grow faster over the next decade than for bachelor’s or doctoral degrees, according to the Educational Advisory Board. The board also predicts that specialized business-related degrees will be among the fastest-growing areas of professional graduate education. Accounting and taxation degrees with special emphasis in data analytics would be included in this type of degree with tremendous growth opportunity.

The school has received a four-year grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation to provide funding for five Mississippi students per year to attend one of the new degree programs. The support will include tuition costs and a stipend. The Hearin grant also provides funding for two new faculty members for three years.

The Patterson School has hired three new faculty members for fall 2018. All three of these faculty will teach in the MADA and MTDA programs. Also, several existing faculty members will play a significant role in the course offerings for the new degree programs.

“We are very grateful to the Hearin Support Foundation for making such a significant investment in our new degree programs,” Wilder said. “Our goal is to deliver an educational experience to our students that will make the Hearin trustees proud.”

The new degree programs are available to all interested and qualified students. During a period when many universities are struggling to increase graduate enrollment, these two new data analytics programs have spurred growth in the Patterson School of Accountancy. Master’s enrollment for fall 2018 is at 219, representing 70 percent growth over last fall’s master’s enrollment of 129. Enrollment in the new data analytics programs is at 77 (46 in the MADA program and 31 pursuing the MTDA). While 35 percent of the current master’s class is pursuing one of the new data analytics degrees this fall, Patterson School leadership estimates this number will reach 50 percent for fall 2019.

“These degree programs are wonderful for the national visibility of Ole Miss and will certainly raise our national reputation even more,” Wilder said. “Developing new graduate programs such as these (is) a tremendous amount of work, and our faculty (members) are to be commended for their interest and willingness to work together to create these new programs (that) will be a tremendous benefit for our students.”