

University of Memphis business school installs first Hall of Fame



PHOTO BY [BRANDON DILL](#)

Nov 13, 2013 — Former Memphis supermarket magnate Art Seessel sneaks a peek at medals and plaques covering an award table before the first ever Fogelman College Hall of Fame induction ceremony at the University of Memphis. Seessel came to support his friend Rex Deloach who was one of nineteen individuals honored during the event. (Brandon Dill/Special to The Commercial Appeal)



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Nov 13, 2013 — Medals and plaques cover an award table before the first ever Fogelman College Hall of Fame induction ceremony at the University of Memphis. Nineteen individuals were honored during the event. (Brandon Dill/Special to The Commercial Appeal)



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Nov 13, 2013 — Dr. Rajiv Grover (right), Dean of the Fogelman College of Business and Economics, presents Kemmons Wilson Jr. with a medal as Wilson and his father Kemmons Wilson Sr. are inducted into the Fogelman College Hall of Fame at the University of Memphis. Nineteen individuals were honored during the first induction ceremony for the hall. (Brandon Dill/Special to The Commercial Appeal)

The University of Memphis business school on Wednesday enshrined honorees into its new Hall of Fame.

Photos of distinguished alumni and friends of the Fogelman College of Business and Economics now line a brick wall in the triangular lobby of the college's classroom building.

"The students take pride in seeing these people," Dean Rajiv Grover said. "For the students, the role model is not a professor. The role model is a business executive. They do not want to become us," he said of academics. "They want to become them," Grover said, motioning to the photos on the wall.

The opportunity to inspire students justified the \$60,000 expense, he said.

"The idea is pretty commonplace. Quite a few schools out there have even fancier settings" to display hall of fame names, photos and plaques. "The issue was execution. For execution you need dollars."

Budget cuts made the project all the more challenging. “We are doing a lot of other things that are directly beneficial to the students,” Grover said. “And this one is indirect ... The students take pride in seeing these people ... So there is merit to doing this from a student perspective and that’s how we sold it. Otherwise, it would be difficult to justify these kinds of dollars in these trying times.”

Most of the first hall-of-famers were selected from those who have been honored over the years as an outstanding alumnus or distinguished friend of the business school.

But three new faces were added to the pantheon on Wednesday: Alumnus John Bomer (Class of ‘72) of Houston, Texas, who was president and partner of Consolidated Steamship Agency until selling in 2010; alumnus Gary Shorb, president and CEO of Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare; and Rhomes Aur, executive vice president of wealth management for First Tennessee Bank.

The lobby ceremony was short and rather sweet, opening with a student who strummed his acoustic guitar and sang a folk song. One by one, the names of Hall of Fame inductees were called, and each walked up to have Grover hang a medal around his or her neck and receive a curved metal plaque with their photos embossed on them.

Taking their turn were: Bobby Fogelman, Shorb, Bomer, Aur, Kemmons Wilson Jr. and on behalf of Kemmons Wilson Sr., Douglas Browne, George Johnson, Harry Smith, Ben Watkins, David Sullivan, Larry Papasan, Cathy Ross, Gregory Pilant, Bill Watkins, David Perdue Sr., David Peck, Rex Deloach and Billy Dunavant.

“There’s a sense of gratitude but also a sense of responsibility,” said Bomer, who played center for the Tiger football team. “ ... I had a lot of professors who really invested themselves in me, gave me a good head start getting me into my career.”

The event was an occasion in which participants wanted to express a lot of thoughts — with at least one exception.

Bobby Fogelman, whose family name is on the university’s business school, conference center and a couple of real estate programs, was asked by a reporter if he would comment about what the Hall of Fame honor meant to him.

No, he said.