

DEVELOPMENT CORNER

Former Bulldog Athlete, Spouse Support Agriculture

A deep appreciation for agriculture and a love of athletics continue to draw Donald Ford to Mississippi State University. He understands the importance of remaining loyal to his agricultural roots and his alma mater.

Mississippi State holds fond memories for Ford, who credits the university with providing him the education necessary for a successful career in the agricultural industry. Today, Ford is chairman of the board and president of American Plant Food Corp., a domestic and export chemical fertilizer company that supplies nitrogen fertilizer in the form of ammonium sulfate in Texas, as well as the U.S. and North American markets.

"I feel that without my agriculture degree from Mississippi State, my success in the industry might not have been possible," said the Kerrville, Texas, resident.

After graduation from MSU in 1960, Ford began a career in the chemical fertilizer business. In 1967, he joined American Plant Food Corp. as a salesman. He later became sales

manager and then vice president. In all, Ford has enjoyed a 45-year career with the company, which has plant operations throughout Texas with sales across the U.S., as well as Central and South America.

Born and raised on a farm in Greenville, Ford said he fantasized as a youngster about attending Mississippi State. Following high school graduation, he received a football scholarship and his dream became a reality.

"During those days, players held positions on offensive and defensive sides of the game. So, I played fullback on offense and cornerback on defense. It was a great all-around experi-



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ence," he recalled.

It was during his days as a student that Ford met his wife, Phyllis, who was also attending MSU. After graduation, the two were married and moved to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. While he was pursuing a career in the field of agriculture, she was busy as a homemaker and mother of their two sons, Don Jr. and Stan. The couple, who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, have been blessed with four grandchildren.

The Fords are among the latest contributors giving in support of a new university initiative. *StatePride: An Initiative for Student and Faculty Support* seeks gifts from alumni and friends of the university for scholarships and faculty support.

Through *StatePride*, the Fords have established 10 \$1,000 annual scholarships for deserving students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The Donald and Phyllis Ford Loyalty Scholarships will benefit entering freshmen or community college transfer students with a minimum 3.0 grade-point average who demonstrate lead-

ership potential. Loyalty Scholarships are among several annual scholarships emphasized through the initiative.

The Fords also have established annual awards for exceptional faculty members in the college. Their \$40,000 gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar through a special partnership with MSU Athletics, which will result in \$80,000 for the college.

Over the next two years, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and other colleges will receive matching grant funds from the athletic department to fund a faculty awards program. Needs for each college are dependent on the number of faculty within the individual unit.

"We are proud to have the opportunity to award 32 full-time faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with a stipend of \$2,500 for their meritorious achievements this year," said Melissa Mixon, college interim dean. "The gift from the Fords, coupled with the athletic match, will allow us to recognize these exceptional faculty at a time when our budgets do not allow for raises."

Recipients will be selected based on an individual's con-

tributions to the university's mission of teaching, research and service. Currently, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has a 156-member faculty.

"We are very pleased to be able to double the impact of our gift with matching funds from the athletic department," said Ford. "It's a win-win situation for academics and athletics since strides in both areas will make the university the best it can be."

STATEPRIDE

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

Initiative for Student and Faculty Support

StatePride: An Initiative for Student and Faculty Support has raised more than \$33 million toward a goal of \$100 million since it began in January 2009.

The four-year initiative seeks private gifts to assist Mississippi State in reaching 22,000 students by 2015, a goal set forth by MSU President Mark E. Keenum. The initiative will allow the university to award need-based scholarships for deserving students and academic scholarships to compete for the best and brightest students. *StatePride* also will create opportunities for top performing faculty.

In conjunction with *StatePride*, the MSU Foundation has partnered with the athletic department for a matching gift program. MSU Athletics will match up to an average of \$750,000 annually for scholarships and faculty support as funds become available.

All contributions for annual scholarships and faculty support made before Dec. 31, 2012, will count toward *StatePride*. Over the course of *StatePride*, the MSU Foundation will continue to raise funds for other campus needs, such as building renovations and expansions, but an emphasis will be placed on scholarships and faculty support.

Learn more about *StatePride* by visiting the MSU Foundation online at www.msufoundation.com.

For More Information

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