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The President's Column

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The University of Mississippi

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The President's Column

SELA Awards Breakfast 2022

Dreyfuss Room, Threefoot Hotel, Meridian, MS

Wednesday, October 12, 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM

Welcome everyone! I have been tremendously honored to serve as your SELA President since January 2021. When I started out in SELA, I was the state representative for Mississippi, so I had a seat on the board. This was intentional. I never wanted to *just* be a member. I always wanted to be a meaningful contributor to our organization and to learn and grow from your experiences. I wanted to be a leader, but didn't exactly label myself as one. I say that because I never thought I would be your president. I always felt like a member of the Board Team, and not like the person calling all the shots. It felt like we were all colleagues doing something great and fun together, so I never really thought too much about being in charge. I was honored to lead our meetings and step into all the roles that you asked me to fill. I sometimes, well oftentimes, asked you for help, too. I'm looking at you, Executive Team! I reached out and I always received the answers I needed. Working with you has been a reminder that we are all leaders. You may feel like you are not a leader in other areas of your life, but I promise you, in SELA, you are a respected leader among us. Look around this room. These are your leaders to lean on. These are people you can call on when you have a problem that needs another leader to offer a solution. We help each other get through a lot.

I want to take a moment to brag on our two incoming leaders. Crystal Gates is a model for leadership. She understands how to build up a team and set a good example. She's been a supportive friend to me over the years. I encourage you to reach out to her for advice because she's really good at helping others see a different perspective while being understanding. She and her family love video games and raising guinea pigs, but it should be noted that Crystal never backs down from a challenge. Laura Slavin has been a long time SELA leader and good friend as well. Laura has a wonderful sense of humor, positive

attitude about life, and an adorable little dog named Honey. She moved into a new apartment this year and is a hard-core Alabama fan. But Laura is also one of the best servant leadership models that I have ever seen. I told Laura at a conference years ago that she will run this place someday. Now that day isn't far ahead.

Look at us! We are leaders and we are SELA. We will continue to find other leaders and add them to this space, to our discourse, to our mission, and to our lives. As library leaders we understand how important our jobs are in securing trust. A lot of jobs these days don't have community trust built into them anymore, but ours still does. Because we understand our patrons need to trust us to provide a safe space and we give that to them. We stand up for them. Let's remember to stand up for ourselves too. We are not only leaders, but we are humans. We make mistakes. I get so embarrassed when I make a mistake in front of you. But you always show me grace, and I remember that grace when others apologize to me for making a mistake. I want to show that grace to them, too. Let's support each other and encourage each other when we see someone struggling. Leaders support other leaders. Let's continue to grow other leaders and not worry about who is following us. We build each other up, because as you've heard me say, "if we don't work together, we don't work at all."

There are sticky notes and pens on each table for you to have an opportunity to give someone a "Shout Out." Give a word of encouragement or remind someone that they are important to you. If you get a note, put it in your program and keep it as a reminder that you are appreciated here. If someone asks you, "What's that?", you can say, "Oh that's SELA. We lift each other up. You should join us if that sounds like something you want to do, too. It's \$10 for your first year, and you will meet so many good influences that you'll never want to leave!"

I have enjoyed my time as Secretary, State Councilor for Mississippi, Vice President, and President, and I look forward to filling those big shoes Tim is leaving as Past President for the next two years. I look forward to seeing you in meetings and in other conferences while I continue to

serve you as best I can. Thank you all for being here. Thank you all for your service. Thank you all for your leadership.



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Interested in joining SELA or need to
renew your membership?

SELA has special new member and student rates.

