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Transformation Through Service

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Transformation through service



Service-Learning and Community Engagement at the University of Mississippi
The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement



Mission

The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement advances transformative service throughout the University and fights poverty through education in Mississippi.

Vision

The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement will be recognized for expanding community engagement throughout the University of Mississippi and for its success in addressing poverty in Mississippi through mutually beneficial partnerships.

Core Values

The McLean Institute reflects the following values in its organization and programs:

- **Academic Excellence:** The McLean Institute believes that education should be a lifelong and empowering experience open to all.
- **Transformation:** The McLean Institute recognizes the potential of the University of Mississippi to transform the inequitable structures of Mississippi that contribute to generational poverty.
- **Respect:** The McLean Institute values the strengths and assets of all people and the organizations with whom we partner.
- **Integrity:** The McLean Institute believes in listening honestly, processing information accurately, and following through on its commitments.
- **Inclusion:** The McLean Institute fosters inclusivity and cultural competence in its work.



THE UNIVERSITY of
MISSISSIPPI
McLEAN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE
AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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Transformation through • service

Service-Learning and Community Engagement at
the University of Mississippi

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Greetings

From the Chancellor

Through its core mission of creating, applying and disseminating knowledge, the University of Mississippi strives to transform lives, both individually and throughout communities across our state and nation.

In today's world, that requires students to do more than simply attend class, take notes and pass exams. Putting knowledge into practice is an essential component, and that is why our faculty and administration are committed to helping students incorporate service into their academic experience here.

The service-learning courses and community engagement projects profiled here blend teaching, learning and reflection, producing exchanges among our faculty, students and communities that benefit everyone. This emphasis gives students greater control over their own education, allowing them to discover and pursue passions, set and achieve measurable goals, and help transform the world. With this experience, they emerge more socially conscious and prepared to deal with the challenges, both personal and professional, around them.

Interest in these courses has grown tremendously in recent years, and our faculty members are working hard to increase our student engagement. I am proud of these efforts to incorporate opportunities to be agents of positive social change into the world-class academic experience the university offers, and I encourage you to explore ways to make a difference through your own courses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Jones".

Dan Jones, M.D.
Chancellor

Greetings

From the Provost



The academic experience at the University of Mississippi revolves around critical thinking, intellectual depth, inspiring experiences, outside enrichment, and a sense of social responsibility. In this compendium of articles about service-learning opportunities at the University of Mississippi, you will see many examples of academic rigor and reflective service work in action.

The service-learning courses profiled in this publication span many academic disciplines, including criminal justice, education, engineering, law, linguistics, psychology, social work, and sociology. Our students and faculty have touched the lives of numerous community partners in our state and across the globe, from budding entrepreneurs in the Mississippi Delta to a community seeking to improve its educational infrastructure in Togo, Africa.

The transformative learning experiences detailed here represent the best of what a University of Mississippi education seeks to achieve: high-quality scholarship with a lasting impact on the greater good. I hope that these testimonials inspire and challenge you to consider the many ways that scholarship can address pressing societal needs and to seek out those mutually beneficial partnerships in your own work.

Sincerely,

Dr. Morris H. Stocks

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs



Welcome

Service-Learning at the University of Mississippi

Welcome to the inaugural publication on Service-Learning at the University of Mississippi. Universities have increasingly become aware of their intellectual and economic importance in forming effective local partnerships to make a difference in the social and economic conditions in the areas in which they serve. Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* has been a clarion call for universities to build bridges between theory and practice, establishing a scholarship of application to encourage higher education to identify problems that might be solved by deliberate application of research.

This publication highlights UM courses that are connecting theory and practice through service-learning to address community-based needs. The McLean Institute's mission is to advance transformative service throughout the University, which will in turn fight poverty through education in Mississippi. One way to accomplish this mission is to partner with UM's colleges/schools, departments, and faculty to support service-learning courses.

What is Service-Learning?

Service-Learning is a teaching methodology that enriches instruction by providing thoughtfully designed opportunities for students to use their skills and knowledge in service to and with the community. In collaboration with UM's Council on Community Engagement, the McLean Institute has crafted a common definition for service-learning at the University of Mississippi.

Service-Learning courses are credit-bearing courses in which students take action to address a community question, challenge, or problem. Students combine academic concepts and ideas with practical learning and service to create mutual benefit in a community. Students reflect on their service activity to explore how theory and experience interact, helping to enhance their sense of community engagement and responsibility.

University surveys show that UM faculty and students are interested in service-learning courses and desire to see more community and student engagement on campus. UM's 2020 Vision Survey conducted in 2011, with almost 40% of faculty participating, indicated that departments and faculty are interested in offering more service-learning courses. In a 2013 UM survey of Deans, Chairs, and Directors, most indicated being familiar with the concept of service-learning, with one chair responding:

“An experiential [service] learning course is one that is created with the goal of a real world, implemented response to a community question, challenge, or problem that needs resolution. The nature of the challenge would be such that the course would have an academic basis for addressing it. Such courses are often interdisciplinary and utilize case study methods of teaching and learning. In either instance (interdisciplinary or not), the course should consistently be engaged in the discussion of how theory and experience interact. And the course should be constructed in a way that depends on the students to frame the level and extent of the community engagement.”

In two UM student engagement surveys (2013 and 2014), 16% and 17% of UM students indicated completing a service-learning course. More than 50% of students in each survey indicated that the service-learning course had made a difference in the community in which they served. And 74% of the students wanted to see more offerings of service-learning courses at the University.

In the Deans, Chairs, and Directors survey, a Department Chair remarked:

“I think that clearly demonstrating the benefits of using service-learning will be important to its success on this campus. Identifying a wide range of ways that faculty incorporate service-learning would be helpful in dispelling the myth that there is “only one right way.” Recognizing the work required for the development of service-learning courses within the Tenure and Promotion guidelines in various Schools and Departments will also be important...”

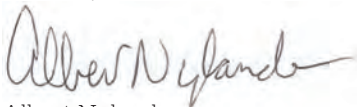
The enclosed articles highlight some of the projects arising from service-learning at UM and how they have benefitted faculty, students, and communities. In a state with almost 24% of its residents living below the poverty threshold – the highest in the nation – there are so many ways this classroom approach can make a difference in Mississippi. Service-Learning courses are also far-reaching, evident by Dr. Cris Surbeck and the team from the School of Engineering's work in building a school in Togo, Africa.

Service-learning presents a holistic approach to student learning and community engagement, empowering students to become potential change agents for the betterment of society. I envision service-learning courses equipping UM students with all of the concepts and tools necessary to challenge the persistent factors inhibiting social and economic progress in struggling Mississippi communities and around the world.

The McLean Institute will continue to support the development of service-learning courses through initiatives that provide financial support for new and existing courses. Since 2012, there have been 15 new or enhanced service-learning courses. UM faculty who need more information or support to develop a service-learning course are encouraged to contact our office. A service-learning toolkit is being prepared for easy access through the Institute's website (<http://mclean.olemiss.edu/resources/service-learning/>).

I hope you find this service-learning publication useful and informative. Increasing community engagement and service-learning opportunities for faculty, staff, and students are important goals for the University. The McLean Institute is here to assist faculty who seek more information about developing service-learning courses.

Sincerely,



Albert Nylander

Director of the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement and Professor of Sociology

Psychology Students Boost Kindergarten Readiness

Taught by Dr. Carey Bernini Dowling

The rapid physical, cognitive and emotional development that takes place in the first five years of a child's life sets the course for a lifetime. Many communities across Mississippi are working to become certified as child-friendly, with an emphasis on Kindergarten readiness. Lafayette-Oxford-University Excel by 5 is a coalition of educators, community leaders, and parents who work to support parents, families, and caregivers with resources on optimal early childhood development.

Students in Dr. Carey Bernini Dowling's PSY 470: Children and Families: Community Work course had the opportunity to engage firsthand with children impacted by LOU Excel by 5's community interventions. In this upper-division course, students explored themes pertaining to early childhood development and Kindergarten readiness, including language acquisition, how children's behavior becomes conditioned to stimuli, and skills for parenting small children. Students applied classroom theory while working with children at two local child care facilities: First Baptist Weekday Education and Learner's Playhouse.

"The course is a wonderful learning experience for students considering going into fields involving work with children and families," stated Dr. Dowling. "They can get a feel for what it is like to really work with children, build knowledge and hone skills that will help them in their future field."

Through the service-learning project placements, the psychology students interacted with children from a broad spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds. Stepping into the role of community-engaged practitioners allowed students to uncover any personal beliefs or biases that emerged when interacting in the community setting, and to reflect on how that impacts their effectiveness in working with children and their caregivers.

In addition to applying classroom concepts, the psychology students also gained life skills that will assist them in their desired career paths. Dr. Dowling explained that through the service-learning experiences, students "obtain a deeper understanding of the multiple determinants that impact ourselves and others, and an appreciation for barriers to optimal

functioning people may experience, as well as factors that influence resilience and optimal functioning."

During the summer term, students spent two hours per day at the child care facilities. Over the spring semester, students spent two hours per week at the community partner sites. While there, they engaged in activities designed to help cultivate early language development through verbal interaction and reading with children in the infant and toddler rooms. Speaking with babies has a powerful effect on their language acquisition, and language gaps can develop as early as 18 months of age. When parents consistently emphasize language as they interact with their child, they can build that child's vocabulary dramatically.

While in the 3K and 4K classrooms at the child care sites, students engaged in activities designed to help prepare children for their upcoming transition to 4K or Kindergarten. This course has been taught during the summer and spring semesters, so the intervention from the University of Mississippi students came at a critical juncture before all children were scheduled to move up to the next classroom.

"The children here at First Baptist looked forward to the visits from the students in the service-learning project," remarked Ms. Linda Glaze, the Director of First Baptist Weekday Education. "I observed them truly engaged in the student activities with a sense of wonder and adventure about what was planned for them each day. I could see that the children were focused on books read to them, conversations they had and games and activities that they considered just plain fun! I believe that the children were impacted in a positive way, extending skills related to early language acquisition, social and emotional development and the development of critical thinking, all of which are so critical to school readiness and success in life. Our staff also gained some new ideas for activities for this kind of skill development and helped them to be better teachers."

In addition to familiarity with letters, numbers, colors, and shapes, the broader goal of Kindergarten readiness is to foster the social and emotional development that will allow a child to successfully

“ I loved having the opportunity to work with the children!”

— MADOLYN STATLER

learn in a formal classroom setting, including the ability to listen, communicate, and get along with other children and adults. The activities in these Pre-K classrooms were designed to promote Kindergarten readiness by focusing on improving executive functioning skills such as the ability to inhibit behaviors they should not engage in, focus attention appropriately, and use working memory to solve problems. The activities and feedback were also designed to help children obtain a growth-mindset. The growth-mindset, as defined by Dr. Carol Dweck, is the belief that one's abilities, including intelligence, can improve.

As she reflected on her service-learning experience, University of Mississippi student Madolyn Statler stated, “I loved having the opportunity to work with the children! It was so fun to be able to watch the infants and toddlers progressively learn and understand new words, and it was inspiring to observe the preschool students develop a more open mindset. From day 1 to day 10, I heard less of ‘I can’t’ and more of ‘I want to try.’”

Creating child-friendly communities also means supporting parents. At the conclusion of the course, all parents whose children worked with Dr. Dowling's psychology students received a handout explaining the strategies utilized by the students. This information explained the techniques employed by the psychology students, so that parents could replicate these practices to nurture their child's language acquisition and preparation for Kindergarten at home.



Children develop early math skills in learning to recognize shapes, size, and quantity.

Providing parents with tools to support their child's development is critical, as much learning and development takes place in the home. In fact, Mississippi Kids Count reports that in 2014, 50% of children in Mississippi did not attend preschool. This underscores the need for organizations like LOU Excel by 5 that work to reach all parents, whether or not their young children attend child care or pre-school. Through hands-on interaction and preparation of materials for community workshops, Dr. Dowling and her students successfully disseminated best practices in early childhood development to young children and their families throughout Lafayette County.

For more information about PSY 470, please contact Dr. Carey Bernini Dowling at (662) 915-6686 or cbdowlin@olemiss.edu.

Promoting Social Welfare While Studying the Aging Process

Taught by Dr. Jo Ann O'Quin

Gerontology is the study of aging and older adults. This is a critical field of study, as life expectancy increases and members of the baby boomer generation turn 65. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that by 2030, 1 in every 5 Americans will be an adult over the age of 65. As advances in health care have evolved to manage chronic disease, people are living longer lives and often doing so while managing various health conditions. This lends itself to a complex set of dynamics facing older adults and their caregivers, and available social services have not necessarily kept pace with emerging community needs.

Working with older adults provides exposure to many social service areas such as access to health

care, mental health care, transportation, and housing. Skillful social workers understand how these services interlink, and quickly pinpoint the gaps facing older adults and their caregivers. Students at the University of Mississippi pursuing an undergraduate degree in social work have the opportunity to hone their skills while working with older adults in several gerontology classes taught by Dr. Jo Ann O'Quin, Professor Emerita of Social Work. In these service-learning courses, students study aspects of aging, along with family and caregiving issues, dementia, and end-of-life care, and apply skills that will serve them in any area of clinical or professional practice.

"The design of these courses recognizes community-based organizations as full partners in the teaching and learning process," explains Dr. O'Quin. "One class session featured a panel of older adult guest professors who shared their experiences and perspectives with the students."

Students are expected to volunteer a minimum of 10 hours per semester at a community partner organization. In Oxford and Lafayette County, these community partners include Memory Makers Respite Day Program, as well as several area nursing homes, assisted living communities, and hospices.

"One of our participants recently asked a University of Mississippi student why he comes to Memory Makers each week," recounted Dianne Arnold, co-founder of Memory Makers. "The student told him that he enjoys the company of our participants and misses them when he cannot be here. That's what makes this collaboration so special – the volunteers become like old friends."

SW 326: Gerontology: Social Welfare Aspects

SW 326: Gerontology: Social Welfare Aspects explores the biological, psychological and social aspects of the aging process and their impact on individuals, caregivers, families, and society. Students explore how the aging process impacts quality of life, and how caregivers and living environments can foster a sense of independence throughout that process. As they study gerontology, students familiarize themselves with the social services available to older adults,



Dr. Scott Vitell and wife Caren teach ballroom dancing once a week at Memory Makers.

and the social issues that stem from individual and community responses to an aging population.

Through their service work, students are challenged to consider their career path. "This experience has impacted my career choice and I have already been speaking with an elder-care director at an assisted living home in Nashville. It is our responsibility as a community to give back and help those in need and I feel this population is largely overlooked. I have loved this class and it will stick with me for the rest of my life," reflected one student.

SW 498: Special Topics on Aging: Caregiving, Dementia, and End-of-Life Issues

As a service-learning course, SW 498: Special Topics on Aging: Caregiving, Dementia, and End-of-Life Issues is particularly innovative because it is offered as an online course. Students at the Grenada, Southaven and Tupelo campuses have the opportunity to seek out their own service placements to fulfill the service component of the course. Identifying and building a relationship with a community partner is a valuable experience for future social workers, psychologists, nurses, physicians and related professionals, as well as elder law accountants and lawyers, who will one day need to broker services for their clients. The service experience also provides continuity between the face-to-face and online course delivery, while retaining a powerful learning experience for the students.

Stepping into the role of a caregiver is a transformative experience for the students. As one social work student recalls, "these adults had known how to care for themselves before, and although they may be disoriented and confused, a care-taker must not bombard them with information nor make them try to retrieve it on their own. I was humbled by their energy and willingness to participate in activities. I learned more from them than I ever thought I could from 'older people.' I have always had respect for elderly but with a bit of a teenage bias, like they do not understand the world today. In reality it is the young



Memory Makers provides fellowship opportunities for adults affected by memory loss and University of Mississippi students.

who do not understand as well and working around these brilliant elderly who are losing function of their brain has shown me how much I have to learn."

SW 575/PSY 575: Psychosocial Aspects of Aging

SW 575/PSY 575: Psychosocial Aspects of Aging is a graduate level, intergenerational service-learning course that integrates current research on the biological, psychological, social, and behavioral aspects of aging with service experiences. As this course is cross-listed with psychology, students explore special topics pertaining to mental health and treatment.

These service-learning courses have impacted students, faculty, and community partners beyond the semester they are taught. Many students have received letters of recommendation based on their hands-on service work, which speak directly to their skills and competencies as emerging practitioners. For her part, Dr. O'Quin has used these service-learning courses as the basis for numerous academic publications, including articles and book chapters. Finally, many students are so impacted by the experience that they continue volunteering at their service placement, thus strengthening the community partner organizations and enriching the lives of their clients.

For more information about Gerontology service-learning courses, contact Dr. Jo Ann O'Quin at (662) 915-7199 or joquin@olemiss.edu.

Growing Local Business and the Food-Based Economy in the Mississippi Delta

Taught by Professors Cam Abel and Marie Cope



Transactional Law Clinic students visit local farmers as part of their effort to further the food-based economy in the Mississippi Delta.

High rates of poverty, food insecurity, and unemployment coexist in the Mississippi Delta. Students and faculty from the University of Mississippi Law School's Transactional Law Clinic met with community members regarding this confluence of issues, and determined that small farmers in the region needed assistance in creating legal entities to support the local food-based economy.

University of Mississippi law students participate in service-learning coursework through the Transactional Law Clinic, where each student completes a minimum of 90 to 150 hours of casework per semester. The Transactional Law Clinic maintains 18-20 active cases. Through these cases, students gain hands-on experience assisting clients with entity formation, contract negotiation, commercial leasing, and other legal matters.

"Our students learn that the legal world goes far beyond the world of lawsuits and litigation," noted Cam Abel, Adjunct Professor and Co-Director of Transactional Law Clinic. "Lawyers play an important role in advising clients about business development and navigating the complex world of compliance with state and federal regulations. The Transactional Law Clinic brings nonprofit corporations into existence and gives our students experience in contract drafting and anticipating the pitfalls that may lie ahead for their clients."

The course, which is taught every semester, is structured to offer a weekly classroom seminar to facilitate problem-solving, provide updates on each project, and discuss the role of service in promoting justice for small farmers and growers in the Delta. Clinic faculty provide supervision and observe

opportunities for reciprocal learning among the law students and their clients.

The Transactional Law Clinic has nurtured many community partnerships through its work to support the food-based economy in the Delta. On campus, the Center for Population Studies and its Director, Dr. John Green, have worked closely with the Transactional Law Clinic on best practices for community education and engagement. The Transactional Law Clinic has also been recognized as an official partner of the Alliance of Sustainable Agricultural Production, a collaborative group of small-scale farmers and growers, as well as community organizations across Mississippi.

The relationship with the Alliance for Sustainable Agricultural Production provides law students the opportunity to travel to Goodman, Mississippi each month to participate in field days that are organized with Tougaloo College, Alcorn State University, Mississippi State University, and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce. At these field days, Transactional Law Clinic students give presentations on legal issues such as LLC formation, specialty insurance, tax preparation, commercial leasing and contracting, and provide advice and counsel to small farmers and growers.

“The Transactional Law Clinic gives students a chance to practice business law skills on behalf of low-income Mississippi Delta farmers,” said Marie Cope, Clinical Professor of Law and Co-Director of Transactional Law Clinic. “And on occasion, they are drafted to try out some agricultural skills on farm work days. A law student with a shovel can be dangerous.”

The field days also provide an opportunity for law students to build trust with community members by working alongside them in the field. Students from the Transactional Law Clinic learn how to lay drip tape, build high tunnels, and identify pests, as well as planting and harvest cycles. This exercise flips the dynamic of university representatives as experts, and instead places the farmers and growers in the teaching role for the law students. This strengthens the relationships between all stakeholders. Each field

day attracts between 45-50 community members, and results in approximately 25 percent of the Transactional Law Clinic’s caseload.

Sarah DeLoach, a third year law student, reflected that the Alliance’s field days in Goodman were excellent opportunities to connect law students with a small farmer community. “As student attorneys, we discussed farmers’ legal needs and, with the guidance of our professors, provided legal services,” shared DeLoach. “While we provided an important service, we also learned valuable client communication skills and became familiar with the non-profit and business entity formation processes.”

Farm Manager Keith Benson highlights the importance of the University of Mississippi’s Transactional Law Clinic in supporting the Alliance’s efforts to improve the quality of life for poor, rural, and under-served communities. As Benson explains, “this mission is accomplished by helping low-income people to grow, process, market and distribute healthy, sustainably-grown food. Thanks to our partners, we have conducted 29 field days and training sessions, involving more than 1,000 participants.” This effort involves making an investment in skills and knowledge, and providing critical training, technical assistance and support. The partnership with the law clinic provided free legal assistance and business advice, as well as an opportunity for hands-on learning on the farm.

Through the interaction with community members and the opportunity to apply legal concepts in a real-world setting, students at the Transactional Law Clinic gain skills that render them more “practice-ready” than their peers that have not had similar experiences. Many students who have come through the Transactional Law Clinic continue to participate in the field days as volunteers, strengthening their commitment to careers in the public interest.

For more information about the Transactional Law Clinic, contact Marie Cope at msalibacope@gmail.com or Cam Abel at camabellaw@gmail.com.

““ The Transactional Clinic gives students a chance to practice business law skills on behalf of low-income Mississippi Delta farmers.”

— MARIE COPE, CLINICAL PROFESSOR OF LAW

Building Community Infrastructure and Improving Public Health in Togo

Taught by Dr. Cristiane Surbeck and Assistant Dean Marni Kendricks

Transformation through service is central to the mission of the University of Mississippi. For the past several years, engineering students at UM have engaged in transformative service and learning outside of the classroom and in rural communities in Togo, West Africa.

“This kind of project is the best way for our students to link academic work to the real value of their profession,” noted Dr. Cristiane Surbeck, who teaches engineering service-learning courses that travel to Togo. “It’s only during a hands-on project like this one that engineering majors see that the project is not just about the calculations, but about the people who are going to benefit from that school building.”

The connection between north Mississippi and Togo reaches back to 2004, when local community members traveled to Togo during the summer for medical mission trips. These encounters planted a seed that would later take root as a five to ten year partnership between the School of Engineering and rural communities in the Vogan region of Togo.

“Being involved in these service-learning engineering courses has had a far more significant impact on me and our students than I even imagined in the beginning. Very hard work and difficult environment, but so rewarding.”

— MARNI KENDRICKS, ASSISTANT DEAN

Reverend Kokou Loko has been instrumental in connecting his community in Togo with the University of Mississippi. He provides continuity for the delegations of students who visit his community, and serves as their host, champion, and cultural ambassador. “I would recommend this program to any Ole Miss engineering student because it is a program that builds not only the academic but mostly

the heart and gets one ready for any assignment, no matter where and how that might be,” said Rev. Loko.

In 2009, a chapter of Engineers Without Borders-USA was founded at UM. EWB-USA partners with communities in developing countries to improve their quality of life by implementing sustainable and economical engineering projects. Through these partnerships, EWB-USA promotes social responsibility among its network of student and professional engineers.

During the August Intersession of 2012, University of Mississippi engineering students, led by course instructors Assistant Dean Marni Kendricks and Dr. Cris Surbeck, traveled to Togo as part of ENGR 496, a service-learning course aimed at implementing infrastructure and health improvements in Togo. The course, which was subsequently offered in August 2013, January 2014, and August 2014, works in collaboration with the University’s chapter of EWB-USA.

“Being involved in these service-learning engineering courses has had a far more significant impact on me and our students than I even imagined in the beginning,” said Kendricks. “Very hard work and difficult environment, but so rewarding!”

The specific goal for the second trip of the EWB student chapter, which operated in conjunction with the August 2013 service-learning course, was to begin the construction of a school building in the village of Hedome in the Vogan region of Togo, with assistance from residents of Hedome. The project consisted of three parts: assessment and design; implementation/construction phase I and phase II; and post-implementation/inspection.

During the preparation phase, students created design drawings for the school building along with materials lists, construction details, and calculations, under the supervision of the EWB-USA professional mentor. They also attended instructor-led meetings where students were



The completed school building after the January 2014 service-learning trip.

briefed on issues related to health and safety and discussed detailed travel plans.

During the two implementation trips, students and instructor Marni Kendricks traveled to Togo, along with professional mentor Michael Costelli, P.E. of Gulfport, MS, to supervise, direct, and engage in the construction of the school building, with the help of community residents. During this phase, students were tasked with performing a considerable amount of manual labor as well as activities that are typical of construction engineering projects, including inventorying materials, planning daily construction activities, rechecking design calculations as needed, and coordinating with community residents.

"The Togo project was the most emotionally and physically draining yet the most rewarding experience of which I have ever had the privilege of being a part," reflected Diana Kapanzhi, an engineering student. "The project not only enhanced my desire of becoming an engineer, it showed me the importance of the profession. My time in Togo taught me patience, perseverance, and teamwork as well as the meaning of true friendship, respect and love for others, and for that I am very much grateful."

Rev. Loko also observed the transformation that takes place in the engineering students that visit Togo: "I have seen most of them, especially the first time comers (rookies) arriving in Togo with a great deal of apprehension and anxiety.... It is like having

their feet on the Togolese soil but their eyes staring back at the U.S. Then after an intense week (and at times two) of hard labor...when finally the time came for them to depart I observed every single time that their feet and hearts became so heavy that they could hardly move and turn them back swiftly toward the US.... It was hard for them to say goodbye to new friends and hard to say goodbye to those concrete blocks they had laboriously laid. Reason why we Togolese would continually say in our mother tongue to all those who are involved toward helping and building our country: AKPE KAKA! Thank you very much!"

After the trip and during the course's post-implementation phase, budget items were checked and accounted for, and various reports were written and submitted to EWB-USA.

During the August 2013 trip, students constructed the foundation and columns of the building. After the subsequent service-learning trip in January 2014, three of the building's classrooms were completed and made functional with walls and a roof. Another service-learning trip was conducted and led by Dr. Surbeck in August 2014 to start planning a water supply project.

For more information about ENGR 496, please contact Dr. Cris Surbeck at (662) 915-5473 or csurbeck@olemiss.edu.

Catalyzing Entrepreneurship and Economic Development

Creating economic opportunity for students and communities

Dr. Albert Nylander and Ryan Parsons, *Project Manager at the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement*

The Catalyzing Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (CEED) Initiative works with University of Mississippi students and faculty to build actionable partnerships with Mississippi communities. Through these partnerships, students and community members co-develop entrepreneurial approaches to addressing poverty and job creation.

“The goal of CEED is to help students at the University of Mississippi learn how they can create economic opportunities for themselves and for Mississippi communities,” explained Ryan Parsons, project manager at the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement. “We hope that our work in rural Mississippi will inspire more UM graduates to start their own ventures here in Mississippi.”

Counties in rural Mississippi have been consistently losing population since the 1940s. This steady outmigration is exacerbated by the decline in agricultural and manufacturing employment across the state. Nearly a quarter of Mississippians are unemployed or underemployed, and Mississippi has one of the lowest rates of microenterprise and small business ownership in the nation.

There are numerous barriers to starting a business in rural Mississippi. One respondent who completed the Delta Leadership survey for the McLean Institute illustrated with this example: “We don’t understand how great the gap is between what they offer and what people trying to climb out of poverty can afford. For example, I know a young black artisan who creates the most beautiful handcrafted walking sticks with only a box cutter for a tool. He

““ The students from the McLean Institute are giving hope to folks trying to create a new story.”

— PATRICK WEEMS



Dr. Nylander and Ryan Parsons (back row, left) with the 2014-16 cohort of CEED Scholars and Fellows.

“ Through the McLean Institute I have been able to expand my thinking in a way that allows me to be creative as I strive for positive social and economic change in rural communities.”

— CAMILLE WALKER

could be an entrepreneur. But he can't afford \$300 for a pre-accelerator class to assess his business. And he can't afford tools. He doesn't have a car. He catches rides to town.”

The development of small businesses and other entrepreneurial ventures offers a chance for the University of Mississippi to provide an opportunity to mitigate the social challenges facing small towns. A recent study by the Delta Regional Authority found that over 90 percent of new jobs created in the greater Delta region are at businesses with 9 or fewer employees. Additionally, entrepreneurship is one of the fastest growing areas of study in post-secondary institutions in the United States, and the CEED initiative offers students at the University of Mississippi the opportunity to contribute to solutions in communities across Mississippi.

The CEED Initiative will work with a minimum of 50 University of Mississippi students, eight faculty teams, and eight rural Mississippi counties. Each cohort of Undergraduate Innovation Scholars and Graduate Innovation Fellows will work in four rural counties or communities in Mississippi. Students will work closely with community mentors in one of these regions. The 2014-2016 cohort will work with partners in Calhoun, Coahoma, Lee, Leflore, and Tallahatchie Counties.

Camille Walker, an undergraduate Innovation Scholar with the CEED Initiative, shared the following reflection: “Through the McLean Institute I have been able to expand my thinking in a way that allows me to be creative as I strive for positive social and economic change in rural communities. I hope that through this program I can help establish a sustainable business that also addresses a social problem. As a Mississippian, my connections to these communities fuel my passion for enacting change.”

The return on investment for entrepreneurial education, particularly through experiential learning exercises, is significant. Formal programs in entrepreneurship education have been shown to dramatically increase the likelihood that students will launch businesses after graduation, reduce the time it takes for students to launch these enterprises, improve the long-term viability of those ventures, and boost earnings. Mississippi is ripe with opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs. According to the Corporation for Enterprise Development, Mississippi has the potential capacity to support an additional 70,000 micro-entrepreneurs or small business owners.

The impact of CEED on Mississippi communities is compounded by an emphasis on social entrepreneurship and rural development. Team members are encouraged to use tools from the business world to identify social problems in rural Mississippi and generate sustainable solutions.

“The CEED program has had an unbelievable impact on my community in Tallahatchie County,” said Patrick Weems, Director of the Emmett Till Interpretive Center. “The students from the McLean Institute are giving hope to folks trying to create a new story. As the director of a small civil rights museum I've struggled with resources and encouraging local leaders to take pride in their work to heal past wounds. The student leaders led by Ryan Parsons, Dr. Nylander, and the staff at the McLean Institute have added their expertise in economic revitalization and encouraged local people to build a stronger community. I'm grateful to have a strong partner in the McLean Institute to help encourage and support our project.”

For more information about the CEED Initiative, please contact Dr. Albert Nylander at (662) 915-2050 or mclean@olemiss.edu.



Social Issues in the Mississippi Delta: An Experiential Approach Rooted in Service

Taught by Dr. Albert Nylander

In the spring of 2013, the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement and the North Mississippi VISTA Project partnered with the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement at Mississippi State University to make an alternative spring break experience available to students at the University of Mississippi. In the spring of 2014, the McLean Institute built on the success of the 2013 trip by developing SOC 451: Social Issues in the Mississippi Delta and Experiential Spring Break as an accompanying course for the trip. Students were led by Dr. Albert Nylander, Professor of Sociology and McLean Institute Director, as well as Ryan Parsons, McLean Institute Project Manager, and AmeriCorps VISTA Members Gabe Lincoln, Sean Ray and Kathy Trabue.

Throughout the semester students met once a week in a seminar-style classroom setting to discuss contemporary issues and theory in the areas of education, poverty, community development, and economic development, while focusing specifically on how these issues interact with one another uniquely in rural environments. Among other core texts, students read *Worlds Apart: Poverty and Politics in Rural America* by Dr. Cynthia M. Duncan, a widely recognized expert on rural poverty in the field of sociology, and held a conversation with Dr. Duncan over the phone to discuss her work.

“Students in the course explored issues of poverty and inequality through the lens of the Sociological Imagination, which is the critical awareness of the

“ We aim to create a reciprocal experience for the students so that they leave the week as impacted as the communities they are working in.”

— RYAN PARSONS

social processes that shape and are shaped by human experience,” explained Dr. Nylander. “Engaging in this analysis throughout the semester challenged students to maintain a high level of academic rigor in their service experiences.”

The service-learning component of the course took place over spring break when students committed to a full week of learning and serving in the Mississippi Delta while living in dorms at Delta State University (DSU).

Students began the week by assisting with the clean-up of public spaces in the historical town of Mound Bayou, a town founded in 1887 by freed slaves. During this project students were also able to meet with the Mayor of Mound Bayou, Mr. Darryl Johnson, to discuss the history of the town and his plans for future development.

Later in the week students assisted in the construction of teaching gardens and greenhouses at the sustainability non-profit Mississippians Engaged in Greener Agriculture (MEGA), located in Shelby.



Students were led by the CEO of MEGA, Ms. Dorothy Grady-Scarborough, and learned about her mission of engaging the youth and adults of her community in the practice of sustainable farming and healthy eating habits.

“The hours of work the students on the alternative spring break committed to us had a great impact on our community,” said Ms. Grady-Scarborough. “We were able to complete many of our projects, such as a number of raised garden beds, and distribute them throughout the community with senior citizens and other folks, much more quickly thanks to the work of those students. We’re very grateful for the relationship that we share with the University of Mississippi and the alternative spring break program, and we look forward to it continuing.”

The class also had the opportunity to interact with the faculty, students, and staff of West Tallahatchie High School in Webb during multiple service-learning projects at the school including painting educational murals, landscaping, and tutoring individual students.

Along with completing service projects, students on the trip were able to learn about the culture and history of the region through a tour of historical Blues sites facilitated by the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at DSU, as well as through independent excursions to places such as the B.B. King Museum in Indianola and the Mississippi River.

Students also completed daily reading assignments relevant to the areas in which they would be working, and watched documentary films on poverty and civil rights. In the evenings students reconvened as a class to discuss how the service projects of the day impacted their understanding of the sociological makeup of the Delta that had previously only been informed through readings and lectures.

Ryan Parsons said that the trip allows students to see the issues of the Delta “firsthand” and that “the

trip is also meant to let students give back through service in a way that will benefit them. We aim to create a reciprocal experience for the students so that they leave the week as impacted as the communities they are working in.”

Indeed many students on the trip were impacted, with one student stating “I see people in the Delta now where I used to see statistics.”

“To borrow from an old cliché, one can’t just read and listen to the blues, one has to experience it,” said another student. “I understand the blues through the reflections in the eyes of the children with whom I interacted, the aspirations of teenagers who are trying their hardest at a low-performing school, and the decaying windows of historic buildings whose ghosts continue to haunt the Mississippi Delta.”

In the post-trip phase of the course, students continued to meet weekly as a class and reflected on their experiences while critically examining their and the University’s role in supporting Mississippi’s communities. For their final projects, students researched and developed viable programs for addressing poverty in the Mississippi Delta that were informed by their experiences on the alternative spring break trip. Students proposed a system of affordable public transportation that accounted for the unique spatial challenges of the rural Delta environment, and adapted an urban-centric afterschool program for extended learning time into a more rural-friendly model. Through this course, students considered innovative approaches to improve quality of life that were informed by their broadened understanding of the region.

For more information about the Alternative Spring Break Trip, please contact the McLean Institute at (662) 915-2052 or mclean@olemiss.edu.

Bringing the World to Mississippi, and Mississippi to the World

Taught by Instructor Tracy Case Koslowski

The University of Mississippi is home to over 900 international students and over 300 international faculty, scholars and staff, representing more than 90 countries. Service-learning courses like IE 051, Topics in Intercultural Communication: Community Connections, create a bridge to facilitate exchange between international students and communities in Mississippi.

This service-learning course gives international students a platform from which to share knowledge about their culture, language, and customs with students from the United States. By engaging in this intercultural exchange, international students are also afforded the opportunity to improve their language skills and develop their cultural knowledge base.

Instructor Tracy Case Koslowski organizes visits to elementary schools throughout Mississippi, where the international students hone their English skills by giving presentations on their home countries, and the

elementary school students develop public speaking skills with presentations about Mississippi.

“It has been an all-around rewarding experience for my service-learning course to continue our involvement with the elementary schools in our local and regional community,” said Koslowski. “Our international students gain from the practice of speaking English with the children, while learning more about the diversity of cultures in Mississippi and gaining a deeper understanding of their own cultures and languages as they practice telling others about their homes. The experience makes these visiting students feel as if they have made a contribution to the local community, which gives them a greater sense of acceptance and belonging during their stay here. We are very grateful to have our community partners.”

Many communities where the international students visit through the service-learning class are



International students at the University of Mississippi celebrate linguistic and cultural exchange with students in the Mississippi Delta.



Students proudly paint a world map at their school, which serves as an ongoing teaching tool.

located in rural areas that lack regular exposure to international cultures. A student from Vietnam, Lien Phan, was struck by what she perceived to be a lack of resources in the Delta community she visited.

However, upon entering the schools, the international students received a warm and enthusiastic welcome. Arthur Miguet, a student from France, wrote this reaction about meeting the school principal: “When we arrived at the school, I saw a tall guy coming to us, and my first thought was that it was a teacher because he was smiling and relaxed. Then he introduced himself as the principal of the school. I’m not used to seeing a principal like that; in France, often the principals are strict, busy and unfriendly.”

The prospect of giving an oral presentation can be daunting for many international students. Yuriko Hatano, a student from Japan, wrote this about her experience: “At first, I was so nervous because I didn’t know whether they were interested in Japan or not, and I worried if they would listen to our presentation.

However, when they entered the classroom, some of them said hello in Japanese, and many of them showed their sparkling faces. I was so surprised that they knew how to say hello in Japanese, and they are interested in Japan. They eased my nervous tension.”

Through this service-learning course, international students are able to reflect on the experience of sharing language and culture with elementary school students. One student remarked, “Those children and I were suddenly friends. I learned with them and they learned with me.” The act of sharing one’s knowledge forges connections.

For students in Mississippi communities that may not have the opportunity to travel outside of Mississippi, these are powerful exchanges.

“Our school has benefited enormously from the partnership with the Ole Miss Intensive English program,” said Michael Cormack, Jr., Principal of Quitman County Elementary School. “The program provides a global awareness for my Delta students. They love the world mural map and really look forward to the World Passports Day, which has become an annual event at our school. They love learning about the home countries of our international students and comparing them to Mississippi cultures.”

Learning a new language can be a challenge. Topics in Intercultural Communication: Community Connections contextualizes language learning and cultural awareness around community service, leaving a lasting impact not only on international students but also on the communities they serve.

For more information about IE 051, contact Tracy Koslowski at (662) 915-1847 or tlcase@olemiss.edu.

“ Our international students gain from the practice of speaking English with the children, while learning more about the diversity of cultures in Mississippi and gaining a deeper understanding of their own cultures and languages as they practice telling others about their homes.”

– TRACY CASE KOSLOWSKI, INSTRUCTOR

Creating Community and Identity through Language

Taught by Dr. Allison Burkette

Since its inception, American English has been in a constant state of development and change. Linguists seek to track and understand these changes as new dialects emerge and flourish throughout the United States, each constructed along unique regional, racial, and cultural lines.

In the fall of 2014 Dr. Allison Burkette, Associate Professor of Linguistics, taught LING 435/ENGL 434: Dialects of American English, a course that helped students gain basic knowledge about the terms and skills used in the field of linguistics, and then taught them how to apply those skills to American English through the implementation of a service-learning project within the class.

Students began their time in the classroom by studying the differences between prescriptive and descriptive perspectives on language. While a prescriptive view of language hands down rules as to what people should or should not say, a descriptive view of language looks at how speakers actually use language, looking for patterns and tendencies in real speech. The field of linguistics, for the most part, takes a descriptive stance, listening to how people talk in ordinary conversation and understanding that there are many different varieties of any language.

In the classroom, students got first-hand experience in the methods of descriptive linguistics while also learning how to perform community-based research. Outside of the classroom, students had their perceptions and unacknowledged biases challenged

through the service-learning component of the course. For this portion of the course, students were required to conduct several hour-long interviews in the town of Marks, Mississippi.

Through a partnership between the McLean Institute and the Department of Modern Languages, Katie Ireland, whose family is from Marks, was provided a graduate assistantship to work with Dr. Burkette. She worked through her family relationships in Marks to facilitate introductions for students. The experience was “a privilege and an invaluable opportunity,” she remarked. “I found members of the community who kindly agreed to let students interview them. Each student was able to conduct interviews in a group setting, contributing not only to our class knowledge base but also an appreciation for those who so graciously gave their time for our project. This was a wonderful learning experience, especially to be cherished as it points to the value of the different communities that surround the University of Mississippi and beyond.”

Along with conducting interviews in Marks, students were required to keep field reflections detailing their physical surroundings during the interview, their impression of how the interview went, as well as self-critical feedback on their skills as an interviewer.

“I learned a lot about myself during this project,” reflected Juliana Norton, a student in the class. “Unlike many other papers I have had to write where I just passively researched...in this project I got to participate in the study myself. Being able to have such an active role throughout the entire project helped me come up with a topic for my final paper more easily and made me feel closer to the assignment.”

After completing the interview phase of the course, students collaborated so that each could find a mode of analysis that would most effectively examine specific portions of the data gathered from the interviews. Several students chose to look at ways in which language is used to create and express a sense of community.

“Everybody knows everybody and who you’re related to,” said one Marks resident. “And I have a feeling in my mind that if I were ever in trouble, I

“Conducting community interviews is a wonderful way to learn how to give of yourself while collecting data for a larger project. Students have to learn how to pay attention to the people who are willing to talk with them, how to be respectful, and how to give back to that community.”

— DR. ALLISON BURKETTE

“ This was a wonderful learning experience, especially to be cherished as it points to the value of the different communities that surround the University of Mississippi and beyond.”

— KATIE IRELAND



could go to any house in Marks and they would help me. If I really needed help, they wouldn't hesitate to help me.... So you know, I mean that's kinda like family. Yes, we don't agree with each other all the time but we're there for each other." In addition to explicit statements such as this, students in the class also found that Marks speakers used features of Southern English to further identify themselves as community members.

"This kind of investigation is important for a number of reasons," noted Dr. Burkette. "Conducting community interviews is a wonderful way to learn how to give of yourself while collecting data for a larger project. Students have to learn how to pay attention to the people who are willing to talk with them, how to be respectful, and how to give back to that community."

Students in the course completed the service component through proposing a variety of projects for the community members of Marks, such as creating a video history, developing a school curriculum, and



Images from Marks, Mississippi, located less than an hour away from the University of Mississippi Oxford campus.

curating a museum exhibit. A "Stories from Marks" pamphlet has already been printed and is on display at the Marks public library.

For more information about LING 435/ENGL 434, please contact Dr. Allison Burkette at (662) 915-1458 or burkette@olemiss.edu.

McLean Mentors: Boosting Academic Performance and Nurturing College-going Aspirations

Laura Martin, *Project Manager at the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement*

The mission of the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement is to promote transformative service efforts that address poverty in the state. While many University of Mississippi students are engaged locally in Oxford and Lafayette County, students also gravitate towards pressing societal needs in other parts of the state.

The McLean Mentors program emerged as a means to inject university resources into other parts of the state, and bring youth from other areas to experience the cultural and intellectual resources on campus.

The McLean Mentors program was co-designed with Calhoun City Excel, a community partner. Excel serves 30 1st through 6th grade students in afterschool tutoring sessions that operate from Monday through Thursday. Excel heavily emphasizes parent involvement, and requires that parents attend a monthly meeting and volunteer with the program on a regular basis.

Sister Judy Sinnwell, who directs Calhoun City Excel, suggested that students in Excel's afterschool tutoring program would benefit from 5 weeks of



Students from EDUCATE in Como participated in a community mural project during a Saturday on Campus with the McLean Mentors program.

one-on-one tutoring from University of Mississippi students. To expand the horizons of the elementary school students, Sinnwell suggested that the youth from Calhoun County could spend a day on campus at the University of Mississippi and begin to envision themselves as college students.

“This partnership with the McLean Institute has been an incredibly significant experience for students at Excel, for parents, for Excel staff and advisory board – really for the wider Calhoun County community,” said Sinnwell. “In fact, since the Excel students were on campus in the fall, parents and staff are consciously using the phrase ‘when you go to college’ with the children. The repeated use of that phrase alone broadens the field of possibility for children and parents. Excel is so grateful for McLean Mentors bringing the resources of the university to small rural communities, impacting the present and the future.”

In the spring 2014 semester, 8 students from the University of Mississippi volunteered at Excel in the pilot phase of the McLean Mentors program. The following semester, the program grew to 20 mentors serving at Excel and EDUCATE in Como, another partner afterschool site. The McLean Institute sought feedback from the McLean Mentors, and kicked off the spring 2015 semester by increasing the volunteer commitment to 8 weeks, to provide more continuity for the youth at Excel and EDUCATE.

“Working with students at Excel was great,” reflected Brittany Fields, a junior who tutored students at Calhoun City Excel. “The students were very dedicated to learning and doing their homework. I have never been around a group of children their age that were ready to do their homework.” Excel also fosters a supportive and collaborative learning environment. Fields went on to note: “I was there to help them, but if another student knew the answers, he or she had no problem assisting the other students.”

EDUCATE in Como provides afterschool tutoring to 36 students from Kindergarten through 6th grade from Monday through Friday, and integrates tutoring with enrichment from the Delta Music Institute’s Mobile Music Lab and the University of Mississippi Museum’s traveling trunk exhibit.

“I enjoyed going to Como every week to mentor the students, and I really enjoyed having them come to campus because some of them had never imagined going to college,” said Kimberly Hardges, a senior at the University of Mississippi.

The McLean Mentors collaboration provides a pathway for students who wish to become involved in service designed to nurture college-going expectations in Mississippi’s next generation. McLean Mentors travel nearly one hour each way to the community partner sites, and experience parts of Mississippi they would not otherwise explore. One McLean Mentor shared the following: “It was an amazing experience. As a college student, it is easy to forget that there are people outside of the university setting. It was refreshing to get to help and learn from children once a week.”

“ I enjoyed going to Como every week to mentor the students, and I really enjoyed having them come to campus because some of them had never imagined going to college.”

— KIMBERLY HARDGES

Through this program, community partner organizations can offer additional one-on-one homework help for elementary school students still adapting to Common Core expectations. The elementary school students, in turn, have the opportunity to visit campus alongside college mentors and tour the dormitories, the library and the museum, places that they would likely not experience. The Saturdays on Campus have featured physics demonstrations, a planetarium show, and opportunities to meet student-athletes. Throughout the campus visits, the elementary school students participate in activities designed to stimulate their vision about their educational goals, their future, and the future of their community.

Madison Gable, a sophomore who has volunteered with the program since its inception, stated that “this experience reinforced my belief that early education deserves greater focus. Programs like McLean Mentors help build a strong foundation for Mississippi’s children by showing them more possibilities and encouraging them to continue their education.”

For more information about the McLean Mentors Program, contact Laura Martin at (662) 915-2078 or lemartin@olemiss.edu.

Horizons at the University of Mississippi

Emma Tkachuck, *Horizons Director and Project Manager at the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement*

A key initiative of the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement, Horizons at the University of Mississippi aims to eliminate summer learning loss for underserved students, positively impact student perceptions of school and learning, and increase student self-confidence. The six-week, full-day program includes reading and literacy instruction, art, swimming, and STEM activities.

Forty-five low-income students, grades first through third, participated in the 2014 summer

program. Horizons students spend the day on campus participating in academic, enrichment, and recreational activities. Horizons at the University of Mississippi is part of a larger, national network of locally vested Horizons programs that seek to provide students with a high-quality learning environment outside of the traditional school year.

“The University of Mississippi’s Horizons program is transforming lives for both children in the community and University students. It is a key initiative for the McLean Institute in its work to fight



Horizons students enjoy recreational activities on the field at Vaught-Hemingway stadium.



Students learn about food and gardening while tending newly-planted herbs.

poverty through education,” said Dr. Albert Nylander, director of the McLean Institute.

In partnership with the Oxford School District, the McLean Institute and Horizons had certified teaching staff in each classroom. UM’s College Corps volunteers and AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates also worked with the program, increasing support for students. The 5-to-1 student-to-teaching staff ratio allowed students to receive one-on-one support, providing the opportunity for a greater focus on social and character development.

According to Horizons Director Emma Tkachuck, this summer’s success is due to the highly experienced and enthusiastic teaching staff and volunteers who created a positive, supportive, and exciting learning environment. “It was incredible; they built an environment where students were excited to come learn each day,” says Tkachuck. Students are invited to return each summer and Horizons provides student and family activities throughout the school year to maintain the sense of community and excitement developed over the summer.

University of Mississippi volunteers are integral to Horizons’ success, and working with elementary students alongside experienced teachers provides them with valuable experience.

Partners for this summer’s Horizons program include: the United Way of Oxford and Lafayette County, the Oxford School District, the UM Departments of Outreach and Student Housing, Aramark, the Turner Center, the FedEx Student-Athlete Academic Support Center, the Lafayette County Literacy Council, Yokna Bottoms Farm, and the UM Field Station. Horizons will expand each year until it serves kindergarten through grade eight. “We look forward to building on the success of the past two summers and, with the help of our partners, offering students new experiences and opportunities in the years to come,” said Tkachuck.

For more information about Horizons, contact Emma Tkachuck at (662) 915-2713 or etkachuc@olemiss.edu.

An Exploration of the Human-Nature Connection

Taught by Dr. Laura Johnson

Humans have long played a role in shaping the environment, from transforming landscapes and atmospheric conditions to legislating protection and conservation policies. As researchers work to understand the impact of humans on the environment, Dr. Laura Johnson explains that “in a recent report delivered by the American Psychological Association to the United Nations, psychologists and educators were urged to recognize the immense role of psychology in understanding and responding to environmental concerns, both local and global.”

PSY 365: Environmental Psychology and Service-Learning: The Human-Nature Connection gives students the opportunity to explore concepts in environmental and conservation psychology. These areas provide critical insights into understanding the connection and tension between humans and nature, and illustrate psychology’s role in addressing environmental challenges facing humans and wildlife.

A key area of emphasis in the course explored the role of youth in addressing challenges in their communities. Students practiced Jane Goodall’s approach through the Roots & Shoots program, which empowers youth to map challenges in their community, prioritize issues, plan a solution, and take action. The Roots & Shoots program is active across the globe, and provides a platform for young people to address issues in their communities such as air and water; food and health; indigenous communities; landscapes, trees, and plants; pets and domestic animals; recycling; and wildlife.

The service component of the course allowed students to pursue projects benefitting humans, animals, and the environment. Through these service projects, students embraced the conservation psychology model that recognizes the interconnectedness of humans, animals, the environment, and sustainability practices. To

gain exposure to these areas, students completed approximately 20 hours of service in a major field and 10 hours of service in a minor field. Community partners included Good Food for Oxford Schools, Oxford-Lafayette Humane Society, Oxford Tree Board, and Yokna Bottoms Farm.

Students working with the Oxford Tree Board assisted with a tree inventory project to provide baseline data that would be used to draft Mississippi’s first urban forest management plan. The volunteer-based tree inventory offered an opportunity to strengthen interactions among residents and between people and the environment. Students working on the tree inventory learned to identify common local tree species based on leaf type, tree type, and leaf/twig arrangement, and how to catalog GPS coordinates, tree height, trunk diameter, and ground cover.

Students shared several challenges in completing the tree inventory. “Coordinating our schedules with the [Mississippi State University] Extension service and each other was the first challenge,” remarked one student. “Next, came the rush to finish before the falling leaves.”

During the course of this project, students helped a local Girl Scout troop earn their Tree Badge and debriefed with other community members on the project, including advice for how to recruit future volunteers. “It was cool to see we were part of something much larger,” observed another student. The tree inventory was a powerful project for students in the course, who reflected that “we grew close to each other and learned that even sidewalks have history.”

Jason Gordon, Assistant Extension Professor of Forestry at Mississippi State University, led the tree inventory effort in Oxford. He shared that the students from Dr. Johnson’s class were instrumental in completing the tree inventory in a



“ This is a service-oriented class and you will learn a lot about yourself through the service work.”

– STUDENT, PSY 365

timely manner. “All of us – project coordinators as well as other resident volunteers – were impressed by their professionalism and dedication,” remarked Professor Gordon. The students “injected energy and enthusiasm into the project, and they demonstrated how young people can make a significant difference in their community. One day they will return to Oxford to see how they played an important role in making a great urban tree canopy even better.”

Reflection held a prominent place in this course, both in the form of reflection on service activities as well as on a nature immersion that allowed students to explore their relationship with the natural world. As one student observed, “this is a service-oriented class and you will learn a lot about yourself through the service work.” Students also wrote an eco-autobiography, in which they considered formative experiences throughout their lives that shaped their connection to nature and their own identities.

As part of the course, students calculated their carbon footprint and implemented behavior change such as turning off lights, using less water, utilizing reusable grocery bags, and eating less meat. “It is a very unique course, and you will be asked to do things outside your comfort zone,” remarked one student. “But it was fun, and you learn a lot.” Added another student, “This course has completely changed my views on things and helped open my eyes to what’s going on in our environment.”

“My view is that social action is community service,” notes Dr. Johnson. “Civic engagement is a means of change and also a desired outcome of service-learning. Increased awareness of social justice issues and diversity concerns are among the other desired outcomes of service-learning, as is connection to community, both local and global. Toward the end of



Psychology students gathered data for a tree inventory to develop an urban forest management plan for Oxford and Lafayette County.

the semester, some students came up with the idea of organizing a demonstration to bring attention to injustice in the wake of the Michael Brown and Eric Gardner incidents. For four days they held hands and signs in a silent demonstration of support for equal rights and justice.”

Students left the course with an understanding of how sustainable approaches to local and global development are matters of social justice, along with civic engagement tools to utilize in taking action on these issues.

To learn more about PSY 365, contact Dr. Laura Johnson at (662) 915-5185 or ljohnson@olemiss.edu.

Training Citizen Scientists and Science Teachers

Taught by Dr. Joe Sumrall

The growing emphasis on the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – collectively known as STEM – has placed science teachers on the front lines of nurturing enthusiasm about these areas of study. A key priority for many teacher training programs is to develop excellent STEM teachers, particularly those in underrepresented groups such as women, African-Americans, and Hispanics.

Education students in EDUC 333/555: Service-Learning in Science Education: Serving the K-12 Schools had the opportunity not only to apply principles of science education but also to interact broadly with the scientific community and with schools in Oxford/Lafayette County and surrounding areas. The service components of this course included

difference by assisting in the learning of science through something called problem or project-based learning,” explained Dr. Joe Sumrall. “With increased individualized assistance, problem-based approaches can help motivate and show K-12 students that they can be successful at doing science. I believe that by having our university students work with children individually, the quality of assignments such as science fair projects can improve significantly.”

Citizen scientist projects are opportunities for ordinary citizens to assist scientists in managing massive amounts of data. Many websites are dedicated to fostering this type of engagement with the scientific community. A citizen science project through the website Zooniverse assists scientists collecting data on wildlife in Antarctica by annotating photographs available online.

Emily Slocum, a student in EDUC 333, recognized that leveraging the online interface is an ideal way to engage the digital natives in elementary school classrooms: “Even in elementary schools, technology has become a big part of the day. I am so impressed by all the citizen science projects on the Internet. This is perfect for involving students in science in their own communities and it’s guaranteed to keep them involved because it can feel like games.”

To explore environmental issues in the K-12 setting, one student pursued a recycling project at Oxford Intermediate School. “For the recycling project, I had my students play Tic-Tac-Toe Science that taught them about using natural, renewable resources and recycling,” recalls Collin Griles. “After they finished with it, they began a school-wide recycling project.”

Other students worked on a flower garden, which they will be responsible for tending in the future. “I have never seen students so happy to do work! These kids cleared out an 8x12 flowerbed in about 6 minutes,” said Emily Slocum. “Everyone grabbed something and pulled. One of the older students used a pitchfork to aerate the soil while younger ones pulled up large roots behind him. I let each child plant his or her own seed.”

Josie Watson mentored a 4th grade student as he prepared for an upcoming science competition. “We



Students use the scientific method to test the strength of a paper towel.

a citizen science event, a K-12 environmental project, mentoring K-12 students for a science competition, and assisting K-12 teachers in conducting a classroom problem solving challenge.

“What I really enjoy about this course is that our university students are actively making a

had to do all the steps of the scientific method, and put them on his tri-fold board,” she explained.

Many education students in the course assisted K-12 teachers in implementing a foil boat challenge with their students. In this challenge, groups of students build a boat out of aluminum foil and compete to see which boat can hold the most weight, as measured by pennies. The exercise also had some very practical applications for aspiring teachers. As Emily Slocum recalls, “I did not realize how messy tubs two inches full of water could be in an elementary classroom. I also had no idea that the students would be semi-familiar with the project. No one tried to design an attractive boat. They started out just laying the aluminum foil on top of the water without morphing it at all. They knew surface area was important. Ultimately the winning group held 176 pennies or 16 grams using a piece of foil crumbled up the sides.”

“My classes really enjoyed the activities they were engaged in during the University of Mississippi student visit,” said Dr. Kristen Curry-Sumrall, a 6th grade science teacher at Lafayette Middle School. “So many of my students aren’t aware of the various educational opportunities in the fields of science, technology, education and math, so I feel that it is my job to find ways to expose them to these opportunities.”

Through this course, education student LaChristie Crawford reflected on her aspirations as a teacher and the challenges of interacting directly with every student



The foil boat experiment challenges students to develop problem-solving skills.

who needs help. “My experience at Della Davidson Elementary was eye-opening. I think that I should get more involved in the school systems and help as much as I can because there are students who need extra help.”

Justin Brewer observed that science education and social studies are “wonderful canvases to plan lessons that serve as opportunities to integrate Language Arts and Mathematics. These are not subjects that need to be pushed to the side, but ones that provide students with opportunities for higher thinking levels.”

This service-learning experience ignited a sense of excitement about teaching, science, and service that will continue to impact these future teachers and the classrooms they serve.

For more information about EDUC 333/555, contact Dr. Joe Sumrall at (662) 915-7350 or sumrall@olemiss.edu.

“ My experience at Della Davidson Elementary was eye-opening. I think that I should get more involved in the school systems and help as much as I can because there are students who need extra help.”

– LACHRISTIE CRAWFORD

Criminal Justice Students Foster Community Connections

Taught by Dr. Linda Keena

Mississippi has one of the highest adult incarceration rates in the nation. The Pew Charitable Trusts has reported that the prison population in the state has grown by over 300% during the past three decades, a rate that far outstrips Mississippi's rate of population growth. According to the Sentencing Project, blacks in Mississippi are incarcerated at a rate that is 3.5 times higher than whites.

The corrections system is by nature isolated from the fabric of social institutions in the wider community. Future criminal justice practitioners in CJ 390: Service-Learning in Criminal Justice had the opportunity to bridge that gap by exploring their role as individuals while volunteering with several community organizations in Oxford and Lafayette County.

Associate Professor of Legal Studies, Dr. Linda Keena, created this course because of her conviction that service-learning can be especially beneficial for studying criminal justice. "Service-learning may be more important in criminal justice than other areas of study because it connects classroom learning to the real-life criminal justice system," she explained. "Service in all three subsystems – fire/police, courts, and corrections – encourages students to question their preconceptions, examine their assumptions, observe the connectedness of community partners, and gain vital field experience."

Students in CJ 390 completed a minimum of 25 service hours at various nonprofit organizations, including the American Red Cross, Boys and Girls Club, Family Exchange Center, Mississippi State Veterans Home, Oxford-Lafayette Humane Society, and the Oxford Fire Department. While each of these organizations addresses a different

community need, the class came together to share observations and reflections on the interconnectedness of these institutions in serving the broader Oxford-Lafayette County community.

As they engaged with these community organizations, students gained an appreciation of the extent to which nonprofit organizations depend on volunteers and financial donations. In her final paper, one student wrote: "I never understood how much effort it took to run a humane society, and I was completely unaware that they were nonprofit; they function solely from volunteers and donations." This observation was echoed by students who served at various community organizations.

One of the course objectives was to open students' eyes to the diversity that exists in society, and how this impacts community needs and solutions. One student who completed his service-learning hours with the Oxford Fire Department observed the following: "I didn't know there were so many people experiencing poverty, especially in Oxford. The firefighters told me that the low-income people are really subjected to more fires because they can't afford safe heating and air conditioning. They live in trailer homes that burn fast and drive vehicles that are so damaged they burn quicker." In reflecting on poverty and race in his community, this student wrote, "I'm glad the fire department is professional. It doesn't discriminate between affluent people and those who aren't, or the blacks and the whites."

New criminology research suggests that growing

income inequality in the United States is linked to public policies that have resulted in mass incarceration. It is imperative, then, that students of criminal justice develop a nuanced understanding of the social forces that result

“ I noticed, too, that my attitude towards the juvenile had changed. I no longer thought of the juveniles as bad, evil criminals. Instead, I saw them as troubled kids.”

— STUDENT, CJ 390





Service-learning experiences prepare criminal justice students to be effective practitioners by challenging them to integrate classroom concepts with real-world experience. Photos courtesy of the School of Applied Sciences.

in intergenerational poverty, and how incarceration relates to social mobility.

One student mentored juveniles participating in the Adolescent Offender Program with the Family Exchange Center. Throughout the course, the student worked to break down barriers with the youth as he simultaneously grappled with his own preconceived notions of youth in the correctional system. "I noticed, too, that my attitude towards the juvenile had changed," he wrote. "I no longer thought of the juveniles as bad, evil criminals. Instead, I saw them as troubled kids."

Much of this learning stems from the emphasis on reflection in the service-learning course design. As they progressed through the course, students were prompted to record their evolving thought processes on their service experience, intellectual inquiry, and personal beliefs. In the final paper, one student shared: "Reflection played a big role in my service-learning project. I did not realize my growth while completing the project until I read over my reflections...if it was not for the reflection process, I would have never seen my growth." These regular reflection journals and prompts served as a yardstick for students to measure their evolution throughout the course. This can be a powerful exercise, particularly when students move outside their comfort zone.

Another dimension of the reflection process allowed students to gain insights about their desired career path in the criminal justice field. The student who volunteered at the Family Exchange Center shared the following: "This service-learning project helped me to decide whether this was the career area

for me. My last day at the center, I knew I wanted to continue to work with the juveniles. I felt a sense of accomplishment being there."

"My students really benefited from the course," remarked Dr. Keena. "They got to witness authentic criminal processes and practices. The field experience required them to take ownership of their own learning, by challenging them to reflect on their misconceptions and predetermined attitudes. Participating students were able to form their own conclusions based on the realities they witnessed rather than media or biased reports."

In addition, the community partners benefited from the service learners. Fred Johnson, Executive Director of the Family Exchange Center, noted that "the students were so valuable because we used them to provide much-needed programming to the offenders." Staff at the Boys and Girls Club highlighted the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge in reflecting that "we learned as much from the students as they learned from us."

Through the service-learning experience, students honed their skills as future criminal justice practitioners both in and out of the classroom. The students felt connected not only to the youth and the staff, but also to the broader community. This can combat the perception that college students are isolated from the community at large, while providing much-needed support to under-resourced community organizations.

For more information about CJ 390, contact Dr. Linda Keena at (662) 915-1998 or ldkeena@olemiss.edu.

Developing Sustainable Models of Student Engagement

Laura Martin, *Project Manager at the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement*

Student organizations are an incubator for leadership development, and also offer opportunities to impact the broader community. However, the membership of student organizations is fluid by nature; as charismatic student leaders graduate, their absence can interrupt the momentum of an organization that seeks to make a sustained impact.

The McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement created the Student Engagement Fellows program to support student leaders in developing sustainable models for their organizations to retain institutional memory and build on past successes. Student Engagement Fellows work with the McLean Institute to complete a program evaluation of their organization and, based on the priorities that emerge from that assessment, lead service projects in Lafayette and Coahoma Counties.

The 2014-2015 Student Engagement Fellows have partnered with Sister Kay Burton and the Durocher Service Development Program in Jonestown, Mississippi, which works with youth to foster leadership skills and civic engagement. The Student Engagement Fellows will offer monthly workshops to youth from the Durocher Program throughout the spring 2015 semester, and those students from Jonestown will then visit the University of Mississippi for a campus visit in June.



The Resource Center in Jonestown, where the 2014-15 Student Engagement Fellows offer youth engagement workshops in partnership with the Durocher Service Development Program.

Meet the 2014-2015 Student Engagement Fellows

Name: **Jack Badger**
Hometown: Chattanooga, TN
Year: Junior
Major: Accounting
Organization: Moneythink, an organization dedicated to teaching financial literacy skills to high school students. The Moneythink chapter at the University of Mississippi serves over 200 students in the Oxford and Lafayette County high schools. Moneythink strives to prepare low-income students with economic, financial, and professional skills.



What do you like most about your work with Moneythink?

At Ole Miss, there is a plethora of student organizations that allow for students to get involved and give back to Oxford and the surrounding communities. Moneythink does this too, but in a more specialized way. Educating students on financial literacy is incredibly important, and this knowledge is something they will be able to use for their entire lives. Moneythink also allows for students really interested in finance or education to harness their passions and put them toward a really great goal.

What have you learned as a Student Engagement Fellow?

There are so many methods, processes, and other approaches for analysis within an organization I had never considered before. The Student Engagement Fellows Program has made me think about my organization from a much more technical and scientific standpoint than I would have thought possible. It can also be easy to get a little bogged down in all the details of your findings and what you really intend to do, so it is important to be able to pick the bits and pieces that you really need to look at.

Name: **Will Bedwell**
Hometown: Hattiesburg, MS
Year: Senior
Major: Public Policy Leadership
Organization: Students for a Green Campus, which seeks to expand sustainability efforts at the University of Mississippi. Students for a Green Campus was instrumental in creating the University of Mississippi Green Fund, and works to raise awareness around environmental issues.



What do you enjoy most about your work with Students for a Green Campus?

What I love most about my work with Students for a Green Campus is being able to raise other students' environmental consciousness, and through that involve them in planning projects and campaigns that improve them as stewards of conservation and as leaders at Ole Miss.

What have you learned as a Student Engagement Fellow?

Being a Student Engagement Fellow has taught me to view more of a concrete picture of what the end results of Students for a Green Campus's work should be. And that is empowering students to pursue change on environmental issues by pursuing careers in fields related to the environment.

continued

Name: **Darius Moore**
 Hometown: Clarksdale, MS
 Year: Senior
 Major: Exercise Science
 Organization: Alpha Phi Omega, a national, co-educational service fraternity that upholds the cardinal principles of leadership, friendship, and service. Members of Alpha Phi Omega engage in a range of volunteer service activities which foster the development of leadership skills.



What do you like most about your work with Alpha Phi Omega?

I really like the interaction. I love working with people, whether alongside or helping someone. I love that this organization teaches one how to grow. The values and cardinal principles of leadership, friendship, and service provide a very broad platform for serving the community and fostering personal growth.

What have you learned as a Student Engagement Fellow?

This program has taught me how to channel my thoughts and ideas to be a better leader. I have learned to consider the complexities of being a consistent, long lasting, committed, contributing member of an organization or society, even when other distractions demand one's attention. It takes work to build trust, but when you do the reward is great. Also, I have learned to think as if I was the one being served. One has to place himself into the environment, into the lives of other people to try to understand them in order to best serve them. I have also learned that doing something is never easy, but that is the work most worth doing.

Name: **Gabby Vogt**
 Hometown: New Orleans, LA
 Year: Freshman
 Majors: Modern Languages and Secondary Education
 Organization: Rebel Global Connections, an organization that promotes cultural awareness at the University of Mississippi and in public schools throughout the state. Rebel Global Connections fosters cultural exchange through painting map murals and hosting World Passport Days for K-12 students, which provide opportunities to interact with international students and learn about their cultures.



What do you like most about your work with Rebel Global Connections?

Working with Rebel Global Connections has allowed me to meet so many new people from around the world. This is a truly rewarding experience that I wish I would have had at a younger age. For this reason, I love the idea that RGC exposes younger students to world cultures and allows them to have interactions with people from around the world. It is very easy to feel like you are in a bubble as a kid, but RGC really opens the minds of younger students to the world around them.

What have you learned as a Student Engagement Fellow?

I have learned so much as a Student Engagement Fellow in such a short time. I have had leadership positions in the past, but I never learned the tools needed to create a successful and meaningful organization. The skills I have learned as a Student Engagement Fellow will allow me to have more success as a leader throughout my life. I have also learned that there is nothing more rewarding than giving back to the community around you. Oxford and Mississippi as a whole has become my home away from home and I feel lucky to be able to use service as a means to better its future.

Civic Engagement to Advance Human Rights

Taught by Dr. Mark Frezzo

“**H**uman rights are a set of protections and entitlements held by all members of the human species – irrespective of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, or national origin,” explains Dr. Mark Frezzo, Associate Professor of Sociology. Students at the DeSoto campus enrolled in SOC 355: Sociology of Human Rights are challenged to trace the development of human rights as a concept, explore the ways that human rights are advanced by institutions and social movements, consider the relationship between human rights and democracy, and evaluate the outlook for universal human rights protections.

In this course, students explore the broad scope of protections contemplated within the human rights framework, including civil and political rights, economic and social rights, cultural rights, environmental rights, and citizenship and migrants’ rights.

“I learned about rights I didn’t realize I had,” said Rotosca Gray, a student enrolled in Sociology of Human Rights. “The course taught a different outlook on life and it changed my way of thinking. I also learned to think outside the box!”

With regard to economic rights, Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

While DeSoto County outperforms the national median household income and percentage of persons living below the poverty level, the state of Mississippi lags far behind those national metrics. This suggests a spatial inequality in the state of Mississippi, in which DeSoto County is an outlier compared with the rest of the state. Dr. Frezzo’s class challenges students to contemplate the extent to which such inequality impinges on the human right to enjoy an adequate standard of living.

Sociology of Human Rights also incorporates a strong call to action, which students pursued



as a service project with the international non-governmental organization Amnesty International. Across the globe, Amnesty International is known for its work to fight injustice and as a staunch defender of human rights. The Amnesty International campaign for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights notes that “across the world, 925 million people are undernourished. Every 90 seconds, a woman dies from complications of pregnancy or childbirth.”

While Amnesty International frames these issues on a global scale, Mississippi manifests many similar challenges. According to Feeding America, the rate of household food insecurity in Mississippi is 21.1%, meaning that over 1 in 5 Mississippians experience a lack of access to adequate food for a healthy lifestyle for all household members, as well as limited access to nutritious foods. The Mississippi State Department of Health reports that “Mississippi has one of the higher pregnancy-related mortality rates in the U.S. and that rate has been climbing for more than a decade.”

Students downloaded materials from Amnesty International’s website and engaged in outreach and public education by disseminating the materials in their communities. As a culminating activity, the students gave a presentation on campus about human rights and action steps that one can take to expose and prevent present-day human rights abuses.

“I believe that the purpose of sociology is to interrogate the contemporary period,” notes Dr. Frezzo. “It is my hope that students will come to think of themselves as active participants in the global public sphere.”

For more information about SOC 355, please contact Dr. Mark Frezzo at (662) 915-7177 or mvfrezza@olemiss.edu.

Honoring Selfless Service with the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award

The Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award was established in 1890 to honor individuals who exhibit nobility of character, exemplified by selfless service to others and the community. This is the University of Mississippi's highest award in honor of service. The award criteria emphasize placing service to others and the community before oneself, while embodying the qualities of humility, honesty, morality, ethics, integrity, responsibility, determination, courage, and compassion. In partnership with the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Foundation, the McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement has honored the following individuals with this prestigious award:



Mary-Haston Leary
**2014 Graduate Student
Sullivan Award Recipient**



Carol Van Besien
**2014 Community Member
Sullivan Award Recipient**



Deterrian Shackelford
**2015 Graduate Student
Sullivan Award Recipient**



Darryail Whittington
**2015 Community Member
Sullivan Award Recipient**

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