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Delta Students Learn About Health Professions at UM

Program exposes high schoolers to research options in health professions

JULY 21, 2018 BY CHRISTINA STEJBE

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High school students from the Mississippi Delta visit the UM campus to learn about health professions and health-related research as part of the Tri-County Workforce Alliance partnership with the Center for Population Studies. Photo by Elizabeth Sweeney

OXFORD, Miss. – Students from five Mississippi Delta counties got a firsthand look at health care professions and research during a recent visit to the [University of Mississippi](#).

Nearly 50 high school students from Clarksdale and Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, Sunflower and Tallahatchie counties visited campus as part of the Tri-County Workforce Alliance. The TWCA is a partner of UM's [Center for Population Studies](#), which is a division of the [Department of Sociology and Anthropology](#).

The TCWA involves students who have expressed an interest in health-related professions. The organization offers students opportunities to pursue those interests through its mentorship program, high school summer institute and other programs.

Many students think of health care professions only with regard to positions as physicians and nurses, said Josephine Rhymes, TCWA director. Her goal with the mentorship program is to help students discover other careers in health care.

"We want them to see that research is an important part of the health care profession also," Rhymes said. "Through these visits, students are able to see that there are other careers out there that are sustainable."

The students interacted with faculty and staff from the [Department of Biomolecular Sciences](#), [National Sea Grant Law Center](#) and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. They also spoke with admissions advisers and met with student groups to discuss the transition from high school to college.

"This partnership has been an asset to us and the students in that it's broadening their horizons," Rhymes said. "The students are learning what they can do to grow our communities and make them better."

Lynn Woo, research associate and instructor of sociology, coordinated with all partners to orchestrate the campus visit.

"The ultimate goal is that these students do continue on in pursuing an education, no matter where that might be," Woo said. "While on campus and through our center's many projects and initiatives, these students are also exposed to different types of health-related professions."

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Thank You To Our Donors

Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

"As many do have hopes in pursuing professions in direct care careers like medical and nursing schools, we do want to expose them to other health-related professions, such as health researchers in areas like public or population health and health policy careers."

For example, many of the students have participated in the collaborative Lead in Drinking Water Project, where they were able to see how water samples from their own homes were processed and analyzed in the toxicology labs within the Department of Biomolecular Sciences. The findings were sent to the students' parents, which increases parental involvement in education.

"This program is doing so much more than just exposing them to possible career options," Rhymes said. "It's also helping to build a stronger relationship between the student and parent."

Beyond campus visits, the mentorship program has students shadow health care professionals and learn life skills such as team building, conflict resolution, time management, worth ethic and communication skills, Rhymes said. They also get assistance with ACT preparation and searching for financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

"We are very proud of the program," Rhymes said. "It's been very successful so far and it's great for our community. The Delta has a lot of good in it if you just look around and find it."

The TCWA's collaboration with the Center for Population Studies has been ongoing for five years. TCWA collaborated with the center for several community-based initiatives, including the Lead in Drinking Water Project and the New Pathways to Health and Opportunity Initiative.

"The New Pathways to Health and Opportunity Initiative provides students with a wide range of educational and skill building activities, thereby equipping them to develop and pursue their aspirations," said John Green, the center's director. "In doing so, it connects them with their communities and to professionals working to improve health."

Green said he has already seen a positive impact on students from the program.

"We have seen students transitioning from high school to college, doing so with job shadowing experience, certifications to begin their careers, dual enrollment credit and improved ACT scores," he said. "They also have further developed appreciation for the logic and role of research in problem solving."

New Pathways began in the mid-2000s and has been a partner with Ole Miss for five years. The expansion of the program has reached hundreds of students, and 95 percent of participants have completed high school and attended college.

Its school and community projects have influenced more than 3,000 people through fitness and nutrition camps, health fairs and stress-reduction assemblies. New Pathways has the ultimate goal of expanding educational and health care employment opportunities in the Mississippi Delta.

This collaboration directly supports the university's **Flagship Constellation** initiative of community well-being, where interdisciplinary team members work to solve the issues facing rural communities.

Last year, the Dreyfus Health Foundation of the Rogosin Institute received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support the initiative. Other partners include the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center Inc. and Mississippi Hospital Association Foundation.

The Center for Population Studies contracts with the Dreyfus Health Foundation for program development, research and evaluation.

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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