McLean Institute Prepares to Launch Community Projects in Delta

Christina Steube

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McLean Institute Prepares to Launch Community Projects in Delta

Continuing work is funded by a $1.6 million grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation

APRIL 28, 2015 BY CHRISTINA STEUBE

OXFORD, Miss. – In the year since the University of Mississippi’s McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement received a $1.6 million grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation, students and faculty have researched issues and are preparing to launch several projects aimed at increasing community and economic development in Mississippi communities.

The grant, part of the foundation’s Catalyzing Entrepreneurship and Economic Development program, has helped undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty members to research poverty, education, asset building and health care in Calhoun, Coahoma, Lee, Leflore and Tallahatchie counties. The researchers include 15 students from across campus, including representatives from the College of Liberal Arts and the schools of Business, Pharmacy, Education and Applied Sciences.

Much of the past year has been devoted to planning, said Ryan Parsons, the institute’s project manager. However, students have worked in Tallahatchie County assisting with the restoration of the courtroom in Sumner for a dedication as part of the 60th anniversary of the Emmett Till trial.

“Our students are already actively working along with community partners in both the Mississippi Delta and northeast Mississippi,” Parsons said. “This summer, they’ll work with groups like the Tri-County Workforce Alliance to learn more about community and economic development from people who do it best.”

Students have also worked in Clarksdale with farming groups in hopes of starting a farmers market in the area, with a long-term goal of education about farming.

“This work increases engagement opportunities that benefit University of Mississippi students, faculty, staff and community partners,” said Albert Nylander, the project’s principal investigator and McLean Institute director. “These projects are empowering UM students to think strategically about Mississippi’s community and economic advancement.”

This summer, the McLean Institute and the Center for Population Studies will host the Delta Regional Forum on Population, Development, and Entrepreneurial Problem Solving in Clarksdale. Set for July 15-17, the event will showcase the work of students and faculty to support economic development in rural communities.

For more information about the McLean Institute, contact Albert Nylander at 662-915-2050 or nylander@olemiss.edu.
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