

FORWARD

CHANGING TOMORROW THROUGH EDUCATION TODAY • A PUBLICATION OF MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE OF EDUCATION



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president finds her
place at MSU

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Mississippi State University

ADVISERS

Richard Blackburn
Dean

Teresa Jayroe
Associate Dean

Mitzy Johnson
Assistant Dean

Trish Cunetto
Director of Development

Camille Carskadon
Communication Specialist

CONTRIBUTORS

Sam Andrews, '18

Megan Bean

James Carskadon, '12

Russ Houston, '85

Harriet Laird

Allison Matthews, '00

Heather Rowe

Sasha Steinberg, '14

Beth Wynn

EMAIL: CCARSKADON@COLLED.MSSTATE.EDU

ONLINE: WWW.EDUC.MSSTATE.EDU

NEWS: WWW.EDUC.MSSTATE.EDU/NEWS

FACEBOOK.COM/ COLLEGEFEDMSU

TWITTER.COM/ COLLEGEFED_MSU

INSTAGRAM.COM/ COLLEGEFED_MSU

COVER: 2018-2019 SA President, Mayah Emerson, welcomes students back to campus during The Drill. Learn how this Meridian native made MSU her home away from home on **page 16**.

LETTER FROM THE DEAN



In my 14th year as dean of the Mississippi State University College of Education, I continue to be impressed with the manner in which the work of our faculty, staff, and students aligns with our College of Education tagline—

“Changing Tomorrow Through Education Today.”

One merely has to review the pages of this newsletter to recognize that the College of Education is having a significant impact in the areas of teaching, research, and service. Work of this type is consistent with our mission to provide instruction, research, and service to state, national, and international audiences that influence educational attainment, economic development, and quality of life. It is important to note that the accomplishments outlined in this publication are merely subsets of the numerous outstanding activities taking place in our college.

Accomplishments such as those outlined in this newsletter are difficult during a period of limited state assistance for higher education. However, the loyal support of our alumni and friends has enabled us to carry out our mission. We humbly ask for your continued assistance.

Hail State,

Richard Blackburn
Dean, College of Education

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MSU-MERIDIAN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR NAMED TO COUNCIL FOR THE STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

An associate professor in Mississippi State University-Meridian's Division of Education has been elected vice president for research and publication for the Council for the Study of Community Colleges.



Mark Fincher, who teaches as part of MSU's community college leadership program, will work to encourage students and two-year college professionals to engage in research during his CSCC tenure. He also will oversee the organization's annual "Dissertation of the Year" competition.

"Dr. Fincher is a leader in his field and a leader in the Division of Education. We are excited to see the great work that will come out of his commitment to enhancing higher education research, policy and practice," said Kimberly Hall, head of the Division of Education at MSU-Meridian.

A CSCC member since 2009, he has served on the annual conference program committee. In 2017, he was responsible for organizing the conference peer-review and proposal process.

Fincher received his bachelor's degree in business administration from Stephen F. Austin State University, and his master's in business administration and Ph.D. in higher education from the University of North Texas.

"The CSCC is the leading research organization for the study of public community and junior colleges. I ran for this office with the intention of enhancing the impact of the research produced by council members on the national debate on higher education policy and practice," Fincher said. "I also hope to facilitate development of the next generation of higher education access-oriented researchers."

CSCC membership is open to all professionals involved in community college education. An affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges and a project of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, the organization studies and promotes two-year colleges, as well as higher education access. ●

Kinesiology graduate student finds success in fall prevention research

Graduate student Alana Turner began her undergraduate career as an engineering major, but discovered quickly that she wanted to follow a different career path.

"I realized I wanted to focus on was being active and needed to find a career where I could do that," the Mendenhall native said. "I love getting to know how our bodies work—how the muscles, tendons and bones all work together. That fascinates me, and I'm excited I get to keep learning about it."

With encouragement from her brother, a graduate of MSU's kinesiology program, Turner began looking at the field as a possibility. She then settled into her new major quickly, taking a class with MSU Kinesiology Professor Harish Chander during her junior year. Mentioning to Chander her interest in the engineering aspects of kinesiology and her passion to work with the elderly, he immediately knew she'd be a perfect fit for biomechanics. Together they could form a team, do the research and work on a fall intervention program for the elderly.

As graduation approached, Turner began thinking about her next move after she finished her bachelor's degree. Initially, she had planned to attend physical therapy school, but she found herself enjoying her biomechanics research more and more. Again, it was Chander who helped her find her path.

"The summer before I graduated Dr. Chander told me about a new graduate concentration called disability studies and that he thought I should look into it," Turner explained.



The disability studies concentration delves into ways of getting those with disabilities either physically active or rehabilitated. The program also prepares students who are seeking advanced graduate study that leads to a doctoral degree. Right away, Turner knew that this was the right choice because of her desire to help improve the lives of the elderly and those with disabilities.

"Right now, I work a lot with the elderly and fall prevention. My fall prevention research is based on physical activity, and more specifically hydrotherapy, to see if it improves balance in the elderly population."

In her research, Turner divided her volunteers into two groups, a land-based group and a water-based group. Over a six-week period, she had each group perform the same exercises to see which performed better over time in regards to balance and dual tasking. While Turner is still looking at the data to determine the outcomes, she sees good results from her research.

After graduating with her master's degree, Turner has plans to pursue her Ph.D. and eventually further her investigation into improving quality of life for the elderly and those with disabilities. ●



MSU'S FAMOUS MAROON BAND RINGS IN NEW ACADEMIC YEAR WITH RECORD-SETTING MEMBERSHIP

Mississippi State's 115-year-old Famous Maroon Band is among beloved traditions that make the gameday atmosphere at Davis Wade Stadium an unforgettable experience. As Bulldog fans "bring the ring" this season, 414 members of the largest college band in university history and in the state will be bringing an even bigger beat.

Part of MSU's nationally accredited Department of Music, this year's Famous Maroon Band features students hailing from 20 states, as well as Colombia, South America. More than 325 students finished in the top 25 percent of their high school graduating class, and nearly 200 students graduated in the top 10 percent. With an average ACT score of 27, this year's membership consists of 23 high school valedictorians and 13 salutatorians.

"We are very proud of the growth in our program, both in terms of quality and quantity," said Director of Bands Elva Kaye Lance, an MSU alumna and instructor with nearly 40 years of music education experience. "We are also excited that the Famous Maroon Band continues to attract outstanding student musicians from throughout the



Prestigious music body now includes MSU band leader Lance

Elva Kaye Lance, Mississippi State's nationally recognized director of bands, has received another major professional accolade.



Lance is among 13 recently elected to membership in the historic American Bandmasters Association, one of the highest recognitions of its kind. An alumna of the university's College of Education, she has led the Famous Maroon Band and associated groups for more than two decades.

Founded in 1929, ABA represents some 300 conductors and composers throughout the U.S. and Canada, along with 80 associate members from music-related businesses and corporations that support performing units and the publication of music they perform.

Ray Cramer, retired director of bands at Indiana University's prestigious Jacobs School of Music, was among those sending congratulations after learning of Lance's election. The honor is "well deserved and certainly represents the hard work and great success you have had at MSU," said Cramer, a former ABA president.

An intense vetting process is required for ABA admission. Those tapped for membership must have achieved the highest levels of excellence over a sustained career.

In 2015, Lance was elected president of Phi Beta Mu, the international bandmaster fraternity of more than 3,000 members spread throughout some 30 states and Canadian provinces.

Also in recent years, she has been named Outstanding Contributor to Bands in Mississippi, Outstanding Mississippi Bandmaster and winner of the Mississippi Bandmasters Association's Edythe M. McArthur Outstanding Woman Band Director Award. Professional memberships include, among others, Kappa Kappa Psi and Sigma Alpha Iota international music fraternities and National Association for Music Education.

Lance is the eighth leader of MSU's Famous Maroon Band, created in 1902 and ranked among the oldest collegiate musical traditions in the Southeastern U.S. Beyond administering every aspect of the Famous Maroon Band program, she conducts the MSU Wind Ensemble and teaches methods classes in the College of Education's Department of Music.

Before returning to work at her alma mater, the Waynesboro native taught instrumental music at several state senior and junior high schools.

Speaking for the College of Education, Dean Richard Blackburn praised Lance "for this significant professional accomplishment." Though immediately recognizing election to the ABA as "a great honor," he admitted to being even more overwhelmed "upon learning of the extreme vetting that candidates undergo prior to being added to this elite group.

"It is particularly significant when one is honored by their peers, and we all are extremely proud of Elva Kaye for both this accomplishment and the many things she does for MSU," Blackburn added. ●

"We are very proud of the growth in our program, both in terms of quality and quantity, We are also excited that the Famous Maroon Band continues to attract outstanding student musicians from throughout the country in addition to those from our home state." ~ Elva Kay Lance

country in addition to those from our home state."

All three drum majors are returning for this academic year. They include Jacob T. Baker, a music education major from Falkville, Alabama; Jacob S. Lanier, a geoscience/professional meteorology major from Marietta, Georgia; and Reece G. Paulk, a biological sciences/pre-veterinary major from Ruth.

With the addition of a synthetic practice field made possible through gifts from alumni, friends and parents, Famous Maroon Band members are experiencing improved practice conditions, even after periods of inclement weather. The new field is located on the southeast corner of campus and adjacent to the band hall.

The lead gift for the field upgrades comes from Jim and Julia Rouse of Suwanee, Georgia. Jim Rouse is a retired vice president of ExxonMobil and the university's 2012 National Alumnus. Contributions exceeding the project's goal have become part of an endowment to maintain the field over time. The endowment for the synthetic field may be increased with additional contributions at www.msufoundation.com. ●



ALSTON AWARDED 'DISTANCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE' SCHOLARSHIP

Jinna Alston knows the power of having a special teacher make a true difference in a student's life because she was that student.

"One of my teachers, Ms. Bird, was a very important influence in my life," Alston said. "She taught me to reach beyond my limitations and helped me develop strengths I didn't know I had."

Alston, a Mississippi State distance student and a fall 2018 recipient of a \$1,000 "Distance Makes a Difference" Scholarship, shared her story in her scholarship application.

"My family struggled financially," she wrote. "We lived in an area that did not have electricity and we often struggled to make it to school. There were even some days when I would have to skip meals."

On days Alston was able to attend

classes, she was embarrassed at having missed lessons and felt she didn't know enough to answer questions or complete classwork.

Bird saw what was happening and reached out. Soon the teacher was sharing her lunch with Alston and staying many days after school to help her catch up on assignments.

"We have a saying in our community, 'We should never fill our stomachs when a neighbor is hungry.' Ms. Bird's actions certainly exemplified that for me," Alston said. "Her kindness and mentorship gave me confidence in myself and my abilities despite my economic situation."

Alston described marrying and starting a family while making the clear choice to put her academic goals on hold to concentrate on being a mom. However, the desire to further her education was never far from her mind.

When her daughter and son turned five and two, Alston decided it was time to pursue an online bachelor's degree in elementary education with a middle school concentration. She credits MSU's Center for Distance Education with allowing her to complete her degree while continuing to be the best mother possible

and following her dreams.

"I am extremely grateful that MSU's distance education program exists. Without it, it would be impossible for me to go back to school and complete my degree in a field I am passionate about," she said.

An extremely happy Alston rushed to tell her husband when she found out she was the recipient of the CDE scholarship.

"Our finances were tight at the time, so my husband and I had decided I would have to skip the fall 2018 semester. With the scholarship, I knew I wouldn't have to do that and would be able to continue without interruption to graduate as planned in fall 2019," explained Alston, who plans to be an educator and make a difference in the lives of her students the same way her teacher made a difference in hers.

Mississippi State's Center for Distance Education offers 47 accredited online programs. Distance education bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, as well as professional certificates, are offered across the country and around the world.

For more information, visit

www.distance.msstate.edu.

www.educ.msstate.edu

College of Education assistant professor encourages collaboration, research among faculty and students

Mississippi State Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations Assistant Professor Elaine Wei is quick to admit that mathematics was never her strongest subject in grade school.

“Statistics on the other hand... statistics are for everyone!” she said, smiling. For China native Wei, becoming an educational psychologist who lives in Mississippi was never a part of her plans. Coming from her home country to the U.S. was a bit of a shock for Wei. She finished her undergraduate studies in law in China and came to the U.S. for graduate school at Texas Tech. She explained that she feels more at home in Mississippi where the climate is similar to her hometown and that working at a university where she can teach, as well as conduct research, is a plus as well.

Wei began publishing articles in graduate school with the help of her adviser, who’s research interest was in special education. As an educational psychology major, Wei felt this also was a perfect research area for her. She credited her strong research background to this graduate advisor who included Wei in many projects. This is a practice Wei continues with her own students at MSU, in research and the classroom.

“I often joke with my students when I introduce myself. I tell them, ‘I teach your favorite classes in graduate school: Statistics 1, Statistics 2 and Statistics 3,’” said Wei.

She admits that many students struggle with learning statistics, and more often than not they enter her class thinking it will be their least favorite. While her classes may not

be the most popular, Wei enjoys teaching them because, like a lot of her students, she didn’t come from a math background.

This helps her connect with them by relating statistics scientifically to their lives and not trying to teach just statistical formulas. By giving real-world examples, she hopes to see students have that “a-ha” moment when statistics start to make sense.

“My favorite part is when I’m teaching, and I see a student’s facial expression that communicates ‘Oh! Finally!’ All of a sudden the pieces come together because I’m explaining it in a way that’s understandable.” ●



MSU STATE SINGERS CONCLUDE TEXAS PERFORMANCE TOUR

Under the direction of Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities Gary Packwood, 53 student singers, including music and non-music majors, gave performances across the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Designed as a recruitment tour for Mississippi State and the Department of Music, the State Singers have toured all around the southern United States, performing in two to three states each fall semester. In the fall of 2018, Packwood decided to change up his scheduling for the singers to perform a total of seven concerts in Texas alone, singing at Birdville, Byron Nelson, Eaton, Plano Senior, Plano West and McKinney Boyd high schools and Texas A&M-Commerce.

Packwood credits the size of his group for being able to travel so far to recruit new singers.

“With the choir, we just need enough



room to stand, and we don’t always need a piano,” said Packwood. “Also, my wonderful colleague here Dr. Christine Lee accompanied us on tour so that didn’t limit us either.”

In addition to the fall tour, the State

Singers perform several concerts, including an October concert and one at Christmas.

For more information on the State Singers or choral activities at MSU, visit http://www.statesings.com/State_Sings/Choral_Home.html. ●

The making of a power teacher: Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations students include cultural experiences in their studies



Three College of Education students—Jasmine Carter, Riley Holmes and Taylor Skinner—participated in a cultural study experience directed by Dr. Qiana Cutts, assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations. Using the work of the late Dr. Asa Grant Hilliard, III, a 30-year Georgia State University scholar, historian and professor, as the foundation, the experience was curated as an extension of the MSU Otilie Schillig Special Teaching Project implemented by Dr. Cutts during her fall 2017 Social Foundations of Education course. Specifically, the experience furthered students' knowledge of how teacher disposition, cultural understandings and pre-service education and preparation impact their ability to become “power teachers” who emphasize school equity and cultivate culturally relevant learning experiences for their students.

For two days in Atlanta, Georgia, the group visited cultural sites, including the APEX Museum, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Kindezi School at Old Fourth Ward and Georgia State. Activities at

these sites included film and exhibit viewings, a teaching observation, and semi-formal dinner and discussion.

The group had the honor of attending the first annual Asa G. Hilliard, III Memorial Scholarship Dinner, where they met and engaged with the Honorable Patsy Jo Hilliard and Hakim Hilliard, widow and son of Dr. Hilliard; Monica Kaufman Pearson, Emmy Award winner and first African American and woman to become a news anchor in Atlanta; Dr. Gwendolyn Benson, associate dean for school, community and international partnerships in the College of Education and Human Development at Georgia State; Dr. Akinyela Umoja, chair and professor of African American Studies at Georgia State, and countless other scholars and community leaders.

The group visited other sites, including Skyview Atlanta, Centennial Olympic Park, Atlantic Station and engaged in a focus group discussion and dinner. The students presented their reflections of and research about their experiences during the 11th Annual College of Education Research Forum in the spring semester of 2018. ●

COUNSELING, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FOUNDATIONS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR SELECTED FOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Qiana Cutts, assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations, is a new selection for the Mississippi Education Policy Fellowship Program.

One of just 17 sites in the country, the MEPFP is a year-long program sponsored by both the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development, Research and Curriculum unit, and the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. The program focuses on both state and national education policy and how educators and leaders in education can influence that policy.

Cutts, who received her Ph.D. from Georgia State University, admits that in the past she didn't spend as much time focusing on policy as she would have liked. Recalling a conversation with her middle school principal who asked if she wanted to be an administrator one day, she said she told him she wasn't sure and that it seemed like “too much politics.” He explained to her, however, that it was primarily “policy with some politics in the mix, and that “policy drives politics.”

“As I've stayed in education longer, I see just how much policy matters, and how much we need to understand it and how it shapes the experiences of our K-12 students,” Cutts said.

After reading about the MEPFP, she decided to apply and was accepted. Cutts and other program fellows learned about specific policy issues, policymaking, and implementation



processes; the intersections of local, state, and national policies; and how effective leaders function in the policy environment.

Each month the program meets in Jackson and brings fellows and ideas together through a variety of onsite learning activities designed to create a personal development laboratory for applying new insights and cultivating new skills. This spring, participants travel to Washington, D.C. to hear and discuss education policy with respected policymakers from across the state and nation.

“As I’ve stayed in education longer, I see just how much policy matters, and how much we need to understand it and how it shapes the experiences of our K-12 students” ~ Qiana Cutts

Cutts explained that the MEPPF has encouraged her to explore more in policy and has empowered her to bring some of what she has learned back to her classroom. Ultimately, she would like to give undergraduate students the chance to learn through an introduction to education policy so they will understand more about how things work.

“Hopefully, these students will be the next generation of people who are making those decisions so we can have more educators at the table or in the room doing what they need to do to influence policy,” she said. ●

Martindale elected president of leading international association

A leading researcher in online learning environments and head of Mississippi State’s Department of Instructional Systems and Workforce Development is now serving as President of the flagship international research organization in his field.

Dr. Trey Martindale was named the new leader of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT). Elected by the general membership to lead the AECT as it sets policies, standards and strategic initiatives for researchers and practitioners in educational technology, Martindale will spend this year leading the board of directors and speaking at various state and international affiliate groups on behalf of the research and service mission of AECT. Martindale was installed as president of AECT at the International AECT Convention, held this year in Kansas City, Missouri. Founded in 1921, AECT is the preeminent scholarly association for researchers in instructional design and technology, a field that examines how people teach and learn effectively. AECT has more than 2,300 members from 28 countries around the world.



L-R: AECT past president Eugene Korweh with incoming president Trey Martindale of MSU.

“Our goal in AECT is to help improve teaching and learning in all kinds of contexts. Our membership includes learning professionals in higher education, the military, health care, industry and non-profit organizations,” Martindale said. “AECT has been so beneficial for me professionally in terms of research and funding opportunities and meeting new colleagues in the field. I owe AECT a debt of gratitude and look forward to helping others connect with the engaged scholars and resources in our organization.”

AECT is currently experiencing rapid expansion in various regions, particularly in East Asia, with new affiliates in Thailand and Indonesia, along with long-standing affiliates in China, Taiwan and Korea. Africa, Europe and South America also are well-represented, and the organization is seeking to expand with new colleagues and potential affiliates in the Middle East.

Martindale recently traveled to Bahrain as an invited speaker at an innovation forum sponsored by the eight Arab Gulf countries in the region. There, he spoke about innovation in higher education and specifically online learning environments. He also began discussions with colleagues for a potential Middle East AECT affiliate. He returned to the region in January 2019 to give a series of lectures to graduate students and faculty in Bahrain.

A professor for 20 years, Martindale joined MSU in 2017. He spent the previous 12 years at the University of Memphis. His career has centered on mentoring graduate students, teaching instructional technology and developing online degree programs. ●

ISWD ALUMNA NAMED INTERIM DEAN OF MUW'S COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, PROFESSIONAL STUDIES



Mississippi State alumna Marty Brock is the interim dean of the College of Business and Professional Studies at Mississippi University for Women.

Also chair of MUW's Department of Business and professor of Management Information Systems, Brock's appointment as interim dean began in August of 2018. In the position, she supervises an additional three departments, including the Department of Business, Culinary Arts Institute and legal studies. Brock joined MUW in 2006 as instructor and director of instructional technology and became instructor and coordinator for the Center for Teaching Excellence three years later. She served as MIS associate professor and assistant professor before taking on the role as business department chair in 2012 and becoming an MIS professor in 2017.

"Dr. Brock has been a catalyst in the student growth and curricular innovation that has occurred across The W's business programs. Working collaboratively with the faculty and staff, the College of Business and Professional Studies could not be in better hands, nor more ably led," said Scott Tollison, MUW interim provost and vice president for academic affairs.

The Caledonia native has served the campus in numerous capacities, most recently with the Planning Institution and Effectiveness Council, Graduate Council and Council of Chairs. She

also has given presentations on a range of topics and has submitted a number of grant proposals related to enhancing student learning.

Her professional affiliations include the Mississippi Business Educators Association, Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education, and the Association for the Advancement of Computing Education.

Prior to joining MUW, Brock was an Extension instructor at Mississippi State.

She earned her Ph.D. in instructional systems and workforce development with a minor in agricultural information science from MSU. The university also awarded Brock her master's degree in business administration and bachelor's degree in history.

Brock said of her MUW colleagues, "I could not ask for a better group of faculty and staff to work with than those who serve in the Department of Legal Studies, the Culinary Arts Institute and the Department of Business. Under Dr. Tollison's leadership, the College of Business and Professional Studies has grown and is in a wonderful place.

"With recent curriculum redesign and innovative initiatives such as the 10K-MBA, I believe we are poised for further growth. I am both honored and humbled to have been asked to serve during this time of transition," she added. ●

Ph.D. student finds passion in educational policy

When New York native Aressa Coley stepped onto the Mississippi State campus as a freshman in 2008, she was an early-admittance pre-veterinarian student set to major in biology. Today, she's an MSU Ph.D. student working on her dissertation in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education. Coley's affection for Mississippi State didn't begin in 2008, however. It began back in high school when she attended the university's Summer Scholars program, arriving on campus after having attended a science veterinarian camp at Tuskegee University in Alabama. With Tuskegee only a few hours from Starkville, Coley's mother suggested she attend Summer Scholars at MSU as well.

"I didn't really know anything about Mississippi, but I had the best time when I attended camp. I still keep in touch with people from Summer Scholars, and it was cool too because I wasn't the only person that was from far away," she said.

Summer Scholars was just a jumping off point for Coley's life in Mississippi. She knew when she had to make a decision about where to attend college she wanted to "go somewhere different," far from her home in the Northeast. Her parents always encouraged her to go as far away as she wanted, explaining that if she could get there she could get back home.

Mississippi State was where she landed, obtaining her bachelor's degree in 2012 and making the decision to continue as a graduate student at MSU not in veterinary medicine, but in biology. During her years as a master's student, she began teaching and fell in

love with working with students. While she didn't know much about education in Mississippi's public school system, what fascinated her the most about her Biology Lab I students at MSU who had graduated from those secondary schools seemed to have started out in her college-level classes at different levels of knowledge. Also, she knew this was not unique to biology lab students.

"I had some students who had done labs before and were very familiar with practices, and then I had some that had never been able to physically use a microscope before," she explained.

Realizing that she might need to address each of her students' needs

differently, she began researching how to better support her students in learning science. Coley said learning science is crucial for students because it's a subject that "bleeds into everyday life." After talking to Dr. Ryan Walker, an MSU associate professor in curriculum, instruction and special education, she knew she needed more time to educate herself and applied for the university's curriculum and instruction Ph.D. program with a concentration in secondary education.

Since being accepted into the program, her work has been focused on education policy and trying to enhance students' education. She has worked with early childhood to adult-learner education.

"I'm really interested in anything that can enhance someone's educational abilities.

Whether it's coming into a formal learning environment or working with students informally, we need to figure out what set of courses or what set of experiences to construct for them to meet their goals," Coley said. "To me, that's fun. That's challenging. That's where my passion lies now." ●



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ARIEL JOHNSON

When Ariel Johnson took a welding class in high school, she had no idea the class would have a major influence on her future. She was convinced to take the class her sophomore year by a friend who already had welding experience.

"I hated it at first because I was the only girl in there. I was also left-handed which makes it a little more difficult, but as time went on I ended up liking it," she said.

Johnson, who has a self-proclaimed competitive streak, decided to stay with the class, and her drive to be the best led her to enjoy welding enough to this major for her associate's degree at junior college. Thanks to her high school's dual enrollment program with Jones College, formerly Jones County Junior College, Johnson graduated with her high school diploma in May 2015 and her associate's degree in August of that same year. A week later she moved to Starkville to begin senior college at Mississippi State.

Stepping on to campus her junior year, she was convinced her future was in another major, but she realized after being at MSU for a year she wanted a more



hands-on career that would keep her interested and engaged from day to day.

After looking through MSU's master class, Johnson noticed that the industrial technology major housed in the Department of Instructional Systems and Workforce Development offered a welding class. She knew that was something she enjoyed and immediately changed her major. She thrived and even had the opportunity one semester to help with the welding class that drew her to the major. She also came to view her professors and fellow students as a family and support system.

With the help of dual enrollment in high school, Johnson walked across the

Humphrey Coliseum stage in December 2018 as an MSU graduate. The Monday after graduation, she began her career as a controls engineer at Yokohama Tire in West Point. Once she adjusted to her new position, she began looking at graduate schools and was accepted into the online industrial management graduate program at the University of Texas, Tyler, and hopes to begin classes this summer. Once she finishes her graduate degree she hopes to come back to MSU to teach welding and be a part of the same support system that was part of her life when she was a student.

"Any time I needed anything, they were always right there," Johnson said. ●

MSU professor invited to serve on humanities review panel

James Sobaskie, 11-year associate professor in the Department of Music, recently was invited to serve as a grant reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Sobaskie, whose research centers on Franz Schubert, an early Romantic era composer who lived in Vienna, and on the music of Gabriel Fauré, a late-Romantic/early Modern era composer who lived in Paris, will serve on a four-member panel that evaluates proposals for the National Endowment for the Humanities' Summer Stipend competition.

The competition attracts well over 800 applications per year from individual scholars in many humanities fields, funding around 9% of these, with awards up to a maximum of \$6,000, which serve to support the creation of books, articles, translations, editions and other scholarly products. Out of the thirty-three applications, Sobaskie will evaluate only three or four will be funded. The four members of the music-focused panel will evaluate proposals that are either musicological, ethnomusicological or musically educational in some way.

"Serving on the NEH music panel is an honor, but it also represents a valuable educational experience. I evaluate articles and special issue proposals on the editorial board of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, and I've served on the grants panel of an Irish musicological organization, but this opportunity will present an array of cutting-edge research and reveal what it takes to gain federal funding," Sobaskie said.

Sobaskie notes that funding resources for the sciences are enormous and growing, while funding resources for the humanities are shrinking. He believes the arts, like music and literature, help people understand who they are as a culture as well as individual, and can provide crucial insight and education.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is the federal agency that was established in 1965 to support research and education in the arts and humanities. It has funded special concerts by the Starkville Symphony Orchestra, as well as some of the historical documentaries on PBS.

"The knowledge generated by funded humanities projects may not have immediate commercial value, but it will sustain the spirit of inquiry and the impulse of imagination, both of which are crucial in higher education but also in society more generally – everyone needs to keep learning and creating!" Sobaskie added. ●

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEPARTMENT HEAD EXPLORES HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND BIG-TIME ATHLETICS

It didn't take Dr. Eric Moyen long to figure out that higher education was the place for him. Returning home from his first semester as a college freshman, he told his parents he wanted to spend the rest of his life on a college campus.

Moyen reminisced, "I loved interacting with people, especially those with different backgrounds. I loved the world of ideas, engaging with others who had diverse perspectives on politics and policy energized me. In addition, I enjoyed thinking strategically. All of these passions converged at a university."

Moyen eventually told his college adviser he wanted to work at a university, and the mentor encouraged him to get his Ph.D. The Lexington, Kentucky native completed his undergraduate degree in social studies education and then earned a master's degree in U.S. history from the University of Alabama. After gaining three years' experience in the P-12 school setting, he enrolled in the educational policy studies department at the University of Kentucky to complete a Ph.D. in higher education. With nationally renowned historian of higher education John Thelin as his adviser and mentor, Moyen focused his research on the history of presidential leadership in higher education.

In 2004, Moyen became a professor of education at Tennessee's Lee University where he taught classes in educational foundations, methods and leadership. After directing the Office of First-Year Programs and serving as a department chair in the College of Education, Moyen was promoted to assistant vice president for Academic Affairs. During that time Moyen co-edited a text for a freshman seminar and authored "Frank L. McVey and the University of Kentucky: A Progressive

President and the Modernization of a Southern University," published by the University Press of Kentucky.

Moyen, now head of Mississippi State's Department of Educational Leadership, enjoyed his time at Lee University but had a desire to work at a research university in the Southeastern Conference. One reason was because Frank McVey, the subject of his first biography, served as the founding president of the SEC.

"I learned that big-time athletic success involved less Xs and Os

"I learned that big-time athletic success involved less Xs and Os from coaches and more influence of presidential leadership. In both the 20th and 21st centuries, presidents from major research universities state that managing athletics is a key element in any administration." ~Eric Moyen

from coaches and more influence of presidential leadership. In both the 20th and 21st centuries, presidents from major research universities state that managing athletics is a key element in any administration," said Moyen of the intersection of higher education and athletics, a connection that led him to his current research project.

Moyen is co-authoring an autobiography of Jim Host, who is considered the pioneer of sports



marketing for college athletics. "Host introduced corporate sponsorships to the NCAA and the idea of 'bundled rights' to individual universities. This led to an unprecedented boom in college athletics," Moyen explained.

This pioneer's company, Host Communications Inc., transformed the NCAA basketball tournament into its current "March Madness" and showed university presidents how to leverage athletics for the promotion of higher education. At its zenith, Host Communications managed sports marketing for nearly 30 big-time athletics programs, including Mississippi State University. Among other topics, the new book includes details on Host's interactions with MSU President Donald Zacharias and Athletic Director Larry Templeton in expanding the "brand" of Bulldog athletics.

After less than two years at Mississippi State, Moyen is glad to call Starkville home. "This university and the college town of Starkville are both special places to live and work. My family and I love it here. MSU is the 'People's University,' and I hope to do my part in making sure that the educational leadership department at MSU does its part to better the education opportunities afforded to every child in Mississippi."

Moyen has been married to his high school sweetheart, Missy, for more than 20 years. They have two daughters, Anna Grace, 16, and Emmy, 15. ●

MSU-Meridian Division of Education names Fall 2018 outstanding students

A nurse for 10 years, Emily Smith decided to change career paths and in December 2018 was recognized at Mississippi State University-Meridian's fall commencement program as the Division of Education's Outstanding Undergraduate student.

Smith had only considered the nursing field when she earned her nursing degree from Jones College, then Jones County Junior College. Her career plan began to shift in 2013, however, when her one-year-old son Dawson was diagnosed with Adenosine Deaminase Deficiency, an inherited disorder that damages the immune system.

Undergoing two bone marrow transplants and chemotherapy, Dawson's immune system was declared 'clear,' but Smith and her husband, Mike began noticing he was experiencing some developmental delays. He later was determined to be on the autism spectrum.

Trying without much success to work with her son at home, Smith began taking special education classes at MSU-Meridian to learn new techniques and strategies to teach him. This was the catalyst in her decision to pursue a degree in special education.

"I really enjoyed attending MSU-Meridian," Smith said. "I liked the atmosphere and small class size and the convenience, which enabled me to go to school, continue to work, and still have time to take care of my family. My instructors were also top-notch, and I felt well-prepared for my student internship this past semester in the Enterprise School District."

Smith also credits her husband for encouraging her when she began her pursuit of a new profession.

"I had a great nursing career, and I still like it, but I feel that special education is my passion," she said. "I would never have been able to start or finish this journey without my husband's support. He, along with the help of both of our families, made it possible for me



Emily Smith



Yasmin Ali

to achieve what I felt God was calling me to do."

Smith said when she looks at her son, now 6-years-old, doing well and making strides every day, she does not see a child with a disability.

"He really is just like any other child—only he communicates and experiences his surroundings in a different way than you or me," she said. "I believe all children, whether they have a disability or not, want the same thing we all do; and that's to be loved and accepted just the way they are."

Division of Education graduate student realizes her dream of becoming a teacher

This fall's Outstanding Graduate

Student in Mississippi State University-Meridian's Division of Education said her third-grade teacher changed her life, and she strives to "pay it forward" with the patience and encouragement she wants her students to embrace.

Yasmin Ali of Meridian, who was recognized for the award during MSU-Meridian's fall commencement in December 2018, will receive a master's degree in elementary education.

Attaining her long-term educational goal makes the 24-year-old reminisce about her desire to become an educator. She traces her path back to her experiences in Mrs. LaPlaca's classroom in Brooksville, Florida.

Born in New York, Ali moved at

3-years-old with her family from Staten Island to her father's native country of Palestine, where they lived for six years until moving back to the United States.

Ali was fluent in Arabic but knew limited English until a caring teacher helped her learn.

"Mrs. LaPlaca took me, a shy, self-conscious little girl who was an English Language Learner, and by the end of my third-grade year, I had placed out of the program," said Ali. "I credit her not only with that success but for the honor of being selected Outstanding Graduate student as well."

Ali's family stayed in Florida a few years before moving to Dayton, Ohio where she attended a private middle and high school that allowed her to reconnect with the Arabic language in addition to her English studies.

"Once I became fluent in English, I realized I was having a hard time remembering my family's native tongue," she said. "I was thrilled that my school in Ohio allowed me to study both."

After high school graduation, she and her extended family moved to Southaven, where she promptly enrolled in elementary education at the University of Mississippi's local campus. Before earning her undergraduate degree, Ali looked up and called her former teacher at Florida's Moton Elementary, Ali's elementary school where LaPlaca still teaches.

"I was so happy she remembered me and that I was able to share with her that I was about to graduate with my bachelor's degree in elementary education—and it was all because of her," Ali said. "She is the reason I became a teacher, and I wanted her to know the impact she made and is still making on my life." The two continue to keep in touch through email.

Ali and her husband, AB Asmar, married in the fall of 2016 and settled in Meridian, where her husband owns a local business. After spending a few months to settle in her new home and explore the area, Ali discovered she could continue her studies at MSU-Meridian.

"On a campus of this size, I felt that I could connect better with not only my classmates but my professors who I could go talk with whenever I needed to," she said.

In her classroom at Poplar Springs Elementary School in the Meridian Public School District, Ali has spent her first semester as a fourth-grade math and science teacher trying to emulate her third-grade mentor.

"Mrs. LaPlaca was always very sweet and patient with me and would always ask about my day. She would encourage me, as I learned English, to not focus on my struggles or what I couldn't do, but look at my successes and the strides I'd made," Ali said. "She literally changed my life. When I think about the way she made me feel, I want to do that for my students. I want them to know and see on my face how excited I am to see them every day. They deserve that."

HOPPER TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF PHI KAPPA PHI



Missy Hopper, professor of instruction and special education at Mississippi State, has been named president of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines.

Hopper's role as president follows her two-year term as president-elect, which came to a close at the society's Biennial Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the fall of 2018.

During her 2018-2020 term as president, Hopper will lead the society's 12-person board of directors. She will assume the role of past president following the biennial term.

Since 2006, Hopper has been active in Phi Kappa Phi at the local, regional and national levels. After beginning in chapter leadership at MSU, Hopper served as Phi Kappa Phi's vice president of chapter development during the 2014-2016 biennium prior to being elected as the society's president-elect at the 2016 convention.

Hopper has also served on the society's Convention Planning Committee and chaired both the Chapter Development Committee and Dissertation Fellowship Criteria ad hoc Committee. She earlier served as south central regional vice president and as a member of the Chapter Criteria Task Force.

Hopper received her bachelor's degree in liberal arts from MSU, her master's in curriculum and instruction and education specialist degree in reading education from University of Memphis, and her Ph.D. in holistic teaching and learning from the University of Tennessee.

Founded in 1897, Phi Kappa Phi awards nearly \$1 million each year to outstanding students and members through graduate fellowships, study abroad grants, member and chapter awards, and grants for local, national and international literacy initiatives.

Membership is by invitation only to the top 10 percent of seniors and graduate students and 7.5 percent of juniors. Faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction also qualify. Some of the organization's notable members include former President Jimmy Carter, retired NASA astronaut Wendy Lawrence, novelist and Mississippi State alumnus John Grisham and YouTube co-founder Chad Hurley.

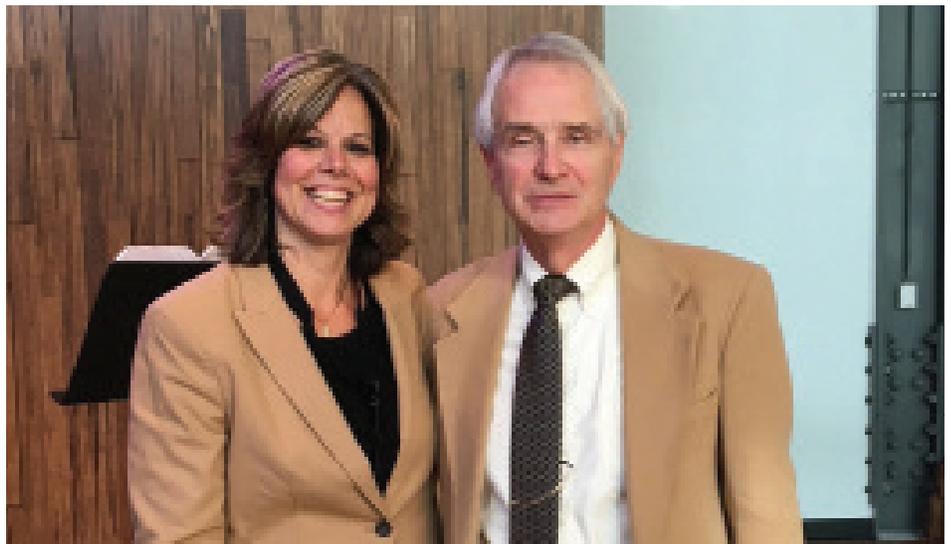
FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: SHERI FALCONE

Mississippi State Department of Music Instructor Sheri Falcone knew from a young age that she always needed some type of music in her life. For the Syracuse, New York native, one of her first memories of someone playing an instrument was listening to a student play the clarinet while attending a concert at a school for the deaf and hard of hearing. Falcone, who is not deaf or hard of hearing, but whose parents are, has always been intertwined with the deaf community.

“When I went out to the school for the deaf, I saw a deaf band program and I was floored by it. A little girl played ‘Mary had a Little Lamb’ on clarinet and I said, ‘Mom, Dad, that’s the instrument that I want to play,” Falcone explained.

Her parents purchased a clarinet and became her biggest supporters, attending every fourth through 12th grade band concert continuing their encouragement once she became a musician in college. Falcone’s love and passion for music also was influenced by her teachers. In community college, while she was taking a clarinet course for non-majors, she decided to change paths from pre-medicine to music. She fondly remembers approaching her clarinet teacher at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, New York, to tell him she had decided to be a clarinet major. Dr. David Abrams informed her that she’d have to have a new clarinet to pursue her dream, and once her parents had bought a new one, she was ready to work—and work she did.

Now in her 19th year of teaching in MSU’s Department of Music, Falcone directs several ensembles and quartets for both saxophone and clarinet. The saxophone quartet was invited to the Mississippi University for Women to perform at the Mid-South Chapter of the National Association of Composers USA in the fall of 2018.



“It was a big deal for them to perform a piece by a composer that’s local and in front of composers from around the Midsouth,” Falcone explained. “It was a little nerve-wracking, but they played very well. I couldn’t be more pleased.”

When asked if she had any plans to retire, Falcone explained that she didn’t stay in one place for 19 years without “absolutely loving it.” In her position, she has the opportunity to collaborate with different departments on research, and because she teaches a lot of different majors she gets to interact with a number of students that many faculty might not.

“Words can’t really explain it,” she said. “Let’s just put it this way: I really love it here.”

Her ensembles and teaching career at MSU aren’t the only things she cherishes. In fall 2018 she was invited to play, alongside one of her former professors, at her alma mater Onondaga Community College, as part of the music department’s music day. Playing with her former professors had always been one of Falcone’s goals.

“I got to talk a little bit about myself and being inspired by my teachers there,” Falcone said. “I also wanted the kids to know it took me a long time to get where I am, but that they can do it too and should follow their dream wherever it may be.” ●

AFTER 23 YEARS, STARKVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT VETERAN CONTINUES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When asked what the key is to being a successful administrator, Dr. Bob Fuller believes that it's "being naïve enough to think you can make a difference because if you believe you can—even in one student's life—then you just might do it."



Early in his career, Fuller took his own advice, which led him from the classroom to middle school administration to helping develop a new partnership between the Starkville Oktibbeha County Consolidated School District and Mississippi State University.

Fuller began his teaching career as an industrial arts teacher at what is now the Millsaps Career and Technology Center in the SOCS. After a few years, he felt his calling was to help a larger group of students and he went back to school at Mississippi State to earn a master's in school counseling. Becoming qualified to become a school administrator, he then was named vice principal at Armstrong Middle School in the SOCS, eventually retiring from AMS.

On his decision to become an AMS administrator, Fuller explained that while he loved teaching and being a counselor at the Millsaps Center, he wanted to work with more students decided middle schoolers were a good choice.

"I had never had any experience in middle school and had taught mostly ninth graders and a few 10th graders. It was a learning curve for me to work with seventh and eighth graders because they are different from ninth and 10th graders. I absolutely loved it. I think I understood them and, hopefully, they understood me as well."

A 23-year veteran of the SOCS, Fuller is now the coordinator of the district's Partnership School at Mississippi State, a role he decided to pursue after learning more about the new, collaborative education effort that will serve all sixth and seventh graders.

Fuller said, "Middle school is a unique time for students. They're venturing out, becoming more social, and trying to discover themselves. It's a huge transition, so it's important that as educators we provide a safety net for them."

"We've got to understand, support, and give them opportunities to branch out, but also catch them when things don't go their way. Hopefully, we've created a school that meets the needs of the kids and the community," he explained.

Fuller received his bachelor's in industrial education, master's in counselor education and Ph.D. in elementary, middle and secondary education administration all from Mississippi State. A Winston County native, Fuller has three daughters who attend the SOCS. ●



*Student Association
president finds her
place at MSU*



For Meridian native Mayah Emerson, choosing Mississippi State wasn't a hard decision. In fact, she'll tell anyone who will listen that it was her only choice.

"Mississippi State was the only place that I actually finished my application," Emerson said, smiling. "I knew I wanted to go to college here, and I've enjoyed every minute since."

Looking back on her application process, she admits that applying to only one school wasn't the best idea, but even if she was to do it all over again she'd still choose Mississippi State.

"I'll be the first in my family to graduate with a four-year degree. It wasn't just my decision, but a family decision. My entire family was comfortable with MSU, so the transition easier," said the senior educational psychology major.

One event that aided her in her transition to MSU was the 2015 College Ready program that gives incoming freshmen a head start. A living and learning community, it's designed to give first-year students a boost as they begin college courses, adjust to living in residence halls, and become familiar with campus.

During the spring semester of her junior year, Emerson was elected MSU Student Association president for the 2018-2019 academic year, and this was something she never thought she'd end up achieving. As a first-year student in 2015, her goals were straightforward. She came to the university wanting to have a good college experience, one that centered on obtaining a degree and doing what she needed to be successful. She knew she would simply be happy surrounded by the friends and memories she would make.

"If you had told me that I would run for SA president when I was a freshman, I would have thought you were insane. I didn't really have those aspirations when I first got here," Emerson added.

After running for Senate during her freshman year and in her words "losing horribly," she was offered a vacant seat on the SA Senate by then-vice president Roxie Raven.

Deciding to run for president three years later was a hard one for Emerson. She explained that she knew deep down she wanted to run, but was terrified she might lose and was unsure if she would do a good job. After putting much

thought into running, she knew she would love being SA president and that serving the student body was really where her heart was.

"Finally, I decided to just go for it. It's really crazy looking back, but I'm really glad I did," she said.

She explained that the experience taught her so much and has prepared her for life after graduation from Mississippi State, adding that involvement with the Student Association puts students into spaces with people they might not usually encounter day-to-day while in college. Personally, she's noticed that she's learned to respect people's differences and to be more of a listener than a talker.

"Mississippi State has taught me in the classroom, and running for president has taught me not to underestimate myself," said Emerson. "Mississippi is always the underdog, and I think I came here not knowing the things I was capable of. It takes hard work, but I've really learned not to underestimate what I can do."

She continued, "I played teacher when I was little. I decorated my classroom. I took worksheets home from elementary school. I've always sort of known that education was my field, but I've also always known that the classroom wasn't necessarily where I wanted to be. With educational psychology, I read the description and thought 'this is perfect.'"

After graduating this spring, Emerson wants to pursue a graduate degree in education policy. She believes it's important to understand how the public education system and all other systems of government work together. With two degrees, she hopes she will be able to influence policy, bring positive change to Mississippi's classrooms, and help teachers lead the way for the next generation of Bulldogs—maybe even the next SA president.

"I would just like to say thank you to the College of Education and Mississippi State for allowing students from all over to benefit from the opportunities that we have here," she said. "I think that no matter what you look like and no matter where you come from, if you are willing to work hard and be open-minded your opportunities are endless at Mississippi State. I'm extremely appreciative of that." ●

"If you had told me that I would run for SA president when I was a freshman, I would have thought you were insane. I didn't really have those aspirations when I first got here." ~Mayah Emerson

IHL Associate Commissioner honored as Alumni Fellow



When Dr. Susan Lee entered an elementary classroom in Grenada with a freshly minted degree from Mississippi State University in hand, little did she know that it was the beginning of a career. Devoted to education for more than 45 years and impacting every classroom across the state, Dr. Lee has served in a variety of roles with different responsibilities, and her steadfast commitment to improving educational outcomes for children has never wavered.

Dr. Lee's commitment and accomplishments were recently recognized by her alma mater as a member of the 2018 class of MSU Alumni Fellows. Sponsored and organized by the MSU Alumni Association, the Alumni Fellows program recognizes and brings graduates of distinction back to the university each year to showcase their talents and inspire and advise current students.

"Graduating from Mississippi State University fulfilled my dream to become a

teacher. Being acknowledged for the privilege of working with students of all ages is such an honor," said Dr. Lee. "MSU prepared me well for a career to teach and to [hopefully] inspire the future citizens of Mississippi. I was humbled to be selected with such an outstanding group of Alumni Fellows."

The Alumni Association works with the eight academic colleges to bring these distinguished graduates back to campus. There were nine honorees in this year's class of Alumni Fellows, carrying the title for life.

"The College of Education at Mississippi State is extremely proud to count Dr. Susan Lee among our outstanding graduates," said Dr. Richard Blackbourn, dean of the MSU College of Education. Her impact on education in our state, through both broad and specific experiences, is immeasurable. In characterizing Susan's leadership behavior, I would cite her strong human skills and her respect for those with differing perspectives. These attributes have served

her well in the various positions she has occupied and have resonated with the many constituents that she has interacted with.”

A resident of Madison, Dr. Lee serves as associate commissioner for academic and student affairs for the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. In this role, she serves as the university system chief academic and student affairs officer, providing leadership for the development, interpretation and implementation of all policies related to academic and student affairs at the state’s eight public universities.

“Dr. Lee is an asset to the university system,” said Dr. Alfred Rankins Jr., commissioner of higher education. “Her leadership helps ensure all of our universities provide students with the academic programs, extracurricular experiences and support services needed to thrive in the classroom and beyond. This is a well-deserved recognition.”

Dr. Lee works closely with the system provosts, vice presidents of academic affairs, and vice presidents of student affairs on the university campuses and also works with leaders of other segments of higher education in Mississippi and across the nation. She also serves as the liaison to the Mississippi Department of Education in all matters related to the state’s 15 teacher preparation programs; director for the Title III-Part A, alternate route teacher preparation programs; director of the Higher Education Leadership Team for Post-Secondary

Engagement; and in other key programs that impact post-secondary institutions.

Prior to her current IHL position, Dr. Lee served as director of academic affairs and director of P-16 Initiatives at IHL. Before joining IHL in 2007, Dr. Lee worked at Delta State University as director of field experiences, coordinator of technology for the College of Education and adjunct professor for the Education Leadership Program.

Other work experiences include serving as director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Delta State; technology coordinator and elementary and secondary school teacher in the Indianola School District; private piano instructor at Indianola Academy; and elementary school teacher in the Grenada School District.

In addition to a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Mississippi State, Dr. Lee also holds a master’s degree in curriculum and supervision, an educational specialist degree in leadership and administration, and a doctorate of professional studies with an emphasis in university administration, all from Delta State. She is a native of Greenwood.

Professional memberships and awards include Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi, the National Scholars Honor Society, American Association of University Women, William J. Fulbright Scholar, Mississippi Teacher Fellowship Program Scholar, and Mississippi’s 50 Exemplary Teachers. ●





Tennessee couple establishes College of Education scholarship in daughter's honor

Growing up in Franklin, Tennessee, Sydney Robbins' parents claim there isn't a time they can recall when their daughter didn't want to be a teacher.

"Even as a young child, she had a little school room set up in our bonus room. Her older brother, any of his friends, family, and anyone she could drag up there were her students," said her father, Mark. "As she got older the school room upstairs got more and more sophisticated with easels and cubbies. That was always her thing."

As Sydney got older, her parents even tried to talk to her about exploring other careers to make sure she was aware of her options. However, every career aptitude test she took in high school came back stating that she should be a teacher.

"It was her passion," her mother, Lisa, added.

Not only did Sydney have a heart for teaching, she had a heart for helping others.

"Some of the stories that we're hearing about her are about little things. She did acts of kindness, and it almost seemed that the more someone was at a disadvantage in one way or another, the more she tried to reach out. That was always just something that was so special about her," explained Mark.

That helpful spirit was what led her to fine-tune her future career and earn her bachelor's

degree in educational psychology with a minor in speech therapy. The next step was to get into graduate school and become a speech therapist.

Like every young person, Sydney knew she needed to find out who she was, and college was the best place to start. While she could continue at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Sydney, like so many who grow up near a university, felt that all of her classmates were going to UT. She knew she wanted a different experience, one where the only person she knew when she stepped on campus for the first time was herself. First, however, she wanted to make sure her parents supported her decision.

"She came to us when she was in high school and asked, 'Are you going to be mad at me if I don't want to go to UT?' We told her absolutely not," Lisa said.

Sydney began her college search, looking at both Mississippi State and the University of Mississippi, and ultimately deciding she wanted to be a Bulldog.

"We had great comfort knowing that she was at Mississippi State," said Mark. "Bad things can happen anywhere, of course, but we just always had a sense of security about Starkville."

According to her parents, Sydney loved every minute at Mississippi State. She was a member



of Chi Omega, making friends there and outside the Greek system. Mark and Lisa knew their daughter was brave to choose a college four and a half hours away from anyone she knew, but they put their worries aside and encouraged her to reach for whatever she wanted in life.

Oftentimes, though, they were concerned for Sydney's health. When she was two years old, she was diagnosed with rhabdomyolysis, a serious syndrome that results from a rapid breakdown of muscle tissue.

After moving Sydney to MSU in 2014, her mother said, "It was very hard for me, especially, to get in the car and roll away. I worried greatly about her, but in that next breath, I also wanted her to be able to experience the things my husband and I had experienced," explained Lisa. "She had a great drive and determination to go to school, get an education, make friends and be in a sorority. I had to let her go and do that. There was no way I could put her in a bubble."

Even with rhabdomyolysis, Sydney lived big. She was a competitive cheerleader throughout her school days, cheering at football games and competitions. Both her mother and father agree that she was wise beyond her years. She never wanted anyone to treat her like she was fragile or let her condition get in the way of living her life, a life that included traveling to Africa on a mission trip.

"She came to us and said, 'I'm going to go to Africa. I flipped out and said, 'Oh no, you're not,'" said Lisa, recalling the memory. "But she

was determined to go, and she wore us down."

To experience episodes of rhabdomyolysis, a person needs to be born with the genetic predisposition that sits dormant until something triggers the first episode. A person could go a lifetime and never experience a trigger, but it can happen at any time, at any age. For most with the syndrome's genetic predisposition, exercise or a muscle trauma experienced in an accident is usually the cause for rhabdomyolysis. In Sydney's case, however, doctors couldn't pinpoint what caused hers. They began at the age of two and a half, and until she was five and a half she had only four incidents. Then it took 16 years, December of 2016, for a flareup to occur with another one following in the fall of 2018. That episode was so severe it proved too much for her heart, and on Dec. 28, 2018, Sydney Elizabeth Robbins died.

Earlier that year after graduation from MSU, she went to work at Poplar Grove Middle School in her hometown where she was an aide to a student with autism. The student, who was also non-verbal, immediately connected with Sydney, a personal confirmation that being employed in a school system and working with students who have special needs was what she was meant to do.

Even after her death, Sydney's spirit still shines. During her memorial service, her parents asked friends and family to write on cards their favorite memories of Sydney. While they haven't yet read them all, many were written by the

friends she made at Mississippi State who shared a similar memory: one of Sydney coming up to them and introducing herself with a simple “My name is Sydney Robbins. I don’t know anyone here. Do you want to be my friend?” Several of the cards began with how beautiful and meaningful Sydney’s friendship was.

That simple question earned Sydney countless friends in her sorority, Chi Omega, and beyond. Stories like these only confirmed what Mark and Lisa already knew about their daughter—that she was kind and funny, went out of her way to help others, and that she blazed her own trail even if it might have seemed frightening at the time. Also, they knew she would be remembered by many, many people.

Recently, Mark and Lisa attended the wedding of one of Sydney’s closest college friends. Throughout the weekend, Sydney’s friends honored her in numerous ways—hanging up her bridesmaid’s dress in the bride’s dressing room and the bride walking down the aisle carrying two bouquets, the bridal one with a small picture and charm of Sydney’s and one meant for Sydney to carry that was presented by the bride to Lisa. At the rehearsal dinner while a microphone was passed around, it was clear that the bridal party missed her.

“We had just such a great opportunity to really have quality conversations with so many of Sydney’s friends that we were unable to have at the time in October or early November,” explained Mark. “There were some tears and it was hard, but it was wonderful as well. It was almost like another visitation but this time it was a happy, fun

event. We were so impressed with the group of friends that she had and their parents.”

After her death, someone presented the idea of setting up a GoFundMe account for the family. At first, the Robbins weren’t entirely comfortable with the idea, but after talking to some close friends they agreed, realizing that so many people wanted to reach out and do something to express their love for Sydney. As the weeks went by the account grew rapidly, and Mark and Lisa knew they needed to decide what to do with the money that would honor Sydney.

“Sydney would be thrilled that this money would be to help people,” said Mark.

Sydney’s scholarship will be available for students in the College of Education, but will not have the restriction of being only for in-state or out-of-state students. For students to receive the scholarship, they must have some financial need. The Robbins’ hope is that it will be finalized and available to students this fall semester. At the end of each year, a portion of the money the scholarship earns will go back into the principal so more students will receive it as it grows. This means that as the years go by, more and more students can earn a degree and help the world—even if it’s just a small corner of it. It’s what Sydney did and hoped others would do.

Her mother remembered, “Her pediatrician told me, ‘Lisa, listen, you’ve got to let Sydney live her life.’”

And she did. As short as her life was Sydney lived it to the fullest, and thanks in part to the scholarship that bears her name, a piece of that life will live on forever at Mississippi State. ●





Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations sponsors study abroad trip

Dr. Ty Abernathy, associate research professor in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations led a study abroad trip to Vienna, Austria and Prague, Czech Republic in May of 2018. The cross-listed and split-level educational psychology and psychology special topics course was titled “An Exploration of the European Foundations in Psychology, Psychiatry, and Mental Health” and included 19 undergraduate and graduate students. The trip was the first traditional group, study abroad program in the MSU College of

Education. The group visited and toured the major sites in both cities including the Vienna City Center, Vienna City Hall (Rathaus), University of Vienna, Sigmund Freud Museum (including his apartment and practice where Psychoanalysis theory and therapy began), Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens, Old Town Square, Prague Castle, Museum of the Senses, Petrin Tower and Park, and Vltava River. For pictures and more information visit the group’s Facebook page - Mississippi State: Vienna/Prague Trip Summer 2018 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/194914711116890/>. ●



L-R: President Keenum, Allison Moore, Kasia Gallo, Daniel Gadke, Dean Blackburn and Vice President Shaw

UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES RESEARCH SUCCESS WITH ANNUAL BANQUET

More than 50 Mississippi State students, faculty and staff were 2018 selections for exceptional research and leadership honors.

MSU President Mark E. Keenum welcomed honorees, their guests and senior administrators to a celebration of the university’s research achievements during a spring 2018 campus awards luncheon in the Hunter Henry Center’s Hal and Linda Parker Ballroom.

The annual research awards program honors individuals who contribute significantly to MSU’s mission of research. In addition to faculty, it recognizes and rewards students and staff for accomplishments and creative endeavors, as well as for increasing

awareness of the university’s many research programs and capabilities.

“The Annual Research Awards Banquet is a highlight of the academic year at Mississippi State, and it showcases the extraordinary diversity of our research portfolio,” said David Shaw, the university’s vice president for research and economic development.

Keenum praised them for their work and far-reaching impact in the state, the nation and globally, noting that each one is a “truly outstanding contributor.”

The College of Education 2018 winners included: Daniel L. Gadke, faculty; Latara Arterberry, research support; Kasia Gallo, graduate student; and Allison Moore, undergraduate student. ●

MSU College of Education honors student research at annual forum

MSU's College of Education hosted Dr. Brent Ruby, director of the Center for Work, Physiology and Exercise Metabolism at the University of Montana, as the keynote speaker for the college's 11th annual research forum.

Ruby received his Ph.D. in exercise science from the University of New Mexico and serves as the director of the Human Performance Laboratory at the University of Montana. Ruby and the research staff at Montana WPEM, as it is also known, work to facilitate a better understanding of applied human physiology using aggressive laboratory and field study designs. Through his research success and application of the research to real life, Ruby has garnered the respect of faculty, those in military service, civilians at the U.S. Department of Defense, the wildland fire community, and undergraduate and graduate students. His work has a wide-ranging spectrum, from simple undergraduate projects to in-depth research designs with national and international colleagues. During the research forum, Ruby spoke on "Calibrating Direction in an Era of Moving Targets."

In addition to the keynote speaker, the forum showcased student percussion performances directed by Jason Baker and featuring David Jenkins and Grace McCommon on marimba. Dr. Richard Blackbourn, dean of the College of Education, also spoke on "Conducting Meaningful Research: Lessons from Experience, Colleagues and the Wizard of Oz." Two students also had the opportunity to present their research. Leah Boyd presented her work titled "Chopin's Unsung Opera: The Fantaisie-Impromptu's Inspirations in Song" and Jalen Jackson spoke on "Mozart's Theme and Variation in the American Style."

More than 250 participants attended the research forum, and approximately 50 undergraduate and graduate students entered the poster session. Three undergraduate and three graduate



L-R: Associate Dean Jayroe, Kimberly Ball, Nashedra Barry, Elizabeth Struna and Dean Blackbourn



Quigley



Westbrook



Mathis

students conducted faculty-guided research projects throughout the 2017-2018 academic year and received awards. These students were:

Undergraduates

FIRST – Mitchell Quigley, a kinesiology major from Southaven. His project "Ankle Kinematics During Unilateral Landings on a Tilted Surface: Simulating the Mechanism" was completed under the guidance of Dr. Adam Knight.

SECOND – Margy Westbrook, a kinesiology major from Oakland, Tennessee. Her project "Effect of Exogenous Ketone Salts on Oxidative Stress and Cardiovascular Responses in Fireflies" was completed under the guidance of Dr. Matt McAllister.

THIRD – Aaron Mathis, a kinesiology major from Texarkana, Texas. His project "Physical Activity and Falls in Adults with Intellectual Disabilities" was completed under the guidance of

Dr. Stamatis Agiovlasis.

Graduates

FIRST – Kimberly Ball, an instructional systems and workforce development major from Starkville. Her project "An Investigation into Persistence and Non-Persistence of Second and Third Year Engineering Students" was completed under the guidance of Dr. Mabel Okojie.

SECOND – Nashedra Barry, an educational psychology major from Columbus. Her project "Effects of Phrase Cued Text Lessons on Reading Fluency and Comprehension in Elementary School Children" was completed under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Gadke.

THIRD – Elizabeth Struna, an educational psychology major from Granville, Illinois. Her project "Using Manipulatives to Teach Quantity

Discrimination to a Child with Autism” was completed under the guidance of Dr. Daniel Gadke.

Teresa Jayroe, associate dean, recognized the research committee for their hard work preparing for the forum. The research committee includes:

Dr. Teresa Jayroe, Associate Dean of Research

Dr. Mitzy Johnson, Assistant Dean

Dr. JoAnne Beriswill, Instructional Systems & Workforce Development

Dr. Jennifer Cmar, National Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision

Ms. Janie Cirlot-New, T.K. Martin Center

Ms. Theresa Hall-Brown, America Reads Mississippi

Dr. Missy Hopper, Curriculum, Instruction, & Special Education

Dr. Beth Jackson, MS Writing/Thinking Institute

Dr. Stephanie King, Educational Leadership

Dr. Rebecca Robichaux-Davis, Curriculum, Instruction, & Special Education

Dr. Ryan Ross, Music

Dr. Tina Scholtes, World Class Teaching Program

Dr. JohnEric Smith, Kinesiology

Dr. Kasee Stratton-Gadke, Counseling, Educational Psychology & Foundations

Dr. Ben Wax, Meridian Division of Education

Dr. Glenn McGee, Director of the Center for Educational Partnerships

Ms. Christa King, Program Manager, Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program

Ms. Jenny Hartness, Database Administrator

Ms. Lori Staggs, Contracts & Grant Specialist

KINESIOLOGY ASSISTANT PROFESSOR HELPS ESTABLISH DEPARTMENT'S NEUROMECHANICS LAB

Ask Harish Chander what he is most proud of professionally as an assistant professor, and he immediately explains what research—and its practical application—mean to him.

“Research isn’t just about the publication of academic papers or chapters in a book; it’s about constantly improving knowledge and building upon what you learn every day,” Chander said. “That’s what we are doing at the Mississippi State neuromechanics laboratory in the Department of Kinesiology.”

A native of India, Chander went to physical therapy school, but after practicing for a few years he decided to make a change. This led him to a master’s degree and then a doctoral program at the University of Mississippi.

“Very quickly, I realized that while I enjoyed practicing physical therapy, my heart really lies with research. In research, not only can I use my knowledge of physical therapy, but I also can continue to develop and discover new things that can help improve the lives of firefighters, military personnel, and assembly line workers,” Chander said.

Transitioning to Starkville was natural for him and his wife, Jay. They had grown to love college towns, and Starkville was the perfect size. Since joining Mississippi State’s faculty in 2014, Chander has helped launch and lead the university’s neuromechanics lab.

In addition to his academic credentials, Chander is a member of the American Society of Biomechanics, Gait and Clinical Movement Analysis Society, International Council of Motor Sports, South-East American College of Sports Medicine, and an American Red Cross certified CPR/AED instructor.

Now the lab’s co-director, Chander’s research focuses on biomechanics and a range of subjects from human factors and ergonomics to the impact of footwear on human balance and gait. His projects aim to create safer and more efficient work environments for those who have physically strenuous jobs. His research has been funded by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, National Science Foundation and the NSF I-Corps program, with industry research support from PACCAR Engine Company. Along with MSU’s Industrial Systems Engineering Department, he also has a pending provisional patent for the collaborative invention titled, “Ankle Complex Wearable for Kinematic and Kinetic Movement Data Capture and Assessment.” This patent is based on their funded NSF-Partnership for Innovation research project that utilizes soft robotic stretch sensors to detect foot and ankle human movement during various athletic training and tasks.

“When I first came here, the department was in the process of converting a classroom into what is now the neuromechanics lab. I got to help create the lab, and now that it has been running for four years, my dream is to make it increasingly more competitive,” Chander said. “I want other professionals to visit Mississippi State to see how we do things, and we are well on our way to achieving that.” ●



KINESIOLOGY PROFESSOR AWARDED INAUGURAL EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD WITH TAI CHI PROJECT



Mississippi State has recognized a Department of Kinesiology project as one of the four major outreach efforts receiving the university's inaugural Excellence in Community Engagement Awards. "Bringing Tai Chi to Mississippi's Aging Population for Healthy Body and Positive Emotion" is the name of the award-winning project.

The award includes \$5,000 to further community engagement within MSU's trifold mission of teaching, research and service and honors examples of successful involvement of faculty, staff and students. Sponsors include the offices of the Provost and Executive Vice President and Vice President for Research and Economic Development, MSU Extension and the Center for Community-Engaged Learning. Selected from more than 30 nominations, the Department of Kinesiology's project earned its award in the community-engaged service category.

Previous research indicates that Tai Chi, a traditional Chinese martial-art-type of exercise, can reduce falls—a major cause of injury among the elderly—along with improving cardiovascular function, muscle strength,

flexibility and mental health in older adults. Tai Chi is a low-intensity, slow-motion exercise that has been studied in older adults. The MSU study involved 32 Trinity Place retirement home residents placed into two groups, with one group participating in Tai Chi exercises and the other playing Bingo.

AFTER EIGHT WEEKS, THE PRELIMINARY DATA SHOWED THAT ENDURANCE IMPROVED IN BOTH GROUPS, THOUGH HAND-EYE COORDINATION SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED FOR THOSE WHO PERFORMED TAI CHI, BUT NOT FOR THOSE WHO PLAYED BINGO.

"Aging induces deterioration in fine and gross motor function which helps us complete activities of daily living. Dexterity, depth perception, comprehension, proprioception, balance, and locomotion are all factors that make up motor function," explained Zhujun Pan, assistant professor of kinesiology. "However, if any of these factors are compromised, there may be problems in

L-R: Min Huang of UMMC Physical Therapy, Zhujun Pan of MSU and right is MSU kinesiology department head Stanley Brown.

completing simple everyday tasks, such as self-dressing, self-feeding, ambulating, or grooming, all of which promote independence for the older adult population."

After eight weeks, the preliminary data showed that endurance improved in both groups, though hand-eye coordination significantly improved for those who performed Tai Chi, but not for those who played Bingo.

Pan said the research concludes that this exercise can give older adults higher levels of endurance, manual dexterity and strength. Findings were published in the journal *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* and presented at the Southeast Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine 2018 conference, among other outlets. ●



**THE JOURNEY
ISN'T OVER.**

GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

COUNSELING, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, & FOUNDATIONS

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Educational Psychology MS
Education EDS
Educational Psychology PHD
PHD in Counselor Education & Student Counseling
PHD in Student Counseling & Personnel Services

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Education EDS
Elementary Education MS
Secondary Education MS
Secondary Teacher Alt Route MATS
Special Education Alt Route MATX
Special Education MS

INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEMS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Education EDS
Instructional Technology MSIT
Technology MS

KINESIOLOGY

Kinesiology MS
Kinesiology PHD

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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GERTRUDE C. FORD FOUNDATION GIFT ASSISTS MSU AUTISM CLINIC

Mississippi State University received support from the Ridgeland-based Gertrude C. Ford Foundation for autism and developmental disabilities research and treatment services. Specifically, a gift of \$125,000 makes possible renovated facilities and expanded services for more clients of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic in MSU's College of Education.

"Mississippi State University is committed to taking a leadership role in addressing autism and developmental disabilities by changing the lives of children and families, and a partnership with the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation will advance our efforts," said MSU President Mark E. Keenum. "We are grateful for the foundation's confidence in our level of expertise in this area and their willingness to help us train the next generation of mental health practitioners who can combat this critical need in our state."

A portion of the gift is helping the clinic expand from its existing space to a newly renovated location on Blackjack Road, making possible services for more clients with additional treatment space. The ADDC is the flagship clinic of the School Psychology Services Center operated by the school psychology faculty through the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations. The clinic's mission is to provide high quality services to the community at little or no cost, train future professionals, and engage in research to enhance the field.

Daniel L. Gadke, associate professor of school psychology and interim head of the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Foundations, founded the ADDC after joining the MSU faculty in 2013. He also serves as center director. The ADDC is primarily funded year to year

through grants, and it is one of the only comprehensive pediatric psychological service centers in north Mississippi.

The ADDC began with only five clients, but now serves 100 to 150 people weekly, the majority of which are community children. Clients range in age from birth through adult, and includes about 40 MSU degree-seeking students who have autism. The ADDC works with MSU Disability Support Services

"IN THE FUTURE, WE HOPE TO HAVE MORE BOOTS ON THE GROUND IN THE FORM OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTS SUPPORTING OUR WORK. GRADUATE STUDENTS ARE PURSUING THEIR PH.D.'S OR EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST DEGREES, AND THEIR WORK IS CRUCIAL TO THE OPERATION OF THE ADDC." ~ DANIEL GADKE

to offer the Autism Liaisons program.

"Although there are other clinics at college campuses around the country, we operate on a fairly large scale as a training and research facility. We individualize our approach and assist case by case with research-based integrity," said Gadke. "Intervention for community children and work with vocational students is critical, and our goal is to help each person be as autonomous as possible. And support from the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation will help further our work through expanded services for all."

The ADDC offers a variety of services for those in pre-k to emerging

adults including, individual services including behavior concerns, academic skills and vocational skills training, social skills groups and assessment services.

This fall the clinic began with 70 clients. Once those were scheduled for the semester, the ADDC started taking those on their waitlist. The clinic, which does not charge for most of its services, with the exception of assessment services, is grant-funded.

In the surrounding community, the ADDC serves 100-150 clients, not including their autism liaison services, a program in partnership with Disability Support Services tailored towards degree-seeking MSU students who identify as having autism. Through that partnership, they have a group of graduate students known as autism liaisons dedicated to serving the students at Mississippi State. They meet on an as-needed basis or up to weekly to help them navigate college.

A true hub of cross-campus collaboration and service for people with developmental disabilities, the clinic is not only run by graduate students under the supervision of professors in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations, but undergraduates from any major can volunteer their time in the clinic.

"We get a host of undergrad volunteers from engineering, kinesiology, psychology, business from all over really," Gadke said. "We'll have students from other colleges say 'I have a cousin with autism, and I've always wanted to know what it was like to help and work with somebody. Can I volunteer at the clinic?' Undergrads come in, they work in the clinic every single week with a grad student."

Professors involved with the clinic also give professional and community



trainings throughout the state on autism, behavior, academics and disabilities.

Along with school psychology faculty, eight graduate assistants pursuing doctoral degrees in school psychology help operate the clinic, and their work is part of their direct training and education.

“In the future, we hope to have more boots on the ground in the form of graduate assistants supporting our work,” Gadke said. “Graduate students are pursuing their Ph.D.’s or educational specialist degrees, and their work is crucial to the operation of the ADDC.”

With multi-year support, the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation will help the clinic continue to meet the needs of the area.

“The mission of the ADDC aligns with our foundation, and we are pleased to further the important work of the clinic and help extend the reach of services for increasing numbers of deserving clients,” said John Lewis, vice president and treasurer of the board of directors for the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation.

The Gertrude C. Ford Foundation furthers the legacy of the organization’s late namesake. Since 1998 the non-profit organization has supported religious, charitable, scientific, literary and educational activities, and the humane treatment of animals. Earlier support from the foundation helped make possible the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation Library for MSU’s School of Architecture. The library is located in the Jackson Design Center in the state’s capital city, where MSU architecture students complete their final year of study. ●



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY'S AMERICA READS – MISSISSIPPI (AMERICORPS) PROGRAM CONTINUES TO HELP STUDENTS STATEWIDE

This fall, the Mississippi State University region of the America Reads – Mississippi (AmeriCorps) program will commemorate the program's 20th year of service, helping students statewide.

Established in 1998, America Reads-Mississippi (ARM) is an AmeriCorps program administered through the Academic Affairs Office of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), and today includes over 80 members throughout three regions in the state.

"IHL saw a need for greater access to higher education and the opportunity through AmeriCorps to make it available, and wrote the first grant for the program," said Theresa Hall-Brown, Regional Coordinator for ARM-MSU. "Research says that if a child can't read by third grade, then they're more likely to become high school dropouts. The reasons for the program's implementation were two-fold; to help boost students' reading scores by adding a support person in the school that is trained to help with reading, and to increase access to higher education for Mississippians."

Members serve students based on their scores in school assessment and are placed statewide in schools, where they tutor students in grades K-3 in reading. Before Corps members are placed in the school districts, they go through a three day tutor training where they become familiar with the materials they use with their students. Before they can begin tutoring students, they must demonstrate effective implementation of the interventions.

ARM members can serve up to two years unless they serve as a team leader, which then allows them to serve for one additional year. Members serve as either a reduced-time member at 1200 hours or a full-time member at 1700 hours in the school. Members serve in the schools the majority of the day tutoring students and also assisting with classroom rotations. Other service activities include planning and implementing community service projects and volunteer recruitment. ●



Mississippi State's 2018 Diversity Award winners are EXPRESS Yourself! artist Candace Stephenson, pictured in front; back, from left, MSU Assistant Professor of Sociology Margaret A. Hagerman, EXPRESS Yourself! trackers Laurie Craig and Judy Duncan, David Clark (accepting on behalf of MSU graduate student Brittany Radford-Clark) and JP Abercrombie, MSU assistant athletic director for life skills and community engagement. MSU President Mark E. Keenum, right, congratulated the honorees during the awards ceremony.

MSU RECOGNIZES DIVERSITY AWARD WINNERS

Mississippi State honored a group of student, faculty and staff members Wednesday, April 4 for actions that enhance campus diversity.

University students, faculty, staff and team honorees received their respective 2018 Diversity Awards during a ceremony hosted by the MSU President's Commission on the Status of Minorities. The commission is led by committee chair Tracey Baham, associate director of MSU's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness.

"I believe that when we celebrate our strengths and work on improving our weaknesses we become better as a society," Baham said. "We all have unique aspects about ourselves and it is because of these unique perspectives that we can survive as a society."

EXPRESS Yourself! artists and trackers with MSU's T.K. Martin Center for Technology and Disability. The T. K. Martin Center's project EXPRESS Yourself! (EXperiencing Painting as Recreation & Express the Spirit within Yourself) uses the techniques of Artistic Realization Technologies to provide a means for Mississippians with the most severe disabilities to feel the power of self expression through art. The trackers being honored are Laurie Craig, a speech language pathologist at the T.K. Martin Center, and Judy Duncan, a case manager at the center. Both Craig and Duncan have served as trackers in the program for more than 10 years. The artists being honored include Amanda Williams and Candace Stephenson of Ackerman, Demetria Gilbert and Dustin Sudduth of Tupelo, Kendrell Davis of DeKalb, Mark S. Jones of Columbus, Monica Heard of Eupora and Shannon Herod of Columbus.

During Wednesday's ceremony, MSU President Mark E. Keenum thanked the honorees for what they have done to help make MSU a better place.

"Diversity empowers and enriches any institution, as well as the people in it," Keenum said. "Diversity allows people to come together and communicate when they might not otherwise come together. That communication replaces fear and prejudice with understanding and respect. That's what diversity does for any institution, and that's why it enriches any institution." ●



MSU's College of Education hosts first CHARGE family gathering

Seven families from around Mississippi took part in the College of Education's first-ever CHARGE Syndrome family gathering.

The gathering, held September 21 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Starkville, was the first of its kind for MSU's CHARGE Lab and wouldn't have been possible without a donation from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities. This event was also the first time many of the families with loved ones diagnosed with CHARGE Syndrome met.

"I've always wanted to do a family gathering in Mississippi. When the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation announced September 21st as a Day of Remembrance, I knew it was the perfect opportunity." Kasee Stratton-Gadke, director of MSU's Bulldog CHARGE Syndrome Research Lab, said.

During the gathering, Stratton-Gadke talked with the families about resources around the state that could benefit them and their children, but she stressed that because the CHARGE Syndrome community is so small, the most important reason for the gathering was the relationships that could be made there.

"Until you feel like someone else is going through the same situation, it can feel like you're isolated. So it's essential for families to know they aren't alone and that other families are going through a journey that is similar to their own. I want our families in Mississippi to know they just joined a large, supportive, extended family," Stratton-Gadke said.

CHARGE Syndrome refers to a specific set of congenital disabilities, medical problems and developmental issues that occurs in one in every 10,000-15,000 births. Most individuals with CHARGE have difficulty with hearing, vision and balance, and some have decreased cognitive and adaptive abilities.

Mississippi State University is home to one of only two labs in the nation conducting groundbreaking research on CHARGE syndrome. Students gain hands-on experience and knowledge about this complex condition while researching ways to improve the quality of life for those with CHARGE.

For more information about CHARGE syndrome and Mississippi State's CHARGE SYNDROME lab visit www.chargesyndrome.org and www.facebook.com/.



WORLD CLASS PROGRAM MANAGER

Her official title is program manager for MSU's World Class Teaching Program, but Christa King prefers to think of herself as a motivator for the motivators.

Since April, King has been putting her knowledge and passion for education to use every day in recruiting and mentoring teachers seeking National Board for Professional Teaching Certification. She enjoys working alongside WCTP Director Tina Scholtes, a four-time MSU graduate and board certified educator who King considers one of her greatest mentors. Housed in the university's College of Education, the WCTP was established through legislation in 1996.

"It's really nice to encourage and help teachers as they set goals and make decisions for their own professional plans," King said. "It goes back to that Mississippi State family concept—always knowing people are here to support you. People in different positions on campus have helped me, so it's rewarding to come to work each day and get to be that cheerleader for others."

King said teachers with at least three years of classroom experience are eligible to begin the national board certification process, which takes one to three years to complete. Along with providing up-to-date information about best teaching practices, King said this professional development opportunity can lead to a \$6,000 pay increase over five years. The process is rigorous, she admits, but it's well worth the work.

"I chose to pursue national board certification after my third year of teaching," said King, who taught for a total of 11 years in her hometown of Grenada and the Tupelo Public School District. "I stopped my master's process, became board certified and then finished my master's program. It was challenging at times, but I could see the benefits in the classroom personally and the impact it was having on the students."

King, who is pursuing an MSU doctorate in curriculum and instruction, is proud to note that Mississippi currently ranks fourth in the nation for its number of nationally board certified teachers. Research suggests that students whose teachers have earned their national board certification tend to perform better in the classroom, King said.

"I taught on campus for a while and held several different positions, but I always found myself going back to research I knew from the board process," she said. "It's really neat that MSU is on board with the World Class Teaching Program and supports this drive that teachers have to become board certified, which can help them better focus on each individual student."

King said she is grateful to be an employee and student at MSU, where learning and camaraderie are encouraged and celebrated.

"This is a special place with people who genuinely care and are looking out for the best interests of anyone with whom they come in contact," she said. "I think there's a need to be encouraged every day, and this is where I'm most comfortable." ●



MILLER JOINS MSU ANNUAL GIVING TEAM

The Mississippi State University Foundation welcomed Klaire Miller of Vicksburg as assistant director of annual giving.

Miller joins Georgia Carter, director, and Ally Walker, associate director, as a professional development team member for the MSU Office of Annual Giving. Through annual giving, donors are provided an avenue to support any area of the university including colleges, schools and programs.

Miller will oversee the Bulldog Calling Center that employs some 20 to 40 MSU students to make telephone solicitations year-round. Callers also update database records of alumni and friends. Mississippi State currently has more than 142,000 living alumni.

"Klaire is a great addition to the annual giving team and her experience will be invaluable here," said Carter. "I feel very lucky to have gained such an energetic, passionate and capable candidate to lead us in strengthening the efforts of the Bulldog Calling Center."

Miller holds a 2017 bachelor's degree in kinesiology from Mississippi State. She previously worked in MSU's life skills department, an NCAA-sponsored unit that bridges the gap between college and professional life for student athletes. Additionally, as a student, Miller interned with the Bulldog Club, MSU's athletic fundraising arm, and with Bulldog Suites, where she also served as an ambassador and floor captain.

"I am excited to be working with the MSU Foundation and look forward to sharing with friends and fellow alumni my love for this university. During my time on campus I have learned that being a Bulldog is a family affair, and at Mississippi State we take care of family," said Miller. "I am eager to bring new ideas to improve the annual giving experience." ●



Mississippi State University's College of Education announces new student ambassadors

Twenty-six students from throughout Mississippi, as well as Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and South Carolina have been selected as ambassadors of Mississippi State University's College of Education.

Representing all departments in the college, members of the College of Education Ambassadors serve as liaisons for the college's faculty and staff to students, prospective students, alumni and other constituents of the college.

The College of Education Ambassadors represent the college at events including Preview Days, Scholars Recognition Days, Fall Convocation and Academic Insight. Membership is open to all undergraduate students enrolled in the College of Education. To apply students must have a cumulative GPA of 2.5 and must serve at least two consecutive semesters. Ambassadors should be active participants in the college and have an appreciation for educational opportunities. College of Education Ambassadors must reapply every year.

This year's group includes (by hometown):

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA – Sarah Creagh Goings, a junior elementary education major.

BRANDON – Jordan Lloyd, a junior elementary education major.

BRANDON – Savannah Lowe, a sophomore secondary education major.

BRANDON – Leigh Trimm, a junior elementary education major.

BUCKATUNNA – Chelsea Alyse Everett, a sophomore information technology services major.

COLLINSVILLE – Matthew Miller, a freshman secondary education major.

FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE – Claire Hamblen, a sophomore elementary education major.

GERMANTOWN, TENNESSEE – Abbey Ragan, a junior elementary education major.

GOLDEN – Hillara Katelyn Summerford, a junior elementary education major.

GORDO, ALABAMA – Ginny Grace Gibbs, a sophomore elementary education major.

GORE SPRINGS – Maggie Worthy, a junior secondary education major.



GREENVILLE – Crista Alexis Martin, a junior elementary education major.

HAMILTON, ALABAMA – Lois Corinne Cobb, a junior kinesiology major.

HENDERSON, TENNESSEE – Claire Elizabeth McNatt, a junior special education major.

JACKSON – Mary Caroline Garrard, a junior educational psychology major.

LENA – Madeleine Bunyard, a senior educational psychology major.

MABEN – Jensen Reed, a sophomore elementary education major.

MADISON – Amber Nicole Young, a sophomore elementary education major.

MANNING, SOUTH CAROLINA – Laura Beth Thigpen, a junior elementary education major.

MILTON, GEORGIA – Meghan McGowan, a junior elementary education major.

MOBILE, ALABAMA – Emily Allen, a senior educational psychology major.

OLIVE BRANCH – Lauren Kate Hogan, a sophomore secondary education major.

OLIVE BRANCH – Celine Rena Sanko, a junior elementary education major.

PASCAGOULA – Ariana Rosado, a sophomore secondary education major.

STARKVILLE – Hannah Holtcamp, a freshman kinesiology major.

TISHOMINGO – Brandi Smith, a junior secondary education major.

For more information, contact College of Education Ambassador advisers Dr. Donna Shea or Tiffany Middleton at 662-325-2206. ●

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ENCOURAGES TEACHERS, STUDENTS TO BECOME CITIZEN SCIENTISTS



For the past several years Dr. Ryan Walker, an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education, has worked with the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont helping train teachers how to encourage their students to become citizen scientists.

“We have always relied on students. Citizen science has been a movement of the past 10 years or so, and in my work with the National Science Foundation, we’ve seen a huge increase recently,” Walker said.

The Institute at Tremont has a campus within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. There they offer extended field trips for mostly fifth through eighth graders, but also do high school and college groups extended stays. While these groups are in the park, they participate in citizen science projects, where they collect scientific data from around the national park. Walker got to know the people at the institute through his dissertation research on what the impact was of citizen science projects and how the schools incorporated this experience into their science curriculum. He realized that if they wanted to increase teachers’ impact on these students and their projects that the teachers needed to go through some type of training to make these experiences more impactful.

This led to the institute seek funding for an immersive one-year workshop with teachers from the school districts that board the Smoky Mountains National Park in addition to only accepting teachers from boarding school districts. All in all five projects like the one at the institute were funded around the U.S., but the one at the Institute at Tremont put teachers in the middle of developing the science project. During the year-long workshop, Walker and the institute staff helped teachers develop their own citizen science projects that used their students to collect the data.

These projects all had to be related to water as well as bordering the national park. Walker ended up selecting six schools that had access to water on their campuses. Teachers were able to develop their own research project and have their students work on them as long as they all used a nationally recognized database so scientists could use their data.

“We advise them on the protocols, like if you’re collecting water samples, what is the process for collecting a water sample that would make accurate data? Essentially, what we can do is as long as you have an established protocol that they agree to, you’re erasing any error because of the sheer volume of information that these students collect.” Walker explained.

During the workshop, one of the first things Walker wants to model is to get the teachers asking questions to their students. He explained that this usually works when students have a question the teachers, in turn, ask the students how would they go about finding the answer and guiding them through the process of how they would learn the answer to that question. Walker goes on to explain that the goal of this is for the teacher not just to be a dispenser of information, but to show students the process of learning. Once the workshops concluded Walker found the teachers had grown in confidence especially in their planning of science curriculum.

“We are looking into student impact, but right now we are just blown away with teacher impact and how it has influenced them. We’re hoping to see how that translates into the classroom.”

For more information about the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont visit www.gsmiit.org.



Assistant professor helps to improve STEM education in rural America

Dr. Yan Sun joined the ISWD family in 2018. She received her Ph.D. in Learning, Design, and Technology from Purdue University in 2013 and completed her post-doctoral research at Texas



A&M. While her move and transition to Mississippi State were smooth, Sun knew that she needed to find a way to get involved. She decided to become a member of the College of Education Faculty Council; a decision that has proved to be very helpful.

“We talk about what kinds of problems faculty members might have and organized a panel discussion on those problems to, hopefully, be able to answer those questions.”

Sun began serving on faculty council last semester becoming a part of the college community. Sun explained that it’s a great way to get her own questions answered while helping other faculty members. She also mentioned that the council is a good way for her to get to know people from other departments, and she hopes this will lead to research collaboration to examine how technology can be integrated to improve STEM teaching and learning, especially in rural schools. Not long after coming to Mississippi State, Sun published a book on the subject titled “Engaging STEM students from rural areas: Emerging research and opportunities.”

As she points out in her book, “The term ‘rural America’ is deceptively simple; it is simple in the sense that ‘rural’ seems perpetually associated with the mental images of sparsely populated areas with sprawling expanses of farmland and pasture, but it is deceptive because, with this single term, we are talking about 97% of the country’s land mass and home to about 60 million people. When it comes to rural education, this word ‘rural’ applies to more than 49,500 public elementary and secondary schools serving about 12 million students.”

Improving rural school STEM education with emerging technologies is one of the areas Sun will focus on in her future research and service.

“We want to engage the students with these new technologies, but we also want to show teachers how to integrate them into their classrooms. We want them to make learning, in general, more engaging and fun, but especially in STEM education.” ●

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FOUNDATIONS FINDS PLACE AT JOHNS HOPKINS

The moment Hallie Smith stepped on to campus she knew that Mississippi State University and the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology and Foundations was the place for her.

“Off all the programs I applied for and interviewed with, I felt a sense of peace and belonging when I visited the campus and interviewed with the faculty. Although it was the furthest from home, I felt that I would get the training and experience I needed not only with psychology, but what applied behavior analysis,” Smith said.

Smith, a 2017 graduate and licensed clinical psychologist and behavior analyst in the Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program at the Kennedy Krieger Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, knew that she wanted to help children ever since she took AP psychology in high school. Her goal was to create meaningful and positive change in the lives of children with a variety of disabilities. A pediatric feeding disorder is a global diagnosis that a child receives when they are unable to attain appropriate weight/growth status, have a diet so selective they are deficient in essential vitamins and nutrients to maintain appropriate growth or engage in inappropriate mealtime behavior.

Once she was admitted to the School Psychology program at MSU, she knew she’d made the right decision and that the training she would receive would help her create positive meaningful change for the children and families that would one day be her patients. She explained that one of the best things about the program for her was the quality of training, supervision and mentorship she received from the faculty.

“Not only were the faculty wonderful classroom instructors but the clinical and research supervision I received really allowed me to understand what exactly I wanted to do with my professional life after graduate school,” Smith explained.

While at Mississippi State, Smith also took part in the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic and the Autism Liaison Program. MSU’s Autism Liaison Services was developed through a collaboration with Student Support Services and the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic. Autism Liaisons, like Smith, offer services and support to degree-seeking students on the autism spectrum to facilitate their success on campus. Smith said that her experiences at the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic provided her with outstanding and unique clinical skills as well as supervision and leadership skills.

“Having been provided with so many opportunities to deliver evidence-based behaviors interventions to a variety of children with a variety of diagnoses was integral in my development as a psychologist,” Smith said. ●



Starkville Oktibbeha County Consolidated School District Partnership School at Mississippi State to open August 2020



A long-awaited and innovative project is set to open August 2020.

Since it was first announced in 2015, the Starkville Oktibbeha County Consolidated School District Partnership School at Mississippi State University has been on track to become a unique and innovative school that will serve both middle school and college students. The school will serve every sixth and seventh grade student in the school district and will also be utilized as a demonstration site for teacher interns and faculty members in MSU's College of Education. It will provide opportunities for the two entities work together to identify collaborative efforts in curriculum, instruction, assessment and evaluation.

The school will also be a research site on rural education geared to help Mississippi address challenges facing rural schools. Professional development opportunities for educators across the state will be an additional benefit of this initiative.

"We want this to be a professional development school where we are preparing undergraduate teachers to be in the classroom, but we also want it to be an institute where we can bring middle teachers from all over the state in during the summer and provide them with professional development opportunities

at the Partnership School and here on campus as well," said Dr. Bob Fuller, College of Education Coordinator for the Partnership School.

Fuller, whose primary role will be to facilitate the work of university students coming into the school, explains that most of the College of Education's Teacher Education junior and senior level courses will be taking place within the Partnership School. Students should be able to discuss theory with their professors and classmates, and then see it in practice within the walls of the building.

The 43-acre, university-donated school site is located on the MSU campus, near the university's North Entrance at the intersection of George Perry Street and Highway 182. Funding for the \$27.5 million school is provided by MSU and bond issues from the Mississippi Legislature and SOSD.

"This school, even though it is on Mississippi State's campus, is going to be a Starkville Oktibbeha County Consolidated School District school that will be run by the school district. Mississippi State University will be



there to supplement and to support them in their endeavors. One unique thing about this school is it is the only school in America located on a university campus that is inclusive of all students in that school district and that's something we can be proud of," said Fuller.

Flowood-based JH&H Architects is the design professional for the school, which will serve up to 1,000 students every year. The building will house seven MSU classrooms and several offices for MSU faculty. School plans, developed with extensive input from teachers, administrators and community stakeholders, include a gymnasium, media center, robotics classroom, science labs, music facilities and art classrooms, in addition to classrooms arranged in pods and equipped with the latest technology. The new building also will alleviate building capacity issues for SOSD, which was formed when the Starkville and Oktibbeha County school districts officially consolidated in 2015.

Classroom arrangements will allow MSU education students to observe teaching techniques without interrupting instruction, and the school's design features spaces for rotating displays from MSU museums and galleries. ●

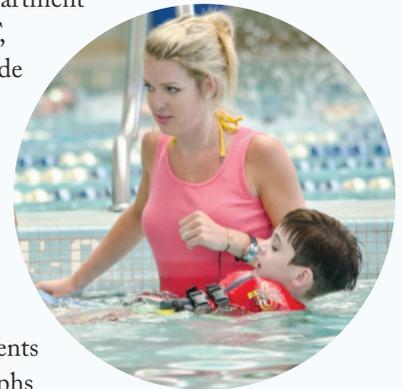


CAMP JABBER JAW CELEBRATES 21 YEARS

Funded in part by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Project START, Camp Jabber Jaw was established to provide a fun way for individuals to develop improved interactive communication skills. The campers are both individuals who utilize augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and those who do not but are of similar ages. Parents attend the camp with their child and have the opportunity to interact with other parents giving each an opportunity to share triumphs as well as disappointments. The camp has provided a forum for the development of friendships, facilitation of interactive communication and fun.

In June 2018, Camp Jabber Jaw paused for a moment to celebrate the completion of 20 great years of camp and also to celebrate Camp Jabber Jaw turning 21. The campers began the week on Monday night with "An Anniversary Affair" complete with lace table cloths, china, candlelight, flowers and an anniversary cake. The campers engaged in a variety of activities throughout the week focusing on celebrating big things as well as celebrating everyday things including random acts of kindness. Campers packed hygiene kits to be distributed by OSERVS as well as packed backpack meals which are given to local students in the school district to assure they have adequate meals on the weekends. The campers went horseback riding, swimming and participated in a special musical activity which they had requested.

On Wednesday, Camp Jabber Jaw celebrated its 21st Birthday Bash and welcomed back campers from over the years as well as previous T.K. Martin Center staff to the annual camp dance. Guests were entertained on Friday with a play entitled, "Camp Jabber Jaw... This Is Your Life," that looked back at all the exciting events, fun times and accomplishments achieved with our speech generating devices over the years. Counselors for the week were graduate students from Mississippi University for Women, Jackson State University, the University of Southern Mississippi along with recent MSU grads. Campers attended Jabber Jaw from across the nation including California, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Georgia. ●



MSU-MERIDIAN TO GRADUATE SIX IN FIRST COHORT OF PANTA STUDENTS

Six Mississippi State University-Meridian students in the inaugural Professional Advancement Network for Teacher Assistants initiative cohort graduated during Fall Commencement at the MSU Riley Center for Education and Performing Arts.

Implemented in 2017, the PANTA initiative helps teacher assistants complete the educational requirements to become licensed teachers. Currently, 25 teacher assistants representing 10 school districts participate in this initiative.

Chastity Galyean, a teacher assistant at Enterprise Elementary School who began working in education more than 10 years ago, said she often has been encouraged by her peers to finish her degree.

“I really wanted to go back to school, but as a wife, mother and full-time employee, a traditional college class schedule would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible to juggle,” Galyean said.

Through PANTA and its blended delivery format, the mother of four was able to gain the academic knowledge and skills required to become a licensed teacher, while still working full time with her school district.

“Through PANTA I had the opportunity to put into practice what I was learning in my university classroom,



as well as share new and innovative teaching strategies with my fellow teachers back at my school,” Galyean said. “This has been a long, but extremely rewarding journey for me. I am grateful to MSU-Meridian and look forward to having my own classroom once a teacher vacancy within our district opens.”

Jeffrey Leffler, assistant professor of elementary education and director of graduate studies for MSU-Meridian’s Division of Education, said the blended delivery format allows PANTA students to participate in either face-to-face instruction or remotely when they are unable to attend class. Students also can view archived lectures.

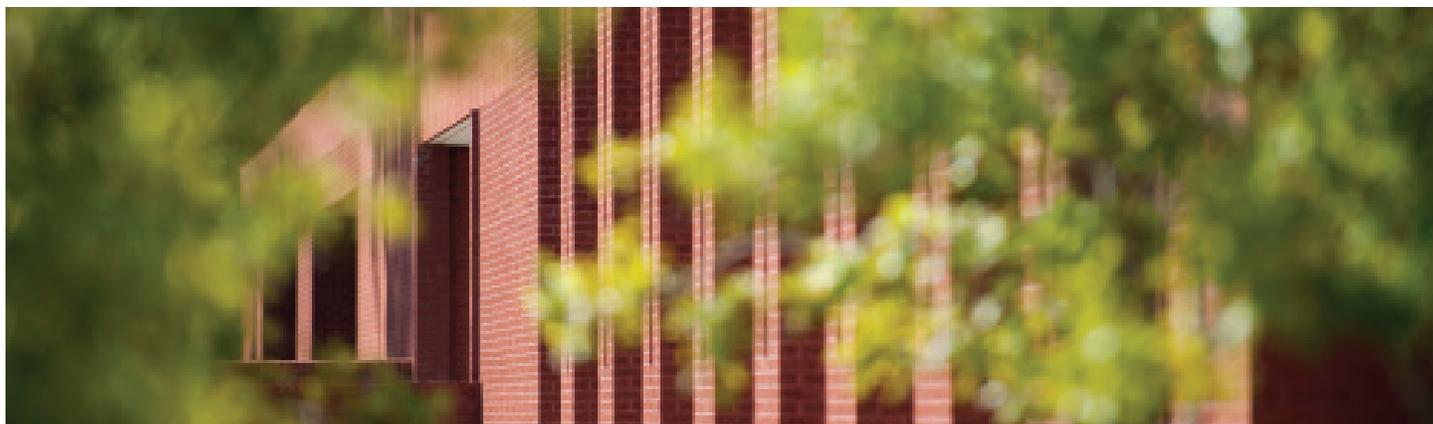
Maddie Collins, a Petal Elementary School teacher assistant, also took advantage of MSU-Meridian’s blended delivery course offerings.

“When I moved in June, it was basically impossible for me to make the hour-and-a-half drive back to Meridian

for class after working in the classroom all day,” Collins said. “Being able to log on to my computer and participate live in all aspects of the class as if I were actually there—including class discussion—helped me tremendously. I had a great experience at MSU-Meridian through the PANTA initiative, and I can’t wait to receive my degree December 13.”

All six graduates will receive a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education, with concentrations in either early childhood or middle-level education. They also are completing requirements for one of three licensure options: pre-kindergarten through third grade; pre-K through sixth grade; or K-6 with seventh- and eighth-grade endorsements in two subject areas.

For more information about the PANTA initiative, contact Kevin Entrekin, MSU-Meridian academic adviser, at kentrekin@meridian.msstate.edu or 601-484-0244. ●



MISSISSIPPI EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING PROGRAM AT MSU NAMES NEW COHORT

Thirty Mississippi State University students are new scholarship recipients in one of the state's most prestigious teacher education programs.

Housed in the university's College of Education, the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program (METP) is a collaborative endeavor with the University of Mississippi. The scholarship includes full tuition, with room, board and books, a \$1,000 technology stipend, and a fully funded study-abroad experience. The award is available to students majoring in secondary mathematics, secondary science, secondary English, as well as elementary and special-education majors.

Funded by the Jackson-based Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation, the scholarship is valued at approximately \$100,000 over four years.

Competitive applicants should have at least a 28 ACT—or 1310 SAT—score and a 3.5 high school grade point average. Applicants participate in an interview with faculty, write an essay about why they want to enter the teaching profession, and commit to teaching in Mississippi in their program area for five years after graduation, though the obligation may be deferred if students decide to pursue graduate degree programs.

The 2018-2019 METP Scholars class includes (by hometown):

ACWORTH, Georgia – Lauren E. Sennett, an elementary education/middle school major.

BAY ST. LOUIS – Nikolas Clogher, a secondary education/English education

BILOXI – Christopher Baker, a secondary education/mathematics education major; Krislyn M. Clinton, an elementary education/middle school major; Brandon E.



Demelo, a secondary education/English education major; and Avery L. Warrick, an elementary education/middle school major.

BRANDON – Mary A. Kirby, a secondary English education major; Molly C. Saunders, a secondary education/English education major; and Kaitlyn M. Slaymaker, a secondary education/mathematics education major.

CARMI, Illinois – Peyton R. Roedder, an elementary education/middle school major.

CHUNCHULA, Alabama – Callie N. Holmes, a secondary education/English education major.

CLINTON – Shannon L. Lacy, an elementary education/middle school major.

COLLIERVILLE, Tennessee – Branden T. Roller, a special education major.

GLEN – Rhiannon D. Lambert, a secondary education/English education major.

GULFPORT – Catherine B. Karl and Katherine E. Walker, both elementary education/middle school majors.

HAMILTON, Alabama – Macy L. Cooper, a special education major.

HATTIESBURG – Clay R. Smith, a secondary education/mathematics education major.

JACKSON – Reagan F. Cothorn, a secondary education/physics education major.

MOBILE, Alabama – Amelia F. Cole, an elementary education/middle school major.

NEW SITE – Avery A. Barnes, a secondary education/mathematics education major.

NOXAPATER – Yolanda M. Cooper, a secondary education/English education major.

OLIVE BRANCH – Emma C. Lee, an elementary education/middle school major; and Savannah G. Steen, an elementary education/middle school major.

PEARL – Raymond K. Morgigno, a secondary education/English education major.

SOUTHAVEN – Mallory K. Wolfe, a secondary education/biology education major.

STARKVILLE – Sophia J. Seltzer-Hill, an elementary education/middle school major.

WAYNESBORO – Alyssa D. Cochran, an elementary education/middle school major at MSU-Meridian.

WIGGINS – Breanna M. Brown, a secondary English education major. ●

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION'S MIGRANT EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER CONTINUES TO PLAY KEY ROLE IN HELPING MIGRANT CHILDREN GET AN EDUCATION

In its 17th year, Mississippi State University's Migrant Education Center continues to offer services to migrant children of the state by strengthening their education and providing resources for both the students and their parents.

A solid education is, at times, something that is taken for granted, but in the 1960s all it took was a short 55-minute television documentary, aired just after Thanksgiving Day to help Americans realize that not every child has the opportunity to succeed. The documentary, "Harvest of Shame," shines a light on the conditions of migrant workers, but also focuses on their children. At the time, children of migrant workers had low levels of literacy, and only one out of 5000 of those children would finish high school.

Even today the education of migrant children is often interrupted since their parents and other family members follow jobs linked to agriculture and fishing harvest seasons. In part because of "Harvest of Shame," the federal government created the Office of Migrant Education and Migrant Education Service Centers which are located in every state. The only center in Mississippi is located at Mississippi State and is housed in the College of Education.

"The lifestyle of a migrant parent is following the crops, so oftentimes students miss a lot of school and fall through the gaps," explained Gabriella Davis, Director of the Mississippi Migrant Education Service Center. "The Migrant Education Service Center functions as a supplemental program that helps close those gaps."

Like others, Mississippi's center sets out to ensure that eligible families are receiving appropriate educational services that enable their children to achieve academic standards by overcoming the obstacles of cultural and language differences stemming from their frequent moves around the nation. At any given time, Mississippi can have anywhere between 450 to 500 migrant students enrolled in its school districts, each with his or her own needs. Priority for service goes to the students that have been in the school district for less than a year so make sure they receive all the support that they need from tutoring to

school supplies. The center identifies students and family through a survey from the public school systems. Once the survey returns to them, the recruiter visits the home to determine the eligibility of the family. Once the family qualifies for the program, then they are enrolled and can stay enrolled for 36 months.

Davis explains that the life of a migratory family is that they move many times throughout the year. Since the children move with them, they tend to miss out on school. Oftentimes they don't have the resources that many other students would have. Mississippi State's center, alongside the other centers, make sure they have all the tools they

need to succeed academically whether it's tutoring, English language books or even something as simple as know how to get affordable glasses. The center's parent coordinator also makes sure that parents of the children have the resources they need to help their children succeed.

The center also offers after-school programs and even summer programs for migrant children. After school programs usually take place in a school district that has a large number of migrant students. During the program's teachers tutor those children to ensure that those learning gaps are closed and students are brought up to their grade level. The service center also provides in-home tutoring where the teacher meets the student's families providing one-on-one tutoring for the child. This one-on-one tutoring is usually reserved for school districts where the migrant population is lower.

School year and summer programs are for increasing migrant student success, which is why the center provides summer programs, in addition, the program that runs throughout the school year. Much like the academic year programs, the summer programs are designed for pre-kindergarten through high school to connect language, literature, technology and life skills to develop English proficiency and promote academic achievement in reading and mathematics. Each program encourages and assists students to complete a project in relation to their thematic unit in order to affect change within their school and community. ●

"The lifestyle of a migrant parent is following the crops, so oftentimes students miss a lot of school and fall through the gaps. The Migrant Education Service Center functions as a supplemental program that helps close those gaps."

~ Gabriella Davis

MSU-Meridian professor creates learning opportunities beyond the classroom

Ksenia S. Zhbanova, an assistant professor in Elementary Education at Mississippi State University-Meridian, has found practical experiences for her students to apply what they learn in the classroom.

She asked her students to write pen pal letters to students in Russia, to work with Hope Village for Children and to work with the MSU-Riley Center arts

HER STUDENTS WRITE LETTERS TO MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RUSSIA ABOUT MISSISSIPPI AND THE RUSSIAN STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT RUSSIA.

integration in the classroom program. The goal of these programs, she said, is to give students experience outside the classroom and to apply what they have learned while exposing them to different experiences.

Zhbanova, a native of Russia, received her bachelors and masters degrees at the University of Iowa. Before teaching at MSU-Meridian, she taught gifted students at a public school in Iowa for several years. She involved her students there in a pen pal program and that gave her the idea to apply the lesson for older students studying to become teachers.

Last semester she used the experience in a class called Explaining Diversity Through Writing and this semester she uses it in her Writing Through Thinking class.

Her students write letters to middle and high school students in Russia about Mississippi and the Russian students write about Russia. Zhbanova said



students in Russia are taught a foreign language at a young age so they are able to correspond in English.

“Both parties are extremely excited about the program,” Zhbanova said.

Zhbanova said the program benefits both sides because it allows both future teachers and students to be exposed to different cultures. The program also gives her students a sense of what it is like to teach someone who speaks a different language.

The MSU-Meridian students write the letters in pen and then Zhbanova scans the letters and emails them to a person she knows in Russia. That quickens the response time while maintaining the personal touch of writing in pen, Zhbanova said.

PARTNERSHIP WITH HOPE VILLAGE

Zhbanova said it is important to build connections within the community, too. She is working on creating a partnership with Hope Village Guild at the Hope Village for Children.

She would like her students to volunteer with Hope Village’s Run for Hope and other projects. MSU-Meridian students plan to volunteer with the event and provide water to runners on Nov. 10.

Zhbanova would also like her students to be able to tutor children at Hope Village and work with them on

extracurricular activities. Zhbanova said her goal is to have the project set up and ready to begin next semester.

Emily Strasser, Hope Village Guild member, said she is excited for the partnership and is happy Zhbanova reached out to them.

One of the goals for the partnership, Strasser said, is for children at Hope Village to receive more instruction during the school year. This will help kids to receive the help they might need, she said.

ARTS INTEGRATION

Zhbanova said she been working, also, with the MSU-Riley Center to expose her students to arts integration in the classroom.

Her students have been creating resource guides for teachers to use in the classroom as well as for the educational shows being put on by the Riley Center, Zhbanova said. Her students are highlighting the connection of subjects such as science and math with the arts.

Teaching through the arts can help expose students to different opportunities they may not have had before, Zhbanova said.

“It will also give them self-confidence,” Zhbanova said.

Zhbanova said through ideas such as these three programs she wants to give her students exposure to ideas beyond a textbook to use in their classrooms. ●

HARDIN FOUNDATION GRANT HELPS MSU-MERIDIAN, CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTNER TO PUT MORE TEACHERS IN CLASSROOMS

Mississippi State University-Meridian and Meridian Public School District are teaming up to address teacher shortages, thanks to a grant from the Phil Hardin Foundation.



The foundation's board of directors recently announced plans to fully fund alternate route certification courses for 15 students who already hold bachelor's degrees in areas other than education. Necessary courses were completed in the fall semester, meaning individuals began to be placed in MPSD classrooms at the beginning of the new year.

"We are excited about the opportunity to expand our Teach Meridian campaign in partnership with MSU-Meridian," MPSD Superintendent Amy Carter said. "The grant provided through the Phil Hardin Foundation affords prospective teachers financial assistance to become a teacher, which benefits both our students and our community."

The Phil Hardin Foundation, known for its mission of improving educational opportunities throughout the state, has long supported MSU-Meridian, establishing two libraries along with helping support the MSU Riley Center for Education and Performing Arts.

"Mississippi State University-Meridian is doing an outstanding job of matching MSU's resources with the community's needs, and there is no greater educational need in Meridian in this era of teacher shortages than well-prepared, high-quality teachers in the classroom," said Lloyd Gray, Hardin Foundation executive director. "We are excited about this partnership between MSU and the Meridian Public School District and what it can mean for the children of this community."

MSU is the leading provider of educators in this region of the state, having more than half of the prestigious 2017-2018 Golden Apple recipients as alumni. The Golden Apple awards program honors and recognizes excellence in teaching.

"I am pleased Dr. Carter and the Phil Hardin Foundation entrusted us with this opportunity," said Terry Dale Cruse, MSU-Meridian's administrative director and head of campus. "Our education faculty are the best in the region and prepare the strongest educators for local school districts." ●

Loviza honors daughter, fellow MSU alumnus with new scholarship

Joseph Loviza of Vicksburg has established a Loyalty Scholarship in Mississippi State University's College of Education to honor his daughter and fellow MSU alumnus, Kathleen Loviza Miles.

Miles, also of Vicksburg, is a 1995 communication graduate of the MSU College of Arts and Sciences and a former alumni chapter officer. The newly created scholarship bearing her name will provide annual support for entering freshmen and community college transfer students.



Candidates for the Kathleen Loviza Miles Loyalty Scholarship must be fulltime students in the College of Education who have earned a minimum 3.0 grade-point average (on a 4.0 scale) and demonstrated leadership ability. Recipients will be awarded on a year-to-year basis and may be considered to receive the award for up to four years given their compliance with the selection criteria.

Loviza is a longtime supporter of MSU and the College of Education, where he earned three degrees and served as an adjunct faculty member for 12 years. After graduating from Hinds Community College in 1960, Loviza received bachelor's and master's degrees in education from MSU in 1967 and 1971, respectively. He later earned an Education Specialist degree from MSU in 1976.

A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Loviza began his career with the Vicksburg Warren school system as director of vocational, technical and adult education. He was the first employee of the Hinds Community College Vicksburg-Warren campus, where he served 20 years as director, and later as dean. Following his retirement, Loviza served as mayor of Vicksburg from 1993 to 1997.

During his career, Loviza was named the Outstanding Vo-Tech Educator in 1987 and Outstanding Marketing Educator in 1992 for the Vicksburg Warren School District. In 2014, Hinds Community College named the Vicksburg-Warren campus multi-purpose building in his honor.

As a Loyalty Scholarship, Loviza's gift is eligible for a matching contribution from the MSU Bulldog Club, which currently provides up to \$500,000 annually for Legacy and Loyalty Scholarship gift matches. The organization's ongoing commitment to grow these annual awards increases the university's ability to attract emerging scholars.

For more information on how matching gifts can help establish scholarships in the MSU College of Education, contact Trish Cunetto, director of development, at 662-325-6762 or tcunetto@foundation.msstate.edu. ●

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION SENIOR EARNS INAUGURAL YVONNE R. FERGUSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

A senior educational psychology major in MSU's College of Education has received the first-ever Yvonne R. Ferguson Memorial Scholarship.

Corinth native Sara Morrow is the first recipient of the scholarship that focuses on single parents working toward a college degree. The scholarship was established by Department of Plant and Soil Sciences Assistant Professor Dr. Connor Ferguson in honor of his late mother, a single parent herself.

Ferguson explained he wanted to pay it forward for the woman who gave him so much, and that creating this scholarship allowed him to continue telling his mother's story.

"Just days after I moved to Starkville, my mother was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer. Getting to celebrate her life by rewarding students who go through the unique challenges of parenthood and providing a way to help them further their education and to celebrate what they get to do in the next steps of their lives is an honor," said Ferguson.

Morrow is the daughter of Anthony and Christle Morrow of Corinth and she has a seven-year-old son. She is pursuing a counseling concentration and upon graduation hopes to find a job working with elementary school children. Morrow said that her past experiences in school drew her to educational psychology.

"I feel like everyone needs someone to be on their team, and I want to be that person," said Morrow. "Earning this scholarship has helped relieve stress for me. Knowing that people like Dr. Ferguson are helping someone like me the way I want to help someone in the future is amazing."

Morrow also was the recipient of the E.H. Sumners Endowed Scholarship. Morrow most recently shadowed two counselors in Choctaw County for real-world experience that complements her major.

"Sara is a really promising student. She's someone who day in and day out goes to class, works hard to raise a good son, and makes necessary sacrifices much in the same way as my mom," said Ferguson.

To be eligible for the Yvonne R. Ferguson Memorial Scholarship, candidates must be full-time students in any major with a minimum of 2.5 GPA (on a 4.0 scale). Preference will be given to students who are single parents. ●



Music major receives MSU Libraries' 2018 Docher Award

Through a special award, Mississippi State University Libraries and the Department of Music celebrated a late student's passion for music and a current student's spirit in carrying on his legacy.

Catherine N. Patriquin, a senior music education/instrumental major from Ocean Springs, was honored with the 2018 Keyone Docher Student Achievement Award during MSU Libraries' recent 12th annual Charles H. Templeton Ragtime and Jazz Festival.

Annually presented to an outstanding MSU music student, the award pays tribute to Keyone Docher, a Weir native and former MSU music education/piano major who died in 2014 following a 13-year battle with cancer.

Patriquin, a member of the Famous Maroon Band, Wind Ensemble and Saxophone Ensemble, was nominated for the award by MSU music professors Jackie Edwards-Henry and Rose Sebba.

During one of the festival's evening concerts, Patriquin received a plaque and check from MSU Libraries Associate Dean Stephen Cunetto and Chip Templeton, festival co-chair and son of festival namesake Charles H. Templeton Sr. She also performed "Bordel 1900," the first movement of Astor Piazzola's "Histoire du Tango," on tenor saxophone with piano accompaniment from MSU music instructor Karen Murphy.

"When Keyone performed for us several years ago, he was our first amateur to play in the festival," Templeton said during the concert. "It was a special moment not just because he played a beautiful song for us, but because he put his heart and emotion into what he was doing. It was quite obvious that this young man loved music, and that was the real connection."

Docher's parents, Charles and Tammy Docher, also attended and gave remarks during the concert. The couple showed its appreciation to MSU Libraries by presenting Templeton and Cunetto with a plaque bearing the names of every Keyone Docher Student Achievement Award recipient since the honor's inception in 2015. In addition to Patriquin, other recipients include Sarah G. Wallace, a 2015 magna cum laude music graduate from Brandon; Tyler J. Stallings, a 2016 music education/instrumental graduate from Pontotoc; and Abby L. Weinstein, a 2017 cum laude music/vocal graduate from Marietta, Georgia.

"I'm so used to hearing that piano some late nights," Docher said with a laugh. "It brings back such good memories, and it lifts my spirit, lifts my soul and makes me carry on. It makes me thankful for Mississippi State and the music department and what they've done for Keyone. It's just a wonderful feeling." ●



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The following College of Education students were awarded scholarships in 2018.

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Caroline Weathers

BERT JENKINS ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

David Seabaugh

BETTY AND JOE TRULOVE ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP IN EDUCATION

Caroline Weathers

BEVERLY BEATTY BOOZER ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP

Anna Maria Henderson

BOBBY AND REGINA SANFORD ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Macy Replogie

CAREY P. VANDERFORD SCHOLARSHIP

Madeline Leblanc
Reagan Cothorn

CHARLES KENNETH IRBY, SR. SCHOLARSHIP

Taylor Spinks

DAVID AND PEGGY TIFFIN LOYALTY SCHOLARSHIP

Katelyn Chisolm
Mary Hannah Duke
Meredith Bass
Seth Prewitt

DEWEY AND MARIE MALOUF SCHOLARSHIP

Alaina O'Bryant
Jaylin Smith
Rebecca Knight

DR. BILLIE J. AND JEAN T. BALL ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Adam Shumaker

DR. JANICE NICHOLSON ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

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Hailey Ripple

DR. SUSAN MCLAREN BROOKS, PH.D MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Elizabeth Counts
Erica Eastman
Kristen Simmons
Madeline Ezelle

DURWARD B. DUNN SCHOLARSHIP IN EDUCATION

Kaitlyn Slaymaker

ELLEN CURTIS RICCI SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

Amber Chamblee
Bailey Harper
Karey Williams

EMMA GRACE HAYES MEMORIAL ENDOWMENT

Karey Williams
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Abigail Dekrafft
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LETTER FROM **GIVING & DEVELOPMENT**

Dear College of Education Alumni and Friends,



As I drive through campus on my way to work each day, I continue to be amazed at all the additions to our beautiful campus. A new civil and environmental engineering building is under construction, the renovations to Dudy Noble baseball complex are complete, the Animal and Dairy Science building will be completed this spring, and plans are underway for other additions and renovations all over campus. Many ask how we can continue to grow year after year. My answer is because of the generosity of our Mississippi State University alumni

and friends. **YOUR** gifts enable this continuous growth, and we thank you for your loyal support.

The College of Education also is growing and changing each year. Plans are underway for construction of a music building, and preliminary discussions for a new kinesiology building have begun. We are excited about having these facilities for our faculty, staff and students that will allow for growth and provide wonderful environments for teaching, service and learning.

Every time you make a gift to the College of Education, no matter the size, you are helping us enrich the lives of our students and allowing us to grow as a college. Each year I have the amazing opportunity to meet with

many of you and thank you in person for your generosity to MSU. Through your gifts, we have been able to grow our Patron's Scholarship Fund, and our list of endowed scholarships continues to grow.

As we get closer to completing MSU's Infinite Impact Campaign of \$1 billion, you have an opportunity to be a part of history with your gift to the College of Education. If you would like additional information about giving I would be happy to talk with you. I can be reached at tcunetto@foundation.msstate.edu or 662-325-6762.

Trish Cunetto

Trish Cunetto
Director of Development



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We would love to continue to feature updates and accomplishments of our outstanding alumni in the future editions of FORWARD. Send an email or letter to:

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