

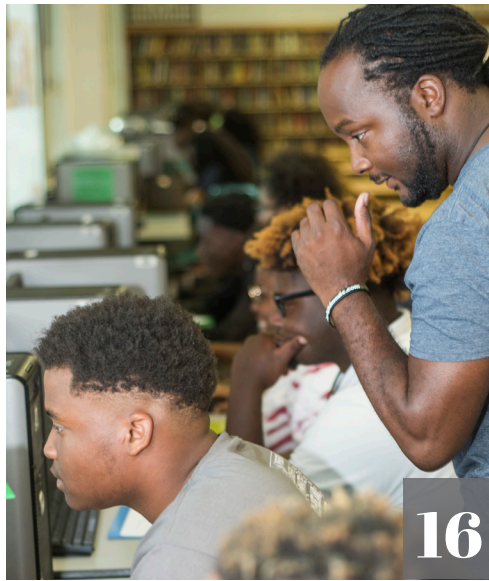
Annual Report 2018



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER



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Letter from the Director



The Social Science Research Center has a long and proud tradition as a location for meaningful social science research for scholars on our campus and beyond. Its origins can be traced to the Social Science Round Table, a faculty group that began meeting shortly after World War II. This body's goal was to promote research in sociology, history, economics, political science, and other related disciplines. Its signal contribution was to advocate for the creation of a research organization to facilitate social science research on campus. From their vision and efforts grew the Social Science Research Center, which was formally recognized in 1950 as the University's first campus-wide research enterprise. Following this vision of a campus wide organization, the Center reports to the Vice President of Research and Economic Development and the Vice President for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.

The Center, from its origin, has emphasized interdisciplinary research and the application of social science knowledge to the most critical problems facing the state, region, and nation. In addition to scholars on campus, the Social Science Research Center has become a place for scientists from other institutions to come and conduct research, study, and participate in the special environment of the Center. Collaboration across disciplines, across institutions, and even across nations is an essential feature of the Center's strategy of development.

Over the last 5 years, the Center's research programs have received over \$43 million dollars in financial support. Grants and contracts were awarded to Center scientists from over 80 extramural sources of funding, including many of the most prestigious research organizations in the nation. For example, our research is currently being supported by the National Science Foundation, National Institute of

Health, National Institute of Justice, USAID, and the Centers for Disease Control, as well as numerous other federal and state agencies. Foundation support is also important with substantial investments in the Center by the Kellogg Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and others. The amount of extramural support is among the largest for such social science enterprises nationwide.

Strong collaboration with academic departments has led to the establishment of several social science laboratories that greatly enhance the University's capabilities to carryout cutting edge research projects. The Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Laboratory was established as a joint effort between the Department of Sociology and the Department of Political Science and Public Administration in 1981. It is operating continuously as a facility for conducting rigorous academic social surveys and is responsible for hundreds of studies for projects housed at the University and beyond.

The Social Relations CollABortative is a joint venture between the Department of Psychology and the Social Science Research Center that focuses on experimentation and social relations. It is currently the home of the "The reasons for retaliation research project" that is funded by the National Institute of Justice. The Message Laboratory was recently initiated between the Department of Communications and the SSRC to lead in research on the science of science communication.

The Social, Therapeutic & Robotics Systems Laboratory (STaRS) is a joint venture between the Department of Computer Science and Engineering and the Social Science Research Center. STaRS conducts interdisciplinary research on the interaction between robots and humans and is currently funded by grants from the National Science Foundation.

The Civic Life Laboratory, our newest lab, is jointly sponsored by the Department of Communications, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, and the SSRC. It is utilizing experimentation of simulation games to study civic engagement and political polarization.

My colleagues and I are most appreciative of the fine support we receive from the leadership of Mississippi State University and are thankful for the opportunities that this fine institution has provided us.

Sincerely,

Arthur G. Cosby
William L. Giles Distinguished Professor and Director

About the SSRC

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) was established at Mississippi State University (MSU) in 1950 to promote, enhance and facilitate social science research and related scholarly activities. The Center is organized with university-wide responsibilities and reports to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and the Vice President for Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine. The Center offers a superior research environment with an impressive array of research opportunities and options, state-of-the-art facilities, laboratories and support units that enhance and expand both the scope and quality of social science research. The SSRC fosters a rigorous and independent research environment to ensure objective, relevant and unbiased analyses.

The success of the SSRC relies primarily on the expertise, talents and entrepreneurial skills of its scientists. Individual scientists, or self-organized teams of researchers, provide the impetus and direction of funded research projects. They determine their research agendas and benefit from the SSRC facilities as they so choose. Research fellows and research associates, supported by an administrative staff and graduate and undergraduate research assistants, conduct both sponsored and unsponsored research projects. Funding for projects comes from a variety of sources including federal and state agencies, foundations, MSU units and other public

and private entities. The SSRC research portfolio usually exceeds \$10 million a year.

Research issues that social scientists face are now so profoundly complex that their solutions demand the combined resources of multiple disciplines, multiple professions and multiple institutions. From its origin, the SSRC has had a strong interdisciplinary emphasis. Scientists from a number of disciplines, both on campus and off, come together in the SSRC to work on common research problems. It is the norm to find various combinations of such diverse disciplines as psychologists, business professors, sociologists, social workers, geographers, historians, economists and political scientists joining together to bring to bear their expertise on various research problems.

The range of interdisciplinary involvement goes beyond the social sciences. The Center often becomes a place where social scientists team with colleagues from agriculture, engineering and other disciplines. The SSRC also forms partnerships, strategic alliances and collaborative agreements with entities such as state agencies, off-campus national-level research organizations and professional groups. These various interdisciplinary research enterprises provide a steady stream of innovative projects and creative investigations.

The organizational structure of the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) is purposely flat, with several internal research units, normally led by coordinators, reporting to the Director. Project directors operate with a great deal of autonomy and take full responsibility for the conduct of their projects.

Over the years, the SSRC has developed strong working relationships with faculty members and administrators in the College of Arts & Sciences, the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine, the College of Business and the College of Education. In addition, it has established strong linkages with outside funding sources, including federal and state agencies, research entities and foundations.

The research faculty members in the SSRC are the driving force for the Center's activities. Together, they define the Center's goals, develop research agendas, prepare and submit proposals and conduct research. The SSRC maintains a small staff of full-time research faculty to support ongoing research activities. These individuals are normally affiliated with an academic department. Other faculty members hold joint appointments on a continual basis between academic departments and the SSRC. A third category of faculty members works in the Center on a periodic basis, depending upon funding of a particular grant or contract, or is supported via summer appointments while developing research proposals. In order to facilitate the efforts of the research faculty, the SSRC seeks to maintain collegial, cooperative relationships with academic departments and other campus entities.

The Center maintains a core staff of experts to assist in the financial and personnel aspects of preparing, submitting and administering research grants and contracts, as well as individuals who manage specific Center programs, such as the Mississippi Alcohol Safety Education Program (MASEP). Research associates and graduate and undergraduate assistants support research and administrative activities. In addition, the Center employs many individuals on an intermittent basis to serve the needs of the individual projects.

The continued success of the SSRC is clearly dependent upon the personnel who participate in its activities. Attracting bright, capable, energetic and entrepreneurial individuals and then encouraging their continued intellectual and professional growth is a key element in the SSRC organizational philosophy. By keeping bureaucratic requirements to a minimum, the SSRC seeks to create an environment that fosters, facilitates and enables innovative and creative research efforts.

Mission Statement

The SSRC conducts research to explore social, economic, political, human resource and social-environmental problems facing the state, nation and world. Scientists strive to present findings to a variety of constituents in a meaningful way to improve the health, safety and well-being of all people.

Statement of Goals

The Social Science Research Center strives to be a center of excellence for social science research that serves the entire university community. This collective ambition is reflected in our institutional goals:

- To contribute to the University's graduate and undergraduate programs by involving students in research projects through assistantships and other work arrangements.
- To conduct rigorous, objective and unbiased research on relevant social, economic, political, human resource and social-environmental problems facing the state, nation and world.
- To provide a vehicle for unique social research and public service programs that do not fit more traditional academic structures.
- To provide a support system for the University to plan, develop, secure funding for and conduct social research on problems of interest to the scientific community and to consumers of research findings.
- To provide a mechanism whereby existing social science research capabilities in the University can be matched with funding sources.

SSRC Facilities

The SSRC is currently located in the Mississippi Technology Center, in the Thad Cochran Research, Technology and Economic Development Park. The Mississippi Health Policy Research Center (MHPRC) is located at the CAVS E building in Canton. In addition to the core space at CAVS E, the SSRC has access to state-of-the-art conference and meeting facilities.

Special Collaborative Partnerships

The productivity of the SSRC Scientists remains high and the support from extramural organizations is quite varied. Our research benefits from awards and partnerships from the following:

American Academy of Pediatrics
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
E Q Health Solutions
Education Services Foundation
Federal Motor Carriers
Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute
Harvard Law School
Harvard School of Public Health
MIT Election Data Science Laboratory
National Cancer Institute
National Center for Intermodal Transportation
National Institute of Justice
National Institute on Drug Abuse
National Institutes of Health
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Science Foundation
New York Sea Grant
Northern Gulf Institute
Rice Research and Extension Center at the University of Arkansas
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Southeastern Universities Research Association

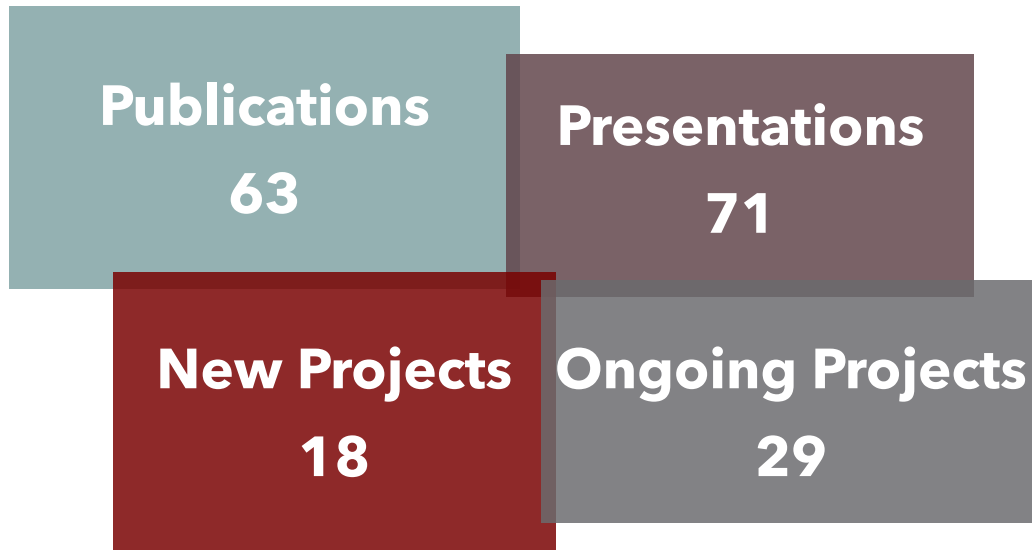
Tec de Monterrey, Mexico
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
U.S. Agency for International Development
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Transportation
U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration
University of Applied Sciences VERN', Zagreb
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
University of Illinois
University of Kentucky
University of Split, Croatia
University of Tennessee, Health Science Center
University of Zagreb, Croatia
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Walton Family Foundation
Prevention Research Center at Washington University in St. Louis

Within Mississippi, the SSRC has partnerships with and/or funding from the following:

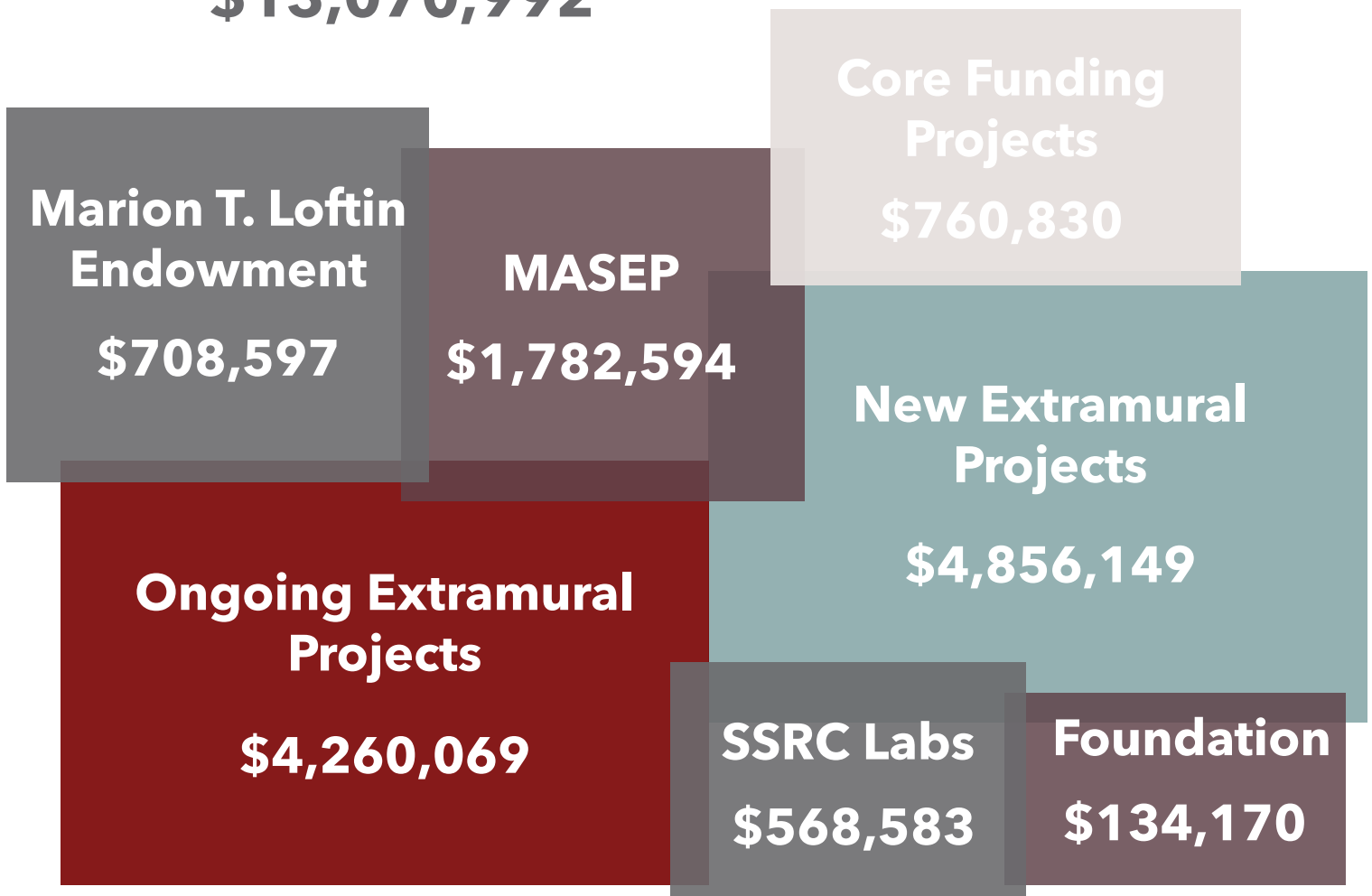
Blue Cross & Blue Shield Foundation of Mississippi
The Bower Foundation
Center for Mississippi Health Policy
Center for Population Studies at University of Mississippi
College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University
Health Care Foundation of North Mississippi
Healthy Mississippi
Mississippi Alcohol Safety Education Program
Mississippi Area Health Education Center
Mississippi Attorney General's Office
Mississippi Association of Grantmakers
Mississippi Center for Education
Mississippi Center for Justice
Mississippi Department of Education
Mississippi Department of Human Services
Mississippi Department of Medicaid
Mississippi Department of Mental Health
Mississippi Department of Public Safety
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Mississippi Department of Transportation
Mississippi Division of Public Safety Planning
Mississippi First
Mississippi Health and Advocacy Program
Mississippi Health Care Association
Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning
Mississippi Non-profits
Mississippi Office of Highway Safety
Mississippi Public Health Institute
Mississippi State Department of Health
North Mississippi Medical Center
Office of Research and Economic Development
Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Tobacco Control
Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi
Preusser Research Group, Inc.
Public Health Program at Jackson State University
Tougaloo College
University of Mississippi Medical Center
William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation
Women's Foundation of Mississippi

SSRC Annual Impact



**Total Funding:
\$13,070,992**



Research Fellows



Front row (l-r): Susana Cervantes, Cindy Bethel, Viktorija Car. Back row (l-r): Christopher Archibald, Ioannis Ziogas, Taylor Shelton.

Christopher Archibald

Dr. Archibald is an Assistant Professor in the Computer Science and Engineering Department at Mississippi State University. He focuses his research and teaching primarily on the areas of Artificial Intelligence, Multiagent Systems, Robotics, and Machine Learning. He especially seeks to understand and evaluate decision-making algorithms in complex scenarios. He received his BS degree in Computer Engineering from Brigham Young University, his MS and PhD degrees in Computer Science from Stanford University and was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Alberta.

Cindy Bethel

Dr. Bethel is an Associate Professor in the Computer Science and Engineering Department at Mississippi State University (MSU). She is an ACM Distinguished Speaker (2017-2020) and in September 2017 was awarded the Billie J. Ball Endowed Professorship in Engineering (2017-2020), from the Bagley College of Engineering at MSU. She is the Director of the Social, Therapeutic, and Robotic Systems (STaRS) lab and a Research Fellow with the MSU Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems (CAVS) Human Performance Group. She is an affiliated faculty with the Department of Psychology. She is a Senior Editor for the International Journal of Human-Robot Interaction. She received her B.S. in Computer Science (summa cum laude) and her Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering from the University of South Florida. Her research interests include human-robot interaction, human-computer interaction, interface design, social robotics, and artificial intelligence. Her work focuses on the use of robots for therapeutic support, information gathering, law enforcement, and military applications.

Viktorija Car

Dr. Car is an Associate Professor at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, at the Faculty of Political Science – Media and Communication Department. She got her Ph.D. degree at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and during the doctoral study she spent one semester at the University of Lund, Sweden. In the focus of her scientific research are public service media, visual culture and visual media, media narratives, digital activism, media and gender studies, and media and minority studies. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the Media Studies journal and member of the Editorial Board of the Anali HPD journal published by the Croatian Political Science Association. She was member of the HRT Program Council 2011-2012, and she is one of the founders of the Free and Responsible Media group within the Human Rights House Zagreb.

Susana Cervantes

Susana Cervantes has served as the Mississippi Delta Fellow, a two-year position jointly sponsored by the Social Science Research Center and Harvard Law School. As the Fellow, she worked to explore and promote innovative solutions to poverty in the Mississippi Delta through law, policy, and community development. Prior to her fellowship, Susana studied at Harvard Law School, where she was a student leader in the Mississippi Delta Project and participated in a number of clinics and internships focused on education law and policy, youth and family issues, and systemic justice. Prior to that, Susana spent two years teaching high school English in Jackson, Mississippi with Teach for America. Susana received her A.B. in English from Harvard College in 2012 and her J.D. from Harvard Law School, magna cum laude, in 2017.

Taylor Shelton

Dr. Shelton is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geosciences at Mississippi State University. Prior to joining MSU in 2017, he held appointments as a visiting scholar in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky and as a postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Urban Innovation at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Broadly-trained as a human geographer, Dr. Shelton earned BA and MA degrees in geography from the University of Kentucky and his PhD from the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University. Dr. Shelton's work focuses on exploring the social and spatial dimensions of 'big data' and how these new sources of data are changing the way we think about, and intervene in, the world around us. In particular, he is interested in how mapping and data visualization can be used to develop alternative understandings of urban spaces and social inequalities.

Ioannis Ziogas

Dr. Ziogas earned his PhD in Political Science from the University of Florida. His primary research interests revolve around the dynamics that promote peace or lead to violence in the international system, broadly defined. His work includes papers on territorial conflict, sampling algorithms, and survival modeling. Prior to entering academia, Dr. Ziogas worked as a diplomatic attaché at the European Union in Brussels, Belgium.



Students and faculty members from SENA-M visit with the Stennis Institute for Government. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)



SENA-M students learn about drone usage in precision agriculture. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)



Students and faculty members from SENA-M visit with Dr. Art Cosby at the Social Science Research Center. (photo by Alan Burns)



MSU student visit a banana farm in Magdalena, Colombia. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)



MSU student, Marisa Laudadio learns about equipment in a SENA-M lab. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)

COLOMBIAN EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Three Mississippi State University students participated in a study abroad program in Colombia this past spring break to learn about precision agriculture. The program was a bilateral exchange that saw students from Colombia also visiting Mississippi.

by Alan Burns

For three Mississippi State University (MSU) students, this past spring break was a bit different from a normal trip to the beach. Marisa Laudadio, Cristina Griffith, and Diana Wilson had the opportunity to spend their spring break in a study abroad program in South America.

The study abroad program led them to Bogotá and Santa Marta, Colombia, where they had a chance to recognize aspects of precision agriculture, rural development policies, and culture. This program was led by Dr. Gina Rico Mendez, a Research Fellow at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC), and Dr. Sandra Guzman, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Water Resources Center at Auburn University. Both Rico Mendez and Guzman are Colombian natives and attended Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá.

The program officially titled Study Abroad and Spanish Language for Precision Agriculture, was funded by 100,000 Strong In the Americas' Innovation Fund Grant. It saw MSU partnering with SENA-Regional, Magdalena -Centro Acuicola y Agroindustrial de Gaira (SENA-M), a publicly funded workforce development institution in northern Colombia with the goal of increasing bilateral exchange between the partners.

This study abroad was the first bilateral exchange program in the field of precision agriculture that focused on innovations in agriculture, combined with cultural awareness at MSU. Bilateral exchanges provide students and faculty from both institutions the chance to study in a different country and learn from one another.

The Innovation Fund Grant seeks to fuel strategic partnerships between universities in the Americas to build a "hemisphere of students ready to compete and thrive in the 21st century workforce." In order to prepare the students according to those goals, two groups of students and faculty, one from MSU and other from SENA-M visited Colombia (March 10-18) and the United States (April 20-28) respectively.

"This exchange project was the first of its kind, bridging Mississippi and Colombia," said Rico Mendez. "It was definitely a challenge, but we had a unique chance to learn from one another about different agricultural practices and to compare the application of new technology in two completely different geographic areas."

The two groups of students had both shared and separate objectives for their exchange. For MSU students, the goal was to increase knowledge about precision agriculture data

techniques, large versus small farm management practices, and comparative rural development policies. For SENA-M students, the goal was to access advanced research in precision agriculture aimed at improving transfer of technology and education tools, expand collaboration networks, and increase awareness of higher education opportunities in both Colombia and US. Both shared the program goals of enabling creative thinking, expanding collaboration capacity, honing foreign language skills, and increasing multicultural awareness.

Student Participants

The group from MSU consisted of two faculty members (Rico Mendez and Guzman) and three students. Marisa Laudadio-political science and communication major; Cristina Griffith-agribusiness major; and Diana Wilson-food science and nutrition major.

"We had a great team that went along," said Rico Mendez. "It was very interesting to note as well, that all of the students and faculty from MSU were women, while the opposite was true for SENA-M."

"The Precision Agriculture study abroad was a great experience, more than I could have imagined," said Cristina Griffith. "I already had



MSU students and faculty visit with SENA-M students in Santa Marta, Colombia. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)



Students from MSU learn about the packaging process for bananas. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)

a love for agriculture and Spanish, but I came back encouraged and inspired to try even harder in my classes because I could now grasp the end result of my education.”

From SENA-M, there were two faculty members, Jorge Peralta and Cristian Angarita, and three students, Jerrys Arrieta-irrigation major; Aldair Molina, and Johan Cantillo, both precision agriculture majors. At SENA-M, the students are commonly called apprentices, as they are learning applied technical skills in agriculture.

“For me the exchange with MSU was the best experience in my life, it gave me a different perspective, this trip changed my way I look at things” said Aldair Molina, one of the SENA-Students. Another student, Jerrys Arrieta, said “The exchange to MSU allowed me to get to know a different culture, with a different way of living. At the same time, it was a very motivating experience that encouraged me to keep studying and working for the development and technology in agriculture.”

Planning for the Exchange

The program was set up in four phases: establishing the partner connection, study abroad planning,

study abroad implementation, and evaluation.

For the first phase, the programs looked at establishing contact between the two partners. Most of the contact was online, with meetings occurring every six weeks from June 2017 to February 2018. This planning phase allowed the teams to develop their program goals and decide on communication strategies for the students.

Phase two of the program featured further planning for the study abroad while the team began recruiting students. Drs. Rico-Mendez and Guzman pushed the Colombia exchange to potential new students majoring in Agriculture and Life Sciences at MSU. The team collaborated with MSU’s Office of Study Abroad and the International Institute to promote the opportunity during the fall 2017 study abroad fair and other campus events.

Part of the exchange program involved an online course entitled, “Educating the Next Generation of Global Leaders: Social-Water Nexus in Unconventional Environments.” This course was greenlit by the MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) and focused on precision agriculture, as well as

Colombian social and policy context in agriculture.

“The goal for the class was to introduce students participating in the project into non-traditional cultural, governmental, and water management aspects of precision agriculture,” said Rico Mendez. “We decided to create the online course to provide a background before we actually made the site visits.”

Studying Abroad

Over the course of March and April, the students completed the study abroad portion of the program. Prior to departure for Colombia, the faculty leading the project created a booklet in English for MSU students that included information about Colombia, an itinerary for the trip, and important information on traveling abroad. A similar booklet was created in Spanish for the SENA-M faculty and students with information about the United States, an itinerary, and information on traveling abroad.

From March 10-18, participants from MSU made their way to Colombia. They first went to Bogotá, where they had the chance to visit different historical parts of the city. The MSU team then traveled to Santa Marta



Students and faculty from SENA-M visit with MSU students and tour campus. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)



SENA-M students visit the MSU-Delta Research & Extension Center in Stoneville, MS. (photo provided by Gina Rico Mendez)

where they met the SENA team for the first time.

Rico Mendez explained that their time in Santa Marta allowed the students to interact with each other, as well as provided a chance for them to see how both commercial and small banana farms operate. After seeing how both operate differently, the team traveled to the Port of Santa Marta to see how bananas are packaged and shipped to the United States and other regions of the world. The team also had the chance to visit other regional and national cultural landmarks including the Tayrona National park; Quinta de San Pedro Alejandrino, the death place of Simon Bolivar (the George Washington like character for South America), and spent some time at the beach.

“As Colombians, we are proud we open the doors of exchange between MSU and SENA; we gave low-income students from Colombia a lifetime opportunity of traveling abroad and letting them know that opportunities exist for them in Colombia and abroad. This was also an eye-opening experience for MSU students, some of whom had never been in a plane or traveled abroad,” said Rico Mendez.

“My love of agriculture became more directed after the study abroad trip. Through experiencing international agriculture hands-on, I found my passion for the future in helping people with Agriculture Engineering Technology,” Griffith stated.

SENA-M faculty and students had a similar opportunity to travel to the United States and begin the second part of the study abroad from April 20 to 28. While in Mississippi, the SENA team was exposed to multiple research areas, as well as some leisure activities. While on campus, the group visited many units including: The International Institute, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Precision Agriculture Lab, and Ag & Bio engineering Water and Environmental Research Lab, Stennis Institute of Government, Social Science Research Center, Geosystems Research Institute, and the MSU Library where they toured the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library.

The SENA-M faculty and students had a chance to travel to the MSU-Delta Research and Extension Center (DREC) in Stoneville, MS. There they met with researchers to talk about precision agriculture and irrigation methods for a more efficient use of water, as well as

toured the USDA-ARS Genomics and Bioinformatics Research Lab on location. The SENA team also got to visit with the MSU Precision Agriculture Laboratory team to learn about some of their materials and fly drone simulators.

“The students had the opportunity to see innovative research at multiple levels; from the implementation of cost-effective irrigation methods to determine the right time and amount of water by using soil moisture sensors and UAV’s, to the research at the molecular level in crop genomics and water quality. With the simulators and field visits, the students had a hands-on experience in automation that could be translated to the Colombian landscape”, said Guzman.

While in the United States, the team got to experience some leisure activities that counted as cultural awareness. These activities included going to some MSU athletic events and a tour of the campus. During their trip to the Mississippi delta, the team visited the B.B. King Blues Museum in Indianola, MS and took a brief trip to Memphis, TN.

Creating a Partnership

The program was seen as a success

for all involved, including the students from both MSU and SENA-M. Overall, the program allowed a partnership to form between the two universities. This relationship allowed the faculty from both universities to expand their knowledge base in agricultural practices, and also allowed the SENA-M to experience their first international trips.

In the future, the team hopes that there is a chance to identify long-term institutional faculty at each university to lead new iterations of the project. This would require faculty that are fluent in both English and Spanish, as well as familiar with the Colombian and SENA institutional context and culture.

“This project afforded us the opportunity to establish the first partnership with an institution in Colombia,” said Dr. Julie Jordan, associate vice president for international programs and executive director of the MSU International Institute. “I expect the MSU-SENA-M partnership opened the doors for a broader collaboration between MSU and institutions of higher education and workforce development in Colombia. This country is going through an incredible moment given its significant economic growth, increased access to higher education, and post-conflict scenario.”

Jordan explained that the International Institute serves as MSU’s hub for integration of global experiences, like studies abroad, into the institutional framework. This allows students, faculty, and staff to learn more about global challenges, such as food security, and increase their opportunities to actively engage and contribute to solving those challenges. She viewed the study abroad to Colombia as an opportunity for MSU and SENA-M

students to apply their academic knowledge to think about problems of food production and distribution from a global perspective.

“It is important to recognize the effort and commitment of the institute’s staff in the implementation of this project, their work was critical for the successful completion of this study abroad,” Jordan concluded.

Rico-Mendez, who is a native of Bogotá, Colombia, saw the importance of the opportunity for SENA-M students to travel abroad to the United States.

“Seeing these young SENA-M students encouraged to continue their path on higher education, working for their country and their communities from their respective areas of interest, enabled a sense of pride among the project team,” she explained.

“In the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at MSU we have been promoting the transformational benefits that study abroad experiences provide to students,” said Dr. Scott Willard, associate dean in CALs. “The exchange with Colombia that CALs-MSU engaged in this past Spring was an excellent example of these types of experiences. It was an educational partnership that went way beyond our expectations, and provided the students from both institutions and countries with a tremendous experience to understand different cultures and agricultural production practices.”

Willard stated that cross-over exchanges provide benefits for both the institutions and students during our current global marketplace and increasing interconnected society.

“While the internet and other

technologies bring us all closer together, nothing replaces actually seeing, doing, and experiencing another place first hand,” he explained.

“We at Mississippi State University had initiated a precision agriculture program recently, and it coincided with the awarded grant for an exchange opportunity in this same area,” Willard concluded, explaining that the timing of the event was very important. “Having students engage from both institutions around topics related to precision agriculture, water security, and global food webs in a comparative nature by visiting each other’s countries and regions will no doubt have lasting impacts as they draw on these experiences in their future careers.”

One of the most inspiring aspects, according to Rico-Mendez, was the ability of the students to work together despite their differences and language barriers. She stated that she felt it provided a great example of 100,000 Strong in the Americas’ goals and the potential of this current generation.

“The capacity of the students to find ways to communicate with each other, despite there being a language barrier, was so inspiring,” she said. “They learned that even though they live over 2,000 miles from each other, there are things they have in common and, with the help of technology, they were able to talk with one another and develop connections.” ■

Visit ssrc.msstate.edu for more information on the Social Science Research Center. For more information on SENA-M, visit centrogaira.blogspot.com.

Impacting Lives

The Greenberg Scholarship Established

by Alan Burns

The accomplishments and impact of a long-time pediatrician and collaborator were memorialized this past fall at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC). The Family and Children Research Unit (FCRU) at the SSRC established the Margaret A. and Robert E. Greenberg Scholarship Award for undergraduate or graduate students who demonstrate an interest in improving the health and well-being of children, with a particular focus upon impoverished children. Students who receive the award will also have the opportunity to work with and be mentored by researchers at MSU's Social Science Research Center on a child health research project.

Robert "Bob" Greenberg was well known for his work in the field of pediatrics and endocrinology, as well as his work on equity child health and child rights. Greenberg was a graduate of both Stanford and the University of California, San Francisco, and would later go on to develop the pediatric program at the Charles Drew/Martin Luther King Medical Center in Los Angeles and chair the Department of Pediatrics at the University of New Mexico.

In 1985, Greenberg helped organize the New Mexico Voices for Children, a statewide child advocacy organization, and continued to serve as chair or on the board until 2006. He also spent time serving as the chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) Council on Pediatric Research, during which time he helped develop the Center for Child Health Research (CCHR). This, in turn led to the collaboration between Dr. Linda Southward of the SSRC and Dr. Greenberg to create the Collaborating Centers for Child and Family Health Research in early 2001.

"Almost twenty years ago, I had a tremendous honor of being selected as one of 50 child health leaders across the country at the launch of AAP's



Dr. Margaret Greenberg (L) and Dr. Robert Greenberg (R). (photo provided by Matt Greenberg)

Center for Child Health Research," said Southward. "We met with, listened and learned from some of the country's leading experts on a wide array of child health topics."

"For me, one of the most knowledgeable and approachable individuals in attendance was Bob Greenberg. As chair of the CCHR, it was clear that having his 'buy-in' to having a research partnership with the SSRC was key. Dr. Greenberg was keen on including research with children in rural settings, in early care and education settings, as well as the impact of second-hand smoke on young children," she continued.

"Within 18 months of our first meeting, a research partnership was established. We had no idea two decades ago about the amazing cascade of research projects that would result from establishing the research partnership between the AAP and SSRC," Southward said.

Maggie Greenberg was very much an advocate in her own right, having done tremendous work in public health and community engagement. She also

influenced numerous nursing students whom she taught at the University of New Mexico.

The SSRC presented the inaugural award in 2017 to two students that were planning on pursuing work in the medical field: Hasna Khandekar and Nia Sims. Khandekar is currently perusing her medical degree at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi, while Sims graduated in May 2018 and is also continuing her education through graduate studies.

Southward stated that she sees this scholarship benefiting the medical field and preserving the lasting impact that the Greenbergs had on the nation's children.

"The personal friendships of both Maggie and Bob Greenberg have been some of my most cherished ones and they are deeply missed—on a multitude of levels. Both of these individuals' impact continues to live on through their mentorship and their work with individuals across the globe. We at the SSRC are indeed, fortunate to have established of the scholarship in their memory," Southward concluded. ■

As a part of the pilot school program, Get2College counselor Stephen Brown supports a college application day. (photo provided by the Woodward Hines Education Foundation)



GET2COLLEGE PILOT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Researchers at the Social Science Research Center are working with the Woodward Hines Education Foundation to evaluate their Get2College Pilot School Program, which seeks to increase the number of students getting to college in Mississippi.

by Alan Burns

Many high school students have thought about attending college after graduation, but many may not know how to get there. A lack of college planning advice at home and in school and financial barriers ranging from college application fees to large tuition gaps are obstacles that often prevent students from enrolling in a community college, four-year college or university. Researchers at Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center (SSRC) are evaluating the Get2College Pilot School Program that is working to create a college-going culture in eight high schools throughout the state.

Woodward Hines Education Foundation (WHEF) is committed to helping more Mississippians obtain postsecondary credentials, college certifications, and degrees that lead to meaningful employment. WHEF focuses mainly on a three-pronged strategy: access and entry to college, persistence and completion of college, and connection to family-sustaining employment. Get2College, a program of WHEF, provides the boots on the ground work for the access strategy.

The Get2College program serves students, their families and educators across Mississippi. With three centers located in Jackson, Ocean Springs, and Southaven,

Get2College staff work with students and their families to help plan and pay for college. While Get2College staff work with all families, they are committed to helping students who have historically been underrepresented in college, low income, first generation, and students of color.

Get2College also provides training on college access issues. This includes support for high school counselors across the state, FAFSA training for high school, community college, and university partners; training for educators on how to leverage data to move the needle on college access; training for teachers for the new College and Career Readiness course for high schools; and college admission recruiter training on issues of college access and financial aid.

Another key program of Get2College is their pilot school program where they work on site in eight high schools across Mississippi to create a college-going culture. Since January 2017, researchers at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) have been working with Get2College on evaluating their Pilot School Program.

The Pilot School Program

In order to increase the numbers of students going to, persisting

and completing college, the Pilot School Program is designed to use nationally identified best practices and benchmarks from the National College Access Network (NCAN). Get2College works with administrators, counselors, teachers, students, and parents through on-site support, workshops, special events, and individual counseling. Some of the activities include application days, campus tours, ACT workshops, college applications days, and FAFSA completion events.

"In a way, the Pilot School Program grew out of the work that we do in our centers. We were able to see that students coming to our centers were going to college at a very high rate using data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)," said Get2College Program Director Ann Hendrick.

The eight pilot high schools include Lake Cormorant in the DeSoto County School District, Pelahatchie Attendance Center in the Rankin County School District, Bruce High School in the Calhoun County School District, Taylorsville High School in the Smith County School District, St. Martin High School in the Jackson County School District, O'Bannon High School and Riverside High School in the Western Line School District, and Moss Point Career and Technical Center in the Moss Point School District.



Students from O'Bannon High School participate in the Get2College pilot school program. (photo provided by the Woodward Hines Education Foundation)

The participating schools were selected to showcase the difference in small versus large schools, with junior and senior classes in the eight schools ranging from 43 at the smallest to over 350 at the largest. The differences in size provide insight on how the program can impact schools of varying sizes and demographics.

SSRC Team Leads Evaluation

Ben Walker and Izzy Pellegrine, both researchers at the SSRC, are operating as Co-Principal Investigators for Get2College's pilot program evaluation. Walker and Pellegrine feel that this evaluation is unique in that it presents them a chance to use an emergent research design that couples together distinct social scientific approaches.

"One of the most interesting pieces about this evaluation is the actual design," said Pellegrine. We're using a mixed-methods component with a matched pairs qualitative sub-component, which essentially means we're using both qualitative

and quantitative methods at the pilot schools, as well as match schools in the state. This design will provide us with information that we wouldn't normally get from a program evaluation."

The evaluation can be most effectively described by breaking it into two areas: the quantitative component and the qualitative component, with the qualitative having a matched pairs qualitative sub-component. According to Walker, the team is trying to tackle two main ideas from a quantitative perspective.

"Ultimately, the quantitative part of the evaluation is looking at how many students are getting into college, and of the various services that are offered, which are having the most benefit in terms of getting them there," Walker explained.

In the qualitative section, the evaluation is geared towards the process of intervention on the ground. Pellegrine and Walker explained this section has two distinct parts, one that has been

completed and one that they are getting ready to launch.

"Our qualitative section is on the ground looking at what's really happening in these schools," Pellegrine stated. "We want to know what these programs look like as they exist currently. We want to center on student voices in how they relate to these services and what they'd like to see from the program in the future."

For the comparative qualitative match component, the team matched the pilot schools with 8 control schools that are not receiving the program. The schools that were chosen are demographically similar to the pilot schools, which allows them the chance to have a more effective reference group for comparison.

"Our qualitative match component is working at the school level with the demographically matched schools. This comparative component consists of counselor interviews and focus groups with students that look at their processes and resources," Pellegrine said.

Another key issue for the program evaluation is the establishment or expansion of the college-going culture in Mississippi schools. The evaluation team hopes that the focus groups, in both pilot and match schools, will give them insight into the current college-going culture.

"In these focus groups, we plan to find out what the college-going culture is like. It's hard to find this out on a standard survey instrument such as our entrance and exit surveys, but the focus groups should yield richer information," said Walker.

"That is why the student's perspective is so important," explained Pellegrine. "All of the adults



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involved, such as the counselors, administrators, and parents, are all stakeholders in creating that culture, but the students on the ground can actually relay the result of Get2College's efforts to create and expand that culture."

Regarding the complex methodology, both Pellegrine and Walker expressed their anticipation for the results and how this evaluation can be proof of the methodology for testing other programs in the future.

Early results in the program have helped reinforce both national standards and observations that the WHEF and Get2College were currently using regarding Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion.

"So far, we've found that student's FAFSA completion is the strongest factor in predicting their transition to college," said Walker.

Hendrick reciprocated these results. "We have always used national data, but with this evaluation, the SSRC has given us the ability to use our own data to promote the college-going culture and that's very valuable to us," she said.

Get2College's Future and Impact

For Get2College, it is important to take what the team learns from the Pilot School Program evaluation and apply it to our work around the state, explained WHEF Director

of Communications and Impact Courtney Lange. "Just as important as informing our own work, we plan to share what we've learned with schools and educators throughout Mississippi so that they can replicate the promising practices identified through the Pilot School Program."

"Often, people will commission research, it is read, and that is where it ends. But this project is on a continuum: the work, the research, and then putting it into practice on a broader scale," Lange continued.

For the future of Get2College and work with students, Hendrick noted that the final results from the SSRC's evaluation would play a crucial role.

"At Get2College, our goal is to work within a cycle of Do-Learn-Test-Share, where we implement a project, participate in an ongoing assessment of the project's effectiveness, and experiment with new approaches that will ultimately move the needle on college access in Mississippi," Hendrick said. "As we begin thinking about our pilot school exit strategy, we plan to leverage the data we receive from the evaluation to create a college readiness and enrollment dashboard for high school leaders in each pilot school and to develop a data-driven plan to compliment it."

This dashboard would include specific goals, timelines, and success metrics to help high school counselors and administrators to

both create and sustain a college-going culture in Mississippi high schools.

Hendrick also noted that a longer-term approach to evaluation could result in sharing college readiness information more widely to high school administrators and eventually include community colleges, universities, and communities to work towards a state-wide, data-driven approach to college attainment goals. ■

Visit woodwardhines.org for more information on the Woodward Hines Education Foundation. For more information on the Get2College program, visit get2college.org.

COUNTING OUR CHILDREN

The Mississippi YOU COUNT! Collaborative

A new project at the Social Science Research Center is seeking to educate the public about the importance of the 2020 census. The project, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a partnership between the SSRC and the Center for Population Studies at the University of Mississippi.

by Alan Burns & Heather Hanna

The 2020 Census is approaching, and Mississippi families stand to be greatly impacted by its outcomes. Every ten years, the United States government conducts a national census, which aims to count the number of people living in the country, identify them demographically, and chart the results. While some may not believe that the census has an impact on their lives, it often helps decide how much federal money is spent in each state. These federal dollars fund programs that benefit Mississippi's children and families, and the amount received depends on accurate counts of the state's residents. Additionally, the census is used to determine how many representatives serve Mississippi in the U.S. House of Representatives, which can affect state resources and influence.

Mississippi currently receives around two billion dollars from the federal government each year and has the highest federal reimbursement rate for each dollar spent of any state. Specifically, programs affected include children's health insurance programs, children's nutrition programs, special education, foster care, and early childhood programs—all essential for optimal development of the state's youth. Therefore, low census participation among families with children may cost the state needed dollars and put a strain on agencies already struggling to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

A new project at Mississippi State

University's Social Science Research Center (SSRC) seeks to educate the public and other stakeholders about the importance of the upcoming census in 2020. The Mississippi YOU COUNT! Collaborative is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a private philanthropy based in Baltimore that provides grants across the country to federal agencies, states, neighborhoods and more to impact children's well-being.

The project, which is being led by Dr. Heather Hanna, an Assistant Research Professor at the SSRC and Co-Director of Mississippi KIDS COUNT, will entail a partnership between the SSRC and the Center for Population Studies at the University of Mississippi, led by Dr. John Green.

Green points out that, "Beyond providing a count of the population and its demographic characteristics, the decennial census serves as the foundation for numerous health, educational, and economic data sources. We need the best data possible to inform programming for Mississippi's children, and this requires community outreach, engagement, and promotion."

According to Hanna, Mississippi has a very big opportunity in the 2020 census to impact the state and its children. "We want people to realize that the upcoming census is a big opportunity to sustain or increase our current levels of funding for some very important programs," she stated. "Basic programs for our

children, such as Head Start, free and reduced lunches, Medicaid, and foster care are all dependent on census counts; consequently, if we do not do a good job of counting all children, we could possibly lose funding in those areas."

Hanna stated that the Mississippi YOU COUNT! Collaborative efforts are designed to complement the U.S. Census Bureau's efforts to ensure a complete count of young children in the state. "Given that Mississippi had an overall participation rate of 69% in the 2010 Census, the Census Bureau is currently engaging in targeted efforts to raise awareness in the state to ensure the most accurate data possible," she explained.

Across the nation, it's estimated that almost one million children under the age of five were not counted in the 2010 census. This undercount was due to many reasons, including the rurality of some areas; having high numbers of families living in poverty, renting or living in multigenerational households; and low participation rates among young parents. Minority children were less likely to be counted than White children. Each of these factors will contribute to the difficulty of an accurate count in Mississippi, making the state high risk. Additionally, the 2020 Census will be the first to promote a primarily online response from residents. This will pose an additional challenge for Mississippi given that much of the state suffers from poor connectivity. Vicki Mack, Partnership Specialist with the Census Bureau's office in

Census Planning Database 2018

Planning Database

The Planning Database (PDB) assembles a range of housing, demographic, socioeconomic, and census operational data that can be used for survey and census planning. Data are provided at both the census block group and the tract levels of geography. The Planning Database uses selected Census and selected American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. In addition to variables extracted from the census and ACS databases, operational variables include the 2010 Census Mail Return Rate for each block group and tract.

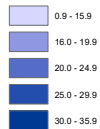
Research Outreach Area Mapper available online.

<https://www.census.gov/roam>

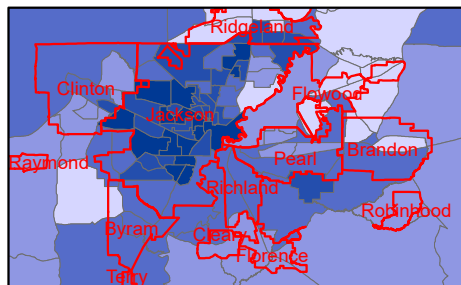
Low-Response Model Summaries at the Tract Level

Tract	Population	Population Density	Population Change	Population Change Rate	Population Change Rate	Population Change Rate	Population Change Rate	Population Change Rate	Population Change Rate
001000	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
002000	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
003000	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300	300
004000	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
005000	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
006000	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
007000	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	700
008000	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800	800
009000	900	900	900	900	900	900	900	900	900
010000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Low Response Score



Jackson Metro Inset



Map produced by the
Center for Population Studies
University of Mississippi

Above: A 2018 Census Planning Database map showing tract levels for low-responses. (map provided by the Center for Population Studies University of Mississippi)

Atlanta, explained, “The Census Bureau is engaged in a variety of recruiting and awareness-raising efforts across the state. For the first time, the Census Bureau will be urging most households to submit responses online via the Internet. Therefore, traditional outreach efforts are even more important, given the new response modes.”

“Residents will be encouraged to respond to the census online using a computer, tablet, or smart

phone. Responses can also be provided via telephone 24 hours a day if households call the Census Questionnaire Assistance Center. The Census Bureau will provide online questionnaires and telephone assistance in multiple languages,” she continued.

According to Mack, “Local governments and community groups can help reach hard-to-count populations by creating or joining a Complete Count Committee (CCC).

Members of CCCs partner with other trusted voices and influential leaders in their areas who are committed to increasing census participation. A CCC is a volunteer committee established by tribal, state, or local governments and/or community leaders to increase awareness about the census and to motivate residents in the community to respond. The CCC is charged with developing and implementing a plan designed to target the unique characteristics of their community.”

Despite the barriers Mississippi faces, Hanna hopes that collaborating with other groups across the state and releasing targeted materials in hard-to-count areas will help. “With the help of stakeholders, we’re going to develop Mississippi-specific materials to distribute,” she stated. “Young parents are a population of concern in our state, so we want to distribute information that will hopefully help them understand the stakes and encourage their participation. We are also hoping to encourage strategies, such as using public libraries for greater Internet access, and we will target local businesses to let them know how important accurate census counts are for infrastructure and business planning,” she continued.

The project team will also present information to state policymakers, who can impact census counts by encouraging census promotion at the national, state, and local levels. Policymakers can also provide funding for census efforts and work with trusted messengers to ensure the public understands the importance of participation. Hanna concludes, “Hopefully decision-makers, stakeholders, and residents will hear from multiple sources about the significance of the 2020 Census for Mississippi.” ■

GENDER EQUITY IN NORTHERN GHANA

by Alan Burns, Kathleen Ragsdale, & Mary Read-Wahidi



Above: Dr. Gina Rico Mendez works with survey team members in a village in Ghana's Northern Region. (photo by Kathleen Ragsdale)

A five-year project that focused on gender equity in the Northern Region of Ghana has been extended for another three years of research. The Socioeconomic and Gender Equity Research Team seeks identify gaps and improve gender responsive development in Africa.

A five-year project on gender equity in Ghana's Northern Region, which was set to finish this year, has been extended by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for an additional three years. This research is being conducted by two Social Science Research Center (SSRC) researchers, Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale, an associate research professor, and Dr. Mary Read-Wahidi, an assistant research professor.

Funded by USAID, the Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab is one of 23 Feed the Future Innovations Labs located at premier U.S. universities who work with institutions in developing countries to tackle global challenges in agriculture and food security. The Soybean Innovation Lab is focused on addressing this issue by improving soybean production among smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa.

Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi lead the Lab's Socioeconomic and Gender Equity Research (SGER) team. The SGER team focuses on gender and socioeconomic impacts of soybean production, which are two of the ten research areas being addressed by the Lab. Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi conduct research for development (R4D) that seeks to identify gaps and determine entry points to improve the Lab's efforts to effectively implement gender responsive development



into the Lab's agricultural activities and trainings for men and women smallholder farmers.

Smallholder Farmers' Importance to Global Food Security

Smallholder farmers are considered those with less than five acres of farmable land. According to the United Nations (U.N.) Food and Agriculture Organization (2012), "eighty percent of the farmland in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia is managed by smallholders," and it is these men and women smallholder farmers who "provide up to eighty percent of the food supply in Asian and sub-Saharan Africa." Ragsdale explained that "By

assisting men and women farmers with increasing their productivity and their access to markets, R4D can help feed a world population that the U.N. predicts to reach 8.5 billion by 2030 and nearly 10 billion by 2050.

Identifying Empowerment Issues

In order to identify gaps and determine R4D entry points in northern Ghana, Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi first established baseline data on topics such as gender and economic barriers in soybean farmers' access to land, credit lines, and markets for their soybean crops.

The SGER team began by implementing Wave I of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) in 2014, which they adapted by adding soybean modules to produce the WEAI+. The original WEAI was developed through a partnership between USAID, Feed the Future, the International Food Policy Institute (IFPRI), and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. According to Feed the Future (2014), the WEAI is the first index to "directly capture women's empowerment and inclusion levels in the agricultural sector." The original WEAI is designed to systematically capture and men's and women's decision making power across important agricultural domains, such as what crops to plant on their own farm land.

The WEAI+ includes soybean modules to collect additional baseline data on soybean production in Ghana's Northern Region. The SGER team administered Wave I of the WEAI+ to 675 farmers across northern Ghana, of whom the vast majority were husbands and wives.

Their WEAI+ results showed that both men and women farmers are

participating in the soybean value chain in northern Ghana. The results also identified specific areas where women farmers lacked decision making power as compared to their husbands – such as what crops to grow on their own land. This is noteworthy because such decisions can directly impact women's soybean yields, their ability to generate income from growing soybean, and their ability to save part of their crop to feed their children.

This last point is important in terms of increasing protein intake for undernourished children because soybean is both a cash crop and a nutritious food crop, as soybean contains amino acids essential for children's growth and development. In northern Ghana and other parts of the world where some farm families are extremely poor, soybean can help provide needed protein to malnourished children.

Through the WEAI+, Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi found that men were 17 times more likely than women to have decision making power over purchasing, selling, or transferring land and other assets. Men were five times more likely than women to have decision making power over agricultural issues, such as what crops they grew. And men were four times more likely than women to be empowered to speak up in public, including to ask Extension Agents about 'best practices' to improve their horticultural knowledge.

Digging Further into Empowerment

After reviewing the WEAI+ results, Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi moved towards a more precise understanding of empowerment issues among men and women farmers in northern Ghana that could be used to develop tools and trainings to increase gender



Women soybean farmers participate in a focus group on land tenure. (photo by Kathleen Ragsdale)



Drs. Kathleen Ragsdale and Gina Rico Mendez with CRS/ Ghana staff and survey team members. (photo by CRS)

responsive agricultural development in this region and beyond. Towards this goal, they developed and administered several large surveys and conducted farmers’ focus groups in Ghana in 2016, 2017, and 2018.

As Read-Wahidi stated, “We started by looking at men and women’s empowerment with the WEAI+, which defined the areas where women lack empowerment compared to men. Our adapted version also collected soybean specific data – that’s why we added the “plus.” With the SUNS [the Soybean Uptake and Network Survey], we wanted to see how those empowerment differences translate into measurable issues faced by men and women soybean farmer.”

In 2016, Ragsdale and her team administered the SUNS Wave I to 832 men and women farmers in 12 villages. The SUNS collected data on soybean production that could be analyzed across genders, villages, and regions. From this data, Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi found that although women were similarly engaged in soybean cultivation, men were significantly more likely to have planted more than one acre of soybean, to have produced higher soybean yields, and to have earned higher incomes from selling their soybean crops.

Building on the WEAI+ results, these SUNS results provide clear evidence of how agricultural disempowerment among women farmers plays out under real world conditions and has tangible outcomes. These combined results resonate with USAID’s (2016) statement that women could increase their farm yields by 20-30 percent if they had the same access to productive resources as men.

During that trip, Ragsdale and her team also implemented focus group discussions using the guide they developed, Information and Communication Technology for Agricultural Development (ICT4AgD). For this study, 35 men and women farmers were divided into separate focus groups to collect qualitative data on mobile phone ownership and what information farmers most needed. Although nearly twice as many men owned mobile phones as women (93% versus 55%), all participants voiced an urgent need to be able to access up-to-date information on local weather and on fair soybean market prices on mobile phones.

Ragsdale explained, “We are committed to combining quantitative data collected through large surveys like the WEAI+ and the SUNS – with qualitative data collected during focus groups with men and women farmers – to help us gain a more complete understanding of how

empowerment in agriculture plays out in traditional farming societies where gender and cultural norms can restrict women farmers.”

In 2016, Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi developed the Gender Responsive Agricultural Development Assessment (GRADA) with input from USAID and Save the Children colleagues. Launched that December, the GRADA is an internal audit to gauge how Soybean Innovation Lab researchers and implementing partners consider gender equity in their trainings/ activities. Fewer than 50 percent of participants had gender-responsive strategies built into their activities, such as steps to ensure that more equal numbers of men and women farmers receive key agricultural inputs like fertilizer.

This pinpointed critical needs that should be met in order to improve gender responsiveness in all the Lab’s activities, including a need to increase awareness of how gender constraints can limit women farmers’ participation in extension outreach and trainings.

Wave II Data Collection

During 2017, Dr. Gina Rico Mendez, then a SSRC Postdoctoral Research Fellow, traveled with Ragsdale to northern Ghana to collect the WEAI+ Wave II among 984 men and women

farmers in the same 12 villages where the WEAI+ Wave I had been collected. While the data is not yet fully analyzed, preliminary results indicate specific areas where women farmers lack decision making power as compared to men. For example, men are significantly more likely to report having input into most or all agricultural decisions, while women are more likely to report having input into few agricultural decisions.

On this trip, Ragsdale and Rico Mendez also conducted separate focus groups with 72 men and women soybean farmers on Gender Equity and Land Tenure (GELT). They chose to explore this area of research based on the lack of information on how gender equity impacts land use and inheritance among men and women farmers in northern Ghana. Through the GELT focus groups, Ragsdale and Rico Mendez learned that complex cultural practices – such as communities various social structures, farm land allotments, and polygamous marriages – can severely limit women farmers’ rights to land, which in turn, can negatively impact women farmers’ agricultural decision making.

For example, Ragsdale and Rico Mendez found that women farmers can be reluctant to use their small and hard-earned incomes to purchase expensive fertilizers to improve their farm land because they do not have secure rights to their plots. For many women farmers, investing in increasing their land’s productivity is a risky economic gamble, as a plot can be taken away from them by their husband or other male authority with little or no recourse or compensation.

In 2018, Ragsdale and her team returned to northern Ghana to administer Wave II of the SUNS. With the assistance of SSRC research assistants, Kelly Lower and Taylor

Yarbrough, the team collected 904 surveys among farmers in the Northern Region. During this trip, the team also conducted Wave II of the GELT focus groups in the same villages where the GELT Wave I focus groups were conducted. The purpose of these focus groups were to follow up on particular land tenure issues that were identified during analysis of the GELT Wave I results.

Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi anticipate that Wave II of the GRADA will be administered this December. They plan to use the combined results from the GRADA Wave I-II to assist the Soybean Innovation Lab in its R4D goals by 1) ensuring that the Lab’s practices promote gender responsive agricultural development, 2) developing trainings, tools, and resources to support gender responsive agricultural development among the Lab’s researchers and partners, and 3) developing trainings, tools, and resources to support gender responsive agricultural development among the broader development community.

Future of the project

Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi describe their plans for SIL 2.0 as having three distinct goals, including 1) expanding gender equity analyses to other Feed the Future countries such as Ethiopia and Malawi, 2) working directly with Soybean Innovation Lab partners to design and integrate tailored gender equity plans into their activities, and 3) providing sociocultural and gender equity support services



CRS’ Philip Atiim (center) with survey team members in Karaga District. (photo by Kathleen Ragsdale)

to in-country partners and other development actors.

Ragsdale stated that, “One of the most important takeaways from working in Ghana is the importance of community buy-in. We couldn’t have accomplished so much during the few short weeks we are able to be in Ghana each year without the incredible assistance from the dedicated staff of our in-country implementing partner, Catholic Relief Services/Ghana. It is their ‘boots on the ground’ ability to build community buy-in across multiple sectors – from village chiefs to directors at the Ministry of Food and Agriculture – that allow us to accomplish so much research during our trips to the amazing country of Ghana.”

Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi are currently gearing up for the next three years of the Soybean Innovation Lab, which will be focused on using R4D results to expand the Lab’s impacts to other countries. One way that Ragsdale and Read-Wahidi will contribute to this process is by using their combined survey and focus group results from Ghana to further inform tools and trainings as they move forward with the Soybean Innovation Lab 2.0 mission of ‘Scaling for Success’ across sub-Saharan Africa. ■

A CONNECTION WITH THE ALAN ALDA CENTER

After a workshop at Mississippi State University, the Social Science Research Center has established a valuable connection and relationship with the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science at Stony Brook University.

by Alan Burns

The Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science was at Mississippi State University to conduct a workshop on effectively communicating research this past August. Three Social Science Research Center (SSRC) scientists participated in the workshop, while The Message Laboratory located at the SSRC collaborated with the Alda Center to evaluate the workshop.

The Alan Alda Center, which was founded at Stony Brook University in 2009 by the famed M.A.S.H. star of the same name, seeks to help scientists and medical professionals to better communicate complex topics more clearly. The Alda Center's faculty specialize in many fields, including improvisational theater, communication, journalism, medicine, public health, and more.

The workshop was centered around helping MSU researchers and administrators communicate more effectively with the general public, policy makers, media, and potential funders and collaborators. It was funded by the California-based Kavli Foundation and the Mississippi-based Robert M. Hearin Foundation.

"I think having participated in this workshop will greatly impact how we, as scientists, convey our research here at the SSRC," said Dr. Holli Seitz, an assistant professor in the MSU Department of Communication and Director of The Message Laboratory at the SSRC.

"We will be able to better connect with our audience and those we serve with our work, and better convey the implications of our research findings. I hope we can use this to improve outcomes in our state," she continued.

Others in attendance from SSRC were Dr. Arthur Cosby, Director of the SSRC, and Dr. Heather Hanna, an Assistant Research Professor at the SSRC and Co-Director of Mississippi KIDS COUNT.

"Through this training on science communication, I learned how to grab an audience's attention, connect personally with the audience, and to consider the audience's viewpoint when conveying messages about my work, altering the message as needed," explained Hanna. "These are skills I employ during one-on-one conversations that I now realize can translate to public speaking for greater effectiveness."

Workshop Evaluation

The Alda Center has partnered with George Mason University and The Message Laboratory at the SSRC to perform an evaluation on the effectiveness of this workshop. This evaluation is using pre- and post-workshop videos of participants describing their work to determine the effect. The Message Laboratory has helped coordinate the recording of these presentations for the Alda Center, and Dr. Seitz was

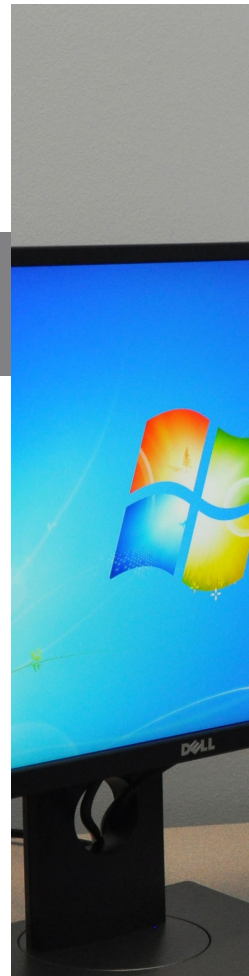
subsequently brought on as a research collaborator.

"Science communication is one of my areas of focus, so I volunteered to host the recordings in our lab. After we talked about the research design, the Alda Center team was kind enough to invite me on as a partner in the study. This is truly an amazing opportunity, as they have so much expertise in the science communication area," said Seitz.

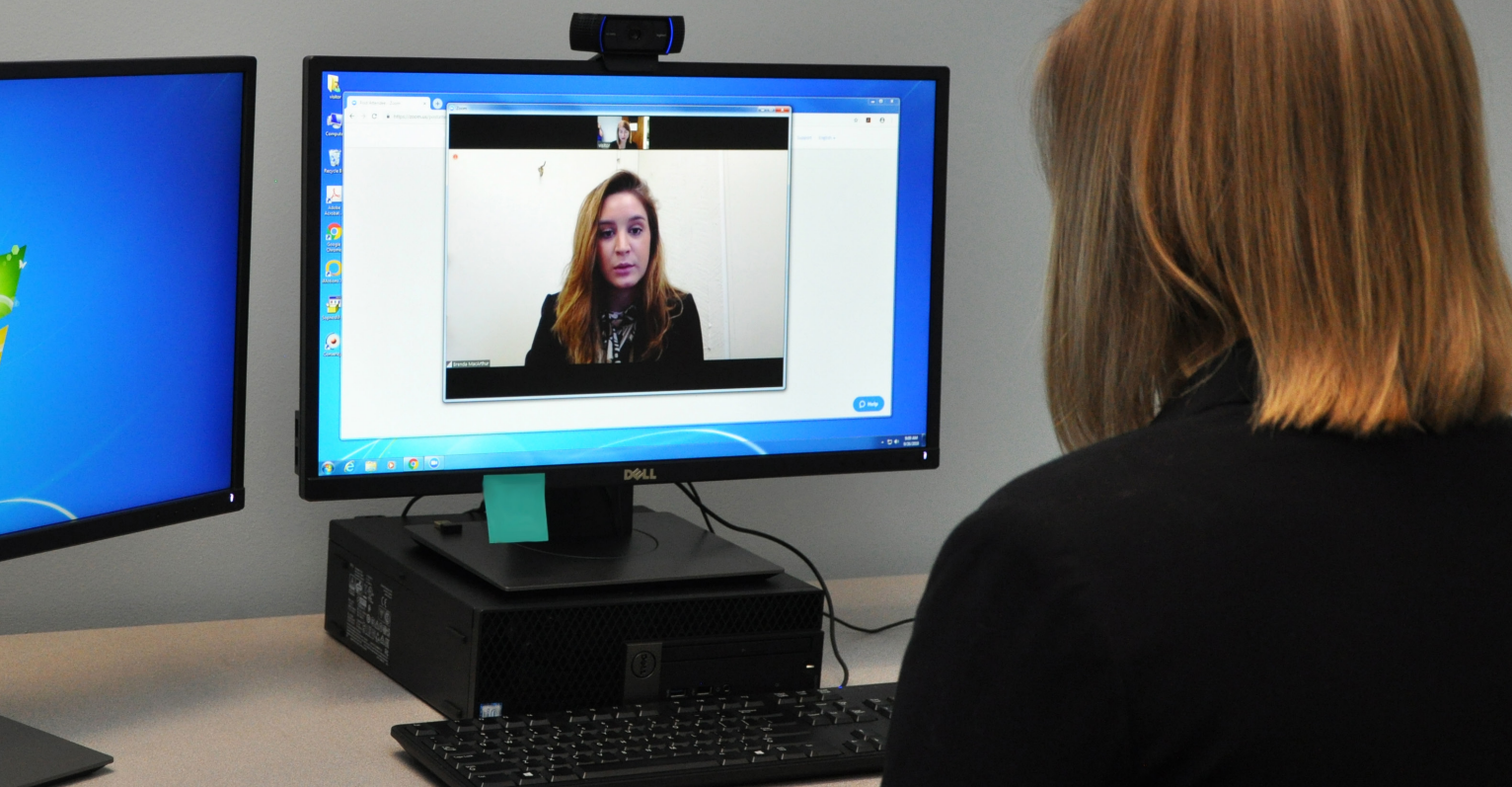
The benefits of the evaluation have the opportunity to reach further than MSU, potentially impacting how scientists and researchers around the world tell their stories.

"I think the immediate takeaway is that we get to evaluate their unique hands-on, experiential training in science communication and how it improves the way that we communicate and connect with our audiences," Seitz stated. "And I think there are many possibilities here to go beyond just effectiveness to look at other factors that affect how communicators appeal to their audiences."

Dr. Laura Lindenfeld, Executive Director of the Alan Alda Center and professor in the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University, oversees the operation of the Alda Center and



A scientist at the SSRC participates in a post-workshop interview at The Message Laboratory. (photo by Alan Burns)



the work it's done extending to over 40,000 people.

"Our ability to empirically measure the effects of our training is central to what we do. We teach our participants to shift their focus to their audience to ensure that a message lands," said Lindenfeld. "Having data that demonstrates that this training impacts scientists and shows how it achieves this is critical to our work. Partnering with Dr. Seitz has added tremendous value to our ability to conduct cutting edge social science research about our training method."

The Future of Storytelling

According to Seitz, one of the most important issues to be addressed following the study is identifying factors that make science communication more effective in Mississippi.

"Emerging data suggests there may be rural and urban differences in how people perceive scientific messages, so I think looking at who the most effective messengers for our specific audiences are will be a great question for future work," Seitz said.

"Through the work of Dr. Chris Volpe, Executive Director of ScienceCounts, we are able to understand how different publics view and form opinions about science, and we integrate that data into our workshops to help scientists better understand the audiences with whom they communicate," Dr. Lindenfeld emphasized. "These types of partnerships – with ScienceCounts and the Message Laboratory – represent a concerted effort to elevate our ability to work collaboratively in support of scientists to advance the public's awareness of science in the US. This

is just the beginning."

"I think it is tremendous that we have this opportunity with the Alan Alda Center," said Dr. Arthur Cosby. "Establishing a research collaboration between them and the Message Laboratory at the SSRC will provide a unique chance to study science communication and messaging."

Seitz stated that she believes this is the beginning of a very productive and collaborative relationship with the Alda Center.

"I hope this is the beginning of a strong partnership and a focus on science communication for The Message Laboratory," she explained. "I believe there is potential for us to collaborate on projects in the future, and working with such respected partners will provide us with new opportunities going forward." ■

Suspension Gaps in Mississippi

A recent study by members of Mississippi KIDS COUNT and the Mississippi Department of Education looked at disciplinary policies in Mississippi and surveyed public school administrators and teachers to better understand how these policies are used and their effectiveness.

by Alan Burns

Most children would consider days away from school as a welcome vacation, but what about the children who are taken out of the classroom due to exclusionary discipline policies? According to the U.S. Department of Education, one out of every seven students in American public schools in 2011 experienced exclusionary discipline such as in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), or expulsion.

Recent efforts by Mississippi KIDS COUNT, a project of the Family and Children Research Unit (FCRU) at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC), sought a better understanding of how disciplinary policies are being used in the state's public schools. The team looked at discipline policy data and surveyed administrators and teachers from Mississippi public schools on the policies' use, effectiveness, and suggestions for alternative strategies.

The report, officially titled "Balancing Act: Mississippi Administrators and Teachers Weigh in on Discipline Policies in Schools," followed a series of Mississippi KIDS COUNT studies of chronic absenteeism, defined as missing ten percent or more of the academic year. All have been conducted through support from

the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Following the Data" policy grants.

"Chronic absence involves unexcused absences and excused absences, but it also takes suspensions into account. When kids are suspended, either in ISS or OSS, they are not in the classroom. They are missing valuable instruction time, which can impede academic success. It's an issue of concern to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)," said Anne Buffington, project director.

Toni Kersh, Director of the Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement at MDE, has worked with Buffington, and Ben Walker, a Research Associate in the FCRU on the chronic absence study for the last five years. She stated that the initial work took a lot of effort to properly explain due to the complicated nature of how chronic absence is calculated.

"It took everyone a while to realize that the issue we were dealing with was more than just truancy, or unexcused absences. We had to get everyone on the same page and that meant getting them to understand that the chronic absenteeism rates are comprised of suspensions, excused absences and unexcused absences," she said.

Kersh recounted that after meeting with the KIDS COUNT team from their work on chronic absenteeism, she noticed something of concern in the data.

"After I met with the KIDS COUNT team in 2014, there was a bit of data that stood out to me," Kersh continued. "The number of kindergartners that were chronically absent in our state was very high. The team went back and started unpacking that data, and they found that it was primarily due to suspension."

According to Buffington, this prompted the research team to move from traditional chronic absence studies to discipline policies, suspension in particular.

Disciplinary Methods

There are five main types of discipline practices used in the state that the research looked at: suspension (which includes both ISS and OSS), detention, corporal punishment, positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), and restorative justice. While these are the main methods of disciplinary action used in the state, not all are practiced in each district or county, with some counties having removed corporal

BALANCING ACT:

Mississippi Administrators and Teachers Weigh in on Discipline Policies in Schools

MAY 2018



A school district's student code of conduct serves as a contract between the student and administration outlining student expectations that, if followed, will foster a positive learning environment. Developed under the leadership of the district administration and adopted and enforced by the local school board, the code of conduct and student handbook explain possible disciplinary actions and consequences should disorderly conduct occur. When a student violates the code, disciplinary policies are put into place to address the behavior exhibited. The methods of discipline and the degree of enforcement vary widely across the U.S. K-12 landscape and even from school to school.

DISCIPLINE POLICIES IN MISSISSIPPI

In Mississippi, school suspension, detention, alternative policies, alternative education, and corporal punishment are allowable under state law. Mississippi Code 37-11-55 requires local school boards to adopt their own disciplinary policies and make them available to students, parents and guardians at the beginning of the academic year.¹

METHODS OF DISCIPLINE

On average, one out of every seven students in American public schools experiences exclusionary discipline: suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), or expulsion.² Expulsion and OSS remove students from the school environment. In-school suspension, in contrast, allows students to remain in the school environment while removing them from the classroom. The goal of in-school suspension is to maintain order and safety while addressing the behavior that led to the suspension.³ Students discipline

punishment altogether. As of 2018, there are 16 districts that prohibit corporal punishment in the state.

The Mississippi KIDS COUNT team defines each of the discipline practices in their report. Suspension removes a student from the regular classroom for a specified time period, either in-school or out-of-school, depending on the severity of the infraction; detention requires a student to report to a designated area during otherwise free time; corporal punishment involves physically administering discipline, usually by means of spanking or hitting; Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) provides discipline plans and rewards for good behavior; and restorative justice seeks to balance consequences with mending the relationship between the student

and school community after an infraction.

Surveying Administrators and Teachers

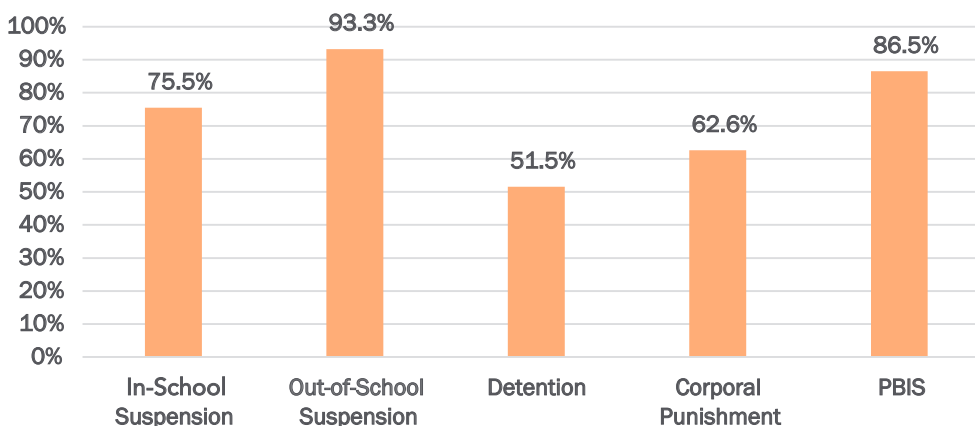
The data collection segment was broken into a web-based survey and qualitative telephone interviews. The team also had access to data from MDE that allowed them to know the usage rate of the discipline policies, primarily corporal punishment.

The web-based survey instrument, designed by the project team, was user-friendly with 28 questions based on the administrators' beliefs and practices regarding suspension and other disciplinary actions. Prior to delivery, the survey was approved by MDE.

"We wanted to find out very basic stuff about discipline strategies among teachers and administrators," said Walker. "A lot of our policy work begins that way, finding answers to very basic questions: what do they think about suspension, what are the barriers to using alternative strategies, and what are the principals doing in their districts? That information just simply isn't available to us, this allowed us to establish a baseline."

The team initially delivered the survey to 888 principals around the state, with instructions inside that asked them to forward it on to their teachers and staff members. The survey had a total of 433 responses, almost half of the responses identifying as teachers.

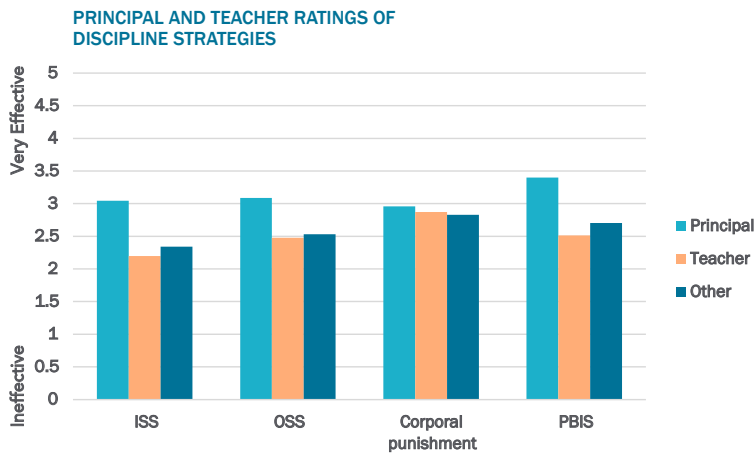
MISSISSIPPI PRINCIPALS' REPORTED USE OF DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES



DISTRICTS PROHIBITING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT, BY YEAR ENACTED

District	Year Enacted
Oxford	1980
Gulfport	1991
Jackson Public	1991
Hattiesburg	1999
Canton	2004
Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated	2005
Ocean Springs	2006
Clinton	2012
Meridian	2012
Tupelo	2013
Moss Point	2014
Natchez-Adams	2014
Pass Christian	2014
Pascagoula-Gautier	2015
Pearl River Co.	2015
Greenville	2018

Source: District Board Policies



In the follow-up piece, team members Anne Buffington and Lisa Long interviewed six school administrators via telephone. Their qualitative answers and quotes were used throughout the report to reflect their views on the disciplinary practices.

“We spoke to administrators around the state, some who are challenged by high suspension rates in their districts and others who have been successful in bringing those rates down. Their feedback was very important; you could see that in the quotes that we used in the report,” said Buffington.

The Results

The final report was compiled using both the data gathered from MDE and the web-based survey results. General findings showed that schools in the state have varying policies and uses of discipline strategies. Over three-quarters of all schools indicated that they used ISS, while over 93% indicated that they used OSS in their settings; however, only half of the schools reported using detention. They also found that while over 86% use a form of positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS), around 60% still use corporal punishment as an active policy.

Regarding suspension data, a majority (97%) of the survey respondents indicated that their schools tracked suspension data, some even tracking by gender, race, grade, disability, and infractions. Those who were interviewed stated that tracking this data helped them identify causes of the behavior, which would help future instances.

One of the most pressing findings was Mississippi’s use of out-of-school suspension. With at least 93% of the principals reporting that they used OSS, previous data collection showed that 8% of Mississippi’s public-school students received OSS in the 2013-2014 school year, compared to the national average of only 6%. African American students received OSS more than three times the rate of any other race.

“This allowed us to see where suspensions come in as a contributor to absence and attendance issues,” Walker explained. “Teacher and administrators may not always make the connection that when a student gets suspended from school, they are missing instructional time. And even if they get ISS, the instructional time they receive is just not the same quality as in a classroom.”

Currently, Mississippi is just one of 19 states that allow the use of corporal punishment in public schools. While 16 districts have gotten rid of the practice, 135 districts (90%) still allow it to be used as a discipline strategy. In just 100 of those districts in the 2016-2017 school year, there were almost 28,000 instances of corporal punishment. At least 15,000 public school students received corporal punishment at least once during that same year. The lowest rate of use in the state was Rankin County at just 0.57% of students receiving the punishment one or

more times, while the highest rate was in West Jasper Consolidated at 34%.

When asked about the effectiveness of the different policies, none of the respondents was able to identify any specific strategy as “highly effective.” However, there was a clear distinction in the beliefs of administrators versus teachers, with administrators believing PBIS and suspension as more effective, in that order, than their teachers and staff.

“What we really saw in the data was that teachers were more in favor of punitive strategies, whereas principals were more inclined to support PBIS, which is a more long-term strategy. That method takes a lot of time, relationship building, and effort, but it is a more positive strategy,” said Walker.

“When you talk about PBIS, you should be looking at the positives with children, not focusing on the negatives. You don’t overlook the negatives, but you intervene in an effort to change them,” Kersh stated.

One of the common solutions presented by all respondents was that increased parental involvement was a key to improving behavior problems. They cited parental accountability as a necessary component to changing the landscape. It is also important to note that school personnel were overall in favor of using alternative strategies such as community service (66%) and restorative justice (50%).

Looking Towards the Future

For MDE, the report is allowing them a chance to move forward in the state and begin tackling the suspension gap along with chronic absences.

“We’ve had a call to action,” said Kersh. “Districts now are asking what can our team do and how can we help them use their information? It’s like when a first storm hits, we may not know what to do, but when the next ones come, we knew what to do and we knew how to prepare. We’re jumping into action, and we’re preparing for what will happen.”

The Mississippi KIDS COUNT team included policy considerations in the report which they hope will help policy makers and educators make informed decisions in the future.

“For me, the message is for districts going forward to carefully track their suspension data,” Walker explained. “We had 97% say that they tracked it in some form, but now you need to use that and understand what disparities may exist in their district and how you can correct them.”

Buffington sees the need for parent, teacher, and community involvement when districts are designing discipline plans and policies.

“The districts set their own discipline policies. I believe parents have a role too. If districts can develop programs that increase parental involvement and help get the word out to parents that we’re all in this together, then we are creating stronger districts. Allowing parents, teachers, and students to have a role in helping developing policy gives them a voice in the decision-making process,” Buffington said.

MDE official launched a chronic absence task force in August, which Buffington was asked to join. Buffington explained that she believes the team has really changed the mindset on chronic absence in the state, and it’s going to benefit everyone long-term.

“The goal is for the task force to drive the work of the agency,” Kersh said. “This task force is looking at why kids may be absent and developing strategies that would be helpful to districts. This is a working task force that will develop a plan of action and resources to get everyone moving in the right direction.”

Kersh also sees MDE’s top-down approach as one of the benefits of the way they are tackling this problem.

“We have to have the school board and superintendents on board if it’s going to work. The partnership we have with KIDS COUNT and other entities, is because Dr. Wright is at the forefront leading the charge. It’s going to benefit not only the school districts, but the communities and businesses as well. If we have kids performing better, we all benefit from their success and together we will make strides as a state. The message has to come from the top down,” she said.

“If our major goal is to get kids across the stage, we should stop setting up hurdles in front of them. If they have to jump this hurdle, then the next one, and another, they’re going to get tired. We as adults even get tired from life’s hurdles, so we can’t expect these adolescents to jump as many or more hurdles than we do, and expect them to keep going,” Kersh concluded. ■

For more information on Mississippi KIDS COUNT, visit kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu.



Top left: Dr. Viktorija Car was presented with a cowbell during the seminar.

Bottom middle: The seminar participants toured Croatia during the trip. (photos by Robert Mcmillen)

BIG DATA SEMINAR IN CROATIA

by Alan Burns

This June, the Utilizing Big Data and the Social and Policy Sciences Seminar took place in Split and Vis, Croatia. The 2018 seminar, the 6th in the series, was hosted jointly between Mississippi State University (MSU), the University of Zagreb, the University of Split, George Mason University, and the University of Applied Sciences VERN, Zagreb. Faculty members from each university attend, as well as students from George Mason University and the local universities.

The week-long seminar allowed for a collaboration between faculty at the universities, as well as a chance for an intellectual exchange of ideas and research. Presentations and topics covered research on social media, politics and society, big data

methods, emergency and disaster preparedness, sentiment analysis, and qualitative data analysis.

Dr. Robert McMillen, a Professor with a joint appointment with the Social Science Research Center and the Department of Psychology, attended to represent MSU. For McMillen, one of the highlights was the interesting perspectives on big data from the Croatian faculty and students.

“The seminar brought together Croatian and American social scientists from five universities to share and discuss their big data analyses of social and policy issues,” said McMillen. “In addition to the invigorating sharing of ideas and research, participants enjoyed

to the cultural exchange across nationalities and institutions.”

According to language from the University of Zagreb, the seminar is the result of an ongoing collaboration between the five participating universities. They hope to see the collaboration expand in the future with a larger network of institutions interested in participating in the ongoing conversation about the big data research in social sciences.

“This was a great experience for me, and I hope other faculty members get to experience it in the future. And, of course, our Croatian hosts were presented with cowbells,” McMillen added. ■

Bethel Named Fulbright US Senior Scholar

by Alan Burns

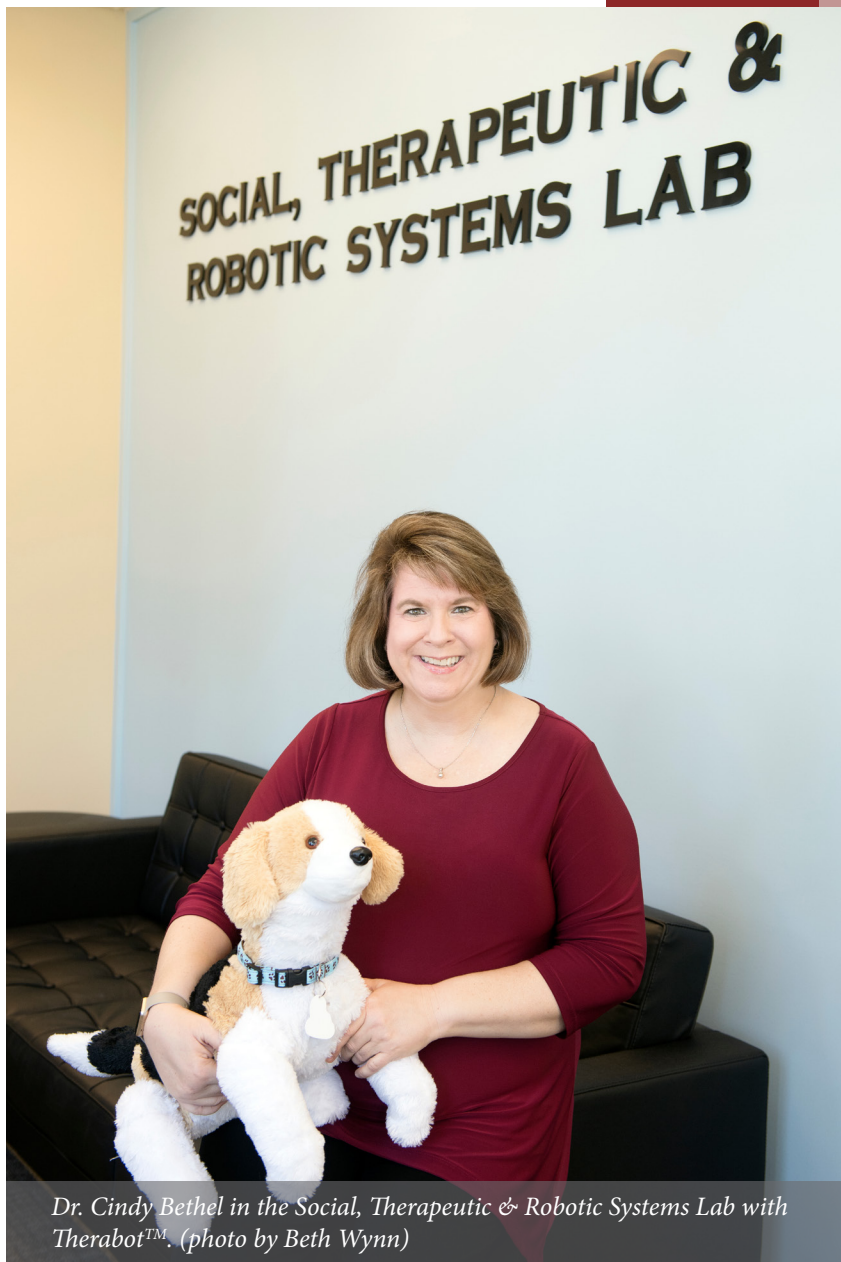
Dr. Cindy Bethel, associate professor in MSU's Department of Computer Science and Engineering and director of the Social, Therapeutic, and Robotic Systems (STaRS) Lab was awarded a U.S. Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship for this upcoming spring.

The Fulbright program is a key international exchange program that is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. As described by the Bureau, the program is "designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries." It is often used by universities to send faculty members around the world to conduct research.

"It is such an honor to be selected for this prestigious and highly competitive award. I am so excited to learn about new cultures, increase my research knowledge, and develop new collaborations," said Bethel.

Bethel's research focuses on robotics and artificial intelligence used for therapeutic robotics and law enforcement applications. She will continue her work this academic year in Australia at the University of Technology Sydney.

Her research in Australia will investigate the use of Therabot™, a robotic dog, that she and her students developed for therapy support. She will be studying whether a support system will be beneficial for people discussing sensitive topics related to stress and anxiety.



Dr. Cindy Bethel in the Social, Therapeutic & Robotic Systems Lab with Therabot™. (photo by Beth Wynn)

Bethel is also the recipient of the Billie J. Ball Endowed Professorship in Engineering and is a Research Fellow with the Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems and the Social Science Research Center. She received both her bachelor's in Computer Science and Ph.D. in

Computer Science & Engineering from the University of South Florida.

For more information on Dr. Bethel or her research, visit www.cindybethel.com and www.stars.msstate.edu.



CIVIC LIFE LABORATORY

by Alan Burns

Can a simple board game give us insights into the obstacles to civil discourse that affect our current political and social climate? The new Civic Life Laboratory at the Social Science Research Center believes it can.

The Civic Life Laboratory (CLL), created in the summer of 2018, seeks to facilitate interdisciplinary research

to understand the issues that prevent citizens from fully engaging in democratic participation. The lab was established as a partnership between the SSRC, the Department of Communication, and the Department of Political Science and Public Administration. CLL researchers hope to show how investigating these issues helps us to explain how our civic bonds have

arrived at their current state and which research-based interventions could create more resilient civic communities.

The CLL was founded by Dr. Melanie Loehwing, assistant professor in the Department of Communication, and Dr. Brian Shoup, associate professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration.

They are joined by Dr. Skye Cooley, assistant professor in the School of Media and Strategic Communication at Oklahoma State University, and two undergraduate research assistants: Ms. Krishna Desai, who is completing a double major in Political Science and Economics and a minor in Spanish at MSU, and Ms. Georgiana Swan, a double major in Political Science and Psychology at MSU.

The team's current project focuses on democratic deliberation, a communication practice that aims to solve problems through group discussion and decision-making. In order to test this, the team has designed a fully-functioning board game called "Rebuilding Main Street: The Civic Mindfulness Game."

"In the summer of 2017, we came up with the idea, rules, and structure of the game," said Loehwing. "We were lucky that one of our colleagues, Dr. Cooley, had the resources to help us take our poster board and construction paper version of the game and adapt it to a polished board game."

"The idea was that you have this actual board game that you can take into a community setting and have people play it, while working on face-to-face deliberation skills. There has been a rise in table top gaming in our culture recently, especially when people started realizing that there is a lot of enjoyment to be had when you're sitting around with you friends and playing these games," Shoup explained.

"Rebuilding Main Street" is a 10-player game where the goal is to work together to build five structures in a city using a limited amount of resources. Each player is given a role such as a teacher or city manager and has their own goals to achieve, but they have to figure out how to

accomplish these goals without hindering the groups' completion of the overall game.

In order to win the game, five structures must be built using four different resources each. These resources are controlled by the different player roles, which requires the group to deliberate on how to use their common resources wisely. However, the game doesn't come without its own twists.

"We've added in event cards to mix the game up, think the chance cards from Monopoly," explained Loehwing. "You get one of these cards and it can change the town conditions, either in a good or bad way. Maybe a tornado hits your town, or maybe you get a windfall of capital resources to use."

Players can also receive special advantages for convincing their group to help them achieve their character's personal goals. Completing the character's goals unlocks a "civic strength" that will help the group finish the game quicker.

"One lesson we hope the game promotes is how to approach rebuilding communities in a broad sense," Loehwing added. "The game doesn't function on a basic cost-benefit analysis, and it doesn't let one person or one group decide for everyone. Instead, it creates a simulation in which the best path forward is one that everyone participates in, where all perspectives are considered and voices are heard."

Currently, the CLL team imagines the project in two phases. The first phase sees the team working this fall to bring in two groups of students to play the game, then evaluate their conversations from the game sessions to see if deliberation

improves over the course of the game. Phase two would see the game being refined and acquiring external funding to help the team expand. They would like to spread it to communities to better understand deliberation and its effects on civic engagement.

"The most powerful and potent thing we can do as citizens is to develop a core of empathy for others, to listen to them, and to construct a community through dialogue," Shoup concluded. "Sometimes, it feels like we've lost that in our current moment, but we think that we can use social science and ask the right questions to learn how people can activate and develop a good citizenship for productive uses." ■

New Paper Looks at Adolescent Use of E-Cigarettes

by Alan Burns

A new paper published in *Pediatrics* looks at adolescent use of e-cigarettes, their trends, and the crackdown launched by the Federal Drug Administration.

E-cigarettes, one of today's fastest growing fads, is the focus of a recent paper by Dr. Robert McMillen, Principal Investigator of Mississippi Tobacco Data (MTD). According to information from the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) 2017 National Youth Tobacco Survey, more than 2 million middle school, high school, and college students are currently using the e-cigarette devices.

"E-cigarettes, or vapes, are battery-powered devices that either use cartridges or a re-fillable tank in order to heat up liquid that produces an inhalable nicotine vapor," explained McMillen. "What we set out to do with this research was to see what kids are actually using and prefer, so we know how better to handle the epidemic."

The paper, which was published in September in *Pediatrics*, used data from a longitudinal survey conducted by the Roswell Park Cancer Institute and funded by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health. This study monitors patterns in the tobacco industry, as well as tobacco product nicotine use in yearly studies.

"This was a huge survey. It interviewed both adolescents, younger adults, and older adults; however, we focused on the adolescent data and questions surrounding the products that they use. We found that most teenagers

that are using these products have been migrating towards the tank system vapes." McMillen said.

The appeal of the tank system is both the customization of the product and the varying flavored liquids that can be used. Their study of the data from the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health showed that more than two-thirds of adolescents preferred refillable devices, as well as more than three-quarters preferred flavored e-cigarettes.

However, McMillen notes that there have been some fast-paced changes in the industry since the survey was conducted and their paper produced.

"Our paper is very relevant in highlighting just how dynamic and fast-paced this industry is at the moment," he said. "A paper that was cutting edge just six months ago, when we completed it, now needs an addendum about the JUUL product, which has skyrocketed in popularity."

The JUUL, a product of JUUL Labs released in 2015, has quickly become one of the most popular e-cigarette products in the last year. According to McMillen, this product is one of the first e-cigarettes that is extremely efficient at producing potent nicotine levels while being easy to use and maintain. This, coupled with the fact that the product is available in several flavors and is small and concealable, has helped drive popularity. Nielsen, a global measurement and data analytics company, stated earlier this year that JUUL controls around 72% of the e-cigarette market.

An announcement in September by the FDA targeted JUUL Labs and four other makers of popular vaping devices to prove that they are being proactive in keeping their products out of the hands of minors. The notice was targeted at both makers and sellers of e-cigarettes, whom the FDA claims has created "an epidemic" by getting adolescents and teenagers hooked on the nicotine producing devices with their flavored products.





Different categories of e-cigarettes: an open system, rechargeable and refillable tank system (top right); an open system, rechargeable and refillable (middle left); and a closed system, rechargeable, cartridge based (bottom right).

Even before the FDA launched their notices to the industry in September, McMillen had expressed that he believed targeting the flavored products was going to be a key to adolescent use prevention. He also sees the use of flavored products as a problem, one that has been a popular topic surrounding the use of e-cigarettes for years.

“I think that if we’re going to be interested in proactive prevention of adolescent nicotine use, we need to focus on the products they are using, and the data shows that is overwhelmingly the flavored

products,” he explained.

“While the flavors are safe for consumption orally, it becomes a different topic when you begin to heat those chemicals up and ingest them by inhalation,” McMillen continued. “These companies that produce the flavorings that are being used in the nicotine products are adamant about the fact that those products are not to be inhaled and that doing so is at your own risk.”

For now, McMillen plans to continue monitor trends in e-cigarette use and preferences, in order to further

develop the regulatory science to inform policy and prevention efforts. ■

Visit mstobacodata.org for more information on tobacco usage in Mississippi. The journal article used is cited below:

McMillen, R., Tanski, S., Wilson, K., Klein, J. D., & Winickoff, J. P. (2018). Adolescent use of different e-cigarette products. *Pediatrics*. doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-0260.

PATHFINDERS: Going to Class Matters

by Alan Burns

For over two decades, the award-winning Pathfinders staff has been working to increase awareness among faculty and students of the importance regular class attendance for freshmen success. They believe their work has been essential in changing the culture at Mississippi State University (MSU) regarding the importance of regular class attendance thus leading to better academic performance.

The programs' staff has been consistent throughout its 21-year tenure. Pathfinders started with Dr. David McMillen as the Director and two graduate students, Ty Abernathy and John Edwards. After a few years, Dr. John Edwards left the project to coordinate the Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Lab, while Dr. Ty Abernathy became the On-Campus Coordinator. The team is also joined by Nell Valentine, Technical support and Project Coordinator at the Social Science Research Center (SSRC).

The program began in the fall semester of 1998 as an internal research project. The basis for the project was data which indicated that missing as few as four classes

in one course was predictive of poor academic performance in the freshman year.

"We began the program at the SSRC to intervene with freshmen early in the semester if they start missing class," said McMillen. "We found in our research that absences early in the semester were highly predictive of not only academic success in the freshman year, but graduation rates six years later."

Pathfinders relies on the timely and accurate reporting of absences by instructors and professors. In the early years, accurate absence data was difficult to obtain for large classes where calling the roll was a challenge. Small classes, such as English, provided the best means of identifying freshmen needing help. With the recent addition of scanners in classes of 70 or more, it has become less likely that Pathfinders would fail to identify students needing help.

Housing and Residence Life has been supportive of the Pathfinders program since its beginning and has allowed Pathfinders to utilize

Residence Hall Academic Assistants (RAs) to interact directly with freshmen missing class. Pathfinders selects, trains, and supervises RAs in approaching students in the student's residence hall for face-to-face contact. This intervention provides the RAs an opportunity to discuss the importance of class attendance with the students, provide information about free and available academic resources they can utilize, and emphasize the importance of personal responsibility in success during college.

"One of the things that we tell students is missing class is the first sign of problems," said Abernathy. "We discuss the important of class attendance and discuss resources that area available for them. Those are messages that we really try to communicate to the students."

"I feel like part of what we do is meaningful because it has the opportunity to change the trajectory of people's lives. When we have this opportunity to help, it's not just professionally rewarding, it's personally rewarding," he continued.

Absences and Freshman Year GPA

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Freshman Year GPA	3.0	2.0	2.5	1.6
Retention to Sophomore Year	89%	70%	80%	60%
6-Year Graduation Rate	72%	40%	50%	25%
ACT	24	23	23	23

Group 1 – Never reported to Pathfinders, no significant absence problems as reported with final grades for the fall semester of freshman year.

Group 2 – Never reported to Pathfinders, significant absence problems as reported with final graders for the fall semester or freshman year. Pathfinders could not help these students because they were never brought to our attention.

Group 3 – Reported to Pathfinders, no significant absence problem as reported with final grades for the fall semester or freshman year (these students apparently changed their behavior after being contacte4d by Pathfinders.)

Group 4 – Reported to Pathfinders, significant absence problem as reported with final grades for fall semester of freshmen year (these students continued to miss class after being contacted by Pathfinders.)

Social Science Research Center



Dr. David McMillen and Dr. Ty Abernathy (center) go over Pathfinders data with residence hall academic assistants at the Social Science Research Center. (Photo by Megan Bean)

Throughout the history of the program, there have been definitive results that make a clear case for emphasizing the importance of class attendance. MSU has seen the 6-year graduation rate increase from 50% before the program to 60% several years after the launch of Pathfinders, even while academic qualifications and ACT scores of freshmen remained the same. However, the years from 2014 to the present have shown a marked increase in the academic credentials of the freshman class, which Pathfinders believes will have an impact on graduation rate data that will become available in 2020.

In recent years, McMillen had the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Rodney Pearson, Director of the Center for Student Success (CSS) at MSU. The two urged the university to better keep track of student attendance, which led to the card scanning systems. This system provided the university with the ability to have more accurate attendance data.

“At first, the card scanners were only used in the larger auditoriums; however now we also use them in

the medium size classrooms, while smaller use classic roll calling,” McMillen said.

McMillen is also very enthusiastic about the potential for another increase in graduation rate due to the rise of average ACT scores and high school core grade point averages (GPA) among incoming freshmen that began in 2014.

“In 2014, the average ACT score of freshmen rose to over 24 for the first time. In 2018, it went up again to 25, also 18% of the freshman class had a high school core GPA of 4.00. We believe the increases in academic qualifications will have a positive impact in the future,” he continued. “We’re two years away from seeing the full impact of the 2014 ACT increase, but we’re predicting that it will have a substantial impact on the 6-year graduation rate.”

While McMillen says MSU’s increase in more academically qualified freshmen is one of the main reasons for improved academic success, he also believes the increase in the number of programs available to assist students has been important. In the last five years, more programs became available targeted at helping

first-year students (e.g. Freshman Year Navigators in the CSS and supplemental instruction in some math and science classes by the Learning Center). These two reasons, coupled with the administration’s support of Pathfinders, have been drivers of its success.

“With the support of Dr. Mark Keenum, as well as current provost, Dr. Judy Bonner, and past provost, Dr. Jerry Gilbert, we’ve been able to grow as a university. Not only have they helped us attract talented students at the university and created a climate around succeeding, but they’ve given this program a chance to flourish and really help students,” McMillen stated.

McMillen says that the years of association with the SSRC have been crucial to the success.

“The technical support, infrastructure, and supportive attitudes at the SSRC have been outstanding,” McMillen said. ■

For more information on Pathfinders, visit www.pathfinders.msstate.edu.

Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Laboratory

Projects conducted by the Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) during the past fiscal year covered a broad range of research topics. In addition to collecting data for three longitudinal studies that focused on the quality of life in the Delta, health insurance coverage in Mississippi, and the use and control of tobacco-based products, the SRL also conducted several surveys that focused on special populations. These included a survey of child care centers in Mississippi and a survey of parents in Mississippi with children under the age of six. Additionally, the SRL continued to collect data for its annual client satisfaction surveys for the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services and Mississippi Department of Mental Health. Three general population surveys included measuring public attitudes and opinions toward increasing state taxes on tobacco products, distracted driving due to cellphone usage, and a national survey of public attitudes toward the military and military service. Lastly, the SRL conducted a very specific study of stakeholders' perspectives of the oyster aquaculture industry in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. The SRL has completed another productive year as part of the Social Science Research Center. Dr. John F. Edwards has begun his eleventh year directing the SRL with the assistance of Laura Grandfield, Laboratory Manager, Izzy Pellegrine, Research Associate, Amanda Gochanour and Audrey Reid, Research Assistants, and more than 50 telephone interviewers. Dr. Wolfgang Frese also continues to provide his many years of experience in his position as Emeritus Research Professor.

Survey of Mississippi Child Care Centers

On behalf of the Family & Children Research Unit (FCRU) at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL conducted a telephone-based survey of more than 500 child care centers in the state of Mississippi. This survey examined the use of developmental screeners for children enrolled in daycare programs. The FCRU secured funding for this research through the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration.

Parent Survey of Children's Health in Mississippi

This survey was a state-specific replication of the National Survey of Children's Health by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. This telephone-based survey included a representative sample of 1,000 parents in Mississippi with children under the age of six. It assessed healthcare access and developmental screening for infants and young children in Mississippi.

2017 Mississippi Vocational Rehabilitation Client Satisfaction Survey

On a quarterly basis, the SRL conducted telephone-based interviews with approximately 250 individuals who received vocational rehabilitation services from the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) during the prior 12 months. This client satisfaction data assisted the MDRS in program evaluation and development.

2017 MDMH Client Satisfaction Survey

On behalf of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (MDMH), the SRL conducted an online, tablet-based survey of client satisfaction. For a two-week period, all clients receiving mental health services throughout the state of Mississippi were provided with an opportunity to share their opinions about the quality of services they received from MDMH. The results of this survey were used to improve the quality of MDMH services.

Survey of Proposed Mississippi Tax Increase on Tobacco Products

On behalf of the Tobacco Control Unit at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL administered a statewide survey to examine public attitude toward a proposed increase in tax on tobacco products. This telephone-based survey of the general public included a representative sample of 400 adults residing in the state of Mississippi.

The Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Survey

On behalf of the Northern Gulf Institute, the SRL piloted a study with a multi-mode survey (paper, web, and telephone) to better understand stakeholders' perspectives regarding the present and future states of the oyster aquaculture industry in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. This survey provided researchers with valuable information about and the working relationships between various stakeholder groups such as oyster harvesters, processors, industry leaders, and environmental regulators.



2017 Distracted Driving Survey

On behalf of the Center for Mississippi Health Policy, the SRL conducted the 2017 Distracted Driving Survey. This survey allowed researchers to gain a better understanding of behavioral patterns of Mississippi drivers, with emphasis on distracted driving due to cellphone use. The present administration of this survey is a longitudinal measure of changes in cellphone usage while driving with the first survey administered in 2010. Some new survey items were added to the questionnaire to account for emerging uses of cellphones, such as the ability to read and post messages to social media platforms. This telephone-based survey of the general public included a representative sample of 1,000 adults residing in the state of Mississippi.

National Survey of Civilian's Attitudes toward the U.S. Military

In collaboration with the Stennis Center for Public Service Leadership, the SRL developed a questionnaire to measure various aspects of civilian-military relations, including the attitudes and opinions of the general public toward the U.S. military, its practices, personnel, and military service in general. To assess changes in public opinion over time, a number of survey items from previously administered questionnaires were also included in the present study. This telephone-based survey of the general public included a representative sample of 1,000 adults across the nation.

2017 Health Insurance Coverage in Mississippi

On behalf of the Mississippi Health Policy Research Center at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL conducted the second administration of the Health Insurance Survey, with the prior version administered in 2014. This survey examined the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of representative sample of 500 Mississippi adults between the ages of 19 and 64 regarding health insurance coverage options and knowledge about the Affordable Care Act.

The 2017 Delta Quality of Life Survey

On behalf of The Walton Family Foundation, the SRL conducted a survey of the perceived quality of life in the Delta that included measures related to health, safety, education, community activities, and the quality of local services. This telephone-based survey was administered to a representative sample of 800 adults residing in Coahoma County, Mississippi and Phillips County, Arkansas.

2017 Mississippi Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control

On behalf of the Tobacco Control Unit at the Social Science Research Center, the SRL administered the Mississippi Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control. Results from this survey assisted researchers in better understanding the degree to which people in Mississippi live in smoke free homes, work in smoke free environments, understand the health risks of tobacco, and talk to their children about tobacco use. Funding for this research was provided by Mississippi State Department of Health. This telephone-based survey of the general public included a representative sample of 1,500 adults residing in the state of Mississippi.

Grants & Contracts

New Projects

Baird-Thomas, C. (2018, May). "Health Help Evaluation," Mississippi Health Advocacy Program.

Buffington, A. (2017, July). "Addressing Suspension Gap in Mississippi Public Schools," Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Cossmann, R. E. (2017, September). "Mississippi HPV Vaccination Promotion, Year 4," National AHEC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Gardner, S. (2017, July). "MSQII-2 Evaluation Project, Year 3," Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Preventive Health.

Hanna, H. & Southward, L. H. (2018, January). "Mississippi KIDS COUNT 2018," Annie E. Casey Foundation.

McMillen, R. (2017, July). "Mississippi State University site for the Richmond Center Administrative Core, Year 7," American Academy of Pediatrics, Flight Attendant Medical Research Center.

McMillen, R. & Valentine, N. (2017, July). "Surveillance and Evaluation Services for the Mississippi Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program," Mississippi State Department of Health.

Parrish, D. (2017, July). "Distracted Driving Survey in Mississippi," Center for Mississippi Health Policy.

Parrish, D. (2017, August). "Observational Seat Belt Survey Site Re-Selection," Mississippi Governor's Office of Highway Safety, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Seitz, H. H. (2017, October). "Advancing Undergraduate Research in Communication Science," Mississippi State University Office of Research and Economic Development.

Seitz, H. H. (2017, December). "Validation of the Veterinary Autonomy Preference Index," Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Seitz, H. H. (2018, May). "Biometrics and Psychophysiology in the Classroom: Enhancing the Pedagogy of Message Effects through Involvement in Applied Communication Research," Mississippi State University Center for Teaching and Learning.

Sinclair, H. C., Goldberg, R., May, D. C., Stubbs-Richardson, M., & McCleon, T. (2018, January). "When does rejection trigger aggression? A multi-method examination of a multi-motive model," National Institute of Justice.

Southward, L. H. (2017, October). "Children's Foundation of Mississippi Planning," W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Southward, L. H., Hanna, H., Baird-Thomas, C. (2017, September). "HRSA Early Childhood Development Health System: Implementation in a High Need State," University of Mississippi Medical Center, Health Resources and Services Administration.

Ragsdale, K. (2017, October). "Focus4Teens Evaluation, Year 3," Mississippi First, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ragsdale, K. (2017, October). "USAID Soy Project, Year 5," University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, US Agency on International Development.

Walker, B. (2018, March). "Mississippi School Health Council Technical Assistance Project, Year 4," Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi, W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Ongoing Projects

Baird-Thomas, C. (2016, December). "Mississippi Action Network for Uplifting Promise (MAN UP) Evaluation, Year 2," Tougaloo College.

Baird-Thomas, C. (2017, May). "Health Help Evaluation," Mississippi Health Advocacy Program.

Bethel, C. (2017, February). "Title," National Science Foundation.

Buffington, A. (2016, October). "Following the Data," Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Buffington, A. (2017, June). "Empowering Mentors to Promote Women's Retention (EMPOWER), Year 4," Women's Foundation of Mississippi.

Cossmann, R. E. (2017, May). "Mississippi HPV Vaccination Promotion, Year 3," National AHEC, Centers for Disease Control.

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- Gardner, S. (2016, August). "MSQII-2 Evaluation Project, Year 2," Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Preventive Health.
- Gardner, S. (2016, September). "The Business Case for Racial Equity in Mississippi," Altarum Institute.
- Gardner, S. (2017, March). "Disproportionate Minority Contact Report," Mississippi Department of Public Safety.
- Gardner, S. (2017, June). "MSQII-2 Evaluation Project, Year 3," Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Preventive Health.
- Ingram, R. & Cossman, R. E. (2016, December). "Social Indicators for Environmental Scientists," Environmental Protection Agency.
- McMillen, D. L. (2016, July). "Pathfinder, Year 18," Office of the Provost, Mississippi State University.
- McMillen, R. (2016, July). "Richmond Center of Excellence Data Sets," American Academy of Pediatrics, Flight Attendant Medical Research Center.
- McMillen, R. & Valentine, N. (2016, July). "Surveillance and Evaluation Services for the Mississippi Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program," Mississippi State Department of Health.
- Parrish, D. (2016, September). "Seat Belt, Motorcycle, and Child Restraint Observational Survey Project, Year 24," Mississippi Governor's Office of Highway Safety (NHTSA).
- Ragsdale, K. & Read-Wahidi, M. (2016, September). "Focus 4 Teens Evaluation, Year 2," Mississippi First, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
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- Robertson, A. A. & Baird-Thomas, C. (2016, September). "Evaluation Services for the Mississippi Delta Heart Disease Project," Mississippi Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.
- Robertson, A. A. (2016, December). "Mississippi State Department of Health Asthma Control Program Evaluation," Mississippi State Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control.
- Robertson, A. A. (2017, January). "Evaluation of the Second Chance Act Re-Entry Program for Adults with Co-occurring Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders," Mississippi Department of Mental Health, United States Department of Justice.
- Seitz, H. H. (2017, April). "Using Communication Science to Understand the Effects of Vaccine Misinformation: What Makes it 'Stick'?" Mississippi State University College of Arts and Sciences.
- Sinclair, H. C., Goldberg, R., May, D., & Stubbs-Richardson, M. (2016, December). "When does rejection trigger aggression? A multi-method examination of a multi-motive model, Year 2," National Institute of Justice.
- Southward, L. H. & Hanna, H. (2017, January). "Mississippi KIDS COUNT," Annie E. Casey Foundation.
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- Walker, B. & Pellegrine, S. E. (2017, February). "Get2College Evaluation," Woodward Hines Education Foundation.
- Walker, B. (2017, April). "Mississippi School Health Council Technical Assistance, Year 3," Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi, W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

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- Ragsdale, K. & Read-Wahidi, M. R. (2018). *Focus4Teens Evaluation Results: YR1-YR3 Technical Brief*. Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University.
- Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R., Reid, A., & Swiderski, K. (2018). *Focus4Teens YR2 Evaluation Results: Aaron E. Henry Community- and School-Based Health Centers*. Teen Health Mississippi and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University.
- Read-Wahidi, M. R., Ragsdale, K., Reid, A., & Swiderski, K. (2018). *Focus4Teens YR2 Evaluation: YR2 Youth Serving Organization Interviews*. Mississippi First and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University.



Presentations

Abernathy, T., & Dunn, L. (2017, November). *Strategies for improving student success by partnering with residence life*. MAHO – Mississippi Association of Housing Officers, Starkville, MS.

Abernathy, T. (2017, August). *Pathfinders Program Overview*. Invited presentation at the Mississippi State University Department of Housing and Residence Life.

Abernathy, T. (2017, August). *Pathfinders Program Overview*. Invited presentation at the Mississippi State University Holmes Cultural Diversity Center.

Abernathy, T. & McMillen, D. (2017, August). *Pathfinders Program Overview*. Invited presentation at the Mississippi State University Department of English.

Booth, R. (2018, April). *Early and Later Childhood Combustible Smoking Impact on E-Cigarette Trying*. Presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research at the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK.

Booth, R. (2018, April). *Early and Later Childhood Combustible Smoking Impact on E-Cigarette Trying*. Presented at the Stanford Research Conference at Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

Buffington, A. (2018, June). *Peer mentoring can make a difference: How EMPOWER can impact student achievement at the community college level*. Presented at the Mississippi Community College Academic Officers Annual Conference, Philadelphia, MS.

Buffington, A., Long, L., & Walker, B.H. (2018, June). *Disciplinary procedures in Mississippi's public schools: what the educators have to say*. Presented to Mississippi State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Carey Wright and administrative team, Jackson, MS.

Cossmann, R. E. (2017, August). *Social Dimensions of Nutrient Reduction:*

State-Level Progress. Presented at the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Environmental Education Training Conference, Biloxi, MS.

Cossmann, R. E. (2017, September). *When the Doctor Can See You Depends: Differing County Level Access to Health Care in Mississippi*. Presented at the University of Memphis Sciences Colloquium series, Memphis, TN.

Cossmann, R. E. (2018, April). *How Important Are Stakeholders and Can Their Impacts Be Measured?* Invited plenary at the Mississippi Water Resources Conference, Jackson, MS.

Cossmann, R. E. (2018, May). *Geography as the Mitigating Factor in Health Outcomes, Treatment, Access and Recruitment: Four Studies*. Presented at the Health Systems Research Forum, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis, TN.

Cossmann, R. E. (2018, June). *Social Indicators Report – Year 1 Findings*. Presented at Civic Engagement Workshop, Biloxi, MS.

Ellithorpe, C. E. & Sinclair, H. C. (2018, March). *Say Something vs. Say Nothing: Assessing Costs of Voicing Disapproval for Romantic Relationships vs. Friendships*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Emery, S., Kostygina, G., Tran, H., Ahn, R., McMillen, R., Gorzkowski, J., & Wilson, K. (2018, May). *#Hightimes: Marijuana-Related Content on Twitter: Policy Promotion, Health Claims, and Youth Targeting*. Poster presented at the 2018 Pediatric Academic Societies Conference, Toronto, ON.

Emery, S., Kostygina, G., Tran, H., Ahn, R., McMillen, R., Gorzkowski, J., & Wilson, K. (2018, June). *#Hightimes: Marijuana-Related Content on Twitter: Policy Promotion, Health Claims, and Youth Targeting*. Presented at the 2018

Utilizing Big Data and the Social and Policy Sciences Seminar, Split and Vis, Croatia.

Gardner, S. & Gray, B. (2017, September). *Leflore County Youth Court HIV/STI Pilot Study*. Presented at the Mississippi Public Health Association Conference, Jackson, MS.

Gardner, S., Walker, C., Robertson, A. A. & Tatch, A. (2017, August). *Keg Stand, Keg Stand: Racial Differences in Drinking Motives, Protective Strategies, and the Relationship with Alcohol Problems*. Presented at the Annual Meetings of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Montreal, Quebec Canada.

Giron-Legarda, J., Stubbs-Richardson, M., May, D. C., & Sinclair, H. C. (2017, October). *Predicting Cyberbullying in Mississippi: The Impact of Alienation, Belonging, and Social Media*. Presented at the Mid-South Sociological Association, Chattanooga, TN.

Giron-Legarda, J., May, D. C., Stubbs-Richardson, M., & Sinclair, H. C. (2018, February). *Examining the Relationship between Offline Bullying and Cyberbullying in an Impoverished Rural High School*. Presented at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in New Orleans, LA.

Gochanour, A., Ragsdale, K., Seitz, H. H., Reid, A., & Harper, S. K. (2017, November). *Infant feeding styles and use of online infant health resources among minority teen/young mothers: EBaby4U survey results*. Presented at the American Public Health Association annual meeting, Atlanta, GA.

Guttmann, K., DeMauro, S., Flibotte, J., & Seitz, H. (2017, October). *A qualitative analysis of parental perspectives on diagnosis and prognosis of NICU graduates with cerebral palsy*. Presented at the 39th Annual Meeting of the Society for Medical Decision Making, Pittsburgh, PA.

Presentations

Guzman, S., Cossman, R. E., and Ingram, R. (2017, July). *Social Indicators: An Innovative Metric to Monitor Nutrient Reduction Strategies*. Presented at the 2017 Arkansas Water Resources Center Annual Water Conference, Fayetteville Town Center, Fayetteville, AR.

Hanna, H. L. & Stouffer, C. (2018, April). *Mississippi KIDS COUNT Plenary Session Presentation*. Presented at the 38th Annual Social Work Conference, Mississippi Valley State, MS.

Herring, L., Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R. (2018, April). *Exploring Food Insecurity Congruence among Husband-Wife Dyads Using the Household Hunger Scale: Occasional, Moderate, and Severe Hunger among Small-scale Men and Women Farmers in Rural Ghana*. Presented at the Spring 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium, Mississippi State University, MS.

Kaseeska, K., Klein, J. D., Gorzkowski, J., Unger, R., Levy, S., Craig, J., McMillen, R., Pearson, S., Wilson, K., & Shone, L. (2018, May). *Developing a 5As brief Marijuana Intervention for Casual Marijuana Users*. Presented at the 2018 Pediatric Academic Societies Conference, Toronto, ON.

Khandekar, H. (2017, August). *Active Referral for Food Insecurity in Pediatric Populations: Pilot Study*. Poster presented at the Strong Children's Research Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester, NY.

Laudadio, M. (2018, April). *Using publicly available comments on Facebook to ascertain public opinion about international adoption*. Poster presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Edmond, OK.

Lower, K., Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R., & Yarbrough, T. (2018, February). *CDC Focus4Teens Initiative: Focus Groups with Mississippi Delta Youth Assess Barriers to Sexual*

& Reproductive Health Services. Presented at the 2018 MSU Graduate Research Symposium, Mississippi State University, MS.

Lower, K., Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R., & Yarbrough, T. (2018, June). *Food Insecurity among Smallholder Men and Women Farmers in Rural Ghana: Household Hunger Scale Results*. Poster presented at the 2nd Annual Mississippi Academy of Sciences summer Student Science Symposium, Mississippi State University, MS.

McClelland, E. (2017, October). *An Update from Mississippi Tobacco Data*. Invited Presentation to the Mississippi Tobacco Control Network.

McClelland, E. (2018, March). *An Update from Mississippi Tobacco Data*. Invited Presentation to the Mississippi Tobacco Free Coalitions Quarterly Training.

McClelland, E. (2018, March). *An Update from Mississippi Tobacco Data*. Invited Presentation to the Tobacco Advisory Council.

McClelland, E. (2018, May). *An Update from Mississippi Tobacco Data*. Invited Presentation to the Mississippi Tobacco Control Network.

McMillen, R. (2017, July). *Product Preferences Among Light and Regular Adolescent E-cigarette Users: Results from the PATH Study*. Presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics Tobacco Consortium Summer Meeting at the AAP Headquarters, Elk Grove Village, IL.

McMillen, R. (2017, October). *Nicotine & Mississippi*. Invited Lunch Presentation at the 2017 Annual Conference of the Mississippi Public Health Association.

McMillen, R., Tanski, S., Wilson, K., Klein, J. D., & Winickoff, J. P. (2017, November). *Product preferences among light and regular adolescent e-cigarette users: Results from the first wave of the PATH Study*. Poster presented at the 144th

Annual Conference of the American Public Health Association, Atlanta, GA.

McMillen, R., Klein, J. D., Wilson, K., Winickoff, J. P., & Tanski, S. (2018, February). *E-Cigarette Use is Associated with Future Cigarette Initiation Among Never Smokers and Relapse Among Distant Former Smokers: Results from Two Waves of the PATH Study*. Presented at the 2018 Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD.

McMillen, R., Wilson, K., Gorzkowski, J., Winickoff, J. D., & Klein, J. D. (2018, May). *E-Cigarette Use and Motivation for Use Predicts Future Cigarette Smoking Among Youth*. Presented at the 2018 Pediatric Academic Societies Conference, Toronto, ON.

McMillen, R., Gorzkowski, J., Wilson, K., Klein, J. D., & Winickoff, J. D. (2018, May). *Smoke-Free Homes are Associated with Better Health and Fewer ER Visits*. Presented at the 2018 Pediatric Academic Societies Conference, Toronto, ON.

Nelson, S., Sinclair, H. C., Stubbs-Richardson, M., May, D. C., Goldberg, R., & McClelland, T. (2017, October). *"Us Against the World": An Overview of Groups and Bullying using Findings from the Reasons for Retaliation Project*. Presented at the Mid-South Sociological Association, Chattanooga, TN.

Nelson, S., Stubbs-Richardson, M., & Sinclair, H. C. (2018, March). *The Frenemy Online is Still a Friend Offline: Examining Responses to Relational Aggression in Cyber Contexts*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R., Lower, K., & Yarbrough, T. (2018, February). *CDC Focus4Teens Initiative: Focus Groups with Mississippi Delta Youth Assess Barriers to Sexual*

Presentations

& *Reproductive Health Services*.

Presented at the 2018 MSU Graduate Research Symposium, Mississippi State University, MS.

Ragsdale, K. & Read-Wahidi, M. R. (2018, March). "Life is not fair, but we can make it more fair": Assessing Gender Responsive Agricultural Development in the Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab. International Development (CO 4253), Department of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Cultures, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS.

Read-Wahidi, M. R., Ragsdale, K., Lower, K., Yarbrough, T., Feher, E., Crenshaw, H., Miller, S., Coleman, M., Williams, P., Mueller, T., Tevendale, H., Brittain, A., & Koumans, E. (2018, June). *The Teen Health MS and CDC Focus4Teens Initiative to Reduce Pregnancy among Mississippi Delta Teens: Results from YR1 Youth Focus Groups*. Presented at the 2018 Delta Directions Regional Forum, Clarksdale, MS.

Reid, A., Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R., Feher, E., Miller, S., Coleman, M., Middleton, D., Mueller, T., & Tevendale, H. (2018, April). *Using In-depth Interviews to Explore Multi-level Factors Associated with Teen Pregnancy in the Mississippi Delta: Unique Insights from Social/Behavioral Support Providers Serving Local Youth*. Presented at the 2018 Conference on Adolescent Health, Ypsilanti, MI.

Rico Méndez, G. (2017, July). *Big Data and Social Media: Big Questions for Democracy*. Presented at the Delta Regional Forum: Population Health, Development, and Entrepreneurial Problem Solving, Clarksdale, MS.

Rico Méndez, G. & Medina Frias, G. (2018, March). *Agricultural Policies in Colombia: The Dilemma between Food Security and Commodity-Export Agriculture (Case Study of Tolima, Colombia)*. Presented at the 19th Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty: Land Governance in

an Interconnected World, Washington, DC.

Rico Méndez, G., Ragsdale, K. & Read-Wahidi, M. R. (2018, March). *Exploring Gender-Biased Customary Land Tenure Systems in Ghana: Results from Focus Groups with Men and Women Farmers in the Northern Region*. Presented at the 19th Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty: Land Governance in an Interconnected World, Washington, DC.

Robertson, A. A., Gardner, S., Pankow, J. & Joe, G. (2018, February). *Recidivism of Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System*. Presented at 2018 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.

Schapira, M. M., Hubbard, R., Seitz, H. H., Conant, E., Schnall, M., Cappella, J., ...Armstrong, K. (2017, October). *The impact of a risk-based decision aid on age of first mammogram: Results of a randomized clinical trial*. Presented at the 39th Annual Meeting of the Society for Medical Decision Making, Pittsburgh, PA.

Schapira, M. M., Lipkus, I., Seitz, H. H., Armstrong, K., Conant, E., Schnall, M., ...Hubbard, R. (2017, October). *The role of felt ambiguity and anticipated regret in breast cancer screening decisions*. Poster presented at the 39th Annual Meeting of the Society for Medical Decision Making, Pittsburgh, PA.

Seitz, H. H., & Kaplan, B. (2018, April). *Cannabidiol in the news: Nature of coverage, inclusion of health effects, and use of exemplars*. Poster presented at the Kentucky Conference on Health Communication, Lexington, KY.

Sinclair, H. C. (2018, March). *When Groups Alienate: Conceptualizing Bullying as Intergroup Conflict*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Southward, L., Baird-Thomas, C.,

Hanna, H., & Stouffer, C. (2018, May). *WKKF Place Scan – Virtual Learning Day*. Live Webinar presenters for a multi-state venue on the W.K Kellogg Foundation Mississippi Data Project & Mississippi KIDS Count projects.

Stives, K., Cooper, W., May, D., Pilkinton, M., Bethel, C., Henkel, Z., & Eakin, D. (2018, February). *Comparing Robot and Human Interviewers in Disclosure of Bullying Experiences among Children*. Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Juvenile Justice: Schools and Crime session, New Orleans, LA.

Stubbs-Richardson, M. (2017). *Digital Activism on Twitter: The Case of Hurricane Sandy*. Presented at the Delta Directions Forum: Population, Development, and Entrepreneurial Problem Solving, Clarksdale, MS.

Stubbs-Richardson, M. & Nelson, S. (2017, September). *Bully Stoppers: An Overview of Types of Bullying and How to Take Action in Your Community*. Presented at the Bully Stoppers Action Summit, Starkville, MS.

Stubbs-Richardson, M. (2017, October). *Strain among Bullying Victims: Considering the Effect of Alternative Relationships on Prosocial, Asocial, and Antisocial Responses to Physical, Verbal, Relational, and Cyber Bullying*. Presented at the Mid-South Sociological Association, Chattanooga, TN.

Stubbs-Richardson, M., May, D. C., Wells, M., Sinclair, H. C., Sellers, J., McCleon, T., & Goldberg, R. (2017, November). *Examining Responses to Rejection among Students in a High School Setting*. Presented at the National Institute of Justice Panel at the American Society of Criminology, Philadelphia, PA.

Stubbs-Richardson, M., Nelson, S., Harris, C., Haynes, S., Richardson, J., & Cosby, A. (2018, January). A

Presentations

Spatial Analysis of Rape Culture News Events on Twitter. Presented at the Sociologists for Women in Society, Atlanta, GA.

Stubbs-Richardson, M. & Nelson, S. (2018, March). *Bulldogs Against Sexual Violence, 2018*. Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS.

Stubbs-Richardson, M., Sinclair, H. C., Goldberg, R., & Ellithorpe, C. E. (2018, March). *Not such mean girls after all: Comparing teens' experiences with and responses to bullying*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Tatch, Andrew. (2017, October). *Basic Socio-Demographic Differences in Findings from the 2008 National Survey of Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Behaviors*. Presented at the Annual Meetings of the Mid-South Sociological Association, Chattanooga, TN.

Tatch, Andrew. (2017, October). *Looking Beyond the Individual: Examining Contextual Covariates of Impaired Driving in Mississippi*. Presented at the Annual Meetings of the Association of Applied and Clinical Sociology, Cleveland, OH.

Tatch, A. (2018, February). *Race and Gender Moderate the Positive Association between Depressive Symptoms and Hazardous Alcohol Consumption Among DUI Offenders*. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association, Montgomery, AL.

Utley, J. W. & Sinclair, H. C. (2018, March). *Attachment & Aggression: Examining peer attachment and bullying in a longitudinal survey of high school students*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Atlanta, GA.

Valentine, N. & McMillen, R. (2018, March). *Healthy Childbearing and the Role of Tobacco Control*. Presented

at the 2018 Mississippi Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Conference, Hattiesburg, MS.

Yarbrough, T., Ragsdale, K., Read-Wahidi, M. R., Lower, K., Feher, E., Miller, S., Hines, M. S. (2018, April). *Perspectives from Parents in the Mississippi Delta: How Parents Engage Teens in Sexual and Reproductive Health Communication*. Poster presented at the Spring 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium, Mississippi State University, MS.

Ziogas, I. (2018, March). *The Rise of European Populism: Political Extremism and the Economic Crisis*. Invited presentation at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Ziogas, I. (2018, June). *Civic Engagement and Environmental Stewardship – Causes, Effects, and Indicators of Civilian Involvement*. Presented at the Civic Engagement Workshop, Biloxi, MS.

Awards & Recognitions

Sarah Gresham Barr was selected as a Robert W. Woodruff Fellow in Theology and Ministry at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, where she will start her Masters of Divinity this fall.

Dr. Cindy Bethel gave a speech to Congress on December 12th about the future of artificial intelligence based on her research projects at Mississippi State University. The speech was given before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation's subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet. Details of her speech and the panel were featured in multiple papers and news outlets: WJLA, Y'all Politics, CIO Divide, GCN, MeriTalk, and the Daily Journal.

Dr. Cindy Bethel was the recipient of a Fulbright U.S. Senior Scholar award. A story on her award and her future plans was featured on the Mississippi State Newsroom: <https://www.msstate.edu/newsroom/article/2018/03/msus-bethel-chosen-fulbright-scholar/>.

Dr. Cindy Bethel's research with the Social, Therapeutic and Robotics Systems Lab (STaRS) was featured in an NBC article on AI: <https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/why-scientists-are-teaching-robot-hug-ncna882026>.

Alan Burns won an Award of Excellence from the Southern Public Relations Federation's Lantern Awards for his work on the 2016 SSRC Annual Report.

Alan Burns was recognized for his work at the 2018 Public Relations Association of Mississippi State Conference. He received a PRISM Award for his work on the 2017 SSRC Annual Report.

Dr. Heather Hanna and Mississippi KIDS COUNT were featured in a Clarion-Ledger story, "Inequity in Mississippi as clear as black and white." <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2017/10/24/inequity-mississippi-clear-black-and-white-report/783103001/>

Dr. Heather Hanna and Mississippi KIDS COUNT were quoted in multiple news outlets on Mississippi's progress in the 2018 National KIDS COUNT Data Book: WREG, Mississippi Public Broadcasting, WCBI, the Daily Journal, and the Clarion Ledger.

Laura Herring, intern for Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale, was awarded three honors at the Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium including: first place in Social Sciences category for Visual Displays, first place in Arts & Humanities/ Social Sciences for the Community Engagement Research Track, and third place (tied) in the Public Health Research Competition.

Hasna Khandekar and **Nia Sims** received the first Greenberg Scholarship Award. The award was presented at the SSRC Open House by Dr. Linda Southward on October 26, 2017.

Marisa Laudadio was accepted to the prestigious 2018 Harvard Kennedy School Public Policy Leadership Conference for Freshmen and Sophomores in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This three-day program focuses on exposing first- and second-year college students to graduate programs in public policy, career opportunities, and fellowships. Over 800 students from 220 different colleges and universities applied to attend the conference this year, and only 73 students were selected.

Marisa Laudadio won first place in the humanities poster division at the Mississippi State Honors Conference in Jackson, Mississippi. She was also invited to present her work at the Posters in the Rotunda event held at the state capitol.

Kelly Lower gave an oral presentation at the 2018 MSU Graduate Research Symposium. Lower placed 2nd in the Masters section for Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Dr. Robert McMillen was quoted and featured in multiple news outlets on the topic of a possible tobacco tax increase: WJTV, Mississippi News Now, the Daily Journal, and Mississippi Public Broadcasting.

Dr. Robert McMillen's research from Mississippi Tobacco Data was featured in the news: <http://www.wdam.com/story/37519399/push-for-tobacco-tax-increase-continues-at-state-capitol>.

Stories in recent newspapers cited data from **Dr. Robert McMillen**, Mississippi Tobacco Data, and the **Wolfgang Frese Survey Research Lab (SRL)**: the Commercial Appeal and the Daily Journal.

Dr. Robert McMillen's research was featured in multiple articles: MPB Online and University of Kentucky News.

Dr. Robert McMillen was featured in an article and video segment on WCBI for World No Tobacco Day: <https://www.wcbi.com/world-no-tobacco-day/>.

Izzy Pellegrine was named Outstanding Graduate Student by the MSU President's Commission on the Status of Women. Read their spotlight on Izzy and the other outstanding women in the Maroon MEMO feature: <http://www.memo.msstate.edu/story.php?id=4557>.

Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale's research was featured in the Soybean Innovation Laboratory's February Newsletter:

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<https://mailchi.mp/illinois/keep-up-with-sils-latest-happenings>.

Drs. Kathleen Ragsdale and **Mary Read-Wahidi's** work on the USAID-funded Feed the Future Soybean Innovation Lab was highlighted in the USAID Agrilinks blog: <https://agrilinks.org/post/building-capacity-gendered-agricultural-research>.

Drs. Kathleen Ragsdale and **Mary Read-Wahidi's** work on the CDC-funded Focus4Teens Initiative to address teen pregnancy in the Mississippi Delta was highlighted in the Winter edition of MAFES Discovers Magazine: <http://www.mafes.msstate.edu/discovers/article.asp?id=105>.

A presentation by **Dr. Gina Rico Mendez**, **Dr. Kathleen Ragsdale**, and **Dr. Mary Read-Wahidi** was featured in a Soybean Innovation Lab Newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/illinois/stay-up-to-date-with-the-latest-sil-news?e=1438403ce8>.

Research from **Drs. Kathleen Ragsdale**, **Mary Read-Wahidi**, and **Gina Rico Mendez** was featured on the Agrilinks website in a story titled "Land Tenure Research Shows Men's Role in Households Impacts Women's Access to Land".

Dr. Holli Seitz was competitively selected by the MSU Center for Community-Engaged Learning to participate in the inaugural class of the Community-Engaged Learning Fellows Program.

Megan Stubbs-Richardson was awarded the Graduate Paper of Distinction Award for her paper entitled, "Strain among Bullying Victims: Considering the Effect of Alternative Relationships on Prosocial, Asocial, and Antisocial Responses to Physical, Verbal, Relational, and Cyber Bullying" at the Mid-South Sociological Association.

Research from **Mississippi Tobacco Data** was featured in a WTVA article about the decrease in tobacco use among Mississippi students: <http://www.wtva.com/content/news/Data-shows-smoking-and-smokeless-tobacco-rates-decreasing-among-Mississippi-students--482970981.html>.



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