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Delta Students Pursue New Pathways to Health During UM Visit

High schoolers discover career opportunities through visit with Center for Population Studies

AUGUST 16, 2019 BY ELIZABETH SWEENEY



The University of Mississippi's Center for Population Studies hosted 33 rising high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from the New Pathways to Health Opportunity initiative for their annual summer campus visit. The students are part of the Tri-County Workforce Alliance youth program, which operates in Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, Sunflower and Tallahatchie counties to build a healthy and competitive workforce through education and job training. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – High school students from the New Pathways to Health and Opportunity initiative recently spent the day at the **University of Mississippi** for their annual summer campus visit.

The university's **Center for Population Studies**, or CPS, hosted 33 rising high school sophomores, juniors and seniors from the **Tri-County Workforce Alliance** youth program. TCWA operates in the Mississippi Delta counties of Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman, Sunflower and Tallahatchie to build a healthy and competitive workforce through education and job training.

CPS, which aims to educate, conduct research and engage in public research surrounding population issues, has been collaborating with the alliance as a partner in the New Pathways to Health and Opportunity initiative for several years.

"We enjoy working with the high school students to give them exposure to different ways of looking at health, health careers and health care," said Lynn Woo, senior research associate and research coordinator at CPS who helps coordinate the campus visit each year.

"We want students to realize that there are other ways of participating within health careers other than just direct care. Not everyone has to be a doctor or a nurse or a pharmacist. You can still be a health professional and look at policies and research."

The summer campus visit typically takes place each June as part of summer programming for TCWA's High School Mentorship Program for Healthcare Professionals. This year's group included students from all five counties that are part of TCWA, representing Clarksdale High School, Cleveland Central High School, Coahoma County High School, Coahoma Early College High School, M.S. Palmer High School, Ruleville Central High School and West Tallahatchie High School.

"We aim to use their interest in health to get them on pathways to succeed in hopes that they will come back home to the Delta," said Woo, who grew up in Belzoni and whose family members still reside there. Woo said she feels a personal connection to the students as well as a desire to see positive outcomes in the Delta.

The Ole Miss visit included a tour of campus,

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

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

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

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

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Ole Miss In the News

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

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

lunch at Rebel Market and hearing from a variety of university officials on topics ranging from pre-college programs to ongoing research within various campus departments.

Kanasia Harris, a rising senior at Ruleville Central High School who is interested in studying occupational therapy or psychology, said the youth program is an eye-opening experience.

"(TCWA) lets us learn more about health care professions," Harris said, noting the program provides motivation and encouragement for pursuing higher education. "Job shadowing gives you the opportunity to get an inside look at your future."

Entering his senior year at Coahoma County High School, Shamar Burks is interested in the obstetrics and gynecology field as a career. The mentoring program that paired him with different nurses and doctors made an impact and influenced his future career path.

"It opened my eyes and allowed me to see that I want to be a part of that," Burks said.

An impromptu guest speaker during the campus visit was Janice Citchens, a McNair Scholar from Mississippi Valley State University conducting research at CPS this summer under the guidance of John J. Green, the center's director. Citchens graduated from West Tallahatchie High School, and her sister participated in the TCWA high school mentorship program.

Citchens urged students to stand out from the crowd and "be memorable" in positive ways. She encouraged them to continue to take advantage of the opportunities offered through TCWA programming.

The New Pathways to Health and Opportunity initiative is supported through a collaborative agreement between UM and the Rogosin Institute, including its Dreyfus Health Foundation. Funding is provided by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The collaboration seeks to develop the health workforce in the Mississippi Delta. Besides CPS and TCWA, other partners include the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center Inc. and the Mississippi Hospital Association Health Research and Educational Foundation Inc.

For more information about the Center for Population Studies, visit <http://cps.olemiss.edu/>.



Several of the high school students participating in the New Pathways to Health and Opportunity initiative tour the Ole Miss campus. The UM Center for Population Studies hosted 33 rising high school sophomores, juniors and seniors for a day to examine careers in health care and related fields. Submitted photo

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

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