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Mississippi Teacher Corps Trains Record Class

More than 50 percent of new recruits to teach math or science

AUGUST 5, 2013 BY JERRA A. SCOTT AND ANDREW MARK ABERNATHY

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Mississippi Teacher Corps TEAM Teacher Aaron Heit explains a science problem to a student at Holly Springs High School during the Mississippi Teacher Corps' 2013 summer training program hosted at Holly Springs High School. Heit will continue teaching at Greenville High School in August.

OXFORD, Miss. – On July 19, 32 newly licensed teachers completed six weeks of intense classroom training as new members of the **Mississippi Teacher Corps**, creating the largest class ever produced by the 24-year-old program.

For the first time, more than 50 percent of the new recruits are mathematics or science teachers. In August, each will teach in a critical-needs school in north or central Mississippi.

The program, founded in 1989, trains top non-education college graduates from across the nation to lead some of Mississippi's most

challenging classrooms in just over two months.

"I am taking a no-nonsense approach to my teaching," said first-year MTC recruit Allison Peña, a 2011 Yale University graduate and native of Sunrise, Fla. "I will have high expectations for these students. They need to learn how high school works because the ultimate intention is to get them to go to college."

Peña, who taught history for two years at a boarding school in England after college, will spend her first year in the Teacher Corps at Meridian High School teaching ninth-grade transitional algebra. Her first challenge is to prepare high school freshmen for Algebra I by their sophomore year.

Through MTC, recruits complete two summer terms at the **UM School of Education**, Mississippi's largest producer of teachers and educational leaders, as well as graduate classes in education two weekends a month, eventually earning a Master of Arts degree in curriculum and instruction. All alumni qualify for an advanced teaching license from the Mississippi Department of Education. Recruits receive full scholarships for tuitions and books, a MacBook and guaranteed job placement upon finishing their first summer training.

In addition to new growth, the Teacher Corps, which is funded primarily by the Mississippi Legislature, is beginning a new school year under new leadership. After the June 30 retirement of co-founder Andy Mullins and co-director Ryan Niemeyer's departure to lead the UM chapter of the **Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program**, Massachusetts teacher education veteran Tom Brady has been named to lead the program beginning Thursday (Aug. 1).

"This job was a blessing," Brady said. "Not only does it serve critical-needs districts, which is where I did some of my own teaching, but, this is a program that's incredibly well-respected."

The program's refocus on recruiting and retaining more mathematics and science teachers is partially supported by new external funding. Last October, the program received a \$525,000 grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation in Jackson that will provide a \$2,000 bonus for math and science teachers who opt to stay in Mississippi after graduation year. The grant also will allow more Teacher Corps veterans, known as "TEAM" teachers, to return to Holly Springs each summer to train new recruits.

"The grant is going to make such a positive impact on the Teacher Corps," Brady said. "Being able to add a few more teachers to the cohort means more schools that we can have a positive impact upon. I can tell already that this is a very special program. The types of people that are opting to teach in these critical-needs schools are the type of people that really want to make an impact."

Next year, new recruits will form the program's 25th class. At that time, this year's cohort – which consists of 10 math teachers, 10 science teachers, nine English teachers and three social studies

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Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

teachers – will help guide new participants through their first summer training program and serve as mentors to first-year teachers throughout the year.

“I have loved the people I have met in this program,” Peña said. “Everyone I have met has been interesting, engaging, committed to education and committed to some of the most disadvantaged schools in the country. We all have different stories and reasons why we’re here, but at the end of the day we all have the same drive to help these students who haven’t been served by the system.”

The first summer is considered a rite of passage for new recruits.

For the first two weeks, the pre-service teachers engage in education coursework at UM. For the next six weeks, the program’s focus shifts into a learn-by-doing approach, during which time the recruits arrive at Holly Springs High School each weekday by 7:30 a.m. to teach and observe teaching of retained summer school students from north Mississippi. Afterward, the teachers break into small groups to work with second-year students, TEAM teachers and UM faculty before returning to Oxford for more classwork and lesson planning for the next day.

Many recruits work at least 14 hours a day during this time. Each year, some do not complete the whirlwind training.

“I love the sense of community that the program brings out in people,” said new MTC recruit Tiffany Smith, a 2011 Rutgers University graduate from South Plainfield, N.J., who served previously in the **AmeriCorps** organization. “Teacher Corps TEAM leaders are there for you and understand that the training is difficult. But they let you know that you can do it, and that they are here for us when it get hard.”

Smith will teach at H.W. Byers High School in Mount Pleasant. She will teach biology for ninth through 12th grades as well as anatomy, physiology and ACT preparation.

“This semester, I will be trying to find out who my students are and what works best to make them effective learners,” Smith said. “I also want to be involved not only in the classroom, but in the community as well. I’ll be attending school events and church events to let students know I’m there for them both inside and out of school.”

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