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## Small Business Development Center Puts Interns to Work

Organization provides experience for students to help local businesses

FEBRUARY 3, 2021 BY SARAH CERVANTES, WESLEY DICKENS AND MICHELLE THOMPSON

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Matt Eddy, a UM senior from Fairhope, Alabama, served as an intern with the Mississippi Small Business Development Center during the summer of 2020. He worked in client outreach services assisting with PPE loans and industry research. Photo by Sital Singh

OXFORD, Miss. – The COVID-19 pandemic has created instability in the business climate. To ensure survival, businesses have changed plans and strategies to adapt to challenging economic times.

Budget cuts have been one tool in the arsenal for business survival, and often, that has meant delaying or canceling programs such as internships. Many students at the **University of Mississippi** experienced the loss of an internship opportunity firsthand in recent months.

The **Mississippi Small Business Development Center**, or MS-SBDC, recognized both the immediate need for outreach to businesses and also an opportunity to use student support in a number of areas. In March 2020, the center created plans and procedures for communicating with small businesses, and in April, it hired five Ole Miss business students for a Triage Center to reach out to businesses and provide needed tools and communication.

"I gained knowledge of the health care, manufacturing, restaurant, real estate and technology industries by performing research vital to the growth and recovery efforts of clients impacted by COVID-19," said Matthew Eddy, a senior marketing major with an emphasis in sales. The native of Fairhope, Alabama, worked as one of the center's data research analyst interns.

Several of the participating students lost internships due to COVID-19. They contacted business owners with surveys and responded with written communication and links to aid. They also maintained a hotline for help with "Mississippi's Back to Business Grant" and conducted outreach to 2,000 clients.

The level of impact would not have been possible without the student involvement

Additionally, the MS-SBDC launched a research project to update and enhance a Mississippi government resource platform, which included a Mississippi Business Resource Map. MS-SBDC partnered with the university's **McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement** and **School of Business Administration** to welcome three data research analyst interns as part of the McLean Institute's Catalyzing Entrepreneurship and Economic Development program.

Through the virtual internship, students got a real-world opportunity to learn how to organize volumes of information while collecting data in a fast-paced environment. They also were exposed to the large variety of businesses located in the state.

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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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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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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

"We are so excited to have these incredible students be a part of our organization and assist in the Mississippi Business Resource Map project," said Sharon Nichols, state director of the MS-SBDC. "They have done, and continue to do, excellent work."

"We know their efforts will help countless business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs in the state of Mississippi."

The MS-SBDC serves entrepreneurs and small business owners across the Magnolia State. At eight centers located throughout the state, experienced business counselors offer one-on-one counseling, technical support and workshops designed to assist small businesses.

The success of these programs has led to plans to incorporate more student and departmental support within MS-SBDC initiatives.

"We look forward to continuing to leverage our campus partnerships in innovative ways," Nichols said. "There are many plans underway for 2021 for programs that will elevate and enhance our outreach to small businesses."

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