Community Partnerships

Our new 2015-16 program year is off to a great start. Funded through the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, we have developed a collaborative partnerships with the Hattiesburg School District, the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services of Hattiesburg (MDRS) and the Mississippi Division of Medicaid. Hattiesburg School District provided a full-time certified special education teacher, Ms. Allison Hinz. MDRS provided two job coaches, Cherish Ducksworth and Sylvester Crosby, and the Medicaid Division provides waiver services and other long-term support services for the students.

Southern Miss Campus Partnerships

Currently we have eight student interns who have transitioned from Hattiesburg High School to Southern Miss. As the host business site, IDS at Southern Miss has developed internal collaborations to create employment training internship opportunities for the students. The internship sights include the post office, Payne Center, Fresh Food Company, Cook Library, Power House, and the Hillcrest cafeteria.

Tobacco Control Strategies Project

As part of their personal skills development, the interns will be receiving health education training. A collaboration has been developed with The Tobacco Control Strategies Project Southern Miss project director, Dr. Rebekah Young. The program provides tobacco-related education and workshops for Mississipians with disabilities based on common reasons for tobacco use and the barriers that limit receipt of and access to smoking cessation information and accessing resources for these individuals.

TRIAD AmeriCorps

The second component of the health education training is provided through the TRIAD Service AmeriCorps program. The program assists individuals with disabilities with becoming physically active and developing healthy lifestyles. The program is funded through the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services (MCVS).
Meet one of our biggest supporters, USM President Rodney D. Bennett

The Project SEARCH team met with Dr. Bennett on October 12 to discuss how the university’s partnership can help to enhance the program’s future.

Rodney D. Bennett took office as the 10th president of The University of Southern Mississippi on April 1, 2013. Dr. Bennett came to Southern Miss from the University of Georgia, where he served as vice president for Student Affairs. [News release/video announcing Dr. Bennett’s hiring.]

Appointed to the presidency by the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning on Feb. 7, 2013, Dr. Bennett is responsible to the Board of Trustees for every facet of institutional operations. Dr. Bennett’s selection as president made history, as he became the first African-American president of a predominantly white higher education institution in the state of Mississippi.

As vice president for Student Affairs at the University of Georgia, Dr. Bennett was actively involved in all facets of student life, from improving facilities to creating service-learning opportunities and celebrating the spirit of diversity on campus. He helped raise funds to enhance student life on campus and improved communications with faculty, staff, students and parents on the Athens campus and three UGA extended campuses.

Dr. Bennett served as chair of the UGA Athletic Association NCAA recertification process, including the institutional self-study. In addition, he was a member of the on-site committee for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, reviewing compliance areas related to student life and student affairs.

Dr. Bennett holds a Doctor of Education in educational administration from Tennessee State University in Nashville, a Specialist of Education and a Master of Education in Educational Administration from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, and a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication from Middle Tennessee State.

If you have information or news you would like to include be included in the next newsletter, please email information to jin.mcclendon@usm.edu by November 9.

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Project SEARCH is a program of the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at The University of Southern Mississippi. Funding is provided through a grant from the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities.
Meet our Interns

Meet Jeromy (left) doing his internship at the post office. Some of his duties are preparing outgoing mail, sorting incoming mail and assisting customers.

Meet Kyndell (right) doing her internship at the fresh food company Cafeteria. Some of her job duties are preparing and serving food, cleaning food areas, processing payments and greeting customers.

Meet Christopher (above) and Arthur (below) doing their internships at the USM Payne Center. Some of their duties are to use the computerized system to check equipment out to members, greet customers, sanitize equipment and wash/dry laundry.

Meet Joseph (above) doing his internship at Hillcrest Cafeteria. Some of his job duties include running the dishwasher, preparing and serving food, cleaning work areas, stocking, and greeting and serving customers.

Meet Santrise (above) doing her internship at Cook Library. Some of her job duties are stocking returned library books, using the computerized system to check books in and out, and assisting customers.

Meet Brenda (left) doing her internship at Power House restaurant. Some of her job duties are preparing and serving food, cleaning food areas, processing payments and greeting customers.