



# COMMUNIQUE

A Publication of Mississippi Valley State University for Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Friends | July 2018 Vol.15 Edition 7

## MVSU TO ROLL OUT EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE THIS FALL



High school freshmen in the Greenville Public School District (GPD) who were brave enough to accept the challenge have become members of the inaugural class of the Greenville Public Early College High School (GPECHS) at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU).

GPECHS is a new initiative that includes a partnership between MVSU, GPD and the Mississippi Department of Education to provide an academically energizing environment where high school students can simultaneously earn a high school diploma plus transferable college credit through concentrated dual-credit opportunities.

MVSU is the first four-year Mississippi Institution of Higher Learning to participate in an early college high school effort.

As part of the initiative, select high school students will spend their days on the campus of MVSU completing high school and college courses. Ongoing plans have the first cohort of students, teachers, and classes coming to the University in August.



**BLAND**

On Wednesday, July 18, those students who will be

joining the program, along with their parents and guardians, visited MVSU to meet faculty, staff and tour the campus—including the Business Education Building where they will be taking courses.

Dr. Constance Bland, vice-president of academic affairs, shared her excitement with the students as well as encouraged them to do their best while explaining all the benefits of participating in the GPECHS initiative.

“I thank you so much for being brave enough to step out and be part of this adventure,”

See “Early College” page 3

## MVSU, VIRGINIA TECH AND SCCSD STILL BRINGING STEM TO THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

Mississippi Valley State University has been continuing its work with Virginia Tech and the Sunflower County Consolidated School District (SCCSD) to increase and strengthen the impact of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in the Mississippi Delta.

Since 2015, the trio has been advancing STEM education through the program “Actualizing STEM Potential in the Mississippi Delta,” made possible through a \$1.6 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

As part of the program, faculty from MVSU and SCCSD have been teaming up to teach high

school students in Sunflower County leadership and teamwork skills while encouraging them to explore STEM careers.

Recently, representatives from each organization met for their annual workshop to discuss ideas

See “STEM” page 4

# HUNDREDS VISIT MVSU FOR YANKY 72 MEMORIAL DEDICATION CEREMONY

Hundreds of visitors filled the campus of Mississippi Valley State University Saturday, July 14, to honor the legacies of the 15 Marines and one Navy Corpsman who passed away last year when their military aircraft crashed into a nearby soybean field in Itta Bena.

The Walter Roberts Auditorium of MVSU's H.G. Carpenter Building was nearly filled to capacity for the dedication ceremony that included a greeting from MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr. as well as special tributes from MS Gov. Phil Bryant; U.S. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith; Lt. Gen. Rex McMillian, Commanding General of the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve and the U.S. Marine Corps Forces North; and Lt. Gen. Carl E. Mundy, III, Commanding General of the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command and U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command.

"As we gather today for the YANKY 72 memorial service, 'The Valley' extends its heartfelt condolences to the families and friends," said Briggs. As a University, our motto is 'Live for Service', meaning we truly understand and embrace a passion for giving. The Valley family can assure you all that this university community will stand with you and give support, always."

Briggs then joined Commissioner Mike Tagert of the MS Northern Transportation District in unveiling the highway marker renaming 7.2 miles of U.S. Highway 82 (from the site of the YANKY 72 Memorial to the Leflore/Sunflower county line) as the YANKY 72 Memorial Highway.

In addition to the naming of the memorial highway, Mississippi's Marine Corps League led an effort that raised more than \$100,000 for a memorial placed outside of the Leflore County Incubator where the recovery effort was based, several miles east of the crash site.

Bryant said that the highway marker and the newly constructed memorial site are just small gestures to honor the legacies of the servicemen.

"The memorial that was built will last for generations and generations, and we hope that generations hence will come to that memorial and remember those 16 that were lost, and never forget that freedom is not free—whether it is on foreign battle fields or here in Leflore County," Bryant said.



Hyde-Smith called the 16 servicemen "giants among men."

"We will recognize them as such forever," she added. "It is our responsibility to carry on the legacy of honor and courage these men represent."

Mundy applauded MVSU for its support in hosting the YANKY 72 dedication ceremony.

"I told Dr. Briggs that I didn't realize that he was a former Marine, and that he epitomizes what it means to be 'semper fidelis'. I won't forget that, and I will always remember Mississippi Valley State University for more than just Jerry Rice," he remarked.

After the ceremony, shuttles transported those in attendance across the highway from MVSU

for the unveiling of the memorial. During the unveiling ceremony, plans were announced to host a ceremony at the memorial site each July.

The YANKY 72 Memorial and Dedication Ceremony were made possible by the Marine Corps Aviation Association, the Marine Corps League, the United States Marine Corps Reserve Association, the Wingman Foundation, the Marine Raider Foundation, the Marine Battleherks, the Marine Corps Air Transport Association, Leflore County and the City of Greenwood, Hamilton and Associates, Larry's Fish House, and MVSU.

# UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROFESSOR ASSISTS IN NATIONAL PROJECT

This summer, Mississippi Valley State University history professor Dr. Kathryn Green participated in a national project to explore how philosophy and history faculty members at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) can improve the work of scholarly societies, and how the scholarly societies can improve access to the resources, professional, and academic networks they provide.



**GREEN**

The participating faculty also detailed intense teaching, service, and research commitments, as well as work they do in their broader communities.

With the help of these participants, the project will explore possibilities for closer connections between scholarly societies and HBCU historians and philosophers. The three focus group conversations have provided the critical insights to guide the project findings and will form the basis of the project report, to be released next year.

The American Historical Association (AHA) and the American Philosophical Association (APA), supported by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, began this project last fall to work towards deeper collaboration between scholarly societies and HBCUs, including exploring how scholarly societies can offer professional development opportunities that address particular needs of faculty at under-resourced HBCUs.



American  
Philosophical  
Association

This initiative, “Extending the Reach of Scholarly Society Work to HBCU Faculty” convened three focus groups in June 2018: at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans on June 8, at Spelman College in Atlanta on June 15, and in Washington, D.C. on June 22.

Members of the project’s steering committee along with the executive directors and staff members of the AHA and APA listened to a group of history and philosophy faculty members who are dedicated to their students and to the missions of their institutions.

The American Historical Association is the largest professional organization serving historians in all fields and all professions. Founded in 1884, the AHA has become a trusted voice for history education, the professional work of historians, and the critical role of historical thinking in public life.

Founded in 1900, the American Philosophical Association promotes the discipline and profession of philosophy, both within the academy and in the public arena. The APA supports the professional development of philosophers at all levels and works to foster greater understanding and appreciation of the value of philosophical inquiry.

## Early College *continued from cover*



Bland said to the students and parents in attendance. You have the unique opportunity to gain college credits and get rewarded by knocking out possibly two years of college.”

MVSU Assistant Vice-President for Online Distance Education Dr. Kenneth Done then further explained what this unique opportunity will provide students.

“The impact for these students is great. They will be able to accumulate those hours and a high school diploma. When they complete high school, they will technically be a sophomore in college and all those hours are transferable,” Done said.

GPECHS Principal Pamela Ward said the initiative is a great way to prepare students for their postsecondary degree.

“This program is designed to help those students who may be first-generation college students to have the opportunity not only to earn college credit, but be a part of a college,” she said. “...and the best thing is that they can earn those credits at no cost to the parents.”

To learn more about GPECHS, contact MVSU’s Office of Distance Education at (662) 254-3913.



*Pictured, from left, are Dr. Dan Trent, MVSU; Ralph Smith, independent technology specialist; LaMorris Strong, MVSU; Paula Wilder, retreat facilitator; Anza Mitchell, VA Tech doctoral student; James Jimison, SCCSD; Dr. Brenda Brand, principal investigator/ VA Tech; Lezly Taylor, VA Tech doctoral student; John Cochran, SCCSD; Takumi Sato, VA Tech; and Marcus Golden, MVSU.*

and activities centered on ways to continue advancing STEM in the Delta. The group also discussed sustainability plans, which included launching a STEM excellence center at MVSU as early as this fall.

Organized by Dr. Brenda Brand, a native of Shaw, Miss., “Actualizing STEM Potential in the Mississippi Delta” is based on a STEM initiative implemented at Virginia Tech 19 years ago.

Brand said she was leaving her hometown headed back to Virginia in 2009 when she began to ponder what’s available to motivate and inspire kids in the Delta.

“I realized that I’d been doing this in Virginia for so many years and had great outcomes, so I should do something similar in the Delta,” she said.

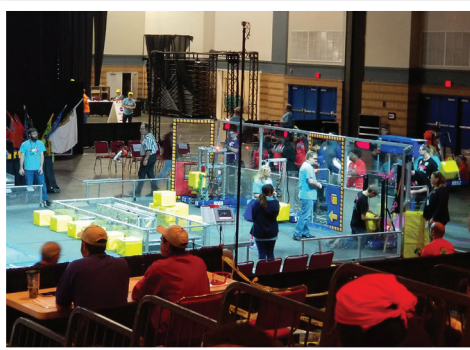
After writing several unsuccessful proposals, Brand was finally funded by the National Science Foundation.

“It’s a replica of Virginia Tech’s program with some difference based on the area,” Brand explained. We thought it was really important to include a University that was within reach for the community.”

For Brand, MVSU was the perfect choice.

“There’s Valley in my blood in terms of all the different people in my family who are Valley alum,” she said. “Also, the University’s proximity was perfect, and I have a deep desire to support HBCUs.”

Brand, who works as an associate professor in Virginia Tech’s School of Education, said she’s



all about collaborating with the K-12 system.

“If you’re going to inspire kids to pursue higher education pathways, then that collaboration just makes a lot of sense,” she said. “Also, a project of this caliber requires varying levels of expertise. We’re finding that faculty here at MVSU are playing a significant role in developing the skills of the students within the disciplines that they teach.”

The program provides high school students with the opportunity to plan, design, build, and program robots. This past March, the students had the opportunity to put their skills to work as team “Delta Overload” during the FIRST Robotics Competition Bayou Regional, hosted in Kenner, La.

“The students at Gentry have really improved their robotics skills each year of the build season as well as the competition,” said MVSU Computer Science Instructor Marcus Golden. I am looking forward to this upcoming season, where I believe we will finally break through and be among the top in the competition.”



The program also includes a mentorship component that gives MVSU STEM students the opportunity to intern at the high schools and facilitate activities related to their respective fields.

In addition, SCCSD students get the opportunity to visit MVSU’s campus several times per year, which helps them become acquainted with a University setting, exposes them to MVSU, and provides MVSU faculty with the opportunity to explore innovative instructional practices.

And while the program is designed to push STEM careers, Brand said she hopes that it broadens students to the endless possibilities available to them.

“My determination is all around providing opportunities and influencing a positive direction for the students in STEM fields or any other positive direction for their lives,” she said.

# MVSU ANNOUNCES ON-SITE REGISTRATION FOR 2018 FALL SEMESTER

Current and prospective students have several options to secure their seat in classes offered by Mississippi Valley State University this fall.

MVSU will begin on-site registration and academic advisement for the 2018 Fall Semester at its main campus Wednesday, August 15 through the close of registration Monday, Sept. 10.

Individuals will be able to stop by the Sutton Administration Building during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday) to register. Extended hours (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) will be available Monday, August 20.

MVSU will also offer registration at the Greenville Higher Education Center in Greenville from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 14; registration at Coahoma Community College in Clarksdale is slated for 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 15.

In addition, students at all sites can continue to register online at <http://sutton2.mvsu.edu>.

MVSU Director of Student Records/ University Registrar Jeffrey Loggins said that on-site registration is a great opportunity for new and current MVSU students.

“During on-site registration, prospective students will have the opportunity to be admitted and sign-up for classes,” he said.

While the University encourages students to complete the admissions and registration process online, Loggins said the goal is to accommodate all students.

“We always encourage students to register online so they won’t have to wait ‘in line’, but we also want to make ourselves available for those students who prefer to register on-site,” he said.

Classes for the Fall 2018 semester will kick-off Monday, August 20.

The last day to register for classes is Monday, September 10, 2018.

For more information, contact the Office of Student Records/University Registrar at (662) 254-3321.

For more information about MVSU’s off-campus sites, contact the Office of Distance Education at (662) 254-3625.

## WELCOME ABOARD



**Vester Waters**  
*Recruiter/Counselor*  
Office of Admissions  
& Recruitment



**Rodd Woods**  
*Assistant Women's*  
Basketball Coach  
Athletics

## LIVE FOR SERVICE



*Rashad Pittman, a junior student-athlete with the MVSU football team, spent some time playing a game of checkers with a kid from the community during MVSU’s Diversity Fun Day at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Greenwood on Tuesday. Pittman is from Mize, MS.*

## Two Minutes with...

# Willie Ryas

*Staff Accountant, Business and Finance*

### *Tell us a little about yourself and your background.*

My name is Willie Ryas, Jr. I am from the greatest city in the Mississippi Delta—Indianola. I attended Gentry High School, and I am very goal-oriented. Once I graduated high school, I made one of the best decisions of my young adult life by choosing to attend Alcorn State University. While attending Alcorn State, I received my Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree. I have been offered job opportunities in several states, including Illinois to Georgia. Although the career options were more appealing, I declined those offers because I feel that my purpose is to help improve the Mississippi Delta. I have been at MVSU, where I serve as a Staff Accountant/Bank Reconciliations, for a little more than a year now. I aspire to begin working on my master's during the upcoming school term.

### *How do you approach providing service?*

As the Staff Accountant/Bank Reconciliations, I only interact with a small selection of MVSU's staff and students. Occasionally, I am needed to assist at the Cashier's Window, where I provide a variety of services to both staff and students. I try to offer a prompt, efficient and courteous customer service experience to every person that comes to the window. I understand how stressful the idea of visiting the Business Office can be, and I strive to alleviate some of the anxiety by going the extra mile to answer any questions an individual may have. Although sometimes the only assistance I can give is to redirect them to another department, I always do it with a smile.

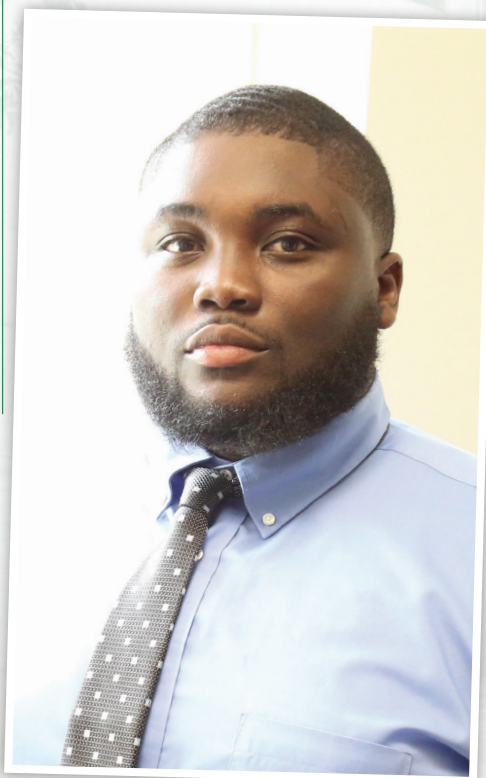
### *Where are we most likely to find you when you are not at work?*

When I am not working, you will most likely find me in the kitchen. Whether I'm home or not, I find comfort in the kitchen. I love to cook. As the staff accountant, I have to pay attention to every detail. Sometimes for my reconciliations to balance, I have to muster up that same

energy that I use in the kitchen to perfect a recipe. I started cooking because I like to eat delicious foods, but I found most of my options were quite bland. I need my food to look and taste a certain way. I couldn't think of a better person to handle that responsibility than myself. I started out making dishes for family functions and gatherings. To my surprise, everything became a hit, and they always look forward to my meals now. It truly warms my heart to see others enjoying the fruit of my labor.

### *What is something we would be surprised to learn about you?*

I think what surprises most people about me is when they find out my interest in music. I am a blues lover. I always played sports growing up, so I never had the time to express my love for musical instruments and my desire to someday play one. I recently started playing the guitar, and maybe in a couple of years (when I have successfully opened up my restaurant), I will also be able to perform with a live band!



# COMMUNIQUÉ

The Communiqué is published for faculty, staff, alumni and supporters of Mississippi Valley State University by the Office of Communications and Marketing

Editorial material should be sent to [news@mvsu.edu](mailto:news@mvsu.edu) or mailed to:

## OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Mississippi Valley State University  
MVSU 7233 • 14000 Hwy. 82 W.  
Itta Bena, MS 38941-1400

For more information, call 662.254.3578  
or email [news@mvsu.edu](mailto:news@mvsu.edu)

Dameon A. Shaw  
*Interim Vice President for  
University Advancement*

Brittany Davis-Green  
*Director*

John McCall  
*Senior Graphic Designer*

Joseph Cotton  
*Associate Graphic Designer*

Donell Maxie  
*Communications Specialist*

Shanae Curry  
*Project Coordinator*



Dr. Jerryl Briggs  
*President*



@MississippiValley



@MVSUDEVILS

**New Hashtag: #GOMVSU**

Mississippi Valley State University complies with all applicable laws regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity in all its activities and programs and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or group affiliation, age, disability, handicap, or status as a veteran or disabled veteran.