



COMMUNIQUÉ

A Publication of Mississippi Valley State University for Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Friends | March 2019 Vol.16 Edition 3

MVSU RENAMES WIST CONFERENCE IN HONOR OF FOUNDER DR. CONSTANCE G. BLAND

Mississippi Valley State University hosted its 22nd celebration of the Women in Science and Technology (WIST) Conference Friday, March 22.

The WIST Organization is a student-led organization, comprised of undergraduate female students majoring in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, designed to promote women in science and technology.

The goal of the annual conference is to show middle and high school females that STEM careers are exciting, attainable and rewarding as well as to increase the awareness of STEM disciplines and MVSU.

Themed “Women in Science and Technology Taking a Stand in STEM”, this year’s event was hosted in the Claude G. Perkins Auditorium from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

During the morning session, the conference featured a special ceremony honoring the

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MORE THAN 2000 STUDENTS ATTEND MVSU'S ANNUAL SPRING HIGH SCHOOL DAY

There was standing room only in Mississippi Valley State University’s R.W. Harrison Sports Complex March 29 as high school students from across the region attended the Annual Spring High School Day.

The annual event is organized by the Office of Admissions & Recruitment and is one of the University’s largest recruitment efforts.

More than 2,000 students from across the state, including Jackson, Columbus, and surrounding Delta counties, as well as Memphis and Texas were in attendance.

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PURNELL RECOGNIZED BY IHL FOR ADVANCING DIVERSITY AT MVSU

Deborah Purnell was recently recognized by the Mississippi Board of Trustees of the State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) for her work to advance diversity at Mississippi Valley State University.

During its February board meeting, the IHL hosted its Diversity Awards ceremony in honor of Black History Month.

As part of the annual ceremony, IHL board members honor faculty from each of Mississippi's eight public universities for advancing diversity at their respective institutions.

Purnell, who serves as an instructor in MVSU's Department of English and Foreign Languages, as well as advisor for the University's Creative Writing Club, was selected as MVSU's recipient by university administration.

"I am honored to have been chosen for a diversity and inclusion award," said Purnell. "It is a rare opportunity to be honored for something that comes naturally to me. I love meeting people and I love telling people about MVSU."

Purnell said she enjoys helping students at MVSU and in the community develop a love for writing.

"I love sharing my writing background and experience with students at the various high schools to encourage more young people to



tell their stories. Mississippians are natural storytellers and our students just need a push to write theirs," she said.

During the ceremony, Dr. Michael Ryan, professor and associate dean for Student Affairs at the University of Mississippi Medical

Center's School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences was named the 2019 Diversity Educator of the Year.

Retired educator and community volunteer Penny Sisson of Oxford received the Karen Cummins Community Service Award.

ZEIGLER TAPPED AS MVSU DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID

Mississippi Valley State University announced its new director of financial aid recently with the hiring of Letherio H. Zeigler.

Zeigler brings a wealth of experience to the university and has worked in financial aid for nearly 22 years. He has served as a director of financial aid at four institutions between Georgia and Tennessee.

According to Zeigler, working with students and providing top-notch service is key to running an efficient financial aid office.

"I love working with the students, and I am a strong believer in world-class customer service, along with making processes for students and staff as user-friendly and simple as possible. I will work tirelessly to achieve these goals," he said.

The South Carolina native enrolled at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree. He obtained his Master of Arts Degree at Lincoln

University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Currently, Zeigler is pursuing a doctorate in Educational Leadership/Higher Education Administration.

Zeigler started his work in financial aid when he was hired in May of 1997 at Lincoln University as a financial aid counselor as well as the Academic Scholarship chairperson.

"I enjoyed working and servicing the students, and at that moment, I knew this was the career I wanted to continue to pursue," Zeigler explained.

He later became associate director at the Art Institute of Atlanta in 2001 and served there for several years until he was promoted to director of financial aid at the Art Institute of Tennessee-Nashville in 2011.

Zeigler served in that position for nearly three years until transitioning to Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn., as the director of financial aid.



See "Director" page 9 Letherio Zeigler

MVSU STAFF MEMBER PRESENTS RESEARCH ON STUDENT HEALTH & WELLBEING DURING NASAP

A Mississippi Valley State University staff member was recently extended an invitation to present research during an annual conference designed for professionals serving at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and those minority populations in diverse settings around the country.

Dr. Yolanda Jones, Dean of Student Development, presented on the topic “Student Health and Well-Being: The Impact on Academic Success” during the 65th National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP), hosted February 21-23 in Atlanta.

NASAP, founded in 1954, is on the forefront in providing innovative ideas, real-world solutions and professional development opportunities for student affairs professionals serving at HBCUs, and those serving minority populations in diverse settings around the country.

The annual conference provides a forum for professional growth and development for all who are involved with students and is open to professionals in higher education in general, and the nation’s business industry. Concurrent student-focused conference sessions provide professionals and students the opportunity to learn, network, and create lasting friendships



Dr. Yolanda Jones

that endure beyond the conference.

Jones’ presentation discussed the differences between well-being and wellness, the types of well-being, and the eight dimensions of wellness, emerging trends, and provided several examples of innovative strategies to teach students and

employees skills to flourish. She also explored the concept of well-being and wellness beyond the buzz-word to include definitions, models, and measurement tools.

Her presentation concluded that student health issues affect student’s attendance, their grades, attitudes, appearances, and their ability to learn, which is a direct correlation that affects the retention, persistence, and the graduation rates of college students.

“With more than 17 years in higher education at MVSU, I understand and I have experienced first-hand that a healthy mind and a healthy body, both work together in a complex system,” said Jones.

“A college student’s primary responsibility is to achieve academic success. Recent studies indicate that it has not been an easy task for most students, and in order for students to function at their highest potential, it is imperative that they take care of both, their mind and their body” she added.

“Dr. Jones’ participation in the conference continues to underscore the importance of

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TURNIPSEED AND OLUDARE WIN BEST CHEFS



Pictured, from left, Drs. Sade Turnipseed and Alaba Oludare were named the “Best Chefs on the Yard” March 29, following the conclusion of the Valley in Motion Spring 2019 Chopped Competition! The duo’s winning dishes featured an international flare—African Jollof Rice with Chicken, Brazilian Stirfry with Crab, Salmon with Sweet Pepper Chili Sauce; Carribean Eggplant, Smash Potatoes, and “Grandmama’nem” Special Apple Pie.



WIST *continued from cover*

contributions of WIST founder, the late Dr. Constance G. Bland.

“Dr. Bland dedicated more than 23 years of service to this University and actively demonstrated her passion and commitment for the University and its faculty. She established a great relationship with the community and was well respected,” remarked MVSU alumnae Sabrina Phillips.

“She was responsible for developing this conference. She had a distinguished career for advocating young women to push for and dominate the areas of STEM. She loved being a part of this conference every year, and you always saw a glow on her face,” she added.

Following special remarks by MVSU Director of Academic Support for STEM Departments & Ayers Programs Dr. Earlean Anderson, the new WIST logo was unveiled by President Dr. Jerryl Briggs; Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Elizabeth Evans; and Mathematics, Computer and Information Sciences (MCIS) Department Chair Dr. Latonya Garner.

The keynote speaker for this year’s conference was Hilliary Bland-Spivey, daughter of Edgar Bland, Jr. and the late Dr. Constance Bland. Spivey is a 2010 graduate of MVSU and currently serves as a physician assistant with Next Level Urgent Care in Houston, Texas.

Garner said she was extremely excited about this year’s event because it exposed young females to successful women in the fields of STEM, including obstetricians and gynecologists, physician assistants, computer scientists, nurses, biologists and mathematicians.

“The WIST Organization aspires to become a motivator to young ladies who yearn to be different in shaping the world in the 21st century,” said Garner. “We hope this conference has improved young females’ attitudes about STEM and increased their interest in MVSU.”

Other presenters for the conference included: Dr. Mary Crump, Jacquilyn R. German, Jackie Henne-Kerr, Dr. Nneka Okezie Okeh, Dr. Manju Pande, Sabrina Phillips, Muriel R. Pollard, Margaret Reynolds, Dr. Hattie Spencer, Dr. Candace Carter-Stevens, Yolanda Harvey-West, and Dr. Stacy White.



VALLEY RECOGNIZES STUDENT SCHOLARS DURING 2019 HONORS CONVOCATION

Mississippi Valley State University paused to recognize its student scholars during its Annual Honors Convocation Thursday, March 21.

Hosted in the Walter Roberts Auditorium of the H.G. Carpenter Building, this year's event was keynoted by MVSU President Dr. Jerryl Briggs, Sr.

During the convocation, recognition was extended to 92 Presidential Scholars, 72 Distinguished Scholars, 214 Honor Scholars, 186 Scholars, and 45 Outstanding Scholars (selected by academic departments). Special recognition was also extended to those students receiving, state, regional and national honors.



MVSU TO COMPETE FOR CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE AT 30TH ANNUAL HONDA CAMPUS ALL-STAR CHALLENGE

After winning a series of regional competitions, Mississippi Valley State University is one of 48 schools that will vie for the championship title at the 30th Annual Honda Campus All-Star Challenge (HCASC), America's premier academic competition for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

The HCASC National Championship Tournament will be held April 13-17, 2019, on the American Honda campus in Torrance, California. MVSU has the opportunity to win the HCASC top prize—a \$75,000 institutional grant from Honda.

Patrice D. Otero, a senior from Greenwood majoring in English Education; Jaylin R. Smith, a sophomore from Greenwood majoring in Communications and Media Studies; Casandra Newsome, a senior from Chicago majoring in Business Administration; and Andrew J. McDaniels, a sophomore from Eastvale, Calif., majoring in Art will represent MVSU. MVSU Professor Dr. Abigail S. Newsome will coach the team.

"We are excited about the opportunity to once again participate in the HONDA Campus All-Star Championship," said Newsome. "For several years, Honda has provided students from



MVSU the premier opportunity to travel and compete against other students from across the country. We are thankful for this platform and the opportunity to expose our students to this intense, challenging and rewarding experience."

Honda Campus All-Star Challenge connects the nation's best and brightest HBCU students who expand their scope of knowledge; learn teamwork and sportsmanship; and develop a bond with their fellow competitors.

The fast-paced buzzer competition highlights students' academic prowess and ability to answer

questions about history, science, literature, religion, the arts and pop culture. Outside of game play, the year-round program provides community service activities, leadership, networking opportunities and mentorship.

"For 30 years, Honda Campus All-Star Challenge has provided a platform for the nation's top HBCU students to advance their dreams," said Steve Morikawa, vice president of Corporate Relations and Social Responsibility

See "Championship" page 9

DEROSA NAMED SWAC WOMEN'S FIELD ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Mississippi Valley State's Tiara DeRosa was named the SWAC Women's Outdoor Track Athlete of the Week, as announced by the conference March 20.

DeRosa won the discus throw event at the South Alabama Jaguar Invitational, clearing 45.47 meters (149-02 feet) on her second-to-last attempt. Additionally, the junior set a new personal best in the shot put, making a toss of 13.31 meters (43-08.00 feet) on her way to a third-place finish in the event.

The junior transfer is the first MVSU female student-athlete to win a Field Athlete of the Week during the 2018-19 season. The Sandy's Bermuda native currently ranks third in the SWAC in the discus and fifth in the shot put.



UNIVERSITY MOCK TRIAL TEAM CLOSES SEASON WITH ANOTHER AWARD

The Mississippi Valley State University Mock Trial Team capped off its season in the Jackson Regional Mock Trial Tournament recently, bringing home another individual award.

During the four-round, three-day tournament, hosted Feb. 15-17, Mississippi Valley scored well and had attorneys and witnesses who ranked on the judges' ballots.

The team competed against Florida State University, Georgia State University, Millsaps College, and Mississippi College scoring well on all of the ballots.

Mychal Barnum, a sophomore Pre-Law/Legal Studies and Government and Politics double major from Memphis, Tenn., won an outstanding witness award for the Plaintiff for his role as an expert witness, Dr. Wiloughby Hawkins.

The other members of the team included Co-Captains Kambreca Mitchell of Greenwood, Miss., and Donovan Brownlee of Cleveland,

Ohio; Jasmine Murphy of Itta Bena, Miss.; Mychal Barnum of Memphis; Jakaria Robinson Greenville, Miss.; Nadia Crawford of Atlanta, Ga.; Alexus Ervins of Laurel, Miss.; Rodarius Turner of Indianola, Miss.; and Chelsea Washington of Yazoo City, Miss.

examinations and closing arguments. Students must be skilled and focused to succeed.

The coaches for the MVSU Mock Trial Team include Neysha Sanders, Esq., and Dr. Larry W. Chappell.

Sanders is an assistant professor of Legal Studies. She also coordinates the Pre-Law/Legal Studies program, serves as University's Pre-Law advisor and is a member of Sanders and Sanders Law Firm. Chappell is a retired professor of Political Science and former coordinator of MVSU's Government and Politics Program.

MVSU's Mock Trial Team is sponsored by the Department of Social Sciences, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of University Advancement, the Office of Sponsored Programs, and the Office of the President and the Leflore County Board of Supervisors.

Special thanks are due to Senior Graphic Designer John McCall of MVSU's Office of Communications and Marketing for preparing the demonstrative aids that students used in their testimony.



Mock trial requires students to perform as attorneys and witnesses competing against teams from around the country. The Tournaments are sponsored by the American Mock Trial Association (AMTA). Teams consist of up to 10 members who must compete in three-hour trials on prosecution and on defenses.

Team members must learn depositions, affidavits, and expert reports, and also analyze and use numerous pieces of evidence. A trial consists of opening statements, direct examinations, cross

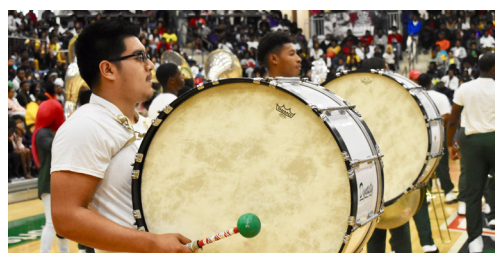
High School Day

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The event kicked-off with an academic fair followed by greetings from members of the MVSU executive cabinet and student leaders.

Students were then presented with a taste of all-things Valley—from Greek life and sports to the Mean Green Marching Machine University Band.

After the pep-rally and special presentation, students had the opportunity to network, dance and enjoy lunch under the Pavilion. There were also opportunities to receive on-site admission and a campus tour.



BAILEY NAMED SWAC MEN'S TRACK ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



Mississippi Valley State's freshman runner Christopher Bailey was named the SWAC Men's Outdoor Track Athlete of the Week, announced by the conference March 27.

Bailey won the 400-meter dash at the Mississippi State-hosted Al Schmidt/Bulldog Relays with a personal-best time of 46.57 seconds. Additionally, the freshman set a personal-best mark in the 200-meter dash, finishing in 21.58 seconds.

In the 400m, the Atlanta, Ga. native ranks sixth in the nation and first in the SWAC.

MVSU ALUM NOW HEADS VISIT JACKSON

The Visit Jackson Board of Directors recently announced Mississippi Valley State University alumnus Rickey L. Thigpen as the official president and chief executive officer of Visit Jackson.

Visit Jackson (Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau) is a destination marketing organization charged with attracting, promoting and facilitating events to generate positive economic impact and improve the quality of life for residents of the Capital City.

"I am honored to have been given the opportunity to serve my hometown in this role," said Thigpen. "The team at Visit Jackson is passionate about working with the tourism industry to execute strategies that will be transformative and impactful. It is a blessing to be in this place, at this time. Our collective ambition will yield results that will reward all of Jackson."

Thigpen joined Visit Jackson in 1987 and has served in multiple management positions within the administrative and marketing disciplines, including more than 15 years as the executive vice president. In Oct. 2018, the Visit Jackson board named Thigpen as the interim president of the organization.

"Mr. Thigpen has hit the ground running and we have been very impressed with his leadership and ability to establish Visit Jackson as an industry leader," said Robert Gibbs, Esq. (board chair).



Rickey L. Thigpen

"The Board feels very confident that he is more than qualified to lead Visit Jackson as both his practical and educational background have prepared him for this position. We look forward to working alongside him," Gibbs added.

Thigpen is a member of numerous professional and civic organizations, including Destination



International, 100 Black Men of Jackson, Inc., Mississippi Valley State University National Alumni Association, Leadership Jackson Alumni Association (Board of Directors), Alpha Foundation, Inc., and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Professionally, Thigpen represents Visit Jackson and the Jackson Tourism Industry on numerous committees and commissions including the Mississippi Tourism Association (PAC) Board of Directors and the Governor's Conference on Tourism Annual Meeting Planning Committee.

A native of Jackson, Thigpen received a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from MVSU, a master's degree in Leadership, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Additionally, Thigpen has earned professional certifications from the University of Southern Mississippi, the Mississippi Tourism Association, and Destination International. He has also appeared in Black Meetings & Tourism magazine as one of the most influential African-Americans in the tourism industry multiple times.

Research *continued from page 3*

her passion for Student Affairs as a practitioner and a scholar. She has had a distinguished career in student services and I am proud to see her present this important research on student well-being. She has always been passionate about student retention and remains a critical voice in the student affairs network.” said Dr. Gerald Peoples, co-chair of NASAP’s Council of Past Presidents.

Jones has a history of being engaged in efforts to address the holistic student. In November 2018, she presented during the annual Mississippi’s Coalition of Partners in Prevention (MCPPI) Annual Training, which was organized by the Department of Health Promotions and Wellness at Mississippi State University.

MCPPI is a group of universities and community colleges in Mississippi that

have joined forces to collaborate in planning, implementing, and evaluating researched best-practices for alcohol and other prevention programming to support education/prevention and safety for college students.

MCPPI provides training, resources, and support for its members. MVSU was the first HBCU to join the coalition and was very instrumental in recruiting other professionals from around the state.

Jones has also been reappointed to the Mississippi Blues Commission, where she has served as a statutory member since 2013. The Blues Commission is a body of eighteen appointed Commissioners representing major organizations and geographic/political regions supporting Blues initiatives throughout the state.

“Championship” *continued from page 5*

at American Honda. “Honda congratulates the ‘Great 48’ for their incredible work ethic, teamwork and competitive spirit. We look forward to an exciting National Championship Tournament and crowning the 2019 HCASC National Champion in April.”

In 1989, Honda established HCASC as a way to recognize and celebrate the academic achievements of HBCU students. More than \$9 million in grants from Honda to participating HBCUs have been used to fund tuition and book scholarships, student development initiatives, endowment and development campaigns, as well as facilities and equipment. Over its 30-year history, HCASC has built a network of more than 125,000 program alumni.

The 2019 Honda Campus All-Star Challenge finals will be live-streamed on Tuesday, April 16, starting at 12:00 p.m. ET. To view the live stream and for more information about HCASC, including a full list of the 48 qualifying teams, visit www.HCASC.com.

Director *continued from page 2*

“Mr. Zeigler has experience in various financial aid positions over the years, such as financial aid counselor, associate director, consultant and director. He is very knowledgeable of Title IV funding processes and federal regulations, two key aspects of any financial aid operation,” said Dr. Jacqueline Gibson Preastly, vice president of student affairs and enrollment management.

“Most importantly, Mr. Zeigler demonstrates the professional acumen to effectively educate our students and their parents on the financial aid process and available financial packaging options that will aid in funding their education at MVSU. Thus far, Mr. Zeigler has proven to be a sound asset to the University, and we are delighted to have him as part of the team,” she added.

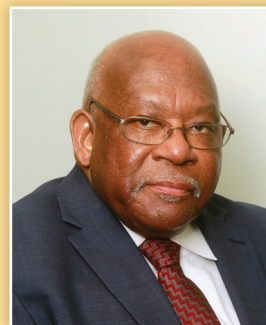
At MVSU, Zeigler plans to put ideas into motion that will positively impact students and the entire campus community.

“I have a lot of strategic plans that I am certain will be beneficial to the students of MVSU as well as the institution as a whole,” Zeigler said. “I was truly honored to be selected as the Director of Financial Aid here at Mississippi Valley State University and look forward to servicing the MVSU community.”

WELCOME ABOARD



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Two
Minutes
with...

Jamye Hicks

Computer Technician

Tell us a little about yourself and your background.

I am a Laurel, MS, native and an alumnus of Mississippi Valley State University. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science with a minor in Mathematics. While attending The Valley, I was initiated in the Zeta Phi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. After graduating with my degree, I moved back home briefly to work for AmeriCorps at the local middle school as a mathematics tutor. While employed there, I was extended the opportunity from MVSU serve as a computer technician in the IT department. I'm excited to return to the great city of Itta Bena so that I can give back to the great university that gave to me.

How do you approach providing service?

I begin by communicating with the person who

requested my services so that I can better understand the problem. Then, I gather my own diagnoses by running a series of test to find an adequate solution that fits the needs of both the client and the department.

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

When I'm not working as a computer technician, I can be found at a park or any scenic area; I love nature. Other than that, I can usually be found in my apartment watching Netflix or reading a book.

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

I enjoy yoga and meditating. Also, I sang the class song at my high school graduation, and I love music of all genres.



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New Hashtag: #GOMVSU

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