

Institute for Community-Based Research Recognizes Graduates of Innovative Capacity-Building Program

Cleveland, MS, 2007 – On November 29, the Institute for Community-Based Research at Delta State University (DSU) recognized graduates of its Addressing Community Challenges by Empowering Students and Staff (ACCESS) Program. ACCESS bridges the gap between research and practice by training DSU graduate students to perform community-based research in partnership with staff from nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

Participants in the fall semester of 2007 included four Master of Science in Community Development students – Jolana Gibbs, Marcie Moore, Sharon Nguyen and Mary Kathryn Wooten. Their projects focused on community and youth. They worked with the DSU Bologna Performing Arts Center, Cleveland Police Department, Coach Sank Powe Community Foundation, and organizations involved with the Mississippi Delta Leaders Empowering Youth (MDLEY) initiative. Through participation in monthly workshops at DSU, student participants worked with their site supervisors to design and implement a resource assessment to inform program planning.

“It is instrumental as a community developer to partner with organizations when accessing challenges and successes,” said ACCESS student Jolana Gibbs. “The ACCESS program gives students first-hand experiences with this aspect of community-based research, which I will surely apply in other contexts.”

“I have worked in communities in my hometown for the last nine years,” said Sharon Nguyen, another ACCESS student, “and I wanted to be able to perform community-based research within my own community.”

On November 29, the ACCESS students presented their projects to the public at the DSU Center for Community and Economic Development (CCED). In attendance were the students and their partner organization site supervisors, DSU faculty and staff, and other members of the community. After each presentation the audience was allowed time to ask questions to get more insight on the student’s work with their organization.

ACCESS offers practicum course credit to graduate students in the Division of Social Sciences. It is sponsored by the Institute for Community-Based Research, a collaborative partnership of the Division of Social Sciences and the CCED. Additional support is provided by the American Sociological Association’s Sydney S. Spivack Program in Applied Social Research and Social Policy. The ACCESS program will continue in the spring 2008 semester.