

Unit Missions

DCCL Mission Statement

Mission statement

To promote greater understanding of Mississippi Delta culture and history and its significance to the world through education, partnerships, and community engagement.

User Outcomes

DCCL 01: UO National Endowment for the Humanities Workshops

Start: 7/1/2014

End: 6/30/2015

User Outcome

During FY 2015, The Delta Center's NEH funded "Most Southern Place on Earth" workshops took place July 13 - 19, 2014 (40 participants) and June 21 through 27, 2015 (37 participants). It should be noted that NEH "Most Southern" workshops are reported according to months that fall within FY 2015 (i.e., July 2014 and June 2015) rather than the federal year in which these workshops are funded.

Participants were master teachers and educators from all over the United States. NEH participants become educational and cultural ambassadors for the Mississippi Delta in their communities and across the nation. They teach what they have learned in the workshops in their classrooms and share lessons with their professional colleagues. Many participants also return to the Delta after their NEH workshop experience year after year. They visit the Delta by themselves, with family members, with students, and with fellow NEH participants. See ["NEH 'Most Southern' workshops create Delta ambassadors."](#)

NEH grants and participants have generated economic activity (i.e., tourism, visitor expenditure) at DSU, in the Cleveland community, and throughout the Delta region:

- Participants reside in DSU dorms and in local hotels during their six-day stay in the area. They dine at DSU's cafeteria and student union, as well as restaurants in Cleveland and the surrounding area.
- NEH grant funds support experiential learning tours of educational and cultural attractions in the region including museums (e.g., BB King, National Civil Rights Museum, Cotton Museum) and restaurants that serve authentic Delta cuisine (e.g., fried catfish, BBQ).
- Many participants remain in the Delta and MS after the workshop, touring and staying in cultural heritage destination communities throughout the region (e.g., Clarksdale, Vicksburg, Natchez).
- Several participants enroll at Delta State for graduate credit through the workshops.

Data Collection (Evidence)

Portfolios providing a narrative and visual summary of the workshops were created by Robertson Scholars, rising sophomores from Duke University and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill who are hosted by The Delta Center. Portfolios were submitted to NEH for the funded workshops held July 2014 and June 2015. NEH participants completed detailed evaluation forms after each workshop. Results from the evaluations are included in the portfolios. Portfolios are published and available at <http://deltacenterforcultureandlearning.com/southern-place-workshop/photos-portfolios/>.

Results of Evaluation

Evaluations completed by participants must be submitted to NEH with any future funding requests. Over the past six years, the workshops have brought over \$1 million in federal grant funds to Delta State University. Through collaborative efforts between The Delta Center and the Office of Institutional Grants, Delta State was awarded \$179,791 for workshops to be held during summer 2016. This is the

greatest amount awarded in the program's six year history. See ["NEH announces funding of Delta Center's Most Southern workshop."](#)

DCCL 02: UO sustained operation

Start: 7/1/2014

End: 6/30/2015

User Outcome

The Delta Center will continue to operate in an effective manner and provide services to the University and the people of the State of Mississippi. As managing entity of the MS Delta National Heritage Area, we can further our mission and goals.

DCCL 03: UO Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area

Start: 7/1/2014

End: 6/30/2015

User Outcome

In August 2014, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) Management Plan was approved by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. This event signaled a 100% increase in annual funding from the National Park Service (i.e., \$150,000 to \$300,000). It also signaled The Delta Center's transition from its previous role as Phase 1 Management Entity to Management Entity and Management Plan Implementer. In this new role, The Delta Center has initiated and completed several projects included in the MDNHA Management Plan.

Data Collection (Evidence)

During FY 15, The Delta Center collaborated with an array of regional partners to implement aspects of the MDNHA Management Plan. Below is a list of resources that summarize implementation progress and accomplishments.

- Director's report for FY 15, presented at Aug 2015 MDNHA board meeting (see attached)
- MDNHA National Park Service Passport Program: <http://www.msdeltaheritage.com/ms-delta-national-heritage-area-mdnha-passport/>
- Event Summary: Winning the Race Opening Reception and Delta Jewels Community Gatherings (see attached)

-  [MDNHA Directors report Aug 2015](#)
 -  [MDNHA spring 2015 event summary](#)
-

DCCL 04: UO International Delta Blues Project (Year 1)

Start: 7/1/2014

End: 6/30/2015

User Outcome

During FY 15, The Delta Center completed its first year managing the International Delta Blues Project (IDBP). Delta State University was awarded a three-year \$598,000 grant from the Robert M. Hearin Foundation, a Jackson, MS-based supporter of Mississippi higher education and economic development.

The IDPB is a three-tiered initiative featuring an International Conference on the Blues, development of an academic Blues Studies minor, and a Blues Leadership Incubator, a series of public lectures and workshops for entrepreneurship and economic development, which aligns with GRAMMY Museum Mississippi and Delta State's vision of becoming a destination for Blues education.

The inaugural [International Conference on the Blues](#) took place October 5-7, 2014, with over 400 attendees. The conference consisted of two days of intense academic and scholarly activity and included a variety of musical performances to ensure authenticity and a direct connection to the demographics surrounding the “Home of the Delta Blues.” Topics of interest included the African American musical tradition and its influence on American music and culture, the Blues musical genre, folklore, history, ethnicity, and the Mississippi Delta. The conference program also included academic papers and presentations solicited from young and emerging scholars, as well as Blues performances. Featured guest speakers and performers included:

- GRAMMY-winning artist Alvin Youngblood Hart
- GRAMMY Museum Executive Director Bob Santelli
- Scott Barretta, host of the “Highway 61” radio show for Mississippi Public Broadcasting

The first year of the IDBP met with great success in developing courses for the Interdisciplinary Studies in the Blues and obtaining approval for a new minor in Blues studies. Several courses currently offered by Delta State, particularly through the Delta Music Institute, the Department of Music, and the Division of Social Sciences and History, have been redesigned and incorporated into a Blues Studies curriculum. Both a Blues performance track and a Blues non-performance track will be offered starting fall 2015. Course titles include:

- Psychology and Culture of Hip Hop
- Geography of the Blues
- History of the Blues
- Music in American Culture
- Entertainment Industry Studies
- Sociology of the Blues

Finally, the Blues Leadership Incubator was launched in partnership with Delta State University's Winning the Race diversity conference. A Lunch and Learn session was held as a pre-conference event on Monday, March 30 at the Coahoma County Higher Education Center in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The session featured Dr. Ann Markusen, Professor Emerita and Director of the Project on Regional and

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Industrial Economics and its Arts Economy Initiative at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Dr. Markusen presented on how diversity and inclusion can strengthen the Mississippi Delta's creative economy. The session was free and open to the public with collective sponsorship from the City of Clarksdale; the Coahoma County Tourism Commission; Coahoma County Higher Education Center; Clarksdale Revitalization, Inc.; the Crossroads Cultural Arts Center; The Delta Center; and Delta State University. Over 40 guests attended the Lunch and Learn event. For more information, see "[Markusen to highlight Clarksdale at Winning the Race conference.](#)"

Members of the IDBP team include:

- Lee Aylward, Program Associate for Outreach and Education, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and Lead Coordinator, International Delta Blues Project
- Robin Boyles, Administrator, Institutional Grants
- Tim Colbert, Instructor of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and Curriculum Development Adviser, Blues Studies
- Dr. Shelley Collins, Associate Professor of Music, and Chairperson, International Conference on the Blues
- Moira Fair, Graduate Assistant, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning
- Dr. Rolando Herts, Director, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning
- Heather Miller, Program Associate for Projects, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and Coordinator, International Delta Blues Project
- Don Allan Mitchell, Associate Professor of English and Curriculum Coordinator, Blues Studies
- Patricia Webster, Administrative Assistant, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning

Data Collection (Evidence)

The Delta Center designed and managed survey distribution, collection, analysis, and reporting processes for the following aspects of the IDBP.

International Conference on the Blues: Online surveys were used to collect conference attendee satisfaction data. The survey process was developed and executed in collaboration with DSU College of Business, DEBTS Program, Delta Music Institute, and Verizon Wireless. Survey Monkey was used as the online survey platform. Over 100 surveys were completed, which exceeded the maximum number allowed for analysis under Survey Monkey's free trial plan.

Blues Leadership Incubator: Paper surveys were used to gauge participant satisfaction at the Lunch and Learn event featuring Dr. Ann Markusen. The survey was completed by 35 guests who attended the event, yielding a 69% response rate.

Results of Evaluation

Survey results: International Conference on the Blues

- 98% of respondents indicated that their experience at the conference was “good” or “excellent.”
- 94% expressed an interest in returning for the following year's conference
- 92% related that they would encourage others to visit the Cleveland area

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- Nearly all respondents visited and patronized one or more venues on a list of major Cleveland attractions, including the Bologna Performing Arts Center, Dockery Farms, Po' Monkey's Lounge, Downtown Historic Cleveland, the Delta Arts Alliance, and the Heritage Railroad Museum.
- The favorite two events at the conference were the Plenary Session with Alvin Youngblood Hart and Scott Barretta, as well as the Lunch with Bob Santelli, Executive Director of the GRAMMY Museum in Los Angeles, CA. These two favorite events were rated "excellent" or "good" by 55% and 62% of survey respondents, respectively.

Survey results: Blues Leadership Incubator Lunch and Learn event

The surveys indicate, overall, that Lunch and Learn attendees believed that the presentation supported the Blues Leadership Incubator's primary goals, including promoting greater understanding of opportunities related to the Blues and the creative economy, as well as shared goals with Winning the Race regarding diversity and inclusion. Participant feedback regarding the session was generally positive, as 96% of respondents indicated that their experience was "excellent" or "good."

More detailed survey results from the Blues conference and the Lunch and Learn event are included in the 2014-15 IDBP Annual Report compiled by participants in the Robertson Scholars Leadership Program at Duke University and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. The report is attached here and also is available online at -----.

-  [2014-15 IDBP Annual Report](#)

Use of Results and Recommendations

The planning committee for the Blues conference has used inaugural conference survey results to inform structure and content of the Second Annual International Conference on the Blues which is scheduled for October 5-6, 2016. The 2016 conference will feature preeminent Southern/Blues studies scholar and folklorist, Dr. Bill Ferris, as keynote speaker. Dr. Ferris is founding director of the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture and former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He currently is Senior Associate Director at the Center for the Study of the American South at UNC Chapel Hill. GRAMMY Award-winning Blues artist Dom Flemons also will perform at the conference. There also will be a panel discussion on the tourism impacts of the Mississippi Blues Trail moderated by Dr. Ferris and featuring members of the Mississippi Blues Commission.

Survey results from the inaugural Blues Leadership Incubator Lunch and Learn event have been used to inform the development of local and regional partnership opportunities for hosting future workshops. Ideally, such partnerships will help to increase the capacity and further enhance the focus of the Blues Leadership Incubator.

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area Director's Report (Presented at August 2015 board meeting)

PROJECTS COMPLETED FY15 (From "possible early implementation projects")

Project	Management Plan Action	Notes
Expand NPS passport stamping program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop printed materials - Engage and attract tourists 	Next step: NPS Centennial t-shirts for those who secure stamps from all 18 counties

NEW PROJECTS COMPLETED FY15

Project	Management Plan Action	Notes
MDNHA presentations, meetings, and press releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicate heritage area goals through presentations, meetings and media 	20+ presentations (e.g., Rotary, Exchange Club, conferences, experiential learning groups); ANHA meetings in DC, Alaska; 25+ press releases available at http://www.deltastate.edu/news-and-events/category/delta-center/

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS FY15 (From "possible early implementation projects")

Project	Management Plan Action	Notes
Incorporation as a 501c3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate as a nonprofit and tax exempt organization - Develop by-laws 	By Laws Committee will provide update at Aug 2015 board meeting
Annual partners meeting/events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage adult residents and youth - Communicate heritage area goals through presentations, meetings and media - Host forums and exchanges on tourism, preservation, reconciliation, and other topics - Develop partnership agreements - Engage and attract tourists 	<p>"Telling the Delta's Story" and NPS Centennial Projects</p> <p>MDNHA Opening Reception featuring former NPS director Bob Stanton, Winning the Race conference, Delta State University, March 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 200 attendees total including 50 W. Tallahatchie HS students and BB King All Stars Choir <p>Delta Jewels Community Gatherings: Clarksdale, Charleston, Indianola, Yazoo City, Ruleville (April – May 2015) and Mound Bayou (July 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 500 attendees total including visitors from TX, CA, NY, IL; 10 community partners = \$2665 in kind sponsorships; retail, catering, and hotels = \$4,400 economic infusion to Delta communities

NEW PROJECTS INITIATED/IN PROGRESS FY15

Project	Management Plan Action	Notes
MDNHA MDTA Partnership (Cooperative Regional Membership Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage and attract tourists - Partner with the MDTA to promote the Delta's culture and heritage to visitors - Develop and implement a plan to include all 18 counties in the MDTA 	Approved by MDNHA board at May 2015 meeting; Need MDTA invoice to process payment for membership
MDNHA Fundraising Partnership Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare plans to ensure stability of funding - Hire a development officer 	RFP posted; four proposals received; next steps TBD at Aug 2015 board meeting
MDNHA Grant Program	Create a grants program to support projects that meet heritage area goals	MDNHA Grant Planning Subcommittee will provide update at Aug 2015 board meeting
Oral History Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host forums and exchanges on tourism, preservation, reconciliation and other topics - Research and document Delta's history connected to themes - Research and document living traditions - Provide training on preserving archival resources - Develop partnership agreements 	Partnership approved at May 2015 board meeting; Delta Jewels traveling exhibit in process; MOA developed for MDNHA board review at Aug 2015 board meeting

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
Summary of Sponsored Events – Spring 2015

MDNHA Opening Reception, Winning the Race Conference



The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA), in partnership with Eastern National (National Park Service) and The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the Winning the Race Conference at Delta State University, hosted the Opening Reception for the conference on Monday, March 30, 2015. Over 200 guests from throughout the Mississippi Delta region and beyond attended.

On behalf of the MDNHA, The Delta Center engaged Mayor Johnnie Thomas of Glendora, MS, who brought over 50 high school students from West Tallahatchie Consolidated School District to attend the Opening Reception and Session on Monday, March 30. Several of these students are participants in President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative sponsored by the Village of Glendora, MS.

Sponsorship from Eastern National helped to provide these students access to an educationally and culturally enriching event that they likely would not have experienced otherwise. Tallahatchie County is one of the most impoverished in the Delta region; over 90% of West Tallahatchie High School students come from low income households.



The reception featured remarks from former NPS director, Bob Stanton, and Bill Justice, Acting Superintendent of Vicksburg National Military Park. They heard performances from the BB King All Stars Choir, which is comprised of musically talented youth from throughout the Mississippi Delta. They also listened to live oral histories on race relations and human perseverance from Robert Stanton; author and entrepreneur, Clifton Taulbert; FedEx social responsibility executive, Rose Flenorl; and Grammy Award-winning director of the Delta Music Institute, Tricia Walker. This is a significant step toward fulfilling the National Park Service Centennial's primary goal of helping our citizens – especially our youth – to “find their park” in ways that will enhance their quality of life beyond measure.

Below are links to both Opening Reception photo galleries:

[2015 Winning The Race Opening Reception Gallery I](#)

[2015 Winning The Race Opening Reception Gallery II](#)

Delta Jewels Community Gatherings

The MDNHA's Delta Jewels Community Gatherings provided five MS Delta municipalities and surrounding areas - Clarksdale, Charleston, Indianola, Yazoo City, and Ruleville – with access to an intergenerational cultural and social awareness exchange that was both celebratory and educational. Below are some quick facts about this literary series that highlighted oral histories and photographs of African American church mothers from the Mississippi Delta collected by Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalism professor, Alysia Burton Steele, from the University of Mississippi:

- MDNHA board members played various roles with the Community Gatherings. Kappi Allen, Clarksdale Coahoma Tourism Commission, hosted the Clarksdale Community Gathering. Pamela Junior, Smith Robertson Museum, served as community feedback moderator for the Charleston and Indianola Community Gatherings. Stuart Rockoff and Spencer Nash attended the Yazoo City and Ruleville Community Gatherings, respectively.
- Jacqueline Dace, Project Manager for the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, MS Department of Archives and History, served as community feedback moderator at the Clarksdale, Yazoo City, and Ruleville Community Gatherings.
- Ten community partner organizations jointly sponsored the events, including Clarksdale Coahoma Tourism Commission; Son Edna, CARE, and New Town Missionary Baptist Church, Charleston; Sunflower County Library System, Indianola; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., City of Yazoo City, Yazoo County Convention and Visitors Bureau; City of Ruleville; and Barnes and Noble. The estimated total value of these sponsorships is \$2,665.
- The Community Gatherings contributed to economic activity throughout the region. Five local businesses received support from these events, including retail (Peter's Pottery, Mound Bayou) and caterers/restaurants (Dutch Oven, Clarksdale; Blue Biscuit, Indianola; Pat Chatem Catering, Yazoo City; and 1933 Restaurant, Ruleville). The author and moderators stayed overnight at hotels in Yazoo City, Indianola, and Cleveland.
- An estimated 220 Mississippi Delta residents attended the Community Gatherings
- A total of 230 copies of Delta Jewels were sold through Barnes and Noble at Delta State University as a result of the Community Gatherings.

Click available links below to see photo galleries for that Community Gathering (gallery photos by Bobby D Steele Jr).



[Clarksdale](#)



[Charleston](#)



[Indianola](#)



[Yazoo City](#)



[Ruleville](#)

INTERNATIONAL
DELTA DIVES
PROJECT

Thank You

The International Delta Blues Project is funded by a grant from the Robert M. Hearin Foundation.



DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY | CLEVELAND MS



Annual Report 2014-15

Towards establishing its standing as the “Academic Home of the Blues,” Delta State University is proud to declare a successful first year for the International Delta Blues Project.

The International Delta Blues Project, part of a five to ten-year vision for the cultural and economic revitalization of the Delta region, seeks to increase opportunities for cross-disciplinary academic study of the Blues, as well as to create jobs in various sectors of the creative economy. The three-tiered project features an International Conference on the Blues, the development of a Blues curriculum, and a Blues Leadership Incubator, which will collaborate with the GRAMMY Museum Mississippi, scheduled to open in November 2015.

Together, these project components seek to improve the economic climate of the region by way of grassroots entrepreneurial projects, with the aim of creating a platform on which Delta residents can market their unsung skills in the creative economy and Delta visitors can take advantage of new tourism markets. The project will revitalize appreciation for the Blues, encourage collaboration among community organizations, and foster individual relationships by encouraging genuine dialogue on the Blues, race, and civil rights.

Delta State University would like to thank the Robert M. Hearin Foundation for its generous support of the International Delta Blues Project. The Hearin Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in Jackson, has provided numerous grants to Delta State University over the years. The organization supports Mississippi higher education and economic development.



International Delta Blues Project: International Conference on the Blues



GRAMMY-winning artist Alvin Youngblood Hart performed and spoke



GRAMMY Museum Executive Director Bob Santelli speaking to conference attendees



Featured speaker Scott Barretta, host of the “Highway 61” radio show for Mississippi Public Broadcasting

First Annual International Conference on the Blues Delta State University

Delta State University’s inaugural [International Conference on the Blues](#) took place October 5-7, 2014, in conjunction with Bridging the Blues. [Bridging the Blues](#) is an annual series of events that occur over several consecutive weeks in September and October.

Bridging the Blues aims to maximize the opportunities for discovery of the richness of the Blues tradition in the Mississippi Delta region, and is sponsored by organizations in three states: Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Bridging the Blues serves as an umbrella organization to promote a wide variety of Blues-related activities.

The International Conference on the Blues consisted of two days of intense academic and scholarly activity and included a variety of musical performances to ensure authenticity and a direct connection to the demographics surrounding the “Home of the Delta Blues.” The conference occurred between the Mighty Mississippi Music Festival in Greenville, MS, and the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, AR.

The conference was designed to appeal to a broad public audience, including Delta State students and faculty, community residents, and Blues scholars, enthusiasts, and tourists from around the world. Topics of interest included the African American musical tradition and its influence on American music and culture, the Blues musical genre, folklore, history, ethnicity, and the Mississippi Delta. The conference program also included academic papers and presentations solicited from young and emerging scholars, as well as Blues performances.

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Scan to view 2014
Conference information
website and program
book



Mississippi State Senator Willie Simmons, Delta State President William LaForge, and GRAMMY Museum Mississippi supporter Lucy Janoush



Delta State University President William LaForge welcomes conference guests

Co-chairs of the International Conference on the Blues, Don Allan Mitchell and Shelley Collins, were thrilled to see support for this unique programming of the conference.

The first annual conference featured a full schedule of workshops, presentations and performances, approaching the Blues not only academically, but also in a manner accessible to even the casual Blues fan. A unique feature of the Conference was the Juke Joint on the Stage. This sampler concert and jam session included local musicians, involving artists from the diverse communities surrounding Delta State University.

As a program headliner for the 2014 Conference, Robert

Santelli, Executive Director of the GRAMMY Museum at L.A. Live, provided the keynote address. Also, Blues scholar and host of the Highway 61 radio show Scott Barretta and Grammy winner Alvin Youngblood Hart appeared as featured guests for the conference's first year. The conference targeted visiting, emerging, and developing scholars, undergraduate students, community members, and Blues enthusiasts from the United States and overseas.

One of the conference's areas of focus was teaching the Blues to a general audience, aiming to increase the local community's ability to portray accurately the Blues and its rich traditions as the town of Cleveland prepares for the incoming GRAMMY Museum

Mississippi that is scheduled to open on the Delta State campus in the fall of 2015.

The International Conference on the Blues has had, and will continue to have, a far-reaching impact. It attracted young and emerging scholars to Delta State University, increased interest and knowledge of the Blues, provided opportunities for scholarly activity, and promoted exposure to the region. The International Conference on the Blues also has the ability to help recruit traditional and non-traditional students from the United States and around the globe to Delta State University's current programs of study as well as programs that emerge as a result of the International Delta Blues Project.



4 International Delta Blues Project

Feedback: Summary of Evaluations

According to feedback surveys distributed to attendees – with a 98% response rate – the International Conference on the Blues garnered an overwhelmingly positive reception. 98% of respondents indicated that their experience at the conference was “good” or “excellent.” Furthermore, 94% expressed an interest in returning for the following year’s conference, while 92% related that they would encourage others to visit the Cleveland area. Nearly all respondents visited and patronized one or more venues on a list of major



Cleveland attractions, including the Bologna Performing Arts Center, Dockery Farms, Po’ Monkey’s Lounge, Downtown Historic Cleveland, the Delta Arts Alliance, and the Heritage Railroad Museum. The favorite two events at the conference were the Plenary Session with Alvin Youngblood Hart and Scott Barretta, as well as the Lunch with Bob Santelli, Executive Director of the GRAMMY Museum in Los Angeles, CA. These two favorite events were rated “excellent” or “good” by 55% and 62% of survey responders, respectively. Conference guests also provided valuable feedback on amenities in Cleveland, featured in the chart below – a strong indication that the International Delta Blues Project can drive tourism and economic development in the Delta region.

Attendee Responses to Cleveland Amenities	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	N/A
Hotel lodging value you received for the price paid	19%	8%	3%	1%	0%	69%
Variety of arts/cultural events	43%	14%	5%	2%	0%	36%
Unique local dining	36%	22%	6%	0%	1%	35%
Appeal of shopping and merchandise	25%	22%	8%	1%	1%	42%
Evening activities/entertainment	38%	15%	6%	1%	2%	38%
Street signage, wayfinding, maps, and/or directions	37%	16%	7%	2%	1%	37%



Responses suggest that conference attendees contributed to tourism activity in Cleveland through hotel stays, shopping, and dining. Attendees also provided valuable input on potential improvements to the town’s amenities.

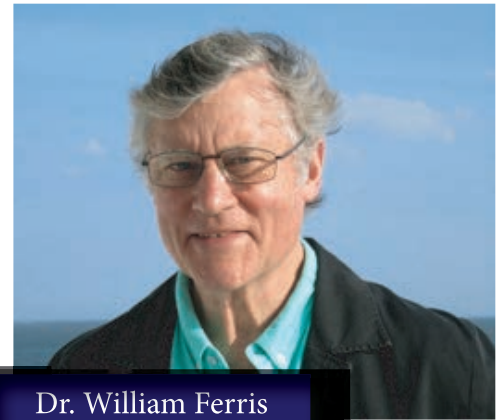
Looking Ahead: International Conference on the Blues 2015

During the spring semester, the Blues conference planning committee began the process of accepting and reviewing proposals for the Second Annual International Conference on the Blues, which will take place on October 5th and 6th, 2015. As was done during the 2014 conference, papers from young and developing scholars are encouraged.

The years conference is being co-chaired by Delta State University faculty members Dr. Shelley Collins and Don Allan Mitchell. The conference is poised to have a far-reaching impact. Dr. Rolando Herts, Director of The Delta Center, visited the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to recruit Blues Southern Studies expert Dr. William “Bill” Ferris, to serve as keynote speaker (pictured below). Don Allan Mitchell recruited Grammy Award-winning artist Dom Flemons, former member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, to participate in the conference. As the conference enters its second year, it will continue to attract young and emerging scholars to Delta State University, increase interest and knowledge of the Blues, provide opportunities for scholarly activity, and promote exposure to the region.

The Second Annual International Conference on the Blues will promote important aspects of the International Delta Blues Project as well as new developments in the Delta region’s creative economy. The conference will feature a panel discussion with members of the Mississippi Blues Commission, moderated by Dr. William Ferris. Panelists will field questions on the Mississippi Blues Trail, an ongoing project of the Mississippi Blues Commission that promotes tourism and cultural appreciation of the Blues throughout the state, the nation, and the world. The panel’s theme of economic revitalization through creative and cultural industry will continue with a discussion on the Blues Commission’s Blues Musicians Benevolent Fund, which supports Blues musicians in need via individual grants of up to \$1,000.

“Blues tourism has become a major economic driver for Clarksdale and the Delta,” said Lee Aylward, Lead Coordinator for the International Delta Blues Project. “The Delta literally is ground zero, the crossroads of Blues tourism with its many Mississippi Blues Trail markers and rich, living Blues culture.” The Delta’s status as “ground zero” for the Blues is particularly evident at present, as the region prepares for the grand opening of GRAMMY Museum Mississippi in November 2015.



Dr. William Ferris
2015 Keynote Speaker

William R. Ferris, a widely recognized leader in Southern studies, African American music, and folklore, is the Joel R. Williamson Eminent Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the senior associate director of UNC’s Center for the Study of the American South. He is also adjunct professor in the curriculum on folklore. A native of Vicksburg, MS, Ferris was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, where he taught for 18 years. He also taught at Yale University and Jackson State University. A graduate of Davidson College, he received a Ph.D. in folklore from the University of Pennsylvania (1969).

The former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Ferris has conducted thousands of interviews with musicians ranging from the famous (B.B. King) to the unrecognized (Parchman Penitentiary inmates working in the fields). He has written or edited 10 books and created 15 documentary films. He co-edited the massive “Encyclopedia of Southern Culture” (UNC Press, 1989), which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. His most recent book “The Storied South: Voices of Writers and Artists” (2013), was published by the University of North Carolina Press.

Bill Ferris’ films include “Mississippi Blues” (1983), which was featured at the Cannes Film Festival. He has produced numerous sound recordings and hosted “Highway 61,” a weekly blues program on Mississippi Public Radio for nearly a decade. He also has published his own poetry and short stories.

International Delta Blues Project: Minor in Blues Studies



Interdisciplinary Studies in the Blues Curriculum Delta State University

The first year of the International Delta Blues Project met with great success in developing courses for the Interdisciplinary Studies in the Blues and obtaining approval for a new minor in Blues Studies. Several courses currently offered by Delta State, particularly through the Delta Music Institute, the Department of Music, and the Division of Social Sciences and History, have been redesigned and incorporated into a Blues Studies curriculum. Both a Blues performance track and a Blues non-performance track will be offered, starting fall 2015. The establishment of a major in Blues Studies, potentially including undergraduate and graduate degrees, will be developed in subsequent years. Specific curriculum details will be based on the enrollment demand for courses and the success of the program in its first year.

Inaugural Course List:

- Psych and Culture of Hip Hop
- Geography of the Blues
- African American History
- The New South 1865-Present
- History of the Blues
- Jazz Ensemble
- Music in American Culture
- Intro to Multi Media Life
- Entertainment Industry Studies
- History of Recorded Music
- Craft of Songwriting
- Guitar
- Bass
- Old School Review
- Sociology of the Blues
- Telling the Southern Story



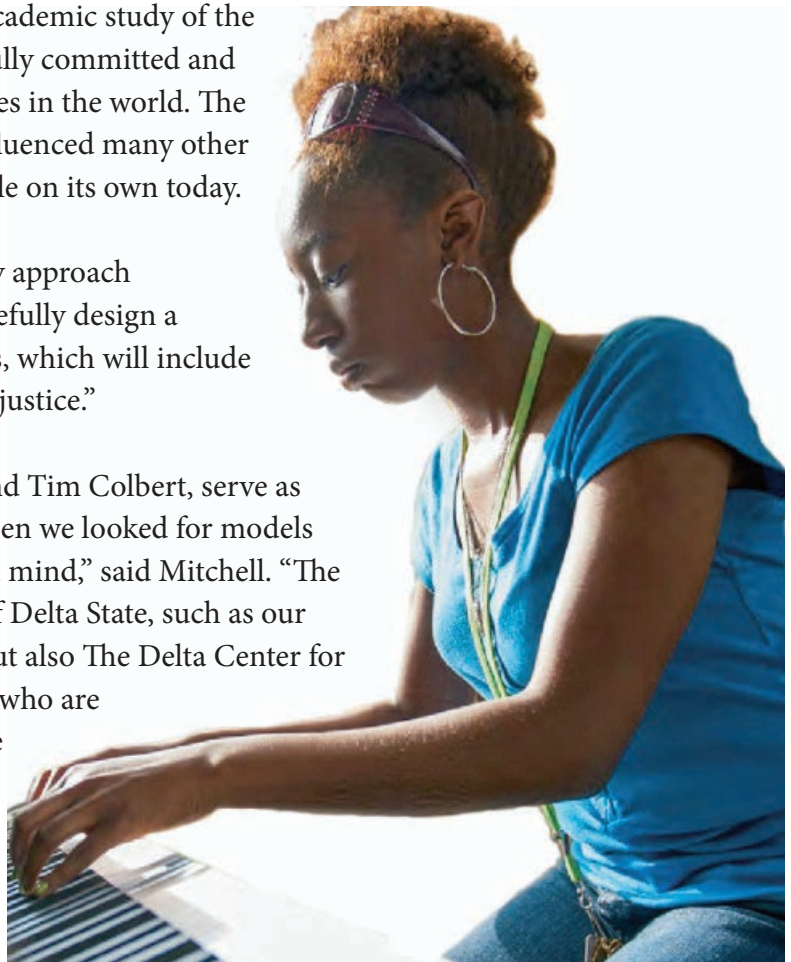
The Interdisciplinary Studies in the Blues curriculum will have a positive impact on the recruitment of students to the Mississippi Delta to study the Blues in various disciplines. It also will bring visiting scholars and artists, lecturers, and artists-in-residence to the Delta to teach hand learn the Blues. The curriculum is designed to produce an educated workforce, some of whom likely will remain in the region to establish their careers in various sectors that promote the Blues.

Dr. Charles McAdams, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, said Delta State deserves to be coined the academic center of blues studies. The hope is to bring visiting scholars, lecturers, artists and artists-in-residence to the Delta to teach and learn the blues.

“Delta State University is the rightful place for an academic study of the Blues and Blues culture,” said McAdams. “We are fully committed and uniquely positioned to be the center for Blues studies in the world. The Delta Blues is a separate genre of music that has influenced many other styles of music and continues to be a prominent style on its own today.

“This [Hearin] grant will enable us to systematically approach the development of a blues curriculum. We will carefully design a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the blues, which will include music, art, literature, history, economics and social justice.”

Delta State faculty members, Don Allan Mitchell and Tim Colbert, serve as curriculum coordinators for the Blues Project. “When we looked for models for a Blues studies curriculum, we kept two ideas in mind,” said Mitchell. “The first was that we wanted to build on the strengths of Delta State, such as our music department and our Delta Music Institute, but also The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the wide array of faculty who are interested in interdisciplinary studies. Secondly, we wanted to make sure that current faculty would have opportunities to experiment with teaching the Blues in a variety of contexts.”



International Delta Blues Project: Blues Leadership Incubator



Left to right: Timothy Lampkin, Desta Ruff, Meghan Tooke, Dr. Ann Markusen, Rosalind Wilcox, Dr. Rolando Herts

Creative Placemaking

(noun) Partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.

Source: Markusen and Gadwa, Creative Placemaking, 2010

Creative Placemaking Lunch and Learn with Dr. Ann Markusen

Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant designated 2014 as the “Year of the Creative Economy,” highlighting “a twelve-month celebration of Mississippi’s creative people, enterprises, and communities.”

To champion and celebrate the multicultural identity of the Mississippi Delta region, Delta State University hosted the “Winning the Race” conference in April 2015. The goal was to promote dialogue on race relations by fostering conversations that bridge together diverse communities in the Delta.

An integral part of this conversation was a Lunch and Learn session, held on Monday, March 30 at the Coahoma County Higher Education Center in Clarksdale, Mississippi. The Lunch and Learn served as the inaugural workshop for the Blues Leadership Incubator under Delta State University’s International Delta Blues Project, which is made possible by the support of the Hearin Foundation. The Incubator seeks to positively influence job creation, economic development, and cultural advancement in the Delta.

The Lunch and Learn event featured Dr. Ann Markusen, internationally renowned creative placemaking expert from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Markusen presented on how diversity and inclusion can strengthen the Mississippi Delta’s creative economy. She introduced extensive research on creative placemaking, including national and international examples that helped to inform a multi-faceted approach toward unleashing the economic potential of the Delta’s rich cultural heritage.

According to the Delta Center for Culture and Learning, greater engagement among Delta residents in the creative economy will lead to new opportunities for diversity and inclusion. “This event will help to promote community awareness of how Blues and other African American art forms are key drivers of the Delta’s creative economy,” said Dr. Herts, Director of The Delta Center.

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“Blues tourism has become a major economic driver for Clarksdale and the Mississippi Delta. The Blues Project’s support of the Lunch and Learn event is timely.”

- Lee Aylward
Lead Coordinator,
International Delta Blues Project

Left to right: Lee Aylward, Dr. Rolando Herts, Dr. Ann Markusen

Background

As part of Delta State University’s engagement with the Mississippi Delta region during the Winning the Race Conference, a conference on race relations and diversity, the International Delta Blues Project hosted a Lunch and Learn community listening and feedback session. While the Lunch and Learn event served as a pre-conference activity for Winning the Race, it also served as the inaugural workshop for the International Delta Blues Project’s Blues Leadership Incubator.

One of the session’s primary foci was Clarksdale’s Crossroads Cultural Arts Center. In 2014, Clarksdale Revitalization Inc., received a \$350,000 grant from ArtPlace America to create the Crossroads Cultural Arts Center. The Center will preserve the region’s rich history of art, writing, and music, with a focus on African American contributions to the arts – such as the Blues.

The Lunch and Learn session was facilitated by Dr. Ann Markusen, Professor Emerita and Director of the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics and its Arts Economy Initiative at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The session was free and open to the public with collective sponsorship valued at over \$3,000 from the City of Clarksdale; the Coahoma County Tourism Commission; Coahoma County Higher Education Center; Clarksdale Revitalization, Inc.; the Crossroads Cultural Arts Center; the International Delta Blues Project, Delta Center for Culture and Learning; and Delta State University.



Dr. Markusen meets with Clarksdale stakeholders and members of the Affordable Design and Entrepreneurship team from Olin College of Engineering and Babson College in Massachusetts



Mayor Bill Lockett of Clarksdale (left) listens intently to Dr. Markusen’s lecture at the Lunch and Learn Session

“Delta residents have this desire to learn and collaborate and the Blues is the universal tool that we’re using to do it. There is a true genuine desire to improve this region and make it a vibrant place that is culturally and financially healthy. We need to appreciate each other’s talents and attributes. Be creative together. Be successful together. We need to build on the momentum we already have here and go a little deeper. It only takes a few people to start a movement and transform a place.”

- Timothy Lampkin
CCAC Board Member



Lunch and Learn Discussion

As the inaugural community workshop for the Blues Leadership Incubator, and as part of the “Winning the Race” conference at Delta State University, the Lunch and Learn discussion integrated complex issues of race relations in Delta communities with the Blues art form. Against a backdrop of commercialization and appropriation that has raised questions regarding ownership and who benefits, this discussion sought to use Blues as a platform on which Delta residents of all races and backgrounds were able to come together to engage in community conversations about how diversity and inclusion in the region’s creative economy sectors can help diminish economic disparity.

The Delta Center developed partnerships with various community organizations in Clarksdale with the objective of building a racially and socially diverse coalition of support. Timothy Lampkin, CEO of Lampkin Consulting and board member of the Crossroads Cultural Arts Center (CCAC) was at the center of this collaboration. “This is about engaging the local

community, breaking down misconceptions about different populations, and coming together to empower people in the creative economy; collaboration is essential to really transforming the Delta,” he said. Through this collaboration, new community partnerships were cultivated and brought a multilayered purpose to the event.

Social oppression and economic disparity based on race are what birthed the Blues as a form of cultural expression among African Americans in the Mississippi Delta. The Lunch and Learn discussion created a safe space for beginning difficult conversations on race relations and cultural diversity. The discussion revealed a collective interest in engaging a diverse cross-section of Clarksdale residents in conversations about building economically and socially inclusive opportunities centered on Blues music, art, and tourism. The Blues Leadership Incubator has the power to address racial and social issues by bringing Delta communities like Clarksdale together to create economic opportunity through cultural assets like the Blues.

The Lunch and Learn discussion also focused on alleviating poverty and socioeconomic stagnation by harnessing previously unsung skills among the local population. “Creative economy means empowering people and local artists, showing them how their creativity and talent can generate income. We have to empower people to become entrepreneurs,” said Lampkin.

Dr. Markusen provided examples of communities that have used creative placemaking effectively to stimulate local entrepreneurship among visual artists, performers, craftspeople, and other key creative economy players. As the birthplace of the Blues, Delta communities have the opportunity to do this together.



Scan to view Delta State University press release: “Markusen to highlight Clarksdale at Winning the Race conference”



Community leaders pose for the camera following a productive Lunch and Learn session.

Left to right: Shirley Fair, Dr. Ann Markusen, Dr. Rolando Herts, Mac Crank

Feedback: Summary of Evaluations

Participant surveys distributed at the Lunch and Learn community session reflected positive, constructive feedback. The feedback survey was given to 35 guests who attended the event, yielding a 69% response rate. The surveys indicate, overall, that Lunch and Learn attendees believed that the presentation supported the Blues Leadership Incubator’s primary goals, including promoting greater understanding of opportunities related to the Blues and the creative economy, as well as shared goals with Winning the Race regarding diversity and inclusion.

Participant feedback regarding the session was generally positive, as 96% of respondents indicated that their experience was “excellent” or “good.”

According to Mr. Timothy Lampkin, CEO of Lampkin Consulting Group and board member with Crossroads Cultural Arts Center, guests at the Lunch and Learn were “very inspired” by Dr. Markusen’s presentation on creative placemaking and its potential to revitalize Delta communities. Participant surveys indicated a strong and widely-shared desire for more Lunch and Learn community sessions. Survey responses suggest that attendance at future events should include greater representation from historically underrepresented communities (African American, low-income) that community partners aim to learn from and positively impact. Mr. Lampkin believes that many people were unable to take part in the event due to limitations in timing, convenience, or communication.

Attendee Responses to Session Goals	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
After attending this session, I have a better understanding of creative placemaking and the creative economy.	50%	37%	4%	4%	0%	4%
	Total: 87%					
This session has helped me to understand economic development opportunities in my community related to Blues and other forms of art and culture.	33%	42%	17%	4%	0%	4%
	Total: 75%					
This session has helped me to understand how diversity and inclusion are essential to successful creative placemaking and creative economy projects.	65%	26%	4%	0%	0%	4%
	Total: 91%					
After attending this session, I feel empowered to promote and engage with creative placemaking and creative economy projects in my community.	52%	39%	9%	0%	0%	0%
	Total: 91%					
Based on my experience today, I would encourage co-workers, colleagues, friends, etc. in my community to attend future Blues Leadership Incubator lectures and workshops.	57%	30%	9%	4%	0%	0%
	Total: 87%					

Combined responses from “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” categories suggest that most attendees left with a clearer understanding of opportunities related to the Blues, creative placemaking, and the creative economy.



From left to right: Mac Crank, Robin Colonas, Rosalind Wilcox, Dr. Ann Markusen, Timothy Lampkin, Adrienne White-Hudson

Winning the Race Panel Discussion

Tuesday, March 31, 2015, marked a full day of presentations at the Winning the Race conference at Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. Conference presentations were offered in four tracks: Social Justice, Civil Rights & Law; Economic Opportunities; Education and Community; and Culture and Community. Hundreds of guests from throughout the Mississippi Delta and beyond attended the conference.

“Creative Placemaking in the Mississippi Delta: the Case of Clarksdale” was one of the presentations offered within the Economic Opportunities track. This presentation featured Dr. Ann Markusen moderating a discussion with members of the Clarksdale community who are engaged with creative placemaking efforts. Each talked about how Monday’s Lunch and Learn session in Clarksdale helped to shed light on the work that they and others in the Clarksdale community are doing.

The panelists spoke broadly and pointedly about the opportunities and challenges that Clarksdale’s downtown revitalization movement has created for cultural organizations like the New Roxy Theater, The Real Delta, and the Crossroads Cultural Arts Center. Rosalind Wilcox, who figured prominently in securing the ArtPlace grant for Clarksdale, shared that the Lunch and Learn session represented a good beginning to a conversation that needs to continue. Speaking to the issue of economic inclusion, Mac Crank mentioned that Clarksdale’s Mayor Bill Lockett announced to Lunch and Learn attendees that the city continues to be supportive of engaging the community in constructive conversations about race and diversity. The Lunch and Learn session is an example of this, as it fostered discussions about how to improve race relations toward developing opportunities for community members to collaboratively engage with the creative economy.

Dr. Markusen concluded the presentation by thanking the Clarksdale panelists for their time and expertise. She also acknowledged Dr. Rolando Herts and the staff of The Delta Center for organizing both the Lunch and Learn session and the Winning the Race panel discussion.



The Power of Partnerships and Collaboration

The Lunch and Learn community session in Clarksdale and the conference panel discussion at Delta State University in Cleveland both featured renowned creative economy and placemaking expert, Dr. Ann Markusen. These events were made possible through support and contributions from the following community partners:

- City of Clarksdale
- Coahoma County Tourism Commission
- Clarksdale Revitalization, Inc.
- Crossroads Cultural Arts Center
- International Delta Blues Project, Delta Center for Culture and Learning
- Winning the Race conference, Delta State University

Next Steps

“An extraordinary beginning to a crucial, difficult conversation...”

- Comment from participant survey

According to feedback from participant surveys, the International Delta Blues Project can improve future Blues Leadership Incubator events in several ways. First and foremost, the IDBP must diversify and expand its strategies for communication in order to reach a wider audience and increase attendance from underrepresented groups at future events.

“We talk about inclusivity and bridging communities...Let’s do that in these sessions.”

- Comment from participant survey

The Blues Leadership Incubator should continue to embrace partnerships and collaboration as mechanisms for bridging racial and socioeconomic divisions in the Delta region toward encouraging communities to work together in pursuit of a more economically competitive Delta region. During the workshop itself, as well as in participant surveys, the need for continuous, open dialogue was a commonly voiced point of concern, with one guest identifying Mississippi’s issues of racial tensions and divisions – past and present – as “the elephant in the room.”

“We have to work on a model that makes everyone feel welcome”

- Timothy Lampkin, CCAC board member

Events should be planned with workday and childcare convenience in mind. Furthermore, few students or youth were present at the Lunch and Learn. This is another demographic with valuable insight and great potential for fulfilling the Incubator’s goal of “putting the Blues to work for the Delta.” In order to broaden demographic participation and inclusion in future events, as well as to harness the community’s excitement and demand for future workshops, staff should continue to employ diverse communication strategies, including postal mail, word of mouth, phone, email, and the Internet.

“Ann gave a wonderful, down to earth presentation – very informative.”

- Comment from participant survey

Finally, encouraging community leaders and stakeholders to become involved in the Blues Leadership Incubator, as recruiters and connectors, will help to increase local participation in events and programs.



Dr. Ann Markusen

Ann Markusen is Director of the Arts Economy Initiative and the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and Principal of Markusen Economic Research. She is a researcher, frequent public speaker, and advisor to public agencies, policymakers, businesses, economic developers, and nonprofit organizations across the US, in Europe, Japan, Korea, Australia and Brazil. Her expertise is in economic development at the state and local level, where she brings analytical skills to bear on the ways that industries and occupations shape possibilities for creating good work. Markusen is currently serving as research and writing consultant for the Minnesota House of Representatives’ Select Committee on Living Wage Jobs. In recent years, Markusen’s research and consulting has focused on artists, arts organizations, and creative placemaking.

annmarkusen.com

**2014-15 Annual Report, The International Delta Blues Project
The Delta Center for Culture and Learning
Delta State University**

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Photo Credits

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**The International Delta Blues Project acknowledges the leadership and support
of the following Delta State University administrators:**

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Dr. Charles McAdams, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
Dr. Michelle Roberts, Vice President for University Relations and Chief of Staff

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the Race conference"