



delta
scholars

cultivating changemakers

MISSION STATEMENT

The Delta Scholars Program (DSP) is a two-part academic and community engagement program for talented and motivated college students interested in leadership and cultivating change.



Image: 2025 Delta Scholars, Alcorn State University Extension/Research Farm & Technology Transfer Center



ABOUT THE DELTA SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Delta Scholars Program (DSP) believes that investing in students can change entire communities. With donor partnership, bright and motivated undergraduates become leaders ready to collaborate on issues related to public health, economic renewal, and community resilience. This two-part academic and engagement experience selects outstanding students for their achievements and commitment to service, guiding them through pre-sessions in the spring, a two-week Summer Research Institute and Delta Innovation Tour, and a Capstone Project where they partner on solutions that extend far beyond the program itself. The experience culminates in a fall conference bringing together partners to continue to build collaboration.

Participation in DSP includes engagement with and learning from diverse partners brought together under the umbrella known as the Delta Directions Consortium. This involves researchers from universities, outreach practitioners from nonprofit organizations and the Extension Service, leaders from philanthropic foundations, and many others. Through this, scholars build networks to include an array of leaders from community, regional, and national organizations.



Image: Delta Scholars and SRDC meeting with community leaders Marks, MS 2025

DELTA SCHOLARS LEADERSHIP

DSP is led through the Mississippi State University (MSU), Shackouls Honors College in collaboration with many partners. These include the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, the Southern Rural Development Center, based at MSU, Brandeis University, the University of Mississippi (including the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and the Grisham-McLean Institute for Public Service and Community Engagement), Rutgers University, and Harvard University (including Harvard College, Harvard Law School, and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health).

Eleanor McMillen Green, M.Ed., Director

Professor Eleanor M. Green received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Mississippi State University and a Master of Education in History from Delta State University. For over 25 years Professor Green engaged in applied community efforts, collaborating with many partners, including small farmer organizations, community health organizations, and schools. Her background includes teaching courses such as Sociology of Food, Sociology of Peace and Justice, and Community Development.



CULTIVATING LEADERS FALL CONFERENCE

Scholars are invited to reconnect and present at a three-day Cultivating Leaders Fall Conference in collaboration with our partner institutions to culminate the eight-month long experience. This conference provides an opportunity for students to share updates on their projects, receive continued mentorship, and engage with students and faculty working on Multi-State Delta issues.



Image: 2024 Delta Scholars, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA

The goal of this intellectual exchange is to provide both sides with fresh perspectives, promote dialogue that can push their work forward, and foster networks of young leaders that might collaborate in the future.



Image: 2024 Delta Scholars, Widener Memorial Library, Harvard College, Cambridge, MA

ALUMNI THOUGHTS

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“I got into my number one graduate school choice to pursue a master’s degree in public health, I could not have done it without you guys and this program!” Trinity Wilson, Alcorn State University, DSP 2024

Trinity Wilson,
Alcorn State
University,
DSP 2024.
Meharry Medical
College MPH
Student



Delta Scholars was an utterly immersive overview of the Mississippi Delta. Having lived in Mississippi for a few years, I knew the region's significance. However, within a week, I was in awe of the contributions and history the Delta has made to larger American culture. I was most touched by individuals in the region who were committed to seeing it grow.

Muneebah Umar, Mississippi State University, DSP 2023, University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine MD Candidate



“I’ve always had a passion for community engagement, and the Delta Scholars Program equipped me with the tools to create informed action. The education and support I’ve received from this program have transformed my academic trajectory.”

McKenzie Cox, University of Mississippi, DSP 2024

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McKenzie Cox,
Senior, University
of Mississippi,
DSP 2024



ALUMNI IMPACTS

Mayukh Datta, 2018 DSP cohort, developed a Capstone Project addressing food access. He teamed up with two friends to build on this vision to make a difference within the Delta region. Together with friends Braeden Foldenauer, a fellow DSP alumnus (2019), and Ryan Hopson, he built a non-profit dedicated to tackling food insecurity in Holmes County.

From its inception, Feeding the Future Mississippi (FFMS) has made significant strides. Since 2019, the program has provided over 8,600 weekend meals to needy children. They are serving 90 students in the 2025-2026 school year at two schools.



As they have grown in their professional lives, they have continued to serve FFMS. Mayukh is currently a researcher at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and handles Operations and Logistics for FFMS, Braeden is now a Response to Intervention (RTI) Interventionist in Baltimore City Public Schools and serves in a Fundraising and Development role with FFMS, and Ryan is Chief Operations Officer of a technology startup and handles technology and structure for FFMS.



Image: Left to Right: Braeden Foldenauer, Mayukh Datta, and Ryan Hopson: Feeding the Future Mississippi at Delta Regional Forum 2025

<https://www.feedingthefuturems.com/>

DELTA SCHOLAR REFLECTIONS

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The Delta Scholars Program was a transformative experience. It was so inspiring and humbling to share a space with so many forward-thinking students and faculty from across the Delta region. The program has strengthened not only my personal connection to the Delta region but also my conviction for serving it.

. It is not about what I can do to help alone but what I can do alongside and in partnership with others.”

When I first applied I had no idea the impact Delta Scholars would have on me. I enjoy learning and experiences things I had never done before. It is so important to learn about different cultures, customs, and experiences. DSP did just that. When I applied I thought it was going to be a easy thing, but now Delta Scholars made me start having convos I never thought I would have.

I have the tools I need to cultivate change and empower others around me-- Delta Scholars helped show me that.

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DELTA SCHOLAR IN THE FIELD SUMMER 2025



J's Neighborhood Market,
Clarksdale, MS



Alcorn State University Extension/Research Farm & Technology Center



Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, Mississippi State University



Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum, Delta State University

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi is an independent 501(c)3 charitable organization with offices in Hernando and Clarksdale, Mississippi and was established in 2002 with a generous grant from the Maddox Foundation. The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi serves Bolivar, Coahoma, DeSoto, Leflore, Marshall, Panola, Quitman, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica and Yalobusha counties and is governed by a Board of 22 Volunteer Leaders from the region.

The eighth cohort of the Delta Scholars Program (DSP) welcomed its first annual Tom Pittman Delta Scholars. Tom is a longtime supporter of the program, and last year the foundation committed to providing funding to scholars in his honor. Three of 2025 scholars received support in partnership with the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi enabling these future leaders to pursue their goals and give back, building a better community.



Tom Pittman Delta Scholars,
Left to Right: John Robert
Walker, Yale University, Eleanor
Green, Director DSP, Tom
Pittman, President Emeritus
CFNM, Kayle Amos, University
of Mississippi, and Spencer Lile,
Mississippi State University

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



Southern Rural Development Center



Image: Delta Scholars participating in World Café group dialogue at the Delta Regional Forum in Clarksdale, MS 2024.

Mission

The Southern Rural Development Center seeks to strengthen the capacity of the region's 30 land-grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

Goals

- Stimulate the formation of multi-state research teams
- Coordinate the development and revision of educational materials and maintain a centralized repository of educational resources
- Organize and deliver high-priority rural development research and educational workshops/conferences
- Provide leadership for the preparation of science-based rural development policy reports
- Build partnerships that link the South's land-grant university system with other key entities committed to rural development activities in the region

Innovation and Impact in the Multi-State Delta Region depends on partnerships, alumni networks, and future Delta Scholar applicants.

To learn more, apply, or join the conversation to cultivate future change makers

<https://www.honors.msstate.edu/initiatives/delta-scholars>



<HTTP://HOW TO GIVE?>

TO CONTRIBUTE:

<HTTPS://DDA.MSSTATE.EDU/GIVE-NOW>

TYPE DELTA SCHOLARS
ADVANCEMENT FUND IN THE
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UNIVERSITY™**

**JUDY AND BOBBY SHACKOULS
HONORS COLLEGE**



Sally McDonnell
Barksdale Honors College

Grisham-McLean Institute for
Public Service and
Community Engagement



Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship
HARVARD COLLEGE



**HARVARD
T.H. CHAN
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**



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LAW SCHOOL**