

Researchers: Where you live is important

In a current essay published for the Association of American Geographers, several Mississippi State research scientists issue a wake-up call about American health. Their observation: Where you live can be a life and death matter.

In an ongoing project by the university's Social Science Research Center, team members are using the tools of spatial analysis—that is, an examination of “place”—to provide a map that traces the nation's health over time.

Using county-level Centers for Disease Control data on death rates and mapping it with geographic information systems technology, the team has determined that healthy and unhealthy places “persist over decades,” said geographer and lead author Ronald E. Cossman.

The research report appears in “WorldMinds: Geographical Perspectives on 100 Problems,” which was issued by Kluwer Academic Publishers (New York

and other worldwide locations) as the commemorative publication of the AAG's centennial anniversary.

Collaborating on the article with Cossman were MSU sociologists Jeralynn S. Cossman, Troy C. Blanchard, Wesley L. James, and Arthur G. Cosby.

The report identifies six clusters of persistently high-mortality counties, including:

- the Piedmont belt along the Southeast coastline,
- Mississippi Delta, and
- portions of Appalachia, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, South Dakota, and Northern Nevada.

“Most research about health has ignored the geographic perspective,” said Ronald Cossman. “The place-based research we're doing could be used in the allocation of medical services, as well as targeting populations that are at

special risk.

“A majority of the high mortality counties are in the region typically called ‘South,’” he added.

Now in its 54th year of service, the Social Science Research Center recently established the Rural Health, Safety and Security Institute to focus on issues of particular importance to Mississippi's small communities. Funding for the research on healthy and unhealthy places was provided by the Office of Rural Health Policy, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The project's next phase will try to answer the question “why”?

“This research begins to chip away at the question, ‘Is it the place or is it the people causing these clusters of high and low death rates?’” said medical sociologist Jeralynn Cossman, a sociology faculty member and Ronald's wife. Cosby,

Continued on page 3



Six Mississippi State employees are 2004 honorees for 35 and 40 years of service to the university. Receiving 35-year service awards during recent ceremonies are (from left) Eugene Brown of the Physical Plant, Robert Wilson of biochemistry and molecular biology, and Magnolia Thomas of Custodial Services. Bob Rogers of animal and dairy science (far right) is a 40-year employee. Unavailable for the photo were Donald Pogue of the North Mississippi Experiment Station, also with 35 years, and Elmer Burchfield of the Delta Research and Extension Center, 40 years.

Printing consolidates operations

Mississippi State's Extension Service Duplicating Shop and the university's Printing Services Office now are combined operations under the new title of Consolidated Print Services.

Sid Fondren, leader of extension support services until the February merger, now is manager of university printing operations. His office is located in Auxiliary Plaza's Russell Street location.

Previous MSU printing director Karon Makamson has taken on multiple roles as manager of Office Supply and Mail Services, as well as marketing coordinator for the entire unit. Her office remains at Auxiliary Plaza.

Dr. Joe M. McGilberry, executive director for the Office of University Extension and Outreach, said the consolidation allows the institution "to more effectively utilize resources and to more appropriately align the operations with efforts conducted" by his office.

"We also are evaluating the expansion of our quick-copy operations in the central part of campus, as well as other opportunities for printing services throughout the university," he added.

McGilberry said the Bost printing facility—and all current employees—remain in the center's basement, though it now operates as a satellite shop. Bost print manager Bobby Collier also is assuming Fondren's role as extension service mail officer.

Fondren and Makamson may be reached at 325-2251; Collier at 325-3745.

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Budget manager Cynthia Hemphill (l) and academic records assistant Amy Hunt were among employees honored at the College of Forest Resources' annual banquet. Both received 2004 Doris Lee Memorial Staff Awards for outstanding service.



Three College of Forest Resources faculty members were honored with outstanding achievement awards. They are Dr. Andrew W. Ezell (l) of forestry for teaching; Dr. Loren "Wes" Burger of wildlife and fisheries for research; and Dr. Robert A. Daniels of extension forestry for service. The CFR is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

MSU-led supercomputing team supports 'PET'

When Department of Defense officials seek the nation's best minds to solve computer problems related to weapons design—or retrofitting the Pentagon after 9/11—their phone calls often are made to Mississippi State.

In an effort described by veteran researcher Joe Thompson as “high-end outreach,” MSU leads a consortium of 10 universities and two private companies in matching high-performance computing expertise with specific defense research needs.

Known as the Center for DoD Program Environment Training, the project began in 2001 with a record \$108 million awarded to Mississippi State through a nationally competitive process. The only university-led group receiving such funding, PET, as it's called, is the largest competitive research grant ever made to a Mississippi institution of higher learning.

Thompson, a Grenada native with degrees from Mississippi State and Georgia Tech, directs both the project and national consortium. An aerospace engineer, he is among a dozen holding the rank of William L. Giles Distinguished Professor, MSU's highest academic

honor.

Defense officials recently affirmed Mississippi State's leadership when they exercised a research contract option for the first of five additional years. The decision, they told Thompson, was based on the university's success during the project's first three years.

“This speaks to Mississippi State's outstanding capabilities in engineering and technical areas and shows the national reputation of our faculty members,” said engineering dean Wayne Bennett. The university's supercomputing capabilities currently are “ranked among the top 10 at American universities,” he added.

The team's problem-solving often involves computer software issues in 14 highly technical areas that run the gamut from computational fluid dynamics to signal and image processing.

“On a day-to-day basis, we don't necessarily know what we'll be dealing with,” Thompson explained. “We're continually called on to address new computer architectures and are challenged both from the expected and the unexpected events of the world.”

The MSU-led consortium includes Ohio State University and the Ohio

Supercomputer Center, along with the universities of Alabama at Birmingham, Tennessee and Texas. Also taking part are several minority-serving universities, including Jackson State, Florida International, Central State, and Hawaii.

Both in California, corporate team members include SAIC, an international information technology company based in San Diego, and Computer Sciences Corp. of El Segundo.

Thompson said that the combined effort specifically supports supercomputing operations at the Army Engineering Research and Development Center in Vicksburg and Naval Oceanographic Office at Stennis Space Center near Bay St. Louis. Other Defense Department facilities on the list include the Air Force Aeronautical Systems Center in Dayton, Ohio, and the Army Research Laboratory at Aberdeen, Md.

“Mississippi has 40 percent of the defense department's high-performance computing power,” Thompson said. “Through PET, we provide technical support on defense issues ranging from the simulation of terrorist events to environmental quality modeling.”

While the high-tech outreach is in a relatively new arena, Thompson said the model is a familiar one for Mississippi State.

“Service, along with teaching and research, is an important part of the tripartite land-grant university mission,” he said.

For more information about MSU's Center for DoD Program Environment Training, visit www.erc.msstate.edu/pet/.

Live—continued from page 1

longtime SSRC director, said geography provides a starting point in “seeing” clusters that cross state lines and in revealing previously hidden patterns.

“Our technique of combining different research methods and academic disciplines has been very successful,” he explained. “By bringing together investigators from geography, sociology and demography, we were able to visualize medical data and identify those clusters.”

Other geography-related chapters in “WorldMinds” addressed the environment and politics; AIDS pandemic; urban transportation; “smart” growth; gender and globalization; tropical deforestation; dangerous environments; undocumented immigrants in the 21st century; and a host of other topics that “confront society and the environment.”

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Employment Opportunities

View and apply for current MSU positions (executive, faculty, professional, and support staff) on the Human Resources Management Online Employment System at www.jobs.msstate.edu. For more information, telephone HRM at 325-3713, e-mail employment@hrm.msstate.edu or visit 150 McArthur Hall.



Calendar of Events

Send your calendar items to

Kay Fike Jones, 102 George Hall; Mail Stop 9512; FAX 325-7455; e-mail jonesk@ur.msstate.edu at least **TWO WEEKS** in advance. For updates, check www.msstate.edu and click on "Calendar of Events."

To list calendar events online, access www.ur.msstate.edu/news/today.asp and follow the instructions.

May 3-7

Final exams.

3

Asian Festival, Drill Field, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. 325-2033.

Presentation: Dr. Reinosuke Hara to discuss nanotechnology, 120 McCain Hall, 3 p.m. 325-2270. (see story page 2)

7

MSU vs. Georgia, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 4 p.m.

8

Commencement, Humphrey Coliseum, 10 a.m.

MSU vs. Georgia, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 4 p.m.

MSU vs. Georgia Tech, softball doubleheader, MSU Softball Field, 6 p.m.

"Plant Biology: The Short Course Series. Sexual Reproduction (Flowers)," Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, 2-3 p.m. Must be registered. 601-799-2311, extension 22.

8 and 22

"Children's Storytelling on the Pinceote Pavilion," Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, 10 a.m. 601-799-2311, extension 22.

9

MSU vs. Georgia, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 1:30 p.m.

9, 16, 23, 30

"Bird Watching," Crosby Arboretum, Picayune, 5 a.m. 601-799-2311, extension 22.

11

HRM workshop: "Leave Training for Supervisors," 150 McArthur Hall, 10 a.m. For MSU supervisors. Registration required. 325-3713.

12

MSU vs. Louisiana Tech, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 6:30 p.m.

14

MSU vs. Arkansas, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 6:30 p.m.

15

MSU vs. Arkansas, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 2 p.m.

American Quarter Horse Show, Mississippi Horse Park, 10 a.m. 325-9350.

16

MSU vs. Arkansas, baseball, Dudy Noble Field, 1:30 p.m.

Greek organizations fund new flagpole

Flying above the Drill Field is a 25-by-15-foot American flag unfurled April 26 as part of a new permanent monument.

Funded entirely by fraternity and sorority members at the university, the \$30,000 redesigned and re-landscaped seating and gathering area replaces an older and smaller flagpole mount. The Drill Field Flagpole Project provides "a more prominent focal point for the central campus," said Robert E. Rice, interim director of campus landscape.

New lighting now enables a 24-hour display of the Stars and Stripes. Previously, the flag was raised and lowered at dawn and dusk.

Centered amid a brick seating area are

sections of flowers in rotating annual colors, Rice said. "As an example, we'll feature red, white and blue petunias this summer," he added.

Heidie Lindsey, assistant director of student life, said Greek student leaders representing nearly 30 social sororities and fraternities launched the project following a 2003 leadership retreat with campus administrators.

"Students saw this, first, as an opportunity to give back to Mississippi State and secondly, a chance to provide a much nicer, larger structure to display our nation's flag," Lindsey said.

Work on the project was completed by campus landscape technicians

based on a design provided by former landscape architecture major Colin Brock. A 2002 graduate from Raymond, Brock currently works for Regen-Bogen Associates of Charlotte, N.C.

