Greetings Friends & Supporters!
This is our first bi-annual newsletter, which we hope will provide a glimpse into all of the hard work HLS students have been doing to improve public health and promote economic development in the Mississippi Delta.

Besides the exciting news you will find within, we are happy to report that we have taken on two new Vice Chairs for our group, Jared Policicchio and Eleanor Simon, both second year law students who will help carry the torch next academic year after our founders Daniel Preysman and Victoria Smith graduate this spring.

We are very excited to report that we have just created a Harvard Law School Delta Project Blog at http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/delta/ Please visit the site for brief updates on all of our projects, as well as information about upcoming events. We will also go live later this spring with a website, which will provide information about the HLS Delta Project, our leaders and advisers, and our student projects. We will let you know when the website is available, and will also post the link on our blog.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the HLS Delta Project, and if you have any questions, advice, or suggestions, please contact us at harvarddelta@gmail.com

Food Policy Initiative
During the fall semester, students researched farmers market legislation in several states. Six states were selected as especially favorable in their legal treatment of farmers markets, and legislative recommendations were created using these states as a guide. Formulating the recommendations involved extensive research on four issues: sales tax, food safety regulations, county and municipal funding of farmers markets, and federal food assistance programs. The completed recommendations were integrated into a policy paper titled "Mississippi Farmers Markets: Legislative Recommendations and Innovations to Promote and Sustain Farmers Market Development." A copy of the Legislative Recommendations can be downloaded here: http://www.deltadirections.org/programs_initiatives/initiative.php?id=32 (continued on page 2)
During January term, students traveled to Mississippi to present their research, with the goal of advocating for legislative changes to promote farmers markets. Students met with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi state legislators (including members of the Agriculture and Ways and Means Committees), and non-profit organizations, to discuss their findings and recommendations in these areas. Specifically, students advocated for legislation exempting from sales tax all food products grown or made by Mississippi farmers and sold at Mississippi farmers markets. A bill incorporating this recommendation passed the Mississippi House and Senate was signed by the Governor into law on April 1! Students also worked on updating a farmers market legal manual and met with all the Delta regional farmers market managers to present their findings and legislative recommendations.

More information about the status of the bill and the current bill text is available at: http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2010/pdf/history/HB/HB1566.xml

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**FINANCIAL SERVICES INITIATIVE**

This fall saw the kickoff of the Financial Services Initiative. In partnership with Delta State University, four students spent fall semester researching community financing and preparing a guide to community financial services. Students prepared an annotated bibliography of community financing and researched the major institutions and products used in extending financing to under-served communities. Two students, Yaw Asare and Daniel Preysman, spent January term in the Mississippi Delta conducting interviews with nonprofits, banks, and regulators about the financial services industry in Mississippi. Yaw and Daniel conducted more than a dozen interviews across the state and are in the process of producing a report of their findings. Now, in the spring semester, a new group of students is completing the financial services guide and working with Southern Bancorp, a major rural development bank in the Delta, to help with its development goals including identifying legal strategies for historic preservation and assessing legal implications for running a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site.

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**HEALTH HELP FOR KIDS**

During the fall semester, two Health Law and Policy clinic students coordinated with Mississippi Health Advocacy Program, a non-profit agency, to produce a manual for MHAP’s new Health Help for Kids initiative. Health Help for Kids is a not-for-profit operation that will provide comprehensive protection and advocacy services to Mississippi parents attempting to enroll their children in a public healthcare program. The students researched Medicaid for children, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and other public healthcare programs and drafted a manual, which will be used to train health care providers and advocates to navigate Mississippi’s health care system. During January term, one of the students continued working on a modified draft of the manual, and now the finished draft is ready for print.
In November 2009, Harvard Negotiators presented a module on negotiation basics at the Mississippi NAACP Black Leadership Summit, a two-day conference in Jackson, Mississippi. Elected officials received training on how to become more effective negotiators. The training concluded with an invitation from the Mississippi NAACP to return to do longer, more focused training. A team from Harvard Negotiators will return in March 2010 to continue helping elected officials in Mississippi develop these essential skills.

Harvard Negotiators also offered a one-day negotiation basics workshop in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Through a combination of informative lectures, interactive negotiation exercises and group discussion, the workshop covered various topics, including the common reasons why negotiations fail, a framework for thinking about and understanding negotiation, a step-by-step method for preparing for upcoming negotiations, and ways to create more value in negotiations.

Workshop participants came from a variety of professional backgrounds, including staff from the Mississippi Department of Public Health, students and faculty from Delta State University, as well as community economic developers and other professionals. The course was sponsored by Delta Directions Consortium, the Tri-County Workforce Alliance, and the Institute for Community-Based Research at Delta State University.

During the fall semester, a group of five students worked with the Mississippi Kids Count organization, a non-profit agency that releases an annual data book containing statistics about the health and well-being of children in Mississippi. The students helped the Kids Count staff translate these statistics into policy recommendations to be considered by state legislators and advocates. In 2009 Mississippi Kids Count focused on Children’s Health, and students drafted policy papers concerning issues of children’s health, particularly teen pregnancy and low birth weight, which were posted on the Kids Count website http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/mskidscounorea/Resources/index.htm; parts of these papers were also excerpted and published in the 2009 Kids Count Data Book http://www.ssrc.msstate.edu/mskidscounerea/Download_Data_Books/ Index.htm. In the spring semester, a new group of students will work with Kids Count to draft policy papers on the 2010 topic, Education.
Thank you again for your ongoing support of the Harvard Law School Mississippi Delta Project. Once our website is up and running you will be able to learn more about all of our current projects, the student leaders involved in the group, and our faculty and attorney advisers. In the meantime, please reach out to us if you have questions about any of the projects or if you have any advice, suggestions, or ideas!

About Us

The Harvard Law School (HLS) Mississippi Delta Project is a student organization contributing to an innovative model of public service focused on public health and economic development in one of the poorest and most under-served parts of the United States. HLS students engage in transactional pro bono legal work, policy work, and research and writing in support of non-profit, for-profit, and governmental clients in the Delta. Projects are developed and supervised by Emily Broad, Esq. HLS ’08, who serves as the Delta Fellow and Director of the Delta Directions Consortium.

www.deltadirections.org

Leadership Team
Daniel Preysman and Victoria Smith, Student Co-Chairs
Jared Policicchio and Eleanor Simon, Student Vice Chairs
Emily Broad, Esq., Supervisor

For more information about the HLS Mississippi Delta Project, please visit our blog at http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/delta/
or email us at harvarddelta@gmail.com

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