



MEDIA RELEASE **Public Relations**

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Contact: Tommiea P. Jackson

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Administration Tower, Second Floor
Post Office Box 17490
Jackson, MS 39217
Fax: (601) 979-5833
Phone: (601) 979-2950
(601) 979-2272
Cellular: (601) 503-5749
Web: www.jsums.edu
Email: tommiea.p.jackson@jsums.edu

JSU hosting Community Leadership Summit to promote heritage tourism

(JACKSON, Miss.) — Jackson State University's Center for Urban Planning and Policy Assessment, School of Policy and Planning and the Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute on Citizenship and Democracy will host a Community Leadership Summit at 10 a.m. Friday, Sept. 14.

The summit, which will be held at the JSU College of Business, will bring together mayors and civic leaders from selected Mississippi communities to discuss creative ways to promote economic development through heritage tourism. The conference is part of a one-year project funded by the Mississippi Development Authority's Community Services Division.

The project, Local Economic Development through Heritage Tourism, focuses on 15 selected communities, 13 of which are located in the Delta. The summit has been designed to take participants through a creative problem-solving process and promote collaborative partnerships.

Gov. Haley Barbour will participate in the summit, along with Delta Regional Authority, Mississippi Heritage Trust, Mississippi Arts Commission, Enterprise Corporation of the Delta/Hope Community Credit Union, the Mississippi Development Authority, the Alcorn State University Extension Program and Mississippi State University's Extension Service.

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A primary goal of the project is to help communities identify and develop their heritage tourism resources, says Joan Wesley, project co-director with JSU's Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the Center for Planning and Policy Assessment.

"In our research visits to many of the selected communities, we are discovering significant but little-known historical events and landmarks," she says. "Many of these can be promoted to attract visitors who are interested in regional history and culture. This summit meeting brings Mississippians a step closer to preserving their history and culture and sharing it with the world."

David Deardorff, project co-director with the Hamer Institute notes, Mississippi's Heritage Trails initiative will establish markers at historic sites throughout the state, grouped by individual topics.

"Our project takes a different approach, focusing on the unique character of distinct regions and the local communities within those regions," Deardorff says. "We believe these two different approaches will complement one another and provide tourists with alternative ways to structure their visits."

For more information, call Deardorff at (601) 979-1562 or Wesley at (601) 432-6860.

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About Jackson State University

Jackson State University, founded in 1877, is a historically black, high research activity university located in Jackson, the capital city of the state of Mississippi. Jackson State's nurturing academic environment challenges individuals to change lives through teaching, research and service. Officially designated as Mississippi's Urban University, Jackson State continues to enhance the state, nation and world through comprehensive economic development, health-care, technological and educational initiatives. The only university in the Jackson metropolitan area, Jackson State is located near downtown, with three satellite campuses throughout the city. For more information, visit www.jsums.edu.