



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

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FROM CLASSROOM TO COMMUNITY: BRIDGING PATHWAYS OF ENGAGEMENT THROUGH DAWG NATION'S UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL MICROCOSM

ABSTRACT:

Mississippi State University–Meridian's DAWG Nation reimagines community engagement by partnering directly with local school districts to provide tutoring, mentoring, and early intervention for at-risk youth. Through an interdisciplinary collaboration—uniting teacher education, counseling, and educational leadership—DAWG Nation demonstrates how a university can function as a “microcosm within the macrocosm,” aligning its internal resources to meet community needs. Participants will explore replicable strategies for building sustainable, school-centered university partnerships that promote student success and holistic engagement.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Shifting Foundations: Modern fundamental changes in how communities form, change, and represent themselves.

Blockage and Clearance: Physical, infrastructural, financial, or organizational barriers or portals to community engagement.

Floods and Droughts: Too much of one thing, not enough of another. How complimentary partnership can fill the gaps.

BIO:

Dr. Alisha Milam is an Assistant Clinical Professor and Program Coordinator in the Division of Education at Mississippi State University–Meridian. She directs DAWG Nation, a community-engaged learning initiative that unites teacher education, counseling, and educational leadership programs to provide mentoring, tutoring, and early intervention for at-risk youth. A published author and national and international presenter, Dr. Milam's work centers on building sustainable, interdisciplinary partnerships between universities and communities. Her scholarship emphasizes applied learning, civic responsibility, and the transformative power of higher education in local school ecosystems.