

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

at Mississippi State University[®]



Campus Tours

Need assistance with campus tours?
Contact Lindsey Shelton
(lshelton@grad.msstate.edu) or Natalie
Coats (nparrott@grad.msstate.edu).

Upcoming Events

Graduate Student Appreciation Week will take place April 6th-10th.

Starkville Campus Commencement will take place April 29th-30th

Meridian Campus Commencement will take place May 3rd

Kudos

Doctoral candidate, **Adrian Lazaro-Lobo**; professor, **Dr. Gary N. Ervin**, and assistant professor, **Dr. Kristine Evans** recognized for Outstanding Paper by the WSSA.

Opportunities

Reminder: **Graduate Student Association (GSA) Officer election** will be held virtually on Cowbell Connect April 1st through 3rd. We hope that you will participate in the election and select a 2021-2022 GSA leadership team that will represent your interests as a graduate student.

Please visit the GSA Cowbell connect page to learn more.

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Graduate School,

March 21 marked the official start of spring which heralds the start of a new season of growth and renewal. It is my favorite time of year as it exudes with optimism and the wonderful summer months that lay ahead. It also is a busy time for many graduate students who are planning their research projects or who are in the short rows of their programs, to borrow a term from the row crop scientists. In fact, as of this newsletter, some 406 graduate students (MS/MA = 356, EDS = 9 and PhD 41) have registered to graduate the end of spring semester.

This is the most exciting time of the academic year where we see so many of our graduates enter new careers or continue in advanced graduate studies. It is a time to, not only celebrate the accomplishments of these students, but also to thank the many major professors and academic advisors that helped them navigate the challenges of their respective graduate programs. Without the dedication of the faculty and staff that support the graduate education and research enterprise at Mississippi State University, this opportunity to embark on a new career trajectory for many of the soon to be graduates would not be possible.

So today, we salute all of the graduate faculty and support staff, especially the major professors, academic advisors and the graduate program coordinators who make these educational experiences possible for our graduate students. We wish you all a very successful conclusion to the semester and the academic year of 2020-2021. Stay well, stay safe and we look forward to seeing the graduates at Commencement exercises.

Respectfully,

Dr. Peter Ryan
Executive Vice Provost and Dean - The Graduate School

Student Spotlight:

Robert Booker, Kinesiology

Cardiometabolic disease is a leading cause of death worldwide and one doctoral student has dedicated his research to how to reduce this risk. Robert Booker is a graduate student (PhD) in the Department of Kinesiology mentored by Dr. Megan E. Holmes. His research focuses on how sedentary behavior and physical activity contribute to cardiometabolic disease. Robert's research interests are focused on better understanding the health disparities associated with and contributing to cardiometabolic risk and how sedentary behavior and physical activity impact this risk. Robert's dissertation investigates these associations using multiple large cohort epidemiological datasets. He is combining innovative methodologies of risk assessment and examining how sedentary behavior and physical activity change this risk.

Robert has sought out opportunities to provide him research experiences at Mississippi State University and at other training programs around the nation. Robert was selected to participate in the Robert Smith, MD, Graduate Scholars Program as part of the Jackson Heart Study's Graduate Training and Education Center at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The two-year program provided an intense research and training experience with world renowned cardiovascular disease epidemiologists using data from the Jackson Heart Study. The Jackson Heart Study is a large cohort of elderly African Americans living in the Jackson Mississippi area.

Robert has just accepted an offer for a postdoctoral position at Northwestern University. It is an NHLBI-funded T32 in Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology and Prevention in the Department of Preventive Medicine at Feinberg School of Medicine. His involvement with research while at Mississippi State University played a prominent role in him earning this position. The new research and training opportunities that await him at Northwestern will position Robert to cement himself as a leader of cardiovascular disease epidemiology research.



Robert Booker, Kinesiology

Je'Kylynn Steen, Health Promotion

Je'Kylynn Steen came to MSU to gain the skills needed for a career helping people achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle. She initially signed up for a pre-medicine track, though after a couple years on that path, she saw that with her skills and passion, she could have a broader impact working in the maternal and child health, family life, and health promotion areas. The native Memphian changed her major to Human Development and Family Science, earned that degree as a first-gen college graduate in 2019 and will complete the Master of Science in Health Promotion this May.

Since 2018, she has worked with the MSU Extension Health Sciences Initiative as a Community Health Intern; in 2019, Je'Kylynn transitioned to a graduate research assistant role, with primary responsibility for ensuring the Mental Health First Aid rollout across Mississippi. She has led trainings in the Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid programs for over 100 Extension agents and community members, has developed abstracts and presented at state, regional, and national meetings, and has published two peer-reviewed articles, one of which she led as first author. Je'Kylynn has also earned two professional designations while at MSU- the Certified Family Life Educator and the Certified Health Education Specialist credentials. After successful defense of her thesis this month, Je'Kylynn will begin to wrap up her work at MSU and start the transition to the PhD program in Human Development and Family Science at Auburn University where she has secured a full graduate research assistantship.

One of her mentors, Dr. David Buys, said "Je'Kylynn has been an absolute delight and to have seen her professional and personal growth since our first interactions in 2018 is to have been inspired, encouraged, and just so proud! I will miss having her in our office, but I will always count her as a part of our team. While I'm sad to see our time of active collaboration winding down, I am so very excited about what she is about to accomplish in the next phase of her career development."

Dr. Mary Nelson Robertson, who has been a mentor and with whom she has worked daily added, "It has brought me immense joy working with Je'Kylynn, especially seeing her blossom from an undergraduate and master's student to an outstanding professional. I cannot wait to see all that Je'Kylynn accomplishes during this next chapter of her life and beyond. Even though I am going to greatly miss Je'Kylynn, I am extremely proud of Je'Kylynn for spreading her wings and furthering her education and skillset so she can help improve the overall health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Je'Kylynn has a very bright future ahead."



Je'Kylynn Steen, Health Promotion

Faculty Spotlight:

Dr. Ali Gurbuz

"My recently awarded NSF Career project aims to build the foundations of future smart sensing systems. Most of our current sensing systems, from our cameras to automotive radars or medical imaging devices, acquire data in a similar fashion without knowing how the acquired data will be used. This has led to massive data generation that becomes unbearable for today's sensing systems. We reimagine the classical sensing and processing structure and develop machine learning based solutions to create task oriented cognitive sensing systems. We don't only use machine learning as a black box solution but leverage prior domain knowledge, physics of sensing and sensor constraints to make a robust and fully smart sensing and processing pipeline. This project will support current research and educational outreach efforts in the Information Processing and Sensing (IMPRESS) Lab related to smart sensing systems, machine learning and signal processing for a variety of applications from computational imaging to autonomous systems and remote sensing.

You may also reach the project's public abstract on NSF's website [here!](#)"



Dr. Ali Gurbuz

Spring 2021:

Deadlines

March 22-April 1: Image of Research Exhibition

April 1: Last day for initial submission of thesis/dissertation to the Library for May graduation.

April 5-9: Graduate Student Appreciation Week

April 23: Last day to submit Library-approved thesis/dissertation to the Library for May graduation.

April 28: Deadline to pass thesis/dissertation defense after all other requirements are met except thesis/dissertation submission to Library.

April 28: Last day for non-thesis comprehensive exam for Spring 2021 graduation.

April 28: Last day for non-thesis exams for Spring 2021 graduation and deadline to defend theses/ dissertations for enrollment in GRD 9011 for the Summer term.

“*Excellence in education is when we do everything that we can to make sure they become everything that they can.*”

-Carol Ann Tomlinson



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