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Sarah Lee leads her field with innovative thinking

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By CALLIE DANIELS BRYANT



Dr. Sarah Lee

It goes without argument that Mississippi is the stomping grounds for some of America's most influential people, unfortunately most of them who have left the state to find their fortune. Yet the state is beholden to a woman who has taken incredible strides to empower Mississippians in computing and technology.

This woman, Dr. Sarah Lee, is the associate clinical professor, assistant department head and director of undergraduate studies for the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at Mississippi State University. Since 2011 she has regularly taught numerous courses at undergraduate and graduate levels, and has consistently received favorable reviews from her students.

But those titles don't convey what all she has done beyond the university.

While working as faculty, Lee has also researched ways to encourage women and African-Americans throughout Mississippi to pursue computing. She looks at factors such as pre-collegiate experiences that inspires them to enroll in computing science, what stakeholders guide them or push them away from these careers, and what programs are effective in impacting their interest and drive in computing.

"We need a diverse technology workforce bringing their unique perspectives to the design of tomorrow's technical solutions. Without that, we will miss out on a lot of innovative technology solutions that could have a positive impact on the world," said Lee.

In 2013, Lee co-founded Bulldog Bytes with an engineering student, Rian Walker. Bulldog Bytes began as an outreach educational program for Mississippi students and faculty.

EDUCATION



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2017 list of the top 100 private companies in Mississippi based on MBJ research. Info provided by company representatives from reliable sources and is ranked by total revenue.

Mississippi 100

2017 Ranking	2016 Ranking	2015 Ranking	Company
1	2	1	The Home Depot
2	1	2	Boonville Farms II
3	3	3	481 Logistics LLC
4	4	4	Freightliner
5	5	5	Boonville Farms II
6	6	6	Boonville Farms II

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CPA FIRMS LIST (LARGEST)

The 2017 list of the largest CPA firms in Mississippi. Ranked by number of CPA's

Largest Accounting firms

RANK	Firm	Local Address	Telephone
1	HORNE LLP	1020 Highland Colony Pkwy., Ste. 400, Ridgeland, MS 39157	601-326-9100
2	Watkins, Ward & Stafford, PLLC	213 Commerce St., West Point, MS 39373	662-494-5100
3	GranthamPoole, CPAs	1052 Highland Colony Parkway, Suite 201, Ridgeland, MS 39157	601-499-2900
4	Haddon Reid Fuhank Betts PLLC	188 E. Capitol St., One Jackson Place Ste. 500, Jackson, MS 39201	601-948-2100
5	RKD, LLP	190 E. Capitol St., Ste. 500, Jackson, MS 39201	601-948-6100

Information was provided by firm representatives and MBJ research and is ranked by CPA's in MS

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"Currently, we provide programs throughout the state for students (elementary to high school) and teacher professional development," Lee said. "Our teacher program introduces teachers in any content area to computer programming and cybersecurity, and provides them with a pedagogical approach to introduce those topics into their classrooms."

In 2015 Bulldog Bytes partnered with GenCyber, a free-of-charge national summer camp that teaches K-12 students safe online behavior, increases diversity and interest in cybersecurity careers, and also helps teachers learn methods for teaching cybersecurity in computing classes. Bulldog Bytes also introduces K-12 students and their teachers to computing professionals who teach cybersecurity, digital forensics, and coding with robots.

Lee is also the director of the new Mississippi Computing and Cybersecurity Equitable Education Space (MSuCCCEEDS) which is housed at MSU. This program provides classroom space for K-12 students and their teachers as a first-hand introduction to possible careers in computer science.

Lee is also a program manager for the Mississippi Aspirations in Computing award in collaboration with the National Center for Women and Information Technology. Each year the program rewards high school girls throughout Mississippi for their passion in technology and computing.

In 2015, Dow selected Lee for a DOW Diversity Fellowship which she has mentored students MSU Bagley College of Engineering students who are members of minority groups.

In 2016 with Dr. Vemitra White of Bagley College of Engineering Lee founded the Mississippi Alliance for Women in Computing which is made available with funding from the National Science Foundation.

"Through this alliance, we have partnered with non-profits, educational institutions, and industry to illuminate a pathway for girls and women in Mississippi who want to pursue computing education and careers," she said.

Lee has also encouraged students with disabilities in computing programs, and has hosted summer interns through the AccessComputing program at the University of Washington. She has worked with one of the interns to offer a summer computing outreach program this year for students with low vision or blindness.

She currently serves on the board of Mississippi Coding Academies (MCA), which she sees as an "important part of computing education landscape."

"The academies are an alternative educational pathway for Mississippi citizens," she said, "whether they are recent high school graduates, have attended college, or have even completed college but want to retool to be more competitive in our digital economy."

Mississippi State University has taken a leadership role with MCA, and the Golden Triangle campus will by the end of August be located at Thad Cochran Research, Technology, and Economic Development Park, adjacent to MSU campus.

Lee said, "I am so impressed with the students at the Golden Triangle campus that I work closely with. I had a group of MCA students and some of our MSU students attend a hackathon recently that was hosted by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Students. The MCA students were very competitive and worked side by side with our Bagley College of Engineering students. The winning team at the hackathon was led by an MCA student. These students are getting 11 months of active learning in an instructor-led environment, and it is tuition-free. They learn full-stack software development, which includes front-end to back-end computer programming. The curriculum is driven by our industry partners, and we are currently looking at additional content that includes artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. I am so excited about the future of Mississippi State and the Mississippi Coding Academies collaboration."

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Matt Jones named food & beverage manager at Reunion Golf & Country Club

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