



Released May 24, 2012

First Collegiate STAND Leadership Class Graduates at MSCC

The first collegiate leadership class of the STAND (Strive Toward A New Direction) Foundation received praise and encouragement during graduation ceremonies earlier this month at Mid-South Community College.

“Our inaugural class is very special, and we will cherish the memories that we’ve made here,” said Tracy Steele, STAND Foundation CEO who also serves as a member of the Arkansas State House of Representatives. “No matter where we go from this point forward, I want you to remember that we started right here at Mid-South Community College.”

“Also remember that this is the beginning and not the end. We have just started our work here. We appreciate what everyone has done, and we will count it a joy to return to West Memphis.”

In addition to saluting the participants’ achievements and efforts, Steele recognized MSCC for taking the initiative to bring the program to the West Memphis campus.

“For us to have a vision, we have to have an organization that is willing to embrace and catch that vision,” he pointed out. “Mid-South Community College was a



wonderful receiver of our program, and it's been a great partnership, one we certainly desire to continue. This is the first time we have been on a college campus, but it will not be the last."

Nearly 20 students participated in six day-long training sessions throughout the academic semester that emphasized issues of personal, career, and leadership development, augmented by Internet-based training, motivational speakers, and the development of a community service project plan.

The local training, a collaboration between the College and the STAND Foundation with funding from MSCC's Title III Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI) Grant, featured innovative and action-oriented leadership instruction designed to empower participants with tools and skills to improve themselves and their communities.



Marcus Grisby, left, accepts a certificate of completion and a handshake from Tracy Steele.

"I can already see a difference in you," Steele said. "Not only do I see a difference, I see all of you wanting to be a difference. From what I've heard and seen, this community is going to be better off because of the work you are about to do. We are proud of that."

Dr. Christopher Davis, assistant professor of homiletics at Memphis Theological Seminary in Memphis Tenn., who served as one of the training facilitators, presented the keynote address. Dr. Davis is a native of Proctor, Ark., and a graduate of West Memphis High School.

"Since I've been with you since Day 1, I wanted to share some things that would continue to reinforce what we've already discussed," Davis said. "One of the things about this class that kept coming back to my mind was 'leaping over and living beyond their limitations.' For me, that's what this class personifies."

“The reality is all of us, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, are going to face some challenges and some limitations in this life. I am convinced that none of us will be what we want to be or arrive at the place we ultimately want to arrive unless we know what it means to leap over and subsequently live beyond our limitations.”



Michael Leslie, left, receives an award for perfect attendance.

He said his goal in leading discussions and exercises was to help students overcome their real and perceived limitations.

“Limitations are temporary if you understand the truth about them, one of which is the way we think,” Davis pointed out. “You must understand as you go forward that success is ultimately your responsibility. All of us can enjoy it, and all of us can achieve some measure of success if we understand it’s our responsibility.”

Davis encouraged graduates to overcome their limitations and put forth their best effort to “leave behind a contribution, an impact, a mark that people will talk about long after we live. Not everyone is going to be excited about your idea or your community project, but don’t let anybody or anything stand in your way.”

Two students, Lori King Wilson and Pat Crume, were selected to make presentations at the ceremony.

Wilson presented her “Weekend Angels Foundation” community service project which is designed to “give parents of special needs children a well-deserved break.”

Crume talked about the overall experience with the leadership training. “This program is awesome,” she said. “The leadership class taught me to embrace my strengths, and it also taught me how to strengthen my low-performance areas. It also challenged and motivated me to work smarter in my classes, in my work, and in my personal life.”

STAND is a nonprofit organization with additional Leadership Institute programs in Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Arkadelphia, and El Dorado.

For more information about leadership and other training/education opportunities at the college, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call the Admissions Office at (870) 733-6728, email admissions@midsouthcc.edu, or see the college's website at www.midsouthcc.edu.

For more information about The STAND Foundation, visit standone.com or call (501) 374-8788.