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Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College Corps, based at the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, and the Mississippi University for Women, will have 122 minimum-time AmeriCorps members who will serve economically disadvantaged children in Lafayette, Oktibbeha, and Lowndes Counties by delivering an enhanced pre-K curriculum, by providing sustained after-school tutoring, and by supporting a summer learning program. Members will also provide food and referrals to economically disadvantaged children families in our counties. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for preparing at least 32 economically disadvantaged children for kindergarten; for helping at least 248 economically disadvantaged children achieve academic engagement as readers; for preventing summer learning loss in at least 36 economically disadvantaged children; and for delivering food and referrals to at least 170 economically disadvantaged children and adults. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 488 volunteers, who will be engaged in service to economically disadvantaged children and families. The College Corps will focus on the CNCS focus areas of Education and Healthy Futures. Although no matching funds are required by CNCS, the CNCS investment of \$20,656 will be matched with approximately \$80,000 in local, state, and private dollars.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

PROBLEM: COMPELLING COMMUNITY NEED

Over the last three years, with AmeriCorps support, we have developed and refined a program model that can be effective in almost any college town in America. We now seek to build on our success by expanding the College Corps to two additional college campuses in Mississippi. Three years ago, when we first developed the College Corps at the University of Mississippi, we started by listening to directors of local non-profits. Through focus groups and interviews, those leaders all told us the same thing: college students are quick to volunteer, but they are also quick to disappear. Our non-profit leaders were struggling to retain high-quality volunteers. Tutoring and feeding programs might attract dozens of volunteers early each semester, but those volunteers would evaporate over time. This pattern was creating big problems for many non-profits, limiting the quality and consistency of their programs, and making growth impossible. After hearing this problem repeated again and again, we designed the College Corps, in which college students become minimum-time AmeriCorps members and serve approximately ten hours per week--every week for a full academic year--at one local non-profit. Our

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members are reliable and invested. They serve at tutoring programs for low-income children and at feeding/referral programs for individuals with food insecurities. They become devoted (and accountable) to their agencies and to the people they serve. This structure, made possible by AmeriCorps, has made all the difference in our community. Students are competing to become College Corps members; new non-profit leaders are asking to become College Corps hosts; and, most importantly of all, many more low-income children and adults are receiving consistent, high-quality services. We are still listening to those original non-profit leaders who helped formulate the College Corps. They are now our College Corps partners, and we have weekly contact with them. They are thrilled with our members and with the support provided by our program staff. Their consistent request now: more College Corps members, please! Our town of Oxford, Mississippi, is not unique. It is a wonderful college town, but it is also a prototypical college town. Indeed, last fall, we hosted our colleagues from Mississippi State University and the Mississippi University for Women. Coming from similar Mississippi college towns, they shared similar stories of frustrated non-profit leaders complaining of unreliable waves of college students. In Starkville and Columbus, as in Oxford, students would flood volunteer rosters early and then evaporate over time. During two meetings in Oxford last fall, representatives from our three universities discussed this problem and a possible collaborative solution. Together, we toured multiple College Corps sites, speaking with members and non-profit partners. After those meetings, our three universities have decided to collaborate on the proposed expansion of the College Corps. Each campus will have a College Corps coordinator, who will recruit and manage local members. The three coordinators will work closely together, speaking every week by phone and meeting in person every other month. The College Corps staff in Oxford, who has experience with the program, will support the new coordinators. As we expand, we will continue to focus our efforts on the priority areas of education and healthy futures.

Our program, the College Corps, based at the University of Mississippi (UM), Mississippi State University (MSU), and the Mississippi University for Women (MUW), will address problems related to education and healthy futures in Lafayette, Oktibbeha, and Lowndes Counties of Mississippi, where poverty greatly exceeds the 2011 national rate of 15%. In Lafayette County, 23.1% of children and adults live in poverty; in Oktibbeha County, 33.5% live in poverty; in Lowndes County, 24.5% live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau SAIPE Program 2011). Unemployment rates are also high: 9.3% in Lafayette County; 11.5% in Oktibbeha County; and 10.7% in Lowndes County (U.S. Bureau of Labor Local Area Unemployment Statistics 2012). All public schools to be served by our program are Title I Schools. After-school tutoring and summer learning programs are scarce, strained, and/or under

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resourced. Economically disadvantaged children do not have access to enough out-of-school learning and enrichment opportunities. Too many of them arrive to kindergarten, which remains optional in Mississippi, unprepared. In fact, while $\frac{3}{4}$ of U.S. children attend pre-K, fewer than half of Mississippi's children attend pre-K of any kind (Barnett et al, NIEE's The State of Preschool 2011). Deficits in reading carry to the fourth grade and beyond. In 2013, as in previous years, Mississippi ranked last (alongside D.C. and Arizona) in the U.S. Department of Education IES scores of reading levels at grade 4 (The Nation's Report Card 2013). In addition to problems of education, poverty in our area also contributes to problems of health and nutrition. Many economically disadvantaged families experience food insecurities. According to the USDA Food Access Research Atlas, all three counties to be served by our program contain food deserts. Food banks are scarce, strained, and/or under resourced, and food insecurity rates are much higher than the 16.1% national average. In Lafayette County, 19.4% of children and adults struggle with food insecurity; in Oktibbeha County, 25.6% struggle with food insecurity; in Lowndes County, 23.1% struggle with food insecurity. The rates of children and adults living below the SNAP threshold of 130% poverty are even more alarming: 54% in Lafayette, 67% in Oktibbeha, and 57% in Lowndes (Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap Study, 2011).

Within this difficult context, schools and non-profits are taking action and improving lives. Our program, the College Corps, will strengthen their efforts to fight poverty through education and food relief. We will deploy 122 minimum-time AmeriCorps members to seventeen schools and non-profits: the Horizons Summer Learning Program, the Jumpstart Pre-K Program, the LOU Homeless Task Force, ICM, Love Packs Weekend Feeding Program, the Leap Frog Tutoring Program, the Oxford Public School Homeless Children and Youth Tutoring Program, the Oxford Boys and Girls Club, More Than a Meal, the Lafayette County Literacy Council, the Ole Miss Food Bank, the Starkville Public School Tutoring and Assistance Program, the Starkville Public School TRANSFORMERS Program, the Starkville Bridges Out of Poverty Program, the Loaves & Fishes Community Feeding Program, the Cook Elementary School's After-School Tutoring Program, and the Helping Hands Food Pantry. Unfortunately, most of these organizations operate in various states of precariousness. During focus groups and interviews, leaders of these organizations have repeated their biggest problem. They barely have enough steady, reliable volunteers to maintain current levels of service. They certainly cannot consider growth, even though needs are obvious. The College Corps will solve this problem. Over the last three years, with the support of CNCS and MCVS, our program model has proven successful in Lafayette County. In the current proposal, we are seeking to expand to two additional counties. Our

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program works because we are organizing and expanding the involvement of university students. We carefully recruit, train, and support these students. They become minimum-time, education-award-only AmeriCorps members, who are then strategically deployed to our partner organizations. Last program year, we filled 100% of our 60 slots. Our members served effectively and reliably. During focus groups and surveys of leaders of our organizations, we learned that College Corps members are significantly strengthening after-school tutoring and feeding programs. This success in our first three years of funding is the reason for the proposed expansion. Leaders MSU and MUW have observed our success during several campus visits, and they are eager to bring the College Corps model to their communities.

If funded during this cycle, our 122 minimum-time, education-award-only members will provide 17 organizations with well-trained, steady, and reliable volunteers. Each of our members will be matched with one organization and will serve 10 hours per week with that same organization for the entire academic year. Our members will be tutoring economically disadvantaged children and providing food to economically disadvantaged families. At the same time, they will be adding a critical layer of strength to important non-profits and schools. Each of our 17 partner organizations has voiced a desire to develop a more purposeful and intentional partnership with our universities and to field long-term student volunteers through the College Corps. As partners, they have clearly defined their needs. Thus, they have steered our program design.

In our first three years, we have noticed an additional benefit. Not only has College Corps provided stability to our tutoring programs and feeding programs, it has also enabled some of them to expand their services to additional economically disadvantaged children and families. In our communities, we have large numbers of people living in poverty, and we have too few summer learning, after-school tutoring, and emergency feeding programs. The gaps are apparent in the following examples. When the Horizons Summer Learning program began last year (with the help of several AmeriCorps VISTAs), teachers at one school identified 95 low-income children who would benefit from the program. Horizons had the capacity for only 30 of those children. With our help this year, Horizons will be able to serve 45 children from that school. In three years time, with College Corps support, Horizons will grow to serve 90 of those children. After-school tutoring programs like Leap Frog are also bursting at the seams. With the stabilizing presence of College Corps members, Leap Frog has been able to expand its services by 36% in the last few years. Moving forward, Leap Frog hopes to expand by an additional 30% and to pilot a summer program. College Corps support will be critical to this progress. Similarly, the Oxford Boys and Girls Club is working at full capacity, serving mostly

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students from three low-income public housing projects in Lafayette County. The Director of the club, Lamont Watkins, is one of our program's biggest fans because our members have enabled him to decrease the ratio of volunteers to children and to increase the quality and consistency of their programs.

In the 2012 KIDS COUNT Data Book, the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that Mississippi ranks last in child well-being. We are often on the bottom of such rankings. In truth, however, such rankings merely quantify the obvious. In Mississippi, poverty-related problems are extensive and compelling. We are seeking to continue College Corps--and to expand it--because our members are effectively addressing problems in two key areas: education and healthy living. With CNCS support, our members will strengthen local non-profits and schools and improve lives in Mississippi.

SOLUTION: MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We seek AmeriCorps support for philosophical and practical reasons. Our members will be our students, and we wish to introduce them to the national ethic of service promoted and embodied by AmeriCorps. We also seek to create incentives for service, and AmeriCorps education awards will be a critical part of our incentive package. We will pair EAP dollars with work-study funding to make service attractive to all students--and possible even for students with financial need. We request 122 minimum-time (300-hour) education-award-only positions without CNCS living allowances. This type of member slot aligns with our program design/activities and will be well-suited to our members, who will be full-time students recruited from our three universities. To be specific, our 122 members will address problems in education and healthy living through four types of activities:

1. Twenty members will deliver the Jumpstart curriculum to 40 economically disadvantaged pre-K children (Oxford). Through this proven model, members will provide two 3-hour sessions per week for eleven weeks. As mentioned above, there is a pre-K crisis in Mississippi. While $\frac{3}{4}$ of U.S. children attend pre-K, fewer than half of Mississippi's children attend pre-K of any kind (NIEE, The State of Preschool 2011). For those who do attend, quality varies dramatically. By bringing the Jumpstart curriculum into existing daycares, we will help children develop the language and literacy skills need for kindergarten. This program holds much promise for Mississippi. Led by a Jumpstart Coordinator, our members will receive 30 hours of training before ever setting foot in a classroom. The training will continue throughout the year, and members will be closely supervised and supported. Jumpstart is a polished, national model that we are proud to have in Mississippi. It is an effective way to improve outcomes for low-income pre-K children and to get them ready for kindergarten. Gains in literacy and language skills are tracked using a pre-/mid-/post- checklist that provides clear measures of program

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impact. Since 1993, Jumpstart has served 42,000 children nationwide. At least four well-designed and well-implemented studies have found that Jumpstart positively impacts literacy skills. For example, a randomized, control trial conducted by researchers at Illinois State University in 2011 found that "Jumpstart impressively augments the literacy, school readiness, and socioemotional skills of low-income preschoolers, attaining its goal of equipping such children--as they reach the cusp of kindergarten entry--to succeed, both academically and socially" (Harris 2011). Another study, by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, found that these positive affects persist even after children leave the program, as Jumpstart children have been shown to outperform their non-Jumpstart peers in the areas of language, literacy, and initiative skills one year after their participation (Jumpstart Child Outcomes Evaluation, 2003).

2. Seventy-two members will tutor 370 economically disadvantaged children from grades K-4 (Oxford, Starkville, and Columbus). This 1-1 and small group tutoring will occur at various non-profit organizations and schools. The frequency will be at least twice per week for a period of 18 weeks per program year. As mentioned above, Mississippi ranks last in reading scores for children in fourth grade. In fact, according to the Nation's Report Card, only 21% of our fourth graders scored at or above proficient on the NAEP in 2013. 47% scored below even the Basic level on that assessment. By tutoring in after-school programs, our members will help economically disadvantaged children become more academically engaged as readers, thereby contributing to improvement of the statewide reading problem. There is evidence to suggest that tutoring programs can help children achieve gains in reading. Some studies have found small gains ("After-school tutoring in the context of no Child Left Behind" by Zimmer, Hamilton, and Christina, *Economics of Education Review*, (29) 2010). Other studies have found bigger gains connected to out-of-school tutoring. An impressive meta-analysis in 2003 found "an overall tendency for positive impacts in reading for low-achieving or at-risk students." The same study found that "tutoring and individualized instruction . . . are particularly helpful for students in the early elementary grades" ("The Effectiveness of Out-of-School-Time Strategies in Assisting Low-Achieving Students in Reading and Mathematics: A Research Synthesis" by Lauer et al for the IES of the U.S. Department of Education). In another meta-analysis conducted by Elbauam, Vaughn, Hughes, and Moody, the authors found that "one-on-one instruction, provided as a supplement to classroom teaching, is generally considered to be the most effective way of increasing students' achievement. The effectiveness . . . has been validated by empirical research, especially for students who are considered at risk for school failure" (*Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2000). Later studies by Hock, Pulvers, Deshler, and Schumaker and by Baker and Clendaniel support earlier

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findings that after-school tutoring programs, when properly planned and administered, positively impact educational outcomes for at-risk youth. Finally, Ritter et al offer very strong evidence that volunteer tutoring has a positive effect for student achievement for K-8 students. Through their analysis of 21 studies reporting on randomized field trials, Ritter et al found that "participation in a volunteer tutoring program results in improved overall reading measures of approximately one third of a standard deviation. With respect to particular subskills, students who work with volunteer tutors are likely to earn higher scores on assessments related to letters and words, oral fluency, and writing as compared to their peers who were not tutored" ("The Effectiveness of Volunteer Tutoring Programs for Elementary and Middle School Students: A Meta-Analysis" in *The Review of Educational Research*, Spring 2009). Many studies find that design of tutoring programs can significantly impact quality and thus outcomes. This conclusion is usefully distilled by Edward E. Gordon in his article, "5 Ways to Improve Tutoring Programs" (*Phi Delta Kappan*, February 2009). Also, Susan Gibbs has written an excellent summary of effective tutoring practices for McGraw Hill's "Information for Educators" series. Such resources will be utilized during our member training sessions, which will be facilitated by professors from our Schools of Education. Tutoring after school is an effective practice, and its effects can be maximized by high-quality tutor preparation.

3. Ten members will provide summer enrichment to 45 economically disadvantaged children during the 6-week Horizons Summer Learning Program (Oxford). This intensive summer program will be delivered during full days in June and July. Our members will support certified teachers through 1-1 tutoring, mentoring, and purposeful play. As mentioned above, there are very few high-quality, structured summer learning programs in our counties of Mississippi, and none that are easily accessible to children from low-income families. Throughout our state, which is just now discussing the possibility of widespread pre-K and which has not yet made kindergarten mandatory, summer learning is a neglected subject. Research is clear that summer learning loss ("the summer slide") is an epidemic among low-income children. Johns Hopkins University's Karl L. Alexander and his colleagues--along with many other researchers--have documented this national problem. In "Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap," published in 2007 in the *American Sociological Review*, Alexander et al found that summer learning loss is greater for low-income children and that these losses accumulate over time. This creates big gaps between low-income children and middle- and high-income children. Our members will address this pernicious problem through Horizons, an evidence-based program with proven results. As detailed on the Horizons website: "Horizons partners with two education data assessment firms, Wireless Generation and Renaissance Learning to generate

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useful and accurate pre and post reading and math assessments. Wireless Generation's mClass DIBELS is used for Kindergarten through second grade reading assessment, and Renaissance Learning's STAR Reading and Math are used for grades three through eight." Results over multiple years show that low-income students in Horizons show positive and significant improvements, on average 2-3 months of growth during the 6-week session. Thus, children in Horizons replace summer learning losses with summer learning gains. The rigor of this program--and its independently documented results--have merited national attention, including an award from the National Summer Learning Association. Our members will serve through Horizons, which has been in MS for only one year. They will eliminate the summer slide for 45 economically disadvantaged children.

4. Twenty members will provide food and information to 200 economically disadvantaged children and adults through food banks and feeding programs (Oxford, Starkville, and Columbus). As mentioned above, poverty in our area also contributes to problems of health and nutrition. Many economically disadvantaged families experience food insecurities. According to the USDA Food Access Research Atlas, all three counties to be served by our program contain food deserts, meaning it is difficult to find high-quality food at affordable prices. Food banks are scarce, strained, and/or under resourced. In Lafayette County, 19.4% of children and adults struggle with food insecurity; in Oktibbeha County, 25.6% struggle with food insecurity; in Lowndes County, 23.1% struggle with food insecurity. The rates of children and adults living below the SNAP threshold of 130% poverty are even more alarming: 54% in Lafayette, 67% in Oktibbeha, and 57% in Lowndes (Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap Study, 2011). Our members will support our partners as they struggle to maintain food supplies and to distribute that food to families in need. At the same time, our members will add value by distributing information about other local and federal assistance programs. We will decrease hunger and increase knowledge. There is much research that confirms the obvious. Providing food through food banks and feeding programs is an effective way to lessen hunger in the short term. "Hunger in America 2010" is a large study of American domestic hunger. The report, published by Mathematica Policy Research and Feeding America, provides comprehensive and statistically-valid evidence that food insecurities are growing and that emergency food distribution is an effective strategy to combat this problem. Other studies, like "Emergency Food Assistance Helps Many Low-Income Hispanic Children," provide even more evidence that many families are relying on food banks and feeding programs (Martinez-Schiferl and Zedlewski, Urban Institute, 2010). We have seen this growth in need during the first three years of College Corps. Our partners in this area are serving more meals and distributing more food to more people. For example, More than a Meal served weekly

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meals to an average of 70 individuals per week during 2011. This year, the average number has grown to 90. Through this organization and others, our members will provide emergency food and information to children and adults experiencing food insecurities. We will decrease their short-term hunger and increase their knowledge of local and federal resources. The latter activity is especially important because such resources have been found to reduce food insecurity in the medium- and long-term. Using a "dummy endogenous variable model with instrumental variables to control for selection bias," researchers Ratcliffe and McKernan, in their March 2010 study, found that SNAP benefits "reduce the likelihood of being food insecure by roughly 30 percent" and reduce "the likelihood of being very food insecure by 20 percent" ("Childhood Poverty Persistence," Urban Institute). Our members will provide both emergency food and information about other local and federal programs, like SNAP.

MEMBER TRAINING

We will build community among the College Corps by bringing each campus group together 1) for orientation, 2) for training at least twice per semester, and 3) for an end-of-the year social event. Orientation will be conducted in two stages. In the first stage, program staff will introduce members to AmeriCorps, to program expectations and procedures, and to the community service landscape in our state and counties. During this session, we will emphasize rules regarding prohibited activities. We will invite an MCVS staff member to contribute or will ask our AmeriCorps VISTAs to speak about their experiences in service. We will also engage members in a brief reading and discussion exercise on the meaning of service. In the second stage of orientation, members will travel to their respective placement sites to meet with leaders of our partner organizations. Members will learn about the specific organizations they'll be serving and about the partner's specific expectations for the year of service. In addition to orientation, one training per semester will occur on each campus. We will draw on expertise from the Schools of Education at our campuses to inform our trainings. We will also create a College Corps Google site. This site will enable program staff to distribute important information and will give members a place to ask questions and collaborate. Around the mid-point of the term of service (January), members will gather together in Tupelo for a "Meaning of Service" workshop, led by UM staff who have been trained by the Illinois and Mississippi Humanities Councils. At the end of the term of service, we will bring College Corps members together for a presentation of service. During this gathering, members will present to one another on their year of service. (This gathering has been a huge success in previous years, with many tears and much laughter.) It should be noted that most of our partner organizations have some kind of training programs in place, and

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members will be required to participate in those trainings, in addition to the College Corps trainings described above. Also, it should be noted that the above activities will take place at all three of our college campuses. We will also develop one opportunity for members from all three campuses to gather in Tupelo for a meal/meeting.

MEMBER SUPERVISION

Overseeing the program will be the Assistant Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Mississippi. He will be supported by three Coordinators of the College Corps (newly created positions on each of our three campuses), one senior secretary at UM, and by an AmeriCorps VISTA. Members will be recruited, trained, supervised, and supported by the Coordinators of the College Corps, with the support of the assistant dean. The senior secretary will assist with correspondence and record keeping. Furthermore, our universities' financial aid offices have agreed to reserve work-study dollars for our members, allowing us to leverage the power of the Segal Education Award. The College Corps coordinators will supervise members through 1) regular communication, 2) visits to placement sites, 3) review of timesheets, and 4) discussions with community partners. The assistant dean overseeing the team of coordinators has broad management experience and training. The Coordinators of the College Corps will have experience working with university students and with non-profit organizations. Members will have an open line of communication with the assistant dean and the program coordinators. Each member will meet one-on-one at least once with the assistant dean and/or a program coordinator during the term of service. Program Coordinators will meet at least once per month with each community partner. Of course, supervisors at our partner organizations will also be critical. These site supervisors will meet as a group and will be given detailed information about the overall design of the program. They will have home and work contact information for the program staff. Members of the College Corps will be members of our universities' communities and will thus be governed by the conduct policy outlined in our campus handbooks of standards. Program staff will quickly address any misconduct. We will conduct regular surveys of our site supervisors to ensure that any conduct problems are caught and remedied.

COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION

We are proud of our AmeriCorps affiliation. Our recruiting materials will emphasize AmeriCorps through use of language and the logo. This emphasis will be continued during member training, development, and end-of-service events. We will provide every College Corps member with an AmeriCorps t-shirt and pin--and insist during trainings and site visits that pins be worn during service. During our orientation, we will also explain to our members the importance of speaking to

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community members about AmeriCorps. We will offer a template for a "brief elevator talk" and give our members a fun opportunity to rehearse those talks. At our major service sites, we will place "AmeriCorps Members Serving Here" yard signs.

Organizational Capability

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY

The primary contact for this grant application is Dr. Stephen Monroe, Assistant Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Mississippi. The secondary contact is Dr. Glenn Hopkins, Dean of the College. Dr. Monroe is the founding director of the College Corps, which has operated in Lafayette County for three years. From the beginning, the College Corps has been an AmeriCorps program. The College of Liberal Arts is the oldest and largest division at the University of Mississippi, which is our state's flagship university. Research faculty throughout the College have much experience administering federal funds, especially research funding from NSF and NEH. All such grant funding is coordinated by UM's Office of Research. The College is also currently hosting an AmeriCorps VISTA Project, directed by Dr. Monroe. The North Mississippi VISTA Project has been a highly effective way for the University of Mississippi to expand its community engagement activities. We have 22 AmeriCorps VISTA slots in our project and 1 VISTA Leader. Although UM has administered a handful of other AmeriCorps grants in the past, these projects have been housed in other divisions and are no longer active. The dean reports directly to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs (the Provost) who himself reports directly to the Chancellor. The current operating budget of UM is some \$1.5 billion. Instrumental to our plans to expand College Corps beyond Lafayette County have been Dr. Cade Smith and Meggan Franks at Mississippi State University and Dr. Kate Brown at the Mississippi University for Women. All are experienced administrators who have visited our program several times and who have rallied support for College Corps at their universities. Dr. Smith and Ms. Franks work from the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement (SLCE) and have already identified a College Corps coordinator for MSU. That coordinator will have an office in the SLCE and Dr. Smith and Ms. Franks will support his or her work. The assistant dean will work closely with the coordinators to manage the College Corps and will provide weekly updates to the dean. Secretarial support for the program will be provided by Dr. Monroe's current administrative assistant. During the first three years of our program, we have grown from 40 members to 72 members. We have learned many lessons about staffing and managing an AmeriCorps program, and we feel well prepared to expand our program to benefit more economically disadvantaged children and adults. This is especially true because we are working closely with colleagues at two other major universities, both

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with exemplary records and histories. Dr. Monroe will continue to direct the overall program, with his team in Oxford providing support and guidance to the new College Corps coordinators at MSU and MUW.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In our three-year history as an AmeriCorps program, our members have complied with AmeriCorps rules and regulations. This success is attributable, we believe, to three factors: 1. We have established recruiting processes that bring in highly motivated and intelligent members, who grasp the importance of protecting the AmeriCorps name. 2. We train our members and remind them of the importance of never pursuing prohibited activities. 3. We clearly explain these prohibitions to our site supervisors in the community. Thus, they have never put our members into awkward or compromising positions. We will continue to emphasize these lessons, and we expect that our members will continue to respond. Site visits have proven to be a critical practice for us. We make phone calls and stay in touch with members and site supervisors by e-mail, but there is no substitute for visiting a site when members are tutoring or distributing food. Problems can be quickly identified and corrected, and, perhaps more importantly, members and supervisors feel supported and celebrated. The absolute necessity of regular and frequent site visits is the reason that we will have a College Corps coordinator in each town. As detailed on our member service contract, which our members complete and sign at orientation, our program has a "disciplinary ladder" model that we use to document and correct any member misconduct. We will continue this best practice as we expand.

CURRENT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

As mentioned above, the College Corps model has been exceptionally successful in Lafayette County. We believe the model would work well near any college or university. Based on surveys and focus groups, we know that our members and community partners are satisfied and that we are addressing real needs through our activities. Indeed, the College Corps fills an important void for non-profits and schools by providing them with stable, reliable, and well-trained volunteers. It also fills an important void for our members, college students who seem to crave meaningful, long-term service. Our universities are rich in short-term volunteer opportunities, like picking up trash on a Saturday for a few hours. The College Corps is different, however, and our students and partners seem to appreciate that difference. Based on this success, we feel confident that the model can work well near any college or university in Mississippi. In the last two years, we have been successful in achieving our national performance measures. Each year, we have improved our results, and we expect this improvement to continue this year, our third. In 2012-2013, our second year, we met or exceeded all performance

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measure targets in our primary focus area of education. Our 60 College Corps members tutored more than 240 economically disadvantaged children. 202 of those children were tutored for 15 hours or more across the academic year. Our members built strong relationships and improved their tutoring skills as the year progressed. They were effective tutors, as evidenced by our outcomes. Through pre/post testing, we know that more than 140 children who received tutoring demonstrated improvement at the end of the year. In 2012-2013, we also met or exceeded our performance measure targets in our secondary focus area of healthy futures. Our members provided food and support to more than 100 children and adults during the program year. One of our original assessment methods proved impossible because our key partners do not keep detailed contact information on the people they serve. We could not, then, conduct phone interviews with a significant sample. We have adjusted our assessment in this application to be more practicable. Our new assessment method--in-person surveys conducted by members--is one recommended under current CNCS performance measures. In our second year, we attempted to add one service site to benefit veterans. Although we did meet our performance measure targets in this area, it was a struggle and our members did not have a positive experience at our veterans site. We attempted to remedy this problem because we believe wholeheartedly in serving veterans. Even so, the community partner is simply not capable of handling our members at this time. We have eliminated this performance area in the current application, creating a more streamlined program that focuses on only two priority areas: education and healthy futures. Even so, we will encourage our members to participate in the 9/11 Day of Service, which our program helped inaugurate in our community. As mentioned above, our program enrolled 100% of the slots received last year. 44 of our members (72%) completed more than 300 hours last program year and thus earned the education award. Members either completed the full year without reaching 300 hours or were exited at the halfway mark due to scheduling conflicts. As for recruiting, we've enjoyed much success. The College Corps attracts a high number of applicants. We have learned important lessons about marketing/recruiting, and we will follow those lessons as we expand to MSU and MUW.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We are committed to continually improving our program. The assistant dean and the coordinators will collect and use assessment data and observations and feedback from members, MCVS staff, and community partners to inform our decisions. Assessment and monitoring will rely upon three mechanisms: 1) Regular surveys of members, community partners, and participants; 2) Regular communication and visits between program staff, members, and community partners; and 3)

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Feedback from our College Corps Advisory Board, which will include representatives from our partner organizations. Through these mechanisms, we will seek to identify areas of weakness or potential growth. The program staff will respond quickly to resolve any problems. We will also seek to identify strengths. Such findings will be recorded in a management journal, which will be reviewed at year's end. We expect to make some mistakes as we expand, and we plan to make program adjustments based on lessons learned.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

COST EFFECTIVENESS

We request \$800 per MSY. With 122 minimum-time member slots, our total MSY will be 25.82. Thus, we request \$20,656 to be used to offset administrative costs. We have carefully reviewed our plan, and we feel confident that we have adequate resources at our universities to accomplish our goals. Because the College Corps will add value to our institutions and provide new learning and serving opportunities for our students, it has attracted sufficient internal resources to succeed. We have in-kind contributions of employee time and campus resources like office space and travel support. By hiring three half-time coordinators, we will add an important layer of support to the program. These are people who will stay focused on the College Corps project and who can work alongside the assistant dean to manage the members and to maintain sound relationships with our community partners. In relation to the overall budgets of our three universities, our program will not be expensive. After three years of operation, we understand the costs of administering such a program, and there are no more surprises. We are prepared to meet those costs. At the University of Mississippi, we have already hired a College Corps Coordinator at \$40,000 per year. MSU and MUW have committed to hiring coordinators for their campuses. These personnel costs are our most significant overall. Other expenses, like background checks, computers, office space, t-shirt costs, and training costs will be paid by our universities. Although no match is required for a fixed price program, we are prepared and willing to match the support award. We have been able to find internal and in-kind resources on our campuses for a variety of reasons. Many people see the great value in this service opportunity and in the affiliation with AmeriCorps. All see the great value in the education awards that our students will earn and likely spend at our institutions. This is another reason that our program structure has been successful, and another reason that AmeriCorps support is critical to our success. The College Corps has proven to be a cost-effective program that delivers benefits for the community, our universities, our students, and, most important of all, economically disadvantaged Mississippians.

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Evaluation Summary or Plan

EVALUATION PLAN

We are re-competing for the first time, following a successful three-year period of funding. We are requesting 122 minimum-time, education-award-only member slots. Our members will serve in two focus areas: education and healthy futures. They will complete four activities. In addition to the assessments of short-term outputs and outcomes discussed previously, we will evaluate the success of each of these activities in the following ways.

1. Twenty members will deliver the Jumpstart curriculum to economically disadvantaged pre-K children. Through this proven model, members will provide two 3-hour sessions per week for eleven weeks. Because of member efforts, literacy skills will improve. 80% of children served will gain the literacy skills to be ready for Kindergarten and 80% will actually advance to--and complete-- Kindergarten. Children served will also see long-term success in elementary school and beyond. Will enhanced pre-K positively impact the academic preparedness and achievement of these students? We will answer this question by tracking their progress through the local school system. We already have a cooperative agreement with the city and county schools and will be able to access this data, although it will need to be anonymized before being reported upon. This data will yield useful results in the short-, medium-, and long-terms for both our program and for the Jumpstart model in Mississippi. We will ask that data be analyzed by the Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction on the UM campus, who can provide an independent and detailed analysis.
2. Seventy-two members will tutor economically disadvantaged children from grades K-4. This 1-1 and small group tutoring will occur at various non-profit organizations and schools. The frequency will be at least twice per week for a period of 18 weeks per program year. 75% of the children tutored will become more academically engaged as readers. 80% will advance to the next grade level in the year following the tutoring. In the long term, will these children succeed in elementary and high school at higher rates? Will they attend college? To begin to answer these questions, we will track their progress through the local school system. We already have a cooperative agreement with the city and county schools and will be able to access this data, although it will need to be anonymized before being reported upon. This data will yield useful results in the short-, medium-, and long-terms for both our program and our partners. At intervals, we will discuss the results of these assessments to look for ways to improve our program and to refine our tutoring.
3. Ten members will provide summer enrichment to economically disadvantaged children during the 6-week Horizons Summer Learning Program. This intensive summer program will be delivered

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during full days in June and July. Our members will support certified teachers through 1-1 tutoring, mentoring, and purposeful play. We expect children in this program to gain literacy skills and to avoid the summer slide. We also expect that 90% will advance to the next grade level in the year following the program. As we are preventing the summer slide, will we also see increased rates of success in elementary school and perhaps higher graduation rates from high school? Will these students also attend college at higher rates? To begin to answer these questions, we will track their progress through the local school system. We already have a cooperative agreement with the city and county schools and will be able to access this data, although it will need to be anonymized before being reported upon. This data will yield useful results in the short-, medium-, and long-terms for both our program and for Horizons National. At intervals, we will discuss the results of these assessments to look for ways to improve our program and to refine our tutoring.

4. Twenty members will provide food and information to 200 economically disadvantaged children and adults through food banks and emergency feeding programs. We will count those served each week by our members and tally those numbers. This basic assessment will tell us the number of hungry people receiving short-term relief. We will also distribute information about local and federal assistance programs. Will this knowledge lead to less hunger and less food insecurity in the medium- and long term? We will survey those receiving food and information to draw some preliminary conclusions about this approach. The survey will be carefully designed by several professors from our Department of Nutrition. They have expertise in this area and can design a valid survey instrument. These results will be shared with our community partners and will be useful as they refine their schedules and food delivery systems.

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

1. Please respond to the following items in the clarification summary field of the narrative, or as directed for a specific clarification item:

a. We added our leveraging statement to the executive summary.

b. For both members and site supervisors, we will emphasize rules regarding prohibited activities during orientation and trainings. During site visits, we will ask members and site supervisors directly

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about the avoidance of prohibited activities. This questioning will remind supervisors and members of the rules and will enable us to ensure adherence. We will enforce these rules using a disciplinary ladder model, one that is detailed on our member contract and which is signed by our members at orientation, before the start of service. Between site visits, we will maintain open lines of communication with our members and supervisors, encouraging the immediate reporting of any prohibited activity. If and when a prohibited activity is detected, we will meet in person with the member, the supervisor, and any other relevant parties. After gathering and documenting the facts, we will address prohibited activities and violations of our rules of conduct by initiating the disciplinary ladder detailed in the member contract. The details of our disciplinary ladder are discussed below in clarification 1c.

c. We will prevent and detect compliance issues by regularly discussing prohibited activities and program rules with our members and supervisors. During orientations, trainings, and site visits, program staff will emphasize the avoidance of the prohibited activities detailed in section IV.b of our member service contract. If and when compliance issues are detected, we will immediately hold members and/or supervisors accountable. We will gather and document the facts of the situation. If a member has engaged in a prohibited activity or has violated a rule of conduct, we will implement the disciplinary ladder, as detailed in sections VI and VII of our member service contract. Members will be subject to appropriate penalties, including written warnings, written reprimands, mandatory adherence to a performance development plan, and/or program release. Site supervisors will also be educated on prohibited activities and on their supervisory expectations, as detailed in the MOU, currently under revision. If a site is no longer meeting its responsibilities, we will hold the site accountable through appropriate actions, including written warning, probation, and/or removal of members. Key to our prevention and detection of compliance issues is communication. We give all site supervisors contact information for program staff. We also communicate regularly with site supervisors, both during site visits and during regular check-in calls. We have found that this steady communication helps to prevent problems and ensures that site supervisors are comfortable contacting program staff immediately upon detection of a problem. Furthermore, we maintain regular and steady communication with our members, both during site visits, trainings, and during regular one-on-one check-in calls/e-mails. Again, we have found that this steady communication helps to prevent problems and ensures that members are comfortable reporting problems to program staff immediately.

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d. Our VISTA assists with recruitment of members and sites and with program assessments. The VISTA is also building our web and social media presence. Furthermore, the VISTA is present at all member trainings. This weekend, for example, our fabulous VISTA presented to our College Corps on VISTA and other national service opportunities. We are proud that this connection has resulted in recruiting victories, including a recent one in which a College Corps member will be joining VISTA next year following graduation. The supporting VISTA never supervises our College Corps members.

e. All College Corps members are college students and will have a high school diploma or its equivalent. All members serving at tutoring programs will complete pre- and in-service tutoring training provided by our respective Schools of Education. This training will be in addition to orientations and training provided by our individual sites.

f. Because our members are students at Mississippi universities, they have all met the education criterion of 45 CFS 2522.910. What's more, we require a program application and interview, which has enabled us to attract dedicated members with strong academic and service records. Our orientation and trainings for those members engaged in tutoring will be delivered by faculty from our Schools of Education. These faculty members will have terminal degrees and exemplary research records in their fields. This will be our best means of assuring that our members receive high-quality and current training.

g. To assess student progress and to measure student outcomes, we will use the following tools and strategies: the JumpStart pre/mid/post literacy checklist; a pre/post survey of academic engagement; pre/post DIBELS; and the medium-term tracking of grade-level advancement for individual students.

h. Our partner sites implement various high-quality and research-based tutoring curricula. All of our sites are either embedded within or working closely with the local school districts. Their tutoring programs have been designed by and/or endorsed by trusted administrators, principals, and teachers from local public schools. This oversight and connection ensures that the tutoring curricula are consistent with Mississippi academic content standards.

i. Our orientation and trainings for those members engaged in tutoring will be delivered by faculty

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from our Schools of Education. These faculty members will have terminal degrees and exemplary research records in their fields. Their expertise will be our best means of assuring that our members receive high-quality training. We are fortunate to have ready access to such experts.

j. Our site supervisors are current teachers, administrators, or non-profit directors with strong backgrounds in the field of education. Their daily supervision buttresses the orientation and trainings provided by our faculty experts.

k. We request a grant award start date of 8/1/14 with an end date of 7/31/15. We request a member enrollment start date of 9/1/14 and an end date of 7/20/15.

2. Suggested changes have been made in the Performance Measures screens.

3. Strategic Engagement slots: At this time, the University of Mississippi/College Corps AmeriCorps program is not requesting any Strategic Engagement slots.

4. No cost MSYs: At this time, the University of Mississippi/College Corps AmeriCorps program is not requesting any no cost MSYs.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics