



Delta State University
Center for Community and Economic Development

Press Release: 2005 Delta Rural Poll

Introduction:

The Center for Community and Economic Development at Delta State University is pleased to announce the upcoming "Delta Rural Poll." The 2005 Delta Rural Poll will occur in late January and early February, 2005. Researchers will contact Delta residents by telephone, and ask about their employment, quality of life, and demographics. In addition, Deltans will be asked their perceptions and opinions on employment opportunities in the region, and on using the area's heritage as a basis for promoting tourism. The poll is sponsored by the Center for Community and Economic Development and the Mid-South Delta Consortium, and this year will be administered by researchers at Mississippi State University.

Information on the 2005 Delta Rural Poll:

The 2005 survey asks questions on the following topics:

- Community Characteristics
- Individual and Family Quality of Life
- Demographic Characteristics (e.g. age, race, income, education)
- Respondent's employment, Respondent's spouse's employment
- Opinions and perceptions on employment opportunities in the Delta
- Opinions and perceptions regarding heritage tourism in the Delta

The survey will take about 12 to 15 minutes to complete. Each question will provide participants with a list of answers to choose from. The questions are easy to answer and require no special knowledge or experience.

The survey will be administered in the following counties: Bolivar, Coahoma, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, and Washington.

The Delta Rural Poll provides local and state policymakers with valid data that can be used to better understand local characteristics, and to create solutions to local concerns.

The 2005 Delta Rural Poll is the second time this survey has been undertaken. The first Delta Rural Poll was done in November and December of 2003. Results of that survey have been analyzed and used to produce a series of policy reports. These reports are available through the Center for Community and Economic Development at Delta State University. See the Center for Community and Economic Development's website for more information: <http://www.deltastate.edu/cced>

Quotes on the 2005 Delta Rural Poll:

The following quotes are from **Dr. Alan Barton**, Director of the Delta Rural Poll. Dr. Barton is also a Faculty Associate in the Center for Community and Economic Development, and an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Community Development at Delta State University.

“The Delta Rural Poll is unique in that it is carried out by people right here in the Mississippi Delta, for the residents of this region. The Poll provides Delta residents with an opportunity to have a say in the decisions that affect them, and with the chance to participate in forming the policy agenda in the state and the region.”

“We invite all Delta residents that are contacted by the Delta Rural Poll to collaborate in this important research effort. The Delta Rural Poll is truly a project by and for the residents of the Mississippi Delta.”

“One portion of this year’s Delta Rural Poll addresses heritage tourism. Tourism has tremendous potential as an engine of economic development in the Delta, and the rich cultural and natural heritage of the region provides a great opportunity to share this region’s treasures with visitors from all over the world in ways that benefit local residents. The Delta Rural Poll will help us understand the perceptions and experiences of Delta residents with respect to heritage tourism, and the potential of this approach to economic development in the region.”

The following quotes are from **Dr. Brent Hales**, Director of the Center for Community and Economic Development. Dr. Hales is also a researcher with the Delta Rural Poll, and an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Community Development at Delta State University.

“Ultimately, the Delta Rural Poll will provide the Center for Community and Economic Development with research that will allow us to focus on the specific needs of the Delta. The Delta Rural Poll gives us a certain critical edge that allows us to say from a statistical standpoint where we stand in terms of providing feedback to the state and the region. It also gives us an authoritative basis for knowing what is going on in the Delta, creating opportunities to address specific needs. When we get into the education data, we can work to make our education programs in the Center more effective. When we get into the tourism issues, we can focus on the specific needs that are addressed in the Poll.”

“The Delta Rural Poll is valuable to the Center for Community and Economic Development, as it gives each of our programs data to use to prepare grant proposals to make positive changes in the region. The Poll also enables us to identify new opportunities for further research and outreach for the Center.”

The following quotes are from **Dr. John Green**, a researcher with the Delta Rural Poll. Dr. Green is also a Faculty Associate in the Center for Community and Economic Development, and an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Community Development at Delta State University.

“From a community development perspective, the Delta Rural Poll allows us to take a more informed approach to the region’s needs, and to give people more empirical information on which to base judgments. The Poll opens up a ‘development dialogue’ and encourages debate and discussion on the future of the region.”

Quotes from **Dr. John Green**, continued:

“The Delta Rural Poll allows us to document public opinion, and to use the citizens’ voice to help make decisions and to inform policymakers. This participation is essential in the process.”

“The Delta Rural Poll helps the Center for Community and Economic Development make much more informed decisions about what development activities and programs to pursue, and also helps us judge the impact of development efforts over time. Since the Poll is carried out annually, it allows us to gauge how these changes are taking place in the region.”

“One portion of this year’s poll addresses workforce development issues. There is a lot of discussion about the importance of education and advanced workforce development through community colleges and universities, and how these relate to actual jobs in the region. The Poll allows us to track these issues with data that help in the planning process, whether in the development of pilot programs, to policy initiatives, to the education system. It also allows us to get the human side, to see how satisfied people are with their employment, with the benefits, and what they think about the relationship between those issues and education.”