

## MGCCC-GC Center partners Ag Science program with MSU

**By: Royce Armstrong- 07/29/2021**

Far and away, agriculture provides the greatest contribution to the George County economy with the second-place runner up not even close. Peanuts, cotton, cattle, corn, forestry, nursery plants, fruits and vegetables are all commercially grown in George County, producing an economic effect of nearly \$40,000,000, according to the MS State Extension Service.

So, it is hardly surprising that when Mississippi State University (MSU) approached the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College about forming an ag science partnership, MGCCC readily accepted the opportunity.

The goal is to make MGC- CC, and more specifically the George County Center, the "Mecca" for agricultural education along the Gulf Coast, according to MGCCC Administrative Dean Lisa Rhodes. Students enrolled in the MGCCC Ag Science program will be on their way to earning a Bachelor of Science degree from MSU.

The two-year program gives MGCCC students the same curriculum choices and Ag Science classes they would have if they were enrolled at MSU. In fact, a MSU advisor will make regular visits to the MGCCC campus and work with the students, helping them prepare for the transition to the University. Additionally, MGCCC will transport the Ag Science students to Starkville each semester so they can tour the MSU campus, meet and talk with the instructors and begin to narrow down a preferred career field.

"At MGCCC, we are always striving to meet the needs of our students," Rhodes said. "Partnering with Mississippi State to provide this Agricultural Science Pathway program here at the MGCCC George County Center means that we can offer our local students an opportunity like no other. We want to make the George County Center the Ag Science Center for MGCCC, and this partnership with MSU is just the beginning. We hope that this Program is just the start of building something really big at the George County Center."

Once a student attains 30 credit hours at MGCCC, he or she is eligible for dual enrollment. They become a MSU student as well as a MGCCC student. Among other benefits, that opens the possibility for the student to participate in MSU student activities, according to Rhodes.

Agriculture is much more than farming. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food and its related industries, all contribute over \$1 trillion to the country's GDP. This vast industry also provides U.S. citizens with over 22 million full-time and part-time jobs. In some way, agriculture touches every individual multiple times each day.

MGCCC and MSU are offering a variety of focus areas from which a student may choose. These include agribusiness, ag education, leadership and communications, agricultural pest management, animal production, floral management, floriculture and ornamental horticulture, food sciences, integrated crop management, precision agriculture and soil and environmental sciences.

Rhodes said the Ag Science Pathway program is open to students across the Gulf Coast.

"MGCCC is about helping to build a strong community through providing excellent educational opportunities that are close to home and convenient," Rhodes continued. "This Agricultural Science Pathway Program between MGCCC and Mississippi State is happening right here in George County, and we wanted to do this for the people of George County and the surrounding area."

Rhodes said the program is already receiving strong community support and enthusiasm. Enrollment is open now, and classes for the fall term will begin on August 19.