

**Alan Barefield**

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Alan Barefield is an Extension Professor with the Mississippi State University Extension Service. His primary role is to facilitate economic and community development educational programming efforts in the state of Mississippi. Specific areas addressed include business and entrepreneurship development, community economic and social analysis, business retention and expansion, and community infrastructure development and analysis. Barefield has received the BREI Distinguished Service Award in 2010 and the Master Business and Retention Professional designation in 2011. Barefield has had several service roles with Business Retention and Expansion International including serving as a member of and current chair of the BREI Education Committee, rewriting the curricula for the BREI Fundamentals Course with Kathy Tweeten and developing curricula for several BREI Continuing Education courses.

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Dr. Lisa G. Cooley is an Assistant Professor of Marketing and the Graduate Programs Coordinator at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. Prior to joining academia full-time, Cooley worked in economic development primarily working with Chambers of Commerce and Main Street organizations.

Cooley served as the Main Street Program Director in Cleveland, Mississippi and Natchitoches, Louisiana. During her time overseeing these programs, Cooley assisted with strategic planning and implementation, grant writing, marketing, event planning, and efforts to support small business.

Cooley has served on numerous boards. She currently serves on the Cleveland Bolivar County Chamber of Commerce board, the Cleveland Development Foundation Board, and on the Operations Management and Entrepreneurship Association board. Her research focuses primarily on entrepreneurial ecosystems and the organizations that are in place to support entrepreneurship at the local level.

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Devon Meadowcroft is an Assistant Professor for the Department of Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University. She began work at Mississippi State in August 2020 and is based out of the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, MS. Devon's work is primarily in rural development and health. Originally from New Jersey, Devon completed her Master's degree at the University of Delaware and her Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University.

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Zina Taran received her doctoral degree specializing in marketing from Rutgers, the State University of NJ. An author of a few dozen journal articles, conference proceedings and presentations, she is an expert on branding, market research, and quantitative methods, as well as corporate social responsibility. Her research analyzes reputational characteristics like brand equity, reputation due to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), or reputation of being knowledgeable, and the resulting perceptual and cognitive biases. She is also a passionate and devoted educator.