



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 30, 2021

MOST Policy Initiative names Acting Executive Director and Acting Deputy Director

Jefferson City, MO – [MOST Policy Initiative](#) is pleased to welcome [Dr. Brittany Whitley](#) as Acting Executive Director and [Dr. Josh Mueller](#) as Acting Deputy Director. The leadership transition comes as [Dr. Rachel Owen](#) steps down as Executive Director effective September 1, 2021.

Whitley served as a 2020-2021 [MOST Policy Fellow](#) covering education and workforce development policy. She earned her Ph.D. in Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Washington- Seattle. Prior to her dissertation research, she completed her B.S. in Neuroscience at Bucknell University and served for two years at the National Institutes for Health as a post-baccalaureate research fellow. Before joining MOST, Brittany worked enthusiastically to promote science accessibility for both policymakers and the public as a Science Communication Fellow at the Pacific Science Center, Life Science Interpreter at the Seattle Aquarium and Policy Director for the UW Graduate and Professional Senate.

“I am thrilled for the opportunity to lead MOST Policy Initiative and grow our reputation as a trusted source for scientific information in Missouri. Rachel is leaving some very big shoes to fill, but I'm confident that the work she has done over the past several years has positioned our team for continued success,” said Whitley.

Mueller also served as a 2020-2021 [MOST Policy Fellow](#), covering health and mental health policy. He completed his Ph.D. in Dynamical Neuroscience from the University of California, Santa Barbara in summer 2020. His dissertation work, completed in the Complex Systems Group under the supervision of Dr. Jean Carlson, characterizes the syntax of fruit fly grooming behavior. Josh earned a B.A. in Biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied proteins responsible for the regulation of replication in Epstein-Barr virus and Kaposi's sarcoma-associated herpesvirus.

“It has been a privilege to work as a MOST Policy Fellow this past year, so I am very excited to have the opportunity to guide the Fellows program into its next phase of operation. We are looking forward to building upon the success of our past year by expanding our team and the portfolio of issues we cover, and will continue to lean on Rachel's guidance as we navigate these new challenges and opportunities,” said Josh.

Owen co-founded MOST Policy Initiative alongside Hallie Thompson and Mike Hendricks in 2016 and served as the executive director from June 2019 to present. Under her leadership, the organization launched the [MOST Policy Fellows](#) program and the [Missouri Local Science Engagement Network \(LSEN\)](#). Through MOST, she has worked to create a sustainable, nonpartisan model to institutionalize science in the policymaking process in the state of Missouri. Owen will continue to serve as the President of the Board of Directors.



“It has been an honor and pleasure to build and lead MOST over the past five years and I could not be more excited to hand the reins to Brittany and Josh. I am confident that, under their leadership, MOST will continue to serve as a valuable resource to Missouri lawmakers and train the next generation of science policy leaders,” Owen said of her departure.

MOST Policy Initiative is a nonprofit organization aimed to promote long-term health, sustainability, and economic growth for people across Missouri by connecting science and policy. The organization was established in 2016 at the University of Missouri and is home to the [MOST Policy Fellows](#) program and the [Missouri LSEN](#), a partnership between MOST and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. To learn more about the organization, visit <http://mostpolicyinitiative.org>.