

Building opportunity in Mississippi through higher education

**A Report from the Steering Committee for the
Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education**

Executive Summary

Facilitated by



CENTER FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION TRUSTEESHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Association of Governing Boards
of Universities and Colleges

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*The Steering Committee foresees a future where Mississippians and their fellow Americans share a view of Mississippi as the state of promise and opportunity. The Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education has worked hard to identify what all of higher education—public and private, two-year and four-year institutions—can do to advance the competitiveness of our state, and to improve the quality of life of our people. Through this package of **priorities** and **initiatives**, our intention is to provide a shared framework for educational, economic, and social progress.*

It will not be easy to implement that framework. We feel, however, that with a concerted and collegial effort, we can make our dream of the future a reality.

1. All of Mississippi's children and their families, along with educators, business persons, professionals, the media, and communities, will understand and embrace the value of education and training, both for their own personal accomplishment, and to develop a more robust state economy.

■ **BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS.** Mississippi should launch a broad public campaign directed to all segments of the population, underscoring the importance of high school completion, advanced education, and adult lifelong learning.

2. All of Mississippi's children will start school ready to learn.

■ **EXPAND AND IMPROVE PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN ALL AREAS OF THE STATE.** All Mississippi's children should enter school ready to interact with their peers and teachers, eager to read, and able to begin working with numbers. To accomplish that goal, the state's colleges and universities should partner with schools, social service agencies and providers; deploy college-student volunteers; and work to establish pilot projects in selected school districts.

3. Mississippi will substantially boost the quality of teaching and learning in all elementary and secondary schools to better prepare more graduates who are ready to compete in the new economy.

■ **ENHANCE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS.** Each college and university should establish three or more partnerships with school districts, with first priority given to those districts ranking lowest on the

state's accreditation measures. Each of those partnerships will reflect the particular goals and needs of individual districts and colleges.

- **DEVELOP A SCHOOL-BASED STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN.** College and university faculty should partner with school administrators and teachers to design and conduct research that will address real needs in the classroom.
- **BOOST ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE OFFERINGS THROUGHOUT THE STATE.** Mississippi's colleges and universities should develop a plan to help each Mississippi public school offer at least one AP course by the fall of 2002, and add one more each year for the next 10 years.
- **EDUCATE MORE AND BETTER TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS—AND WORK TO RETAIN THEM.** Mississippi should increase the supply of teachers in mathematics, science and technology—curricula vital to educating tomorrow's leaders—and consider developing a business plan to strengthen teacher supply and quality in all academic areas. Furthermore, the state should redouble its efforts to use its technological infrastructure to make sure its teachers and administrators have ample access to the professional development opportunities that will keep them in the classroom. Mississippi also needs to make sure all educators appreciate and understand cultural diversity; and strengthen the skills of teachers and school administrators (especially principals) at the induction and mentoring of new teachers.

4. Mississippi will increase high school graduation rates and college participation and graduation rates at all colleges and universities.

- **PROMOTE THE COLLEGE PREP CURRICULUM.** The Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning, colleges and universities, elementary and secondary schools, and the business community should partner to publicize and disseminate the college prep curriculum and encourage all high school students to complete it.
- **RAISE PARTICIPATION AND GRADUATION RATES** in two-year colleges and universities, especially among first generation college students and African-American students.
- **RAISE THE NUMBER OF COLLEGE GRADUATES IN CRITICAL CAREER FIELDS** such as science, mathematics, computer science, and engineering. At the same time, the state should continue to cultivate its rich tradition in the arts, humanities, and the social sciences.

5. Mississippi will increase participation in adult lifelong learning, worker training, and professional development activities.

- **INCREASE PART-TIME ENROLLMENT AND ACCESS TO ADULT EDUCATION.** Mississippi's two-year colleges need to evolve into truly comprehensive community colleges that train highly skilled workers in applied fields, as well as serve a baccalaureate-transfer function.

- **DEVELOP CAREER AND EDUCATION PATHWAY PROGRAMS IN HIGH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES.** Such pathways will link targeted education and training to work-based high school curricula and postsecondary certificates, associate degrees, and transfer to four-year programs.
- **ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS TO OFFER EMPLOYER-PAID TUITION BENEFITS.**
- **CONDUCT A STUDY OF THE STATE'S HUMAN RESOURCE NEEDS,** and reshape educational offerings and outreach strategies to address them.

6. Mississippi will increase its support for university-based research and development, and the higher education community will redouble its efforts to address state and community economic needs, and to prepare students for careers in the new economy.

- **CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE STATE'S SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL, AND RESEARCH CAPACITY** to attract and retain high-technology industries, as well as to reenergize Mississippi's traditional industries.
- **DEVELOP PROACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY** that will enable the state's colleges and universities to become full partners in economic development.
- **CONSIDER MATCHING PRIVATE RESEARCH INVESTMENTS WITH STATE MONIES** to support institutionally specific mission-driven research addressing state needs.

*The Steering Committee believes that to accomplish this ambitious agenda, Mississippi's policymakers, educators, and citizens will need a sustained effort to gauge their progress. Toward that end, the state should consider establishing an **education coordinating entity** to better align policies and practices across educational sectors. The body would be composed of the board chairs and chief executives of the Department of Education, the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Institutions of Higher Learning, as well as representatives of Mississippi's independent colleges and universities.*

*And to annually assess educational progress at all levels, the state should consider creating a **Mississippi Education Progress Board**. The Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House, the three executives of the Institutions of Higher Learning, the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, and the State Board of Education, as well as three at-large members, should comprise the board.*