

A Public Agenda for Higher Education in Mississippi

One: Mississippi's children, their parents, educators, and the state's communities, will embrace higher educational aspirations.

- *Mississippi should launch a broad public campaign directed at parents and children to raise educational aspirations and encourage youth to complete high school and attend college.*

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

- *Help expand and improve pre-kindergarten programs for children in all areas of Mississippi. Mississippi's youngest citizens should enter school ready to interact with their peers and teachers, be eager to read, and be able to begin working with numbers.*

Three: 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 up to three partnerships with school districts.*
- *Develop a comprehensive strategic plan for action research. College and university faculty should partner with their customers—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 better teachers—and work to retain them. Mississippi should redouble its efforts to raise teacher education exit standards; strengthen teacher induction, mentoring, and professional development; encourage teachers in mathematics, science, and technology; make full use of the state's technology infrastructure to expand access to teacher education courses; and consider developing a business plan for strengthening teacher supply and quality.*

Four: Mississippi will **increase high school graduation rates and college participation and graduation rates** at all schools, colleges, and universities.

- **Promote the college core curriculum.**
- **Raise participation and graduation rates** in two-year colleges and universities.
- **Raise the number of college graduates in critical technical career fields**, while continuing the state's rich tradition in the arts, humanities, and the social sciences.
- **Develop career and education pathway programs in high schools and community colleges.**
- **Boost part-time enrollments and adult education in community colleges.**

Five: Mississippi will **increase its investments in university-based research and development**, and the higher education community will redouble its efforts to address state and community economic needs and 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 in the new economy and reenergize Mississippi's traditional industries.
- **Develop proactive partnerships with the Mississippi Economic Commission and business and industry** that will enable the state's colleges and universities to become full partners in economic development.

Six: Mississippi's **policymakers, educators, and citizens will have the information they need to gauge progress** on this agenda for higher education.

- **Create a Mississippi Education Progress Board** to annually assess educational progress at all levels, including the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the House Speaker, the House and Senate education committee chairs, and business leaders appointed by the board of the Mississippi Economic Council.
- **Establish an Education Coordinating Council** 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 and representatives of Mississippi's private colleges.