

January 8, 2007

Dear Mississippi State Faculty and Staff:

Greetings from the Office of Research! I feel very honored to have been asked by President Foglesong to serve as the Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development, and look forward to working with the faculty and staff to aggressively move our research programs forward during my tenure.

I am in the middle of my sixth year on the faculty at Mississippi State University. I grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, and attended Old Dominion University and Virginia Tech, receiving my B.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Chemical Engineering from Virginia Tech in 1986 and 1991, respectively. Prior to my time at MSU, I served on the faculty at the University of North Dakota (in Grand Forks, North Dakota), Michigan Technological University (located in Houghton, Michigan in the Upper Peninsula), and then at Mississippi State. My previous administrative experience includes time spent as a Department Head/Chair of Chemical Engineering both at Michigan Tech and Mississippi State, as Director of the Energy Engineering Doctoral Program at UND, and most recently, as Dean of the James Worth Bagley College of Engineering at Mississippi State. My research background is in Surface Science and Catalysis, and has involved a variety of projects within engineering and the hard sciences. My wife, Dr. Noel N. Schulz, is currently an Associate Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering here at Mississippi State, and we have two sons: Tim (16) is a sophomore at Starkville High School, and Andrew (12) is in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Henderson Intermediate School.

The Office of Research plays a critical and important role in a modern research university. I am a firm believer that research and scholarship are integral to our success as a land grant university, and as such, it is the responsibility of the Office of Research to provide a strong vision and direction for research and scholarly work. In order to do this effectively, the Vice President for Research and Economic Development must serve as an advocate and champion for research both internally and externally. Outside of the university community, it is imperative that we demonstrate to the citizens of Mississippi the importance of research and scholarship at Mississippi State. Within MSU, the Office of Research must advocate and promote a research agenda for the university in close collaboration with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.

While it is tempting to always want to do more research than the previous year, it is also critical to have a single, significant goal related to research on a university level. If we aspire to be a nationally recognized research university, then it is important that we compare ourselves with peers on a national level, and not always compare ourselves with our sister institutions within Mississippi. On a national level, the Carnegie Association for the Advancement of Teaching classifies all colleges and universities based on several different factors relating to research funding and performance. Presently, Mississippi State is classified as a "Research University – High Activity", a classification shared by SEC members including the Universities of Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi; Auburn

University; and Mississippi State University. The highest current Carnegie classification is “Research University – Very High” which is the category for all of the other SEC members including the Universities of Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee; Louisiana State University; and Vanderbilt University. If we are to be successful at reaching our ambitious goals as laid out in FutureState 2015, then I believe we must set our sights on achieving the classification status of “Research University – Very High”. Over the next couple of months, I will be working closely with the university research community in developing a strategic plan that will provide a roadmap with an overall goal of moving Mississippi State University to the highest Carnegie classification level.

While having a strong vision is important, the fundamental purpose of the Office of Research is to assist faculty members in their research and scholarly endeavors. While a significant portion of the university research occurs in agriculture, engineering, and the sciences, I want to be sure that we are providing needed support for all academic disciplines at MSU. However, we cannot do this unless you let us know ways that we can assist you in achieving your personal research goals. I, or one of the senior members of the Office of Research, would be happy to sit down with any department, college, research center, or individual to assist you in growing and supporting your research efforts. Please feel free to contact myself ([schulz@research.msstate.edu](mailto:schulz@research.msstate.edu)), Dr. Sandra Harpole ([sharpole@research.msstate.edu](mailto:sharpole@research.msstate.edu)), or Dr. Melvin Ray ([melvin@research.msstate.edu](mailto:melvin@research.msstate.edu)) to let us know your questions, suggestions, or concerns.

I will communicate directly with the faculty as a whole with “Dear Colleague” letters similar to this every two months. In these letters, I will let you know what is occurring within the Office of Research, and will also highlight some of the research successes of our faculty. In my experience, it is nearly impossible to “over communicate” within a university environment, and these letters will be one of several ways that I hope will keep communication channels open.

I look forward to working and getting to know as many of you as possible in my role as Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development over the next several months.

Regards,

Kirk

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