

January 2008

Dear Faculty and Staff:

Happy New Year! I trust that everyone had a restful and enjoyable Christmas break. While there were many highlights from 2007, watching the Bulldogs win the Liberty Bowl was especially satisfying. I haven't heard that many cowbells ringing during a game for some time, and it was wonderful to send the UCF fans back to Orlando still hearing the cowbells ringing in their sleep!

Right before the holidays, the National Science Foundation released their rankings of research and development expenditures from universities and colleges for 2006 (which includes 640 institutions in the U.S. who reported research expenditures). Mississippi State University finished ranked 86th, which is a testament to the outstanding ability of our research faculty and staff to attract external funding. The overall R&D rankings of some of the other SEC and regional universities –

- 17 - University of Florida
- 36 - Vanderbilt University
- 46 - LSU (all campuses)
- 52 - University of Kentucky (all campuses)
- 53 - University of Georgia
- 69 - University of Tennessee (all campuses)
- 86 – MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
- 101 - University of South Carolina (all campuses)
- 111 - Auburn University (all campuses)
- 129 - University of Arkansas (all campuses)
- 132 - University of Mississippi (all campuses)
- 175 – University of Southern Mississippi
- 186 - University of Alabama

NSF also ranks R&D expenditures in engineering, where MSU ranked 41st nationally in 2006. The engineering rankings of some of the other SEC schools –

- 18 - University of Florida
- 38 - University of Tennessee
- 41 – MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
- 43 - University of Kentucky
- 46 - LSU
- 58 - Vanderbilt
- 60 - Auburn
- 76 - University of South Carolina
- 89 - University of Arkansas

Over the break, I had some time for reflection and was able to do some planning for 2008. There are five major initiatives and areas for improvement that I intend to focus on during the upcoming year.

First, we need to complete the development of our strategic plan for research and scholarly activity at Mississippi State. During the fall semester, we had meetings with focus groups from each academic college and major research center. We took this information and convened a broad, diverse group of faculty members in early December to help formulate a set of strategic objectives. During the first part of 2008, I intend to engage the campus community in providing feedback on our proposed plan in order to ensure that we get the best possible set of strategic objectives. I will provide more details on your opportunities for feedback and comment in next month's Dear Colleague letter.

Second, we need to work with the campus community to obtain feedback on many of the services provided by ORED in support of our expanding research enterprise. One of the most significant changes I have noticed since moving to a Vice Presidential role is that it is easy to become isolated from the day-to-day issues confronting our research faculty and staff, and as such, it is doubly important to obtain constructive feedback. In order to both measure our effectiveness and to find ways to continue to improve, we are working on a two-part process to obtain feedback. In conjunction with the College of Business and Industry and the Social Science Research Center, we are going to use focus groups on campus to assess many of the services offered by ORED, to be followed up with a broad university survey. By combining both of these methodologies for feedback, I am optimistic that ORED will assess and improve our services to the university research community.

Third, we will continue to grow our faculty development program offerings. Many of the seminars offered by ORED have been very well attended, and we are being asked more frequently to tailor research seminars to individual academic and research units. At our most recent grant writing workshop, we had over 75 faculty and staff members attend in order to learn more about grantmanship. During the upcoming year, we need to build a more comprehensive faculty development program, so that we are providing internal professional development opportunities for all of our research faculty and staff members. Any suggestions you have for possible topics would be appreciated.

Fourth, we need to continue to aggressively nominate MSU faculty and staff for highly visible external awards. We have many deserving colleagues who have not been nominated for Fellow awards or other types of national and international recognition. I will be working with the Provost and other campus leaders to find ways to increase the number of nominations for faculty and staff recognition. Often, people will speak of our faculty quality as "one of the best kept secrets in the southeast" – we need to change this so that the quality and prestige of our institution is better recognized across the U.S.

Finally, I want to be sure that my office, and myself as Vice President, communicate effectively and frequently with the university community. We are all bombarded with a tremendous amount of information on a daily basis, so it is often a challenge to figure out

the most effective ways to communicate with a large and diverse campus. I will continue to send out my monthly “Dear Colleague” letters, and will be encouraging the different ORED units to also communicate activities, successes, and opportunities with the campus through newsletters, email notes, and print media. If you have other suggestions on how my office can communicate more effectively, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my service as Vice President over the last year, and look forward to an outstanding 2008.

Go Dawgs!

Kirk.