

February 2008

Greetings from the Office of Research and Economic Development! I hope that your semester is off to a great start, and that you have found some time to enjoy our unseasonably warm weather recently. March Madness is right around the corner, and we are in the difficult “home stretch” in men’s and women’s basketball. If you haven’t had a chance to come out and support our student-athletes, I hope that you will do so. Having lived in several other areas of the country, and I attest to the excitement and fun around SEC basketball.

I have some faculty and staff kudos to pass along to you for this month –

\* Dr. Ian Munn, Professor in the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, has been named a Fellow of the Society of American Foresters. Being named a Fellow is one of the most prestigious awards accorded by your peers, and speaks highly of your national reputation and lifetime achievement.

\* Ms. Tina Hood, Administrator with the Sponsored Programs Administration, recently passed her national exam as a Certified Research Administrator (CRA). In order to sit for the exam, a person must have a Bachelor’s degree and 3 years of experience in research grants administration.

In several of my previous letters, I have talked about the development of a strategic plan for research and scholarly activity at Mississippi State University, and I am pleased to let you know that we now have a draft strategic plan available for comment. The entire strategic plan is available as a PDF file on our website under the Strategic Plan tab on the ORED main page: <http://www.research.msstate.edu/plan/>. Please note that it is purposefully short and concise – so it won’t take any more than 5 minutes of time to read. I would like to encourage each of you to carefully read through this, and to offer your suggestions for improvement.

So, how was the draft strategic plan developed? The Office of Research and Economic Development hosted small focus groups (representing academic colleges and research centers) to discuss our future goals and directions. Notes were made from these discussions for each of the 17 different focus groups, which were then used as source materials by a larger group to come up with major strategic objectives. In December 2007, about 20 faculty members met in a retreat setting to develop 4 to 5 key strategic objectives, along with appropriate sub goals. The notes and information from all of these groups are listed under the Strategic Plan tab on the ORED webpage. The final step in the process is to share the proposed plan with the university community at large for comment and critique, which is where we are today.

FutureState 2015 is the university strategic plan that was put into place by President Foglesong early in his tenure as President. In this document, Mississippi State University is seeking to become the “most respected land grant institution in the southeast”, and the

draft strategic plan for research and scholarship seeks to provide additional details which will help us to achieve our stated university objective.

Prior to the start of the planning process, I looked a significant amount of benchmarking data comparing our research and scholarly activity at Mississippi State to other southern land grant schools such as Auburn, LSU, Clemson, Texas A&M, and Florida. After careful consideration and consultation with colleagues, I chose what I believed was an appropriate overall goal for research at MSU by 2013. This overall goal is simple, concise, and measurable: “Mississippi State University will rank in the Top 100 research universities nationally in all major research categories. Our recognition as a major research university will be reflected by our designation as a Research University – Very High Activity by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching”.

Why should we worry about being ranked in the Top 100 research universities? In my view, achieving this goal will place us among the elite research universities in the United States, which in turn helps us attract and retain stellar faculty members, results in increased opportunities for research, helps facilitate new job creation through spin-off companies, assists in student recruitment, and in general, opens up additional educational opportunities for the university community.

With the Top 100 status as an overall goal, we then worked to develop a set of appropriate sub-goals that would help us move towards this target. Following significant discussions with faculty focus groups, we came up with four key sub-goals:

Goal 1 - Increase the quantity and quality of PhD students and doctoral programs to emulate nationally recognized peer institutions.

Goal 2 – Effectively promote and recognize faculty scholarship to enhance the national reputation of the university.

Goal 3 - Identify and support institutional research focus areas that have a statewide, regional, and national priority.

Goal 4 - Increase total university research funding to a level in excess of \$200M sustained over a three-year period.

We are now in the final phase of our strategic planning process, where we are engaging the campus research community in comment and feedback on the proposed strategic plan. I will be happy to come and meet with any group on campus to hear your comments, suggestions, and critique. Currently, I am planning to visit with the Faculty Senate, with Academic Deans and Department Heads, with Center Directors, and other groups on campus with a strong interest in research and scholarly activity. However, it is critical for everyone involved or interested in research to have the opportunity for input, so I do hope that you will avail yourself of the opportunity to help shape the direction for research at MSU in the future.

I welcome your comments and suggestions on our proposed plan, and look forward to continuing to grow our research efforts at Mississippi State. Please send any comments directly to me at [schulz@research.msstate.edu](mailto:schulz@research.msstate.edu).

Good luck as we move through the semester to graduation!

Go Dawgs!

Kirk.