

March 2008

Dear Colleagues:

Greetings from the Office of Research and Economic Development! As you are aware, we have a number of our athletic teams in action – with a lot of Bulldog success that we can be proud of. Our women's softball team is currently ranked 18th nationally, our men's basketball team is ranked 25th nationally, our baseball team is preparing for the SEC part of their season, and our women's basketball team is starting play in the SEC Tournament. I hope that you will take the opportunity to go out and support our student-athletes during March.

The Office of Research and Economic Development, in partnership with the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine, jointly sponsor an annual research awards recognition program to honor faculty, staff, and students who have excelled in their scholarly work. I would strongly encourage each of you to nominate a deserving colleague for one of these awards. Each academic unit gives out an award to a faculty member, a research support staff member (professional/classified), a graduate student (Masters or Doctoral), and an undergraduate student. Additionally, we will select the 2008 Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award winner, which is the highest recognition given out to an MSU faculty member for research excellence. Nomination information is on the ORED website at:
<http://www.research.msstate.edu/information/award.php>.

When I was growing up, my parents often told me that if I had a 50-50 chance of getting something right, that I would make the wrong choice every time. Last month, in my faculty and staff kudos, I had an announcement that Tina Cunningham had passed her exam to be a Certified Research Administrator (CRA). If you haven't guessed it by now – we have two of our research administrators named Tina, and I mentioned the wrong one. So, please join me in congratulating Tina Hood, Administrator with Sponsored Programs Administration, on passing her CRA exam. Great job Tina!

Other Kudos to pass on –

* Mississippi State University will have a major role in a new center from the Department of Homeland Security that is titled “The Center of Excellence for Natural Disasters, Coast Infrastructure and Emergency Management”. The lead institutions for this center will be Jackson State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and will focus on protecting people and property from natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and wildfires. The MSU portion of the proposal was lead by faculty and researchers at the GeoResources Institute (GRI).

Starting this past summer, ORED started two programs which have been used by faculty members from across the university – the Quick Grant program and the Faculty Travel Program. Both of these programs have been very successful, and I wanted to pass on some mid-year information on both of these initiatives.

To date, the Quick Grant program has funded a total 40 different projects totaling \$65,388 as follows: Agriculture and Life Sciences (\$2,750); Architecture, Art & Design (\$15,550); Arts & Sciences (\$15,175); Business & Industry (\$6,550); Education (\$14,133); Engineering (\$5,000); Meridian Campus (\$2,730); Library (\$2,000); and University Centers and Institutes (\$1,500). These projects have ranged from funds in support of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association meeting to funds to pay for professional mounting of photographs in the Chelsea Galleria in Miami. My office will continue to support creative small grant projects as long as funding is available.

To date, the Faculty Travel Program has provided funds in partial support of 73 faculty members to present their scholarly work totaling \$76,562 as follows: Agriculture and Life Sciences (\$3,847); Architecture, Art & Design (\$9,750); Arts & Sciences (\$43,165); Business & Industry (\$3,000); Education (\$6,750); Engineering (\$6,350); Forest Resources (\$2,200); Meridian Campus (\$1,500); and the Library (\$2,000). The funds from ORED are matched by the department and college, and are exclusively for presenting a scholarly paper at a conference. I believe that both of these programs have been successful in assisting our faculty members in moving their research programs forward, and we plan to continue to build and grow both these programs in the future.

In my last month's newsletter, I spent some time discussing our Draft Strategic Plan (<http://www.research.msstate.edu/plan/>). I have received a modest amount of feedback via email and discussions with various groups. Generally, most people seem to feel that the overall plan and goals are appropriate. However, there are three major areas that are not currently addressed in the plan that have arisen from my meetings across campus, and I want to discuss each in turn.

First, there is no mention of undergraduate research in the plan. It is my belief that one of the key reasons to come to a major research university as an undergraduate is the opportunity to work with a faculty member on a research project. For many of our high achieving students, an open-ended research project may be the most challenging academic endeavor they have ever undertaken. As such, we will need to add some appropriate goals to the strategic plan focusing on undergraduate research opportunities for our students and faculty members.

Second, there is a significant difference in research infrastructure across our research centers and academic units. Some units on campus have better facilities, staff support, accounting support, research tools, and other necessary attributes to grow their research programs, while other units have relatively little research support. It will be critical to ensure that all of our faculty, staff, and students have the necessary and needed infrastructure to perform their scholarly work. Thus, we will also add some appropriate goals related to infrastructure support across campus.

Third, there is a significant difference in teaching loads across campus, which normally is directly related with the number of faculty members in a unit. If we are to grow our research across the university, it will be critical to find ways to ensure that our faculty

and staff have enough quality time to perform and direct research similar to that of our peer institutions. It is my plan to also add some sub goals related to ensuring our faculty and staff has appropriate levels of time to perform increased amounts of research and scholarship.

If you have any particular concerns, comments, or suggestions on our strategic plan, please send them to me directly (schulz@research.msstate.edu). It is my plan to have our final draft completed and on-line by April 1, 2008.

Go Dawgs!

Kirk.