

May 2007

Dear Faculty and Staff:

Greetings from the Office of Research and Economic Development! I hope all of you are having a productive summer, whether it be on vacation, working on your scholarly work, or simply taking some time with your friends and family.

Last month, I introduced some new staff members in the Division of Research and Economic Development, and I am pleased to introduce two additional staff members:

Katie Echols started in May as an Administrative Assistant in ORED. She will be providing administrative support for the Associate Vice Presidents, and can be reached at [kechols@research.msstate.edu](mailto:kechols@research.msstate.edu).

Lele Waits has joined Sponsored Programs Administration as a new Administrator. She is responsible for proposal submissions from the College of Architecture, Art & Design; College of Arts & Sciences; College of Education; PET; Life Sciences & Biotechnology Institute (LSBI), and the Office of Graduate Studies. She can be reached at [lwaits@spa.msstate.edu](mailto:lwaits@spa.msstate.edu).

In this month's letter, I would like to discuss two issues of importance as we look ahead towards the future – the development of a faculty leadership program and the first steps in the development of a strategic plan for research and economic development at MSU.

Under the direction of President Foglesong, student leadership development has become a focal point of Mississippi State under FutureState 2015. As we continue to grow our research programs at Mississippi State, it will be critical that we train our next generation of academic leaders who will be undergraduate/graduate coordinators, department heads, center directors, and deans. While we have a large number of our faculty with outstanding skills in scholarship, teaching, and service, as a university we need to ensure that our faculty also have opportunities to develop their academic and administrative leadership skills.

With these items in mind, I am pleased to let you know that we will be conducting a leadership program focused at our next generation of academic leaders at Mississippi State. Any faculty or staff member is eligible, and must be nominated by a center director, department head, or dean.

The format of the workshop will consist of 2-hour workshop sessions conducted once per month from August to May. A variety of topics will be covered including - Understanding Your Leadership Style; Facilitating Organizational Change; Effective Communication in Organizations; Academic Planning; Diversity; Building Effective Research Teams; Principles of Fundraising; Working Effectively with Staff Members; and Evaluation and Assessment of Your Organization. These topics will be covered using case studies and readings, and will be taught by experienced academic leaders at

MSU. Because of the nature of the workshop, participation will be limited to 12 people annually. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact my office.

The development of a leadership program is one component of a broader faculty development program that we will also launch this fall. If we look back over the past six months, things have been busy in ORED – we have an updated website; send email alerts highlighting proposal opportunities in the humanities, business, and the sciences; publish monthly “Dear Colleague” letters highlighting news and notes from ORED; have publicly discussed our quest as a university to achieve ARL status for our library; and finally have also stated our desire to move to MSU to the highest level in the Carnegie classification system.

While all of these items are notable, it is important that we develop some key overall goals and objectives for Research and Economic Development at MSU. As such, we are starting this summer the development of a strategic plan for ORED so that we have a roadmap for our next five years. This plan will be complimentary to FutureState 2015, and will provide details specifically related to increasing our scholarly activity at MSU.

In my opinion, a strategic plan should be short, easily understandable to any group, quantitative, and easy to assess. It is my intent that our plan will fit on two typed pages, will be clearly measurable (i.e., did we accomplish a particular goals or not?), will be inclusive of all scholarship done at MSU, and will aim high. Additionally, there needs to be enough flexibility in any plan so that we can be opportunistic and respond to unanticipated opportunities as they present themselves. While this may sound simple, the development of a concise plan will be quite challenging.

During my time as the Dean of Engineering, I had the opportunity to visit with several very successive alumni who had managed large, multinational companies on the subject of strategic planning. As we developed a strategic set of goals for the Bagley College of Engineering a couple of years ago, we looked at what process would work to come up with a quantitative and measurable set of goals and objectives. Several of these key business leaders felt strongly that it was important to set a high overall goal, and to then involve a wide group of constituents in the plan for achieving that goal. They felt that if you tried to get a group of folks together to choose an overall strategic goal, you would spend so much time discussing what the goal should be that you would shortchange the development of an action plan.

As I have stated previously in these letters, I feel that the major goal for research and scholarly activity at MSU will be to move us into the highest research university classification as determined by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

With these thoughts in mind, we are going to use the following procedure in the development of our plan. First, I will be meeting with focus groups during the summer from each academic college and major research center. These groups will meet for one 2-hour session to discuss ways in which we can achieve our overall goal. Notes from

each group will then be used during a retreat near the end of the summer so that a committee with university wide representation can formulate a set of goals and objectives. Following this step, we will have a draft plan, which will then be discussed with a broad set of groups across the campus for initial comments and suggestions. These comments will be incorporated into a revised plan, which will then be “kicked off” on January 1, 2008.

There will be plenty of opportunity for each faculty and staff member to be involved in the development of the plan. As always, I would welcome any suggestions or comments.

Go Dawgs!

Kirk