AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST UNIVERSITIES CENTER; TO DEFINE THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE CENTER; TO DEFINE THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER; TO DEFINE THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS AT THE CENTER; TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES TO OFFER LOWER LEVEL COURSES AT THE CENTER; TO DEFINE THE SCOPE OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT THE CENTER; TO PROVIDE FOR COORDINATION OF COURSES AT THE CENTER; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) There is hereby created the Mississippi Gulf Coast Universities Center as an agency of the State of Mississippi, hereinafter referred to as the "center," which shall have full authority to contract and to be contracted with. The Commissioner of Higher Education shall serve as the director for the center.

(2) The center shall be under the general direction and management of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning. The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall, in its discretion, obtain fidelity bonds and determine who and what should be covered thereby and amount of such bonds.

(3) The Commissioner of Higher Education, with the approval of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, shall appoint and employ such staff and employees and fix the salaries and wages of employees of the center as he deems necessary to carry out the objectives and purposes of this section and may establish the organizational structure of the center,
which shall include the creation of any divisions necessary to
implement the duties assigned to the center.

(4) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
Learning is empowered and authorized to provide for the planning
and construction of the center which shall be a
multi-institutional higher education complex located on the
Mississippi Gulf Coast central to, and equally accessible to the
counties of Hancock, Harrison and Jackson, on the land designated
therefor. The center shall include physical plant and facilities
necessary to accommodate and house the classrooms and necessary
administrative offices of the constituent institutions which shall
include all universities under the jurisdiction of the Board of
Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning. The board of
trustees shall have full authority to offer such undergraduate
level junior and senior courses that may be required for
completion of the universities' bachelor's degree programs at the
center, and to offer graduate and postgraduate level courses that
may be required for universities' masters and doctorate programs.

(5) The State Board for Community and Junior Colleges shall
have full authority to offer lower undergraduate level freshman
and sophomore courses for students attending the Mississippi Gulf
Coast Universities Center with the approval of, and under a
cooperative agreement with, the Board of Trustees of State
Institutions of Higher Learning.

(6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
Learning shall have responsibility for the administration of the
center. By so designating the board of trustees as administrator
for the center, the Legislature hereby expresses its intent that
the center shall have a relationship of close cooperation and
coordination with the several universities but that the center
shall not be under the control or influence of any single
institution. With the approval of the board of trustees,
academically eligible center staff may hold appointment to
faculties of state universities and university faculty members may
be assigned to the center to conduct classes and research. The
Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall
require that the presidents of each university under its
jurisdiction designate a person responsible for activities at the
center in carrying out its responsibilities related to
coordinating, assisting, monitoring and reporting on activities at
the center.

(7) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
Learning may exercise the following powers relating to the center:
   (a) To promulgate rules and regulations for the safety
       of students, employees and property located within the center;
   (b) To promulgate rules and regulations providing for
       the operation and parking of vehicles upon the grounds, driveways
       or roadways within the center;
   (c) To cede jurisdiction for the enforcement of traffic
       laws on campus;
   (d) To institute and carry out a system of registration
       and identification of vehicles owned or operated by students,
       faculty and staff attending or employed by the constituent
       institutions and center staff; and
   (e) After notification to the affected president of a
       constituent university, to resolve a conflict concerning an
       academically- or operationally-related issue at the center. The
       board shall have the authority to make the final decision to
       resolve the issue presented to it, and such decision shall be
       binding on all of the constituent institutions affected.

(8) On or before a date to be set by the Board of Trustees
of State Institutions of Higher Learning, and in accordance with
board of trustees policies and procedures, the board of trustees
shall coordinate and the constituent institutions shall submit to
the board of trustees, academic and facility master plans for the
constituent institutions to provide classes or research services
at the center. The coordinated academic and facility master plans shall address all multi-institutional issues at the center that the board of trustees determines to be relevant to the role and mission of each institution and academic program requirements for fulfilling that role and mission. The board of trustees shall review the master plans and shall order revisions to the extent that the plans fail to maximize efficiency and academic program effectiveness. When approved by the board of trustees, the academic and facility master plans shall submit a report thereon to the Legislature.

(9) The center may identify and obtain research funds and other grants from public and private sources, and may contract with universities and other entities to effected needed priority economic development related research projects affecting the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

(10) The center may advise the various agencies and departments of state government located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast regarding research needs and programs and shall assist in the establishment of such programs where needed. These programs shall be coordinated by the center in order to minimize duplication of effort, to maximize utilization of data and equipment and to standardize procedures for the more efficient pursuit of research. Communities, counties, districts, development groups and other such organizations may call upon the center for informational services, and specific research projects may be undertaken by the center for such organizations on a contract basis. The center may provide advice and counsel, consistent with its duties, to the private business community located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and specific research projects may be undertaken by the center for private business on a contract basis.

(11) The Attorney General of the state shall be legal counsel to the center.
(12) The center, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, shall prepare an annual report of its activities to the Governor and the Legislature not later than July 1 of each year.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.