To: Universities and Colleges; Appropriations

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2002

By: Senator(s) Moffatt, Robertson

SENATE BILL NO. 2004

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH 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 ACTING THROUGH A LEAD INSTITUTION; 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 and Research 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.

(2) The center shall be under the general direction and management of the University of Southern Mississippi or a University designated by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, which shall be designated as the lead institution for the center.

(3) The lead institution, 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 mission of the center shall be to provide Mississippi Gulf Coast citizens educational opportunities ranging from the associate's, bachelor's and graduate degrees through...
post-graduate work. These educational opportunities shall exist without unnecessary duplication of programs and will encourage research and economic development capacity for the region with the greatest of efficiency and economy for the state, which shall include providing courses and educational programs in accordance with the student's geographical proximity.

(5) 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 in one of the three on the Mississippi Gulf Coast counties, on the land designated therefor. The center shall include the 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.

(6) 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 and Research Center with the approval of, and under a cooperative agreement with, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning.

(7) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall have responsibility for the administration of the center through the lead institution. 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 be under the 
administrative control of the lead 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.

(8) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher 
Learning, acting through the lead institution, 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.
(9) On or before a date to be set by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, and in accordance with the 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.

(10) 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.

(11) 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.

(12) The Attorney General of the state shall be legal counsel to the center.

(13) 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.

(14) Beginning with the Fall Semester of the 2002-2003 academic year, the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, with the participation of individually affected community/junior college(s) and universities, shall jointly develop a plan which shall provide for the uniform development of the off-campus center. Such a plan shall provide for both short-term and long-term needs to include financial and programmatic activities for a five-year period of time. The participating boards shall also include special emphasis on common use of existing and new facilities with provisions for co-locations according to the closest proximity, such facilities may be utilized by all participating institutions. This plan shall be finalized and submitted to the Legislature no later than January 2, 2003.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.