HOUSE BILL NO. 179

AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI ENGINEERS OF THE 21ST CENTURY SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR ELIGIBLE JUNIOR AND SENIOR ENGINEERING MAJORS WHO AGREE TO WORK WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION UPON GRADUATION FOR THREE YEARS; TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIPS SHALL COVER THE COST OF TUITION AT A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MISSISSIPPI; TO REQUIRE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS TO DEMONSTRATE FINANCIAL NEED; TO REQUIRE ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING; TO REQUIRE THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE FUND AND TO ADMINISTER THE FUND; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is created the Mississippi Engineers of the 21st Century Scholarship Fund. The fund shall consist of all monies appropriated to the fund by the Legislature and any gifts, grants or donations that may be received from any source, public or private. Monies in the fund may be used solely for the purpose of awarding scholarships under this section. Interest earned on the investment of monies in the fund must be returned and deposited to the credit of the fund.

(2) A student enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an engineering program at a state institution of higher learning in Mississippi who is classified as a junior or senior by the registrar of the applicable institution may apply for a scholarship under this program.

(3) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall establish the maximum annual award that may be made under the scholarship program, which may not exceed the cost of tuition at the state institution of higher learning at which the student is enrolled. Students classified as juniors may receive a maximum of two (2) annual awards or, in those instances when a
degree program requires five (5) years for completion, three (3) annual awards. Students classified as seniors may receive one (1) annual award or, in those instances when a degree program requires five (5) years for completion, two (2) annual awards.

(4) In order to be eligible for a scholarship, a student must be found to be in financial need. An applicant is in financial need if:

   (a) The two-year average annual adjusted gross income of the applicant's family is less than Thirty-six Thousand Five Hundred Dollars ($36,500.00); or

   (b) The two-year average annual adjusted gross income of the applicant's family is less than Thirty-six Thousand Five Hundred Dollars ($36,500.00) plus Five Thousand Dollars ($5,000.00) for each child, other than the applicant, who is not emancipated.

The two-year average annual adjusted gross income of the family must be verified by Internal Revenue Service returns or by certified affidavits in cases of income that cannot be verified by such returns.

As used in this subsection, the term "family" for an applicant who is not emancipated means the applicant, the applicant's parents and other children under age twenty-one (21) of the applicant's parents. The term "family" for an emancipated applicant means the applicant, an applicant's spouse and any children under age twenty-one (21) of the applicant and spouse.

(5) Before being granted a scholarship, each eligible applicant must enter into a contract with the board of trustees, which shall be deemed a contract with the State of Mississippi, agreeing to the terms and conditions upon which the scholarship will be granted. In order to receive a scholarship under this program, the recipient must agree in the contract to be employed with the Mississippi Department of Transportation for a period of
(6) As a condition for renewal of a scholarship, a student must make steady academic progress toward a baccalaureate degree with a major in engineering, as certified by the institution's registrar, and must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 calculated on a 4.00 scale at the end of each term.

(7) If a scholarship recipient does not complete a baccalaureate degree with a major in engineering or fails to be employed with the Mississippi Department of Transportation for a period of three (3) years, the full amount that the recipient received under the scholarship shall be due and payable, together with interest at the current Stafford Loan rate when the breach occurs, to the board of trustees.

(8) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry out the purposes and intent of this section. The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the administering agency of the program.

(9) It is the intent of the Legislature to fully fund scholarships to eligible students under this program. If funds are insufficient to fully fund scholarships to all eligible applicants, the board shall award the scholarships to students working toward their first degree on a first-come, first-served basis; however, priority consideration must be given to persons previously receiving scholarships under the program who are making steady academic progress toward completion of a baccalaureate degree with a major in engineering.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2003.