

By: Senator(s) Moffatt, Robertson, Burton

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2154

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

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

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

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

25 (3) The Commissioner of Higher Education, with the approval
 26 of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning,
 27 shall appoint and employ such staff and employees and fix the
 28 salaries and wages of employees of the center as he deems
 29 necessary to carry out the objectives and purposes of this section
 30 and may establish the organizational structure of the center,

31 which shall include the creation of any divisions necessary to
32 implement the duties assigned to the center.

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

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

55 (6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
56 Learning shall have responsibility for the administration of the
57 center. By so designating the board of trustees as administrator
58 for the center, the Legislature hereby expresses its intent that
59 the center shall have a relationship of close cooperation and
60 coordination with the several universities but that the center
61 shall not be under the control or influence of any single
62 institution. With the approval of the board of trustees,
63 academically eligible center staff may hold appointment to

64 faculties of state universities and university faculty members may
65 be assigned to the center to conduct classes and research. The
66 Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall
67 require that the presidents of each university under its
68 jurisdiction designate a person responsible for activities at the
69 center in carrying out its responsibilities related to
70 coordinating, assisting, monitoring and reporting on activities at
71 the center.

72 (7) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
73 Learning may exercise the following powers relating to the center:

74 (a) To promulgate rules and regulations for the safety
75 of students, employees and property located within the center;

76 (b) To promulgate rules and regulations providing for
77 the operation and parking of vehicles upon the grounds, driveways
78 or roadways within the center;

79 (c) To cede jurisdiction for the enforcement of traffic
80 laws on campus;

81 (d) To institute and carry out a system of registration
82 and identification of vehicles owned or operated by students,
83 faculty and staff attending or employed by the constituent
84 institutions and center staff; and

85 (e) After notification to the affected president of a
86 constituent university, to resolve a conflict concerning an
87 academically- or operationally-related issue at the center. The
88 board shall have the authority to make the final decision to
89 resolve the issue presented to it, and such decision shall be
90 binding on all of the constituent institutions affected.

91 (8) On or before a date to be set by the Board of Trustees
92 of State Institutions of Higher Learning, and in accordance with
93 board of trustees policies and procedures, the board of trustees
94 shall coordinate and the constituent institutions shall submit to
95 the board of trustees, academic and facility master plans for the
96 constituent institutions to provide classes or research services

97 at the center. The coordinated academic and facility master plans
98 shall address all multi-institutional issues at the center that
99 the board of trustees determines to be relevant to the role and
100 mission of each institution and academic program requirements for
101 fulfilling that role and mission. The board of trustees shall
102 review the master plans and shall order revisions to the extent
103 that the plans fail to maximize efficiency and academic program
104 effectiveness. When approved by the board of trustees, the
105 academic and facility master plans shall submit a report thereon
106 to the Legislature.

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

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

128 (11) The Attorney General of the state shall be legal
129 counsel to the center.

130 (12) The center, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of State
131 Institutions of Higher Learning, shall prepare an annual report of
132 its activities to the Governor and the Legislature not later than
133 July 1 of each year.

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