

By: Senator(s) Moffatt, Robertson

To: Universities and  
Colleges; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2004

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

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

12 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby created the Mississippi Gulf  
13 Coast Universities and Research Center as an agency of the State  
14 of Mississippi, hereinafter referred to as the "center," which  
15 shall have full authority to contract and to be contracted with.

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

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

29 (4) The mission of the center shall be to provide  
30 Mississippi Gulf Coast citizens educational opportunities ranging  
31 from the associate's, bachelor's and graduate degrees through



32 post-graduate work. These educational opportunities shall exist  
33 without unnecessary duplication of programs and will encourage  
34 research and economic development capacity for the region with the  
35 greatest of efficiency and economy for the state, which shall  
36 include providing courses and educational programs in accordance  
37 with the student's geographical proximity.

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

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

60 (7) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
61 Learning shall have responsibility for the administration of the  
62 center through the lead institution. By so designating the board  
63 of trustees as administrator for the center, the Legislature  
64 hereby expresses its intent that the center shall have a



65 relationship of close cooperation and coordination with the  
66 several universities but that the center shall be under the  
67 administrative control of the lead institution. With the approval  
68 of the board of trustees, academically eligible center staff may  
69 hold appointment to faculties of state universities and university  
70 faculty members may be assigned to the center to conduct classes  
71 and research. The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of  
72 Higher Learning shall require that the presidents of each  
73 university under its jurisdiction designate a person responsible  
74 for activities at the center in carrying out its responsibilities  
75 related to coordinating, assisting, monitoring and reporting on  
76 activities at the center.

77 (8) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
78 Learning, acting through the lead institution, may exercise the  
79 following powers relating to the center:

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

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

85 (c) To cede jurisdiction for the enforcement of traffic  
86 laws on campus;

87 (d) To institute and carry out a system of registration  
88 and identification of vehicles owned or operated by students,  
89 faculty and staff attending or employed by the constituent  
90 institutions and center staff; and

91 (e) After notification to the affected president of a  
92 constituent university, to resolve a conflict concerning an  
93 academically- or operationally-related issue at the center. The  
94 board shall have the authority to make the final decision to  
95 resolve the issue presented to it, and such decision shall be  
96 binding on all of the constituent institutions affected.



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

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

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



130 consistent with its duties, to the private business community  
131 located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and specific research  
132 projects may be undertaken by the center for private business on a  
133 contract basis.

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

136 (13) The center, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of State  
137 Institutions of Higher Learning, shall prepare an annual report of  
138 its activities to the Governor and the Legislature not later than  
139 July 1 of each year.

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

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

