

*Remarks for the
ARC Regional Forum on Science and Technology
November 21, 2002*

It's good to be here with you this morning, and I'm excited about the discussions that are going to take place here today. With the subject of "Mississippi's Science and Technology Assets and Opportunities," the discussion could go on for days – and I'm proud of that.

It means Mississippi is doing the right things. It means we're competing at a higher level than ever before. And, it means we're moving this state and its people toward the fulfillment of its promise and potential.

I'm proud of Mississippi State for being recognized in the ARC report on regional technology assets and opportunities as a rising institution in the national rankings for its research programs, and our other institutions for their commitment in this area.

Our assets and opportunities are many. They begin early in our children's lives, where we are introducing technology into the schools as soon as possible.

That's why we're putting an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in this state. Through our "Computers in the Classroom" initiative, children from every corner of the state – from the most rural districts to the most urban – will have the same opportunities to learn, to research, to make the most of the information superhighway.

Many of those computers are being built from scratch by Mississippi students – a tremendous gift to those coming up in the grades below them.

My chief of staff, Bill Renick, was at a meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, recently and the subject of computers in schools came up.

One individual from Tennessee commented that all the schools in the state were wired for the Internet. Well, Bill was able to inform them that not only is every *classroom* in Mississippi wired for the Internet, but every classroom is going to have a *computer* to make use of that wiring.

And the National Governors Association has confirmed that Mississippi will be the first state in the nation with an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom. *We are, as they said, “at the head of the wave of technological innovations.”*

There’s a big difference between being wired and being connected – and Mississippi’s children are connected.

This effort in our schools has a natural progression into our universities and junior and community colleges.

In my budget recommendation for the next fiscal year, I am calling for the creation of the Mississippi Brain Trust – a \$200 million commitment to recruiting and retaining the best minds for research and development at our institutions of higher learning.

The ARC report states that its findings can help guide state investments in “centers of excellence.” That’s exactly what we’re going to do.

We have to build our intellectual capacity and research capability, and the Brain Trust is the way to do it. *We've invested hundreds of millions of dollars in buildings; it's time to invest in our people.*

Today's program will give you the opportunity to hear about some more of the great work being done in Mississippi. From polymer sciences to our efforts to build a wireless broad-band infrastructure in communities across the state, we are focused on developing the technological foundation that will help us compete in the global marketplace.

We are making great progress, all of it with a foundation in education. That's where we're putting our efforts and our dollars. *It's very simple: If we shortchange education, we shortchange our future.*

Exciting things are happening in Mississippi. We are absolutely at the head of the wave of technological innovations – and that's where we're going to stay.

Thank you.