

**Is the Governor and his staff helping to find answers to relieve parents, faculty and staff during this time of tuition hikes and budget cuts? If so, how?**

Yes. The Governor is working with our university and community college systems to lessen the impact of these tight fiscal times on Mississippi's higher education. His efforts began in the Spring of 2001 when he met with representatives of each university's Faculty Senate Association. Governor Musgrove invited representatives of these same associations, as well as their counterparts in our community and junior colleges, to a meeting in his office this past fall.

Governor Musgrove recognizes the importance of financial aid to so many of our students and their families. Although the Legislative Budget Committee recommended funding Student Financial Aid at \$27.8 million for FY 03, Governor Musgrove's budget recommended a funding level of \$28.2 million. The Legislature actually appropriated only \$27.5 million for FY 03 financial aid.

**In a recent report it was stated that the Legislature cut the budget of Mississippi's institutions of higher learning by twice as much as our surrounding states. Do you feel that this underfunding has led to two consecutive years of tuition hikes? Do you feel that tuition is still a bargain for Mississippi students and their parents?**

The Southern Regional Education Board recently issued a bulletin stating that when appropriations for higher education were adjusted for inflation, they decreased in 23 states between the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 budget years. Of those 23 states, 10 were SREB states. Of these 10 SREB states, Mississippi decreased the greatest – by –5.5%.

The Legislature's reductions in state funds for our state's higher education system has contributed to our universities and colleges increasing their tuition. Our higher education system was forced to look for additional means of revenue to offset the reduction in state appropriations.

I remain committed to education and have demonstrated this support via my budget recommendations (general funds) compared to those of the Legislature for FY 03:

	LBR	GBR	Conference
IHL-Support	\$255,049,042	\$271,383,907	\$251,306,651
Cmnty/Jr Clgs – Support	\$110,431,315	\$117,023,476	\$112,224,626

I think Mississippians remain committed to our state's higher educational system, as well. The SREB's June 2001 *Fact Book on Higher Education* found that out of 16 SREB states, in 1998 Mississippi had the greatest percent (94%) of freshmen attending in-state colleges and universities.

In addition, this same report found that from 1995 to 2000, the median annual tuition and required fees for full-time in-state undergraduates at Mississippi's public colleges and universities decreased from 10.2% to 8.8% of Mississippi's median household incomes.