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**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE**  
**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** GOVERNOR  
**FROM:** RILEY  
**SUBJECT:** CENTER FOR STATE SCHOLARS PROPOSAL: LETTER OF SUPPORT  
**DATE:** 7/25/03  
**CC:** FILE

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Mississippi has been invited to apply to the Center for State Scholars for funding and technical assistance to implement the Scholars initiative. The goal of the initiative is to increase the percentage of Mississippi high school graduates who fulfill a rigorous high school course of study. Seven states (AR, IN, MD, OK, RI, TN and TX) have implemented the Scholars initiative. (NOTE: This is the initiative that John Stevens from NAGB mentioned to you as we were leaving the SREB meeting in Austin.)

The initiative is a partnership between K-12, post-secondary, this office and the business community. Dr. Johnson is very supportive of the initiative. Dr. Bonita Potter of his staff has been working with Peggy Howard of MEC/Public Education Forum and me to draft our state's proposal. Dr. Bill McHenry of IHL has attended some of our discussions.

The proposal has to come from the state's business-education coalition - our Public Education Forum. If selected, the national Center will award \$300,000 over the course of 2 years to PEF to hire a staff person who will build consensus within the state's education and business leadership for the program. This staff person will also implement our State Scholars initiative at the state office level and in two local school districts. As a result of our drafting discussions, we would like to see the program implemented in Hattiesburg and Canton. Dr. James Davis in Hattiesburg has already indicated interest in it. Canton is a GEAR UP! pilot site and the two programs have similar objectives. After the first two pilot years, the program will be offered statewide. MEC/PEF will solicit funding to cover the cost of the program after the first 2 years.

The program will provide incentives to and recognize students who complete a rigorous course requirement for graduation. The attached spreadsheet compares Mississippi's current graduation requirements to those of the Center. We differ in our required courses. We will recognize State Scholars for completing the Centers' coursework, regardless of whether they make an A or a C. So, this program will reach down to touch our "average" students and not just those who make all A's. This will not require any changes by the state Board to graduation requirements, rather this will just recognize those students who exceed them. I think that the State Scholars program can help us in addressing our low ACT scores, as students will be recognized for completing advanced course work and doing so should have a positive impact on ACT scores.

Our proposal must include a letter of support from you, which I have drafted and attached for your signature. The letter addresses the role that this office will play in the initiative. Please either sign the letter indicating your support or mark any changes that you want made.