

May 1, 2001

Mr. James Barksdale
111 Green Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

Dear Mr. Barksdale:

Mississippi needs your participation on a project vital to the future of our State. I am pleased to announce that the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) has chosen Mississippi as the first state for a State Leadership Summit on Higher Education. AGB staff visited Mississippi to assess support and interest in such a summit that would develop a "public agenda" for higher education. AGB staff concluded that Mississippi and its leaders are eager to develop a future orientated public agenda for higher education that meets the needs of Mississippi and its citizens.

The leadership summit and the process leading up to it will bring together leaders of state government, the business community, and higher education, as well as other civic leaders, on a neutral common ground for a candid and goal-oriented dialogue about the future of our state. The purpose is to outline what all of higher education (public and private and two-year and four-year institutions) can and should do to advance Mississippi's competitiveness and to improve the quality of life of our citizens.

I am asking a number of notable Mississippians to volunteer their efforts by serving on a Steering Committee for the project. The Committee will meet three or four times over nine months. I am co-chairing the Steering Committee with Aubrey Patterson, Chairman and CEO of BancorpSouth. We need your contribution as a member. The Steering Committee will have its initial meeting on Thursday, May 31, 2001, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. at the Educational and Research Center in Jackson.

Please return the enclosed acceptance form by May 11, 2001. Mississippi's success in the era of knowledge and information will depend on the graduates, research and services from our colleges and universities. I know we can count on you!

Very truly yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE