

BOARD APPROVES SALARY INCREASE PROPOSAL AND JSU BUILDING PROJECTS

JACKSON, MISS. (August 21, 2003) – Today, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning approved a request to the legislature to increase Mississippi faculty salaries by 12 percent over three years.

Commissioner of Higher Education David Potter explained the request, “We request that the legislature start closing the current \$7000 gap by making a commitment to increase Mississippi’s faculty salaries by 12 percent over three years.”

“Our universities must compete nationally for faculty and key staff if we are to effectively fulfill the state’s higher education mission,” Dr. Potter said. “The past four years have resulted in a growing gap between our average salaries and those of our competitors. We are requesting that the legislature endorse a strategy to begin closing this gap by employing a multi-year funding approach.”

Dr. Potter explained, “Given current fiscal conditions, we believe that legislative intent to address this issue through a multi-year investment in its higher education workforce will be a strong statement of support. It will help ensure that we do not lose our best and brightest to competitor institutions in other states.”

The Board also approved a request to increase the overall Fiscal Year 2005 (FY05) appropriations request by \$3,950,772 for the University of Mississippi Medical Center’s built-ins. The Board is also submitting a request for built-ins for FY05 identifying unfunded built-ins from the previous four years.

A proposal from Dr. Ronald Mason, Jr., President of Jackson State University, was also approved today to issue bonds in the amounts of \$45,621,749 for the cost of capital improvements that include new student housing, a new student center and the renovation of Dixon Hall.

College Board President Thomas Colbert, Brandon, said he will call a special Board meeting within 30 days to discuss issues reviewed at the Board retreat. Colbert plans to review the Board’s meeting process and look for ways to improve the Board. “We should really stick to policy-making and look to staff recommendations and our President’s council for recommendations in other areas,” Mr. Colbert said.

In other matters, Dr. Potter announced the resignation of Peggy Sledge, Director of State Student Financial Aid, who has accepted another position. Mary Jane Covington has been named Interim Director of State Student Financial Aid.