

IHL INTER-ALUMNI COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE
MAY 28, 2003

1. As Governor, ensuring that each one of our citizens is ready, able and healthy to go to a good paying job is important to me. Mississippi is a state that is competing and leading in the global marketplace, a state that is setting new standards in education and economic development. Since I've been Governor, I've put education first. Classrooms are the cornerstone of our communities, and I've made education a top priority because good schools bring good jobs and build great communities. Sixty-three percent of our high school graduates are going on to continue their education -- that is higher than the national average and is the highest percentage in the southeast. Our workforce is highly-skilled, and our graduates are leaving our high schools and colleges ready to work. I will continue to make a good education, a high-paying job, and good health for all of our citizens my top priorities for the people of our state.

2. I support funding education first in all future legislative sessions. During this year's State of State address, I asked the legislature to make the future of our state -- the education of our children -- our top priority. When I signed the historic education funding bills on February 5, 2003, we changed education funding in Mississippi forever. Under my leadership we will work to ensure that this funding level is a promise kept to Mississippi's children and teachers. As Governor, I will continue to call on the Legislature to make education our top priority, by appropriating pre-kindergarten through higher education at a minimum of 62% of the general fund, and to fund it during the first month of each legislative session.

3. During the first years of my administration I could not support the legislature's appropriations bills for several reasons. The legislature lost sight of the importance of setting priorities, especially during the tough times of a national recession. By challenging the state senate and house to put education first this year, we prevented the budget cuts that the legislature made in previous years. I look forward to working with the legislature in the future to set priorities, and to fund pre-kindergarten through higher education first.

4. The national recession has forced state leaders across the country to cut services, shorten the school week, lay off state employees and even to raise taxes. By cutting the fat out of state government, and setting priorities Mississippi has avoided the crises other states have been experiencing. As Governor, I will continue to make education a top priority, by funding it first, and at the level needed to meet all of our educational needs.

5. By setting our top priorities on the education of our children and our workforce, the opportunities that are open to our citizens are now limitless. Under my leadership, we have built a workforce in Mississippi that will help us retain our current industries and attract new ones, like our Nissan plant in Canton. The role of our universities in early childhood education, in addition to the workforce training and continuing education for adult students at our community colleges, has been vital to making Mississippi a national leader in site selections for businesses and industry.

In this year's State of the State address I called for the creation of a \$200 million "Brain Trust" for our universities and community and junior colleges. Under this plan, bonds would be issued - \$20 million a year for 10 years - to recruit and retain the very best minds for research, development, and workforce training. We know this is the type of investment that creates more high-paying jobs for our people. In my second term I will work with the legislature to ensure the passage and funding of this critical plan for our future.

Policy is important, but forging coalitions of people to work together to unite around priorities is just as important. As Governor, I've brought the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Director of the State Board of Community and Junior Colleges, and the State Superintendent of Education to the table each month to address how to better work together to support P – 16 education for all Mississippians.