

MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN

1. Are you committed to continued and stable support of IHL's current eight universities?

I am committed to stable support for all of education. 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 students -- 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 students and faculty. 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 invest in education during the first month of each legislative session.

2. Do you value Mississippi having both small and large universities?

I support Mississippi having both small and large universities. Each student has individual needs that must be met by their institution. Small and large universities offer distinct learning environments to students and provide students a choice in selecting the environment that will be most beneficial to their learning, as well as to their social development. Mississippi's eight universities each offer dynamic and unique opportunities to their students.

3. Would you support tiered financial aid for higher education, i.e., a larger amount for four-year university students?

While tiered financial aid is certainly worthy of consideration, I would not support it at this time. Our universities, as well as our community colleges, play a pivotal role in our state's workforce training and continuing education for students of all ages. Such programs have proven vital to making Mississippi a national leader in site selections for businesses and industry. Many of our adult learners in our community colleges are not full-time students, but they are in need of financial assistance in order to be able to attend classes to enhance their skills and marketability.

I will propose the Mississippi Higher Education Affordability Act during next year's legislative session. This will allow families and students across the state a tax deduction in the amount of their in-state tuition. Again, we must make higher education accessible and economical to our students and their families.

(NOTE: CHRISTOPHER – THIS PROBABLY ISN'T THE ANSWER THEY WANT, BUT I DON'T THINK WE CAN SUPPORT TIERED FINANCIAL AID BASED ON 2-YEAR OR 4-YEAR COLLEGES.)

4. What are the priority funding issues for higher education in Mississippi for the next 10 years? Rank the top five. (NOTE: CHRISTOPHER YOU MAY WANT

TO CHANGE THE RANKING OF THESE. FACULTY SALARIES IS IMPORTANT TO FACULTY ON THE CAMPUSES.)

I will continue to call on the Legislature to make education our top priority, by investing in pre-kindergarten through higher education at a minimum of 62% of the general fund and during the first month of each legislative session. We must make higher education accessible and affordable to students. Investing in education first enhances students' opportunities. An August 27th USA Today article stated that Mississippi is the only state in the nation not raising tuition for the 2003-04 school year.

By investing in education first, we ensure that our universities receive the resources necessary to provide a quality education to their students. Such resources include having quality faculty who stimulate students' learning. We must pay our faculty competitive salaries for the professionals they are and in order to retain their skills and enhance students' learning.

Average employee out-of-pocket health insurance costs continue to increase. My 2004 budget recommendation fully funded the State and School Employees Health Plan. I will continue to fight for competitive salaries, as well as the full funding of health insurance coverage.

The Mississippi Higher Education Affordability Act will allow families and students across the state a tax deduction in the amount of their in-state tuition. Again, we must make higher education accessible and economical to our students and their families.

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.

5. What is your view on the need and support for renovation of university campuses in Mississippi? Would you support bond bills for the W's historic campus?

Our students, faculty and administrators must have safe and adequate facilities. We must be fiscally prudent, especially in tight fiscal times. Mississippi's bond rating and current interest rates offer advantageous and fiscally prudent conditions for utilizing bonds to upgrade and improve our campuses. I am committed to providing safe learning environments on our university campuses. This is one reason that executive agencies responded so quickly to work with Mississippi University for Women officials following tornado damage to campus in November 2002.

6. Do you support regularly increasing faculty and staff salaries in public universities to the level of competitiveness with Southern peers? (NOTE: CHRISTOPHER – BE SURE TO CHECK THE WORDING ABOUT IHL’S 3-YEAR FACULTY SALARY PLAN.)

Yes. By investing in education first, we ensure that our universities receive the resources necessary to provide a quality education to their students, including having quality faculty who stimulate students’ learning. We must pay our faculty competitive salaries for the professionals they are and we must retain our faculty’s skills and knowledge in order to enhance our students’ learning. My office has requested a copy of the recently announced three-year plan for increasing faculty salaries and will review the plan to determine our role in seeking its passage.

7. Would you support tuition waiver reciprocity for contiguous counties in states bordering Mississippi?

(NOTE: CHRISTOPHER – I HAVE NO IDEA OF WHAT OUR POSITION IS ON THIS. I KNOW THAT IHL HAS TALKED OF THIS, BUT I HAVEN’T EVER DISCUSSED IT WITH THE GOVERNOR.)

8. What general characteristics are you seeking in potential appointees as members of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning?

I believe my five appointees to the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning exemplify the traits and characteristics that I look for in potential appointees. These five reflect the diversity of our state and bring sound, professional experience to the Board. I am looking for individual, yet rationale thinkers who can analyze a situation and determine the best course of action for our university system as a whole. (NOTE: CHRISTOPHER – YOU MAY WANT TO FLUFF THIS ONE UP SOME.)

9. What is your long-range goal of enhancing higher education in Mississippi? List specific examples of how you will implement this vision.

Since I’ve been Governor, I’ve put education first. 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. I will continue to call on the Legislature to join me in making education our top priority,

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. Among other items discussed at these monthly meetings, is our implementation of the recommendations of the Higher Education Summit, including early childhood education, increasing college and university graduation rates, increasing university research and expanding life-long learning. Initiatives such as the Mississippi Brain Trust and the Mississippi Higher Education Affordability Act address these recommendations.

10. Do you support the historical mission of Mississippi University for Women which is to provide an education for all students with an emphasis on education and leadership opportunities for women?

I certainly support Mississippi University for Women’s historical mission to provide an education to all students with an emphasis on education and leadership for women. Mississippi University for Women has eclipsed this historical mission to offer a quality education to each of its students, regardless of gender. MUW’s quality education at an affordable cost has not gone unnoticed. U.S. News and World Report has cited MUW as a best value seven times during the last ten years. Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine recently ranked the University as 67th of the 100 best colleges in America. As I stated earlier, each of our universities offers unique opportunities to students and each is a vital component of Mississippi’s higher education system. (NOTE: CHRISTOPHER – THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF CONTROVERSY IN YEARS PAST AS TO IF WE REALLY NEED 8 UNIVERSITIES, WITH TALK OF POSSIBLY CONSOLIDATING MUW WITH MSU AND POSSIBLY GETTING RID OF THE SMALLER UNIVERSITIES LIKE VALLEY STATE, ALCORN OR MUW. YOU MAY WANT TO FLUFF THIS ONE UP SOME MORE GIVEN THIS BACKGROUND.)