

July 6, 2002

Dr. Cecil Burge  
Associate Vice President for Research  
and Technology Transfer  
The University of Southern Mississippi, Box 5116  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406-5116

Dear Dr. Burge:

The creation and strengthening of technology-based firms is critical to the future growth and diversity of the Mississippi economy. Significant energy and resources have been invested to help prepare Mississippi for the “new economy.”

The federal SBIR/STTR programs, since their inception, have been of great value to small and medium-sized technology-based businesses in funding applied research and product development. Historically, Mississippi has not done well compared to other states in submitting and winning SBIR/STTR awards. In recent years, due to the “Phase Zero” assistance provided through the university resources of the Mississippi Research Consortium (MRC) and last year with the partnership support of the Mississippi Technology Alliance (MTA), the numbers are increasing. Results have shown that this type of assistance to firms provides a good return on investment.

We are pleased to hear of the continuing opportunity provided by the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Federal and State Technology Partnership Program (FAST) to provide SBIR/STTR related assistance to technology-based firms. We understand that the MRC will continue to partner with MTA in the proposed second year of the MRC-MTA FAST program. The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), the state’s economic development agency, will also continue to work with MRC and MTA to support the firms being assisted by this program.

The Mississippi FAST proposal is sound, based on the positive results of the current effort and will continue to add significantly to the pace of technology-based company creation and growth. We commend the work of the MRC and the MTA in developing this proposal for continuation of the FAST program and urge the SBA to fund it.

Very truly yours,

Ronnie Musgrove

RM:cdl