

*Remarks for the  
“GEAR UP” Press Conference  
September 17, 2002*

(recognize Dr. Layzell, Dr. Johnson, other dignitaries)

We are here today to share some great news about our work to shape our future through education. All of us recognize that the role our schools play in the giving our younger citizens – our children – the skills they will need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

That economy won't be like the one previous generations of Mississippians have grown up in – the new economy will be borderless, wireless and global. It will demand the very best we have to offer, just as it demands our students learn the skills to succeed.

Our efforts to meet those demands are getting a tremendous boost today. I am proud to announce Mississippi has been awarded a grant through the United States Department of Education to ensure our disadvantaged middle and secondary school students are prepared to pursue and succeed in post-secondary education.

This grant – known as the GEAR UP grant – provides \$12.4 million over the next five years to take on this mission. It is a partnership between the Mississippi Department of Education, the State Board of Community and Junior Colleges, and the Institutions of Higher Learning.

Working together, we can be stronger and accomplish more for our people. The GEAR UP program is a catalyst to align the resources of the state. Others will use it as a model for building partnerships and bringing together government, businesses, foundations, communities and educational agencies.

GEAR UP is simple – it's a program for **G**aining **E**arly **A**wareness and **R**eadiness for **U**ndergraduate **P**rograms. More importantly, it's a program for growing Mississippi.

Creating jobs for the people of this state has become a trademark of my administration, but building a future for the children of this state through quality education is my personal passion.

Education is where we build our success, and this is how we're doing it.

This is a great day for education in Mississippi. We have a lot of work ahead of us, and I know we share a commitment to seeing this program through.

Thank you.