

**STATEMENT FROM DR. THOMAS C. MEREDITH, COMMISSIONER
MISSISSIPPI BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF
STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING**

October 22, 2008

I have spent the past 45 years working to help more people in this country obtain an education. Nineteen of those years have been in Mississippi. We were excited to return home to Mississippi three years ago to try to help make a difference. Much has been accomplished in many areas as shown in our recent publication on this topic. I am particularly proud of the expanded working relationship with K-12 and the growing relationship with the community and junior colleges.

We were pleased, but not surprised, when the state auditor's report revealed that we were not at fault regarding the landscaping controversy at our home. When the offer was made to us to find the recommended trees for our yard, it was accepted only on the condition we pay for them. We were given that assurance. Our efforts to receive a bill are documented. With the auditor's report, we discovered for the first time the cost of the trees and how they were provided. On that day, I issued a check for the full amount of \$6,347.53.

I have worked diligently over these 45 years to build a reputation of honesty and integrity. There is no way I would have taken a chance at this stage of my life to damage that reputation over anything. Those who know me know this is true.

The new governance model, adopted by the board before I was hired, places the commissioner front and center as he carries out the board's policies and the board's search process. This has been challenging at times but I accepted it as part of the responsibility.

Although it will be difficult to leave the institutional executive officers, an outstanding staff at our office and a job not finished, I believe it is best that I not continue for a variety of factors. I have notified the Board of Trustees of my decision to retire effective close of business November 15, 2008, and trust they will act upon it quickly.