

Institutions of Higher Learning

General Higher Education Legislation Pending before the Senate Universities and Colleges Committee

The Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) is charged with an incredible responsibility-to move Mississippi forward through higher education. IHL is committed to fulfilling that mission, but we need your help with adequate funding and passage of certain higher education-related legislation.

Endowment Partnership Trust Fund (SB 2799)

IHL is seeking to establish an Endowment Partnership Trust Fund of \$5 million, which would provide money that the universities would match with outside donations, for endowing faculty positions and professorships. Similar trust funds in other states have been used successfully to recruit, support, and retain eminent scholars, who in turn attract talented students and other faculty, which stimulates research and helps leverage funding. With endowed faculty

positions our universities are also better able to plan more effectively for the future by committing to promising areas of research, and provide freedom for the academician from the time-consuming job of seeking additional grants.



IHL Executive Office O&M Assessment Increase (SB 2553)

The Education and Research Campus is shared by Mississippi Public Broadcasting, the Mississippi Board of Community and Junior Colleges, the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, and several other state-supported organizations. Although IHL occupies only about 34.1 percent of the campus, it is responsible for about 86.4 percent of the total operations and management (O&M) cost, which includes the cost of utilities. The campus, which has undergone no major renovations since its construction in 1969, is

not energy efficient – utility costs alone have increased 95.3 percent since FY 2000.

IHL's actual cost of O&M in FY 2006 was \$6.72/sf, and the budgeted cost for FY 2007 is \$7.29/sf. IHL is requesting the authority to raise the current assessment rate it charges the other state agencies that share the campus from \$1.50/sf to \$2.50/sf in an effort to recapture some of its losses. By comparison, the Department of Finance and Administration charges as much as \$12.00/sf to tenants of the space they operate.

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\$5 Million Scholarship Fund for Community College Transfers (SB 2936)

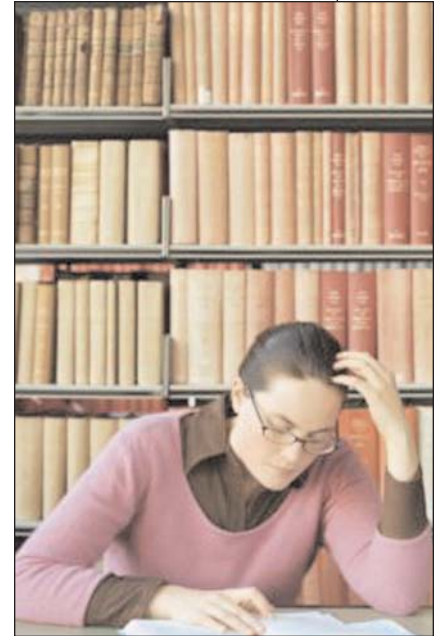
By establishing a fund for need-based transfer scholarships, Mississippi can help students who have completed their two-year college coursework transfer to universities to earn bachelor's degrees. Approximately 68 percent of Mississippi's first-time freshmen enroll in the state's two-year colleges, but only 22 percent of them transfer to four-year colleges. We hope to encourage more transfers because Mississippi needs more university graduates. Why?

■ A university graduate makes on average about **\$1 million more in a lifetime** than a high school graduate and about **\$17,000 a year more** than a person with only some college education. Our state will benefit from the **larger tax base** that comes from having more citizens who are earning higher salaries.

■ According to U.S. Department of Labor data, by 2012 - five years from now - there

will be **3 million more jobs** requiring a bachelor's degree than college graduates to fill them. The gap will grow to 12 million by 2020. Our state will also benefit from having a more highly educated workforce that **attracts new business** to the state.

■ We must be competitive. Approximately 25 percent of the nation's population has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 16.9 percent of Mississippi's population.

***Reinstatement of Master Lease/Purchase Program (SB 3057)***

IHL's master lease/purchase authority was eliminated in error as a result of legislation enacted during the 2005 Legislative Session. The Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) is aware of the error and supports restoration

of IHL's master lease/purchase authority. Reinstatement of IHL's master lease/purchase authority would allow the universities to save money by consolidating and financing their essential equipment needs as one request.

Tele- and Video-Conference Meetings (SB 2554)

Last year, the Legislature passed a provision which allows public bodies to conduct any meeting, except an executive session, via tele- or video-conference. IHL is very thankful for this provision, as it allows our geographically diverse Board of Trustees to meet from remote locations, thus saving time and money in travel and travel-related expenses.

For this provision to operate as effectively

as possible, the Board needs the freedom to hold executive sessions via tele- or video-conference as well. Since remote meetings are often necessary because unexpected business arises, IHL is also asking the Legislature to change the notice requirement of a tele- or video-conferences from 30 days prior to 5 days prior to the date of the scheduled meeting.

Any questions? Call Commissioner of Higher Education Dr. Thomas Meredith at 601.432.6623 or E-mail: commissioner@ihl.state.ms.us