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## Position statement on status of Higher Education

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## **UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE ASSOCIATION POSITION STATEMENT**

27 February 2001

The Faculty Senates Association of Mississippi [UFSA] is profoundly concerned and troubled by the financial crisis facing Mississippi's tax supported public colleges and universities. The immediate and potential long-term damage to our colleges and universities is real and the future of higher education in Mississippi is being threatened.

The time has come for decisive political leadership from Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck and the Mississippi Legislature to preserve the investment in public higher education that has already contributed much to Mississippi's economic development. Public education, including higher education, is crucial for the state's advancement in the Twenty-First Century and must receive top priority for funding.

The citizens of Mississippi must understand four key issues facing their public colleges and universities.

**POINT 1.** The recent 5% budget cuts levied against public colleges and universities, with the prospect of massive cuts in higher education funding for the 2001-2002 academic year, will result in immediate and long-lasting-perhaps even irreparable - damage to Mississippi higher education.

These budget cuts already have had an immediate impact and will continue to imperil the quality of Mississippi higher education in the years ahead for the following reasons:

- Loss of faculty to higher paying jobs outside of Mississippi, many of whom will not be replaced because of hiring freezes imposed because of budget cuts;
- The ability to attract well-qualified faculty will be compromised by inability to pay competitive salaries and a track record of inconsistent pay raises;
- With less faculty, fewer classes will be offered and class sizes will increase, reducing the effectiveness of instruction;
- The possible elimination of academic programs that cannot be supported based on reduced state funding;
- Regionally- and nationally-accredited academic programs may be threatened;
- Much needed investments in library resources and instructional technologies will be jeopardized;
- Already inadequate instructional operating budgets will be further curtailed; and finally,
- Further cuts to college and university budgets will have a direct negative impact on local economies and dampen economic development.

**POINT 2.** Cutting college and university budgets will require raising tuition, placing additional financial burdens on many working students and their parents who seek brighter economic futures through higher education.

- Higher tuition and fees likely mean students will find college and university education increasingly unaffordable and their access to higher education will be diminished;
- Diminished access to higher education can have an economic impact, considering that the income gap between high school and college graduates has widen over the past twenty years, U.S. Census figures show;
- Students likely will become even more dependent upon financial aid, especially student loans will increase the indebtedness with which they begin their working lives; and,

· Mississippi's existing shortage of public school teachers could grow even more severe if students are saddled with additional student loan debt.

POINT 3. Mississippi's college and university faculty salaries continue to lag behind national and regional standards, making the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty even more difficult.

· College and university faculty salaries have not grown at rates as high as those of all workers over the past 25 years, the Southern Regional Education Board reports;

· Average salaries for Mississippi college and university faculty rank No. 46 in the nation -- \$ 9,200 behind the national average, based on National Education Association figures;

· Average salaries for Mississippi college and university faculty rank No. 12 among the 16 Southern States - no change from 10 years ago and between \$4,400 and \$5,200 behind regional averages, based on Southern Regional Board figures;

· Mississippi's college and university faculty received no raises in six of the past 15 years, including three consecutive years [1989 - 1992] of no raises. Faculties received no raises this year and are being told to brace for more of the same in the next two to three years.

· The cost of living, including rising medical insurance premiums, is increasing at the same time salaries are stagnant, thus faculty experience an erosion in their purchasing power.

POINT 4. We call upon Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck and the Legislature to provide political leadership to avert the immediate and the long-term financial crisis facing higher education by:

· Restoring Mississippi's public four-year college and university funding to the FY 2000 level before this recent round of budget cuts;

· Using the "Rainy Day Fund" now to underwrite that financial support of higher education;

· Making the same commitment to college and university faculty and staff that was made to public school teachers to raise their salaries to the regional average; and, faculty,

· Taking a leadership position to make hard political choices to assure that all public education, including higher education, is a top priority in Mississippi and receives annual, consistent, dependable and stable long-term financial support.

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The University Faculty Senates Association of Mississippi [UFSA] is comprised of the president / chairperson and a duly-elected delegates from the Faculty Senates of Alcorn State University, Delta State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women, Mississippi Valley State University, University of Mississippi, University of Mississippi Medical Center, and University of Southern Mississippi.

University Faculty Senates Association offers for 2000 - 2001 are:

Dr. Arthur ["Art"] Kaul, President, University of Southern Mississippi

Dr. Vernon Archer, Vice President, Jackson State University

Dr. David A. Smith, Secretary, Mississippi University for Women

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## UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATES ASSOCIATION OF MISSISSIPPI

Whereas, The University Faculty Senates Association of Mississippi [UFSA] recognizes the following historic pattern regarding faculty salaries:

1. The salaries of Mississippi's public four-year colleges and universities faculties have not grown at rates as high as those of all workers, regardless of level of education, over the past 25 years;
2. The faculties of Mississippi's public four-year college and universities have gone without pay raises in five of the past 15 years [ on average, one of every three years];
3. Faculty salaries have not grown at rates as high as those of other workers with advanced levels of education over the last 10 years;
4. Average salaries for Mississippi's public four-year college and university faculties ranked No. 12 among the 16 SREB states in 1989 - 99, reflecting the same rank of a decade earlier;
5. Mississippi's public college and university faculties received no salary increase for the 2000 - 2001 academic year;
6. The cost of living, including rising medical insurance premiums, is increasing at the same time salaries are stagnant, thus, faculty experience an erosion in their salaries;
7. The Mississippi Legislature in the year 2000 committed itself to raising the salaries of public school teachers based on projected revenues;
8. The IHL has recommended to the legislature 4% pay raises for public college and university faculties in each year of the next three years;

Therefore, The University Faculty Senates Association of Mississippi:

# Endorse the IHL proposal for a Legislature commitment of 4% pay raises for public college and university faculties in each of the next three years;

# Supports the principle of consistent, equitable and fair annual salary increases for all public four-year college and university faculties;

# Urges Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck and Legislature to provide leadership to assure consistent, equitable and fair annual salary increases for public school teachers and university faculty, including the commitment to raise public college and university faculty salaries to the SREB average.

\* Endorsed September 2000