As I write this message, it is a couple of weeks prior to the return of students of Oak Grove Primary School in Lamar County. This is my 13th year at Oak Grove, and the scene looks much the same as the prior 12 at this time of the year. Administrators are planning for the coming year. Teachers are readying their classrooms. Staff members are cleaning, repairing and maintaining the grounds. This tradition of preparation is all for the hundreds of students who will soon cover the campus. It is likely very similar to the scenes on your campuses.

When students do return to classes this fall, some I expect will observe another tradition—that of giving their teacher an apple. There are theories as to how this tradition began, the most popular of which reference the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, who ate an apple from the tree of knowledge. The apple, as a result, has become a symbol of knowledge, and the gift of the apple representative of the gratitude for knowledge passed down from teacher to student. Other less commonly held theories state that the gift is provided as food for the poorly paid teacher, or that the apple, which starts with the letter “A,” is an indication of the grade the student desires.

While the origin of that tradition is probably debatable, it is certain that apples, like students (and educators), require care to grow. Without sunlight and water, the apple cannot reach its full potential. Think back to your education and the care that went into it. What, or who, was the sunlight and water for you? I imagine there were probably teachers who inspired you—they may have even been the reason you chose education as a profession. There were for me. Those special educators inspired me. They guided me to a career in education. They had qualities, like patience, intelligence, and selflessness that I sought to emulate.

As we begin another school year, if you are a teacher or professor, I encourage you to ask who were those educators for you? Who inspired and guided you? What qualities stood out? I expect your mentors possessed similar characteristics as mine. They inspired. They guided. Most importantly, they educated. Today, I feel a responsibility to pay forward the investment made in me. I hope you feel the same.

MPE supports its members’ professional growth through a variety of means, including the MPE Journal, graduate scholarships, our annual symposium, and regional trainings. We are here to support you and the incredible work you do each day. Encourage your co-workers to join MPE today!

Thank you for your continued membership in MPE. In the past five years, our membership has grown by 34%, from 7,911 in July 2008 to 10,566 this past July. Not only does MPE offer its members professional liability protection, but we also provide the latest information on education policy developments and events throughout our state.

As we begin another school year, if you are a teacher or professor, I encourage you to ask who were those educators for you? Who inspired and guided you? What qualities stood out? I expect your mentors possessed similar characteristics as mine. They inspired. They guided. Most importantly, they educated. Today, I feel a responsibility to pay forward the investment made in me. I hope you feel the same.

Regardless of your position, though, I encourage you to make inspiration and investment in others your traditions—traditions that you’ll observe each year. Mississippi students and educators, like everyone, crave inspiration and require significant investments in them to grow. They need support. They need intelligent guidance.

Have a wonderful school year.

Deedre’ Coll

Kelly Riley
When I began teaching, the energy I had for my students never stopped! I still enjoy being in the classroom where I see my students become excited about technology and how it connects to their future.

As I answered my own questions, I realized that leaving education was not an option for me. I love my career! I guide my 7th graders toward their future plans and encourage them to be technology savvy at the same time. I know these skills are vital to their success. They, in turn, have taught me to remain energetic and patient as we learn together.

I realized that the “fire” I needed was continuing my education. I will continue my love of teaching and also pursue an educational specialist degree beginning this fall.

Through reflection and self assessment, the answer to my questions became clear. Changes occur each year in districts and schools. Students change from year to year, and their abilities and attitudes will sometimes be challenging. But, I still have too much to give and learn from my students. Teaching is not just my career, it is my calling. I still have the drive to grow as an educator and the commitment to serve the students who enter my room. As long as I am privileged to be a classroom teacher, I will not hold back!
McConnell Selected as Executive Director of MSMS

Germain McConnell has been selected as the new Executive Director of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS). A member of MPE since 2012, McConnell has an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering, Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction, and Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, all from the University of Mississippi. He began his education career as a high school mathematics teacher in Tunica County at Rossa Fort High School in 1998. Prior to joining MSMS in 2011, McConnell served as Program Manager for the Mississippi Teacher Corps at the University of Mississippi, including Director of Field Experiences and Co-director of the Mississippi Teacher Corps. Before his selection as Executive Director, McConnell served as MSMS’s Director for Academic Affairs (Principal). As Executive Director, McConnell is focused on the school taking a more of a leadership role in the state not just as advocates for mathematics and science education, but also for providing more challenging academic opportunities for high achieving students. Congratulations, Germain!

MPE Member Joan Fabbri was recently selected as Mississippi’s 2013 Colin L. Powell Teacher of the Year. The award honors a teacher who supports students who desire to enlist in the United States Military after high school graduation and recognizes the critical responsibilities teachers have in providing guidance, counseling and mentoring to this select group of students. A member of MPE since 1999, Joan served as MPE’s Building Rep at Brandon High School for numerous years. She now serves as a MPE Area Director. Congratulations, Joan!

MEL BUCKLEY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED

Joey Hutto with Ross & Yerger Insurance recently presented the Mel Buckley Scholarship Award. Hutto, Senior Vice President with Ross & Yerger Insurance, and the Tupelo based CREATE Foundation established the $500 scholarship in 2007 as a tribute to Mel Buckley, MPE’s former Executive Director. The scholarship is awarded to a Tupelo High School graduate who will be majoring in education. This year’s recipient is Paige Knapp. Paige is attending Mississippi State University this fall. She is actively involved in her church and the community. She was a member of the National Art Honor Society, the Anchor Club, the National Spanish Honor Society and the VISUALS Art Club. Miss Knapp was also recognized as an ACT Scholar at Tupelo High School and a National Society of High School Scholar.

Governor Phil Bryant

My Favorite Teacher: Mrs. Josephine Henley
School: Marshall Elementary
Subject: 4th Grade

“I am always happy to talk about my favorite teacher, Mrs. Josephine Henley. She was my 4th grade teacher at Marshall Elementary School in south Jackson.

Mrs. Henley identified my dyslexia and taught me to overcome this challenge. She was a great teacher and a wonderful example of how one person can make a difference.”

Eric Clark, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Mississippi Community College Board

My Favorite Teacher: Mrs. Lynette Moore
School: Taylorsville High School
Subject: 10th, 11th, & 12th Grade English

“Mrs. Lynette Moore was a world-class English teacher at Taylorsville High School for several decades. I was blessed to be her student for three years in the late 1960s. She taught me how to write. I have written a great deal over the intervening years, and it was never a problem in school or at work, because of Mrs. Moore’s extraordinary teaching.”

William Winter
Governor of Mississippi 1980-1984

My Favorite Teacher: Mrs. Estelle Turner
School: Grenada High School
Subject: 11th, & 12th Grade English

“Miss Estelle Turner had a formidable reputation for demanding superior performance from her students. She would not tolerate mediocrity. As a result of my fear of her disapproval, I studied harder than I ever had in my life and because of her efforts I have enjoyed a life-long ease and confidence in the use of the English language.

She not only guided me academically but she took a personal interest in my life and inspired me with a motivation to excel in whatever I tried to do. I kept in close touch with her from the time of my graduation in 1940 until the sad day when I attended her funeral in her hometown of Durant in 1979.

In the 1950’s I established the Estelle Turner Award, at Grenada High School, which is given each year to the graduating varsity athlete with the highest scholastic average.”

MPE wants to recognize outstanding educators who exemplify true professionalism and go above and beyond the call of duty every day. To nominate an Educator of Excellence, please visit www.mpe.org to fill out a nomination form. You may also contact our office at 800-523-0269.
Richard Jones
Spann Elementary School
Onion Cell Experiment
I was really excited about the students’ enthusiasm during this experiment. A large part of this enthusiasm came from me telling my students that “looking at specimens through microscopes is a skill that they normally don’t acquire until they are in middle or high school.” As educators, we know that in order for student learning to occur, students must be engaged! During this experiment students carried away two different skills. The first skill was the familiarity with the parts and general use of a microscope. The second skill was the ability to identify the parts of an onion cell.

Shirley Hardman
Woolmarket Elementary
Follow That Music
The grant to Woolmarket Elementary was for teaching the history of our state through the arts – specifically music and the visual arts. As the students in our district did not have access to art lessons, nor do they have exposure to any type of music, this was an opportunity to provide the children with an internal glimpse of other time periods and provide a bridge across cultural chasms.

At every opportunity we painted to the music and displayed our work throughout the school – this in itself elicited comments and feedback from the community in general – giving the students an authentic audience.

The students throughout the school were asking questions of my students and the 4th graders gave a ‘gallery tour’ of the artwork to their classmates, explaining every era and stopping to sing a relevant song. It was a huge self confidence boost as teachers booked time for their presentations.

Bill Glover
Prentiss County Vocational Technical Center
Guerillas in the Mist
Business fundamentals and marketing students at the Prentiss County Vocational Technical Center in Boonville, MS were recently able to complete a career simulation designed around guerilla marketing thanks in large part to a grant from MPE. The $500 grant allowed the students to purchase design software, printing paper, plastic covers and pay for printing costs for public service announcement posters to be placed in schools within Prentiss County for the upcoming school year. After learning about guerilla marketing, they formed advertising teams to create the posters from scratch. The theme was “seatbelt safety.” Designs were widely hailed as professional quality.
What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? According to the CCSS Initiative’s website, “The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two or four-year college programs or enter the workforce. The standards are clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations established by the Common Core State Standards. The group routinely shares an article of the week, and there are frequent discussions and sharing of Common Core ideas. We want to provide every Mississippi educator an opportunity to contribute ideas and ask questions about methodology associated with the CCSS. It is a remarkably professional group with excellent dialogue between its members. It is truly an online professional learning community.

The purpose of these new standards is to help our students become globally competitive. These standards are designed to increase student problem-solving capabilities and prepare them to become more successful when they complete their K-12 education. Mississippi, along with 44 other states, has adopted the CCSS. A change in standards means that end-of-year state assessments must be changed to match the standards. The current plan is to begin using these new assessments in 2014-2015; additionally, these new assessments will be online rather than traditional paper/pencil tests.

To prepare for the implementation of the CCSS and the resulting online assessments, districts will have to upgrade their electrical infrastructure, hardware, software, and bandwidth as well as address the increased costs associated with these upgrades. The greatest challenge, however, will be providing educators and students with access to quality curriculum aligned with these new and rigorous standards.

Several months ago a few Mississippi public educators formed the Mississippi Common Core Collaboration Group on LinkedIn, the businessperson’s Facebook. This group was created to unite Mississippi public educators and to provide a 21st century online professional learning community that spans the state and even reaches out to surrounding states. More than 1,550 people are members in the collaboration group, and we build the resource base through online collaboration.

We have the chance to band together as 151 public school districts in Mississippi and create a phenomenal resource bank for the new Common Core State Standards that our state has adopted. Members of the Mississippi Common Core Collaboration group offer updates and artifacts to include on the website.

Because we are focused on all children, we share the data with anyone who requests membership. This is not a profit driven group, and we build the resources available on the website by having several school districts contribute their successes and challenges related to the CCSS. This group works at night and on weekends to create this resource for all of Mississippi’s children and teachers. Our goal is for every Mississippi public school district to join this team. We want every teacher in Mississippi to tap into this free resource and to help make the curricular playing field level for every student in our state.

These new standards as well as this collaboration provide an excellent opportunity for Mississippi educators and students to improve the state’s national ranking. Forty-five states are going to begin this new challenge at the same time, and the states that work the smartest and the hardest have great potential. The states that embrace technology will have a decided advantage over those that fail to seize the 21st century opportunity to expand their resource base through online collaboration.

We also want to expand the collaboration membership in the group to include university and college educators and students. We believe this inclusion will strengthen the existing college and university education programs by providing education majors with a forum to contribute ideas and gather data from practitioners. We believe there is limitless potential in creating this forum for college and university students to gain valuable insight from practitioners. The other value associated with college students who are aspiring educators joining the Mississippi Common Core Collaboration group is it provides an online profile and resume for future employment opportunities with public school districts who are constantly looking to improve their teacher quality.

The ultimate goal of the Mississippi Common Core Collaboration group on LinkedIn is to improve the quality of education for all of our state’s children. We are asking all educators associated with public education in Mississippi to lend their valuable knowledge and insight to our students. We believe if we can accomplish this, “The only limitation our students will have is the boundary of their ambition.”
Mississippi’s 2012 Teacher of the Year, Stacey Todd

As Mississippi’s Teacher of the Year, I have been honored to represent the talented educators of our great state. My journey has taken me from Scottsdale, AZ to Washington DC and most recently to International Space Camp in AL. Over the past year, I have had enough adventures to fill a book. However, in this article, I will only share a couple of my most memorable lessons.

First of all, I have learned that teachers all over the world share the same basic desires. From California to Australia, from Mississippi to Greece, we all want our students to have deep, meaningful learning experiences and less “high stakes” testing. We want to be treated as professionals and leaders. We want our voices to be heard. We want support from parents, community members, administrators, and policy makers. But most of all, we want the very best for our students. We can agree unanimously that our greatest desire is for people to see what we see in our students: young people with gifts, dreams and purposes rather than scores and data. The highlight of every meeting I have attended has been networking with teachers in every subject area. I love to listen to their creative ideas. Without a doubt, when a roomful of teachers gather, excitement and innovation are ignited. I am proud to be a member of this elite profession that so greatly impacts the lives of others.

I have also learned the importance of teacher leadership and having a voice. Too often in education, especially in Mississippi, we hear only about the negatives and I have learned that our positives far outweigh those negatives. Our greatest assets are the dedicated individuals that have committed their lives to preparing students for their futures. As educators, it is our responsibility to inform the public about the engaging, creative activities that take place in our classrooms on a daily basis. We need to shout our successes from the rooftops! Teachers know how to teach and how to reach students. But they desperately need policy makers and stakeholders to fight for them and their students. I know all of us are feeling the pressure of common core, statewide teacher evaluations, data driven assessments, and countless other educational policies that seem to be constantly set before us. At times, we feel frustrated that our voices do not seem to be heard. Who is fighting for our rights and the rights of our students? I can say in all honesty that one of the most valuable lessons I have learned this year has been the importance of staying informed and using our voices! You know all those emails we receive from MPE about new legislation and new policies (the ones we file to read later, but never seem to have the time)? Those are vital to our profession! How can we have input in these decisions if we don’t know the issues?

When all else fails (or seems to be failing), stand firm! Stand on the beliefs that drew you to this profession. Continue to do what you do best: TEACH!

Mississippi’s 2012 Teacher of the Year, Stacey Todd

Giving your students a brain boost!

Use Move to Learn in your class!

Move to Learn is all about getting your students ready for learning. Through free online exercise videos, Move to Learn helps students refocus for learning and build healthy habits.

Get our videos by visiting movetolearnms.org.

AN INITIATIVE OF:

Move to Learn gives our students the opportunity to get their blood pumping and their brains ready for learning.”

ALISON BLOCK, PRINCIPAL
MAGNOLIA PARK ELEMENTARY

It’s amazing the difference I can see in my students’ attentiveness before and after we watch the Move to Learn videos.”

MEREDITH BROWN, TEACHER
NORTHSIDE ELEMENTARY
RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES

MPE’s recruitment incentives provide a great way for you to earn a free membership, as well as a little extra money. You earn a free year’s membership for simply recruiting five new members and you earn money for each new member recruited after five. Encourage your professional co-workers and friends to join the premiere organization for professional educators in Mississippi.

- Five new members = one year’s free membership
- 6-9 new members = one year’s free membership + $10 per member*
- 10-14 members = one year’s free membership + $15 per member**
- 15 or more new members = one year’s free membership + $20 per member*

You will receive $5 per student member recruited.*

Recruitment bonus checks will be awarded at the end of each quarter, with the first quarter beginning July 1 and ending September 30. Credit will be given for each new member who joins or re-joins** between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. Free memberships will be credited towards the next year’s membership.

* credit will be given for each additional member after 5.
** member must have previously been made inactive for a period of three months or more.

You work hard for your students. We work hard for you.

At Liberty Mutual Insurance, we’re giving you something in return for everything you give to students. We’re partnered with MPE to offer exclusive auto insurance savings and benefits to people like you who work to enrich the lives and minds of today’s youth. And these benefits — like a waived deductible if your vehicle is vandalized on school property or while using it for school-related events — are available at no additional cost. 1

To learn more or get a quote, call 800-524-9400 or visit www.libertymutual.com/mpe

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SAVE THE DATE:

2014 Best Practices Symposium

Saturday, April 12, 2014
The Hilton, Jackson, MS

Dr. Andrew Mullins, who has served as a Special Assistant and Advisor to two Governors, three State Superintendents of Education, and three Chancellors of the University of Mississippi, will be our keynote speaker.

- Break-out sessions with engaging speakers
- The latest information on the budget, legislation and much more.
- CEUs and SEMIs will be available
- Great door prizes!

A reminder to those of you who have recently retired. Please keep your membership in MPE active. You now have several choices.

1. If you are fully retired, you can be a member for just $10 since you won’t need the insurance coverage. You will continue to receive the Journal and email updates (if you remember to change your email address with the office if you’ve been using the school address). You will also have a voice in the Legislature as a part of the state’s largest professional educator organization.

2. If you are going to be working part-time, you can join for $60.

3. If you are going to continue working full time, you will need to retain your present membership.

The office sends out special emails to our retired members to keep us updated on issues concerning our retirement. Please let them know you are retired whichever membership you choose.

Enjoy your retirement—and if I can help you in anyway, please don’t hesitate to contact me at phileneallen@bellsouth.net or 662-588-9011.

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Enjoy your retirement—and if I can help you in anyway, please don’t hesitate to contact me at phileneallen@bellsouth.net or 662-588-9011.
School is in session and we wish you great success as you embark on another school year.

We want to take this opportunity to update you on the teacher evaluation system and other initiatives targeting student achievement and growth. The Mississippi Department of Education is dedicated to supporting educators as they prepare students for future success, and as we work to phase-in these initiatives, we encourage you to provide your thoughts and suggestions on how we can improve.

In school year 2013 – 2014, the MDE will field test two components of the new teacher evaluation system: M-STAR (50%) and school-wide growth (50%). Also this year, all evaluators must complete a two-day, MDE-approved training before evaluating teachers this year.

To date, MDE has conducted 53 sessions (106 days) across the state. MDE has provided M-STAR training for approximately 600 teachers. We welcome any recommendations for making the system the best it can be during this field test. Mississippi joins states across the country as they implement and tweak their federally required systems of evaluating teachers based on student achievement.

You may have heard U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announce a flexibility waiver opportunity to allow states more time in using teacher and principal evaluations to make personnel decisions and to allow states some degree of freedom from double testing during the transition to the PAARC assessments. We currently are evaluating the waiver option to ensure that we understand the requirements related to the waiver, and we will keep your superintendents informed of the Mississippi Board of Education’s decision as soon as we can.

As you know, the MDE follows a blueprint for student achievement that was developed by the Board. The Board’s aim is to help students read successfully by 3rd grade, reduce the dropout rate, and reach proficiency on assessments that compare Mississippi students to students in other states.

Bottom line, the Board has charged all educators in our state to help students exit school successfully by reducing the barriers to that success. The prekindergarten collaborative and the Literacy-Based Promotion Act approved by the Legislature in April both support student success in the lower grades, and the MDE is working to fully implement these laws.

Also, Mississippi continues its journey on the road to rigorous college and career-ready standards. Many of you have already completed training sessions on Common Core State Standards. I know implementing these standards will be challenging, but we believe our students and educators are up to the challenge.

The use of the ICAP—the individual career and academic plan— with 8th graders, is also an important component for ensuring that our students have a successful future. The ICAP process will provide the framework for students, their parents, teachers and counselors to explore the options available for students as they contemplate their futures and will lay out the pathway for accomplishing their goals.

This process coupled with dual credit/dual enrollment, career academies, and other innovations we feel will not only provide students with more options for success, but will ultimately create a citizenry that will bolster our state’s economic development, which is good for all Mississippians.

I thank you for your commitment to the profession, especially during this time of great change. You make a difference in the lives of our students each day, and we believe that by working together we can make Mississippi’s future brighter.

Beginning July 1, there were several changes in leadership positions at the Mississippi Community College Board and at two of our community colleges.

Mr. Chip Crane from Fulton began serving as chair of our board and Mr. Bruce Martin from Meridian is our new vice-chair. Also, Mrs. Dolly Morasco from Grenada and Mrs. Sue Stedman from Natchez began serving six-year terms. All of these board members bring valuable knowledge and expertise in many different areas that will benefit our community colleges in the years to come. I look forward to working with them.

Additionally, Dr. Valmadge Towner replaced Dr. Vivian Presley as president of Coahoma Community College, and Mr. Mike Eaton took over at Itawamba Community College for Dr. David Cole. Combined, Drs. Presley and Cole served their institutions for nearly 60 years and provided great leadership and guidance throughout our state system. They played an integral role in transforming our community colleges into the modern educational entities they are now. Both will be greatly missed, and I am confident that Dr. Towner and Mr. Eaton will be successful in their new responsibilities.

Oftentimes, I talk about the reputation that all of our community colleges have as being among the best in the nation. During the summer, several of our community colleges received individual recognition from various organizations. Pearl River Community College and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College were ranked among the top 50 community colleges in the country according to TheBestSchools.org. Northwest Mississippi Community College’s eLearning Department was included among the best online universities and community colleges by AccreditedOnlineColleges.org. Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College was ranked 78th in the nation for the number of associate degrees produced in the nation by the educational magazine Community College Week. Finally, Diverse: Issues in Higher Education included Mississippi Delta Community College among its top 100 degrees producers for minority students.

These are just a few examples of the many honors our community colleges receive throughout the year and prove that we do have one of the best systems in the country. This is something that all Mississippians can be proud of.

The start of a new school year brings with it endless possibilities for you as an instructor and the students you teach. You have the opportunity to make the lives of thousands, whether it is an elementary, high school, community college, or university student. I hope that each of you has a wonderful year, and thank you for the job you do.

Let us know if we at MCCB can help make your school year better.

Dr. Lynn House
Interim State Superintendent of Education

Dr. Eric Clark
MCCB Executive Director

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EXEMPLARY TEACHERS VITAL TO SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers shoulder an enormous responsibility and do not always receive the support they need and deserve. I appreciate all of the time, hard work and dedication you provide to Mississippi’s students. I hope your summer was a time of renewal and the new school year is getting off to a good start.

During the summer, a report was released on the quality of teacher education programs. The National Council on Teacher Quality conducted the study and promoted it as “an unprecedented evaluation of more than 1,100 colleges and universities that prepare elementary and secondary teachers.” However, the report did not take into account the quality of instruction in their education programs; this study does nothing to inform that very important discussion.

Mississippi, in particular, will likely face a crisis as many very talented and dedicated teachers choose to retire in the next few years. Developing very capable students into extraordinary teachers will be a task for all of our education programs.

We must find a way to attract the best and brightest to the classroom. There are two new programs designed to accomplish this goal.

The Teacher Education Scholars Program was established during the 2013 Legislative Session and was funded for the upcoming school year. The Program provides a $15,000 per year award, which covers tuition, room and board and books for each scholar. This is a wonderful opportunity for someone who dreams of becoming a teacher to have the worry of how to pay for college or the burden of student loan debt upon graduation lifted away.

Students can now apply for the Teacher Education Scholars Program by completing the online application for state aid, available online at www.mississippi.edu/financialaid. Applications will be accepted through September 15, 2013 and supporting documents may be submitted through October 15, 2013 for the 2013-14 school year.

Please help us by identifying potential candidates and letting them know about this opportunity. Incoming freshmen who apply must have a minimum 28 ACT composite score and must have graduated from high school with at least a 3.5 grade point average. If already a college student, the student must have a minimum 28 ACT composite score on a test taken prior to entering college and a minimum 3.5 grade point average on their college coursework. Recipients must agree to teach in a Mississippi public school district for at least five years.

Because a student may submit only one online application for state aid each year, any student who is interested in applying for the program but has already submitted a current year state application (since January 1, 2013) should contact the Office of Student Financial Aid at 601-432-6997 (toll-free at 800-327-2980) or sfo@mississippi.edu to add the Teacher Education Scholars Program to their application.

Unfortunately, this cannot be done through the “Update a 2013-2014 Application” link on the website. Additional program information is available online here: http://www.mississippi.edu/techsch.

Another excellent opportunity for high-achieving students who want to enter the field of education is the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program, or MET. This is a joint effort by the School of Education at the University of Mississippi and the College of Education at Mississippi State University and is funded by the Robert H. Hearin Support Foundation in Jackson.

Designed to be the equivalent of an honors college for education majors, the program seeks to increase interest in middle and high school teaching as a career for top incoming freshmen and community college transfer students. The initial goal will be to attract high ability students who want to become mathematics and English teachers and to help meet the needs of new Common Core standards introduced in Mississippi last fall.

To gain admission to the MET program, students must possess grades and test scores that are comparable to admission requirements for both MSU and Ole Miss’ honors colleges. An interview process will help identify students with a passion and dedication for improving public education in the state.

In addition, accepted education students will receive full scholarships and room and board for up to four years. The program also provides money for study abroad or off-campus learning activities such as visiting high-performing schools around the nation or abroad. More information on the program is available at the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching website: http://www.mnetms.org/.

Thank you for all you do for our students. You help motivate them to try hard, encourage them to persevere in the face of adversity and inspire them to dig deeper and reach higher than previously thought possible. I hope you will find and mentor the next generation of motivating, encouraging and inspiring teachers to follow in your footsteps.

STEPHANIE M. BOUNDS
Commissioner of Higher Education

Mississippi Public Universities received ratings ranging from “Consumer Alert” to 2.5 stars. The two programs receiving the “Consumer Alert” rating were the Undergraduate-Secondary Education program and the Undergraduate-Special Education program at Delta State University. The researchers did not request any documentation on the Undergraduate-Secondary Education program from Delta State. The Undergraduate-Special Education program is not a stand-alone program, so it should not have been evaluated separately from the Undergraduate-Elementary program and the Undergraduate-Secondary program.

In addition to the inconsistency in the documents requested and reviewed, the study failed to give credit to the universities for several important points:

• Graduate and employment data collection is required by NCATE. Surveys are conducted and documented evidence is presented at the on-site visit. All Mississippi teacher prep programs are accredited by NCATE.

• Mississippi uses a statewide Teacher Intern Assessment Instrument, so all should have received the same rating for how student teachers are evaluated, but they did not.

• The study failed to give credit for the 18 hours of required coursework in Reading instruction and overlooked courses offered specifically to train teachers on interventions for struggling readers.

While it is imperative for universities across the country to ensure the quality of instruction in their education programs, this study does nothing to inform that very important discussion.

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* May not include local dues

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