MPE Annual Convention Highlights

2010 Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship Winners

MPE Welcomes New Board Members

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Welcome to Your Credit Union
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MPE has much to celebrate this past year. Our 10,000 by 2010 campaign has moved MPE to within striking distance of our goal with 9,100 active members in April. What a great convention led by President Rhonda Travis. Her leadership along with former presidents, Dianne Sellers, Dennis Silas, Stacy Reeves and Steve Bishop, has built a foundation for success never before reached in our organization. Rhonda will continue to serve on the Board of Directors offering her expertise and vision.

Executive Director Judy Rhodes created a vision of the impossible. Today we are benefiting from her foresight. Kelly Riley along with the MPE team has captured that vision expanding it for our 2010-2011 year. Judy continues leading the team and providing that exceptional expertise and knowledge that makes her a force in Mississippi’s schools and state government.

We have major goals for this year:

10,000 by 2010 – Remember 5 new members will earn you a free membership;
Credit Union Membership – a new benefit;
Bringing professional development programs to all MPE regions; and,
Celebrating schools and districts working as change agents for Mississippi.

This will be another celebration year with continued growth, expanding influence, and additional benefits. MPE has become a change agent in Mississippi’s educational life.

- We believe in the core values of quality education equally provided to every child in every school.
- We believe in the integrity and excellence of each teacher who sees teaching as service rather than an occupation.
- We believe in partnerships with the Mississippi Department of Education, community colleges, institutions of higher learning, state government, school districts, schools, and individual members.
- We believe in the child and the future.

Mississippi is its people and Mississippi Professional Educators reflect those diverse people with their gifts, hopes, futures, and dreams. We are MPE!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
DR. BARRY MORRIS

Building Representatives

We will be mailing out building rep packets in early July. If you have had a change of address or have changed schools, please notify our office so we may update your profile. If you are NOT A BUILDING REP, but would like to inquire about being the building rep for your school, please contact Stephanie Miller at stephanie@mpe.org or call 1-800-523-0269.
MESSAGE FROM THE PAST-PRESIDENT
RHONDA TRAVIS

Has it really been a year already? It seems it has. I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed my term as President of MPE, and I cannot express enough gratitude to all of you for allowing me this honor. MPE means so much to me as an educator. When I read the articles in the Journal, get emails and phone calls from members, and attend meetings, I am always refreshed and reminded of the huge number of true professionals that the field of education in Mississippi is blessed with.

I cannot express thanks enough to Judy, Kelly, and all the office staff. They truly made the year smooth. Everyone at the MPE office is knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful. Not once did I need them that they were too busy for my immediate attention. I truly appreciate the updates from Kelly during the legislative session. These updates were important to me and my co-workers. Not only did they keep us informed, but they educated us as well. The hustle and bustle of teaching does not often allow us the luxury of keeping up with what is pertinent to education, but the updates were always timely and informative. I appreciate being kept “in the loop.”

I would like to thank all the Past-presidents. The legacy left by each one helped me grasp the role of President. I do not know of many other organizations which have had such consistently capable leaders. A special thanks to Dr. Ben Cox, an MPE past president. Dr. Cox was always willing to give advice and answer questions at a moment’s notice.

The board was also a tremendous help. Everyone was always willing to do his/her part just as soon as asked. Some daunting decisions were made, but no one ever skirted an issue or put off a duty. The board could not have been more supportive, and for this, I am eternally grateful. I know our new board will be just as supportive for Dr. Barry Morris.

And thank you, Barry. You were such a support. I probably relied on you too much, but you never told me that, so I just kept on. I know you will do great things for MPE. You are truly a man with a vision for MPE and education. I hope I can be as much assistance to you as you have been to me. I cannot wait to see what you have in store for us as an organization.

I really enjoyed our annual meeting this year. Janie Walters is so motivating and funny. Don’t you wish she could speak to us every Monday morning? What a week we would have. Let’s take her words to heart and apply them to our daily routine. I am also excited that CEU’s are being offered online.

I am looking forward to another great year with MPE. We are a growing force in the education spotlight, and we need to work hard to continue that growth. If every member just talks to one person, we will reach our goal of 10,000 members in 2010. Good luck in the remainder of your school year, and continued success in your upcoming year. Again, thank you for the privilege of allowing me to serve as MPE president.
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JUDY RHODES

Thanks for all of your cards, emails and words of encouragement following my stroke in January. I truly appreciate your support and prayers. They were a source of inspiration while I was hospitalized and I continue to enjoy them during my outpatient rehabilitation. I am continuing to regain my strength each day.

I want to thank our Nominating Committee (Rhonda Travis, Dr. Barry Morris, Sonya Swafford and Dianne Sellers) for the excellent slate of officers and new board members they presented during Convention 2010. The Nominating Committee worked very hard on this slate and I think that is reflected in the outstanding group of professionals joining the Board. I am excited to welcome Walter Moore (District 1), Jeanne’ Rowland (District 5), Jamie Jackson (District 7) and Lynn Smither (Community College) to our Board of Directors. We are thrilled that Angela Towers will be returning to represent District 3.

A special “thanks” goes to our board members who completed their service and rotated off this year: Candace Moore, Lia Landrum, Christian Graves and Dianne Sellers. Each member of your 16-member MPE Board of Directors continuously gives of their time and service to advance MPE. I appreciate their commitment.

We have a great new benefit that we are announcing in this issue of the MPE Journal. MPE has joined the Mississippi Employees Federal Credit Union. I hope you’ll take a few minutes to read the valuable information on page 18 regarding this new opportunity for MPE members. This new partnership will offer you a variety of savings, investment and loan opportunities.

One of the founding principles of MPE is professionalism. As educators, we encourage respect for our profession through the practice of the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. Even in these tough budget times of furloughs and reductions in force, I know you will always be professional in your communications and interactions with administrators, legislators, community leaders and parents.

Have a great summer!

To start receiving our weekly emails, email kelly@mpe.org

Visit our website at www.mpe.org
- UPDATE your membership profile
- JOIN or RENEW your membership
- Receive current BENEFITS INFORMATION
- Access our EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PAGE
**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

**MPE President-elect Named Special Educator of the Year**

MPE President-elect Sonya Swafford was named Special Educator of the Year by the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES) in March. This award is given annually to the person whose contribution to the field of rural special education exemplifies outstanding work for the benefit of those placed in rural areas. A member of MPE since 1998, Swafford is a K-3 SPED teacher at Nailor Elementary in Cleveland. She is also an adjunct instructor with Delta State University, co-director for the Delta Area Writing Project and a mentor with the World Class Teaching Program.

ACRES is an organization comprised of special educators, general educators, related service providers, administrators, teacher trainers, researchers, and parents who are committed to the enhancement of services to students and individuals living in rural America. ACRES was founded in 1981 by a group of individuals interested in the unique challenges of rural students and individuals needing special services. ACRES is the only national organization devoted entirely to special education issues that affect rural America. The membership of ACRES is geographically diverse, and is representative of all regions of the country.

**Moore Named Lee County Administrator of the Year**

Candace Moore was selected by the Lee County School Board in March as Lee County’s Administrator of the Year. Moore is in her second year as principal at Shannon Primary School and has also served as principal at Saltillo Elementary. She has 11 years of administrative experience and 17 years in education. Moore received her Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Leadership from the University of Mississippi. She has been a member of MPE since 1998 and rotated off of our Board of Directors as the District 1 representative this spring.

**MPE RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES**

**“10,000 members in 2010”**

- Five new members = year’s free membership
- 6-9 new members = year’s free membership + $10 per additional member*
- 10-14 members = year’s free membership + $15 per additional member*
- 15 or more new members = year’s free membership + $20 per additional 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, 2010 and June 30, 2011. Free memberships will be credited towards next year’s membership.

*credit given for each additional member after 5
** member must have previously been made inactive for a period of at least three months
MPE congratulates the following recipients of the 2010 MPE Graduate Scholarship Award. Each member will receive $1,000 towards their graduate studies.

**JONI HOUSE** is an Interventionist at Ward Stewart Elementary in Starkville. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Mississippi University for Women. Joni received her National Board Certification as an Early Childhood Generalist in 2005. A member of MPE since 2004, she will pursue her graduate studies at the University of Southern Mississippi.

**BRAD JOHNS** serves as chair of the math department at McLaurin High School in Rankin County. He earned both his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and his Master of Mathematical Education from Mississippi College and is scheduled to earn his Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership from there this May. A member of MPE since 1994, Brad will begin his doctoral studies at Mississippi College in January.

**NIKKI ROBINSON** teaches Pre-Algebra, Geometry and Algebra I at Petal High School. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from the University of Southern Mississippi. A member of MPE since 2009, Nikki is pursuing her Master of Education in Secondary Education at William Carey University.

**MARY TAYLOR** teaches Allied Health at the Lamar County Center for Technical Education. She earned her Bachelor of Nursing from the University of Southern Mississippi. A member of MPE since 2007, she is pursuing her master’s degree from the University of Southern Mississippi’s Technical Education Program.

**TINA THRASH** is a 3rd grade teacher at Sebastopol Attendance Center in Scott County. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Mississippi State University. A member of MPE since 1998, Tina will pursue her Master of Education in Elementary Education from Mississippi College.
Hornsby teaches a variety of courses at PRCC's Forrest County Center, where he also sponsors the Education Club, and is considering working on an 11th degree at Jackson State University.

“I know it seems ridiculous, but there’s a reason for all of it,” he said.

Hornsby enlisted in the Navy after graduating from Lumberton High School in 1959. While serving as a seaman, he decided he wanted to be an officer. After his enlistment, he enrolled at the University of Southern Mississippi and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

“After being commissioned as a Naval line officer, I decided that I wanted to be a chaplain, so it was necessary for me to graduate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary,” Hornsby said. “I knew that chaplains did lots of counseling, so I also got a Master of Science degree in counseling from USM at the same time.”

During 30 years of active duty, including 18 years at sea, Hornsby went to night school whenever he had the opportunity. He earned a Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Rhode Island and a Master of Arts in history from San Diego State University.

“Taking one course at a time, it took me several years to get each degree, and I usually had to write my theses while my ships were at sea,” he said. “Later, the Navy offered to send me to the University of Oklahoma in Norman, for a Master of Arts in human relations, so I couldn’t turn that down.”

Needing a doctoral degree to be promoted to captain in the Navy Chaplain Corps, Hornsby then earned a Doctor of Ministry (Theology) at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., the world’s largest non-denominational seminary.

Hornsby left the Navy in 1996 and taught social studies for five years at Sumrall High School. He earned the Educational Specialist degree in secondary education from USM to qualify for the Mississippi AAA teaching certificate.

“When I ‘retired’ from teaching at Sumrall, I decided that I really wanted to be a mechanic, so I enrolled in the two-year auto mechanics program at PRCC in Poplarville,” Hornsby said.

While earning the Associate in Applied Science degree,
Hornsby was named to Who’s Who Among Students in American Junior College and taught at USM, William Carey and PRCC. He took a full-time teaching position at PRCC’s Forrest County Center after completing the mechanics program.

“I came to PRCC primarily as a history and English teacher, but I soon found myself teaching several other subjects, including sociology,” he said. “I had enough graduate hours in sociology to teach it, but I didn’t have a degree. So, in order to gain credibility with my students, and since USM does not offer a master’s degree in sociology, I enrolled in the sociology MA program at New Mexico State University, my first on-line degree program. It was a very innovative and challenging program that I have incorporated into my own on-line teaching.

“It took me three years to complete the degree, struggling through statistics, passing my comprehensive exam and graduating last December.”

Hornsby credited PRCC math instructor Doug Donohue with getting him through the statistics course.

Hornsby currently teaches marriage and family, social problems and sociology at the Forrest County Center. He makes frequent use of the skills learned in the auto mechanics course as well.

“I’m always cranking kids’ cars,” he said. “I keep everything running for my family.”

His wife, June, recently submitted his list of degrees to the Guinness Book of World Records in two categories - most college degrees with 10 and most master’s degrees with six.

“I have no idea how that will turn out,” he said.

Hornsby plans to start work soon on a doctorate in urban sociology from Jackson State University.

“But don’t tell my wife - she thinks I’m over-educated,” he said.

MPE MEMBERS VISIT CHINA

Vicki Shirley, a math teacher at Corinth High School, and member of MPE since 1982, was recently selected as one of thirty educators representing 18 states to become a member of a People-to-People Mathematics Education Delegation to China. Her husband Dennis, a MPE Area Director, accompanied her as one of ten guests of the delegates. The delegation left the United States on November 30 arriving in Beijing on December 2, 2009.

Led by Dr. Johnny Lott of Ole Miss, this delegation was developed to foster one-on-one dialogue with their overseas counterparts. It also provided the opportunity to experience the rich culture and the education of the country in three teaching venues-in Beijing, Xi’an, and Shanghai.

Excerpt from Vicki’s educational journal:

We were warmly welcomed by schools in each of the three cities that we visited. We found that students at all grades have several different teachers instead of one teacher who teaches all subjects. Chinese students are taught by specialists in mathematics, Chinese, English, Music, Art and Physical Education. The instructional method was direct instruction using interactive lecturing, demonstration and guided practice. The students were well behaved and participatory. Some classes were being broadcast via satellite to the rural areas of western China.

The class size is much larger than in the United States with as many as 50-60 students and there are no teacher’s aides. However, special needs students attend different schools and are not included in the regular classrooms. Primary and middle schools are ability grouped. Secondary schools are split into college bound and non-college bound. Entrance into high school is determined by testing and entrance into college is similarly determined by testing. There are virtually no opportunities available for students who do not perform well on these extremely high stakes tests.

(continued on page 14)
MPE WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WALTER MOORE - DISTRICT 1
Walter is the Assistant Principal of Hickory Flat Attendance Center. Engaged in teaching since 1992, he has served as an administrator for the last 14 years. Mr. Moore earned his Bachelor of Science in Education from Delta State University and his Master of Education from Mississippi College. He has been voted Best Principal in Union County and was named Teacher of the Year in 1996 while employed with the Rankin County School District. Walter has been a member of MPE since 1996.

ANGELA TOWERS - DISTRICT 3
Angela is completing her first year on the MPE Board and has been re-nominated for a 3-year term. Angela has served as the principal of Cypress Park Elementary in Cleveland since 2006. Angela earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, her Master of Education in Educational Leadership and her Educational Specialist in Administration and Supervision degrees from Delta State University. Angela was named Teacher of the Year for the Cleveland School District in 2003. She joined MPE in 2000.

JEANNE’ ROWLAND - DISTRICT 5
Jeanne has been an educator, teaching in all levels of education, for 28 years. She has been selected as Star Teacher, Teacher of the Year, and Spirit of Tech Prep. Ms. Rowland has a specialist degree, national board certification and degrees in both Elementary Education and Secondary English. Jeanne joined MPE in 1999 and serves as a MPE Building Representative. She teaches English and Drama at West Jones High School.

JAMES (JAMIE) JACKSON - DISTRICT 7
A member of MPE since 2001, Jamie teaches Algebra at North Pike High School and for the Mississippi Virtual Public School. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Biology from Mississippi College and his Master of Science in Secondary Education from William Carey College. Mr. Jackson was recognized as a Star Teacher in 2007 and has coached football and baseball for the North Pike School District for the past nine years.

LYNN SMITHER - COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Lynn Smither earned her Bachelor of Science in General Studies and her Master of Science in Education from Delta State University, majoring in Physical Education with a minor in Special Education. She contributed her earlier years to K-12 education, before taking a position at Northeast Mississippi Community College, where she serves as the Dropout Recovery Coordinator. Ms. Smither is a member of the Council of Exceptional Children and has been a member of MPE since 2003.
2010 MPE CONVENTION
MPE held its 31st annual convention on Saturday, April 10th at the Jackson Hilton. Dr. Lynn House, Deputy State Superintendent of Education, shared the latest news from MDE. Members enjoyed a legislative update and discussion of how activities at the capitol will impact their jobs and classrooms next year. Janie Walters celebrated the profession of teaching and provided invigorating activities and reflections for the classroom! As always, MPE members enjoyed visiting with each other. Visit www.mpe.org to view the 2010 convention photo gallery.
MPE Members Visit China (continued)

China’s education system is organized on the national level with a single curriculum for the entire country, while the United States does not have a single national curriculum. One ironic thing that I gathered from our meeting is how China would like to become more like us and differentiate their curriculum more, while there is a movement in the United States for us to have a more unified national curriculum similar to China.

Excerpt from Dennis’s travel journal:
On Wednesday morning, December 9, we attempted to fly from Xi’an to Shanghai but halfway there we were denied landing and required to return to Xi’an due to possible H1N1 exposure. Fortunately we were not quarantined by the airline so we were sent to a local hotel to rest and wait for another flight. We finally got to fly out again tonight but were again delayed because another case of H1N1 was on our airplane. We finally got out of Xi’an and landed in Shanghai at 2:00 a.m. This entire day was spent waiting in a hotel, terminal, or just on the runway.

Dennis and Vicky Shirley atop the Great Wall of China
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2010 Legislative Session Highlights

Education Funding

- **HB 1170** allows school districts to furlough all employees for up to 3 days during the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. Employees will not be paid for furlough days, but will be credited with an additional 1/2 day of personal leave for every furloughed day. Furloughs must be taken on non-instructional days. HB 1170 also authorizes districts to reduce local supplements and conditions the payment of salaries on the availability of adequate funding provided for salaries. (Approved by the Governor)

- **HB 1622** appropriates approximately $80 million less in FY 2011 than the current level of K-12 funding (after FY 10 cuts), including approximately $37 million less for the MAEP. HB 1622 does provide for full funding of the Chickasaw Interest Program, as well as the National Board Certification Program. (Will be sent to the Governor)

- **HB 1059** appropriates $110 million of the anticipated $187 million that will be available if Congress extends the reduced state match for Medicaid, as this $187 million may then be appropriated to other state agencies. HB 1059 provides that approximately $82 million of this $110 million be directed to K-12 education and $13.3 million be directed to general support for universities. (Will be sent to the Governor)

- **SB 3131** appropriates approximately $131 million in state general funds for community college support in FY 2011 as compared to approximately $164 million in state general funds (prior to cuts) in FY 2010. SB 3131 provides $1.5 million for the colleges’ dropout recovery initiative. (Will be sent to the Governor)

- **SB 3129** appropriates approximately $281 million in state general funds for support of the state’s eight universities for FY 2011 as compared to approximately $341 million in state general funds (prior to cuts) in FY 2010. (Will be sent to the Governor)

Instruction and Discipline

- **SB 2015** prohibits bullying or harassing of students, employees or volunteers. District policies must include a prohibition against bullying or harassing behavior and must recognize the right of students to take reasonable actions to defend themselves from an attack by another bullying student. (Approved by the Governor)

- **SB 2293** provides for the transformation of a school classified as “failing” for three consecutive years into a New Start School under the administration of the MDE’s Recovery School District. The Education Employment Procedures Law will not apply to employees in a New Start School, but instructional staff may be rehired after completion of an improvement plan. SB 2293 also provides for chronically under-performing schools to become Conversion Charter Schools. Conversions will be managed by a local managing board comprised of parents and guardians elected locally and must comply with all state education laws, regulations, and standards. (Approved by the Governor)

Employee Benefits

- **HB 957** provides, from and after July 1, 2011, for a 90-day waiting period before a state retiree may be re-employed by the state and for the employer of any retiree who returns to work as a part-time or contract worker for the state to pay the full amount of the contribution to PERS for that employee. (Approved by the Governor)

- **SB 2744** provides, beginning July 1, 2010, the Health Insurance Management Board may assess active state employees $20 per month for health insurance with a $1,000 deductible. Employees who choose not to pay this $20 will have a deductible of $1,800. (Approved by the Governor)
MPE congratulates the recipients of the 2010 Undergraduate Scholarship Award. Each student member was awarded a check in the amount of $500.
Appreciate Teachers

There are several professions, including doctors, nurses and social workers, that have an impact on the lives of children. However, no other profession inspires and touches the lives of children on a daily basis the way that the teaching profession does. In Mississippi, there are more than 35,000 individuals who dedicate their own lives to improving the lives of children.

It is not often that teachers hear the words “thank you” or “I appreciate what you do for our children.” In today’s education environment, there are tremendous demands placed on the teaching profession. The competitive nature of our state, the country and the world demand the highest emphasis on academic achievement and results. Just a few years ago, the Mississippi Board of Education revamped the state’s curriculum and assessments to be more rigorous and challenging for our students. As teachers, you know how important it is to remain on top of their skills as you prepare to teach students more challenging lessons.

In addition to knowing your subject matter, you must be able to teach in a way that your students will understand. You must have qualities that span from being creative, energetic and enthusiastic to being loving, caring and patient. While the reward may not often come in the form of a pat on the back, the greatest reward is seeing the light of learning on a child’s face.

Traditionally, the Tuesday of the first full week of May is celebrated as National Teacher Day. National Teacher Day focuses on the contributions teachers make to help children succeed in school and in life. Mississippi is very fortunate to have many outstanding teachers that work hard each and every day to help prepare our students to become better learners, better thinkers and, more importantly, better people. As a former teacher and now as State Superintendent, I have traveled this state visiting schools and I have seen first-hand the high level of teaching and learning taking place in our schools.

As teachers, you are true role models and leaders in our communities. Your passion for your profession is obvious each time you assist a child who has a problem and each time you listen when a child has exciting news to share. You should be appreciated more than just on one day or a week. I hope that school leaders, parents and community members will find a small amount of time each and every day to say thank you. I believe that a simple “thank you” can do wonders for one’s spirit.

In our fast-paced lives, it is important for children and adults to take a moment to thank the professionals that help mold and shape the future leaders. Thank you for all you do throughout the year. Your work is critical to the success of our children in the classroom and beyond. During Teacher Appreciation Week, I hope you know that I am deeply grateful for your service, dedication and commitment to your students. Your efforts will have a profound impact on the lives of these children and the success of our state for decades to come.
Welcome to YOUR Credit Union!

Mississippi Employees Federal Credit Union: “Helping You – it’s what we’re all about”

We are so excited to welcome Mississippi Professional Educators to our Field of Membership (FOM), and we would like to tell you more about YOUR new credit union!

We are Mississippi Employees Federal Credit Union. We were chartered in 1950, and in 60 years we’ve grown to serve people of all ages and walks of life. We currently serve more than 5,000 members with roots to Mississippi, and we continue to grow and add more services so we can better serve our members.

Like all credit unions, we are a not-for-profit organization. We are member-owned, and each member is both owner and user of the credit union. Additionally, members have the privilege of nominating and electing the board of directors whom serve with no compensation. Members can even serve on the board if nominated and elected.

Some of the services we offer include:

- Regular Shares/savings accounts
- Christmas and Vacation Club Shares/savings accounts
- Free Share Draft/checking accounts that can earn monthly dividends
- Free checks (first order and re-orders)
- Free VISA debit cards
- A VISA credit card with no annual fee and a low 9.9% APR
- VISA gift cards
- A full-service Interactive Web site with free Home Banking and free Bill Pay
- Touchtone Audio Response
- A wide variety of consumer loans
- Wire transfer services
- and much more!

At Mississippi Employees Federal Credit Union, our mission is to provide you with quality, value added financial services that help you improve your quality of life. We will do this by providing the best, most modern financial products and services as reasonably possible; ensuring that our staff handles your financial needs in a courteous and professional manner; and maintaining the financial strength of your credit union so that we can meet your needs for many years to come.

To learn more about MEFCU, visit our Website at www.employeesfcu.com or call 1-888-961-2381. You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter, too. Just follow the Facebook and Twitter links on our home page to find us. We look forward to serving you!
Enrollment at Mississippi’s 15 community colleges continues to increase. Preliminary figures for the spring semester show an almost 16 percent increase compared to the previous spring. This is in addition to a preliminary increase in the fall semester of 13 percent.

Increases in enrollment are not exclusive only to Mississippi. A recent national report by The Campus Computing Project showed that of the 128 campus presidents and district chancellors that participated in the group’s survey, 94 percent reported their headcount enrollment had increased from winter 2009 to winter 2010. Additionally, the report shows that almost a third experienced total headcount enrollment growth of 15 percent or more and another third experienced enrollment growth between 10 and 15 percent. In Mississippi and across the nation, people are flocking to community colleges to increase their education, improve their job skills, and better their lives.

An area of the community college system that is experiencing enormous growth is the Mississippi Virtual Community College (MSVCC). In the spring semester, nearly 29,000 students took approximately two courses each for a total of more than 62,000 course enrollments. Course enrollments are up 14.9 percent compared to fall 2009, and up 24.8 percent compared to spring 2009.

The MSVCC was created in 2000 and initially 1,432 students were enrolled in 63 courses. Now nearly 2,300 courses are being taught by more than 1,300 faculty members from the community colleges. The MSVCC has been used as a model online learning program for colleges and others in Arkansas, Texas, and South Carolina.

In the same study by The Campus Computing Project that I referenced earlier, data confirmed that student demand, not institutional efforts to contain instructional costs, is the primary catalyst for the increase in online courses in community colleges. The MSVCC allows students the opportunity to take community college classes from the convenience of their home computers while still receiving support from a community college instructor. This is another great way community colleges are providing access to higher education for all of Mississippi.

As I write this article, the Legislature has handled most of its general bills and bond bills and has recessed until April 20 when lawmakers will return to finish writing the FY 2011 budget and take care of a couple of other bills. Before the recess, a few bills were passed that pertain to community colleges. In previous emails to you, MPE’s Kelly Riley has discussed H.B. 957 which calls for employers to contribute to PERS for retired employees who are brought back to work on a part time basis. H.B. 1071 establishes an Education Achievement Council with the goal of increasing educational attainment of the state’s working-age population by 2025. Finally, the bond bill, H.B. 1701, authorizes $24.3 million to community colleges for capital projects.

With the school year winding down and summer beginning, I thank all of our teachers for the job you do. With today’s shrinking budgets, along with expectations that are higher than ever, it takes a special person to answer the call to be a teacher. Thanks!
MPE Members Recognized as Top Metro Teachers

MPE members Joy Barnett and David Parks were 2 of 12 teachers recognized by the Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership in February as 2010 Metro Teacher Recognition Honorees. The program, sponsored by BancorpSouth, was created to show appreciation and recognize truly outstanding educators working in various schools in the Jackson metro area. Nominated by principals and parent/teacher organizations, honorees are selected based on essays, unique activity implementation, and ability to correlate the classroom to the real world. Joy Barnett teaches at Pearl Junior High School and joined MPE in 2009. David Parks is a 5th grade teacher at Luther Branson Elementary in Madison County and has been a member of MPE since 2007.

Headrick Named Woman of the Year in Education

Lisa Hughes Headrick, biology instructor at Jones County Junior College, has been named “2009 Woman of the Year in Education” by the American Biographical Institute. Recipients are selected based on their number of years spent in the field of education, number of graduate courses taken in their field of study, educational philosophy, number of professional awards received, school/college service, community involvement and presentations made on the state and local level. A member of MPE since 1989, Headrick has taught at Jones County Junior College for 21 years.

Member Reminded of the Value of Being a Teacher

Dr. Mary “Doc” Sennett, a MPE member since 2003, is retiring as a chemistry teacher at Northwest Rankin High School this spring to accept a position as Science Education Coordinator for Walden University’s master degree program. She shared the following via email with Kelly Riley, MPE Deputy Director, in early March. We have reprinted it here with her permission.

Today I had lunch with a former student. Friday he leaves for deployment to Afghanistan. I expected our conversation to focus on the life and death issues he would be facing over the coming months. To my delight, his conversation was full of reflections on how his education had prepared him. He was grateful his teachers had encouraged him to keep journals. He showed me the one he was taking with him. All the pages were blank – waiting for Friday when he will pen those first words. He was glad he went to schools that had rules and enforced consequences. Following orders would be, “no big deal.” He was grateful teachers had spent time on developing his critical thinking skills. There might be a time when he would be alone and need to make a major decision. He was proud he had teachers that taught him where Afghanistan is in the world. He was certain a lot people did not know. He was happy that his high school had a community service requirement. He would be continuing to help others. He was even pleased he had taken my chemistry class. After all, his specialty is explosives! His reflections went on and on, and my heart warmed with each one.

Yes, I had the best lunch of my lifetime. I was given the opportunity to truly witness the value of education. In doing so, I was reminded of the value of being a teacher.
When my children were born, my wife and I almost immediately started talking about where they would attend preschool. As professional educators, we unequivocally believed that our children’s long-term success hinged on starting the learning process early.

Now that my children are getting older, we have latched onto another preparation piece that I am convinced is just as important as building a firm learning foundation: Ensuring that the transition from one major step to the next in their educational careers is as seamless as possible.

No longer can we view our education systems in silos. From pre-Kindergarten through the highest degree, we must begin to view teaching and learning as a continuum – one level building on and influencing the next.

Inviting others onto our turf can be a difficult but in Mississippi, where we are first on so many lists where we should be last and last where we should be first, we have no choice but to begin to work better together.

In higher education, we have begun this process by re-examining areas like articulation and college-readiness.

In March, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning passed a new policy aimed at easing the process for community college students with an Associate of Arts to transfer to one of our eight public universities. Now, a group of administrators and faculty from Mississippi’s two- and four-year postsecondary institutions are working together to further streamline the process for the top 10 community and junior college majors.

In the college-readiness arena, the Office of Academic and Student Affairs recently launched the Counselor’s Portal, a Web site that allows high school guidance counselors and admissions personnel to submit questions to the Board office on anything from dual enrollment opportunities to the college preparatory curriculum. We hope this new system will help our counselors better navigate the sometimes complicated admissions process.

However, you, our valued teachers, instructors and professors from across the state are our best resources in creating the continuum of education that will help our students succeed.

As educators, you have the awesome responsibility of looking beyond the year that you are teaching in order to prepare students for the steps they will have to take in the future. You have the opportunity to help them dream big, not just get through the next homework assignment or pop quiz.

Moving Mississippi forward depends on encouraging more of our young people to begin preparing as soon as possible for college. Moving Mississippi forward depends on pushing more of our citizens who pass through our classrooms – no matter what age or level – that getting a degree is the best investment they can make for themselves and for the state.

As I see it, the first day of college for my children began on the first day of preschool.

When I look back at all of their achievements, I know I will be grateful to the many teachers, instructors and professors who worked together to look beyond the immediate present and help prepare them for a lifetime of success.
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**Mississippi Professional Educators**

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