

Mississippi State UNIVERSITY

SERVING MISSISSIPPI

A REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT FOR MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY CONSTITUENTS

Retention is critical for students and for state

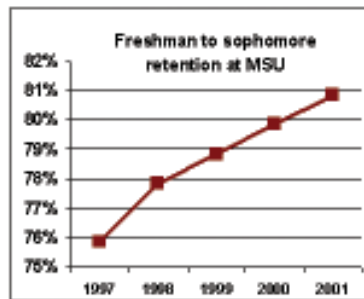
A key university priority is to improve graduation and retention rates, so we were particularly pleased to learn recently that one of the university's programs focusing on that area has been selected for a national award (see story on page 3).

Our "Pathfinder" program, started and directed by Dr. David McMillen, is one of eight innovative efforts across the nation chosen to receive a Retention Excellence Award. The honor given by Noel-Levitz, an operating division of Sallie Mae and a leading higher education consulting firm, recognizes programs and services throughout the U.S. and Canada that promote student success. Judging is based on



measurable outcomes, originality, creativity, use of resources, and adaptability to other institutions.

As Noel-Levitz senior executive Lana Low noted, "Hundreds of thousands of dollars are lost to colleges and universities each year when students leave campus without receiving a degree. Students miss out, too—those who stay in school and complete a bachelor's degree earn over 80 percent more, on average, than those with only a high school diploma. That is why innovative retention programs such as this one are so important."



Mississippi continues to lag well behind the national average in the proportion of our citizens who hold college degrees, and that statistic is clearly linked to our last-place position in per capita income. To bring our educational attainment to the national average of 24.4 percent of adults with a bachelor's degree, we would need almost 132,000 more college-educated Mississippians.

It will take the combined efforts of all of us engaged in education in Mississippi—in elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, and universities—along with the support of parents, policy makers, and business and industry, to overcome our education deficit and improve the quality of life for all of our citizens.

We are working hard to recruit high school and community college graduates from throughout the state, and we are committed to providing new freshmen with the support they need to be successful through programs such as Pathfinder, mentoring efforts, and academic advising. We also are working to make the transition to MSU as easy as possible for community college graduates and other transfer students. (About half of those who graduate from MSU began their college careers elsewhere, and those students consistently graduate at the same rate as their classmates who entered the university as freshmen.)

Access and opportunity make up the most critical part of our mission as The People's University. We welcome every student who can benefit from a Mississippi State education and we are committed to the success of every student we admit.

J. Charles Lee, President

Mississippi State UNIVERSITY

125 YEARS
1878 — 2003

▶ Viking founder endows architecture college's Small Town Center

A \$2.5 million donation by Fred E. Carl Jr. of Greenwood will support small town design research and education at MSU's College of Architecture. The gift from the president of Viking Range Corp. and Viking Capital Ventures will endow the Small Town Center, now named the Carl Small Town Center.

Carl is a former MSU architecture student who has supported scholarships, student recruiting, and small town projects of the College of Architecture. The latest gift will expand the scope and depth of the Small

▶ Community college training program marks 10th year

Teachers and administrators from community colleges in five Southern states attended a leadership training program celebrating its 10th year at Mississippi State in July.

The Mid-South Community College Fellowship Program that helps prepare community college administrators was established with assistance from the Meridian-based Phil Hardin Foundation in 1994. Since then, participating schools have joined with the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and the Lower Pearl River Valley Foundation to provide financial support.

The program offers the only university-based education in Mississippi focused exclusively on community college leadership. More than 200 community college professionals have participated in the program, said director Ned Lovell.

This year's MCCFP program was held in conjunction with the Summer Community/Junior College Conference at MSU sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs.

Mississippi State also joins with Alcorn State University to operate the Mid-South Partnership for Rural Community Colleges, a program initiated with support from the Ford Foundation and with federal funding to provide research and service in support of community colleges.

▶ Students win national contest

A team of MSU seniors won a share of the national championship in a human resource management competition in June.

The three students defeated teams from Penn State, Utah State and North Carolina en route to the championship match at the annual conference of the Society for Human Resource Management.

The MSU team was leading St. Norbert College in the final matchup when problems with the computerized game board forced a halt in the competition. SHRM decided the two finalists would share the national title.

Town Center and increase the number of communities it serves.

The center, established in 1979, has a national reputation for helping Mississippi towns with aesthetic and structural challenges and uses community projects as real-world teaching tools for architecture students.

Viking Range, which Carl founded in 1987, manufactures and markets professional-grade kitchen appliances for the home. The company is based in Greenwood and employs more than 1,000 workers in Leflore County.



Carl

▶ Rural Medical Scholars program shows results

When Ashley Harris was accepted into medical school this year, organizers of a summer program for high schoolers saw results they've been anticipating for five years.

Harris, 21, participated in the Rural Medical Scholars program at Mississippi State in 1999.

He is just eight hours short of a biochemistry degree at MSU, and

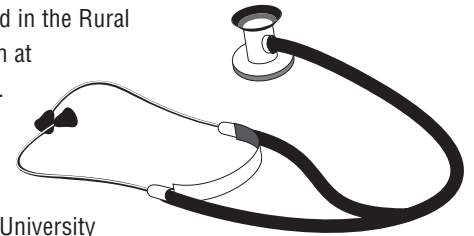
begins medical school at University Medical Center in Jackson in August. He will earn his degree from MSU after his first year of medical school.

Program director Bonnie Carew said Rural Medical Scholars was started in 1998 because Mississippi has the lowest number of physicians per capita of any state in the country. Harris is the first of three program graduates admitted to medical school so far.

After three more years of medical school and a three-year residency, Harris will be a family practitioner. And the Water Valley native has a job waiting in his hometown.

Yalobusha County has just three family practitioners, and two of them are approaching retirement age. Officials were concerned enough to recruit Harris to go to medical school, expenses paid, then work at Water Valley hospital for three years.

The summer before his senior year in high school, Harris took part in the five-week Rural Medical Scholars program offered by the MSU Extension Service and funded by the Mississippi Rural Health Corps, a partnership between the Extension Service and the state's 15 community and junior colleges.



► Freshman retention program success noted with national award

A program that focuses on preventing freshmen from dropping out by encouraging regular class attendance has won a national award. MSU's five-year-old "Pathfinder" program received a Retention Excellence Award in July at the National Conference on Student Retention. When the program started, about 76 percent of freshmen returned for a second year. That number has now topped 81 percent.

MSU was one of eight award winners picked by Noel-Levitz, a higher education consulting firm that is an operating unit of the Sallie Mae federally guaranteed national student loan fund.

As a result of the low-budget, high-impact program, freshmen who miss more than two classes in the first six weeks of school can expect a



friendly phone call, e-mail or personal visit to remind them how important attendance is to academic success.

Class attendance has a direct effect on academic performance and retention, according to program founder and director David McMillen. When Pathfinder started, about 25 percent of freshmen had class attendance problems. That's down to 10 percent.

The effort includes a letter from the president to parents of incoming freshmen, Student Affairs training for Orientation leaders and others who visit freshmen with class attendance problems, faculty attendance reports, and support from Institutional Research, Information Technology Services, Athletic Advising, and the Social Science Research Center.

Other MSU programs complement the effort. A Student Affairs mentoring project pairs new freshmen with faculty and staff volunteers to provide support, and the University Academic Advising Center continually stresses positive academic experiences.

► Former LSU, Iowa State dean named MSU provost

The dean of Iowa State University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is being named to the second-ranking position at Mississippi State. Peter W. Rabideau will become provost and vice president for academic affairs by Sept. 1.

Rabideau, whose academic specialty is organic chemistry, earlier served as dean of the College of Basic Sciences at Louisiana State University. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and has held national appointments with the American Chemical Society and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences.



Rabideau

He earned master's and doctoral degrees from Case Western Reserve University and a bachelor's degree from Loyola University of Chicago.

"Dr. Rabideau emerged as the candidate ideally suited for this vital position by virtue of his outstanding credentials as a scholar, his extensive critical experience as an academic dean at two land-grant universities, and his reputation for getting important things done," said President Charles Lee.

► Computer scientist helping make Mars lander smarter

A Mississippi State professor is helping NASA develop a new generation of roving robots that can "think" their way out of tight spots and secure data while exploring space.

Eric Hansen, an assistant professor of computer science, is working on artificial intelligence software for the remote-controlled landers sent to probe Mars and other planets. The roving robots transmit data about rock and soil samples or atmosphere back to Earth as they scoop and dig. Hansen is part of a team using a NASA grant to develop software that could let rovers act more independently of Earth controls.

► MSU cited for degrees to African-Americans

Mississippi State ranked 61st among all institutions and 37th among historically white colleges and universities in awarding bachelor's degrees to African-Americans in 2001-02. By discipline, MSU is seventh in education, 36th in business, and 37th in engineering in awarding baccalaureate degrees to African-Americans.

The figures are from Black Issues in Higher Education magazine, which drew on U.S. Department of Education data for the report in the June 5 issue. MSU awarded 377 bachelor's degrees to African-Americans in 2001-02, representing 14 percent of the university's total. The number was up from 287 in the previous year.

► Program pushes math research

A select group of undergraduates is taking part in a summer research experience at MSU funded by the National Science Foundation to increase advanced research in mathematical sciences by women and other under-represented groups.

Nine students from universities and colleges in eight states were chosen from among the 65 who applied for the nine-week program. Each receives a \$3,200 stipend, plus housing, dining and travel. Summer sessions also are planned for 2004 and 2006.

► Teachers focus on documents of democracy

Some 30 Mississippi elementary, middle and high school teachers spent a week in June at the “We the People” Summer Institute participating in an in-depth examination of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The workshop is sponsored by Mississippi’s Center for Civic Education, based at MSU. The U.S. Department of Education funds the program, providing participants with no-cost lodging and meals, a library of constitutional literature, and textbooks and other materials. Sessions are led by faculty members from MSU and other colleges and universities.

► Teachers make classroom to industry connection

Forty-four middle school and high school teachers participating in a summer program at MSU saw their classroom lessons applied on the job.

Math and technology teachers enrolled in the MSU Research Experiences in Industry program funded by the National Science Foundation and FastForward Mississippi spent one week of the four-week program working in a regional industry. Teachers worked at Northrop Grumman’s Ingalls shipbuilding operations in Pascagoula or at a TVA operation in Chattanooga, Muscle Shoals, or Ackerman.

The goal is to help teachers make the connection between industry and the classroom, said coordinator Sandra Harpole, director of MSU’s Center for Science, Mathematics and Technology.

“We the People” helps teachers gain a better understanding of constitutional government using lectures, discussions, and other activities. The program helps teachers prepare for simulated congressional hearings in the classroom.



The new home for the MSU Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems, above, will open this fall in the Research and Technology Park adjacent to campus.



The \$9 million facility housing automotive-related research is being built with state funds. Taking shape across the street, right, is the Powe Center for Innovative Technology, a small business incubator to be operated by Golden Triangle Enterprise Center and owned by the MSU Research and Technology Corp., which provided funding along with the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Economic Development Administration and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

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**Office of the President
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Mississippi State, MS 39762-5509**

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