

PRIORITIES AND PLANNING COMMITTEE II
FINAL REPORT



Presented to Donald W. Zacharias, President
Mississippi State University
March 16, 1992



Office of the President

March 16, 1992

To: Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Students of Mississippi State:

The committee assigned to suggest ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the non-academic operations of Mississippi State has completed its work, and its observations and recommendations are included in the enclosed report. I have studied each of the recommendations and, in consultation with the vice presidents and others, have formulated the university's responses. These also are included in the enclosed report.

The committee was asked to study administrative and support services as Phase II of the Priorities and Planning process. The group has worked with great diligence over the past several months and the university community is indebted to these individuals for their efforts. They have produced numerous valuable and insightful recommendations which will help the university perform more effectively while making the best use of its limited resources.

The great majority of the committee's recommendations--about 80 percent--have been accepted without reservations or modification. Several others have been accepted with only minor modifications, and a few were replaced with alternative measures. Out of more than 170 recommendations prepared by the committee, only about a dozen cannot be accepted or implemented--in some cases because acceptance is precluded by state law or Board of Trustees policy.

Some of the committee's recommendations can be implemented immediately, and will be. Naturally, however, much work remains to be done, and a great deal of time and energy will be required to implement some recommendations over the coming months and years. Several major, complex issues require further study, as the committee noted, and I will appoint task forces within the next few weeks to pursue further those topics.

The acceptance of this report and the university commitments outlined here represent a turning point for Mississippi State. I believe the university will become stronger in many respects as a result of the actions we are taking now.

We will have a more open, more participatory campus, with improved communication among faculty, staff, administrators, and students. The Executive Council is being expanded to include faculty, staff, and student representatives. A university review committee, with broad representation, will advise on major policies and expenditures. The Deans Council, Department Heads Councils in each college, and Professional and Support Staff Advisory Council will be expanded and made more inclusive. Efforts to communicate the intricacies of the university budget process will be intensified, and we will use private funds to reward employees who find creative ways in which the university can operate more efficiently.

We will have a leaner administration and changes in the operation of several support services. We will work toward implementing university-wide a Total Quality Management system. We will eliminate immediately two associate vice president positions and phase out two other senior level administrative positions. We will create a motor pool to reduce the number of university vehicles, examine ways to consolidate administrative data processing units, staff benefit functions, and mail services, and implement centralized inventory management and capital asset management systems. We will explore the benefits of

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merging University Relations and Information Services, and we will conduct intensive reviews of the overall operations of the University Television Center, Student Financial Aid, the Golf Course, and Aircraft Operations. The Learning Center will be restructured and the functions of the Faculty Development Center will be redistributed.

We will make significant efforts to increase self-generated revenue and to reallocate scarce state funds. Out-of-state tuition waivers will be continued at a reduced level. An application fee for Mississippi residents will be established and the application fee for non-residents will be increased. The Alumni Association and the Development office gradually will become self-supporting as Education and General funds are withdrawn from those operations. We will proceed with examinations of the feasibility of contracting with private vendors to operate the bookstore, custodial services, and some dining service operations.

These represent only selected highlights from a wide-ranging and ambitious agenda. Implementation of many of these recommendations will be neither easy nor pleasant. Some services to which the campus has become accustomed will be eliminated or curtailed. The number of individuals who will be directly affected cannot be accurately tallied at this point, but some currently filled positions will likely be eliminated.

These actions are necessary in part because of dwindling state support. Even before we begin implementing the recommendations in this report, the university has adjusted to a permanent loss of \$2.2 million in state support for on-campus operations stemming from the budget cut we experienced last month. (The Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine suffered a similar blow.) The recommendations in this report include further steps toward efficiency or reductions. But no one should assume that even the full implementation of these recommendations will by any means solve the university's short-term financial crisis.

Before the extent of last month's state budget cut became known, the Board of Trustees called for pay raises for faculty and staff for 1992-93. The Board has not rescinded that directive. In the absence of new revenue, such salary increases would require the immediate reallocation of an *additional* \$2.8 million from existing sources. Such reallocations, which also would be in addition to any stemming from the report in hand; would have a dramatic and unfortunate impact on university operations. To compound the problem still further, we must anticipate numerous increases in fixed costs during the year ahead, and we cannot rule out the possibility of still another reduction in state support.

There is no question that we are confronted with difficult and even threatening circumstances. The near future will be a pivotal time in the long history of Mississippi State. But I have limitless confidence in the talents, the dedication, and the resiliency of the people who make up this university, and my optimism about its long-term future is undiminished. We will survive the present adversity and emerge stronger in spirit and more focused in our efforts, and positioned to make the best possible use of the expanded support which will certainly, if belatedly, come to Mississippi State.

Sincerely,


Donald W. Zacharias
President

Enclosure

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INTRODUCTION

The Priorities and Planning Committee II was charged by President Zacharias on November 8, 1991, to "review the support functions of the University and determine what their role should be in the future, and to examine the budget relationship between the instructional and support functions of the institution." Further, the Committee was directed "to evaluate the quality, relevance and efficiency of University supporting units, and to suggest ways in which they can provide improved or more appropriate services in the future, recognizing that many potential changes would require more than a year to implement." The final report was requested to be presented to the President by March 16, 1992. The time constraint has limited the extent and depth of analysis, but these recommendations should provide a framework for further study and change.

The Committee examined management and operations in and across the various support units as well as the management structure of the entire University. The structural form and functions were reviewed and evaluated relative to the University's need for the function, the quality of the service provided, and the cost and efficiency of the operation.

The Committee studied completed questionnaires submitted by the units, and conducted detailed interviews with each unit to amplify the information base. External reviews and input from faculty, staff, and students were utilized. Coordination meetings were held with the Chairs of the Priorities and Planning Committees I and III. Issues were discussed with alumni leaders and suggestions were solicited. Organizational structures and functions of other land-grant and comprehensive universities such as Arkansas, Auburn, Clemson, Illinois, Iowa State, Kansas State, Kentucky, North Carolina State, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Pennsylvania State, Purdue, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Washington State, and Wisconsin were examined. Colleagues at several of these institutions were contacted for information. A preliminary report with observations was released on February 14, 1992, to the University community. Feedback from units and individuals concerning the observations was studied.

The Committee operated under the premise that the President is responsible for the administration of the institution, and all authority delegated by the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning is administered through the Office of the President. The Committee believes the administrative organization and support units of the University exist to provide leadership and facilitate the academic, research, and service programs consistent with the mission of the land-grant university of Mississippi.

The present management structure and operational policies have evolved over time. The University has grown from a collection of units, departments, and colleges into an extremely complex organization. Despite the coalescence into a university, the institution is perceived to function as a multiversity. Increased federal and state regulations and insatiable demands for accountability have imposed mandatory management functions which sap the time and energy of administrators, faculty, and staff, and detract from teaching, research, and service activities.

There is a desire among faculty and staff for increased involvement in University governance. This desire is genuine and not just a phenomenon caused by economic uncertainty. There is also a willingness to accept more responsibility for performance if faculty and staff are more involved in decision-making. The University has grown and matured to a level requiring broader input and structure to formulate policy. Communication and coordination across organizational units seem critical to attain optimum efficiency.

Comparisons with organizational structures and resources of regional institutions clearly indicate the University accomplishes much with far less human and fiscal resources. Such comparisons do not resolve the current fiscal dilemma or address the uncertain future. The Committee has taken a rather philosophical approach in evaluating form and function, since there are no generally accepted standards. Also the number, complexity, and uniqueness of the units studied made general, consistent, and across-the-board criteria impossible to develop. For instance, Campus Landscape and the University's research programs are too different to be judged by identical criteria.

The function of University management is to provide leadership to and support for the academic, research, and service components. Pursuit of the University missions and goals should be conducted in an atmosphere of shared governance, with mutual planning and implementing of decisions and strategies for maximum effectiveness. The nature of academia suggests that faculty and staff share in the formulation of University policies and assume a commensurate level of responsibility. It seems critical that faculty and staff have a major responsibility in policy formulation and

implementation of decisions affecting the academic, research and service roles of the institution. The University community should foster a culture which allows it to reorganize and adjust quickly to changing conditions in order to strengthen programs and efficiently use resources.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Current resource reductions and uncertain future support for higher education necessitate change to remain viable and competitive into the 21st century. The Committee proposes consideration of the following mechanisms to address the future and efficiently utilize faculty, staff, and resources for the common good. These recommendations provide a framework for reorganization and increased faculty and staff involvement.

- 1.1 The Committee explored options to reduce the administrative and support costs of the University. Reviewing the budget document and the financial report showed that the University has evolved into a very complex financial system. Reallocation of funds across the University could be accomplished using a process similar to the zero-based budget concept. This process requires that specific goals, priorities, and criteria be defined. The process makes ineffective units visible. It is suggested that this budget process be conducted every five years.

Response: The University endorses the concept of a continuing effort to improve the budgeting process and to increase efficiency and accountability. A task force will be appointed to explore ways of ensuring continuous improvement, and will consider the feasibility of implementing a total quality management program. The Office of Institutional Research will provide staff support and consultation.

- 1.2 A mission statement and a clearly defined set of goals and objectives should be developed to define what the University is, what it represents, and what it strives to achieve. Specific goals should allow for measurement of success.

Response: The University will adopt a revised mission statement by June 1, 1992. The recommendations of the SACS Self-Study committees and the Academic Priorities and Planning Committee (Phase I) will be taken into account in arriving at the mission statement and any accompanying goals or priorities.

- 1.3 The management recommendations are built upon an assumption of a structural model that includes a strong provost, with all units except the President's staff reporting through the Provost.

Response: The Provost will continue to serve as the second-ranking campus executive and will perform the duties of the president in his absence. The other University vice presidents are to consult with the Provost and work cooperatively with him on any and all matters which impinge on the academic program of the University, while continuing to report to the President on matters which fall primarily within their specific areas of responsibility.

- 1.4 The Executive Council should function as a recommending body to the President on matters of University policy, budget, and priorities, with membership including the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice Presidents, Chair of Faculty Council, and Chair of Staff Council. The President should serve as chair.

Response: The Executive Council, which is advisory to the President, will be expanded to include the chair of the Faculty Council, the chair of the Staff Council, and the president of the Student Association. The

President will continue to call on members of his executive management team for advice and consultation at his discretion.

- 1.5 The Academic Deans' Council should serve as a recommending body to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs on academic policy, budget, and priority matters, with the Deans and the Vice Chair of Faculty Council serving as members. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs should serve as Chair.

Response: The recommendation is accepted with the modification that the vice president of the Student Association will serve as a member.

- 1.6 The Academic Department Heads/Chairs' Council should function as a recommending body to the Dean with representation by the Department Heads/Chairs and at least one elected faculty representative. The Dean of the College should serve as Chair.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 1.7 Each Academic Department should conduct regular meetings on policy, budget, and priorities, with the Department Head/Chair serving as Chair.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 1.8 The above Councils and Departments are encouraged to vote. Minutes should be available. Each Council Chair may add representation as appropriate.

Response: The recommendation is accepted with the modification that the University encourages councils, departments and other advisory bodies to strive for consensus on the issues before them, rather than relying on votes as representations of the groups' preferences.

- 1.9 The University's organizational structure should focus on outcomes; both individuals and units should be evaluated on the basis of predetermined goals and objectives.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 1.10 Colleges should vote by October 1, 1993, on changing the position of Department Head to Department Chair. The Department Chair, to be selected by the Department faculty and College Dean, would be renewable at intervals to be determined by the College faculty.

Response: This recommendation is referred to the Provost and the academic deans for further consideration.

- 1.11 Adequate classroom and laboratory facilities are fundamental to the drive for excellence. Resources for classroom renovation and the library expansion should be a high priority. Reserve funds for classroom renovation should be utilized.

Response: Recommendation accepted. The process for identifying needs and setting priorities for classroom and library improvements will be refined; such improvements are necessarily subject to the availability of funds.

- 1.12 The investment in out-of-state tuition waivers for athletes, band and chorus members, children of alumni, and out-of-state ACT Scholarship winners should be reduced significantly. The waivers should be in the amount

of set percentages of the total out-of-state tuition, and a uniform policy on academic eligibility for the waivers should be developed.

Response: *Out-of-state tuition waivers will be reduced by 10 percent, effective in Fall semester 1992. The estimated revenue increase is \$130,000 a year.*

- 1.13 The University should continue to formulate and implement consistent policies on hiring, evaluation, separation, and dismissal. Special attention should be given to the lack of consistent policies governing consulting, supplemental salaries, branch teaching salaries, and compensatory time. Clearly stated policies implemented uniformly could reduce confusion and uncertainty, improve morale and mutual trust, and result in maximum effectiveness.

Response: *Recommendation accepted.*

- 1.14 The University should establish a task force to be appointed by the President to address several issues related to the research/service delivery functions of the University. Specific issues to be addressed would include: (a) salaried, tenured positions on soft money; (b) tenure and promotion policies for the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service faculty; (c) the distribution of recovered overhead; and (d) research units outside of colleges. The task force should be appointed soon and issue its report by March 1993 so that the new policies could be in place by July 1, 1993.

Response: *The recommendation is accepted with the modification that more than one task force will be appointed to study the wide range of substantive issues identified.*

- 1.15 A uniform policy defining faculty time allocated for instruction, research, service, and creative endeavors should be established. Allocation of faculty time should be based upon evaluation of performance.

Response: *Recommendation accepted.*

- 1.16 The Professional and Support Staff Advisory Council should be changed to a council with elected representatives.

Response: *The University concurs with the desire to make the Staff Council more representative of its constituents. The existing council will be asked to recommend policies and procedures for making its membership more broad-based and inclusive.*

- 1.17 The University should review the number and composition of colleges. Academic units should be merged if such mergers are shown to be effective and efficient, while maintaining quality. The following are suggestions that have some logical underpinnings, but are by no means unique. Combining the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, the School of Forest Resources, and the College of Veterinary Medicine into the College of Agriculture, Home Economics, Forest Resources, and Veterinary Medicine would increase its academic core. Another option would be to divide the College of Arts and Sciences, with Biological Sciences added to the expanded College of Agriculture, Home Economics, Forest Resources, and Veterinary Medicine to form the College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Life Sciences. The other sciences would be combined with Engineering to form the College of Engineering and Sciences. The remaining Arts and Sciences departments would be joined with Architecture to form the College of Liberal Arts and Architecture. These steps would

reduce the number of colleges and could substantially reduce administrative and support costs if approached with a positive attitude by administrators, faculty, and staff.

Response: The University encourages a review of the number and composition of colleges, followed by any appropriate mergers. Consideration of specific merger possibilities will be deferred pending such a review.

- 1.18 The University should review the number and responsibilities of the Vice Presidents. It could be possible to reduce the number by consolidating and/or shifting the responsibilities of the Vice Presidents for Administration, Research, and Student Affairs into other areas.

Response: The University will continue to function for the foreseeable future with its current number of vice president positions.

- 1.19 When a recommendation changes the reporting line for a position or function, the funds supporting the position or function should be shifted unless specifically stated otherwise.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 1.20 A budget and expenditure report with variations explained should be provided in an easy-to-read form to the University community.

Response: Recommendation accepted. The Office of Institutional Research will be assigned primary responsibility for such reports.

- 1.21 In order to reduce or counteract the reluctance of many units and/or individuals to come forward with ideas for saving money, incentives should be provided to encourage this, perhaps in the form of a percentage of the savings realized coming back to an account to serve the individuals or units making the suggestions. Such suggestions should be able to be made and evaluated confidentially. Recommendations should be made to the President and those of a non-confidential nature should be made available to the University community for feedback and discussion.

Response: Recommendation accepted. Incentives for money-saving suggestions which are adopted will be provided through private funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY UNIT

2.0 OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

The primary function of this unit is to provide leadership to the University. Interaction with external publics is an increasingly important component.

- 2.1 The offices of the Affirmative Action Officer, Budget and Planning Officer, Government Relations Officer, Internal Auditor, and University Counsel should be moved to one location sharing facilities and resources.

Response: The staff functions reporting to the President will be housed together when an appropriate space can be provided.

3.0 DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

3.1 Office of the Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs

The primary function of this administrative unit is to support and oversee the academic mission of the University.

- 3.1.1 One Associate Vice President should coordinate undergraduate programs. The vacant Associate Vice President position should be eliminated.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.1.2 The University should study the need for a position responsible for information technology.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

3.2 Computing Center

Computing Center provides administrative data processing, systems and network programming, systems and network operations, and user services for the University.

- 3.2.1 All Administrative Data Processing units (Mississippi State University, Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station) should be integrated into one central system.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

3.3 Continuing Education

Continuing Education extends educational opportunities through a variety of learning options to individuals, groups and agencies not reached or served through traditional programs.

- 3.3.1 The Division of Continuing Education should develop a plan to become more self-supporting.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.3.2 The Asian Studies Center should be moved to International Programs.

Response: The Asian Studies Center will retain its current place in the organizational structure. A relocation to a different unit would require the employment of at least one additional staff member, resulting in increased cost.

- 3.3.3 Academic departments should be responsible for the academic content of all credit courses.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.3.4 Collaborative efforts between the Division of Continuing Education, Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service and academic units should be encouraged. These efforts should be based on the needs of Mississippi citizens.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

3.4 Cooperative Education

Cooperative Education establishes, maintains and enhances quality cooperative education relationships with public and private sector employers for qualified Mississippi State University students.

- 3.4.1 All campus units should actively work through Cooperative Education so more students can access this program.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.4.2 The Cooperative Education office should be physically relocated on the campus to provide higher visibility and easier access.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.4.3 To offset costs, a student registration fee consistent with regional standards should be charged for each work semester.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

3.5 Faculty Development Center

The Faculty Development Center was established as a campus-wide effort to improve instruction.

- 3.5.1 The Faculty Development Center as it currently exists should be eliminated; however, the graphics support functions now provided by the Faculty Development Center are substantially used and should be maintained and incorporated into the future plans of the MSU Library.

Response: The recommendation is accepted. The Faculty Development Center will be eliminated as a separate unit. The responsibility for providing visual aids for instructional use will be assigned to another unit. The responsibility for training graduate teaching assistants will be transferred to the Graduate School, along with the funds currently devoted to that purpose.

3.6 Graduate School

The mission of the Graduate School is to provide advanced academic study beyond the baccalaureate, programs in which students can develop methods of independent and systematic investigation, and a setting in which faculty and students can pursue scholarly activities and research.

- 3.6.1 The title of Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs should be eliminated. The Dean of the Graduate School should continue to coordinate graduate programs.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.6.2 The Graduate School should actively pursue funds to increase the number of graduate assistants. This activity should increase the base for the Doctoral I designation.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.6.3 The Graduate School should increase utilization of technology, resulting in more efficient use of personnel, a reduction of staff size, and a decrease in paperwork.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.6.4 The Graduate School should assume responsibility for any general training needed for graduate teaching assistants. A committee of faculty and students should be established to assess the English speaking ability of all graduate teaching assistants before a teaching assistantship is offered.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.6.5 The Graduate School should evaluate the distribution of new monies for assistantships to maximize growth of the graduate program.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

3.7 Honors Program

The Honors Program provides an opportunity to academically advanced students for challenging experiences in the educational environment. The program reports administratively to the College of Arts and Sciences but serves students throughout the University.

- 3.7.1 The Honors Program goals, priorities, structure, and budget should be made with the concurrence of an elected committee of Honors faculty and students.

Response: The recommendation is accepted with the modification that the proposed advisory committee on the operation of the Honors Program will not be expected to have budgetary responsibilities.

- 3.7.2 The Honors Program should report administratively to the Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs to make the program more accessible and visible to the entire academic community.

Response: Recommendation accepted.

- 3.7.3 All departments should be encouraged to offer additional Honors courses by providing participating departments with additional funds for this purpose.

Response: The recommendation is accepted with the understanding that additional funds are not available at this time.

3.8 Learning Center

The Learning Center offers assistance to students seeking academic support.

- 3.8.1 The Learning Center should be moved to the Division of Student Affairs.

Response: The Learning Center will be restructured and remain in Academic Affairs.

- 3.8.2 All credit courses currently taught by or through The Learning Center should be transferred to appropriate academic units.

Response: The recommendation is accepted.

- 3.8.3 Tutoring in specific courses should become the responsibility of the academic departments, which could provide needed tutoring more effectively and efficiently.

Response: The recommendation is accepted with the modification that an advising center will be created as part of the restructured Learning Center. College-based academic peer counseling (tutoring) will be explored.

3.9 Registrar's Office

The functions of the Registrar's Office encompass different areas including delivery of complete academic record services, development and implementation of a computerized student information system, registration and class scheduling, catalog and brochure preparation, master schedule publication, and the other services of a Registrar's Office.

- 3.9.1 The Registrar's Office should continue to improve the utilization of advanced technologies, which should result in more efficient use of personnel, a reduction in staff size, and a decrease in paperwork.

Response: Recommendation accepted.