

Guest Editorial

True Measures of University Research Success

A recent article in *The Hattiesburg American* ("[State universities play a key role in innovation efforts](#)") is common fare found in *THA* and enlightening as to what it falls into the category of "news".

THA routinely runs public relations "news" stories about USM and other Mississippi state universities. It could, but doesn't, ask what research does for Mississippi? *THA* could identify any real measures of success. We all know how Mississippi ranks with regard to education, economic success, etc. How has the research advanced Mississippi on the basis of real measures of education and economic success?

What Mississippians get from the *Hattiesburg American* is rah-rah public relations and not one serious question about the reliability or effectiveness of any research it discusses or a discussion of precisely how the research has advanced Mississippi from the bottom of the country's measures of education and the economy. One blatant example of this cheerleading is found in *THA's* article:

THA cheerfully quotes President Rodney Bennett who claims, without a single example, "At Southern Miss, we pride ourselves on developing new innovation techniques,"... "As a top-tier research university with two campuses and five additional teaching and research sites, we are a leader in higher education not only in the state of Mississippi and the Southern region, but also throughout the country."

Yet, *THA* blithely accepts Bennett's overblown claim that Southern Miss is "a top-tier research university. However, there is no mention of Southern Miss' status as a fourth tier unrated university. Not a single sentence focuses on this devastatingly serious problem. In fact, the 2013 edition of *Best Colleges* from *U.S. News & World Report* reported a 22% 4-year graduation rate for USM. In the 2012 edition, USM's 4-year graduation rate was also 22%. After six years, USM can manage to graduate only 47% of its students. As *usmnews.net* has previously commented graduation rate is the ultimate statistic and USM is failing.

Stay tuned. *THA* will continue to report happy, happy stories.