

June 22, 2001

Dr. Cecil Burge  
Associate Vice President for Research  
and Technology Transfer  
University of Southern Mississippi, Box 5116  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406-5116

Dear Dr. Burge:

The creation and strengthening of technology-based firms is increasingly seen as critical to the future growth and diversity of the Mississippi economy. Significant energy and resources have been invested to help prepare Mississippi for the “new economy.”

The federal SBIR/STTR programs have, since their inception, been of great value to small to medium-sized technology-based businesses in funding applied research and product development. Historically, Mississippi has not done well compared to other states in submitting and winning SBIR/STTR awards. In recent years, due to the “phase zero” assistance provided through the university resources of the Mississippi Research Consortium (MRC), the numbers are increasing. Results have shown that this type of assistance to firms provides a good return on investment.

We are glad to hear of the opportunity provided by the Small Business Administration (SBA) Federal and State Technology Partnership Program (FAST) to commercialize promising federal and university intellectual property and provide additional SBIR/STTR related assistance to technology-based firms. We understand that the MRC will partner with the Mississippi Technology Alliance (MTA) in the proposed effort. In addition, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), the state’s economic development agency, will work with MURA and MTA to support the Mississippi firms being assisted by the program.

The MRC FAST proposal is sound and we believe that the effort will add significantly to the pace of technology-based company creation and growth. We commend the work of the MRC and the MTA in developing the proposal and urge the SBA to fund it.

Very truly yours,

Ronnie Musgrove

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