Missouri Joint Committee on Education
Higher Education Funding Formula Testimony
Missouri Southern State University
President Bruce W. Speck
November 14, 2012

Introduction
Chairman Pearce, distinguished members of the Committee, “Thank You” for providing me the opportunity to address you this afternoon on behalf of Missouri Southern State University. Out of respect for the ten-minute time limit, I have provided written testimony for your review. I will touch on highlights in that testimony, but first I will provide you with a snapshot of Missouri Southern.

Missouri Southern serves approximately 5,500 students in more than 150 academic programs. Our academic programs include undergraduate and graduate programs as well as certifications and continuing education coursework. For the last 75 years, Missouri Southern has developed outstanding, effective programs accredited by state and national bodies that prepare our students for the competitive and changing global society. We recognize that many of our students are first generation college students and are socioeconomically challenged. Missouri Southern State University is committed to student success by focusing on “Students First,” a theme that has been adopted across campus.

Now to your questions:

1. What are the essential functions of higher education?
All higher education institutions in Missouri should focus on developing an educated population of citizens by providing:

   • diverse educational opportunities that promote student learning and development, economic development, and civic engagement,
   • flexible educational opportunities with respect to changes occurring in a broader global environmental, and
   • quality educational programs that allow students to be competitive on a national and international basis.

In addition, higher education as an important entity of the state will:

   • increase economic development,
   • supply an educated work force,
   • provide future leaders in commerce, healthcare, education, legislation, and other areas, and
   • enhance social awareness and responsibility.

2. What are the shared goals of the institutions? What are their unique goals?
MSSU agrees with the Coordinated Plan adopted by CBHE in 2008, that all institutions should implement and achieve three primary goals.

   1.
Goal 1 (summary): To enhance the quality of Missouri’s workforce by increasing attainment of degrees and certificates, increasing affordability of college-level coursework, and increasing attendance rates of high school students and non-traditional students.

In 2012, Missouri Southern conferred the highest number of degrees in its history, with a record 1,111 degrees. We continue to offer the lowest tuition of any four-year public higher education institution in the state. In addition, MSSU continues to stress affordability for our students with services such as our Textbook Rental Program. As a regional economic hub, Joplin, and southwest Missouri benefit by MSSU offering our Lion-Pride Tuition Program, which brings additional students into southwest Missouri from the surrounding four-state area. After the Joplin tornado, we offered scholarships to high school seniors of the 2011, 2012, 2013 graduating classes to keep our graduates in the city and provide the future leadership and energy needed to rebuild the city. And more than 25 percent of our students are non-traditional.

Goal 2 (summary): To ensure that Missouri has a globally competitive society and economy by collaborating with government and business to meet the workforce needs of Missouri; by increasing graduates in STEM-related, health practitioner fields, and other critical fields; and by increasing learning experiences and service activities that promote civic engagement and cultural awareness.

One example of how Missouri Southern State University meets this goal is our partnership with the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Network. We are partnering to sponsor a Student Leadership Program called Super Leaders. This program is designed to identify, cultivate, and motivate future community leaders currently enrolled in college. This informative and thought-provoking program introduces participants to the community and exposes them to its challenges and many opportunities. In addition, Super Leaders provides a strategic curriculum to enhance participants’ leadership skills.

In science, technology, engineering and math, we have seen an increased demand for courses and degrees in the STEM-related areas and we have worked hard to meet that demand. In 2011, we opened newly renovated laboratories that doubled the number of science labs for particular science courses. We utilized the Caring for Missourians grant to complete construction on a new health sciences building and to fund faculty positions in the health sciences. We also work hard to produce successful students in STEM-related and health practitioner fields. Consider the following data:

- 100% pass rate on the National Radiologic Technologists Certification Exam
- 100% pass rate on the Registered Nurse Exams
- 100% pass rate on the Missouri Certification Exam for Environmental Health
- 94% of our 2011 graduates surveyed in Health Science, Public Safety, and Technology are employed or continuing their education

Additionally, we promote civic engagement and cultural awareness through activities such as community service projects tied to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and service learning projects in the community that are part of classes such as Social Problems. This award-winning class allows
students to create and implement sustainable projects in the real world that make a difference in the lives of people in the four-state region. Last spring students redesigned the waiting room at the Joplin Court House for children who are victims of abuse waiting to go into the courtroom to testify against their abusers. The redesign helped children feel safe and comfortable, reducing stress during the waiting time before they testify.

**Goal 3 (summary):** To increase external financial support by demonstrating that educational outcomes promote a globally competitive workforce and resources.

Missouri Southern is committed to providing quality education for our students. We show quality outcomes. Consider the following examples:

- 97% of our 2011 surveyed liberal arts graduates are employed or continuing their education.
- 92% of our 2011 surveyed business graduates are employed in their field or continuing their education.
- 98% of our 2011 surveyed education graduates are employed or continuing their education.
- The average MSSU School of Education graduate scores 10% higher on the Praxis II test than the national average.
- Beginning fall 2013, the Joplin Accelerated Academic Youth Scholar (JAAYS) Innovative Campus initiative will allow Missouri Southern to work with a local high school as well as area businesses to assist students in completing a four-year bachelor’s degree in three years or less after graduating from high school.
- Students gain valuable financial understanding and experience through the Edward Jones Investment Center, one of the only labs of its kind in the United States. Students engage in a controlled investment experience by managing $300,000 in real money.

In addition to supporting the Coordinated Plan goals, Missouri Southern has adopted six additional goals as part of our strategic plan:

1. Achieve student success through quality academic programs
2. Provide a total University experience through quality programs and services
3. Promote an international perspective to foster understanding and success in a culturally diverse world
4. Promote effective stewardship of resources to support the University’s mission
5. Promote a culture that values all members of our campus community
6. Promote the development of our communities

**3. Are the missions of the institutions consistent with their missions as outlined in statute? If not, how do they differ?**

Missouri Southern’s core mission is that we are a “state-supported, comprehensive university offering programs leading to undergraduate and graduate degrees. Central to our mission is a strong commitment to international education, liberal arts, professional and pre-professional programs, and the complementary relationship that must exist among them to prepare individuals for success in careers and lifelong learning.” I am pleased to note that Missouri Southern is
actively addressing the need for our students to be good citizens. Through our various course offerings we are fulfilling the mandate to educate students about their role in society as leaders and community members. Our general education courses allow students to develop the critical thinking and communication skills they will need to serve their communities and the state.

As a result of state legislation, Missouri Southern is designated as a baccalaureate-level, moderately selective admissions institution with an international emphasis serving the greater Joplin area. MSSU is committed to developing globally-minded graduates by facilitating international experiences that extend far beyond the classroom. Missouri Southern has designated “Themed Semesters” each year in which a particular country or region of the world is selected to become the focus of an intensive study. We have also incorporated an international component of study into our freshmen orientation course.

At Missouri Southern, we are working diligently to provide an excellent undergraduate education that will meet the needs of our students. About 70 percent of our students come from nine contiguous counties. We serve many first-generation students, and many of our students work over 30-hours per week, have families, and are engaged in other activities. This means that attending the university is only one of many responsibilities that these students face. We are not unique in this regard, but as a regional university, we have to address student concerns that are different in kind and quantity than those addressed by larger research universities. Thus, the need of the student body is a major issue when universities consider how they differ from one another.

3. How can higher education institutions most effectively contribute to Missouri’s educational and economic policy goals?

Higher education has a responsibility to provide quality academic programs that best serve the needs of the Missouri workforce. Each institution should conduct periodic reviews that implement measures to:

- ensure continuous quality improvement through measurable learning outcomes
- review resource allocation to respond to changing demands in the workforce

In August 2012, Missouri Southern voluntarily implemented a “program prioritization” endeavor. In essence, this is a process of self-study and evaluation designed to examine each individual University program, academic and non-academic. Program mission, program demand, program quality, costs and efficiencies, and potential, as well as many other factors are being scrutinized for every program on campus. This is a labor-intensive, rigorous process that will take at least a year to complete. This process will provide data that will allow us to make planned and systematic changes to enhance quality, effectiveness, and student success. The process examines the current status of educational offerings and support services, assesses the future potential of those programs, and identifies opportunities for program alignment and reinvestment of resources to strengthen the University.

As another effort and in recognition of the need for continuous quality improvement, Missouri Southern has contracted with Noel-Levitz, a recognized leader in higher education consulting. This endeavor is designed to strategically enhance our recruitment, retention, and marketing
programs and services in an effort to strengthen our service to students and enhance student success. Collaboration with other schools is one way to reduce costs and save resources when offering degree programs that are necessary for Missouri’s workforce. Missouri Southern currently has several collaborative programs, both undergraduate and graduate. We have six collaborative graduate programs that are designed to make graduate education accessible to professionals living and working in Joplin and the surrounding areas. These programs include collaboration with Northwest Missouri State University, Missouri State University, University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Southeast Missouri State University. We have recently partnered with Crowder College in Neosho to offer a baccalaureate degree in business management on the Crowder campus.

In addition to collaborative programs, we offer a substantial portion of training outside of the classroom for various fields of the Missouri workforce. For example, for more than two decades, Missouri Southern has offered quality continuing education courses for area law enforcement personnel in our state-of-the-art Public Safety Training Center. These educational and training programs keep officers current in the field while allowing them to obtain the required certification by the Missouri Peace Officer Standard in Training (POST) mandated by the State of Missouri. Our law enforcement training and continuing education seminars are offered not only regionally but throughout the state. The university provides continuing education training to approximately 1,200-1,500 officers each year.

We are one of two schools in the state to partner with the Missouri Army National Guard (Show Me Gold) to offer citizens of Missouri the opportunity for professional development to become commissioned officers in the Missouri Army National Guard. The officer training program will consist of credit-bearing classroom instruction, leadership laboratories, and physical conditioning training.

Missouri Southern is a major factor in the economy of southwest Missouri. We train many of the P-12 teachers in the school systems; we have a vibrant business school that graduates students who work in banking, retail, construction, and other areas; we have strong health sciences, and graduates of health science programs become nurses in our two hospitals, medical technologists, and dental technologists; and we have a touted science curriculum that prepares students for allied health programs and for graduate school.

4. What are the indicators that higher education institutions are serving Missouri well?
This question is challenging to address due to the multiple factors that can indicate if Missouri is being served well by its higher education institutions.

One factor that can be scrutinized is outcomes, such as those noted earlier in this testimony, that show alumni success in the workforce. The interaction of external entities with Missouri Southern and its students is another measure to evaluate success and the validity of academic programs. Last year, more than 200 Missouri Southern students completed over 700 credit hours of internships in various disciplines, all with external entities including businesses and nonprofits. This demonstrates evidence of the demand for our students in the community. Many of these internships lead to employment.
You can also consider the measures of accountability that an institution utilizes to ensure quality. At Missouri Southern, we periodically assess various aspects of our curriculum with instruments such as:

- College Outcomes Survey
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Major Field Exams
- Academic Program Review (five-year cycle)

Another measure that can be used to evaluate success is the approval of external accrediting bodies for academic programs. At Missouri Southern, we have 15 accreditations for various programs including environmental health, nursing, dental hygiene, teacher education, engineering technology, and business. In fact, Missouri Southern offers the only accredited online four-year degree program in environmental health in the nation. MSSU’s School of Education is the only School of Education in this entire region that is accredited through both the MDESE (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and NCATE (National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education).

Closing
In my estimation, not only has higher education in Missouri served the state well in the past, but also the state relies upon higher education to continue serving the intellectual, economic, social, and cultural needs of the future.

During my time as president at MSSU I have been impressed with the work ethic and dedication of the people of Southwest Missouri. These characteristics were most recently evidenced by the way citizens pulled together after the devastating tornado that struck our community on May 22, 2011. We are proud of the work that our students, faculty, staff, and community members have done since that day to rebuild our community, and we continue to support that effort.

On behalf of Missouri Southern, I pledge to continue working with my colleagues at other institutions, state legislators, and our community leaders to make sure that students in Missouri have access to affordable, quality educational programs. Providing students with an education is an opportunity for students to improve their lives, and we are improving the lives of Missourians, one student at a time. I extend an open invitation to each of you to visit our campus to meet and to talk with the many wonderful students we serve.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to address you today.