

USM adds value through its BBER

On page 2 of this issue of The Journal, we mention the Economic Outlook and Mid-Year Assessment for South Mississippi and the Gulf Coast, presented July 17 by the University of Southern Mississippi's Bureau of Business and Economic Research.



Mathews

Unfortunately, space did not allow us to present much detail from the presentations. But that doesn't mean you'll miss out on all the great detail and data if you couldn't attend the presentation at The Peoples' Bank in Biloxi.

The entire presentations by BBER director Dr. William Gunther, associate director Dr. Edward Ranck, Mississippi Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney and Northrop Grumman Vice President for State and Local Government Relations Leroy Barnidge are available on the bureau's Web site. You can search the BBER site at www.usm.edu or go direct to www.usm.edu/bber/outlook-conference.php for the conference presentations. USM's Bureau of Business and Economic

Research may be one of the best resources available to businesses and local governments in our region. The collection of data and analysis their staff puts at our disposal is very comprehensive and the semi-annual economic symposiums they've started are extremely valuable. As "South Mississippi's University" Dr. Gunther has alternated the conferences between the Coast and Hattiesburg.

The July 17 Outlook conference was hosted by Chevis Swetman at his Peoples Bank main office in Biloxi. The next conference is scheduled for Jan. 15 in Hattiesburg, and I'd recommend you put that date on your calendar now and watch for further details.

You'll want to view the video presentation by Leroy Barnidge, which takes you on a virtual tour of the Gulf Coast's aerospace corridor and helps clarify the full impact the KC-45 tanker project could bring to South Mississippi. Kudos to former Sun Herald business writer and Journal contribu-

tor David Tortorano who provided the virtual tour. If you read the "Alliance Insight" insert in last month's Journal, this virtual tour allows you to visualize many of the points David made in print.

As to the economic outlook, the cost of workforce housing — more than any other factor - is dictating the Coast's recovery and the economic pace of the region. It's often difficult to separate the national economic picture from our local one, or to understand how one relates to the other. The presentations by Drs. Gunther and Ranck take much of the mystery out of economic forecasts and provide clear, useful - and actionable — analysis.

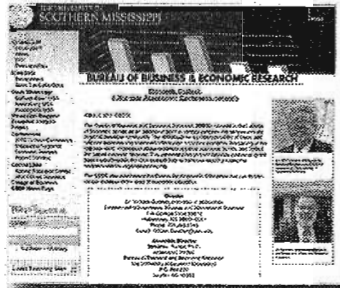
I strongly recommend you bookmark the BBER's Web site and visit it often. You'll find much of their work very interactive and all of it valuable.

Universities almost always add great value to the communities they serve, and that has

always been a hallmark of Southern Miss. But because more than 75 miles separate the hub campus from the Coast and other population and business centers in the region, we outside of Hattiesburg often miss out on many of the benefits of a college town. I congratulate USM President Dr. Martha Saunders and her fine team for working so hard to serve all of South Mississippi. I was struck in a recent meeting by her drive and determination to make Southern Miss known in the South for its economic development capacity. They are well on their way toward realizing that dream.

But the BBER really seems to understand the incredible value they can provide to the entire region, not only in gathering data from within the region, but in helping put that data into perspective by making comparisons to other states and MSAs easy through their Web site.

And taking full advantage of today's technology they give every business — big or small — their own high quality in-house research staff. We thank them for that.



Visit www.usm.edu/bber