



ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
**MID-SOUTH**

July 8, 2015

**College Becomes ASU Mid-South; Focus Remains on Students, Community**

Mid-South Community College officially became Arkansas State University Mid-South on July 1, but while visual changes will begin appearing soon, the focus on student and community needs will remain the same.

“We have changed what we call our institution, but we have not changed who we are,” said Dr. Barbara Baxter, ASU Mid-South interim chancellor. “Our mission to meet the higher education needs of our region continues to be our driving force. Other than new signs, new logos, new ID cards, and new web and email addresses, our students probably won’t see a great deal of change in the next few months.”



“Our long-term hope is that our merger with the ASU System will bring enhanced program offerings to our campus and even greater opportunities for our students to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees without leaving Crittenden County.”

Another thing that will stay the same is Mid-South’s in-county and in-state tuition rates for the fall semester. “We are doing everything we can to keep the cost of higher education as low as possible,” Dr. Baxter said.

With the addition of Mid-South, the Little Rock-based ASU System now serves 23,000 students throughout the state. System members include Arkansas State University; a four-year research institution in Jonesboro; ASU Mid-South; ASU-Beebe, with additional campuses in Heber Springs and Searcy; ASU-Newport, with additional campuses in Jonesboro and Marked Tree; ASU-Mountain Home; and instructional sites in Paragould and at the Little Rock Air Force Base.

Dr. Charles Welch presides over the ASU System, and he is one of the major reasons MSCC pursued the merger.

“Chuck gets two-year colleges, and I think he clearly understands Mid-South’s role, mission, the students it serves, and how important this institution is to the future of Arkansas,” said President Emeritus Dr. Glen Fenter, who recently retired from the college after 23 years at the helm.

“I am confident that under his leadership this is a great thing for Arkansas and a great thing for this campus. He’s just like the rest of us. He is exceedingly attuned to the importance of allowing Mid-South to continue what it’s doing except with added resources and support.”

Dr. Welch, who previously worked at three two-year institutions in Arkansas, pointed out that ASU Mid-South will continue to stand on its own while receiving additional support and resources from the system.

“The system’s role is not to dictate what happens on each of its campuses,” he said. “I’m very sensitive to allowing Mid-South’s processes to work. Our job is to help with additional resources. Our job is to pursue collaborations not only among campuses in our system but other campuses around the state.

“Our job is to try to make sure that all of our system institutions are well represented during policy-making efforts at the state capital to ensure and enhance the unique mission and nature of each.”

Welch added that ASU Mid-South is not a branch of Arkansas State University.

“That’s a common misconception a lot of people have. We don’t want our campuses to be clones of one another or to function as little universities. While all of our campuses share the same Board of Trustees, each is autonomous, and our board has bought into that.

“We have a great board. The members are active and engaged in what’s happening throughout the system, but they don’t try to dictate the day-to-day affairs of our campuses.”

Mid-South’s current trustees will become members of a Board of Visitors. “Their primary role will be as the local board to help with system decisions,” Welch said. “We

want them to function as the voice of the local community. I will not take something to our Board of Trustees that the Board of Visitors has not approved.”

Welch said ASU Mid-South will benefit from the numerous political and business contacts within the ASU System.

“Keith Ingram, Deborah Ferguson, and Milton Nicks have been great voices for Mid-South Community College in the state legislature, but with the merger, the institution is gaining delegates from Mountain Home, Newport, Heber Springs, Jonesboro, Marked Tree, Beebe, and Jacksonville.

“All of the sudden, they care about what happens in West Memphis because Mid-South is a member of the ASU system. We have some heavy hitters who will be representing ASU Mid-South on a variety of fronts.”

Welch said program enhancement/collaboration could come as early as this fall, but “that depends on a number of different things. It’s hard for me to be specific without knowing a lot of the intricacies. But you’ll find I’m not somebody who likes to sit around and wait on things; I tend to try to push the envelope a little bit.

“Jonesboro is excited about potential collaborations and things they can do to help the ASU Mid-South campus. If there are ways we can build off specific programming strengths and collectively go in a particular direction, we certainly want to do that.”

Welch said the ASU System welcomed the opportunity to add Mid-South to its educational effort.

“Mid-South is an outstanding addition to the ASU System,” he said. “When considering a potential merger, we look at what can diversify our system and provide us with opportunities for unique growth. Mid-South meets that criteria because of the unique initiatives and programs it has established.”

Starting in August, east Arkansas native Dr. Debra West will be ASU Mid-South’s chancellor. Welch said she will be responsible for making “the vast majority of decisions related to ASU Mid-South. You won’t see me a whole lot.”

For more information about ASU Mid-South, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call the Admissions Office at (870) 733-6728, email [admissions@midsouthcc.edu](mailto:admissions@midsouthcc.edu), or see the website at [www.midsouthcc.edu](http://www.midsouthcc.edu).