

# A Review of the Current Postsecondary Governance in Mississippi

**CONCLUSION:** The PEER Committee, under its authority granted by MISS. CODE ANN. § 5-3-51 (1972) et seq., authorized a review of the governance of Mississippi’s universities, plus the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). Mississippi’s postsecondary governance consists of two boards: a governing board manages the state’s eight four-year universities (Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning) and a coordinating board that coordinates the state’s 15 community colleges (Mississippi Community College Board). Because no standard for best practices exists, PEER identified potential approaches for restructuring the state’s postsecondary governance.

### IHL Board of Trustees:

The IHL Board is constitutionally empowered to manage and control the state’s eight institutions of higher learning.

Mississippi initially established individual boards for each institution and gave the Governor authority to appoint all board members. This led to government overreach and interference with university operations (e.g., governor-led termination of university presidents and staff), which threatened universities’ accreditation. In 1943, Mississippians voted to create the IHL Board to govern the state’s universities and prohibited current elected officials from serving as Board members.

If Mississippi were to consider changing its postsecondary structure, it would need to take into account regulatory and support functions currently conducted by the IHL Board (e.g., finance and administration, facility operations).

### Mississippi Community College Board:

The Mississippi Community College Board establishes guidelines for the fifteen local community colleges; each has its own local governing board.

In 1928, the Commission of Junior Colleges oversaw the development of the state’s early junior colleges. In 1986, the Legislature reconstituted the Commission as the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges (later renamed the Mississippi Community College Board) in 2011.

If the state were to consider making changes to the state’s postsecondary structure, the state would need to take into account the administrative and support functions currently conducted by the MCCB (e.g., administration, workforce education).

### Postsecondary Education Governance Boards/Agencies

Type of Board	Description
Single, Statewide Coordinating Board/Agency	Refers to states that have one overarching state-level board responsible for coordinating its postsecondary education system, including its universities and community colleges. e.g., Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee
Single, Statewide Governing Board/Agency	Refers to states that have one overarching state-level board responsible for governing its postsecondary education system. This model may have governing authority over both universities and community colleges, or governing authority over one and coordinating authority over the other. e.g., Kansas, Montana, Nevada
One or More Systemwide Coordinating or Governing Board	Refers to states that have at least one board with authority over a particular system, usually either universities or community colleges. e.g., Mississippi, Georgia, Kentucky, Wisconsin
Administrative Service Agency	Refers to states that have either standalone or support functions inside an existing agency (e.g., the state’s department of education) to support the state’s universities and/or community colleges, but does not have a formal governing or coordinating board in which the agency supports. e.g., Florida, Iowa, New Hampshire
No State Higher Education Board or Agency (for universities)	Refers to states that have no state-level board or agency responsible for governing or coordinating its universities. e.g., Delaware, Michigan, New Jersey

### Things to Consider:

Limited information exists about best practices for reorganizing postsecondary governance.

- Focus on the ends, not the means.
- Identify and articulate the core issues the state is trying to address.
- Examine options for working within existing governance.
- A change in governance of institutions managed and controlled by the IHL Board of Trustees would require an amendment of Section 213A of the *Mississippi Constitution of 1890*.

## Identifying Approaches for Restructuring the State's Postsecondary Governance

State leaders could take multiple approaches to amend the current postsecondary governance model. Most models to alter the university governance would require a constitutional amendment and most models to alter the community college structure would at least require a statutory amendment.

### Should the State have An Overarching/Unifying Postsecondary Governance Structure?

- could involve adding an overarching coordinating body for community colleges and universities; and,
- could improve the functionality of the existing governance structure or merging IHL Board and MCCB.

### Which Approach Does Mississippi Want to Utilize to Govern Its Universities?

- maintain existing structure (a central governing board for universities only);
- move toward institutional governing boards for each university or a multiple-university system that has its own board; or,
- institute an overarching governing/coordinating board with some level of authority over universities.

### Which Approach Does Mississippi Want to Utilize to Govern Its Community Colleges?

- maintain existing structure (community colleges have their own local governing boards);
- move toward centralization (e.g., a community college governing board); or,
- establish one board with authority over universities and community colleges.

## Identifying Approaches for Restructuring UMMC's Governance

State leaders could take multiple approaches to amend UMMC's governance. Any approach that alters UMMC's governance would require a change in statute and potentially amending the state's constitution if such change in governance related to removing UMMC from IHL Board of Trustees oversight or significantly altering IHL authority as it relates to UMMC.

### Can the State Identify Sufficient Cause to Change the Existing UMMC Governance?

- could adjust involvement of IHL Board in decision-making; and,
- could make changes in state law to adjust UMMC's governance without significantly modifying the state's postsecondary governance.

### Does Mississippi Want a Single Entity to Govern UMMC?

- could involve eliminating half of UMMC's current dual governance (UM and IHL Board) and requiring UMMC to report only to one board; and,
- would likely require a constitutional amendment.

### Does Mississippi Want UMMC to be Governed by a UMMC-Specific Board?

- involves removing UMMC from its current dual governance and reconstituting UMMC under a single board more tailored to governing an academic health center; and,
- would require a constitutional amendment.

### Does Mississippi Want to Separate UMMC's Clinical Enterprise (i.e., hospitals, clinics, and telehealth) from UMMC's Academic and Research Components?

- involves examining the ownership of UMMC's clinical enterprise; and,
- could involve creating a separate governing arrangement (e.g., separate non-profit; partnership with other healthcare providers).