After two years, Rick Duke has decided to step down as Director of the Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development and Entrepreneurship at Southern Miss. Duke is exploring career opportunities in Mississippi, Georgia and around the country, or he may pursue graduate studies at the University of Georgia. If his location is out of state, Duke plans to stay close to his many valued contacts in Mississippi. In two years, he made significant progress in developing the Center including starting this newsletter, organizing forums such as IMPACT Southern Miss, education programs for elected officials on economic development and helping to advance the Master of Science in Economic Development program. In addition, he has engaged over one thousand people personally to get their insights on the role that the university should perform in economic development. Chief Communications Officer Jim Coll said the university will soon name an interim director and begin looking for a permanent one.