

EIGS and IHL Geospatial Education Council Address Workforce Needs with High School GIS Projects

Projects to increase awareness of geospatial technology at K-12 level and demonstrate benefits to community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 28, 2009

Contact: Lisa Stone
(601) 853-4597; lstone@olemiss.edu

Oxford, MS – The Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions (EIGS) and the Geospatial Education Council of the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) are pleased to announce that on January 15, 2009, the official launch of MARS, the second generation, was held on the Ridgeland campus of Holmes Community College. The MARS program (Mississippi Area Remapping Strategy) is a geospatial high school adoption program with 8 high schools across the state of Mississippi. Eighty-five students, teachers, mentors, and representatives from state departments and agencies were in attendance.

During the spring of 2009, the selected high schools will work with designated university/community college partners to design and complete a community-based geospatial information science and technology (GIS&T) project. The participating MARS high schools receive support from their mentor institution, computer hardware and software, technical support and training, GPS units, and resource books to support the projects.

MARS is funded by EIGS in cooperation with mentors from the IHL Geospatial Education Council. Northwest Mississippi Community College serves as the statewide coordinator for the MARS program.

"The number of new jobs available from Mississippi's geospatial businesses is far outpacing the number of qualified candidates to fill available vacancies," stated Dr. Greg Easson, EIGS Executive Director. "The MARS program was established to help address this ongoing demand for an educated, well-trained workforce and to create a pipeline of the next generation of employees for Mississippi's geospatial industry."

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, geospatial technology is among the top three fastest growing career fields in the U.S. with a 15 percent growth rate in new jobs projected over the next decade.



Over 50 students from 8 high schools across Mississippi are participating in the MARS program.

MARS 2009 includes high schools from Batesville, Brandon, Byhalia, Decatur, Greenville, Kiln, Leakesville, and Woodville. Volunteering their time and expertise to guide the high school teams are members of the IHL Geospatial Education Council including Alcorn State University, East Central Community College, Jackson State University, Jones County Community College, MARIS, MS Delta Community College,

Northwest Mississippi Community College, The University of Mississippi, the UM Medical Center, and the University of Southern Mississippi.

"Through the involvement of a wide-range of community partners, we fully expect this year's MARS projects to not only motivate and excite the students, but to have a positive impact on community needs," stated Joyce Brasell of Northwest Mississippi Community College, the statewide coordinator for the pilot project.

The projects will focus on a diverse array of community needs such as using geospatial technology to map culturally significant sites, E-911 mapping, urban hazard tree assessment, and mapping of infrastructure and facilities. MARS community partners include organizations such as chancery clerk's office, chambers of commerce, tax assessors, forestry commission, regional medical center, planning and development district, fire department, and city engineer's office.

###

About the Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions: *Since 1998, the State of Mississippi has nurtured the growth of a cluster of high-tech companies in the geospatial technology industry. The Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions (EIGS) is the program that coordinates the activities of this cluster. EIGS works with private companies as well as university research programs, state agencies, and other related organizations to support geospatial business development and research with the primary mission of growing the research-based, world-class geospatial technology industry in Mississippi. For more information, visit www.eigs.olemiss.edu.*

About the IHL Geospatial Council: *The Geospatial Council was established in 1999 by Mississippi's Institutions of Higher Learning to organize, coordinate, and promote educational activities in geospatial technologies in the state of Mississippi. The Council includes faculty and staff from all Mississippi's public universities and community colleges as well as several state agencies. Additionally, the Council provides oversight and maintenance of the statewide geospatial software site license program. For more information, contact*

Steve Walker at swalker@ihl.state.ms.us or visit www.maris.state.ms.us/HTM/GeospatialCouncilWebsite/index.html.