

President Foglesong shares vision for furniture institute



The Franklin Furniture Institute is strengthening a long-standing partnership between the state's largest research and outreach university and Mississippi's largest manufacturing sector. It is help-

ing to ensure a vibrant future for our state's furniture industry.

The Institute represents a new level of research and development capability for Mississippi, with the result that MSU's resources and expertise are more closely than ever intertwined with the state's economic development future in general and furniture manufacturing in particular. This industry is too important to our state and its future to settle for anything less.

All of us recognize the importance of furniture manufacturing to Mississippi. More than 200 firms account directly for more than 27,000 jobs, and indirectly for many more, and produce about 70 percent of the nation's upholstered furniture.

But the industry's competitiveness is challenged by evolving technology, shortages of trained managers and skilled workers, foreign and domestic competition, and other issues that many of the smaller firms, in particular, have difficulty addressing on their own.

The Franklin Furniture Institute is organized to respond to those needs. It builds upon the long-standing furniture research and technical assistance program in MSU's

College of Forest Resources. It provides a framework that can focus the capabilities of the participating university units while drawing on the insights of advisors within the industry community.

This collaboration also provides additional "real world" learning and hands-on research experiences for MSU undergraduate and graduate students in business, forest products, business, engineering, and other areas.

While the Franklin Furniture Institute is MSU's primary interface with the industry, we are committed to marshalling resources throughout the university to help support its objectives. The Institute works cooperatively with the College of Forest Resources, the College of Business and Industry, the Bagley College of Engineering, the College of Architecture, Art and Design, the MSU Extension Service, Industrial Outreach Service, and the Mississippi Community Action Team.

We will use this multidisciplinary approach across campus and with industry partners and others to enhance the design, production, marketing, and distribution of furniture products that meet the demands of the marketplace. The Institute also offers technical support to deliver new technologies, methods, and information that can strengthen the quality of the work force and management for the future.

The College of Business and Industry offers a Furniture Manufacturing Management track within the Management major. The College of Forest Resources offers degree programs in forest products with an emphasis on wood industries, forest products marketing, and wood materials science.

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The Franklin Furniture Institute is an interdisciplinary unit within Mississippi State University including the College of Forest Resources; College of Business and Industry; Bagley College of Engineering; College of Architecture, Art and Design; and the Mississippi State Extension Service.

cover photo: Young America by Stanley

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research update

Bariatric furniture

Amy Garrard

One project currently being funded by the Franklin Furniture Institute will examine bariatric furniture as a specialty segment within the overall furniture market, and evaluate its potential as a niche that could be addressed by the Mississippi furniture industry. Bariatric furniture is furniture designed to accommodate obese individuals. Some sources estimate there are about 59 million adults in the U.S. who meet the definition of obese, and these numbers are expected to increase. Researchers plan to define the characteristics of bariatric furniture and key technological issues relating to the design, construction and performance testing standards of it. The market and supply chain for bariatric furniture will be characterized and the competitive environment assessed. This research will provide a road map for individual manufacturers planning to explore and possibly enter the bariatric furniture market. Individual manufacturers will need to address issues specific to their own situations, but this study will provide insight into market size and trends, technological and supply chain issues, the competitive environment, and potential strategies for competing in this niche. For more information on this research, contact Bill Martin, project manager, Industrial Outreach Service, Mississippi State University, at 662.325.0513; e-mail: wmartin@ios.msstate.edu.



Thayer Coggins

Foglesong *continued*

The reality is that we now live in a truly global community. Nowhere are the implications greater for American competitiveness than in the area of furniture manufacturing. We recognize the challenge presented by competitors such as Chinese producers who can ship furniture to the United States at prices significantly lower than those of domestic manufacturers.

Knowledge and innovation such as the Franklin Furniture Institute can bring to bear, coupled with the strong work ethic of our people, offer our best competitive advantage for the years ahead. At the same time, we must step up efforts to acquaint our future leaders—our students—with the challenges of global competitiveness and global leadership through increased opportunities for travel and study abroad with foreign universities and companies.

The capabilities of the Mississippi furniture manufacturing industry, the enormous human capital of the region, and the support of the Franklin Furniture Institute will reinforce Northeast Mississippi as one of the most important furniture producing centers in the world.

As a university, we are grateful for this opportunity to serve the state and region, and for the generosity of industry leaders such as Hassell Franklin, and the foresight of state policy makers who invested the resources to make this effort possible.

Dr. Robert H. Foglesong

“The capabilities of the Mississippi furniture manufacturing industry... will reinforce Northeast Mississippi as one of the most important furniture producing centers in the world.”

Welcome to the Franklin Furniture Institute

G. Stephen Taylor, Interim Director

By way of this newsletter, I would like to welcome you officially to the Franklin Furniture Institute. Our mission is very simple: to provide assistance to the state and national furniture industries. This is a mission we take very seriously, and I invite you to call on us.

Our Institute has been in existence since 2003. Originally known as the Institute for Furniture Manufacturing and Management, we have provided technical assistance to Mississippi furniture companies since our inception. While we will continue to provide outstanding service in this area, a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration now allows us to provide an array of services ranging from marketing assistance to engineering support to design and fabric expertise. Not only are we working with individual companies, but we also are conducting research into broad issues that impact the entire industry. We feel our new name—the Franklin Furniture Institute—better reflects this broad, expanded mission.

The new role of our Institute reflects Mississippi State University's commitment to do even more to improve the welfare and quality of life of all Mississippians. This is one reason why our Institute has established strategic partnerships with units from all parts of the university. These partnerships allow us to bring university resources to assist you in meeting the challenges of today's difficult

and ever-changing global marketplace. Whether you are a furniture manufacturer, assembler, component supplier or retailer, we want to help you find ways to compete more effectively in the national and international marketplace.

Although our mission has fundamentally changed, our values remain simple and traditional:

- Excellence and passion in our work
- Dedication to our clients
- Recognition of our responsibilities to the citizens of Mississippi
- Unquestioned integrity in our teaching, research, and service

Let me close by saying that we at the Furniture Institute are committed to helping you and your company. We know the industry has been through difficult times. But we also know that difficult periods eventually pass. We have every confidence that Mississippi's furniture industry of tomorrow will be stronger and more profitable than ever.

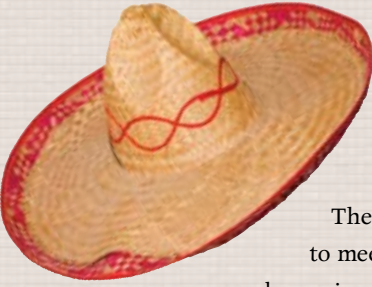


events

Calendar of Events

Event	Dates	Time	Location
Back Injuries	March 22	8:30-10:30 a.m.	Tupelo, Miss.
Highpoint Market	March 26-April 1		Highpoint, N.C.
Managing The Supply Chain In Today's Marketplace	March 28-29		Jackson, Miss.
Leadership	April 4	1:00-5:00 p.m.	Tupelo, Miss.
Workplace Design I	April 12	8:30-10:30 a.m.	Tupelo, Miss.
Communication	April 18	1:00-5:00 p.m.	Tupelo, Miss.
Latin America Trade Specialists	April 23-27		Statewide
Workplace Design II	April 26	8:30-10:30 a.m.	Tupelo, Miss.
Introduction to Computers/Basic Windows	May 1-22	1:00-4:00 p.m.	Tupelo, Miss.
Economic Development Forum	May 17-18		Mississippi State, Miss.

If you are interested in any of these events, contact the Franklin Furniture Institute at 662.325.6787.



Latin American Trade Specialists

assist with furniture export opportunities

The Mississippi Development Authority is providing Mississippi furniture manufacturers an opportunity to meet with Latin American trade specialists during the week of April 23-27. The Latin American market is becoming a strong commercial hub for the U.S. The recent implementation of free-trade agreements and the need for U.S.-made products by Latin American businesses makes this the ideal time for manufacturers to expand in this region. The one-on-one meeting will provide information on economic conditions and trade opportunities in Latin America. Participants will have the opportunity to plan international trade strategies. The meetings can be held in the convenience of your office. There is no participation fee, but space is limited. If you are interested in participating in this learning opportunity, contact Rose Boxx at 601.359.3045 or by e-mail at rboxx@mississippi.org.

market update

Tupelo market innovating

Annalee Rice

The Franklin Furniture Institute recently co-sponsored a booth and the manufacturers' award dinner at the Tupelo Furniture Market.

The market has come a long way since it opened in 1987. An old warehouse housed the market when it debuted, but today, the Furniture Market boasts two million square feet of space in a technologically advanced showplace. Hundreds of exhibitors set up booths at the market, and between 25,000 and 30,000 retail furniture buyers attend each year.

"The market did a lot of research on the market dates, and many exhibitors and buyers thought August was the better selection," said Chairman and Chief Executive Officer V.M. Cleveland.

Janice Coleman, executive director of sales, said this year's market dates of August 22-26, 2007, include the addition of Sunday within the market week.

"Sunday is being added for smaller retailers who need weekend shopping opportunities," she said. "It's going to be a great service for those businesses that can only come on Saturday night and stay until Sunday afternoon."

The Tupelo Furniture Market is a value-oriented, promotional market with a Buyer Recruitment Program to assist with the recruitment of first-time buyers. The market has unmatched quality, convenience and service.

Coleman said the Tupelo Furniture Market is the only market that offers a special price event. "We have what is called a Tupelo-only special," she said. "It is a special opportunity for retailers during market week only."

The market also will send free VIP invitations to the exhibitors so they can invite their customers to participate.

"We are asking exhibitors to send a list of their valued buyers for the promotional program," Coleman added. "We



During the manufacturers' award dinner Pat Patrick (center), furniture sales representative, was recognized for his contribution to the industry. Pictured with Pat are (from left) Ralph Higdon, Higdon Furniture Company; Todd Nafziger, Sauder Woodworking Company; Pat Patrick and wife Diane; Janice Coleman and V.M. Cleveland, Tupelo Furniture Market.

want to send a special invitation to their customers to attend the market."

The Tupelo Market offers complimentary parking, shuttle service, and buyer appreciation breakfasts.

Coleman said there are several companies that will show their products only at the Tupelo Furniture Market. "For some companies, this is the only show of which they participate," she said. "I think that speaks volumes about our business."

"The Tupelo Furniture Market always strives to make every effort to welcome and accommodate the needs of all the market attendees," Cleveland said. "Our goal is to make every market better than the one before with our service and Southern hospitality."



Furniture designer at home in Mississippi

Annalee Rice

Critz Campbell, a Mississippi-based designer and principal owner of B9 Furniture, brings a wealth of professional experience and success into his sculpture and design classes as a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Art at Mississippi State University.

Campbell's work has been featured in the Crate & Barrel catalog, Saks Fifth Avenue's display window, "Saturday Night Live" skits and New York design shows. Television viewers have also seen his creations on the "Today" show, "The Christopher Lowell Show," "The Real World: Chicago" and "Designer Living."

Internationally recognized for his Eudora Chair, made of fiberglass and lit with fluorescent lights from the inside, Campbell paid tribute to the late Mississippi author, Eudora Welty, when he designed the chair.

A recipient of numerous grants and awards, such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the Mississippi Arts Council's Artist Fellowship Grant, Campbell strives to maintain a sense of humility. His work has been featured in Interior Design Magazine, Inside Design Now, Young Designers America and several other magazines and books.

Born in West Point in 1967, Campbell's college career began at Mississippi State, where he attended for one year. He spent the summer after his freshman year in Europe, where he contemplated becoming an artist or writer rather than pursuing his original interest in broadcasting.

Upon returning to the United States, he moved to Chicago to attend the School of the Art Institute and earned a bachelor of fine arts degree. It was then that he realized he enjoyed making sculptures and ceramics.

At the age of 24, he opened a studio outside of Chicago. He was about to marry when he decided to return to home to the Magnolia State.

"I had \$800 and a chain saw, and I moved back to Mississippi," he said. "I bought a shack and spent 80 days in a tent while I rebuilt it. I realized that I was just looking for an excuse. I used fixing up the shack as an excuse not to get married."

With his degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Campbell participated in the student exchange program where he studied sculpture in Lisbon, Portugal.

"After Portugal, I moved to Penland, N.C., to pursue a degree at the Penland School of Crafts," Campbell said. "I was studying furniture design when I was accepted to join the core student program."

After attending Penland, Campbell went to John Makepeace's Parnham College in Beaminster, Dorset, England. He studied furniture design there until he earned his master's degree in 1999.

Campbell's illuminated Eudora chair and illuminated dress, Luna, were chosen by the Cooper Hewitt Design Museum for its Design Triennial "Inside Design Now."

Campbell teaches sculpture and 3-D design at Mississippi State. His works have been displayed in the McComas Art Gallery for students and faculty to view. He resides in West Point, where he continues to create his own designs.



staff profile

Jilei Zhang

The Franklin Furniture Institute has staff experienced in all aspects of furniture design and strength testing. Jilei Zhang, an associate professor in the Department of Forest Products, College of Forest Resources, specializes in the analysis and research of furniture durability and strength.

An nine-year veteran, Zhang thinks most manufacturers design furniture based on experience rather than testing.

“Most manufacturers don’t analyze,” he said.

Incorporating a computer analysis program that tests the design of furniture, Zhang has proven that analysis works better than experience every time.

“I use data and numbers to make the design perfect,” Zhang said. “Engineering is important. You can’t just base it on experience.”

“We conduct material research and study amounts of pressure and how the pressure translates to other parts of the furniture,” Zhang said.

The design and analysis stage must be done repeatedly, it is a never-ending process. Performance testing and simulation are important to ensure products are reliable, Zhang added.

Zhang is currently participating in a project to study weight as related to furniture strength.

Obesity is not a simple condition of eating too much. It is now recognized that obesity is a serious, chronic disease, according to the American Obesity Association.

“In the past, we have not considered the magnitude of obesity in the country. This project will provide new standards for furniture designed for people suffering from obesity,” Zhang said.



Let's keep in touch

Send us your e-mail address so we can keep you informed and updated on activities and opportunities available through the Franklin Furniture Institute. Send your e-mail address to Amy at amy.garrard@msstate.edu.



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