

Week of January 25

Governor Edwards, as expected, issued a proclamation calling the Louisiana Legislature into special session. The session will begin on Feb. 14 (happy Valentine's Day!) and must adjourn no later than March 9. As we have discussed, the state is facing a \$750 million budget deficit for the current year and a \$1.9 billion deficit for next year. Both numbers are expected to get worse when the Revenue Estimating Conference meets on Feb. 10. To read the call in its entirety, click this link:

<http://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/2016-Special-Session-Call.pdf>

As dire as the situation is, solutions are available and I remain optimistic. I do not expect new state investment in higher education this year or next, but I do expect a level of stability that allows us to lead a resurgence. That will take a fight unlike any we have waged, but our message is too compelling for the people not to win.

Now, groups around the state are crafting creative messages in an attempt to protect their constituent groups' taxpayer funded benefits at the expense of human/talent development, but fiction rarely wins. One "journalist" who is a member of a prominent business lobby actually used North Carolina as a model of efficiency by contrasting our five higher education boards to NC's two. In fact, each of the 16 universities in NC has a management board to which the governor appoints members. In reality, NC has TWO coordinating boards and SIXTEEN management boards compared to LA's ONE coordinating board and FOUR management boards. We should always evaluate the effectiveness of our public structures and the return on investment on public expenditures, of course, but let's keep the discussion in the realm of reality.

While the temptation to respond to each of these mythical tales is strong (I fall prey to it quite often), our focus must be on strengthening academics and improving student service. When we do, we will become less and less tied to the political fights in Baton Rouge. The progress we have achieved under the Strategic Framework is a great step in that direction. The new structure to academic leadership will help. Finally, the strategic planning process we will begin in the coming weeks will ensure we have an actionable plan for the next five years. This season of anxiety and scarcity will soon give way to a new era of prosperity.

The Week

The Leadership Team held its monthly meeting Monday morning. Updates were provided by our SGA President, Faculty Senate President, our deans, and our vice presidents. We also discussed the Council of Academic Officers concept and talked about our approach to the budget conversations.

Afterwards, we continued our updates from the Strategic Framework teams with presentations from the Student Experience, Academic Excellence, and Market Responsiveness committees.

Tuesday, Eric Barkley and Missy Setters with the Independence Bowl stopped by to meet with Adam Jonson and me. They would like for NSU to have an annual presence in Independence Stadium.

Tuesday afternoon, we were delighted to welcome Mike Olivier from the Committee of 100, Representative Julie Stokes from New Orleans, and Dr. Jim Richardson to campus to deliver a fiscal strategy briefing. The presentations are attached to this email.

Tuesday evening, Chris Maggio and I traveled to San Antonio to meet with Campus Living Villages, our student housing partners. Wednesday, I provided an address to the group about emerging themes in higher education and the need to focus on the student. Afterwards, we participated in breakout sessions with CLV staff. I was impressed with the focus on “putting students first.”

We returned to Shreveport just in time to attend a recruiting reception at the Haughton home of alum and supporter Mike Knotts. Jana Lucky and her team of recruiters, student leaders, and faculty representatives have held receptions for admitted students across the state. These receptions allow us to develop relationships with our new families, share information about the university, and hopefully secure enrollments.

Thursday morning, Senate President Pro Tempore Gerald Long brought Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne to campus to visit with community leaders. Most in attendance expressed a deep understanding of the social and economic importance of NSU to this region, but I believe we still have work to do to ensure they understand the gravity of the current circumstance. Commissioner Dardenne provided a candid, straightforward

update on the state's budget situation and the Administration's proposed solutions.

Later Thursday morning and again Thursday afternoon we held faculty/staff forums. These were simulcast to our sites in Shreveport, Leesville, and Alexandria. A huge thank you to Tracy Brown for coordinating the technical setup and to Drake Owens and Cole Gentry for helping craft the presentation. The forums will be posted in a Moodle site. Details for accessing the site are forthcoming.

Tuesday afternoon, the Competency-Based Learning Team updated me on the status of the project. We discussed some of the process-related challenges and came up with a plan to launch the program with a minimum of procedural entanglements. This program will expand access to a college education to new populations in a practical, affordable way.

Tuesday evening, Tonia and I traveled to the Lake Charles area for a recruiting reception at the home of General Erbon Wise. General Wise is a 1941 NSU graduate and a true American icon. His home has wonderful pictures of the general in uniform on Omaha Beach and in Paris from 1944. Let's just say the man has seen some sights. He has provided significant financial support for the university in addition to serving as a model of leadership worthy of emulation.

Friday morning, Margaret Kilcoyne, Jana Lucky, and I provided a welcome to hundreds of high school students on campus for the Future Business Leaders of America Regional Conference.

Later Friday, the Athletic Prominence Committee completed our status updates on the Strategic Framework implementation.

Interim ULS President Dan Reneau hosted a conference call to discuss the status of state budget conversations. We discussed the misinformation that has proliferated throughout the state and talked about our own messaging. One nugget that came out of the conversation: at NSU, 80 cents of every dollar of state funding we receive is returned to various state agencies to pay for mandated costs. If you did not hear that I will repeat it. 80 CENTS OF EVERY DOLLAR OF STATE FUNDING WE RECEIVE IS RETURNED TO VARIOUS STATE AGENCIES TO PAY FOR MANDATED COSTS.

Early Friday afternoon, I was honored to walk in the Weaver Elementary Mardi Gras Parade. Joining me were Cat in the Hat, the Grinch, Scott Burrell, and several members of the Demon Basketball Team.

I returned to campus just in time for the NAFME Pie the President fund raiser. Through a twist of fate, my own ticket was drawn. As a good sport, I agreed to pie myself. Unfortunately, when I was attempting to hand my glasses to NAFME Treasurer Bryce Tucker, I lost my balance and accidentally dropped the whipped cream pie on Bryce. Please do not worry, I am okay...

Please contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns.