

Week of September 18

Friday, the University of Louisiana System released the following statement:

UL SYSTEM BREAKS 90,000 STUDENTS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2012

The University of Louisiana System has eclipsed 90,000 students for the first time since 2012. An additional 588 students over last year brings the System's total enrollment to 90,439 students. Six of the nine UL System institutions experienced some level of growth.

Northwestern State University in Natchitoches boasted the highest percentage and student increase at 7 percent and 640 students, respectively. Grambling State University followed with a 6.8 percent increase, an additional 310 students.

"Even during extremely difficult budget times, our universities have worked diligently to attract more students," Interim UL System President Dan Reneau said. "The UL System is the workhorse of Louisiana's higher education landscape and we are proud of the educational opportunities we provide to our more than 90,000 students."

In addition to more students, the System's universities are touting higher quality students. Louisiana Tech University's freshman class includes 155 students who scored a 32 or higher on the ACT and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's freshman class includes 160 valedictorians.

Nicholls State University increased its enrollment by 103 students—its first fall enrollment increase since 2009. The University of Louisiana at Monroe experienced an increase of 261 students and its online program, eULM, has the largest enrollment since its inception.

Southeastern Louisiana University's enrollment is down fewer than a hundred students but its freshman class increased by 14.4 percent. The University of New Orleans decreased overall but did see a slight uptick in new students which includes freshman and transfers.

McNeese State University also experienced a decrease. Some of the decrease may be attributed to the vast flooding in south Louisiana.

The UL System is the largest higher education system in the state and one of the largest in the nation. Statewide the System awards 64 percent of bachelor's degrees and 61 percent of master's degrees which represents 74 percent of education degrees; 72 percent of four-year nursing degrees; 66 percent of business degrees; 60 percent of engineering degrees and all of the state's public pharmacy degrees.

Enrollment growth statewide, despite the numerous obstacles (flooding, TOPS uncertainty, rising tuition, constantly changing/counterproductive policies at the state level), indicates to me that the value of our work is appreciated by our public. That appreciation will prove vital in the days ahead. Later this fall, we will vote on a constitutional amendment that empowers universities and the management boards to better serve the needs of our state. We must also navigate yet another statewide review by the bureaucracy, revamp yet again the funding formula for higher education, and advocate for an end to the decade-long disinvestment in higher education. Enrollment growth is more than a number. That growth will give us leverage in these conversations, the results of which will impact us for generations.

The Week

Monday, Vickie Gentry, Darlene Williams, Curtis Penrod, Begona Perez-Mira, Chris Gilson, and Neeru Deep met with me regarding the competency-based degree effort.

Tuesday morning, Jacob Farnsley from the Current Sauce visited with me about the Columns Fund in the NSU Foundation. His interest was sparked by a recent donation from BOM. We talked about the various types of donations ranging from endowed scholarships and professorships, to dedicated facility projects (the Academic Success Center and Turpin Stadium upgrades are recent examples), and unrestricted funds. Building an unrestricted endowment will allow us to address a number of unmet needs and respond to unpredictable shortfalls.

Tuesday afternoon, Dale Wohletz updated me on a number of facilities projects. We also talked about the newborns in the pasture and his narrow escape from a very protective mother of one of the calves.

Later Tuesday, I was honored to speak briefly to the Faculty Senate regarding the SACSCOC reaffirmation process including the QEP. We also talked about the state budget and a little about the strategic planning process.

Tuesday evening, the Creative and Performing Arts faculty stunned a packed Magale Recital Hall with their annual showcase. The somewhat eclectic mix of performances captured beautifully the breadth of talent, personality, and creativity of the faculty. I think it should become a weekly event...

Wednesday, I traveled to Baton Rouge for the Board of Regents Budget Hearings. Here is a link to the presentations:
<http://www.regents.la.gov/page/2016-17BudgetPresentations>

Thursday, Vickie Gentry and Roni Biscoe met with me to talk about offices...the never ending saga of offices...offices... ☐
Later, Thad Warren gave me a tutorial on the fire code.

Thursday afternoon, Carl Jones, Darlene Williams, Daphne Sampite, Chris Maggio, and I participated in a conference call with the Keypath team. This partnership has great potential to expand access, but ensuring we act in the best interests of our students and our academic mission requires due diligence.

Thursday evening, our own Turpin Stadium hosted an epic battle between two of our feeder schools: St. Mary's and Loyola College Prep. The Facilities, Athletics, Alumni, and NSU Police teams did an extraordinary job executing an event that will pay great dividends going forward.

Friday morning, I was delighted to provide a welcome to the Conference on Louisiana French. The incomparable Loletta Wynder, coordinator of our Creole Heritage Center, put together a magnificent program of significant import.

At the second New Faculty Luncheon, we introduced ourselves, enjoyed a little fellowship, and talked about initial impressions of the university.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments.