

Good morning:

I hope everyone had a great first week of the semester. It is exciting to have the students back on campus and into the swing of school. Here is an update on recent news and some of my activities from this past week.

### **News from the Week:**

Our Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Joseph Rallo, is planning a Spring Forum in Alexandria on February 1 -2, 2017. The first day will focus on academic and student affairs issues, and day two is designed to engage faculty and other higher education leaders with speakers who will share innovative practices in higher education and enable participants to network and provide feedback. Several from NSU are planning to attend, and here is a link to the forum site if interested:

<http://www.regents.la.gov/page/F3>.

News and posturing continues in Baton Rouge on specific ways to close the state budget gap. As mentioned previously, we will continue to work collaboratively with our state leaders for NSU and higher education. Please remember that we can mitigate future cuts and worry less about budget matters if we continue to progress with our strategic vision. If we maintain our commitment to provide excellent academic and student experiences to our students, our growth in student population will continue. An increase of 1,000 students will certainly assist us in becoming less dependent on state funding of our operations. (By the way, spring enrollment numbers are looking promising at this time!)

### **My Week:**

Monday, I attended an inspiring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration program hosted by the Natchitoches Black Heritage Committee. I was proud to see so many of our NSU students, including members of our Greek system and several athletic teams, attend and participate. Rev. Dr. Anthony Johnson, pastor of Rose of Sharon Baptist Church in Monroe, gave a motivational speech on "Keeping the Dream Alive." Later Monday, I attended the funeral services of NSU alumnus Ren Todtenbier. I finished the day at a very touching event as I was greeted by over 200 members of our Greek system with a welcome reception hosted by Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority. Every organization was represented, and I was able to share with them my support and pledge to continue the growth and expansion of our Greek system.

Tuesday was a day that we all have been looking forward to...the first day of class for the spring semester. Although it was rainy, it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of our students as they started the semester. I spent the morning assisting students through some registration appeals and then moved over to Russell Hall for a video session with our outstanding marketing team of Cole Gentry and Kara Scouten. My goal is to keep our alumni and community partners informed of NSU initiatives, which is a vital part of our strategic vision. Later in the morning, Ron Wright, Tracy Brown and I joined a conference call about IT services related to a potential university-wide retention initiative. In the afternoon, Dr. Vickie Gentry and I met to review some personnel and academic topics. We were also briefed by the Dean of Business and Technology search committee on the progress of the search. Dr. Fran Lemoine is doing a fabulous job leading this search, and we are progressing toward interviews with several candidates within the next couple of weeks for this important position.

Wednesday morning, I traveled to Alexandria and joined Dr. Darlene Williams and Mr. Jason Parks as we visited with Dr. Larry Tremblay, Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education for Planning, Research and Academic Affairs and representatives from LSUA and Central Louisiana Technical Community College to discuss budgeting and operations at the Learning Center of Rapides Parish. As many of you may know,

we have a robust presence at the LCRP, as we offer more than 70 classes per semester and have 11 faculty-staff and 4 adjuncts teaching several hundred students in Alexandria. We offer ASN, BSN, Radiological Sciences, Social Work, Business Administration, Computer Information Sciences, Criminal Justice and many support classes. After returning that afternoon, I had several appointments with students and ended the day with an enjoyable visit with Current Sauce Editor Ashley Wolff.

Thursday morning, Dr. Darlene Williams and I met with Tony Davis, President, and Mike Wolff, VP for Economic Development with the Natchitoches Community Alliance (NCA). The NCA provides coordinated, proactive leadership with economic development efforts in the Natchitoches area. We are proud to be a part of this alliance along with the Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Natchitoches and Parish of Natchitoches and look forward to continued collaboration for proactive, coordinated economic development efforts. Later in the morning, the council of Vice Presidents met. We continue to monitor and work with our elected officials on the state budget and potential further mid-year cuts. A highlight of the meeting focused on student retention. We heard a presentation by Mr. Doug Hoffman from the Educational Advisory Board. This was EAB's fourth visit with campus officials. Previous meetings included representation from the advising center, student success center, IT, first-year experience, student affairs, faculty and administrators. We are working diligently on a potential campus-wide retention initiative. We hope to announce progress and possible initiation for this fall semester. After lunch, I met with Dr. Paula Christenson and Damian Glover to review his internship plan and a quick update on our Student Affairs in Higher Education Program. The afternoon was spent assisting several students overcoming obstacles that will allow them to continue their education at NSU.

Friday, I spent the morning meeting with prospective students and in a lengthy phone conference about the on-line education market landscape. NSU has traditionally been a leader in the on-line delivery of classes, and we want to ensure that we remain competitive in the rapidly changing on-line education market. That afternoon, Dr. Vickie Gentry briefed me on our SACSCOC re-affirmation progress and our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). I want to thank the so many people who are diligently working on this. Friday evening, I stopped by the 94th birthday celebration of NSU alumnus, Mr. G.F. Thomas.

Saturday morning, I began the day with the Miss Lady of the Bracelet Farewell Breakfast. I want to applaud and thank 2016-17 Miss LOB, Miss Marissa McMickens, who so gracefully represented NSU throughout this past year at the Miss Louisiana Pageant and many other events and functions. Marissa plans to graduate with a musical theater degree this spring and plans to pursue an entertainment career. We look forward to seeing her perform on a cruise ship in the near future! Later that day I was able to spend some quality time with our prospective football recruits and then attended the Miss Lady of the Bracelet pageant. All of our contestants did a phenomenal job and I certainly want to congratulate our new Miss NSU Lady of the Bracelet, Maria Rome. I want to thank the Student Activities Board for their hard work in hosting the pageant, the CAPA staff for their expertise in producing and directing the event and Mrs. Yonna Pasch for her leadership in providing our students such a wonderful experience. That evening, Jennifer and I along with Courtney and Drake Owens enjoyed an entertaining evening with NSU Long Purple Line member and nationally recognized political lobbyist, Ted Jones and his wife Carmen. Mr. Jones continues to be instrumental in identifying opportunities and partnerships for NSU.

Please contact me if you have any questions, comments or concerns.

Fork 'em Demons,

Chris