

The Week:

This week in the Louisiana Legislature, the House sent the budget bill to the Senate without approving any new revenues. The House agreed to a nearly \$29 billion budget that fully funds TOPS in the coming year but has an \$18.1 million cut to higher education. Now, the bill will be debated in the Senate where it will likely be revised in the coming weeks as lawmakers work to reach an agreement before the session ends on June 8. We will continue to monitor the budget bill and other legislation that affects higher education and keep you posted.

Early in the week, I was glad to see that the Southeast Tourism Society named the 38th annual Natchitoches-Northwestern Folk Festival as one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast for July 2017, <http://news.nsula.edu/home/folk-festival-named-top-tourism-event/>. Our university and community enjoy this annual festival and understand its cultural significance in our region. The Natchitoches-Northwestern Folk Festival is another excellent example of community enrichment, a vital component of our strategic plan. It is nice to see its impact recognized regionally.

As most of you know, I was honored Thursday to be selected as the 19th President of Northwestern State University. I want each of you to know how truly privileged and humbled I am to have the opportunity to serve you in this role. I have appreciated and enjoyed serving you as Acting President for the past four months, and look forward to working with each of you as we continue to expand upon the excellence Northwestern State University. Thank you so very much for the overwhelming support that I have received during the presidential search. I have been deeply heartened and strengthened by this experience. We have an amazing Northwestern family.

My Week:

Monday morning, I did my monthly radio show with Tedd Dumas of Baldrige Dumas Communications. BDC has a network of radio stations with a large audience covering Western Louisiana and East Texas. This is a great avenue to continue to disseminate our message to huge numbers of people.

Afterwards, our leadership team gathered for our monthly meeting. The meeting minutes are attached. As you know, we utilize this monthly meeting to gather input and foster open communications from a large, representative group on campus. This was the last meeting for two important people on the leadership team...Faculty Senate President Dr. Marcia Hardy and SGA President and John Pearce. Both have been instrumental as members of the leadership team in providing input and advocacy for their respective areas. They will be greatly missed, but we are excited to welcome as outstanding replacements incoming Faculty Senate President Dr. Thomas Reynolds and 2017 – 2018 SGA President Tre Nelson.

Later that morning, Jerry Pierce, Drake Owens and I met with local businessman John Richmond about potential opportunities for Northwestern and Natchitoches.

After lunch, I had the honor of participating in the Duke TIP Recognition ceremony. Since 1981, Duke TIP has been recognizing academically talented youth. As a world leader in gifted and talented education, Duke TIP works with students, parents and educators to identify, recognize, challenge, engage and help young scholars reach their highest potential. NSU has been affiliated with Duke TIP for many years and we annually host the state recognition ceremony. A highlight was to see several NSU faculty members' children honored with this national recognition.

Afterwards, Dr. Gentry, Dr. Handel and I met with a student who brought us some outstanding ideas on improving areas at the University. Later that afternoon, I attended the retirement reception for dear friend and colleague Dr. Rick Jensen at the Natchitoches Room in Russell Hall. Dr. Jensen has been an esteemed member of our Louisiana Scholars' College faculty since the early 1990's. He will be greatly missed by the university.

That evening, I joined several other faculty, staff and administrators who attended the Student Government Association end-of-the-year banquet. SGA advisor Shayne Creppel did a great job organizing the event, and outgoing President John Pearce provided an excellent recap of their accomplishments and an effective, emotional farewell address. Incoming President Tre Nelson and the other officers were sworn in, and Nelson eloquently presented their goals for the upcoming school year.

Tuesday morning, I met with two candidates for open faculty positions at the university. After lunch, I traveled to Bossier City and joined Department of Criminal Justice, History and Social Sciences Department Head Joe Morris, Dr. Shirley Snyder and Don Stewart at Bossier Parish Community College as we updated an agreement between NSU and BPCC. The agreement allows BPCC students who complete their Emergency Medical Technician-paramedic training to transfer those credits toward partial fulfillment of degree requirements in Unified Public Safety Administration (UPSAs), specifically the fire and emergency medical services administration concentration, at NSU, <http://news.nsula.edu/home/nsu-updates-emt-upsa-agreement-with-bpcc/>.

That evening, I joined Dr. Donna Johnson at our Shreveport Nursing and Allied Health Campus as we updated our Northwest Louisiana Alumni Association Officers on events and highlights from this semester. We have an enthusiastic group of alumni who are really working hard to keep NSU visible in the Shreveport-Bossier market.

Afterwards, I was with Dean Dr. Dana Clawson at the Shreveport Martin Luther King Health Center & Pharmacy, <http://www.mlkhealth.org/>. The MLK Center, which serves over 1,500 patients annually, operates as a safety net for patients who have no resources to obtain quality health care and pharmacy services. I want to applaud our faculty and students who volunteer at the clinic to deliver health care to medically vulnerable patients.

Wednesday morning, Dr. Gentry updated me on the progress and great work by our Quality Enhancement Plan committees. Thanks so much to all who are working so hard on the QEP.

That afternoon, I attended the retirement reception for long-time employee Pam Hetherwick. I want to acknowledge and thank Pam for her dedicated service to NSU. She has been a wonderful asset to our university. Afterwards, I attended the visitation for Mrs. Rose Long, NSU alumna and wife of Senator Gerald Long. We will miss Mrs. Rose who attended so many NSU events with her husband and was always so proud to tell everyone that she was a graduate of NSU.

Thursday, I spent the day in Baton Rouge in interviews for the presidency. As mentioned above, I truly thank everyone for your openness and input throughout the process. Several board and ULS staff members complimented the NSU family on their extensive involvement in the search process.

Friday morning, I spent time with a candidate for a faculty opening at the university before moving into a budget development briefing with Dr. Vickie Gentry, Dr. Marcus Jones, Carl Jones, Roni Biscoe and Frank Hall. Afterwards, I met with a student before participating in a conference call on Enrollment

Management. That afternoon, I had a wonderful visit with Editor-in-Chief of *The Current Sauce* Alec Horton. We have a great team of student media leaders!

I spent Friday evening at the NSU Athletics Department and Demons Unlimited Foundation Legends Gala at the Natchitoches Events Center. My former classmate and NSU alumnus Coach Ed Orgeron highlighted the event by delivering a rousing address. As you probably know, Ed is the head football coach at LSU, and graciously spent the evening assisting our athletic department in this major fundraising event. Also, Jack Brittain, Jr. was recognized at the event for his support of NSU athletics. I want to thank Associate Director of Athletics Dr. Haley Taitano for a phenomenal job of organizing this amazing event.

Saturday, I attended the NSU vs. Central Arkansas softball game where I got to throw out the “first pitch”. That was truly an honor, but I quickly realized on my walk to the mound that home plate was a little further than I remembered. Although it was not pretty, Emma Hawthorne, our catcher, told me that my pitch was a strike. Thanks Emma on the generous strike zone! .

As always, please contact me with any questions, comments or concerns,

Fork ‘em Demons,

Chris