

The Week:

I want to thank you all for your preparations for Freshmen Connection. This summer, we host four sessions on the Natchitoches campus and sessions on our Leesville and Shreveport campuses. I appreciate Reatha Cox and her student staff for coordinating these informative programs and our faculty and staff who work tirelessly to advise and register our students.

It is important that we remain focused on recruiting and retention. Your support of our students and future students is greatly appreciated.

This past week, I spent a couple of days in Baton Rouge and had the opportunity to visit with several legislators. As mentioned previously, the legislative session ends on June 8, and it was obvious on my visit that there is still much work to be done. It appears to me that it is becoming more likely that a special session might be needed. Here are some Capitol updates from the week:

House Bill 113 that removes the sunset on HB 152 allowing colleges and universities fee authority with an amendment that sunsets fee authority in three years passed the House with a vote of 91-3.

The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) met this week, deciding to make no changes to projected revenues for Fiscal Year 17 but reduced FY 18's projected revenues by \$27.4 million.

Budget discussions about House Bill 1 began this week in the Senate Finance Committee, and Higher Education will be on the committee's agenda Monday morning. Senate Finance Committee members are reviewing the House's version of HB1 which includes funding for TOPS but cuts to health care, corrections and other agencies. The House's version also proposes to appropriate 97.5 percent of available revenues in anticipation of another mid-year budget shortfall. The House's version of HB 1 left a balance of \$253 million to be appropriated.

With the REC taking no action on the FY 17 budget and adjusting the FY 18 budget by \$27.4 million, Senate Finance Committee members are expected to revise the House plan to appropriate 99 percent or more of all available state revenues. If so, Senate Finance Committee members will have the ability to appropriate as much as \$205.7 million after the adjustment for the FY 18. Top priorities for the committee are expected to be restoring cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services, Corrections, and addressing more than \$85 million in supplemental needs from K-12, flood damage and payments to local sheriffs for housing offenders.

As Senate Finance Committee members consider which of the state's priorities will be funded, it is very important that legislators place restoring funding to higher education at the top of their list. Higher education is short \$18.5 million in the current budget for formula funding.

We will continue our fight for higher education!

My Week:

Monday morning, I met with Mary Jones with the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office to review and sign an agreement and partner with St. Bernard Parish on hurricane evacuation. After our meeting, I stopped by to visit with faculty at the Scholars' College faculty retreat.

After lunch, Dr. Chris Gilson and I had a great visit. Later in the afternoon, Dean of the Northwest Louisiana Technical College Laurie Morrow stopped by, and we had a good discussion about our new AMT program.

That evening, I attended the Natchitoches Parish Council meeting before heading over to St. Mary's High School to attend its graduation ceremony. Afterwards, I drove to Baton Rouge in preparation for early morning meetings.

Tuesday, I spent the day at the Capitol. First, I spoke to our North Louisiana legislative delegation at the North Louisiana Economic Partnership breakfast and then had individual meetings with Louisiana Senate President Pro Tempore Gerald Long and Representative Frankie Howard and lunch with Representative Terry Brown.

That afternoon, I joined the NSU Foundation staff, several NSU alumni and a few incoming freshmen students at the NSU alumni tailgate prior to the NSU vs. LSU baseball game. Afterwards, we headed into Alex Box stadium to watch our Demons take on the Tigers. Although we did not win the game, our team fought hard and we had several plays that will certainly make our season highlight film.

Wednesday, I attended the Committee of 100 Legislative Briefing in Baton Rouge. The day was truly informative as we heard legislative updates from Senator Long and Speaker Pro Tempore Walt Leger. Later in the day, Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser addressed the group, and we had an outstanding panel discussion with Louisiana Economic Development Secretary Don Pierson and Department of Transportation and Development Deputy Secretary Dr. Eric Kalivoda. Afterwards was a panel discussion on fiscal reform, and finally Governor Jon Bel Edwards addressed our group.

That evening, I made it back to Natchitoches in time to speak to a group of business leaders about NSU.

Thursday morning, Drake Owen, Dean Dana Clawson, Dr. Maxine Johnson and I had a great meeting with Willis Knighton President and CEO Jim Elrod and his leadership team. We thanked Mr. Elrod for his generous support of NSU, briefed his team on our College of Nursing and Allied Health and discussed future partnerships.

After returning from Shreveport, I met with NSU student and SGA Cabinet member Jacob Ellis as he updated me on his role as Academic Affairs Commissioner. Afterwards, Dean Frances Conine, Reatha Cox, Jana Lucky, Rebecca Boone, Lauren Jackson and I met about the Student Experience strategic plan and discussed our objectives, strategies and metrics.

Later that afternoon, Dr. Kirsten Bartels stopped by to brief me on the Scholars' College semester and plans. Then, Dr. Gentry and I met about several topics. I truly appreciate her leadership and the great job that she is doing in her role as Interim Provost.

Friday morning, Roni Biscoe and I met and then I headed over to Café DeMon for a great visit with Faculty Senate President Thomas Reynolds. Our faculty have a great advocate in Dr. Reynolds. Later that morning, I visited with a prospective graduate student from New Jersey, and Tommy Whitehead stopped by the office for a meeting.

Friday afternoon, Doug Ireland called to let me know that a group of NSU alumni and former Lady Demon Basketball players were in town for a reunion, and I was able to reconnect with some former

classmates. That evening, I attended the NSU vs UNO baseball game as we honored several senior student-athletes on a great career at NSU.

Saturday afternoon, I joined ULS President Jim Henderson, Commissioner of Division of Administration Jay Dardenne, LSMSA Executive Director Steve Horton and honored guests on stage at the Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts Commencement Exercises. That evening, Jennifer and I attended the Natchitoches Regional Medical Center Foundation Gala at the Events Center.

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

Fork 'em Demons,

Chris