

## The Week:

Tomorrow, we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This annual observance is a significant and meaningful event for the university and our nation. I hope you pause tomorrow to reflect on this great leader's accomplishments for our country.

This week, higher education systems participated in a conference call with staff members from the Governor's Office and the Division of Administration. Indications are that the Executive Budget released on Jan. 19 will include significant cuts to colleges and universities, TOPS and Go Grant programs. The Louisiana Constitution requires the Governor to prepare an Executive Budget that balances proposed expenditures with available revenues. Any proposed reductions must be in areas not constitutionally or statutorily protected. Therefore, these recommended reductions, although not reflective of the governor's priorities, would be aimed primarily at higher education and health care.

Such deep reductions in TOPS scholarships would have a drastically negative impact on funding and enrollment at Northwestern. A substantial percentage of students receiving TOPS would not be able to stay in school.

The proposed cut to the university's budget and the loss of revenues from TOPS scholarships would make it necessary for Northwestern to dip into reserves and curtail programs and services. Recovery from those cutbacks would be slow and painful at a time when the university has experienced record enrollment despite continual budget reductions over the past decade.

Because tax-related issues cannot be addressed by the Legislature in regular sessions of even-numbered years, this budget crisis will have to be resolved in a special session. Governor Edwards is understandably reluctant to call a special session without assurances of support for a plan to restore revenues that will be lost when the tax expires.

The regular session runs from March 12 to June 4. Waiting until after the regular session in June to find a solution is simply not acceptable. The ideal solution is for the legislature to work on a solution to the fiscal cliff during a special session in February, allowing our universities and students to properly plan for their future.

We will continue to closely monitor this situation, keep you updated on the issues, and work with you, students, alumni and other friends to inform legislators and others of the detrimental impact these proposed reductions would have on our university.

Other news this week includes our continued emphasis on assessment and utilizing data to move forward with our strategic plan. On Wednesday, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the University Strategic Planning Team provided a brief regarding the 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle Mid-Year Report. This meeting clearly confirmed the University's comprehensive planning and assessment process is moving forward. We are refining our processes on the collection and use of information to make better decisions and gauge how well we are executing our mission.

The group also discussed the closing out of AY 2016-2017, the status of program and unit assessments, the work taking place concerning our core curriculum, and the great progress of our QEP. We spoke about SACSCOC Conference decisions and our plans moving forward. Strategic Focus Area representatives updated me on their individual metrics. We focused on the process, and each

demonstrated we have systems in place to collect reliable and relevant data. We are maximizing the lessons learned from our AY 2016-2017 assessment.

I am in full support of this approach and am confident that this process works. Our recent accreditation is the tangible evidence. We are seeing the kind of progress that will continue to propel Northwestern into the regional and possibly national conversation on excellence in many areas. I recognize it is your hard work that underpins our progress. I am thankful for each of you and for what you do for this University every single day. You are making a difference.

### **My Week:**

Monday morning, the leadership team gathered in the Henderson Conference Room for our first meeting of the spring semester (minutes are attached). Afterwards, Van Erikson and I joined Mayor Posey and others at City Hall for a briefing on the sports and recreational park that will adjoin our NSU Recreational Complex. Later that afternoon, Dr. Vickie Gentry, Dr. Darlene Williams, Julie Longlois and I reviewed the new minimum requirements for dual enrollment as set forth by the Louisiana Board of Regents.

I left early Tuesday morning for Baton Rouge to attend the University of Louisiana System President's Council meeting. After our meeting, I attended the ULS Board of Supervisors meeting where the 2018 board officers were installed. After lunch with the supervisors and ULS staff, I headed back to Natchitoches.

Wednesday morning, Dr. Vickie Gentry, Dr. Greg Handel, Dr. Paula Furr, Dr. Carmella Parker, Curtis Penrod, VP Jerry Pierce and I met on expanding opportunities for our New Media, Journalism and Communication Arts majors, as well as students in our College of Business and Technology.

Later that morning, I met with Leslie Quinn, Constituent Services Special Projects Director for Congressman Mike Johnson about potential opportunities for our university.

Wednesday afternoon, Ron Wright and I met about technology needs for future NSU projects. Afterwards, Dr. Vickie Gentry, VP Frances Conine, Jana Lucky, Andrea Maley and I met to review new Board of Regents revisions to Minimum Requirements for Entry-Level, College-Level Mathematics and English. As we learn more about the new requirements, we will be meeting with larger groups to develop policy for NSU.

Afterwards, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and the University Strategic Planning Team provided a brief regarding the 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle Mid-Year Report. As mentioned above, it is evident your hard work is paying off for our university.

Following the briefing, Greg Burke, Dr. Haley Taitano and I reviewed athletic marketing efforts and preliminary plans to increase exposure in certain market segments. That evening, I attended visitation services for NSU alumnus and long-time supporter Kip Fair.

Thursday morning, Dr. Darlene Williams, NSU Caddo/Bossier Partnerships and Military Outreach Executive Director Suzette Hadden and I met in Shreveport with The Coordinating & Development Corporation Regional Economic Development Organization President and CEO Jack Skaggs and Director of Workforce Development Angie Rymer to visit about partnerships between our two organizations.

Afterwards, Executive Director Hadden and I stopped by our Nursing campus and visited with Dean Clawson and several faculty and staff members as they prepared for the spring semester. At noon, I attended the North Louisiana Economic Partnership New Board Member Orientation Lunch. I am honored to represent NSU as a board member with this regional Economic Development Organization. NLEP provides professional economic development services to the 14-parish region of North Louisiana.

Upon returning from Shreveport, I met with Ashley Sarpy and Chris Post from Chateau Saint Denis Hotel and the Natchitoches Events Center. They provided a briefing on the first year operations of the downtown hotel and shared plans for the facilities. Afterwards, Rita Graves, Roxanne Freeman and I met with our legislative auditors for our NCAA Audit Exit Conference.

That evening, Jennifer and I hosted our Ladies Basketball team for dinner at the President's Residence.

Friday, Dr. Vickie Gentry, Roni Biscoe, Dr. Marcus Jones, Ron Wright, Brett Knecht, Ashley Rainey, Liz Knecht and I reviewed our recent audit finding relating to our Timekeeping Rules and Policies. In our recent legislative audit, it was noted that our current "exception based" timekeeping method needs to be revised to comply with Civil Service Rules and ULS system policies. We have been reviewing alternatives to our current policy and are developing new policies and procedures to ensure compliance. We will keep everyone informed as policy and procedures are finalized and implemented.

The rest of the day, I met with several students maneuvering through appeal and re-entry processes as they prepare for the beginning of the spring semester on Tuesday. I, again, want to thank all of you for your willingness to go "above and beyond" in assisting our students. Many are facing financial and other obstacles and an understanding ear and helpful hand go a long way to ease their concerns. I want to acknowledge Dawn Eubanks, Lauren Jackson, Jennifer Kelly and staffs for diligently working with students having financial struggles to continue their education. Your efforts and the efforts of so many at NSU are greatly appreciated.

Saturday morning, I joined our Criminal Justice, History and Social Sciences faculty as they hosted the regional Social Studies Fair in the Student Union. Over 100 students and many more parents and supporters were on campus for the competition. Thanks very much to our faculty for hosting and judging the competition. Afterwards, I welcomed the Natchitoches Young Professionals leadership team as they met for their leadership retreat.

Saturday afternoon, I joined many of you for exciting basketball action in Prather Coliseum as our men battled Abilene Christian University.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.

Fork 'em Demons,

Chris