

The Week:

At midnight on Monday, the second special session of the Louisiana Legislature adjourned with no revenue measures enacted to address the budget shortfall that will occur when the one cent sales tax rolls off the books on June 30. This was a very disappointing end to the session and a missed opportunity to stabilize funding for higher education and to uphold the TOPS promise to tens of thousands of students who have earned the scholarship.

Because of the legislature's failure to reach a consensus on revenue bills, higher education and TOPS funding are facing dramatic cuts. As it stands now, TOPS students at NSU will have to pay \$1,554 more in tuition next year, and our NSU budget would be reduced by \$3,645,000 if the legislature does not approve revenues in the third special session to adequately fund the state's budget.

We have been consistent with our messaging to the legislature:

- STABILIZE FUNDING FOR OUR UNIVERSITIES
 - Louisiana has the South's lowest resources per student. STABILIZE FUNDING FOR OUR UNIVERSITIES.
 - Louisiana's disinvestment in higher education ranks 2nd nationally. STABILIZE FUNDING FOR OUR UNIVERSITIES.
 - Considering where our state ranks, the proposed \$96 million cut to higher education is unacceptable. STABILIZE FUNDING FOR OUR UNIVERSITIES.

- FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE
 - Of our 28,082 TOPS students in the University of Louisiana System, 37 percent are eligible to receive federal need-based Pell Grants. FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE.
 - A 30 percent cut in TOPS will add \$1,600 in out-of-pocket expenses to our TOPS students. TOPS students already pay an average of \$3,036 out of pocket to cover tuition and fees. This does not include other expenses such as room and board, transportation, books, etc. FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE.
 - The Legislature created the TOPS criteria, and students have earned TOPS by meeting the mandated benchmarks. FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE.
 - Our competition, with their significantly more resources, inundates our highest-performing students with offers that often compete with or exceed TOPS. Uncertainty surrounding TOPS diminishes the appeal of the program. FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE.
 - Is TOPS too easy to earn? We are comfortable with an in-depth policy discussion about TOPS in the proper setting. The merit of TOPS isn't relevant to the decision to fund the program for those who have already earned it. FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE.
 - TOPS provides access to underserved populations. FULFILL THE TOPS PROMISE.

Where does this leave us? On Friday, the Governor called a third special session that will begin on Monday, June 18, and will run through Wednesday, June 27. We must get this right! We have accomplished too much over the past year because of stabilized funding, and we will continue to fight for adequate funding for NSU and our students that will allow us to produce the most educated workforce in Louisiana's history over the next decade.

In many of my weekly updates, I often highlight an area of excellence of our university. What makes me very proud is that these accolades are consistently aligned with the strategic plan that so many worked tirelessly to craft for our university. Throughout the year, we have highlighted our academic program achievements, positive student experiences, our market responsiveness and community enrichment.

Today, I highlight one of our five strategic focus areas...athletic prominence. Last weekend and throughout this past week, NSU's athletic program was featured in ways that we have not experienced in years. The excellence started with our NSU baseball team that qualified for an NCAA Regional for the first time in over a decade. Because we qualified for the NCAA Baseball Regional Tournament, our team was featured on national television four times, once during the NCAA selection show and three times in nationally televised games. Because of this, our market exposure was staggering.

We track marketing analytics to evaluate our exposure. Last weekend, Northwestern State University garnered the following outreach:

- Total National TV audience of 2,644,150
- Total Online News Visitors of 128,726,199
- **Total Earned Media of \$4,228,070**

(Earned media refers to television, radio, newspaper, social media and other media recognition gained through specific achievements and promotional efforts other than paid advertising.)

Furthermore, after the amazing achievements by our baseball team, the NSU Track and Field teams also excelled on the national stage. They competed for three consecutive days on ESPN, set the school record in the 4x100 meter relay and had four student-athletes make the first team All-American Track and Field team!

I was approached by hundreds of fans in Oregon letting us know how impressed they were with our student-athletes and received hundreds if not thousands of texts and social media messages from proud NSU alumni and a legion of new NSU fans.

I want to thank our athletic administrators, coaches and student-athletes for the way these teams represented our university. You have made us proud!

My Week:

Monday, before I began my travel home from Oregon, I did my monthly radio call-in show with Baldrige Dumas Communications. The rest of the day was spent traveling from the NCAA baseball regionals in Corvallis, Ore., back to Natchitoches. Let's just say that by the time we made it home, it was early Tuesday morning!

Tuesday morning, I met with Metropolitan Circles Intake Coordinator Nathaniel Jones about opportunities for local area underprivileged youth. Afterwards, I met with Roger Henson, warden at the Natchitoches Detention Center, about educational opportunities for incarcerated inmates.

Later that morning, I had a conference call with Educational Advisory Board administrators. After lunch, LTC Katherine Carlson brought new NSU Professor of Military Science LTC Wendell Bender by the office

for introductions. We appreciate the outstanding job LTC Carlson has done for our ROTC program over the past three years, and we look forward to working with LTC Bender in his new leadership role at NSU.

Later that afternoon, I spent time working with a student and his parents to get re-enrolled at NSU. Later, Dr. Gentry, Dr. Handel and I met on some academic matters.

Finally, ULS President Dr. Jim Henderson led a conference call with the Presidents from the nine ULS universities discussing the special session and our plans for the upcoming session.

Wednesday, I visited with EAB administrators on retention initiatives. Afterwards, Drake Owens, Jerry Pierce, NSU alumnus Ted Jones and I met about fund-raising opportunities for the University.

Wednesday afternoon, I had the opportunity to address the Louisiana Association of Student Councils summer camp attendees. Over 500 high school student leaders are on campus for a summer leadership camp.

Thursday, I met with a student attempting to re-enroll at NSU. Afterwards, I had a teleconference with National Collegiate Athletic Association Director Wendy Walters, California State University-Northridge President Dr. Dianne Harrison and University of Arkansas Pine Bluff Chancellor Dr. Laurence Alexander. We will be serving on an NCAA Presidential panel later this summer.

At noon, Jennifer and I hosted lunch for the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Teacher Education Center. Afterwards, I joined many of you at the retirement reception honoring University Registrar Lillie Bell. We thank Mrs. Bell for her 35 years of service to our university.

Friday morning, I had several personnel meetings.

Friday evening, I visited with many NSU alumni at the pre-tournament reception for the Johnny Antoon Memorial Golf Tournament.

Saturday morning, I attended the Antoon golf tournament. The benefit tournament drew 120 golfers, and the Johnny Antoon Endowed Scholarship has now eclipsed \$135,000 in endowment and awards.

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

Fork 'em Demons,

Chris