

Week of February 2nd

Budget Talks

***Warning** This section is longer than normal and involves numbers.*

The good: the Jindal Administration is addressing the current year budget deficit of \$103 million without cutting higher education. Even before the revenue shortfall was officially recognized, the administration pledged to find ways to protect colleges and universities. Looks like they managed to do so.

The bad: FY2015-16 will be a very difficult budget year. The current forecast puts the deficit at ~\$1.6 billion. Part of the deficit is due to what is referred to as the “continuation budget.” The continuation budget assumes all things currently funded continue to be funded and are adjusted for inflation and other factors. The amount needed to solve the deficit is far less than \$1.6 billion, but higher education still faces cuts ranging from \$300 million to \$380 million as things currently stand. The administration, legislators, and other stakeholders are exploring solutions to mitigate the problem, including a temporary pause in the various tax rebate programs.

To put things in perspective, NSU was funded approximately \$6,050 per FTE student in 2008-09 in state dollars. This year, NSU is funded approximately \$2,900 per FTE student in state dollars. Over the same time period, the total of annual tuition and mandatory fees has increased from \$3,597 to \$6,786 for a full-time student. At first glance, one would think we have been kept whole. Unfortunately, that is not the case. We discount through “institutional aid” approximately 25% of tuition and fees. These are merit-based scholarships, athletic scholarships, performance scholarships, and assorted other items. In addition, mandated costs associated with healthcare, retirement, and state services have increased tremendously. The net per-student resource base we have has decreased by about 20%.

Here is the good news: the mandated costs and tuition discount amount are relatively fixed. Revenue generated from enrollment growth exceeds the marginal cost substantially. For that reason, we have developed a plan

to drive enrollment in markets with low hanging fruit. Substantial budgetary relief is available if we are successful in attracting new students and are more effective at retaining students we already have.

Many of you may have seen the initial salvos in the battle to fight budget cuts from some of our partners. LSU and others have urged alumni and supporters to contact legislators to advocate against the cuts. LSU has suggested it could see 1400+ faculty and staff layoffs and the closure of 28 academic programs.

Our approach is a little different. While we certainly cannot afford a 40-60% reduction in our state funds, we also cannot afford to waste time and energy on an unlikely worst-case scenario. Instead, we must focus on the things we can control. Hence:

If we remain focused on recruiting, serving, educating, and retaining students, I am very optimistic we will be just fine, though we will have some challenging days. I understand we are all exhausted by this seemingly never-ending cycle of budget reductions. You've heard (or read) me use the phrase "we control our own destiny." I firmly believe that to be true.

In addition, we are launching a campaign to intensify our relationship with our alumni. We will distribute a video message next week, then follow up with a survey designed to elicit alumni input regarding our future. The feedback we receive will be combined with input we have already received from external stakeholders and from you. All of this will be incorporated into a visioning statement/high level strategic plan to be released in late March. This plan will add focus to our efforts and serve as the basis for our requests for support. Your continued engagement in the development of the plan and your expertise in its execution are vital. Below is a link to the video. I encourage your feedback.

<http://vimeo.com/nsula/review/118176875/da53e776ed>

The Week

I was delighted to join Pastor Steven Harris Monday morning as a guest on his Natchitoches Blessing radio program on 93.9 FM. In addition to his pastoral duties, Pastor Harris is a member of the Natchitoches Parish School Board. During the program, he expressed strong support for our university. He also indicated a willingness and desire to build on our partnership with our local school system.

Later Monday morning, we held our second Leadership Team meeting. Stephanie Dyjack from Campus Living Villages joined us for a brief discussion of Living/Learning Communities.

Cole Gentry also joined us to update the team on our outreach and messaging efforts. He gave us a first glance at a new website concept. I am excited about the direction of the site, as I am sure you will be. Of course, a site redesign involves more than changing fonts and pictures. It is an extremely complex and cumbersome task. Cole and Ron Wright will be visiting with every department to obtain feedback and provide information about a new era in Northwestern's web presence.

Darlene Williams updated the team on the initial concept of a "blue ocean" strategy to attract 2500 new students. The successful execution of this plan will be a game changer for all of us. Of course, it will require all of us as well. Stay tuned.

Monday evening, I joined our recruiting team for a reception in Sulphur at the home of General Erbon Wise. General Wise is a 1941 graduate of Northwestern. His parents were graduates in the Class of 1915. On the wall of his foyer hangs a picture of him in uniform on the streets of Paris in 1944. Suffice it to say this amazing man has seen some sights. 31 future Northwestern alumni who are currently enrolled in area high schools joined us.

Tuesday morning, I met with the executive team of Step Forward in Shreveport. Step Forward is a "cradle to career" initiative in the Shreveport/Bossier MSA. I am fortunate to serve as the group's chairman.

The Community Foundation of North Louisiana developed the program and hosts our meetings.

After returning to Natchitoches, I enjoyed separate visits with two of our stellar student leaders: Emily Carter and Garrett Pierce. Emily interviewed me for the Current Sauce on the proposed restructuring of student self-assessed fees. She is an extraordinarily talented journalist. If you picture a baseball pitcher throwing two curveballs low and outside followed by a fastball up and in, you will get a feel for her interview style. Garrett, our SGA president, dropped in to visit about the student fee structure. His leadership in passing the new fee structure was just outstanding.

After lunch, Mike Wolff and Tony Davis from the Natchitoches Chamber of Commerce came to the office to talk about our partnership. Through Mike's efforts, we have hosted a number of training sessions for our local manufacturing interests in our Engineering Technology Department. This training complements the offerings of the department quite well and seems to be in high demand.

Tuesday night, it was off to Leesville for another recruiting reception at the home of NSU alum Gene and Martha Koury. The Koury's are the in-laws of our Leesville/Fort Polk campus leader, Martha Koury. Leesville is a rich market for us, and I was delighted to see the large contingent of faculty and staff from our Leesville/Fort Polk campus in attendance. Together with the recruiters and faculty from Natchitoches, I believe we gave yet another group of future NSU alums great insight into what their experience as NSU Demons will be like.

Wednesday morning, Senator Long brought Mark Moses from Facility Planning and Control to campus to discuss our capital outlay needs. Marcus Jones has a well-considered master plan for our facilities. We were able to get updates and direction on projects currently underway and to advocate for pending projects.

At noon, a large number of Demon Athletics supporters gathered for a luncheon in Prather to celebrate new signing classes for Demon Soccer and Demon Football. Both sports brought in stellar classes of student athletes.

We look forward to seeing these new faces in class and on the field. Congratulations to both coaching staffs!

After lunch, Darlene Williams and I met with Mayor Jacque Roy and members of his administration in Alexandria. Mayor Roy is a true innovator with extraordinary vision. Northwestern can play a major role in realizing that vision for Alexandria and throughout CenLA in partnership with CenLA Technical Community College and LSUA. We came away with specific action items that will strengthen our presence and serve our constituents better than ever.

Wednesday evening, Tonia and I attended the Monroe recruiting reception. This event was hosted by NSU alum Malcolm Maddox at Iberia Bank. Several other alums were in attendance including Guy Barr and Dwight Vines. These events help applicants make their final decision to attend Northwestern. The work of our recruiting team and the participation of our faculty are essential to the events' success.

After a rough start Thursday morning, the day actually proved to be a productive one. Roni Biscoe, Greg Bouck, Steve Horton, Lisa Abney and I met regarding our SACSCOC reaffirmation effort. This will be fun...

A number of students from our Social Work program visited later Thursday regarding a plan for a student food bank. Food insecurity is a relatively hidden problem that affects a far larger population in our communities than we would like to believe. As much as it hurts to say, many of our students struggle with hunger. I could not be more excited about this effort, or more grateful to these students for bringing the idea forward. They will work with other areas of the university to implement an effective intervention of great import.

Thursday evening, Tonia represented us at the Bossier recruiting reception. Jana Lucky told me it was the best event of the week. I am not sure how to take that...

I was not able to attend the reception because I was living the dream. Doug Ireland asked me several weeks ago to join the Voice of the Lady Demons

Tony Taglavore as color commentator for a basketball game. I agreed, thinking it would be fun and might gain us a little press coverage. Doug and company turned it into an earned media coup. For example, here is a link to a full two minutes of coverage from KTBS in Shreveport:

http://ktbs.videodownload.worldnow.com/KTBS_0602201518322871848AA.mp4

Tonia, the Henderson household's resident media expert, tells me we received in the neighborhood of \$10,000 in value from the coverage on television, in the newspaper, and on social media.

While on the subject, thank you for all of the fans who turned out to support the Lady Demons. Brooke and Scott Stoehr have built a program of which we can all be proud. Monday night, Mike McConathy coaches his 1000th game in another Pack Prather event. I hope to see you there for some of the best basketball being played today.

Friday, we welcomed more than 600 high school students to the Regional FBLA gathering. Thank you to Julie McDonald and the School of Business faculty for making this event a success.

This week we continued the breakfast introductions (with one mishap that will be corrected with a mea culpa omelet station) and met with 6 departments. I cannot tell you how appreciative I am for your support of and participation in these discussions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions, comments, or concerns.