

Week of March 16

Budget

Budget hearings associated with HB1, the state's primary appropriating instrument, began this week. The big news: we don't have enough money to fund everything we want to fund. Higher education appears before the committee April 8. This will seem to be a long several weeks ahead of us, but I remain naively optimistic.

If we remain focused on recruiting, serving, educating, and retaining students, we will be just fine. Growth and retention are paramount. We control our own destiny!

The Week

Monday morning, I met with Brad Parmer and Fred Harkrider of Ellucian. They updated me, from their perspective, on the status of our ERP conversion. We remain on schedule and under budget for the remaining modules. We will end the project on schedule and under budget.

The real purpose of the meeting was to discuss the strategic capabilities provided by the Banner product. We have a lot of low hanging fruit when it comes to growth and retention, but sustained growth and radically improved rates of success require business intelligence. Banner contains data analytics tools and decision support functionality that will help us better deploy resources and implement strategies to achieve our objectives.

Monday afternoon, I traveled to Alexandria to meet with Heather Urene of the Kisatchie-Delta Regional Planning & Development District, Leigh Flynn of Learning Center of Rapides Parish (LCRP), and our own Jason Parks. We discussed the concept of a "work ready" community. We also talked about our current offerings at LCRP and potential offerings.

Tuesday morning, Lt. Colonel Underwood brought Lt. Colonel Carlson by for an introduction. Many of you know Mackie is retiring this summer. He has

done an extraordinary job of advancing our ROTC program. Lt. Colonel Carlson will be our new Professor of Military Science. She will arrive on campus in June. We look forward to working with her.

Later Tuesday, I enjoyed a series of conversations with a variety of parties. Steve Gruesbeck stopped by to discuss service learning. We had a great conversation about measurement of service learning outcomes. Calvin Cupp, Louisiana Scholars' College alum and current rowing coach at Wichita State University, dropped in to say hello. He and his team are in town practicing on the Cane River for their spring break. Three members of the Walter Ledet Coffee Club came to the office to pledge their support of NSU during these trying times for higher education. Finally, Max Lecomte from the Coordinating and Development Corporation (CDC) and I caught up on economic development talk and went over the agenda for the CDC meeting on our campus in Natchitoches in April.

Tuesday afternoon, Carl Jones and I participated in a conference call with Sandra Woodley (and members of her staff), and ULS board members Jimmy Long, Ed Crawford, and Kelly Faircloth. We updated them on our current and projected budget scenarios. We also discussed our advocacy work.

Steve Horton, Chris Maggio, Lauren Jackson and I met to discuss our scholarship approach for the remainder of this recruiting cycle. Tuition discounting is a strategic way to achieve a variety of organizational goals, and, in all candor, we have opportunities to better define our strategic intent. We will begin discussions on next year's approach in the coming weeks. A discounting strategy that maximize access and drives revenue generation is very important.

Wednesday was the Council of Louisiana Colleges and Universities meeting in New Orleans. In addition to the business meeting, we were treated to panel discussions from the system presidents and area legislators. We also heard from Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Rallo. At lunch, James Carville surprised the group with a brief, entertaining talk.

Wednesday evening, approximately 75 alumni gathered at Drago's in Metairie as part of a series of alumni engagement events around the country. Chris Maggio and his team from Alumni Affairs put on quite a show. We updated the group on where we are and our vision for who we want to be. Our alumni seem to be responding very positively to our efforts to intensify our relationship with them.

I spent Thursday at the Louisiana Industrial Executives Association meeting in Bossier City. This organization is made up of local, regional, and state level economic developers, chambers of commerce, utilities, transportation interests, and similar organizations. I provided the keynote presentation. While the subject matter was the broader higher education enterprise's involvement in economic development efforts, we did ensure that every slide was bordered in purple...

Friday, Ali Ahmad from Engineering Technology, Phillip Brown and Christina Lake from NSU Project Lead the Way (PLTW), Tony Davis from Natchitoches Chamber, and Mike Wolf from Natchitoches Area Alliance joined Tonia and me for a visit with representatives of the UT-Tyler Ingenuity Center in Tyler. UT-Tyler started work with PLTW several years before NSU and has plowed a lot of ground that will enable us to scale up much more rapidly. We also talked about a number of innovative approaches they have employed to increase market penetration while vastly expanding STEM outreach to middle and high school students throughout Texas.

Tonia and I drove on to Waco after the meeting to watch the Lady Demons play Baylor in the NCAA Tournament. This sounds cliché, but the final score does not reflect the performance we and the Demon fans in attendance saw. Though the physical differences between the two teams was stark, Brooke and Scott Stoehr put a team on the court that was not the least bit intimidated. Just as they have done all year, they fought to the very end. NSU received tremendous media coverage from the event. In addition, the Waco audience was treated to the sounds of the best pep band in the business and was entertained by a polished, enthusiastic cheerleading team. We could not have been better represented.

Saturday, NSU hosted hundreds of high school student for the Northwest Louisiana Regional Literary Rally. The rain did not diminish the spirit of the young people gathered in the Student Union and competing around campus. I was grateful to share part of our vision in a welcoming message to the school coordinators. Rebecca Boone provided the following as a overview of the event:

“The Louisiana High School Rally Association (LHSRA) is a voluntary, non-profit, educational association of middle and junior units of a school (i.e. 8-12 grades in a K-12 school or ninth grade centers), home schools, and senior high schools that are recognized by the State Department of Louisiana and the colleges and universities that coordinate the district and state competitions each year. The purpose of LHSRA is to provide opportunities for students to achieve a greater awareness of the importance of education in these critical times and gain a renewed determination to develop their talents to the maximum by promoting keen competition and a desire for excellence, and in recognizing academic endeavors on a statewide level. Furthermore, it is an enlightened way of recognizing and rewarding students who excel in that for which all schools are primarily established, academic pursuits.”

There are 10 district rally associations and district rally is held on the same day each spring at all 10. At NSU Literary Rally is a project that is coordinated by the office of Counseling and Career Services. There are 47 member schools in the NW Louisiana Rally Association. On rally day tests are administered in 47 academic subjects as well as the Music (voice) and Drama events.

The NW Louisiana Literary Rally is the only district that allows schools to compete teams of 3 in each event and also allows students to compete in 2 events. Students are competing individually to qualify for state and the schools are competing for 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in their divisions (1-5, determined by student enrollment numbers). The NW Literary Rally Association membership is very protective of this arrangement and have resisted several attempts from the State Literary Rally Association to make all the districts uniform. Students

who qualify in the academic and/or performing arts events compete at the State Literary Rally at LSU.

Each year we attempt to create an experience for the students that says “welcome” to our campus.

Hosting Literary Rally requires the cooperation of many departments and individuals each year.

- *First and foremost we need the cooperation and commitment of our faculty who come every year to administer the tests as well as judge the Music and Drama competition.*
- *The President welcomes the school coordinators and students to the NSU campus and provides the connection between NSU and the participating schools.*
- *Christie Price in Testing coordinates the printing and distribution of the almost 4,000 tests that are given every year. She coordinates with the faculty to make sure there are proctors for the tests and that tests are picked up by the Proctor.*
- *The office of Recruiting provides recruiters and Ambassadors on the day of rally to help direct students to buildings and classrooms.*
- *Ron Wright and his staff at the Computer Center score the answer sheets and provide the results. They also update the scoring program and streamline the process.*
- *The staff in Counseling and Career Services, Health Services and our Graduate Assistants and Student workers provide the organizational and logistical support for Rally day.*
- *Alan Pasch prepares the Union and provides a troubleshooter for the day.*
- *Red River Sanitors prepare the buildings “for company” cleaning the classrooms, bathrooms and halls.*

Events of this type allow us to showcase our campus to future NSU graduates. Thank you to all who helped make this event a success.

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