

Week of May 11

## Budget

The budget for higher moved out of House Appropriations last week with good news for higher education. The committee passed a number of amendments to the bill in an attempt to restore higher education funding to FY14-15 levels. Below is a summary of the most significant amendments:

### **Amendments to House Bill 1**

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|---------------|--|
| \$372,099,328 | Replaces supplementary funding as proposed in Governor's Executive Budget with state general fund.   |
| \$201,492,035 | Restores state general fund cuts to higher education including elimination of the tuition swap, restoration of the GEMS cut from last fall, funding base operations and funding for the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance.        |
| \$2,800,000   | Collects funds due HIED from the Louisiana State Racing Commission that have not been received in over a decade. Total funding collected for FY 15/16 totals \$2.8 M with annual anticipated revenues of \$400,000 to \$600,000 in future years. |
| PREAMBLE      | Exempts HIED from state general fund preamble reductions. "The Commissioner of Administration is authorized and directed to reduce expenditures to effectuate a savings of \$18,840,452."  |

Obviously, this is good news. We are far from finished with the debate, however. The bill must pass the House floor (all indications suggest it will), then the complex package heads to the Senate. Still, I'd rather be where we are than headed to the Senate trying to find another \$200 million.

The amendments do not include the following items funded in FY 14/15:

\$22,150,000	WISE Initiative
\$6,100,000	Equity Funds for lowest funded institutions
\$2,000,000	STEM for HBCU's
<u>\$4,500,000</u>	Base supplement for Southern System
\$34,750,000	Funds needed to reach the FY14-15 base

The lack of funding for WISE is troubling, but unless language restoring WISE included a change to the mechanism for administering the funds, I will not lose any sleep over it. The concept of WISE is great. That said, in a model of government efficiency, most WISE funds were not distributed until March, 9 months into the fiscal year. The remainder of the funds was distributed in April. A few simple adjustments to the program would have those funds working for students, employers, and communities much earlier. As an aside, a few years ago, Rapid Response funds for community and technical colleges were not distributed until December/January. RAPID RESPONSE funds...!

I am very troubled about the lack of "Equity Funds" in the bill. Equity is a horrible name for the funds. The \$6.1 million was used to ensure all colleges and universities were funded at a minimum of 50% of the funding formula in FY 14-15. The previous year, funding formula implementation ranged from a low of 39% (BPCC) to a high of 74% (LSUA). Safeguards had been put in place to mitigate cuts to underperforming institutions. Nothing was in place to ensure higher performing institutions were funded at a sustainable level. This will be very important for us going forward. We will perform extraordinarily well in the performance metrics included in the funding formula. We will expect to be funded appropriately. Hopefully, the "Equity Funds" will be restored. The students served at our sister (BPCC) deserve nothing less.

House Bill 1 is scheduled for debate on the House Floor on May 21, 2015.

As you know, I end this section with language about **recruiting, serving, educating, and retaining students. Growth and retention are paramount. We control our own destiny!** I received an email earlier this week

anecdotally suggesting we are doing just that. The relevant portion:

*...I was out of the office much of Friday because I was on your campus in Natchitoches. My son Mitchell is a junior at Bolton High School here. We met Friday with the Computer Information Systems and Business Department people because Mitch wanted to look at NSU.*

*I thought you would like to know that it was a great day. We enjoyed our time with Curtis Penrod of the CIS program and Margaret Kilcoyne of the Business Department. We also met with someone from student recruitment. I wish I had her name but she did a really nice job of talking about the procedures we needed to follow and the important dates. Then, while I visited with friends on campus, Mitch took a tour with a nursing major named Abby who had just finished her freshman year.*

*Mitch loved it the day and told me he was done. He is not considering any other schools.*

*We ate lunch at Chili's before returning to Alexandria. Our waitress was an NSU student who talked to Mitch about how much she loves the school...*

Every single interaction with a student or potential student is a moment of truth that can impact growth, retention, and success.

### The Week

Monday morning, Mike Wolff, Tony Davis, Phil Brown, Christina Lake, and I met to discuss the meeting with Robin Schott of Project Lead the Way.

Later Monday, Rita Graves and Liz Knecht joined me for an entrance conference with representatives from the Legislative Auditors office. They will be on campus reviewing financial reporting and selected topics for the next several months.

Monday afternoon, Chris Weaver and Dr. Phyllis Dupuis met with a group of faculty and staff to introduce an approach to flesh out the strategic framework with short-, mid-, and long-term applications. Everybody will have opportunities to contribute to this work, and I thank you in advance. Faculty in the College of Business & Technology will forgive me, but as you have heard me say before, I am not a fan of traditional strategic planning. While strategic planning has helped many organizations achieve goals, more often than not, contemporary execution of the strategic planning process prevents many organizations from achieving their potential. For example, a strategic planning approach would likely result in a goal for NSU to achieve the SREB average in graduation rates for the entering freshman class of 2020. Wouldn't it be more productive (and fun) to talk about how we ensure the freshman class of 2015 graduates at a better rate than any other Louisiana university? As far-fetched as that seems, aspiring to achieve anything less would not be worthy of you or our students.

Tuesday, the joint meeting of the Northwest Louisiana and Central Louisiana chapters of the Manufacturing Managers Council met in the Student Union Ballroom. The focus of the conversation was workforce development. Jeff Lynn from Louisiana FastStart was among the many partners in attendance.

I stepped out of the meeting to give the commencement address for the graduating class of Northwest Louisiana Technical College Natchitoches Campus. Included in the graduating class were 17 completers of the HiSET credential, the new version of the GED. Several graduates expressed their intent to attend NSU as they walked across the stage.

Wednesday morning, Dr. Craig Cohen stopped by to talk about osteopathic medicine. Schools for the practice have emerged in several states, and the field is growing rapidly.

Later Wednesday, I met with the editorial board of the Shreveport Times. We discussed higher education in general and NSU specifically. Of course, we talked about the state fiscal challenges at length. I suggested to the board that they advocate for three things: a predictable, transparent funding process aligned with state needs; authority for colleges and

universities to price according to market demands and student needs; and a streamlined regulatory environment reflective of the state's lack of participation in funding universities.

Thursday morning, the NSU Elementary Lab School honored those students who achieve good conduct scores throughout the year. These students got the thrill of seeing a firetruck, shaking hands with the fire department's mascot, and meeting the DARE lion. I was happy to be a part of the receiving line, but next time, Vic is coming as well...

Later Thursday, I met with the editorial board at the Town Talk in Alexandria. The conversation was very similar to the one in Shreveport.

Thursday afternoon, the SBDC unveiled new marketing materials as part of a rebranding effort during an open house in Russell Hall.

Thursday night, I traveled to Leesville to participate in the JRTC & Fort Polk College Graduate Recognition Ceremony.

Friday morning, I visited with Tim Fletcher as part of the new Fork 'Em Friday portion of his Shreveport-based radio program.

Later Friday, Robin Schott and Judea Goins of PLTW met with our PLTW team to discuss where we have been and opportunities to expand. At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. and Mrs. Phil Brown presented the NSU Foundation a \$10,000 check to establish a scholarship fund for PLTW. It was a great way to close out the week.

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