

President's Update: Friday, Jan. 22, 2021

Our university strategic plan, <https://www.nsula.edu/documentprovider/docs/423/NSU-Strategic-Plan-2016-2021-Final-01-23-171.pdf>, leverages five Strategic Focus Areas that drive what we do, how we do it, and most importantly, why we do it. One of our Strategic Focus Areas is Market Responsiveness. As our plan states, "the region's citizens rely on us to produce the highly qualified labor force needed to meet the demands of a global economy. Meeting this challenge is dependent upon our ability to respond to the changing environment by responding to the market through timely, effective, efficient, and visionary solutions."

Through our academic programs and collaborative partnerships, faculty and staff members continue to build important relationships with community leaders to prepare our future workforce and enhance our region. Two recent announcements highlight a couple of these creative partnerships.

First, it was announced this week that Northwestern State University has been selected to host the Louisiana Board of Regents' LaSTEM Network Center for Region 6. The Center will be housed on the NSU Cenla Campus in Alexandria and will be one of nine regional STEM Centers strategically positioned across Louisiana. Our STEM Center will provide regional opportunities for PK-16 faculty and students and STEM partners to engage in activities that promote STEM culture and literacy, experiential learning and prepare a STEM workforce for the future.

Another important ongoing initiative is the Central Louisiana Instructional Partnership (CLIP), a paid teacher residency program that develops middle school math and science teachers for high-needs schools in Central Louisiana. Eight individuals from Central Louisiana have recently completed an intense, 15-month teacher residency program and are now beginning their careers as middle school math and science teachers. This program is funded by a \$4.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Partnership Program plus \$8 million of in-kind matched funding from project partners. The partnership includes The Orchard Foundation, nine Central Louisiana school districts, NSU's Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development and College of Business and Technology-Computer Information Systems, Urban Learning & Leadership Center, EvalWorks, and the Rapides Foundation. By the end of the five-year grant, 44 new individuals will be teaching in Cenla schools in critical shortage areas. Recruitment is underway for the 2021 cohort, which begins work in June.

Also, I want to update you on the progress of a few campus improvement projects that are nearing completion or beginning over the next several months. In the fall of 2019, in partnership with the NSU Foundation, we opened the Campus Marketplace Building on University Parkway and relocated our NSU Bookstore to this new facility. This move gave us the opportunity to re-imagine the vacated space in the Friedman Student Union. Reviewing room usage information and facility use requests, data indicated the need for another large meeting room in the building. Also, through focus group meetings with students and monitoring the growing popularity of competitive sport competitions using video games, staff members developed plans to create a state-of-the-art Esports venue. Renovation is nearing completion on both projects. When we are able to do so without pandemic restrictions, we will have grand opening ceremonies for our new Esports venue, <http://nsula.edu/esports>, and 3,500 square foot mini-ballroom meeting space.

We also began this week preliminary work to demolish Dodd Hall in the heart of campus. Demolition is slated to be completed during the spring semester, creating a green space with the opportunity for

future development. Afterwards, we will begin two street overlay projects. First, Caspari Street from University Parkway to the four-way intersection at the Student Union will be repaved, and later this summer we will overlay Sam Sibley Drive from the Student Union intersection eastward to the Wellness, Recreation and Activity Center.

Also, significant preliminary architectural planning work has commenced on our priority capital outlay project, a New Academic Building on the Natchitoches campus. A building planning committee comprised of NSU faculty, staff, students, and administrators continue to work with State of Louisiana Facility Planning and Control officials and contracted architectural firms to develop schematic designs of the proposed \$30 million building. These designs will be completed this spring semester as we continue to work with state officials to keep this important project moving through the state capital outlay process.

Finally, we mourn the loss of a former colleague. On Jan. 18, Dr. Bill Bryant, retired Professor Emeritus in the Department of Fine and Graphic Arts, passed away. Many of us remember Dr. Bryant not only as a well-respected professor of Art at NSU but also as a contributing cartoonist for *The Natchitoches Times* for many years with his armadillo-themed comic strip and as a member of The Back Porch Band, which was an integral part of the Natchitoches Northwestern Folk Festival for many years. Our sincere condolences go out to his family and friends.

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

Fork 'em Demons,

Chris



DR. CHRIS MAGGIO

President

Northwestern State University
Caspari Hall | Suite 223
Northwestern State University of Louisiana
Natchitoches, LA 71497

maggioc@nsula.edu

Office: 318-357-6441

