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## **Tom Layzell Named Interim Commissioner of Higher Education**

BATON ROUGE, La. – A well-respected, former top higher education leader in Kentucky, Mississippi and Illinois was unanimously approved by the Board of Regents today as Louisiana’s Interim Commissioner of Higher Education. Tom Layzell, the retired President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, says he’s excited about coming to Louisiana to serve in an interim capacity and looks forward to working with the board and the systems to help move Louisiana’s educational agenda forward.

“There are lots of good things going on in Louisiana—the budget problem notwithstanding,” said Interim Commissioner Layzell. “You have an educational agenda that is right in line with the rest of the county and is very ambitious. This is an exciting time to be in higher education.”

“Tom Layzell is an impeccable choice for Louisiana. He will be a fantastic asset during these challenging times and is more than qualified to get the job done,” said Board of Regents Chairman Artis Terrell noting Layzell’s extensive experience across the country in presidential searches, budgeting and financial management, strategic planning and workforce development.

Layzell was identified by several national higher education leaders including Paul Lingenfelter, President of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and Mark Musick, President Emeritus of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and Member of the Postsecondary Education Review Commission, as an individual Louisiana should seriously consider to lead its higher education enterprise.

“We look forward to Tom’s leadership in engaging our postsecondary counterparts and stakeholders as we focus on the critical issues facing our colleges and universities. The Board is very pleased to have him on board,” Terrell emphasized.

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## **PAGE 2-LAYZELL NAMED INTERIM COMMISSIONER**

Layzell retired in 2007 after a 42-year career in public higher education, but remains a highly-touted postsecondary education expert with a reputation for consensus building, communication, and working well with higher education boards and staff members. In addition to his work in Kentucky, Layzell served as Commissioner of Higher Education for the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning from 1995-2003 and as Chancellor of the Illinois Board of Governors of State Colleges & Universities from 1984-95.

In addition to earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Millikin University, Interim Commissioner Layzell has also earned a Juris Doctorate and a Master of Arts in Public Administration from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

“Tom Layzell has served state and system boards with great distinction in three states and I know of no higher education leader who is more widely respected,” said SHEEO President, Paul Lingenfelter. “He has also played significant leadership roles in SHEEO and in the National Association of System Heads (NASH), and served as a member of the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education all of which makes him a prime selection for Louisiana.”

"Tom Layzell is an inspired choice by Louisiana and for Louisiana higher education," said SREB President Emeritus Mark Musick. "When someone at a crowded event calls out 'Is there a doctor available?' Tom Layzell exemplifies the person that we all hope to see step forward. His four decades of success in higher education and his personal style inspire confidence, command, respect, and provide reassurance. Louisiana could not have done better."

Interim Commissioner Layzell will enter into an employment agreement with the Board of Regents beginning August 1, 2010 for a period of up to six months, with the ability to extend the timeframe if necessary. His compensation package will include an annualized salary of \$300,000, plus a housing allowance and use of a vehicle. In discussions of the position with the board, Layzell informed them that he and his wife are scheduled to take a one month trip out of the country beginning September 25<sup>th</sup>. He will not be paid during his time off and will be available to the office by cell phone and email.

“Your GRAD Act is setting you on the right course. It will take a lot of work and time moving forward, but I think it is the right thing to do,” said Layzell. “The jobs of the future will require more education for our citizens. You have to have the training and skills to be successful and you are rightly emphasizing that in Louisiana.”

Currently residing in Springfield, Illinois, Interim Commissioner Layzell has been married to his wife, Joan, for 49 years. He has four grown children and 10 grandchildren.

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