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Proposed Cuts Target Education

Louisiana's public colleges and universities would sustain a crippling blow if the cuts to Louisiana's FY 2008-09 budget recommended to the House Appropriations Committee today are adopted.

Responding to a legislative directive to trim 5% from Governor Bobby Jindal's executive budget now before the Legislature, various subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee have recommended a total of \$116 million in budget cuts. Nearly \$70 million, or some 60%, of the total reduction is in education. Approximately \$31 million would come from public colleges and universities across the state. The result: Higher education will sustain 27% of the total state budget reduction.

"It's particularly unfortunate that Governor Jindal's proposed \$15 million in performance-based funding has been recommended for elimination," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "And the reduction in formula funding means that some of our campuses will once again fall below peer funding levels, which will only damage our state's economic prospects, not improve them."

In the 1980's, due to the dramatic drop in oil prices, Louisiana's public colleges and universities suffered a series of devastating budget cuts from which they have never fully recovered. Over the past decade the state has made considerable progress toward restoring public postsecondary education funding to a level more in line with the average college funding in other states. Last year the Legislature passed the largest single-year funding increase in the state's history for public colleges and universities. Even so, the increase only brought funding up to the southern regional average. With the proposed cuts to the FY 2008-09 budget, the state's public institutions would once again fall behind the average of their southern peers.

"We ask the Legislature to remain steadfast in their commitment to higher education in our state and to support the Governor's recommendations, aimed at maintaining our current momentum," Savoie said.