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Regents Support LSU-S/LA Tech Merger

BATON ROUGE, La. –The Board of Regents recommended merging LSU-Shreveport with Louisiana Tech University as part of a study to be sent to the Legislature in response to a request from the Shreveport-Bossier region to assess and address unmet higher education needs.

“I challenged each region of the state to bring Regents their dreams—bring us their plan for a brighter tomorrow. Today, we had our first opportunity to hear from the Shreveport-Bossier community,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell. “This is the first community to step forward and say, we want more, and I think we can all agree they deserve more.”

The report, presented by Eva Klein and Associates, outlined several recommendations to better achieve a comprehensive, public four-year university for the Shreveport-Bossier region including:

- Consolidating LSU-Shreveport and Louisiana Tech University into a single institution to be included in the University of Louisiana System with a Ruston campus and a Shreveport campus.
- Seeking a transfer of LSU-S to the UL System if the merger is not approved by the Legislature.
- Combining the strengths of the LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport with LA Tech to accelerate strategic research and innovation.
- Improving the delivery of degree programs to underserved populations and increasing baccalaureate completion rates.
- Creating an aggressive communications plan to articulate the study’s findings and support its recommendations.

“We believe this is an answer based on the merits, the data, and the aspirations of the people of Shreveport-Bossier. There is no benefit in a delay,” said Eva Klein. “Other states are going through similar discussions. Georgia just approved four mergers and the issue of consolidations will get more attention as the need to synergize resources becomes more critical,” said Klein.

“Higher education matters in our community and it is the key to the economic development of our region. This report involves bold change and out of the gate there is more support for this study than I’ve ever seen in our region including the backing of the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce, the Bossier Chamber of Commerce, the Committee of 100 and the Community Foundation of North Louisiana,” said Phillip Rozeman of the Shreveport Bossier Imperative for Higher Education. “There is a lot of work ahead of us and I can tell you as a cardiologist, treating a heart attack is easier than creating this kind of important change.”

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PAGE 2-LSU-S/LA TECH MERGER

“Today’s action has the ability to impact the Shreveport-Bossier region in an incredibly positive manner especially since it was a home-grown solution brought forth by members of the education, business and civic community,” said Board of Regents Chairman Bob Levy.

“These communities are desperate to hook their wagon to a different pony,” said Regent Chris Gorman. “There is great consensus building for this kind of change and I appreciate the work that has been done in advance of today’s report and recommendations.”

For a merger of higher education institutions to occur, the Louisiana Constitution requires the Board of Regents study the issue and report its findings and recommendations to the legislature. Today’s action triggers the ability for a bill to be filed. Any legislation must achieve an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the members the legislature to pass.

“Governance is tough,” said Representative Thomas Carmody of Shreveport. “In education we need to look for regional solutions. No one would create the system we have, so we must look for a better ways to move forward. My allegiance today is with Shreveport and I look for you to work with me to improve the conditions of our community. Yes, there is a lot of anxiety, but give me the facts and let me try to discern what’s in the best interest of the entire state.”

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