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## **Faculty, Administrators Consider Digital Future of Colleges and Universities at “Innovations Showcase”**

The “digital age” is upon us, and while an ever more sophisticated array of teaching, learning and management technologies is certainly helping Louisiana’s colleges and universities ply their trade more effectively, the demands and expectations of an increasingly technology-savvy student pool mean that campuses must scramble to adapt or risk being left behind. That was the message today at the *2008 Innovations Showcase*, sponsored by the Louisiana Board of Regents. The conference was held at Louisiana Technology Park in Baton Rouge.

- 1) “Today’s conference coincides with the ten-year anniversary of the Regents’ Office of Information and Learning Technology,” said Mike Abbiatti, Regents Associate Commissioner for Information and Learning Technology and conference host. “Those ten years have seen remarkable progress both in the technology available to enhance teaching and learning *and* in Louisiana’s utilization and promotion of that technology. Perhaps the most significant achievement over the years has been the development of Louisiana’s e-learning toolkit, an online repository of electronic resources across a broad range of disciplines, available to any Louisiana college faculty member. That resource has been invaluable in encouraging and facilitating electronic learning in our state.”

The day-long conference featured a series of presentations on the use and implications of digital technology on the modern college campus. Among the presenters was University of New Orleans professor Dr. Merrill Johnson, who shared her experiences in using the popular online virtual community “Second Life” as a teaching tool, and Dr. Bruce Chaloux, Electronic Campus Director for the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), based in Atlanta. Chaloux’s topic was “The Changing World of Student Services: Are You Ready for IT?”

“What we used to call ‘non-traditional’ students are now quite traditional. But even though the traditional ‘school-to-work’ model is quickly fading away, we still deliver student services in much the same way we did thirty years ago,” said Chaloux. “We must adjust to the nature and expectations of the students who are enrolling on our campuses. That means using technology to its fullest benefit.”

Chaloux said that opportunities to accommodate the modern “wired” (and often *working*) college students abound -- from offering online advising and tutoring for online students, to extending office hours and implementing user-friendly telephone services for working students.

Of course, none of these things can happen without the support and blessing of campus administrators. Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie, whose twelve-year tenure in the position has roughly coincided with the birth and subsequent development of what has come to be called Louisiana’s online “electronic campus,” offered some advice to the college administrators attending the conference.

“The first challenge we must face is that our campuses *will* continue to evolve from ‘bricks and mortar’ to ‘bricks and clicks.’ In fact, if they don’t they will be left behind,” Savoie said. “That means there will be increased student and faculty expectation that technology-mediated teaching and learning will be available. Of course, these challenges are accompanied by exciting new *opportunities*, as well. That’s why 21<sup>st</sup> Century administrators must be leaders, not just managers. To put in simply, in order for postsecondary education to thrive in the New Louisiana, the entire postsecondary education community must understand both the benefits and the pitfalls of an increasingly complex infrastructure.”