

Regents Recap

Highlights of the Activities and Official Actions of the Louisiana Board of Regents

March 31, 2006

College Hurricane Preparedness Plans Build On Lessons From Katrina, Rita

One bright spot in the aftermath of last year's devastating hurricanes is that the storms taught those who weathered and responded to them a host of valuable lessons for the future. Those lessons were the theme of presentations made March to the Board of Regents by Louisiana's four college systems on the progress of preparations for the 2006 hurricane season. Representatives of the University of Louisiana System, the Southern University System, the Louisiana State University System and the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) showed the Board how their experiences before, during and after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have shaped the emergency preparedness plans that will be in effect the next time a hurricane makes landfall in Louisiana.

"The presentations were informative and reassuring," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "Last year's storms taught us that Louisiana's colleges and universities possess a wealth of resources – from physical facilities, land, and transportation assets, to medical expertise, intellectual capital and manpower – that are critically important before, during and after a disaster. We must be concerned not only with how to provide for the safety of our own faculty, staff and students in an emergency, but also how our resources can be most effectively applied where they are needed in the overall disaster response. The plans outlined today address both of these issues."

While the plans presented at the meeting appropriately reflected the unique needs and situations of each system and its individual campuses, many significant features were common to the plans, including the following:

- Plans for rapid conversion of campus facilities into evacuee shelters and medical treatment centers.
- Careful coordination of campus emergency plans with state and federal emergency response organizations.
- Contingency plans and special preparations for electronic teaching and learning for displaced students and faculty.
- Enhancement of emergency communications capacity (satellite telephones, emergency power, etc.).
- Contingency plans for campus security during emergency closure.
- Remote storage of electronic data (in other states, in some cases).

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LONI Supercomputer Inaugurated at Tulane

Ducky has landed in New Orleans, but make no mistake, *this* duck is no birdbrain.

Ducky is the nickname of Tulane University's new IBM P5 server, a lightning-fast supercomputer that will enable Tulane to participate in the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative, known more commonly as LONI. The computer, inaugurated in a ceremony March 20 at Tulane University, is being hailed not only as another major milestone for the LONI project, but also as a sure sign that New Orleans is emerging from the devastation of Katrina wired for the future. The supercomputer was dedicated in memory of Karlem "Ducky" Riese, an emeritus professor of physics at Tulane University who lost his life as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

"The installation and activation of this powerful computer at Tulane University is another giant step toward the completion of the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative, a project that is already transforming Louisiana into a major player in the world of high-speed grid computing," said Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. "But it's much more than that. It is significant, even symbolic, that in the very heart of post-Katrina New Orleans, Louisiana has laid one of the cornerstones of a technology infrastructure that will play a critical role in our state's economic future. New Orleans is truly once again open for business!"

The Louisiana Optical Network Initiative is a fiber optic network that will soon interconnect mainframe

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Board Action - March 22, 2006

Regents Adopt Annual Report on Secondary-to-Postsecondary Articulation

Dr. Lisa Vosper reported to the Board that in accordance with Act 151 of the First Extraordinary Session of the 1998 Legislature, the Board of Regents, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, LCTCS and local school boards work together to provide opportunities for secondary school students to take vocational-technical and community college courses provided by LCTCS institutions. Act 383 of 2003 expanded on these initiatives and required that these activities be reported annually to the Legislature in writing.

Dr. Vosper informed the Committee that BESE had reviewed and approved the report at its February meeting and the LCTCS Board endorsed the report at its March meeting. Dr. Vosper then provided the Board a review of the report, highlighting recent changes to the reporting format and explained the impact that hurricanes Katrina and Rita had on the state's progress in this area. She also summarized the report's goals and future directions for the articulation initiative. The Board adopted the report and authorized staff to forward the report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature.

Preparedness (continued from page 1)

- Plans to accommodate students displaced from other campuses.
- Reciprocal agreements for web site hosting to ensure that students will have post-disaster access to campus status information.
- Regularly-scheduled tests and audits of plan.

“Our watchword for these plans is ‘situational awareness,’” said Mike Abbiati, Board of Regents Associate Commissioner for Information and Learning Technology and overall coordinator of the postsecondary education statewide emergency preparedness plan. “While there are certainly factors in an emergency response that we can not control, our goal in this effort is to optimize every variable that we can control. One of the most important lessons we learned last year is the importance of self-reliance to a successful response and recovery from any disaster.”

All plans are targeted for completion by May 31, in accordance with the statewide effort to protect life, property and critical infrastructure in all emergencies.

For more information on these and other Board of Regents actions, please visit our web site at www.regents.state.la.us

LONI Supercomputer (continued from page 1)

computers at Louisiana's major research universities, allowing computation speeds more than 1,000 times the rate previously possible, and transforming the research capability of Louisiana's educational institutions. Governor Blanco has pledged \$40 million over 10 years for the initiative.

“We are very excited that Tulane is participating in the LONI project. We applaud the governor's backing of this initiative to bring Louisiana into the top tier of states in the area of supercomputing and research,” says Paul Barron, interim chief information officer at Tulane University. “This supercomputer provides one more tool for Tulane's incredibly talented researchers to do high level scientific computing to contribute to their already world class research.”

As an immediate benefit of LONI, the Louisiana Board of Regents has become a member of the National LambdaRail (NLR), a nationwide grid-computing infrastructure that is expected to have the same effect on our nation's technological development as the interstate highway system has had on interstate commerce. LONI and NLR have far-reaching implications for Louisiana's research competitiveness and long-term economic development potential. In fact, many Louisiana universities are already engaged in potentially-valuable research that will be exponentially enhanced by LONI and NLR. LONI will access the national grid by means of a node located in Baton Rouge, eventually connecting colleges and universities in every region of the state.

“The positive implications of LONI and our participation in the National LambdaRail can not be overstated,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. “Louisiana now has a place at the table in the world of supercomputing. The future of university research in Louisiana - and the kind of economic development that can accrue as a result - looks bright indeed.” Tulane's Ducky is the second LONI project server to be deployed beyond the LSU-Baton Rouge campus (which already has its LONI servers in place). Next in line to take delivery of their P5s are the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the University of New Orleans, and Southern University - Baton Rouge. The LONI project is expected to be completed this summer.