

# Regents Recap

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

October 2006

## LONI Supercomputer Set to Transform UNO Research Capacity

Pluto may no longer be a planet, but *Neptune* is alive and well, and it's poised to help transport the University of New Orleans - and Louisiana - to a new universe of supercomputing and research capability. Neptune is UNO's new IBM P5-575 supercomputer, which will facilitate UNO's participation in the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative (commonly known as LONI), the state's fiber optics network interconnecting mainframe computers at Louisiana's major research universities, making possible computation speeds more than 1000 times faster than previously possible.

Not insignificantly, Neptune was delivered to UNO on August 29, the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

"We named our P5 *Neptune* in reference to the ancient Roman god of the sea," said Jim Burgard, UNO Assistant Vice Chancellor for University Computing and Communication. "With the devastation of Katrina in mind, the name is a sort of symbolic plea to spare New Orleans from future floods."

Burgard said that the most immediate benefit of LONI and Neptune is that it gives UNO the opportunity to upgrade its computer facilities as the university continues its long-term recovery from Katrina.

Neptune is housed in UNO's Computer Center, which was spared flooding after the storm but experienced significant moisture damage because the

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## Louisiana College Enrollment Down But Still Strong

As anticipated, the lingering effects of last year's storms, combined with Louisiana's (effectively) new minimum admission requirements for public four-year campuses, have resulted in a significant but not overwhelming dip in enrollment at public colleges and universities across the state.

Preliminary headcount enrollment at Louisiana's public colleges and universities statewide stands at 195,556 for the current fall semester, according to a report yesterday to the Board of Regents. That figure is down some 7% from 210,199, the most recent previous fall enrollment figure available for meaningful comparison. First-time freshman enrollment is down approximately 11%, due largely to expected significant drops at campuses in New Orleans. When the storm-impacted New Orleans campuses are omitted, first-time freshman enrollment is down some 5% across the state.

The four-year admission requirements went into effect at most campuses in the fall of 2005, but Hurricane Katrina struck before their impact on enrollment could be assessed. It had been expected that the requirements would reduce entering freshman enrollment on four-year campuses while having the desired effect of increasing enrollment on the state's community college and technical college campuses. Enrollment increases this fall at many community and technical colleges across the state (outside the population-diminished Greater New Orleans area) are consistent with that expectation, but the impact of Louisiana's ongoing disaster recovery effort on the state's economy complicates analysis of the enrollment numbers.

"Obviously, Louisiana has fewer people than it did before the storms," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "Our pool of students has shrunk. Additionally, the four-year admission requirements for entering students are having the planned effect, both on the number of entering freshmen enrolled on our four-year campuses and the enrollment at our two-year campuses. Finally, we're experiencing a significant spike in job opportunities post-Katrina/Rita, and many potential college students are taking advantage of the opportunity. College enrollments often dip during an economic upturn. We will continue to analyze enrollment data in order to design effective strategies to rebuild our enrollment base. Increasing the number of people in our state with a college credential is crucial to Louisiana's long-term recovery."

The statewide preliminary headcount enrollment number reflects the number of students reported by each institution to be enrolled as of the 14th day of the fall semester (9th day for Louisiana Tech). In October, the Board will receive full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment data, which will further clarify enrollment statistics by quantifying student numbers and course loads. ■



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## Board Action - September 28, 2006

### Program Approvals

The Board of Regents approved the following proposed letter of intent, curricular revision, progress reports on new academic programs/centers, and proposed new academic program:

**Proposed Letters of Intent** - Louisiana State University Alexandria - B.S. in Criminal Justice.

**Curricular Revision** - Nicholls State University - Request to Terminate the A.S. in General Business.

**Progress Reports on Conditionally Approved Programs/Centers**

Louisiana Tech University - B.S. in Nanosystems Engineering; Louisiana State University Shreveport Sports Science Institute - Master of Health Administration; Fletcher Technical Community College - Associate of General Studies, A.S. in Nursing, A.A.S. in Technical Studies, and A.A.S. in Nautical Science; University of New Orleans - B.S. in Entrepreneurship; and Southeastern Louisiana University - Bachelor of Health Studies.

**Proposed New Academic Program** - University of Louisiana Monroe - Bachelor of Health Science.

### Board Receives Update on Recovery Initiatives

Dr. Kerry Davidson, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs, reported to the Board that the Post Katrina Support Fund Initiative Primarily Research and Primarily Education White Paper reviews, led by teams from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), had taken place during September 18-19 and 25-26, 2006. He said reports from both AAAS teams are due during October, 2006.

Davidson also provided an update regarding the request for \$28.5 million in CDBG monies to be used for scientific research and education in relation to economic development. The Board voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Sponsored Programs Committee that the Commissioner of Higher Education, if circumstances are optimal, shall have the discretion to allocate up to \$500,000 from the BoRSF for the development of a strategic plan - not pertaining directly to CDBG matters - which relates Louisiana's higher education resources to the state's economic development.

For more information on these and other Board of Regents actions, please visit our web site at [www.regents.state.la.us](http://www.regents.state.la.us)

### Supercomputer (from page 1)

air conditioning was off for an extended period before electrical power was restored to the campus. As a hedge against a repeat of that scenario, UNO has invested in a new natural gas generator to power the air conditioning system during future outages.

Of course, Neptune, in tandem with the LONI network and Louisiana's membership in the National LambdaRail, a nationwide supercomputing network (see below), will have a powerful impact on a variety of key research efforts at UNO. Among those projects, according to UNO Associate Vice Chancellor Scott Whittenburg, is the Ponchartrain Institute of Environmental Science (PIES), which concerns itself with modeling wetlands and coastal erosion.

"LONI's bandwidth greatly facilitates the transmission of large-scale satellite coastal images," said Whittenburg. "It allows researchers to interact on a near real-time basis."

Other important UNO research projects that stand to benefit from this increase in computing power are the UNO Advanced Materials Research Institute, devoted to the exploration of nano-materials and nano-science, including modeling the magnetic behavior of nano-materials. The combined power of Neptune and LONI will allow more realistic simulation.

Among several projects set to benefit from Neptune/LONI have very real economic development potential for Louisiana is UNO's Naval Marine Architecture Engineering Group, which has developed a design partnership with Avondale Shipyards in New Orleans that will be substantially enhanced by the new computation capacity.

Jim Burgard pointed out that Neptune is UNO's first true high-performance, grid-based supercomputer and as such will offer the campus and the New Orleans area a broad range of advantages.

"Obviously, the increased bandwidth and communication speed of the LONI network are a boon to faculty, staff and students," Burgard said, "but there are also significant implications for disaster recovery and preparedness. There is tremendous potential for using the bandwidth for transmission and offsite storage of mission-critical data. In fact, we already have hardware located at LSU in Baton Rouge and LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport to store data." Whittenburg added that the ability to recruit and retain faculty should also benefit significantly, noting that UNO lost some research faculty as a result of Katrina.

"This kind of computing capacity is a great incentive for attracting faculty and keeping them here," Whittenburg said.

# The Culture of Preparedness: Campus Challenges

By Michael Graham  
CIO, McNeese State University

Note: This article is the third installment in a series on emergency preparedness.

McNeese State University went through a difficult time in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. The university was presented with many challenges, and has come through this ordeal a stronger institution, because we were prepared for the worst. In my opinion this is the type of approach that local entities should take to aid the national authorities in helping with recovery. The federal government should expect that local entities are prepared to care for themselves in the immediacy of the aftermath, and can maintain communications, security, and business continuity without intervention from anyone else. I am extremely proud to have been a part of this experience, and a member of the community that helped this university survive. I am also grateful to the leadership of Dr. Robert Hebert who said within a few hours of the storm that we would finish our semester. This goal was set early, on and it set the tone for our recovery. Finally, I am also proud to live in Southwest Louisiana where a “can-do” attitude pervades. The following are some of the things that the federal government should expect from a local entity. This is based upon the after-action report that was written by the university to examine McNeese State University’s Hurricane Rita experience.



**Establish Employee and Student Communications** - University officials were proactive in convening the Crisis Management Team almost five days prior to the actual landfall of Hurricane Rita. President Robert Hebert, members of the Executive Staff, and other administrative officials involved on the Crisis Management Team were proactive in communications to students and employees of the University regarding the potential for landfall in the region, and moved swiftly to provide employees and students alike sufficient time to make appropriate preparations for securing their personal property and evacuating the area.

**Pre-Event Incident Command & Communication** - University officials representing police and physical plant interests participated in daily briefings with Office of Emergency Preparedness and parish-wide government and law enforcement agencies. This permitted the University to make decisions based on the most current information available to them and to ensure coordination of communications and efforts with all other governmental entities. More importantly, outside of a crisis situation university officials met with and knew the officials from the Office of Emergency Preparedness.

**Have Essential Supplies on Hand** - The University was well positioned to provide essential supplies and food for onsite crisis management and recovery personnel. Stockpiles of resources left behind at Burton Coliseum following evacuation of persons from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, combined with food pre-positioned by dining services and first aid and medical supplies pre-positioned by the Student Health Center, ensured that adequate food, water, medical and personal hygiene supplies were available.

**Establish a Command Center** - Farrar Hall, (our College of Education) was identified as the primary incident command facility and within forty-eight hours of storm landfall was being converted for such use. Supplies were stockpiled in the building on the first and second floors, and essential police and physical plant equipment and materials were relocated to the building.

**Ensure Security of Campus Assets** - University personnel in all divisions and departments began securing campus buildings and property immediately upon notification of mandatory evacuation order by parish OEM officials. All residence hall facilities were evacuated and locked down within thirty hours of landfall, and instructional facilities and remaining administrative offices were secured by nine hours prior to landfall. Measures to secure the perimeter of the campus were initiated immediately upon passage of the storm and return of daylight and buildings were chained and secured with padlocks within the first seven to ten days of recovery in order to prevent unauthorized personnel with key access from entering campus facilities.

**Incident Management** - Farrar Hall was placed in lock-down mode at 6:00 p.m., approximately six to nine hours prior to storm landfall. Pre-storm operations conducted on the first floor were permanently moved to the second floor, and

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## Preparedness (from page 3)

personnel who had been previously assigned to various classroom and office spaces throughout the second and third floors were urged to consolidate into the central media library center and rooms immediately adjacent to it.

**Business Continuity** - University officials were prepared for contingencies to maintain business functions. Payroll was met in a timely fashion, and classes were either continued on the web, or information was passed to students utilizing web-based course technology.

**Post-Event Incident Command & Communications** - A portion of the University's executive leadership team, under the leadership of the President, convened at the University Police Department building within two business days following landfall. Vice presidents and directors representing academic affairs, business affairs, student affairs, intercollegiate athletics, and media services met almost daily in the first seven to ten days following the storm. Other executive leadership consulted regularly by telephone, e-mail, and instant messaging and continued to oversee operations of their divisions remotely until conditions in Lake Charles allowed permanent return.

Regular information was provided to local media outlets and directly to the University community through announcements on the website, Blackboard and e-mail. Web and telephone based registration and information systems were implemented to facilitate registration of and information exchange with University employees and students. Near daily recovery team management meetings were conducted by the President and other members of the executive leadership team, and communications with UL-System and Louisiana Office of Facilities and Planning personnel were also daily occurrences leading up to resumption of instruction and continuing restoration of campus operations.

**Inter-Agency Cooperation & Support** - Inter-agency cooperation and support was evident prior to, during, and following Hurricane Rita. University, city, parish, UL-system, state, and federal personnel communicated regularly, shared information and resources, and provided mutual aid and assistance to one another at every level and in every appropriate capacity. This cooperative effort contributed to a timely and successful evacuation of University students and employees, removal of debris, campus security, equipment loans, MRE's and other food and supply items, damage assessment teams, logistics for evacuated students, business continuity support at out-of-area and out-of-state locations, temporary housing for students and employees, local transportation for displaced students and employees, and numerous other in-kind and supportive gestures that significantly influenced the recovery and reopening of the University.

While there were many other positive aspects about the approach that McNeese State University took in preparing for the storm, I believe that those are the critical elements in our success and what the federal government should expect any local entity to be prepared to do to help itself in a crisis situation.

**The next Board of Regents meeting  
will be held  
October 25, 2006.**