



MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring 2004

From the office of Dr. Robert Hebert

Hotline 475-5587

ENROLLMENT

Spring enrollment is up by 4% over last year. The total enrollment this semester is 7,880, an increase of 285 students. This is the ninth consecutive academic term in which we have experienced an enrollment increase. Increases have occurred in continuing undergraduates, re-entry undergraduates, and transfer students for the second consecutive spring semester.

Among the interesting enrollment statistics for this semester:

- 3% increase in full-time undergraduate students
- 14% increase in part-time undergraduate students

The Colleges of Business, Nursing, and Science as well as the Division of General and Basic Studies had the largest increases in undergraduate enrollment. At the graduate level, the largest percentage increases were in engineering and nursing.

As we approach higher admission standards in the fall of 2005, we will continue to prioritize our efforts on recruiting and retention strategies.

Beginning this fall, an expanded orientation program will enhance the student's transition to college by explaining the expectations of collegiate level course work. The course will assist students in making an informed decision about selecting an academic major, will inform them about the resources available on the campus, and will assist them with the social and academic realities of the "freshman year experience."

2004-05 BUDGET

Preliminary figures released by Governor Blanco's office project that all state agencies will be responsible for funding mandated increases in civil service merit raises as well as the employers' share of teacher retirement contributions, health insurance, and risk management insurance. Last year the state provided funding for the mandated expenses related to these employee benefits. So while the media may report that higher education budgets are "stable," these budgets may actually be reduced by the amount of these unfunded mandates. However, should McNeese have to fund these mandates, we can expect a significant impact on our operating budget.

The Legislature will review the budget during the regular session that begins March 29. Final passage of the budget that begins July 1 will probably be near the end of the session in June.

TUITION INCREASE

The eight universities that make up the University of Louisiana System will increase tuition by 3% for the 2004-05 academic year. The LSU and Southern systems will also raise tuition by a minimum of 3% beginning with the fall semester. The ULS increase is the maximum annual amount that the ULS board can authorize without legislative approval. The 3% tuition increase will be covered for students on TOPS.

The annual increase for a full-time student at McNeese will be \$84, or \$42 a semester. Despite annual tuition increases since 2001, the eight UL-System universities are 24% below the average tuition of universities in the South.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

As most of you know, capital outlay projects are funded by the state through bond sales and have no connection to our operating budget. In the annual legislative briefing for members of the Southwest Louisiana delegation, we placed an emphasis on continuing projects related to the renovation and repair of the Frazar Memorial Library and Kaufman Hall, as well as the renovations and additions to the Shearman Fine Arts Building.

The University of Louisiana System has capital outlay requests for life safety code and ADA compliance upgrades and major repair funds for all universities, including McNeese.

Proposals for new projects at McNeese include the renovation and conversion of Alpha Hall (formerly Sallier Dormitory) to a building that can house offices and meeting areas for departments that place an emphasis on dealing with the community. If funded, this project would free more space in other buildings for academic uses.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

McNeese State University is one of the largest employers in Southwest Louisiana. According to information compiled with the help of the H. C. Drew Center for Economic Development Information Services, the annual impact on the economy is an estimated \$437 million.

During the past five years, an average of over \$8.1 million a year has been spent on campus expansions and renovations. These projects are a source of pride for the University and represent a source of income and employment opportunities for Southwest Louisiana.

New projects, including the entrance plaza and the paving of parking lots at the athletics complex, will also contribute to the local economy.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The University has achieved 100% accreditation of the 37 four-year and graduate-level programs mandated for accreditation by the Board of Regents.
- The College of Nursing recently hosted a site visit conducted by the NLN for re-accreditation of the baccalaureate program. While the final decision has not yet been announced, the College received a very favorable preliminary report. The self-study document, which was completed in preparation for the visit, is being suggested as a national model for other nursing programs preparing for the accreditation process.
- Six of our faculty members were honored as the initial Pinnacle Excellence Award winners for their outstanding achievements in teaching and recruitment/retention efforts. You may have seen their “larger than life” pictures on local billboards that Pinnacle has sponsored.
- McNeese has three new national champions in speech and debate. Since 1995, the speech and debate team has won a total of nine national championships.
- McNeese received grant funds which will enable the Associate of Arts program in Early Childhood Education to be offered 100% online.
- A Learning Center has been established to provide tutoring to students. Tutoring is available at no charge and the Center is open during the day and at night. More faculty are offering study and review sessions for their students in specific courses.

- More emphasis has been placed on improving academic advising. Professional development workshops for advisors have been held and will continue this fall. Some departments are developing “four-year academic plans” so advisors can recommend a comprehensive plan for students who wish to move through their major with a targeted completion date.
- Class scheduling has been enhanced by offering courses at times which provide more accessibility to students. Courses are being offered on Saturday and more are being offered online.

NEW PROGRAMS OF STUDY

Beginning this fall, McNeese State University will be among the first universities in the state to offer a concentration in forensics through its chemistry degree. The program was developed by the chemistry department in cooperation with the Southwest Louisiana Crime Laboratory. Students will visit crime labs and shadow personnel and forensic scientists to get a first-hand look at what is involved in this field. They will study chemistry issues concerning chain-of-custody, drug classifications and drug analyses, toxicology, trace analyses, arson, DNA analyses, and serology. Students will also be required to carry out a semester-long forensic internship under the tutelage of crime lab personnel as part of their research course.

The chemistry degree also has a new concentration in biochemistry. This program is the result of the ongoing growth in the biotechnology industry and the substantial advances in molecular medicine, crop engineering, and product development.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

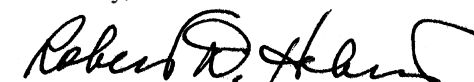
“Dreams, Opportunities and Success all begin at McNeese” is the theme of a multi-media awareness campaign currently underway. The campaign is designed to illustrate the importance of the University to the community by illustrating the value of a college degree.

The UL-System office has also distributed statewide public service announcements that feature students and scenes from the eight campuses that focus on the new 2005 admissions requirements.

ENTRANCE PLAZA UPDATE

The general contractor has been selected and preliminary work has begun on the first phase of the Entrance Plaza at the corner of Ryan and Sale streets. Limestone panels depicting the six academic colleges are in production, and work on the base for the wall should begin soon. This phase of the project should be completed this fall. Phase II of the project will involve construction of the Plaza floor, landscaping, flag poles, and lighting. A possible third phase might include a bronze statue. The principal source of funding for the project is the students’ campus development fee.

Sincerely,



The President's Memo, an informational report, is published regularly throughout each semester and during the summer session as necessary. Copies are distributed to every employee through interoffice mail and the reports are posted on the McNeese Web page.