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Date: September 24, 2008

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LOUISIANA'S HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS ADOPT NEW AGENDA
Focusing on Accountability, Research and the Workforce

BATON ROUGE, La – Presidents from all four of Louisiana's college and university systems joined Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen today in supporting a new way of doing business for higher education that includes accountability, performance measures and incentives focusing on research, the workforce and economic development. The show of support came during a Board of Regents development workshop in which Dr. Paul Lingenfelter, President of the State Higher Education Executive Officers, presented the Regents with a vision for what America and Louisiana in turn need from higher education.

"We must increase educational attainment," said Dr. Lingenfelter. "We have to be deadly serious about student learning, and we need to improve the knowledge and skills of all students: the gifted, the average, and the academically challenged. Second, we have to work harder to sustain our leadership in research and the application of knowledge. Finally, we need to make better use of our investments in research and innovation," Dr. Lingenfelter stressed.

While Louisiana's higher education institutions have in many ways shown leadership in areas of accountability, such as participating in the nation's Voluntary System of Accountability, increasing admission criteria and enrollment, and collaborating with K-12 education, Commissioner Clausen indicated that Louisiana still has a long way to go. She suggests that the collective vision must now focus on two things--students who complete their education with a degree or certificate, and incentivizing additional research and innovation.

"Higher Education is good business," said Commissioner Clausen. "I stand with our four system presidents and pledge that we are building a performance model that will produce more graduates and drive innovation. Our systems and I see the need to incent behaviors that will not only develop the workforce Louisiana has, but it will create the workforce Louisiana wants and needs to be globally competitive tomorrow."

"High quality higher education is a challenging enterprise producing internationally competitive graduates with first rank faculty, staff, and facilities," said Louisiana State University System President John Lombardi. "Like every other American productive sector, the higher education industry must benchmark its performance against the best of its kind."

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“The University of Louisiana System educates the lion’s share of Louisiana’s graduates in teaching, nursing, engineering and business. Our eight university presidents recognize the impact of their campuses on Louisiana’s workforce. We’ve set aggressive performance standards in the past and are proud to join the Board of Regents and the rest of the higher education community in taking another bold step toward educational excellence in Louisiana,” said UL System President Randy Moffett.

“Our roles, scopes and missions may all be different, but each of the college and university systems wants higher education in Louisiana to be the best it can be. For that to happen, each of us must collectively focus on best practices in higher education and support one another in meeting those challenges,” said President Ralph Slaughter of the Southern University System.

“The Louisiana Community and Technical College System stands united with the higher education community in adopting this new agenda. LCTCS is a strong supporter of accountability as evidenced by the recent implementation of our Day One Guarantee which promises a highly skilled, trained workforce and the free retraining for any graduate not meeting the needs of business and industry. Also, we have worked to develop performance measures that have resulted in a 5,000 student enrollment increase at community and technical colleges this fall. Through the adoption of this new agenda, we are confident that we will continue to make strides to help provide access and opportunities for our citizens as we ensure Louisiana has the workforce it needs to help build a stronger economy for our state,” said LCTCS President Joe May

“I am pleased to see the system united on these important state and national issues,” said Board of Regents Chairman Pat Strong. “This is critical to our success in moving our state forward and fulfilling the promise of a quality postsecondary education for the citizens of Louisiana.”

Lingenfelter also pointed out that in order to make progress, states must gather reinforcement from important economic and workforce partners. Tim Barfield, Executive Director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, expressed gratitude for being invited to join with higher education leaders to produce a strong Louisiana workforce.

“Higher education is the indispensable and biggest driver of innovation in this state,” said Barfield. “We must have people working at all levels of the workforce who have the right education and training if it’s going to translate into opportunities here in Louisiana.”

Although not in attendance today due to scheduling conflicts, Stephen Moret, Louisiana’s Economic Development Secretary, noted the importance of all four system presidents coming together for a common purpose.

"I congratulate Dr. Clausen and the higher education community for standing united and adopting good business practices focused on accountability, productivity and enhancing Louisiana’s competitive edge,” said Moret. “This unity and focus on performance will certainly benefit our state long-term regarding business and workforce development.”

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Today's national speaker Paul E. Lingenfelter is the President of the national organization of State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). His work at SHEEO has focused on increasing successful participation in higher education including: strengthening student preparation by building stronger relationships with K-12 educators; improving the quality of teaching; developing accountability systems that contribute to improved performance; improving mechanisms for developing state higher education policy; and developing the data systems and financial policies needed to achieve education improvement.

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