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Higher Education Leaders Present Budget Simulation

BATON ROUGE, La. –Higher Education leaders, including Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen, addressed the Senate Finance Committee today at the request of Chairman Mike Michot. Senator Michot asked higher education to update the committee on the budget process in preparation for an additional \$300 million in cuts for FY 2011-12 due to the loss of federal stimulus funding.

To inform the committee members, Dr. John Lombardi, President of the Louisiana State University System presented a budget simulation tool designed to demonstrate the magnitude of potential impacts to campuses, students and faculty should an additional \$300 million be cut from higher education budgets in the state. The simulation included several scenarios including one that would close a total of 8 campuses, impacting 6,000 employees and displacing 50,000 students.

“These are not recommendations to the committee,” emphasized Commissioner Clausen. “This demonstration is designed to inform the conversation surrounding budget cuts of this magnitude. We are presenting this information to the committee today with a great deal of caution. Higher Education is one of the only state agencies to recruit its staff nationally and internationally. Retaining this nationally competitive labor market makes this discussion even more sensitive.”

Leaders from the four management systems also emphasized that every campus in the state will be impacted by these cuts whether they close programs, eliminate faculty and staff, or close their campus displacing students across the state.

“This is a daily discussion that all of higher education is fully engaged in as we wrestle with the development of solutions that ensure a high quality education for students,” said Clausen. “It will take all of us working collectively to ensure responsible decisions are ultimately made.”

In addition to receiving the presentation, the Senate Finance committee delved into topics including tuition increases, on-line education, program collaboration and cuts to athletic programs in response to the overall budget scenario.

Higher Education leaders in attendance and presenting information to the committee included:
Sally Clausen, Commissioner of Higher Education, Board of Regents
John Lombardi, President, Louisiana State University System
Randy Moffett, President, University of Louisiana System
Kassie Freeman, President, Southern University System
Joe May, President, Louisiana Community & Technical College System