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BOARD OF REGENTS

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February 11, 2016

Mr. Jay Dardenne
Commissioner of Administration
Division of Administration
Claiborne Building 7th Floor
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Commissioner Dardenne:

The Board of Regents has been asked to present an implementation plan for the budget reductions proposed for the mid-year fiscal 2016, as well as for the 2017 fiscal year.

As you know, public higher education has seen its general fund budget reduced by over 44% since 2008, resulting in nearly 5,000 cuts to staff and shifting the burden of paying for education from the state to the student. We are most appreciative of the Governor's strong commitment to public higher education, but submit that these reductions are of such magnitude that their implementation would devastate public higher education in Louisiana.

The following are the broad impacts which would occur if these budget reductions are not reversed:

- The number of faculty and staff who will be laid off means that all institutions will suspend classes during the spring semester and issue incomplete grades resulting in the cancellation of May graduation on campus. Campus closure means that continued accreditation of all institutions by SACS COC, which grants the ability to award degrees, will be in jeopardy.
- All campus construction projects will immediately cease.
- The economic impact of lay-offs, students leaving campus and loss of payroll will have severe economic impact to the communities where our institutions are located.
- The ability to prepare students for those high demand, high wage jobs currently available and those coming to Louisiana will be reduced by over 75%.

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- The reduction in TOPS funding by nearly 80% means that every student now in high school will have to bear most if not all of the cost of attendance to college. Students currently enrolled will have their TOPS award dramatically reduced or eliminated. This means that many students will be unable to attend college due to the inability to fund their education.
- Division I rules require grades to be issued to students who seek to be eligible for fall sports. Since only incomplete grades will be issued during spring semester, no student will be eligible for fall sports. This means that all athletic events will be cancelled for fall 2016.

On behalf of the four management boards and their system presidents, we believe that these actions will have severe and longstanding consequences not just for our institutions and students, but also for the local communities which benefit from their presence in particular and the state of Louisiana overall. While each system has prepared detailed responses by institution, the Board of Regents wished to emphasize the inevitable state wide implications of these proposed budget reductions.

We are ready to work with you and the Governor to seek additional solutions for higher education so that we can Elevate Louisiana now and into the future.

Sincerely,



Joseph C. Rallo, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Higher Education

JCR:cb

c: System Presidents
Board Chairs