



February 26, 2015

The Honorable Bobby Jindal
Governor
State of Louisiana
State Capitol, 4th Floor
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Dear Governor Jindal:

On behalf of Louisiana's public institutions of higher learning, we thank you for your support during last year's legislative session and the creation of the Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) Fund. This unprecedented statewide collaboration across higher education was an important step in directly connecting higher education with Louisiana's economic development efforts. The strategic investment in the WISE Fund, coupled with stable funding for every institution in our state, began what we envisioned as a reinvestment in higher education. Your championing of these initiatives and sparing public higher education from the latest round of midyear cuts recognizes the important role higher education plays in the future of our state.

We cannot lose the momentum that began last year to raise the level of educational attainment in Louisiana. The need for college graduates, particularly in high demand fields such as engineering, computer science, business and industrial trades, is fundamental to meeting workforce goals and ensuring Louisiana graduates are prepared to reap the economic benefits Louisiana has realized. Our joint efforts last session to stabilize base funding, retain tuition revenue, and secure new funding for the Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) Fund provided critical investments that must be protected.

Commissioner Kristy Nichols has informed us of the impending budget shortfall and the funding impacts on higher education. We want to partner with you and our legislative leaders to craft both a short-term approach to address the immediate budget shortfall and offer long-term recommendations that fundamentally change the higher education funding model. In both instances, budget stability is the overarching goal.

We seek your support for the following:

- Ensure that, as options are being considered to meet budget shortfalls, such as excess tax credits, deductions and rebates, higher education is the first priority for funding.
- Maintain the FY 2014-2015 level of state general fund support for all public institutions of higher education and replenish the WISE Fund with state general fund dollars. Funding needed to meet this goal is at least \$1 billion.
- Continue last year's efforts to ensure increased tuition and fee revenues are retained at each institution for reinvestment in academic and student support.
- Provide greater authority and flexibility in setting tuition and fee rates and retaining those revenues for educational purposes.
- Provide greater short-term flexibility regarding admission eligibility and GRAD Act performance requirements at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- Provide GRAD Act II operational autonomies to all public colleges and universities with savings from increased efficiencies retained at each institution for reinvestment in academic and student support.

In the long term, higher education is requesting budget stability and increasing state supported investments in higher education. Increasing college access and degree production, particularly in high demand fields, is critical; and we will work collectively to review efficiency and productivity in the overall higher education system. We will also work to develop and implement a more stable and predictable approach to funding all "formula" and "non-formula" entities in public higher education. These efforts, combined with performance based state funding and tuition and fee authority will enable us to successfully address the state's long-term educational and workforce goals.

The economic stability of Louisiana hinges on our collective ability to find both a short-term solution in the budget for next year and a long-term solution to sustain and increase investments in Louisiana's higher education system.

Sincerely,



F. King Alexander
President
Louisiana State University System



Ronald Mason, Jr.
President
Southern University System



Monty Sullivan
President
Louisiana Community
& Technical College System



Sandra K. Woodley
President
University of Louisiana System



Joseph C. Rallo
Commissioner of Higher Education
Louisiana Board of Regents

c: Mr. Chuck Kleckley, Speaker, Louisiana House of Representatives
Mr. Walter “Walt” J. Leger III, Speaker Pro Tempore, Louisiana House of Representatives
Mr. James “Jim” R. Fannin, Chairman, Appropriations Committee, Louisiana House of Representatives
Mr. Stephen F. Carter, Chairman, Education Committee, Louisiana House of Representatives
Mr. John Alario, President, Louisiana State Senate
Ms. Sharon Weston Broome, President Pro Tempore, Louisiana State Senate
Mr. John “Jack” L. Donahue, Jr., Chairman, Finance Committee, Louisiana State Senate
Mr. Conrad H. Appel II, Chairman, Education Committee, Louisiana State Senate
Members of the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System
Members of the Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University System
Members of the Board of Supervisors of the Southern University System
Members of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Members of the Louisiana Board of Regents