

Grant LSUS doctoral program

When Higher Education Commissioner Jim Purcell visited northwest Louisiana this spring, he shared a regional analysis he had prepared for us that focused on the special challenges and opportunities on the horizon for our community. He also made it clear that with diminishing state and federal dollars, we should not count on Baton Rouge or Washington to come to our rescue: We as a region must address our problems and find our own solutions.

As the business voice for higher education in northwest Louisiana, the Shreveport-Bossier Business Alliance for Education is keenly aware of the need for further education in our region. The percentage of a population with terminal degrees is one barometer of a region's economic viability and while Shreveport-Bossier City is a leader in the state in this regard, our local universities lack the capacity to grant such degrees. The absence of this capability retards our ability to enhance the capacity of our local community and grow the earning potential of citizens. That's why we at the SBBA have endorsed and are actively supporting Louisiana State University at Shreveport's proposal before the Board of Regents to begin offering a

doctorate of education in leadership studies.

Without question, one of the biggest problems plaguing our community is the number of students who drop out of school in Caddo Parish. If current trends continue, close to one-half of the students completing eighth grade this month will not graduate from high school, and most of these students will come from our under performing schools.

We in SBBA believe it will take a multi-faceted approach to address this critical problem, and one part of the solution should be enhanced education and training for our teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators admitted to the doctoral program at LSUS would gain advanced knowledge and skills that would enable them to better motivate and inspire their students as well as manage their schools. The doctoral program is designed to focus on organizational planning, dynamics of leadership, finance, team building, conflict resolution and mediation, and communication. It is our hope that the leaders



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Guest Columnist

who emerge from this program will become the thought leaders at our schools and school systems, implementing best practices and driving innovation. We need fresh ideas and renewed energy, and a doctoral program in education would clearly help foster it.

The Board of Regents has scheduled a final vote on the proposal Wednesday, and members of the SBBA will attend to demonstrate the support of our business community for LSUS and this effort.

LSUS has tried unsuccessfully for many years to secure a doctoral program, and it is important to recognize that none of this would have been possible without the leadership demonstrated by Dr. Purcell and Regents Chairman Bubba Rasberry. We would like to thank them and all of the members of the LSU Board of Regents and their staff for their support of our initiatives to improve northwest Louisiana. At the SBBA we are committed to leveraging higher education to transform our community, and we look forward to many more opportunities to support our higher education institutions as we pursue that goal.

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