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NW La. lucky to have him

The old adage that “you don’t know what you’ve got until it’s gone” is unfortunately, too often true. However, we in northwest Louisiana know better and have long appreciated someone who is a critical member of our higher education and community leadership.



John Hubbard
Guest Columnist

As you have read in these pages over the past several months, our own Jim Henderson was a finalist for the position of president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System.

While many of us were solidly in his corner and would have cheered his selection, in our hearts and for northwest Louisiana we are even more pleased that Henderson will continue to lead Bossier Parish Community College, a vital link to the present and future of the workforce of northwest Louisiana. We are left to dream about how Henderson’s extraordinary vision could have made the LCTCS the envy of the nation.

For those of you unfamiliar with Henderson’s accomplishments, the list is highly impressive. And while time and space limit us to a brief listing here, I believe doing so helps to reinforce how important Henderson has been and will continue to be to our region.

Since Henderson assumed the chancellor’s job in 2009, BPCC has been the nation’s fastest growing community college with its enrollment doubling to more than 8,500. While this statistic itself is impressive, the fact that the number of BPCC graduates continues to increase to record levels demonstrates that BPCC has quality programs that are not just attracting, but also retaining and graduating students into our workforce.

Beyond raw numbers, however, BPCC has become an essential connection to our workforce through partnerships with existing and new businesses such as Benteler Steel. Through its new \$22 million training facility, BPCC will be training the workforce that will fill Benteler’s projected 675 full-time, permanent jobs. BPCC has also received the Military Friendly Schools’ designation and is one of only 13 schools in the country that has been designated by the NSA as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance 2-Year Education. BPCC also recently had 100 percent of the first graduating class of nursing students pass their certification exam.

Jim Henderson has also become a critical player in shaping the overall higher education landscape, working

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closely with the Shreveport Bossier Business Alliance for Higher Education and serving as the current Chairman of the Consortium for Education, Research, and Technology. BPCC’s partnership with Louisiana Tech, expanded 2+2 program with the University

of Louisiana at Monroe, and on campus offerings at LSUS and Northwestern, have positioned BPCC as a dynamic pathway for many of our region’s students to advance from high school to college and career.

At the same time, Henderson has spearheaded programs for some of our neediest students, including those with disabilities and those whose paths to

further education have been hampered by personal, financial or other hardships. Through the Program for Successful Employment, students with cognitive disabilities and autism are being prepared for the workforce. The new Open Campus Initiative offers students of any age the opportunity to take free online developmental courses in mathematics and lan-

guage arts to prepare themselves for placement tests or to brush up on professional skills.

These are just some of the highlights over the past two years, and while none of these initiatives could have been accomplished without the dedication and drive of the BPCC faculty and staff, the fact that so much good is happening in so many areas is due to Dr. Henderson’s visionary

leadership.

His success is not limited to education. He is currently serving as board chairman of the Bossier Chamber of Commerce. His recent induction into Junior Achievement’s Business Leader Hall of Fame tells us more about him. His commitment to and involvement in the successes of northwest Louisiana is impressive. We all await what more his

vision will do for our region.

So, the next time you see Jim around town, please join me and take a moment to share your appreciation, so that he will know we are a community that doesn’t have to lose a jewel to know what it has in Dr. Henderson.

John Hubbard is president of the Bossier Parish Community College Foundation.