A Time to Choose

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES FOR
CADDO PARISH, SHREVEPORT, AND
BOSSIER CITY, LA

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The long term prospects for Northwest Louisiana depends on expanding investment in research, technology, and technology transfer. Ultimately, this strategy means investing in the people of Northwest Lousiana. Only the people of Northwest Louisiana have a stake in this enterprise.

Building The Technology Roadmap

Northwest Louisiana must make large scale investments in its technology base. This translates into investments in science, engineering, technology development, and technology transfer. We have mentioned earlier the important strides being made at the LSU Medical Center and the Biomedical Research Foundation. And shortly we will turn to the public institutions in Northwest Louisiana and what can be done to expand these campuses.

But we should also call attention to the strong commitment Centenary College has recent made to the sciences. Centenary's program to strengthen its science program demonstrates how all the institutions of higher education in this area can work together to build this region's reputation as a center committed to science and technology development. As a prestigious, selective liberal arts college, Centenary enhances the ability of Northwest Louisiana to attract top scientists. With its high percentage of students continuing to graduate and professional schools, Centenary becomes an important resource to attract and retain high quality students and faculty.

In its new science complex, Centenary is taking a bold step to move away from the rigid science disciplines. By striking out in a new direction, Centenary enhances the reputation of this area as an innovator. We need all of our institutions to show the same degree of commitment and creativity.

To continue along this path, Northwest Louisiana must take the following steps.

▲ Merge LSU-S and Lousiana Tech

To expand the economic opportunities available in Northwest Louisiana, we propose a merger of Louisiana Tech and LSU-Shreveport. The two campuses should be combined under the unified focus of Louisiana Tech within the State Colleges and University System. These campuses offer highly complementary programs and markets.

At its core, the merger would combine the population base available to LSU-S with the research and doctoral programs available at Louisiana Tech.

How the Merger Would Work

Our proposal does not subtract any programs or activities from any campus, public or private. Louisiana Tech is primarily a residential campus, and it would remain so. LSU-S operates primarily as a commuter urban campus with a broad-based continuing education program serving Caddo and Bossier parishes, and it would remain so. There is relatively little overlap in the markets of these two institutions. One offers a four year residential experience with graduate programs including the doctoral level; the other provides a flexible urban learning experience with graduate programs presently below the doctoral level.

Under our proposal, both campuses would be merged under Louisiana Tech. The LSU-S campus would leave the LSU System and immediately be converted into a doctoral level institution. Doctoral programs, which are currently available in Ruston, would thereby be available in Shreveport and Bossier City.

The LSU-S campus would be administered by the existing Chancellor, whose title would remain the same. He would coordinate with Louisiana Tech's President in Ruston, and play a major role in the administrative leadership of Louisiana Tech. Auburn University and Penn State University provide a good model to follow in this regard. Any additional administrative bureaucracies would be unnecessary.

Finally, an expanded Louisiana Tech should work closely with Northwestern and Grambling to make sure that degree programs in nursing and education are not duplicated or threatened. It would also work closely with Centenary to ensure that Centenary's recognized commitment to the sciences is strengthened by the merger. It makes no sense to improve organizational cooperation among two campuses only to jeopardize it with three others. These details can be worked out.

The Critical Role of Information Infrastructure

We envision a campus linked by a 21st century information infrastructure. An information infrastructure is composed of four elements: accessible communications networks; digital libraries and information databases; easy to use computers; and trained people to build and operate these resources. The fusion of communications and computing capabilities is setting the stage for an astounding array of new products and services. An information infrastructure tying to-

gether LSU-S, Louisiana Tech, Southern University at Shreveport/ Bossier campus, Centenary, and Bossier Parish Community College can serve as the foundation for applying this technology to a wide range of business, education, and social problems.

This infrastructure will enable faculty and students to access information and communicate with each other easily, reliably, and inexpensively. The information infrastructure will allow communication in any medium — voice, data, or video — anytime, anywhere. This capability will enhance the productivity of research, education and business development.

An information infrastructure is more than computers, databases, and communications networks. It can expand educational opportunities, help build the competitive position of businesses located in Northwest Louisiana, and generate new jobs. It will also serve as a vital link to new international markets.

Some time ago, researchers at Louisiana Tech proposed the idea of a "Linear City" along I-20 between Shreveport/Bossier and Ruston. Some in Shreveport scoffed at this idea. Indeed, if you think of this concept purely in terms of physical development, the idea is difficult to grasp. Information technology will change our thinking. An information highway running from Ruston to Shreveport and Bossier and back will link together the communities of North Louisiana in ways that we can only now imagine.

Why is a Merger Important

It is through a merger of these institutions that Caddo Parish, Bossier Parish, Shreveport, and Bossier City will gain easy access to research and doctoral programs. These programs — particularly those focused in engineering, business, and science — can have a sustained, vital impact on the competitiveness of the regional economy.

In addition, combining the strengths of these two institutions smoothes the coordination among the campuses. Closer coordination will insure that each campus focuses on areas in which it is distinctly competent; we will see the tightest possible fit among the programs at each campus. This merger will likely bring an economy of scale and is an important part of this proposal.

Finally, a merger will expand dramatically the capability of both campuses to meet the needs of local businesses. A merger can lead to a clean, coordinated system of industrial research, technology transfer, technical training, management assistance, and engineering technology support for local firms. The current fragmented system guarantees inefficient competition among the campuses and reduces significantly the chance of building a world-class industrial and information technology infrastructure in Northwest Louisiana.

Building a Technology Transfer System

A major university, with multiple campuses, will attract students, researchers, and experts who are in the leading edge of their fields. These resources provide the engine to drive growth and innovation. To be efficient at doing this, the university must also build a system to transfer technology from research and development to product design and manufacturing. We recommend that the Louisiana Partnership for Technology and Innovation, Inc., a nonprofit corporation based in Baton Rouge, open an office in Shreveport to manage the development of this technology transfer system. The Partnership is the only group of professionals in Louisiana with the background and expertise to manage technology transfer from Louisiana Tech, the LSU Medical Center, and the Biomedical Research Institute. We have included a more detailed proposal below.

Specific Advantages of the Merger

A merger of Louisiana Tech and LSU-S represents the single most important step in creating secure, high paying jobs in Northwest Louisiana. We are already seeing direct economic benefits of expanded research brought about by the efforts of the Biomedical Research Foundation and the LSU Medical Center.

In merging Louisiana Tech and LSU-S, we will:

▲ Create a major institution capable of responding efficiently to the research, education, and the lifelong training and development needs of the citizens and businesses of Northwest Louisiana.

▲ Provide Louisiana with a new university capable of attracting major research and development investment from outside the state.

▲ Accelerate industrial research and development activities in Shreveport and Bossier City to develop more industries as new markets emerge.

▲ Provide a comprehensive system of technology transfer, engineering support, and management assistance to new and existing companies.

▲ Link two complementary campuses with SUSBO, BPCC, LSU Medical Center, and Centenary through a 21st century information infrastructure capable of transforming education — from primary school through graduate education — in Northwest Louisiana.

▲ Provide a potentially powerful link between industry in Northwest Louisiana and federal laboratories in the development of cooperative technology ventures.

▲ Move the Micro Manufacturing Conference Center to the LSU-S campus, add the Advanced Manufacturing Service to the Center, locate an office of the Louisiana Partnership for Technology and Innovation in the Center, expand the mission of the Center to include major international business programs, and seek $3 million in additional state funding for the Center's programs.

▲ Create new opportunities to use the Micro Manufacturing Conference Center as a base for a leading-edge Total Quality Management program, which has already developed a strong regional reputation from the LSU-S Advanced Manufacturing Services. The Center should use the resources of the continuing education and public service division of LSU-S to coordinate its continuing education programs.

▲ Expand Tech's existing conference center in Bossier City into a major technology transfer, business incubation, and engineering extension center with the involvement of LSU-S.

▲ Dramatically accelerate the development of international business programs which have already become an integral focus of LSU-S.

▲ Coordinate the existing and future academic programs of LSU-S and Louisiana Tech in Shreveport and Bossier City and at Barksdale.

▲ Add existing and proposed Louisiana Tech doctoral level programs to the LSU-S campus in sciences, engineering, and business.

▲ Accelerate the natural ties between LA Tech and the LSU Medical Center and Biomedical Research Institute in biomedical engineering.

▲ Strengthen the existing ties between LSU-S and the LSU Medical Center and Biomedical Research Institute in the sciences.

▲ Offer the opportunity to create new research programs in Shreveport in fields such as rehabilitation, neouroprosthetics, biomedical instrumentation, and trenchless technology.

▲ Establish a research-based, doctoral-level program in business on the campus of LSU-S for Shreveport and Bossier City and include Centenary College as a cooperative partner.

▲ Establish engineering technology programs on the campus of LSU-S.

▲ Expand educational programs at Barksdale.

▲ Coordinate and expand continuing education program offerings of LSU-S.

▲ Accelerate the development of the emerging expertise at LSU-S in geographic information systems.

▲ Coordinate the computer, library, and distance learning resources presently available at LSU-S and Louisiana Tech to help create the basis of a "technology road map" for Northwest Louisiana. Link these resources with the LSU Medical Center, SUSBO, BPCC, and Centenary.

▲ Provide an opportunity to develop new graduate level programs in promising areas such as product design, logistics management, and environmental engineering.

▲ Create a major university in Northwest Louisiana with political leadership unified in support of this institution.

▲ Provide major college sporting events to the Shreveport/Bossier City market.

The Role of Shreveport and Bossier City in Supporting this Initiative

An expanded campus of Louisiana Tech will have a major impact in creating new economic opportunities in Northwest Louisiana. To support this move, Shreveport and Bossier City should consider a millage to support the information infrastructure needed to support the campuses of Louisiana Tech, LSU-S, LSU Medical Center, Southern University the BRF, Centenary College, and Bossier Parish Community College. Since the founding of our country, government has played a vital role in building the infrastructure — roads, bridges, waterways — private businesses need to compete. As we close the 20th century, we need to make additional investments in an information infrastructure designed to help our companies compete. It may be