

Introduction: SB Imperative for Higher Education

This is an introduction to the **Shreveport-Bossier Imperative for Higher Education** led by the Greater Shreveport, Shreveport-Bossier African-American, and Bossier Chambers of Commerce, Committee of One Hundred, Community Foundation, cities of Shreveport and Bossier City, parishes of Caddo and Bossier, and the higher education institutions in the Shreveport-Bossier area.

The SB Imperative vision is to increase the number of Louisiana citizens with increase education attainment and to position higher education to be more responsive to the people of Louisiana. In so doing, we hope Louisiana citizens will demand investment in education as a foundation for our future. The result will be a Louisiana that successfully capitalizes on the future knowledge economy.

The Shreveport-Bossier business community is united in support of the creation of the best higher education enterprise for our region within Louisiana's current budget constraints. Fifty business, government, and education leaders currently serve on the steering committee of the SB Imperative with a scope of work through the 2012 legislative session based on the following:

- **Create an "agenda of solutions" around our regional objectives and challenges.**

We have engaged well-known national higher education consultant Eva Klein to work with our higher education leadership to help develop an "agenda of solutions." In addition, the business leadership of Shreveport-Bossier conducted private interviews with each of the chancellors in the Shreveport-Bossier area and our local legislative and Board of Regents delegation around a set of questions designed to determine local objectives and challenges. The agenda of solutions is built on four key messages as follows:

- Higher education is an investment, not an expenditure
- A skilled educated workforce is the most critical component to growing our region's economy
- Preserving core of higher education: Comprehensive solutions and reduced uncertainty
- Reengineering of higher education is an opportunity

- **A catalyst for civic engagement.**

The SB Imperative has united the leadership of business, government, and education leaders in our area and a steering committee of leaders has developed a scope of work and advocacy strategy for the initiative. We have developed a grassroots campaign around this issue by developing our own SB Imperative website (www.sbimperative.com) and holding large monthly public meetings in the Shreveport-Bossier area. Funds to support the communication campaign have been raised in the community.

- **Enlisting help to carry our message to policy leaders.**

The SB Imperative has developed a government relations team to keep us up to date; connect us with state leaders; and help deliver our message to policy leaders. Twenty business leaders have volunteered to be part of the team to deliver the SB Imperative message to Louisiana policy leaders in the legislature, Board of Regents, and Governor's office. Funds have been raised to support these efforts from businesses and philanthropists.

- **Connect with other business and community leaders.**

We will seek to connect with other community and business leaders from around the state with a shared interest of sustaining excellence in the higher education enterprise in Louisiana. This will include expansion of outside higher education consultant services and expanding SB Imperative strategy to other regions through relationships with Louisiana Committee of 100 and other state business and non-profit groups.

The National Governors Association noted that "21st century places will succeed because of assets they create, not because of assets they inherit." The Shreveport-Bossier business community believes our greatest created asset is our people. We are united in support of a "center of excellence" higher education enterprise for the Shreveport-Bossier area.