



June 26, 2003

Dear Colleagues,

The legislative session is over and I want to take this opportunity to explain how well we fared for next year. I have not written you during the session because the situation changed almost daily. Until the Federal Tax bill was passed a few weeks ago, the situation looked bleak and we were facing serious reductions in the budget for all of higher education. With the infusion of extra one-time dollars from the federal government, our legislature was able to avoid what was for us a fairly serious situation. Therefore, we really did not know what our funding was until the very last day of the session. I am happy to report that ULM was appropriated an additional \$1.5 million for the School of Pharmacy. These funds were necessary to continue to meet all of our accreditation requirements and will take the pressure off budgets in all of our other disciplines. We also received funding for the state mandated increases in programs such as Civil Service, health insurance, retirement, and risk management.

In addition, all of the University of Louisiana System Student Government Association leaders, in conjunction with Louisiana's higher education boards, supported an Academic Enhancement Fee increase of up to \$10 per credit hour. In other words, our students wanted to see the academic programs at their institutions improved, and were willing to pay extra for that improvement. I want to thank our SGA, especially this year's SGA President Kayla Haltom and last year's President Charlie Cheatham for their active support and participation in the process to get the Academic Enhancement Fee passed. The fee can only be used for the following items:

Student scholarships

Program accreditation requirements

Hiring additional faculty and increasing faculty salaries

Acquiring additional instructional technology equipment

Upgrading and modernizing existing laboratories and classrooms.

All of this is extremely good news for us at ULM. I am asking every one of you to take the time and write or email your thanks to our northeast legislative delegation. Their names and addresses can be found at the bottom of this message. It was a long, tough session and we need to extend a word of gratitude for their hard work for ULM. I certainly will.

The budget process has been progressing even without the final state appropriation number. Dr. Richters, Dr. Bruno, and their staffs have been working with deans and department chairs to begin to fashion a reasonable spending plan for us. Now that we have fairly specific revenue estimates we can begin the matching process. I will keep you posted this summer as that process develops.

I also want to mention two other important topics. The first is recruiting. We just finished our fourth orientation session, and they have been enormously successful. So successful, in fact, that we are planning two additional sessions this summer to handle the large number of interested students. I am seeing some very good students come through orientation, and the parents are impressed with the enthusiasm they see from all of our faculty and staff. What will enrollment be in the fall? We just do not know yet. As we noted before, Louisiana students are historically late appliers. But, if summer school and orientation are any indication of fall enrollment, I am very optimistic about not only the number but more especially the quality of the students that are now applying. We are making the recruitment of more students our top priority, and we must continue our enthusiasm through the academic year. Recruiting and Admissions has already developed a recruiting calendar for next year. We plan to place the calendar on the web for everyone to see. We also are expecting every department to participate with us next year as we recruit the freshman class of 2004.

Secondly, you recently received an email from our new head football coach Charlie Weatherbie. I hope you have had the opportunity to meet Charlie. He has a dynamic personality and is bringing a new sense of pride and optimism to our intercollegiate football program. I can assure you that not only will the games be exciting, but he is about the student in student athlete. Buy a reduced price season ticket and come out and support your school. More importantly, come out and support your students.

Jim Cofer

President