



MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT

November 2004

From the office of Dr. Robert Hebert

Hotline 475-5587

Many of our faculty members make significant professional contributions to their disciplines, but they also prepare our students scholastically. Student achievements during the past year have been impressive.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- Bachelor of Science nursing students achieved a 100% pass rate on the NCLEX licensure exam.
- Education students achieved 100% passage rate on the PRAXIS when 119 education graduates passed the PRAXIS licensure exam and met highly qualified certification status.
- The debate team won its second straight national championship.
- The pass rate for MSU engineering graduates who take the Professional Engineering exam is 92%; the national average is 82%.
- Radiologic Technology graduates continue to achieve 100% pass rate on the certification exam.
- Six chemistry students presented papers at the American Chemical Society national convention.
- Agriculture students have participated and placed in national livestock judging contests.
- Civil engineering students designed and built the Poke Boat, a concrete canoe which placed first in the region and qualified for national competition.

ENROLLMENT

Faculty and staff have done exceptional work to improve student recruitment and retention. The strategies they have developed are making a difference.

- Fall 2004 enrollment of 8,784 is an all time high for McNeese State University.
- McNeese has experienced an enrollment increase for 11 consecutive academic terms.
- First-time freshman enrollment has grown steadily from 1,345 in fall 2000 to 1,673 in fall 2004.
- The average ACT score for first-time freshmen increased to 20.2, which is above the state average of 19.8 and near the national average of 20.9.
- The total number of students attending McNeese on the Tuition Opportunity Program (TOPS) has grown from 1,324 in 2000 to 1,939 in 2004, an increase of 41%.
- The percentage of first-time freshmen maintaining TOPS eligibility has increased by 6% to 69.5%.
- The overall freshman to sophomore retention rate has increased to 74%.

I will continue to emphasize recruiting academically qualified students and implementing strategies for increasing student retention. We have set goals to reach enrollment of 9,000 by 2010, to improve freshman to sophomore retention rates to 80%, and to improve six year graduation rates to the national average by 2012. Student success and improved graduation rates will be critical elements in the University's future success. Several variables will impact these goals.

- Admissions criteria will increase for first-time freshman students entering McNeese next fall; the higher admissions requirements are projected to cause a decrease in first-time freshman enrollment.
- Louisiana Department of Education data projects fewer high school graduates over the next seven years.
- Community colleges with open admissions criteria will attract more students.

We have been proactive in preparing for a potential decrease in freshmen enrollment next fall. Several initiatives designed to increase student success have already begun.

- The Learning Center provides tutors and study materials in a comfortable student-friendly setting.
- Professional development and training for academic advisors and student-athlete advisors is provided each year.
- Class schedules include more classes offered outside the usual class times (classes are offered on Saturdays and at 7:00 a.m. during the week).
- An orientation session is offered for parents of first-time freshmen.
- When possible class sizes are kept to low student instructor ratios in order to enhance personal attention.
- The night school schedule is coordinated to enhance degree progress and maximum course availability.
- The Program for Access and Student Success (PASS) will be offered during the summer for first-time freshmen students who have completed the high school core requirements but need remediation in math and English. Students who successfully complete PASS and meet other admissions requirements will be eligible to enroll in the fall. The Department of Languages piloted the program last summer and will track students who have enrolled in regular college courses.

These are among the many initiatives and programs developed by faculty and staff to improve our students' chances of scholastic success.

ACCREDITATION UPDATES

An important measure of academic program quality and faculty commitment is achievement of professional accreditation. Currently 100% of McNeese's baccalaureate and graduate programs mandated for accreditation by the Board of Regents are accredited. The University has 37 degree programs on that list. The accreditation process calls for periodic reaffirmation of accreditation which requires a comprehensive program review and evaluation by a visiting team of peer professionals.

Programs undergoing reaffirmation visits during the 2004-2005 year are as follows:

- Teacher education programs at the undergraduate and graduate level were reviewed in October by the National Council for Teacher Education and the Louisiana State Department of Education. Based on information shared at our exit interview with the accreditation team, we are optimistic about the outcome. The final report will be available in late spring.
- A professional team from the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology—Technology Accreditation Commission is reviewing the 4-year program in Process Plant Engineering Technology for initial accreditation.
- In February, a team of peer professionals will review programs in the College of Business for compliance with standards set by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).
- The recertification process for the athletics program by the National Collegiate Athletic Association has begun. The site visit is scheduled for 2006.
- Planning and comprehensive evaluation has begun for the institution's reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS/COC) scheduled for 2007.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

The physical campus continues to improve with several projects underway and others being planned.

- The work on phase I of the Entrance Plaza is complete with the installation of the carved relief panels and lettering.
- Phase II of the Entrance Plaza, which includes the brick flooring, electrical work, irrigation system, and landscaping, will begin soon. We anticipate completion within 120 days.
- For many years one of the highest priorities in the University's capital outlay requests from the state has been funding for renovations and repairs to Frazar Memorial Library. Recently we received notice that \$300,000 has been approved by the state for the planning phase of the project. This major project will include upgrades or replacements

- for the air conditioning system, lighting, and flooring, as well as structural and roof repairs.
- Renovations and repairs to Kaufman Hall may begin late in the spring.
- The preliminary work on the Shearman Fine Arts Building addition is expected to begin next summer.

The coming semesters and years will be busy ones with several major capital outlay projects underway simultaneously. I ask for your patience during this period of growth and revitalization.

I would also like to thank and commend the local legislative delegation as well as members of the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors and Board of Regents for their assistance in promoting and advancing capital outlay projects for the University.

PLANNED GIVING

The University Foundation has established a planned giving program which will provide financial support through bequests, charitable trusts, annuities, life insurance policies, and other planned financial opportunities. Donors are encouraged to direct their gifts to their areas of interest. Kyra Randall, the planned giving coordinator, may be contacted at 337-475-5588.

PINNACLE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

For the second consecutive year, Pinnacle Corporation has provided funds to the McNeese Foundation to recognize six faculty members for their outstanding performance in classroom instruction and student mentoring. One recipient from each college will be selected to receive a \$5,000 Pinnacle Excellence Award.

ALUMNI UNDERGRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS FUNDED

The McNeese Alumni Association has provided \$10,000 for undergraduate assistantships for students conducting research under the mentorship of a faculty member. The awards will be presented for the first time this year. Students from the two largest colleges, liberal arts and science, will be eligible for the awards.

I encourage and remind you to share your ideas and concerns with me. You can reach me directly on the President's Hotline (475-5587), which rings in my office.

I commend those of you who work very hard and unselfishly to help make a difference. At McNeese, "*Excellence with a Personnel Touch*" is more than a slogan; for many of us, it is a creed. Together we are taking this University to a higher level.

I am personally grateful for your commitment to our students and your many outstanding accomplishments.

Sincerely,



The President's Memo, an informational report, is published regularly throughout each semester and during the summer session as necessary. Copies are distributed to every employee through interoffice mail and the reports are posted on the McNeese Web page.