



## August 2007

This is the University's 68th academic year, and it will be a year of progress, opportunities, challenges, and achievements.

Everything we do -- planning, budgetary decisions, capital improvement decisions, and assessment -- directly relates to the University's four core values:

- Commitment to Academics
- Student Success
- Fiscal Responsibility
- University-Community Linkages

Our commitment to academics is central to all that we do.

The 2007 legislature dedicated a large portion of the state budget to education. For the first time in 26 years we begin an academic year with 100 percent formula funding. Last year we were funded at 80 percent.

These additional moneys have been allocated according to a strategic plan and not used on a shortsighted spending spree. Much of the new funding is targeted to student-centered initiatives designed to:

- Increase access
- Strengthen success
- Ensure retention and graduation goals are met

In addition to salary adjustments funded by the legislature for teaching faculty and civil service employees, funds from the McNeese operating budget have been dedicated for additional raises for faculty and salary adjustments for support staff.

Overall, faculty salaries at McNeese are at the Southern Regional Education Board average for the first time in University history. This will allow us to retain and recruit highly qualified faculty who are dedicated to providing excellent classroom instruction. All vacant faculty positions will be filled at or near SREB averages.

Operating funds were also dedicated for raises for non-teaching support staff. Comparable data from the College and University Personnel Association was used to determine these raises. These employees are critical to our mission, and they help us reach our institutional goals.

Funds from the new appropriation have been dedicated to initiatives designed to recruit, retain, and graduate more students including:

- Creating new academic scholarships
- Implementing the Freshman Foundations courses
- Opening the Writing Center
- Expanding e-learning and electronic resources
- Enhancing service learning opportunities
- Providing more need-based campus jobs for students

*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.*

## MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT

Funding these important initiatives in the current budget represents a significant institutional commitment to academics.

This was truly an extraordinary budget year for higher education in our state, and our local Southwest Louisiana delegation was very determined to secure necessary funding for several capital outlay projects that will begin this year. Over \$50 million in capital outlay and facility improvement projects will be underway within the next 18 months. This includes:

- \$22 million renovation and expansion of the Shearman Fine Arts Building
- Nearly \$5 million in renovations and repairs to Kaufman Hall
- \$4 million for repairs and upgrades in the Frasch Hall Annex
- \$6.2 million renovation and repair project at Frazar Memorial Library

More than \$2 million will be used to repair and renovate Alpha Hall, and we now expect this building to be available for spring 2009. Many non-teaching, but necessary student and academic support units will relocate to Alpha Hall including:

- The Writing Center
- Small Business Development Center
- Economic Education Center
- Counseling Center
- Continuing Education
- Leisure Learning
- Research Services
- University Computing Services

This will allow us to reclaim classroom, laboratory, and faculty office space in other academic buildings.

An additional \$3.2 million will be spent on upgrading and repairing facility infrastructure. This includes:

- Chillers
- Heating equipment
- Lighting for Kirkman Hall

Given all of these impressive increases in our state funding, private fundraising is more important than ever. State funding has brought McNeese and other state universities to the SREB average. Our private support is what makes us competitive.

- Total assets in the McNeese Foundation have passed the \$51 million mark.
- The McNeese Foundation ranks in the top third in the University of Louisiana System.
- 13 new endowed professorships were fully funded this year.
- The Foundation has a total of 68 endowed professorships.

Last year the Foundation launched a \$15 million campaign dedicated to increasing academic scholarships and funding for faculty development and academic achievement opportunities. So far the campaign has raised nearly \$6 million—well ahead of schedule.

## MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT

Many former students are major donors to the Foundation. Each year McNeese alumni choose to honor former faculty by endowing scholarships and academic awards. Recently, a local bank made a significant contribution to the campaign. Most of its top administrators graduated from, or attended, McNeese. We are all investing in McNeese State University. The community is investing in McNeese. We are investing in our future.

The University has long been recognized for the high quality and exceptional talent and intellect of the faculty.

- A member of the faculty has been selected as a Fulbright Scholar, and he will teach the U.S. political system at a very prestigious university in Seoul, Korea.
  - We begin this year with eight Fulbright Scholars on faculty.
- Faculty in the Burton College of Education designed, organized, and hosted a two-day literacy conference for K-12 educators that will become a national conference beginning next year.
- New research grants and contracts totaled more than \$5.8 million last year and include:
  - \$2.7 million Board of Regents grant for engineering and science initiatives
  - A \$450,000 grant from the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities for collaboration to preserve the Coushatta Tribal language.
- We have attained 100 percent accreditation for the 37 academic programs mandated for accreditation by the Board of Regents.

Our increased emphasis on academic quality is evident in the preparation of the students choosing McNeese. The average ACT score last fall for entering freshmen at McNeese was 20.8.

- The national average is 21.1.
- The state average is 20.1.
- The average ACT score for McNeese freshmen has risen every year since we began the selective admissions program.

The quality of this University is grounded in our most important core value: a commitment to academic excellence. Working together we will continue to move this University forward and to fully develop it as a premier center for student learning and student success.

I thank you for your dedication and accomplishments, and I wish you much continued success this year.

Sincerely,

