

MEMO FROM THE PRESIDENT



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From the office of Dr. Robert Hebert

Hotline 475-5587

Winter 2005

Fall 2005 will be remembered for the special challenges our state faced as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. At McNeese State University, storm damage was significant, but as a result of an outstanding effort by committed employees, our recovery is inevitable. Prior to Hurricane Rita, the University had experienced its 14th consecutive semester of increased enrollment with a 2.4% increase over Fall 2004 figures.

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

- Official Fall 2005 enrollment was 8,992 on the 14th day of class (September 9, 2005) and is the highest in McNeese's history.
- The College of Nursing had a 12% increase in enrollment and now has 1,177 majors.
- Engineering Technology majors increased by 20.9 % and now number 162.
- Chemistry majors increased by 12.5 % and now number 103.
- Early admissions students increased to 169 students (early admissions students are those who qualify to enroll in college level courses while completing high school requirements).
- Implementation of the Master Plan for Post Secondary Education included applying stricter admissions requirements for first-time freshman students. McNeese admitted fewer freshman students but did allow 10.5% of the freshman class admission by exception.
- The majority of first-time freshmen who did not meet admissions requirements had not completed college preparatory curriculum in high school and/or had not scored high enough on the ACT entrance exam.

HURRICANE RITA

McNeese State University implemented its Disaster Preparedness Plan when Hurricane Rita entered the Gulf of Mexico. The University closed on September 21 to allow students, faculty, and staff to prepare for the storm and evacuate the area. The Crisis Response Team secured the campus, and some members remained on campus throughout the storm on September 24.

Although the University experienced significant damage to several campus structures, the Crisis Response Team, in which I was directly involved, determined that resumption and completion of the fall semester would be the focus of all recovery efforts.

- Storm winds and rain caused damage to every academic building, residence hall, athletic complex facility and farm building. Repairs to academic buildings began on the Monday following the storm.
- The Crisis Response Team worked from the University Police Station, which was powered by a generator until electrical power was restored to the campus on October 5.
- Buildings were opened as repairs were completed and as air quality tests deemed them safe for reopening.
- The University re-opened in phases beginning with the resumption of some classes on October 27. All classes have now resumed and will be completed by December 22.

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.



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HURRICANE RITA *CONT.*

- On-campus student housing required more extensive remediation and repair than we initially expected. Student housing has become available on a gradual basis.
- Burton Residence Hall needs extensive repairs and remediation and is projected to be reopened by summer 2006.
- Students residing in Burton Residence Hall have been provided alternate housing on campus or on the Texas Clipper, a ship located at the Port of Lake Charles.
- The University has worked with parish and FEMA representatives to move trailers to Burton Coliseum. FEMA will assign the temporary housing to qualified persons.
- Permanent repairs have begun on Gayle Hall and Drew Hall. Both academic buildings are projected to be reopened for fall 2006.

BUDGET UPDATE

Hurricane Katrina and Rita's devastation to personal lives as well as business and economic productivity has had a serious impact on Louisiana's fiscal situation. Higher education, including McNeese State University, will experience significant and immediate budgetary reductions. McNeese also faces a direct impact from student resignations and a variety of damages.

- McNeese is taking steps to deal with budget reductions.
- Travel, except for essential accreditation meetings, is frozen.
- Some vacant personnel positions are being held vacant.
- Student recruitment efforts are continuing, and scholarship budgets remain intact.
- Spring 2006 registration is underway, and an event providing registration services from 5-7 p.m. on November 29 in Kaufman Hall will be available for night students.
- While faculty received merit raises in August 2005, scheduled raises for the staff have been delayed.

Private donors have provided funds to assist students impacted by the disaster. Qualified students who are enrolled can receive financial assistance for books, tuition, and other school-related costs.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- MSU forensics director Robert Markstrom is the recipient of Pi Kappa Delta's John Shields Award for his outstanding contributions to communication scholarship and education. The award was presented at the National Communication Association in Boston.
- The H.C. Drew Center for Economic Development Information Services has posted the latest Southwest Louisiana Economic Indicators. The publication can be accessed at <http://www.mcneese.edu/drewecon>.
- McNeese is the recipient of \$110,000 for a LA Gear Up grant which provided three Science Explorer Camps for 8th, 9th, and 10th grade students during the summer. McNeese faculty provided instruction in biology, chemistry, physics, and process technology.

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- The National Science Foundation awarded McNeese State University a grant of \$1,129,999 to implement a five-year program called "Community-Based STEM Education Initiative (Com-STEM). Com-STEM is designed to increase the number of graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.
- McNeese State University received \$695,000 in federal funds to establish the Louisiana Academy for Innovative Teaching and Learning. The Louisiana Academy is designed to foster student success by providing specialized courses in Math and English and by enhancing electronic resources to support instruction.
- Undergraduate student Beau Hanks completed a 10-week medical research internship at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, Maryland. MSU Allied Health Sciences Coordinator Dr. Bill Dees initiated the program.
- The College of Business was reaffirmed for accreditation by the AACSB International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.
- The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) has determined all Engineering Technology programs (both associate and baccalaureate level) achieved accreditation.
- Faculty members from the Burton College of Education have been selected to present papers at the national meetings of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the Association of Teacher Educators. The topic will cover successful Professional Development School collaboration between McNeese and St. John Elementary.

Sincerely,

