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To: Broadcast_LSU_Faculty_Staff@LSU
cc:
Subject: Advancing LSU II

Part One: Status Report on Objectives Announced Last Summer

We are writing to update you on progress in pursuing the University's strategic plan and on how we intend to proceed from this point forward. First, here is a report on what has been done to pursue the seven objectives outlined in an email broadcast by the Provost on June 15 ("Advancing LSU"):

1. 6/15 objective: "Creation of an ad hoc advisory committee to assist in formulating criteria for the identification of programs that can be raised to national and international prominence so that LSU in turn will rise within the ranks of the nation's leading public research universities."

***12/8/99 status: On August 25, we announced the designation of twelve programs for investment budgeting, using criteria developed with the ad hoc committee. The priority status of the programs was approved by the LSU Board of Supervisors on October 29.

2. 6/15/99 objective: "Creation of a task force to develop a master plan for information technology at LSU."

***12/8/99 status: A task force, chaired by Neil Kestner, has been appointed, charged with recommending an information technology master plan by the close of the upcoming spring semester.

3. 6/15/99 objective: "Hiring of a consultant to assist in the selection of a firm to develop a campus facilities master plan as a cooperative endeavor with the LSU Agricultural Center, the Hebert Law Center, and the City-Parish."

***12/8/99 status: The New Orleans firm Eskew+ has been retained to assist in the selection of a firm to work with LSU on the creation of a campus master plan. A timetable has been set culminating in the presentation of the new master plan on April 30, 2001, as the finale and legacy of the 75th anniversary Jubilee Celebration of the LSU campus, and the first steps of the process have been completed on schedule.

4. 6/15/99 objective: "Commitment of incremental recurring funds for four years beginning in the fall of 2000 to create fellowships that will enhance existing support packages for superior graduate students with emphasis on new students in high-priority programs."

***12/8/99 status: The University has committed \$2 million over the next four years to the enhancement of graduate student awards, primarily in the twelve programs selected for investment budgeting. The first round of awards has been authorized for the fall of 2000.

5. 6/15/99 objective: "Active exploration of the creation of several virtual colleges (for example, environmental and coastal sciences, materials science, information science and technology, and earth systems science)."

***12/8/99 status: In September, Vice Chancellor Jelinski announced LSU's new InterCollege Environmental Cooperative, designed to function as a virtual college to enable researchers to share their knowledge and resources to improve research, education and outreach programs. Over eighty members of the faculty are already participating in this multidisciplinary pilot effort. Next on the agenda: materials science.

6. 6/15/99 objective: "Enhancement of linkages between student life and the academic advancement of the University, including implementation of pilot residential college programs in Herget Hall and in East and West Laville Halls and appointments of task forces to make recommendations on A) possible enhancements in the academic programs of the Honors College and B) possible development of a freshman seminar program."

***12/8/99 status: Pilot residential colleges will open next fall. Last week, some 130 faculty, staff, and students at a Provost's Seminar explored a variety of ideas aimed at creation of learning communities and freshman interest groups to promote increasingly effective linkages between students' social experiences and their intellectual development. (Please see the second part of this email).

7. 6/15/99 objective: "Creation of a task-force to develop a campus-wide plan for K-12/University linkages aimed at the improvement of education at all levels in Louisiana."

***12/8/99 status: A task force co-chaired by Karl Roeder and Harold Silverman has been appointed, charged with considering the challenges, opportunities, and obligations facing the University with respect to K-12 education (including pre-K) and making recommendations for optimizing the University's engagement with the schools.

Part Two: Next Steps

In order to concentrate the attention and efforts of the University community on measurable, achievable goals that are essential to the advancement of LSU, the University Planning Council has recommended that we focus on a key time-bound objective for each of the nine Strategic Directions in the University Planning Document. We concur, and in harmony with the recent Provost's Seminar we are committing LSU to a primary objective in fulfillment of Strategic Direction 1 ("To create a challenging learning environment that enriches students' intellectual lives, develops their professional and personal abilities, and fosters civic engagement"), and especially the undergraduate dimension of Strategic Objective 1.3 ("To enroll students who are prepared to excel in LSU's undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs").

To advance powerfully among America's major research universities, LSU must build upon the significant progress we have made in the last two decades to create a strong culture of academic excellence for our

undergraduate students. Excellence in undergraduate education is the bedrock upon which broad-based support for public universities arises.

Since LSU admitted its first freshman class under admissions requirements in 1998, our six-year graduation rate (a standard measuring rod in American higher education) has risen by 12 points, from 38% to 50%. This highly significant advance has been produced above all by a sustained commitment to high academic standards. We now invite all members of the LSU community to join us in a major effort to move up at least another 13 points. The University Planning Council has recommended a graduation rate of no less than 63% by 2008 as the critical institutional performance indicator for Strategic Direction 1 of the University Planning Document.

Why 63%? The six-year graduation rate for all public doctoral universities is currently 56%. For selective doctoral institutions it is 61%. For our ten peers as designated by the Board of Regents--Texas A&M, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, North Carolina State University, Auburn University, and the Universities of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and Maryland--it is 63%. It is not a figure plucked out of the air. It is, we believe, an achievable goal for LSU.

What will it take to get there? Although we do not yet know all the answers, we are convinced we must continue to raise admissions requirements. We must implement the fall 2000 freshman admissions requirements, of course. We will need to develop ever more challenging freshman admissions requirements for the fall of 2002 (and perhaps for the fall of 2004 as well) for consideration by the Board of Supervisors. We must improve advising and counseling services for students; enhance programs that promote student retention and academic success such as tutoring, service learning, supplemental instruction, residential colleges, and learning communities; provide better access to the classes that students need to make timely progress toward graduation; and achieve changes in the intellectual climate and general culture of undergraduate life so that LSU will be known as a place to which serious, ambitious students come to work hard to build the foundations for lifelong success.

And who must be involved? Quite simply, all of us. Last week's Provost's Seminar was intended to be the beginning of an unprecedented campus-wide dialogue about what we want to achieve collectively in undergraduate education and about the means for doing so. (By next week, you will be able to find materials on the Provost's Seminar, including a presentation by facilitator Vincent Tinto and pilot programs developed in break-out sessions, through a link on the Academic Affairs homepage). As always, we solicit your support as well as your observations and suggestions, which may be addressed directly to us or to the UPC at UPC@lsu.edu.

Finally, as we also said in the June 15 broadcast, we are looking to all units to report this spring on measurable progress on the time-bound performance indicators set forth in their strategic plans. It is important that we all be aware of the mission, goals, and objectives adopted by the units in which we work. Anyone wishing to review his or her department's plan should be able to find it through the "Unit Plans" link off the "University Planning Documents" link on the LSU Homepage.