REP. MIKE THOMPSON SAYS

College Endowment Bills Show Cooperative Spirit

Two bills which would provide money for professorship chairs indicate a willingness by legislators to work together for the benefit of higher education in Louisiana, Rep. Mike Thompson of Lafayette said today.

One bill would set up a $4 million endowment fund for public universities. The other would provide matching funds to universities which raise money for professorial chairs.

Both are now back in the Senate for concurrence on amendments. They passed the House Tuesday.

The measures are “definite efforts to establish a new spirit of cooperation among legislators who support major universities in the state,” Thompson said.

First, Only LSU

The bill creating the endowment fund, introduced by Rep. Anthony Guarisco of Morgan City, was orginally intended to generate $2 million for only universities within the LSU system.

Thompson amended the bill in the House Appropriations Committee to increase the total to $4 million and to make it an endowment for all public universities in Louisiana.

His amendment also stated that the endowment fund would be administered by the Board of Regents.

The grants would be given based on a merit system. The university, professor and program would be evaluated before funds are allocated.

USL Also

“I anticipate LSU will still receive a great number of grants simply because they’ve got Ph.D. programs in so many areas,” Thompson said. “But I think we made sure that top quality programs at other universities, USL’s computer science program for instance, will not be excluded.”

Thompson said the bill went unchanged from the House Appropriations Committee to the House, where it was approved with no problems.

The general mood of legislators seemed to establish professorial chairs.

It states that funds raised by a university from outside sources will be matched by the state, although not an equal match.

The university would raise $600,000 and the state would provide $400,000.

Three grants can be awarded to any one university.

Active USL Foundation

“Active foundation programs, like the one at USL, can pretty easily raise $600,000 increments to participate. Just look at their track record,” Thompson said, apparently in reference to the highly successful USL Foundation fundaising drive.

Thompson said the benefits of the bill are two-fold: private contributors would have an incentive because a portion of the total would be provided by the state.