Cuts to higher ed approved

Fewer faculty, course offerings may be ahead

Mike Hasten and
Tina Marie Macias
mhasten@gannett.com
tmacias@theadvertiser.com

BATON ROUGE — Three higher education boards reluctantly approved budget cuts Thursday that will lead to faculty furloughs, reduced class offerings and higher tuition and fees.

The moves were taken to implement their portions of a $109 million reduction in higher education funding for the second half of this school year. Board members said that what makes it worse is that they are looking at a cut three times that size in June when a new state budget is adopted.

Cuts approved by the executive committees of the boards that oversee the University of Louisiana System; Community and Technical College and Southern University systems account for about $58 million of the total.

The LSU System, which has not yet approved its reduction plan, is to cut $50.5 million from its campuses, hospitals, research facilities and law and agriculture programs.

UL is set to cut $7.3 million, while South Louisiana Community College would have to reduce its budget by more than half a million and LTC Region 4, which includes Lafayette's campus, would make about $1 million in cuts.

"This is a problem that has short-term gain but long-term pain," said ULS Board Member Andre Coudrain after approving $33.5 million in cuts to ULS campuses. "We've got to rethink the way state government acts toward higher education."

Higher education has to absorb more than one-third of a $341 million statewide budget cut brought on by falling revenues. State colleges and health
Cuts

Continued from Page 1A

care are the two largest budget items that do not have constitutional protection against cuts.

Layoffs likely

ULS President Randy Moffett said 70 percent of college funding is personnel, so layoffs are probable.

Besides the cuts, all colleges and universities will have to absorb the $10 million cost of tuition that would have been funded by the state for high school students who are co-enrolled and for low-income students who receive a new assistance called GO Grants and the cost of merit raises for civil service employees. The state underfunded the programs.

Tough choices

Savoie said he hopes Gov. Bobby Jindal looks at other ways to reduce spending than cutting so much from university budgets.

"I'm hopeful he will exercise some prudence and spread it around more," he said. "We got a direction to cut 7.8 percent but that's not an official directive and there are ways to spread it around."

He also is looking at outside activities of the university, like federal economic development arms that require UL funding — $350,000 for the federal Manufacturing Extension Program of Louisiana and $385,000 for the Louisiana Technical Assistance Center — as possible sources of savings.

"If I have to make a decision between the history department and MEPOL, I'm going with the history department," he said at the meeting. "If I have to decide between the English department and PTAC, I'm going with the English department."

The governor's preliminary higher education plan asks for the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to slash $14.18 million from its seven community colleges, two technical community colleges and eight technical college regions.

But at the meeting Thursday, LCTCS President Joe May said he had only identified $8.14 million that could be cut from the schools without reducing programs and classes. An official order from the governor is expected in January. Before that time May will try to negotiate the final reduction.

"We don't want to hurt our ability to help the needs of workforce development," he said.

Reductions in stages

May outlined how the LCTCS would be impact-