Educators predict disastrous future

By MARY BROUSSARD
Advocate staff writer

Higher education is headed for a disastrous future if state officials decide to take more money out of state university budgets, a group of educators predicted Thursday.

Further cuts could hurt the thrust to attract high-technology industry to the state, said members of the Louisiana Council of Deans of Arts, Sciences and Humanities.

The council plans to put those thoughts into a resolution Friday telling Gov. Treen and other state officials exactly how they feel.

“We want to reinforce the idea that academic budgets shouldn’t be cut,” said Paul Pennington, dean of the college of arts and sciences at Louisiana Tech.

“Further cuts would be disastrous,” he said. “It would be too horrible to consider.”

About 20 deans from state and private institutions gathered Thursday at the Holiday Inn on Siegan Lane for the council’s annual meeting.

“Basically, we’re trying to attract high technology to the state,” Pennington said.

“If we diminish the opportunities for citizens of Louisiana to gain the knowledge essential to an era of high technology, then we’ve seriously impaired the future of the state.”

Gov. Treen in October ordered a 4.4 percent across-the-board budget cut because of declining state revenues. Various higher education boards — with the exception of the LSU Board of Supervisors — and numerous faculty and student groups pleaded with the governor at the time to exempt them.

Treen later exempted the state’s four predominantly black universities at the prompting of the Consent Decree Monitoring Monitoring Committee. Treen restored the $1.9 million to the black institutions at the time.

Treen last week partially exempted Northwestern State University of about $542,000. Pennington said some deans were concerned about this because their schools were also suffering as a result of budget cuts.

“Most of us are in the same leaky boat.”

Deans

(Continued from Page 1-B)

he said. “We’ve got the same problems.”

Treen partially exempted Northwestern because it was suffering from a $600,000 deficit above the budget cut as a result of poor budget decisions made before President Joseph Orze took office, said Lanny Keller, Treen’s assistant press secretary. Treen felt that Orze should not be excessively penalized because of decisions made by NSU’s previous administration, Keller said.

“They are still out about $800,000 even with the Treen exemption,” Keller said.

Keller also said that in the three Treen operating budgets the governor has increased higher education funding by just over 50 percent.

Dan Dupree, head of the council’s resolution committee, said the resolution would most likely be sent to Treen, the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee.

“All three of those groups would certainly have an interest in the problems we express,” Dupree said.

The LSU System lost $12.1 million for its 1982-83 operating budget as a result of Teen’s executive order. LSU’s Baton Rouge campus lost $3.8 million.