Students = Work

By MARSHA SHULER
Capitol News Bureau

Think of Lake Charles.

That’s what Baton Rouge might be like if it weren’t for the economic boost LSU and Southern University provide Louisiana’s capital city, according to economist Loren Scott.

Lake Charles and Baton Rouge have a comparable collection of chemical industries, Scott said.

But Baton Rouge has higher employment levels, higher per-capita income and more area growth than the smaller city in southwest Louisiana.

That’s largely due to the location of the two colleges in the seat of state government, said Scott.

The schools also attract more than 40,000 students and tens of thousands of visitors to the city, particularly on football weekends.

LSU and Southern are among the largest employers in the Baton Rouge area. The LSU campuses hire more than 7,800 full- and part-time employees, and last year’s payroll hit $293 million. The LSU campuses had total revenue last year of $551 million.

LSU’s presence in Baton Rouge includes LSU A&M, the state’s flagship campus; the LSU Agricultural Center; the Paul M. Hebert Law Center; and the Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

The Southern campus has 1,723 full and part-time employees, an annual payroll of $54 million and total revenue last year of $115 million. The totals include Southern’s Law School.

LSU alone has more employees and revenue than the top two private companies in Baton Rouge — Turner Industries and Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Louisiana.

And LSU has more employees than Exxon, the area’s No. 1 industrial manufacturing firm in 1998.

Southern’s revenue and employees put it in the league with the 14th-largest private company in Baton Rouge — Performance Contractors Inc.

“In my public speaking I will always say ‘LSU is Baton Rouge and Baton Rouge is LSU,’” said LSU System President William Jenkins. “It’s a true statement, but true.

“You do the impact on all the eating establishments.

Southern’s students also contribute free labor to the economy, Jackson said. Its nearly 10,000 students must do at least 60 hours of community service by the time they graduate, Jackson said.

Even if you do nothing to minimum wage, that service means a $500,000 annual contribution to the community, Jackson said, adding that many students do that service in what would be higher-paid, professional-type jobs.

An LSU Systems office report estimates that LSU injects more than $500 million into the Baton Rouge economy.

A large sign at the entrance to Southern University, right, looms above the many commercial signs clustered near the campus.

the commercial trade, gas stations. It becomes a great multiplier. Jobs create jobs,” said Jenkins.

According to LSU, about 75 percent of its nearly 30,000 students live off-campus, most of them paying to rent or lease housing.

While LSU is the larger of the economic engines, Southern contributes its part too.

“Obviously, it is one of the largest employers in the city, and certainly in the African-American community, and the athletic programs are a tremendous boost to Baton Rouge,” said Southern University Chancellor Ed Jackson.

See STUDENTS, Page 45K

See STUDENTS, Page 44K
The Bicycle Shop, on Chimes Street just outside the north gates of LSU, gets a lot of business from students.

Students

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43K

economy annually through employee benefits, purchase of equipment, supplies and the like and capital construction projects.

The same report notes that LSU brings to the parish millions of dollars through grants of faculty, staff and students, conference participants, campus activities and especially sports.

A typical LSU home football game attracts 78,000 fans to Tiger Stadium. That’s more people than live in 51 of Louisiana’s 64 parishes, according to a 1998 report by economist Scott. And those people spend lots of money, Scott said.

There are no similar reports on Southern’s impact, Jackson said.

A large portion of both LSU and Southern’s operating funds originate from outside Baton Rouge.

As a result, much of the Baton Rouge campuses’ spending represents “new money” entering the local economy, said LSU System fiscal analyst Albert H. Lawson.

LSU is also able to attract a lot of national grant money, Scott said.

“Then there’s the entertainment value of the athletic department, and of course that draws people from all over the state,” Scott said.