Gov.-elect Buddy Roemer said Friday one reason he's pushing for a consolidated higher education management board is to rid of many of those on current boards and to be able to appoint people he wants to run higher education.

Louisiana's higher education system needs better management and a single super board for the colleges can get the job done more quickly and more efficiently than trying to work with the current management boards, Roemer said in a speech to the LSU faculty.

"I'll be honest — I'm stuck with 50 to 70 people making higher education policy decisions on management boards. The truth is we can do it better with less — and a lot better with different people," Roemer said, bringing applause from the faculty members.

"Under our constitution, the best way to clean house is to change the number and structure of the boards," Roemer said. "There is a method to my madness... It's the quality of the people who serve, that's the key. New blood, new management is key."

Roemer said when the time comes to make appointments to a higher education management board, he will look for "people of recognized interest in excellence in higher education."

The state's higher education management board should reflect the population of the state and should be composed of men and women who are respected and not simply people who happen to be friends of the governor, Roemer said.

"If someone came to Louisiana and met only the
members of that board, I would like them to be impressed," Roemer said.

Although a transition panel studying higher education has not yet issued a report, Roemer reiterated the higher education plan he pushed throughout his campaign for governor.

Roemer has steadfastly maintained Louisiana needs to emulate North Carolina and consolidate the budget, policy and personnel activities of higher education in a single board.

Louisiana's sprawling college system is currently run by three management boards — the LSU Board of Supervisors, the Southern University Board of Supervisors and the Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities — with the Board of Regents setting overall policy.

Louisiana needs a well-articulated system of higher education, a system with LSU as the flagship at the top, a tier of senior colleges and a foundation of strong junior colleges, Roemer said.

Such a system can meet the higher education needs of all Louisiana citizens better than the current structure with its open access universities in every corner of the state, Roemer said.

Roemer said he would limit access to the flagship university and to the senior colleges, erecting admission requirements that would keep out of colleges those students who don't stand much chance of graduating.

"But, we have to open and maintain some way for those students who struggle out of high school not quite focused, not quite mature, not quite sure about their future," Roemer said. "... We have to keep the college experience open for them too — some people would say especially for them."

Roemer said a strong junior college system could fill that gap.

In what has become the standard Roemer speech, the governor-elect touched on his intention to push campaign finance changes; to restructure the tax system, especially the property tax; to promote more economic development activities and to foster improvements in education from kindergarten through the college level.

And education is the key, Roemer preached.