Trustees taking cautious look at community colleges

By Mike Hasten  
State Editor

HAMMOND — Members of the Board of Trustees are taking a cautious look at legislation creating community colleges, especially since the bills put more campuses under their control.

Trustees President James Caillier told the board that he didn't ask for the creation of any community colleges and it wasn't his idea to put the schools under the Trustees.

He said he's concerned that like vocational schools, legislators will set up a community college wherever there's enough political pull to get one.

Instead, "Hopefully, the Board of Regents will come up with a Master Plan for community colleges so we don't have a community college created everywhere some individual wants one created," he said.

Board member Helen Roberts said she has concerns that "without any input from us, community colleges are coming to us. We may be creating problems for ourseleves, our universities, with this many institutions" under the board's control. "We need to look at some arrangement where we don't get dumped on."

Caillier updated the board on Rep. Jerry LeBlanc's bill to utilize vocational school campuses in Lafayette, New Iberia and Opelousas to establish the Community College of Acadiana, and said the Legislature has ultimate authority to create colleges. "We really have no choice."

Caillier also updated the board on Sen. Larry Bankston's bill protecting higher education from budget cuts. The bill is to be debated by the Senate next week.

The possibility of getting more college funding "is so had we're not asking for more money," Caillier said. "We're just asking for protection" from future cuts. "We are aware of the state's financial condition. We can't get more money when there is no money."

Caillier also got the board to renew its endorsement of creating the University of Louisiana System, which would consist of all schools governed by the Trustees.

that endorsement could help pass Sen. Cecil Picard's bill calling for the name change.

If approved, USL could become The University of Louisiana at Lafayette and other schools would have the option of name changes. So far, Northeast and Southeastern have expressed interest in name changes.

"We're the only group of schools in the nation without a name," Caillier told the board.

The Trustees oversee colleges and universities with enrollments totaling 103,000 — more than 50 percent of all college students in the state. LSU has about 35 percent and Southern 14 percent. If the University of Louisiana system is created, it will be the 13th largest system in the nation.

The board first endorsed the idea in 1984 but Thursday was the first time it had been endorsed by the Board of Regents, the state's policy-making board. Caillier said