

THE STUDY

Objectives, Study Sponsors, and the “Client”

Leadership organizations in the Shreveport-Bossier (S-B) community have long advocated for improved higher education resources to serve the metro area’s economic development strategies for growth and prosperity. They have advocated for growth of LSU in Shreveport (LSU-Shreveport) in particular. Frustration of these aspirations led to this new **analysis of alternative strategies to achieve a comprehensive public university**. In a collaboration that represents a new kind of regional planning approach, the local sponsors—The Community Foundation, the S-B Imperative for Higher Education (Chamber), and the Committee of One Hundred—were joined in sponsorship of this study by the Louisiana Board of Regents.

It was agreed between the sponsors and the consultant, Eva Klein & Associates (EKA) at the outset that, in this study, *the client* is the people of S-B, Ruston, and North Louisiana who rely upon public higher education for their individual needs and for success of the communities. The client is not any particular institution or system or agency. Importantly, it also was agreed that the consultants would not be directed by any party’s expectations, and would do an independent analysis.

Study Approach, Analysis, and Report

EKA analyzed local and regional data, including demographics, educational attainment, economic/industry profiles, and economic development strategies. Louisiana’s current higher education environment was reviewed. National data were scanned for models/solutions used elsewhere, to address unmet needs. The approach centered, above all, on a series of group interviews with institutions, legislators, community/business leaders, staff and members of governance/management boards, and others whose opinions and experience were important to the analysis.

A lengthy, detailed report has been prepared, containing data, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations. This is an *Executive / Briefing Summary* of that Report. The full Report is organized in 7 chapters, followed by Exhibits:

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| 1. Introduction | 5. Overview of Models/Alternatives |
| 2. The Shreveport-Bossier Metro Area | 6. Evaluation of the Alternatives for Shreveport-Bossier |
| 3. Higher Education Contexts | 7. Conclusions and Recommendations |
| 4. Unmet Higher Education Needs in Shreveport-Bossier | 8. Exhibits |

CONCLUSIONS

Unmet Needs in Shreveport-Bossier

Based on an extensive analysis of S-B data, prior studies, and comparative data, the consultants conclude that the S-B metro area is underserved by public education in three different ways:

- **Program Deficiencies.** The array of programs delivered in S-B, while sufficient at the two-year level, is thin and inadequate at baccalaureate and graduate levels for a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of this size and given its industry base and economic strategies. Opinions vary about specific program priorities, but they generally include programs in Engineering, Education, Business, and Information Technologies, and programs related to industry targets for growth, e.g., Energy (Gas); Digital Media/Film; Entrepreneurship; Advanced Manufacturing.
- **Underserved Populations.** S-B lags the State, southern states, and the US in percent of the population with baccalaureate and graduate degrees: The overriding goal is to increase *higher education attainment* in the MSA’s population. An earlier study showed that many Bossier, Caddo, and DeSoto parish 18 year olds attend institutions elsewhere. But, one also must consider who is *not* attending. The unmet need is that of enrolling *place-bound students*. This includes (1) adults of all races with family responsibilities, including those presently employed, who need further education and (2) minority youth and adults whose family or economic circumstances likewise do not permit “going away to college.” Expansion of locally delivered baccalaureate and graduate options is important for increasing participation of these population segments. For this reason, not all program duplication is unnecessary.
- **Growth of Innovation Capacity.** The category of unmet needs most difficult to describe is *human/intellectual capital*—the area’s people resources, including both highly-skilled employees and entrepreneurs, who are vital to sustain a local innovation economy and to attract business investment from elsewhere. Meeting this need includes growth of selected research programs, but it is not nearly that simple. It also means having “lots of smart people” who can engage directly with business/industry and with social/community services in pragmatic collaborations to solve problems and generate innovation—not all of which is research. Growth of faculty in local institutions is a core way to expand this *innovation capacity*, and it also requires the university to focus on problem-solving with partners.

Generic Models Used Elsewhere

Four basic approaches to expand local higher education assets were examined from national models/examples:

- **Growth in Place.** Historically, this is the prevalent way in which higher education institutions have grown—even if growth took many decades or centuries. Only recently has the need to accelerate change and growth made this growth-in-place model less viable as the solution for all situations.
- **Partnerships—Program Collaborations.** In this model, two or more institutions develop joint degree programs and/or research programs in which the two (or more) institutions supply content and faculty and may award joint degrees. This works best in circumstances in which the partners have complementary, but distinctly different strengths.
- **Partnerships—Program Importation.** This model involves inviting a non-domiciled institution to deliver a program in the target locale. Sometimes, this occurs on an existing campus. In other cases, a special-purpose facility, usually called “university center,” is established. University center models often host degree programs from many different universities. An example is in Rapides Parish, LA. This model has been proposed at times for S-B.
- **Consolidation.** Unlike in the private sector, mergers have been relatively infrequent in higher education; however, one list discovered in EKA’s research includes 92 mergers. Interest in mergers has grown recently in several states and abroad. A consolidation can be the solution to financial distress; sometimes, it is done to synergize strengths.

Because they were suggested by interviewees, four specific additional scenarios also were considered:

- The Biomedical Engineering alliance of Georgia Tech and Emory University in Atlanta (program collaboration)
- The unique model (merger, then growth) of Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis
- Consolidation of LSU-Shreveport and LSU Health Sciences Center-Shreveport
- A three-way consolidation of LSU-Shreveport, LSU Health Sciences Center-Shreveport, and Louisiana Tech.

Evaluation of Alternatives for Shreveport-Bossier

The full report contains detailed analyses of the four main alternatives for application in S-B—structured into *Advantages/Requirements* and *Disadvantages/Mitigation*—i.e., what would be required to make *Advantages* real and what could be done to mitigate *Disadvantages*. Recent, concurrent, and potential changes in Louisiana’s higher education structure, including recent studies and the LSU flagship agenda, were taken into account.

Of the four main models, *Program Collaboration* and *Program Importation* were found to be least advantageous as overall solutions; however, they have some specific applications in S-B—for example, collaborations in research and still other collaborations among two-year and four-year institutions to better serve the underserved populations.

Absent significant new resources invested, consolidation of LSU-Shreveport and LSU Health Sciences Center does not address the three unmet needs in S-B. Various programs needed in S-B do not exist at LSU Health Sciences Center and merging the two LSU institutions would not provide immediate synergies for growth of *Innovation Capacity*.

Finally, three-way consolidation of the two LSU institutions and Louisiana Tech—creating an enlarged institution, presumably in the LSU System, does have appeal. It could produce a much more comprehensive university in the North. It might be easier to grow *Innovation Capacity*. Louisiana Tech’s programs would be immediately available in S-B. Overall, this idea may merit study and consideration; however, as it was outside the scope of this study to analyze this idea in depth, EKA cannot make a recommendation about this scenario—pro or con—at this time.

The central choice came down to:

- **Grow LSU-Shreveport (in the UL System).** Seek to expand the LSU-Shreveport’s programs, enrollments, and ultimately, its Role/Scope/Mission, by moving it into the UL System, with a new name. What led to the UL System idea was (1) the reality that LSU-Shreveport has not grown within the LSU system in the past (due to many mixed factors) and (2) current directions, as we understand them, of the LSU flagship agenda and reorganization considerations now being undertaken by the LSU System. It was concluded that growing LSU-Shreveport within the LSU System or a single LSU institution that is focused more than ever on its research mission might be even more difficult in the future than it has been in the past. The UL System, consisting of several regional and statewide universities, seems to be a better fit.
- **Consolidate LSU-Shreveport and Louisiana Tech.** If LSU-Shreveport were to become a second, urban campus of Louisiana Tech, a great advantage is that many existing programs automatically become available for delivery in S-B, and the Role/Scope/Mission debate ends. However, care is needed, so as to not diminish either campus but, rather, to enhance both. Initially, the consultants considered that, due to the research mission, the consolidated Louisiana Tech might fit best in the LSU System; however, interview findings and the LSU flagship agenda directions led away from that conclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having weighed carefully the many complex considerations involved in the above two main choices, as well as the corollary issues—all in terms of how to meet all three types of unmet needs—the consultants make the following five recommendations, each with sub-parts. Please see the full Report for fuller explanations of the recommendations.

Meeting Core Program Expansion Needs

Recommendation #1: Consolidation

Consolidate LSU in Shreveport and Louisiana Tech University as a single, enlarged “new” Louisiana Tech in the UL System—a single university with a Ruston Campus and a Shreveport Campus

#1A: Consolidation Implementation Plan. Require, develop, and approve a detailed *Consolidation Implementation Plan* prior to undertaking any of the formal transfer and consolidation measures

#1B: Special, Interim Governance/Management. Establish a special governance structure to provide oversight for a period of 3 to 5 years, beginning with creation of the *Consolidation Implementation Plan* and continuing through the period of most critical implementation activities, and with the Board of Regents playing a special supporting role

#1C: Critical Leadership Continuity in the Early Years. Negotiate agreements with Drs. Daniel Reneau and Vincent Marsala to defer their retirements until after the early period of consolidation activities, to ensure their essential leadership in the most difficult transition years

#1D: One-Time Special/Transition Funding. Seek designated funding sufficient to cover non-recurring expenses associated with implementing the consolidation that are not reasonable to cover by reallocations of existing resources, with the amount to be determined in preparation of the *Consolidation Implementation Plan*

Recommendation #2: Alternative to #1—Transfer LSU-Shreveport to the UL System (Without Consolidation)

In the event that Recommendation #1 is not supported locally and by the Regents, or that it is not enacted by the Louisiana Legislature and Governor, then transfer LSU in Shreveport from the LSU System to the UL System and seek a “fresh start” in growing the institution

#2A: Name Change. Adopt a suitable, new name for LSU-Shreveport, consistent with its transfer to the UL System

#2B: Comprehensive Program Review and Updates. Set aside past disagreements about doctoral program aspirations and past program and Role/Scope/Mission proposals, to establish a “fresh start” that enables a productive focus on (1) meeting Shreveport-Bossier’s program needs and (2) growing enrollments. Most of the programs that would accomplish these ends are at baccalaureate and master’s levels.

#2C: Additional Program Strategies. Employ program collaboration and importation solutions to meet needs that cannot be met by LSU-Shreveport’s current Role/Scope/Mission or program capacities, e.g. Engineering

#2D: Supportive Role of the Board of Regents. In this scenario, engage the Board of Regents in a collective commitment to this “fresh start,” so that the Regents can help the UL System and institutional leadership accelerate the growth, particularly in expediting review and approval of program proposals

Meeting Intellectual Capital, Research, and Innovation Needs

Growth of *Intellectual Capital* can come about if LSU-Shreveport becomes the Shreveport-Bossier campus of Louisiana Tech. If the two institutions are not consolidated, some growth can occur as the result of updating LSU-Shreveport’s existing program array and adding new ones in ways that lead to strong program/enrollment growth and, thereby, to faculty growth. Still more growth of *innovation capacity* would be based on growth of the research, innovation, and outreach capacities of all three institutions, especially Louisiana Tech and LSUHSC-Shreveport, but also LSU-Shreveport. Thus, Recommendation #3 is a companion to Recommendation #1 or #2, but it also is independent of the core solution and should be pursued in any case.

Recommendation #3: Research/Innovation Capacity and Enhanced Institutional/Community Collaborations

Aggressively accelerate planning and actions to bring about growth in strategically selected areas of research and innovation support, matching the combined strengths of Louisiana Tech and LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport to the MSA/regional economic development industry targets

- #3A: **Collaborative Biomedical Engineering Program.** Ask Louisiana Tech and LSUHSC-Shreveport to undertake immediately joint development of a *Strategic Business Plan (SBP) for a Biomedical Engineering Department or Institute*, adapting applicable elements of the Georgia Tech-Emory University model
- #3B: **Regional Strategic Research / Innovation Agenda.** Undertake collaborative development of a *Regional Agenda (Plan) for Strategic Research and Innovation* that directly connects university research growth to economic development strategies
- #3C: **Business/Industry Outreach and Problem-Solving.** Create the Louisiana Tech Engineering Education and Extension Center, in Shreveport

Meeting Needs of Underserved Populations and Improving Educational Attainment

More degree programs, achieved via Recommendation #1 or #2, are only part of the solution for this need. Additional collaboration and outreach solutions should be employed to meet needs of underserved populations in the metro area. Thus, Recommendation #4 is a companion to Recommendation #1 or #2, but it also is independent of the core solution and should be pursued in any case.

Recommendation #4: Improved Delivery to Underserved Populations and Higher Baccalaureate Completion Rates

Evaluate all service delivery options and techniques typically used in large, successful urban universities and take concrete steps to further encourage and facilitate the two-year to four-year transition and completion for more learners

- #4A: **Adult/Place-Bound Baccalaureate Completions.** To increase associate to baccalaureate transfers and make better use of campus facilities, begin delivering some BPC and SUSLA programs at the Shreveport Campus and sharing advisory/support services—taking advantage of the Louisiana Transfer Degree Program and Guarantee
- #4B: **African-American Participation and Degree Completions.** Engage SUSLA’s active assistance and participation in redesigning and re-staffing support services at the Shreveport Campus for the black student population in ways that will help more of the black student population feel comfortable in moving to and through baccalaureate and graduate education in Shreveport
- #4C: **Pragmatic Aspects of Delivery for Adults and All Place-Bound Students.** Schedule courses and student services to meet needs of place-bound individuals, both working adults and those of traditional college age
- #4D: **A New Professionally-Designed Marketing Program.** Significantly improve (update) institutional marketing efforts and materials, with messages that are engaging and especially directed to currently underserved populations
- #4E: **Collaborations with Centenary College.** Explore how Centenary College’s program assets can be engaged directly with Louisiana Tech or an independent Shreveport-Bossier university in the UL System

Acquiring Community Support and Consensus

Finally, strong community support and leadership are essential conditions if LSU-Shreveport and Louisiana Tech are to become one university in the UL System, or, absent that, for LSU-Shreveport to move alone to the UL System.

Recommendation #5: Communications and Consensus

Create/carry out a *Communications Plan*, to engage constituents and stakeholders from Shreveport-Bossier, Ruston, and North Louisiana in understanding the issues at stake, and the proposed solutions

- #5A: **Support of Legislative Delegations.** Work immediately and extensively with regional members of the Legislature to explain the study, the issues that have been analyzed, and the recommended courses of action that have resulted. Obtain their input and seek to develop their support for material change
- #5B: **Statutory Language.** Establish risk mitigation measures and protections in enabling legislation, including requirement of a BoR approved *Consolidation Implementation Plan* in the case of the consolidation option.

Please see the full Report for details of the data, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations.