

# State not likely to save school budgets

Education chief says funding won't be easy to obtain

By Icess Fernandez

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It's time for everyone in higher education in north-west Louisiana to adapt to the new world economical order — you're on your own. Don't expect much funding to come from Baton Rouge, the state's higher education leader said.

It's about regionalism



Jim Purcell

and creating the human capital to drive economic development.

"Some of that is going to require having local skin in the game with them providing scholarships or direct support to these institutions that are actually building the future economy," said Jim Purcell, Lou-

isiana higher education commissioner. "That's the key to the future of funding here in Louisiana."

Purcell visited Shreveport on Tuesday to present a talk called "Moving Local Economies Forward by Maximizing the Roles of Higher Education in Process" hosted by the Shreveport Bossier Business Alliance for Higher Education.

The discussion focused on how to grow human capital — an educated work

force — during economic difficulty.

"The economy is changing, so higher education has to change," he told a room of higher education stakeholders in a meeting room at the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce.

In the past couple of years, college campuses have taken budget cut after budget cut with some laying off employees, offering furloughs and one declaring financial exigency — the equivalent of

bankruptcy.

Tuesday's talk was sobering for the audience, which was filled with college chancellors, presidents, lawmakers and members of education boards such as the Board of Regents and the LSU Board.

The message was clear — don't expect money from the state to save budget and resources on campuses, Purcell said.

"Find new streams of

See BUDGETS, Page 9

## Budgets

Continued from Page 3  
revenue," he said.

During the presentation, Purcell gave suggestions to the crowd. Among them was to block class sequences together to help students graduate on time, work toward having academic departments produce revenue streams so they are self-sustaining, leasing underutilized space and private sponsorships.

Purcell also discussed local support of education — scholarships and creating local taxes. He used the community college in Tulsa, Okla., as an example.

That campus gains part of its revenue through local taxes; in turn, students go for the first two years for free. Community phi-

lanthropists then helped pay for books for the core curriculum classes.

"There are all kinds of approaches," Purcell said. "You have control of your destiny."

LSU-Shreveport Interim Chancellor Paul Sisson said he liked that Purcell laid out the issues

"I really like the ideas of local support for higher education," he said. "I like the local commitment — if you graduate (high school), we'll send you to college."

Louisiana Tech University Vice President Les Guice said some of these discussions have started at his campus. Guice will assume the presidency this summer.

"These are the same kind of discussions we are having now," he said. "Some things (he mentioned) we are already doing."