

Thanks for service, 'Bubba'

Northwest Louisiana received some good news last week when Shreveport resident W. Clinton "Bubba" Rasberry was selected by the Louisiana Board of Regents to serve a second year as board chairman.

During Rasberry's tenure last year, our area colleges celebrated some substantive and long-sought approvals for new programs. In May, Louisiana State University at Shreveport received approval to offer its first doctorate, a doctorate of education, and since the approval last summer, more than 250 residents have begun the application process for the program.

Just last week, after seven years of seeking approval from the University of Louisiana Board and Board of Regents, Northwestern State University received approval to offer a doctor of nursing practice, which is the terminal

degree for nurse practitioners.

With a shortage of primary care physicians in the state, our communities are depending more and more on nurse practitioners to help fill the gap. We needed this degree offered in northwest Louisiana, and Bubba Rasberry was instrumental in making it happen.



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It is important to note, however, that his colleagues asked him to serve a second year as chairman because of the work he has done to help all of the post-secondary institutions in our state face a host of challenges.

Since 2008, state funding for higher education has decreased by \$700 million, and these cuts have had dire economic consequences for most,

if not all of our state's schools. The Board of Regents has the difficult and unenviable task of allocating these limited resources and then working with the schools to create a plan that allows them to meet growing workforce needs with their dwindling state funds. Strong leadership, like the kind provided by Bubba Rasberry, is essential to this process.

We congratulate Bubba for his selection, but more than anything, we at the Shreveport-Bossier Business Alliance for Higher Education thank him for his willingness to fill this demanding job at a critical time. Members of the Board of Regents are not compensated — their time is a gift — and we thank Bubba for giving us another year as chairman.

Rich DesCoteaux of Shreveport is chairman of the Shreveport-Bossier Business Alliance for Higher Education.