

Give us a seat at LSU table

I would like to begin by way of full disclosure concerning my relationship with LSU: I have three degrees from the LSU System, and have been involved in the LSU Alumni Association (LSUAA), the LSU-S Foundation, the Chancellor's Advisory Council of the Law Center, and the Dean's Advisory Council at the School of the Coast and Environment. I am a lifelong supporter of LSU and have done so with both time and money.

But I am stymied. For the life of me, I cannot figure out what the Board of Supervisors is doing. Over the past year, they have fired the LSU System president; the chancellors of LSU A&M, LSUS, LSUA, the Deans of the College of Science and the Business, the System CFO, and Vice Provost for Diversity have all resigned; we have also had huge turnover in our health care system, and the latest fiasco around the process of combining the job of system President and Chancellor reminds me of a key-stone cops movie.

But it doesn't have to be this way. The AGB report of Oct. 25 laid out a thoughtful and structured approach. It is obvious that in their headlong rush to consolidation, the BOS did not take the time to read their own report. Let's examine the process and results so far:

1. Determine if a single, multi-campus flagship is best for the future of LSU. One could argue

that this has already occurred, but given the obvious disparity between the August and October AGB reports and the lack of meaningful outreach and public engagement, I question whether any other scenario was ever thoughtfully considered.



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Board of Supervisors authority to internally realign LSU. No statement has thus far been produced to my knowledge.

3. Obtain a formal statement from SACS and other accrediting groups on the implications of realignment and steps that must be taken. Clearly this step was not taken as evidenced by the Oct. 29 letter from SACS that questions what exactly the board is attempting.

4. Begin meeting of an executive officers group that draws together the pieces of the new LSU.

5. Initiate meetings of comparable administrators from the separate units with peers of the flagship, CDO's, etc. to begin the communication process. If such a process is underway in either case, it has not been made public.

6. Formally charge the president with creation of a realign-

ment task force, tasked with development and oversight of plans to implement the required changes. The task force has been created but the listening tour that has accompanied it has resulted in reaffirming that Baton Rouge is the "center of the constellation" and that the facilities outside of Baton Rouge will feel the impact of layoffs disproportionately; hardly a stellar opening to a conciliatory process.

In a universe not ruled by football alone, One LSU would not equal Only LSU. Our state is a patchwork of diverse communities, each bringing to the table economic potential and cultural vibrancy. For decades, northwest Louisiana has contributed handsomely to LSU in the form of students, alumni and the financial tithing from the Health Science Center, with little to show in return.

If LSU is serious about creating a statewide flagship system, northwest Louisiana is all ears and expects a seat at the table. If the Board of Supervisors persist in pushing forward their opaque process and ham fisted actions toward a predetermined end, they will not only alienate one third of the state, they will doom LSU to just the sort of inadequacy and second-tier status their efforts are designed to avoid.

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