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Jim Purcell Named Commissioner of Higher Education

BATON ROUGE, La –The Board of Regents unanimously appointed Dr. Jim Purcell as Louisiana’s 7th Commissioner of Higher Education today. Dr. Purcell has been the Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education since 2008 and says he is anxious to lead Louisiana through a transformational period in the history of postsecondary education.

In addition to his time in Arkansas, Purcell also brings experience as Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. During his tenure in both states, Purcell worked extensively on issues including the creation and implementation of performance-based funding, the seamless transfer of credits among colleges and universities, and strategies for improving educational attainment. Purcell previously resided in Baton Rouge, working for Our Lady of the Lake College as Director of Planning and Assessment from 1994-98 and says the commitment to improve the quality of life offered by our state is just one of the many reasons he applied for the position.

Dr. Purcell holds a BS in Public Administration from Auburn University, an M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Montevallo and an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Alabama. Much of his background focuses on improving institutional effectiveness and includes extensive experience in student placement, academic program reviews, academic program development, program entrance requirements, course evaluations, grade distributions and student retention and graduation rates. Additionally, he has experience working in 2-year, 4-year, public and private colleges and universities in five states.

Regent Chairman Bob Levy will negotiate the details of Purcell’s letter of appointment in the coming days. Act 648 of 2010 Legislative Session requires a 2/3 vote of the total membership of the Board of Regents to hire a Commissioner, subject to confirmation by the Senate. Last week, the Board of Regents received approval from the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget on compensation package not to exceed \$275,000 to be negotiated with the Commissioner.

Currently residing in Little Rock, Arkansas, Dr. Purcell and his wife Sandra have an 18-year-old daughter who attends the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

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