



We, the chairs of Louisiana's four public postsecondary systems, in conjunction with the Louisiana Board of Regents, are writing to ask for your support to stabilize funding for higher education and fulfill the TOPS promise to our students. Your action will enable our institutions to increase education and training in our state.

Higher education is talent development. In addition to increasing our students' knowledge base, higher education creates and builds lifelong learners. **The role of postsecondary education is a necessary means of developing the state's talent and should not be underestimated nor underfunded.** Our students become the teachers, welders, doctors, scientists and active citizens that this state needs. We produce leaders, a ready workforce of men and women well equipped to both create and fill great jobs. We know that a healthy higher education system is indispensable in talent development.

Higher education is economic development. Louisiana's public colleges and universities not only provide considerable value to individuals, but they also conduct research, create inventions, and move those new ideas out into the marketplace. Hundreds of businesses owe their success to universities' research, outreach, and business incubation centers.

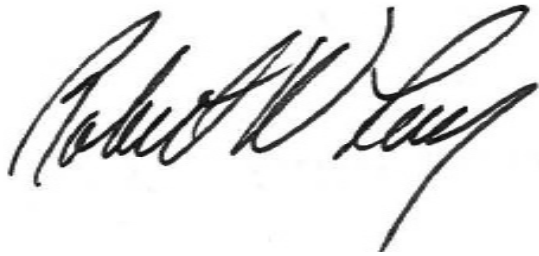
Collectively, our institutions create over \$10 billion in economic impact annually in the state and generate thousands of jobs across Louisiana. In today's economy, a postsecondary credential is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. By the year 2020, approximately 56% of the open jobs in Louisiana will require postsecondary education. This is the economy of today, but we must plan for the economy of tomorrow. The presence of highly educated and talented people is a hallmark of dynamic and thriving economies, and colleges and universities are the idea generators for growing that kind of economy. Studies consistently show a positive correlation between educational attainment, wages and increased economic impact for local and state government. Simply put, we need stable funding to sustain our role in fueling increased economic development.

Higher education is community development. Our institutions are part of the fabric of their respective communities. Throughout the state, from philanthropic activities to business partnerships, we aim to strengthen each area of the state through learning, research and teaching. We are proud to be in the communities, working daily to improve Louisiana.

Despite the countless benefits of a sound public postsecondary educational system, the cycle of declining state funding leaves our institutions under-resourced and hinders our mission to fully support talent development. Consequences of the fiscal impact of enduring years of budget cuts and uncertainty are seen in classrooms across the state. This instability threatens our efforts to improve student success, recruit and retain quality faculty, ensure

the long-term financial stability of TOPS and need-based aid programs, and expand opportunity in Louisiana.

Now is the time to support our students and stabilize our institutions. We need your support and are asking for your help.



Robert W. Levy, Chair, Louisiana Board of Regents



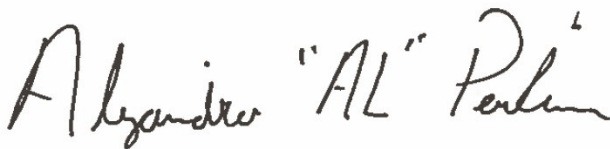
Timothy W. Hardy, LCTCS Board Chair



J. Stephen Perry, LSU Board Chair



Ann A. Smith, Chair, Southern University System Board of Supervisors



Alejandro "Al" Perkins, UL System Board Chair