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## **Jefferson Chamber Releases Statement on Higher Education Funding Cuts**

METAIRIE, LA - The Jefferson Chamber recognizes that the State of Louisiana has a severe budget crisis and that severe measures must be taken in order to balance the state's budget. We do, however, take exception to the continued cuts to higher educational institutions without a comprehensive approach to the issue.

The Board of Directors of the Jefferson Chamber respectively calls on Governor Jindal and legislators to lead the discussion on a) short term resolutions; and b) for a long-term solution using the most recent university efficiency study. Short-term solutions should consider allowing the universities to be autonomous in their ability to raise fees and/or tuition. Long-term solutions would include consolidation based on university enrollment rates, academic duplicity and graduation rates. Additionally, changes must be made to an outdated state constitution that leaves higher education as one of only a few unprotected budget items that can be cut to balance the state's budget.

Simply stated, enough is enough. This important issue cannot continue to be ignored just because it is a budget item that is not dedicated. We must nurture and develop a stable funding source for higher education that can better prepare for changes in market. We are losing teachers (in 6 years, the UL system alone has cut nearly 900 faculty members and 600 administrators) and sending a negative message to our students. Further, classes are being cut and programs deferred at the detriment of the students who are trying to become productive citizens. Just in the LSU system, 60 programs have been terminated or consolidated.

In the coming weeks, we will be meeting with system heads and university officials to examine other options and to ascertain what steps can be taken to make the respective schools more efficient. We will also be in discussion with our elected officials. We will look for solutions to the pending crisis and hope that the legislators, with or without the leadership of the Governor, will act swiftly and in the best interest of turning around this grave situation. The continued cutting of higher education funding can no longer be the solution to bridge the state's deficit.

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### **About the Jefferson Chamber:**

The [Jefferson Chamber](#) is a leading voice for Jefferson Parish's business community. As a non-profit, membership-driven organization, the Chamber is an effective advocate for small and large businesses at

the local, state and federal levels. The Chamber's mission is to work for the advancement of the business community; to enhance the economic, civic and cultural environment; and to improve the quality of life in Jefferson Parish. The Jefferson Chamber is Four-Star Accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and was awarded the 2013 Chamber of the Year Award by the Louisiana Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives in the Large Chamber Category.

For more information about the Jefferson Chamber, visit [www.jeffersonchamber.org](http://www.jeffersonchamber.org), and follow on [Facebook](#), Twitter [@jeffersoncoc](#), and [YouTube](#).