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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

January 12, 2018

Dear Southernites and Friends:

As I prepare to board a plane headed to Florida this weekend to meet with work colleagues from around the country, I'm deeply concerned about my home state of Louisiana. In my message last week, I spoke of all of the progress that Southern University has made over the last couple of years, and how our vision for the future was so bright. However, local Louisiana newspapers are littered this week with articles about Louisiana's "fiscal cliff". After nearly a decade of Draconian budget cuts through the Jindal Administration, the last two years for higher education have been a bit of a reprieve. Like you, I have been pleased to see enrollment numbers increase throughout our system. Local donors, like the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Cane's, and so many other supporters of Southern have made substantial donations to our great University expressing confidence in our progress.

Yet, the fact that the State of Louisiana has not developed a plan for addressing its substantial budget deficit is threatening our University and all of higher education with budget cuts all over again. I just cannot believe it! We have come so far to be facing this prospect yet again. It is like we take two steps forward, and one step back. Surely, the Louisiana Legislature and the Governor will come together and figure out a solution so that we can continue to grow our state by continuing to make a strong investment in the future of our children and economy by supporting higher education.

It's the old adage, "garbage in, garbage out". If we do not invest quality resources into the future of our students, the consequences will continue to be devastating. We will continue to see our state at the bottom of every positive statistic in the nation. I am tired of being last, and the joke "thank God for Mississippi", just does not sit well with me as a citizen of the State of Louisiana. We must do better.

I am hopeful that the Governor and the Louisiana Legislature will not wait until the general session, or worse, after the general session for a last minute special session to resolve the State's budget problems at the end of the fiscal year. Rather, our leaders should act swiftly. They should call a special session now, before the State and higher education are in absolute crisis. "Kicking the can down the road" won't solve the problem. We need a solution now.

Like you, I volunteer my time and fight for this institution because of its incredible importance to the future of the State of Louisiana and to our country. Please, please encourage your representatives and leaders around the state to quickly find a resolution to this billion-dollar problem. Call your state representatives and senators and tell them how important higher education is to our state. Let's continue to ***Make Our Great University Greater***. The link to the Louisiana Legislature's website is as follows: http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/home.aspx. Please contact your legislators today and let them know that we want to continue our progress and not lose the important momentum we have gained over the last two years.

Rise up, Jaguar Nation, and let your voices be heard!

Sincerely,



Preston J. Castille, Jr., Esq.
National President