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Nicholls Future  
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Feature

President Bruce T. Murphy believes that if Nicholls sticks to four specific imperatives, student opportunities and success, innovation, internationalization, and serving the needs of the region and the state, in 5 years Nicholls will be able to accommodate 8,000 students.

Murphy said Nicholls should be at the leading edge of technology. Nicholls doesn't have to be the first in the nation with technology, but it should be able to keep up. "I think in 5 years we will be capable of handling 8,000 students without having to add any infrastructures." However, these 8,000 students will not be from Louisiana alone. For this reason, Nicholls will be creating programs that attract people from other places that come here personally or electronically. Murphy's vision is for Nicholls to have a robust online degree program that attracts students from all over the world.

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According to the Director of Institutional Research, Leslie Dishman, currently 24% of all classes are taught completely online, only 10% of the student body is taking all coursework completely online. Murphy said one of the main goals of Nicholls is to expand the online program to increase that 10%. Murphy's vision is for students to be able to register for the particular programs that are not available anywhere else. Murphy calls these programs "gems, the degrees that Nicholls offers that aren't available at a lot of other universities, if any." Nicholls will be able to provide students with this unique degree plan in a cost-effective way. Programs like culinary, petroleum engineering and safety management, maritime management, and biology. "What better place for students who are concerned with rising water and land decline to study than in this area? Currently there are students trying to mitigate that very thing." Those are the things that Nicholls will build upon. Murphy said he wants someone in Africa to be able to get a degree in things like Petroleum Engineering Technology and Safety Management, or someone from the Persian Gulf to study maritime management online. "We have to grow that right, we have to have the right infrastructure to support such an endeavor."

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One of the obstacles of expanding online programs foreseen by Lori Soule, Director for the Center for Advancing Faculty Engagement, is finding faculty to teach the additional online courses. Soule said many faculty members on campus are teaching overloads for traditional Nicholls courses, “I’m not sure how many more courses some faculty can add to their current schedules.” However, with new hires like Neal Weaver as the Vice President for Advancement, this obstacle may never be more than a thought. Weaver will be at the head of expanding online degree programs. Weaver has the responsibility of Alumni, fundraising and relations. Weaver will worry about how Nicholls is seen, who sees Nicholls, how does Nicholls market to students, businesses and industries.

The office of chief of staff is also important to the advancement of Nicholls. Because sometimes “the right hand doesn’t know what the left hand is doing,” Murphy created a chief of staff position to “integrate and coordinate our efforts at the University.” Alex Arceneaux, chief of staff, “will help ensure that everyone is collaboratively working toward the same goals and that our campus initiatives are being carried out effectively and efficiently.” Arceneaux will have no authority over anyone, to say yes or no, only to coordinate the processes and efforts of each program at Nicholls. “It’s not a line position. He isn’t directing anyone on what to do, or ordering anyone, he simply integrates and coordinates.” The chief of staff organizes both The President’s Cabinet and University Council meetings, making sure they are functioning, presentations are being made correctly, etc. Currently those responsibilities fall under Murphy’s umbrella,

but with the new chief of staff Murphy will be able to work in his specific areas more thoroughly.

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Murphy's projection is that in 5 years, Nicholls will be in better financial shape because it will be using all of its resources directly. Murphy said Nicholls will be able to not only protect its current resources, but also accrue more. And last, but definitely not least, Nicholls will be able to serve a greater number of students and offer a robust and focused online program. Murphy said in the end he would be satisfied if Nicholls was achieving the four imperatives, working with an expanded online presence and serving a greater number of students from around the world.

There is no standard university. Murphy said, "If you've seen one university, you've seen *one* university." As Nicholls gains new personnel such as the Chief Financial Officer, Vice President for University Advancement, Chief of Staff, and possibly Provost or Vice President for Academic Affairs, Nicholls has an opportunity to look at different ideologies and choose the best practice. These people will be key in "charting the course" for Nicholls. Murphy believes, "A better Nicholls will be serving more students with the right programs, providing a good pathway for students to be attracted here, successful career opportunities, and an increase of international students. Murphy said, "Right now it's more about processes."

