

Board approves university programs

New academic programs for two area universities are coming closer to fruition after receiving approval from the Louisiana Board of Regents this week.

The Board of Regents approved a new bachelor of science in cyber engineering at Louisiana Tech University, making it the first program of its kind in the nation.

The board also approved a letter of intent for a master of occupational therapy at the University of Louisiana at Monroe.

Stan Napper, dean of Louisiana Tech's College of Engineering and Science, said the cyber engineering degree will combine computer science with the university's other engineering programs with an emphasis on **software security**.

"This is a unique degree that meets the needs of our time, and there is no other program like it at any other university," Napper said. "We like being on the cutting edge of education and research programs.

"These students will learn the basics of engineering analysis and how physical systems work, but they will also learn the basics of software security so they can be productive in a wide variety of **industries**," he said.

Such industries include manufacturing, oil

and gas, chemical processing, communication **companies** and the military.

Napper said many industries have their physical systems available online for monitoring and security reasons.

"Cyber engineers will be able to manage those systems and keep them secure," he said. The idea for the cyber engineering program was sparked by a need from the 8th Air Force, headquartered at Barksdale Air Force Base, Napper said.

"They helped us develop the curriculum," he said. "The initial demand will be military and defense contractors. They have a particular interest in working with us to develop this degree program."

The program is expected to begin being offered in fall 2012.

"We feel like we are going to meet a need that software development companies and **financial** institutions are going to have for engineers," he said. "It builds on the

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strength of Tech's engineering programs, but it also includes computer science."

Louisiana Tech and the Cyber Innovation Center in Bossier City will co-host a Cyber Engineering Research Conference on Nov. 7 at the Shreveport Convention Center to discuss the applications of the field.

"The timing for this conference and the degree approval was perfect," Napper said. "It will be a great opportunity for prospective students, prospective employers or the general public to come and learn more about the program."

The ULM program would offer an entry-level, online graduate degree for occupational therapy assistants who want to earn their master's in occupational therapy.

The proposed master's degree program, which would be primarily online, would consist of 69 credit hours and can be completed in a little more than two academic years.

Denny Ryman, dean of ULM's College of Health Sciences, has said the degree program will be unique to Louisiana and the surrounding region, adding that it would be one of only 18 in the nation designed specifically for occupational therapy assistants seeking to obtain their master's degree.

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