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## Louisiana community college growth may be too rapid, senator says

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Many of Louisiana's officials are placing **a major emphasis on the growth of the state's community and technical colleges**, which now enroll roughly 80,000 students.

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### Delgado Community College

While that emphasis is apparent in legislative actions, education and state officials are concerned whether community colleges are growing too fast and too soon, especially during times of **higher education budget cuts**.

The 11-year-old Louisiana Community and Technical College System has essentially doubled enrollment the past five years.

Senate Education Committee Chairman Ben Nevers, D-Bogalusa, said he is unsure whether two-year schools can keep up with the "gaping holes" in student demand, such as **Delgado Community College** in New Orleans **having to turn some students away**.

"I'm very concerned about whether we can provide these services in every part of the state and maintain the

quality," Nevers said. "It's yet to be seen if we can do that."

The near overflow of students is occurring even though some colleges are expanding and Louisiana Delta Community College in Monroe just moved into a new campus, LCTCS President Joe May said.

"Our enrollment growth will outpace permanent infrastructure (growth)," May said, noting the reliance on rented spaces will grow.

Other than a few projects that already are authorized, two-year colleges do not have the state dollars in their budget to expand physically, May said.

"It's something we understand and we know. It's not something we like," May said. But he insisted that such issues are being well managed.

Gov. Bobby Jindal and legislators have keyed in on the growth of community and technical colleges as necessary for economic development, often citing the so-called "75-25 split."

Nearly 75 percent of "full-time equivalent" college students in the state are enrolled in more-expensive, traditional four-year universities.

Twenty-five percent go to the two-year schools. Including part-time students in the count, the ratio reflects a 65-35 percent split between four-year universities and two-year schools.

But May and others say a 50-50 percent split is needed to save money and expand the work force through more certificates and associate's degrees, arguing that most new jobs do not require bachelor's degrees. States such as Texas and Florida are much closer to 50 percent.

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