

Summary Points from *Meet the CEO Series* Meeting held on November 10, 2011

The *Meet the CEO Series* took an interesting twist this month with an in-tandem presentation from Flo Guidry Meadows, Chair of the Board of Directors and Rob Guidry, President and CEO of the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has earned accreditation with five-star honors from the United States Chamber of Commerce. Most recently, the American Chamber of Commerce Executives Association named the Lafayette Chamber the 2011 National Chamber of the Year for its work on behalf of the energy industry following the British Petroleum oil spill and drilling moratorium.

Mrs. Meadows and Mr. Guidry commented on a variety of relevant topics. Specifically:

- Meadows started by speaking with high regard about the value of her Accounting degree from UL and noted the significant ripple impact of the faculty on students. She “interviewed” three former students who shared their thoughts on the lessons learned, both in and out of the classroom, from their professors at UL – for instance: ethics, integrity, respect, open-mindedness and the value of hard work and dedication. Meadows agreed with the former students and added that she also learned about leadership and community engagement from involvement in groups like the UL Accounting Society. She commented that the flexibility and balance she has in her life today is a result of such “rich learning” from her professors at UL.
- On the topic of leadership development, Meadows outlined her framework for working together to help others be the best that they can be. The framework is made-up of the four P’s: executing God’s **plan**; developing a **purpose** for your life; providing sustainable leadership through teaching and **philanthropy** (giving back to the community); and using what is learned as a **platform** for helping others to be their best. She stated that her greatest joy comes from connecting people. She leverages her talents to identify what the needs are in the community and then connects people to accomplish community improvement goals.
- Mr. Guidry has been President and CEO of the Lafayette Chamber for 23 years and is the founding Executive Director of Leadership Lafayette and a founder of Leadership Louisiana. Due to the nature of nonprofit organizations, he has had a new Chair of the Board of Directors and a new “boss” each of those 23 years. He commented that although this is a tremendous challenge, it has provided him a great opportunity to learn from each person that has held the position. From a staff perspective, Guidry stated that the Chamber attracts the best talent in the community. He also commented on the recent re-alignment of staff work to better accomplish the goals of the organization and deliver value back to their 1400 member firms.
- Guidry noted that currently there are 7000 Chambers of Commerce in the US and all are dependent on the work of volunteers. He also stated that the President and CEO has to be a “generalist” and able to move within all different circles in the community in order to be successful, citing many examples of the impact of his work in this area. Volunteers today have careers, domestic responsibilities and other extra-curricular obligations so many organizations like the Chamber have become more staff driven. He acknowledged the pressure that this has put on the budget of many nonprofit organizations because such high level talent is often expensive.

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