

ULM receives \$450K for business center

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U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander handed \$450,000 to the University of Louisiana-Monroe late last week for the new Northeast Louisiana Business and Community Development Center.

Alexander, along with the state's other congressional delegation, helped secure the funding for the center.

"Because of these incredible efforts, we will be able to leverage the resources we have in the college to make a significant difference in economic development in our region," said Ron Berry, dean of the College of Business Administration.

The new center will advance entrepreneurship and support economic development by creating a regional business incubator and by offering community development services, Berry said.

"We thought it was very appropriate to use the resources of the College of Business, our faculty, our students, and our staff to make a difference in our

community by providing training. We believe we have the expertise to help. Entrepreneurial development is critical to our region—we have to grow our own businesses and help them to succeed," he said.

Jeffrey Everson with Sen. Mary Landrieu's office said small business community development centers are a vital part of rural areas that are often overlooked.

"Monroe is the heartbeat of northeast Louisiana, and a lot of communities are dependent on the services that cannot be provided anywhere else but Monroe. The small business community development center is a fantastic program, and we're proud to be a part of it. We are happy to see a program like this exist and succeed in northeast Louisiana," Everson said.

ULM President James Cofer said the center will have an impact on the entire region by spurring more economic development throughout northeast

Louisiana.

"We've always said that education is economic development. We produce that intellectual capital that helps produce that economic capital — you can't have one without the other. We're very pleased that our congressional delegation continues to stand behind what we do," Cofer said.

Alexander said small businesses are the heart and soul of a community and local, state and congressional officials must do more to make sure those types of businesses are successful. Federal earmarks, Alexander said, is one way to keep small businesses up and running.

"They (earmarks) are as important as this developmental center is here, not only for helping and encouraging small businesses to come here, but it aids those who are here and helps with problems they might have. Eighty percent of us work with small businesses. They touch the lives of all of us in some form or fashion."