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**For Immediate Release**  
**March 12, 2008**

## **Interim LSU Public Hospital Expands Emergency Department by 20 Beds for Acute Behavioral Health Care**

**Baton Rouge (March 12, 2008)** -- The Interim LSU Public Hospital has expanded its Emergency Department by 20 beds to improve the care of patients experiencing acute behavioral health emergencies. The Mental Health Emergency Room Extension (MHERE) will provide an environment for evaluation, stabilization and short-term management of these patients in a setting appropriate to their needs.

The opening and press conference for MHERE will be Thursday, March 13, 2008, 10:30 a.m., at Interim LSU Public Hospital, 2021 Perdido Street.

Tours of the facility will immediately follow.

“LSU has always made patient care its first priority,” said Dr. Roxane Townsend, LSU System assistant vice president for health systems. “The expansion will provide immediate services for patients in need of behavioral health care.”

The Emergency Department also has five beds where patients with suspected behavioral illness receive initial medical evaluation.

The LSU Section of Emergency Medicine and the LSU Department of Psychiatry will evaluate and treat patients with behavioral health emergencies. Patients who present to the Emergency Department will be evaluated for medical emergencies by an emergency physician, and if appropriate, by a psychiatrist to address their behavioral health needs.

“Our ongoing collaboration with other health care agencies will give patients comprehensive behavioral health care,” said Dr. Dwayne Thomas, hospital administrator for Interim LSU Public Hospital.

The MHERE is a dedicated area of the Emergency Department where psychiatrists will evaluate and make recommendations to stabilize patients experiencing behavioral health crises. In addition, other mental health professionals will staff the unit to assist with medication management, mobilization of support systems, and referrals to appropriate inpatient and outpatient treatment programs.

The MHERE psychiatric services are similar to the services LSU offered pre-Katrina for the evaluation and treatment of patients in the acute phase of behavioral illness. However, only to the extent that the essential community services are in place will MHERE be able to function appropriately. Treatment of behavioral illness requires a continuum of care that includes strong outpatient support. Without these community services, there will never be enough emergency or inpatient beds.

The opening of the MHERE will expand the ability of LSU to care for patients and is one step of many in its progress towards the continuum of care that LSU is committed to provide for our growing number of patients in New Orleans experiencing behavioral health crises.

The LSU Health Care System is one of the largest public health care delivery systems in the country. It has over 60,000 admissions, 350,000 patient days, 1 million outpatient visits, and over 350,000 emergency department visits. Each year 1700 residents from the LSU and Tulane Schools of Medicine and Ochsner Health System and 4,000 nurses and allied health students from many colleges and universities are trained in LSU facilities.

LSU is the largest single provider of uncompensated inpatient care in Louisiana. LSU hospitals have an economic impact of over \$1.6 billion in asset business activity, \$918 million in personal earnings, and support over 10,000 jobs.

For more information, contact Marvin McGraw, Director of Communications and Media Relations, LSU Health Care Services Division, 225.922.1424 or [mmcgra@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:mmcgra@lsuhsc.edu).