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The Ruston Daily Leader

Thursday, October 6, 2005

www.rustonleader.com

Tech evacuee students receive \$250 debit cards

By Judith Roberts
Staff Writer

Nelnet, an education finance company, has recently announced its decision to distribute 1,000 debit cards across the United States college campuses to students who were victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Louisiana Tech will receive 142 of these cards from 10 a.m. to noon, Friday at Adams Parlor on campus.

"These are the students who have been impacted by the hurricane," said Kate Archer, director of Tech's public relations department. "Many are from New Orleans, and some are actually regular Louisiana Tech students who are from New Orleans and have family from New Orleans and still want to continue their school uninterrupted."

The debit cards will have \$250 on them and are being issued throughout college campuses across the country by the institutions' financial aid departments.

Roger Vick, the director of financial aid at Tech, said when he and his staff found out about the debit cards, they immediately went to work to make sure Tech's student evacuees were eligible.

"It was an online process, first come, first served," Vick said. "We had to enter all the Katrina-related

students up here. We didn't want to waste any time because other schools were also registering for the cards. I think we responded within a day."

Archer said since the financial aid office responded so quickly, Tech is one of the universities that will receive more cards.

"Tech is one of the schools where they are distributing the most cards because the financial aid department stepped up and sent off the paperwork," she said. "Tech saw an opportunity and really went for it."

Vick said students are eligible to receive a card if they lost anything during Hurricane Katrina.

"Either if the family was living down there or if the students were going to school down there," Vick said. "Basically, if they had a need."

He added that he and the financial aid department were thankful they were able to meet the evacuated students' needs.

"We feel fortunate that we were able to get a portion of the debit cards," he said, "and that our students will get to utilize those cards for gas, for food or for books for school."

Nelnet has also started an employee giving program and will match 100 percent of the funds raised by their employees. The money will go to the American Red Cross Hurricane Relief Fund.