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Southern University Shreveport Passes GRAD Act

NEW ORLEANS, La – Southern University Shreveport (SUSLA) has passed the GRAD Act for 2012-13 and was officially given a designation of GREEN today by the Board of Regents Executive Committee. The GRAD Act ties performance to 10% annual tuition authority as well as 15% of a campuses funding formula allocation.

During its June meeting Regents assigned annual designations to all participating institutions except for SUSLA because Regents staff’s preliminary designation of RED was under appeal at the campuses request. The GRAD Act Annual Evaluation Process allows an institution to submit a request for an appeal of the staff’s preliminary designation and requires contracting with a consultant, at the institution’s expense, to provide an objective review. Since the full board does not meet in July, the Executive Committee was authorized to address remaining GRAD Act issues--including SUSLA’s designation--on behalf of the full board in order to meet the July 15th annual GRAD Act reporting deadline to the Governor and the Legislature.

“Prior to proceeding with the formal appeal process, Southern University System President Ron Mason and SUSLA Chancellor Ray Belton requested a meeting to provide additional information regarding a failed targeted measure in the Student Success Performance Objective,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell. “SUSLA provided verifiable student records on additional graduates which were not previously reported to the Board of Regents. This process improved its score enough to earn its 10% tuition authority as well as 15% of its performance funding allocation. The stakes are high for GRAD Act and our institutions must focus on monitoring their data while understanding that their operational decisions can easily impact their performance outcomes.”

“The Committee is pleased that SUSLA was able to provide up to date and verifiable information in order to pass the GRAD Act. This certainly highlights the fact that now, more than ever, data matters,” said Board of Regents Chairman Bob Levy. “It is imperative that our colleges and universities ensure not only that their student records are accurate and reported to Regents appropriately, but that they are implementing initiatives that drive improvements in student performance.”

Under the GRAD Act, which was approved by the Legislature in 2010, Regents enters into six-year agreements which set institution specific targets, including annual performance measures that result in educational improvements by the end of the timeline. The GRAD Act includes four performance objectives—student success, articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and institutional efficiency and accountability. Because each institution has its own targets for progress, it is measured against its own improvement plan during the annual review process. However, each campus must achieve successful attainment of the student success objective in order to retain its tuition authority and autonomy eligibility.

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