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Commission Approves Ten Recommendations Regarding Higher Education

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BATON ROUGE, La. – Members of the Postsecondary Education Review Commission approved an additional ten motions and clarified two previously adopted recommendations during their two-day meeting at the State Capitol which ended today. Today's recommendations complete the initial work of the commission which plans to review a draft of their final report during their next meeting in February.

The approved motions are as follows:

I. Withdrawal Policy:

- 1) Every institution report student credit hours on the 14th class day and at the end of the semester.
- 2) A statewide universal withdrawal policy be adopted and implemented.
- 3) The funding formula will ultimately be based on the use of end of semester student credit hours.

This recommendation passed by a vote of 6 yeas and 2 nays. (Five votes are necessary for a motion to pass.)

II. Governance of Higher Education:

- 1) The Legislature shall restructure Louisiana's postsecondary education governance system such that, by the end of fiscal year 2014, if institutions have not made significant progress towards achieving the average graduation rate of their SREB groups, all four-year universities would be governed by a single university board, all technical and community colleges would be governed by a single technical and community college board, and the role of the Board of Regents would continue to be that of a coordinating board.
- 2) The legislature shall take steps during the 2010 regular session necessary to provide for the power, authority and responsibilities of the Board of Regents to become consistent with the recommendation put forth by the report issued by the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana issued in 2009 regarding higher education governance as soon as possible.

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- 3) The required average graduation rate for the SREB I institutions to reach shall be a 75% rate. The required average graduation rate for the SREB II institutions to reach shall be a 60% rate. All other institutions shall reach an average graduation rate of 50%.

This recommendation passed by a vote of 6 yeas and 2 nays.

III. Correction to Recommendations:

Commission staff be granted limited authority to make technical changes to recommendations adopted by the commission as are necessary to provide for compliance with accepted rules of syntax and grammar and consistency of internal references and citations.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

IV. Historically Black College and University Fund Creation:

The Postsecondary Education Review Commission believes in the educational value of students learning in diverse educational environments as outlined in the Supreme Court decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*. The Commission also believes in the unique and important mission of the Southern University System and Grambling State University as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) for fostering expanding educational access, excellence, and success for all students, especially African Americans and disproportionate numbers of low-income, first generation students.

The Commission recognizes, however, that it is an important mission of all of the State's colleges and universities, especially, but not limited to its land-grant institutions, to educate the diverse students of this state roughly in proportion to the racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and geographic makeup of the State. The Commission recognizes further, that if the State does not take affirmative steps to ensure that all of its higher education institutions are educating the diverse students of the State, especially those who have traditionally been and continue to be underserved and underrepresented in higher education, the State will never realize its educational, workforce, civic, social or economic goals.

Therefore, the commission recommends that the Board of Regents recommend to the legislature actions that are consistent with the following:

Set aside within the higher education appropriations a specific allotment of funds, sufficient to enable the state's HBCUs to realize their important missions in environments that are comparable to those of the other institutions of the State. This fund shall be used to ensure that the infrastructures, student/faculty ratio, faculty, Salaries, technology, libraries and other holdings, and other aspects of the campus operations are comparable to their counterparts; and establish specific goals for the State's non-HBCUs to achieve greater racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and regional diversity among full time enrolled students; and establish a financial incentive for meeting and exceeding the graduation goals for African Americans, and other racial and ethnic minorities of the State.

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No state funding or policy shall be used for the purpose of discriminating or have the effect of denying educational opportunity.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

V. Consolidation and Merger Review

The Legislature direct the Board of Regents to conduct a comprehensive review of all postsecondary institutions and authorize the appropriate boards to initiate any consolidations or mergers of institutions necessary to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of Louisiana's public postsecondary education system. The board shall ensure that access to all levels of postsecondary education is maintained in each region of the state.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

VI. Academic Course Redesign

Louisiana will become a leader in conjunction with the National Center for Academic Transformation in Academic Course Redesign that uses information technology in proven ways to improve student learning outcomes and reduce the cost of higher education. The Board of Regents with designated funding from the legislature will oversee the initial development of at least two Academic Course Redesigns at each University with emphasis given to those courses that have the potential to yield the greatest impact in terms of student success and savings.

The Academic Course Redesign at each institution shall be developed with the intent of potential sharing with other institutions.

The funding formula developed by the Board of Regents will incorporate the Academic Course Redesigns' productivity measures and cost savings into its performance funding elements.

The aim of the state's Academic Course Redesigns will be to make Louisiana a recognized national leader in this proven national program for increasing student outcomes at lower costs.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

VII. Higher Education Board Funding

The Board of Regent develop a plan to reduce the costs of the state's postsecondary education board/system offices (including the Board of Regents, excluding flow-through funds) by at least 30% calculated from the amounts included in their initial operating budgets for the 2009-10 fiscal year and that the recommended funding level of each system office be based, in part, on the performance of the system's member institutions.

This recommendation passed by a vote of 5 yeas and 2 nays.

VIII. Tuition and Financial Aid

The Board of Regents, in advance of the 2011 legislative session complete a study and make recommendations on how best to bring Louisiana’s tuition policy, need-based financial aid policies and merit-based financial aid policies in sync to address the following principles:

1. Encourage all high school students to prepare well for college or the world of work by taking a rigorous curriculum in high school,
2. Encourage all college traditional and non-traditional students to perform at the highest level while in college and to persist to completion of their education program,
3. Reduce the financial barriers to college attendance for those students with assessed financial need,
4. Provide financial aid in a fashion that neither impedes the ability of institutions to garner reasonable and necessary tuition revenue to support quality education nor provides an incentive for institutions to increase tuition simply to capture available financial aid.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

IX. Evaluation of University Leadership

The management boards evaluate college and university presidents and chancellors based, in part, on the same performance indicators included in the performance based funding formula.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

X. Distribution of Budget Cuts

The Postsecondary Education Review commission recommends that the Governor, the Louisiana Legislature, and the citizens of Louisiana consider and approve changes to the constitution that will allow required budget cuts to be allocated across all possible state agencies and not fall disproportionately on the postsecondary education systems.

This recommendation passed unanimously.

The Commission also approved amendments to two recommendations passed on December 15, 2009. They now read as follows:

I. Out-of State Tuition

“In accordance with state law and legislative will as expressed in House Concurrent Resolution 298 of the 2004 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, the

commission recommends that each postsecondary education management board exercise the authority granted to it in R.S. 17:3351 (A)(5)(b) (i) to establish tuition and mandatory attendance fee amounts applicable to nonresident students attending an institution under its supervision and management that at least equal the average amount of annual tuition and mandatory attendance fees applicable to nonresident students attending institutions in states comprising the Southern Regional Education Board, excluding Louisiana, which are in the same category as established by the Southern Regional Education Board.”

The amended recommendation passed unanimously.

II. Tuition authority:

Beginning in fiscal year 2013 (after current authority expires) and ending in fiscal year 2019, the Legislature authorizes the management boards to establish tuition and fees subject to a policy developed by the Board of Regents. Such policy must require, at a minimum, that:

- a. Tuition and fees for residents shall be benchmarked against the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) means by institutional classification.
- b. Increases in tuition shall be granted only if institutions are demonstrating substantial increases in retention rates toward achieving the following graduation rate goals:
 - i. SREB 1: 75% by 2018
 - ii. SREB II: 60% by 2018
 - iii. All other institutions: 50% by 2018
- c. Annual increases in tuition shall not exceed five percent or the amount of increase in the Higher Education Price Index in the previous year, whichever is greater.
- d. The management boards may grant an added increase in tuition, not to exceed 20 percent of the difference between the SREB mean tuition and institutions’ increased tuition, to assist institutions in approaching the SREB mean tuition for their respective institutional classifications. This authority shall be used only when the institution's tuition is below the SREB mean.
- e. Institutions granted the authority to increase tuition shall certify that tuition increase waivers are available for students who demonstrate economic hardship.

This amended recommendation passed unanimously.

The Postsecondary Education Review Commission will hold its last meeting Thursday, February 4 and Friday, February 5, 2010 to review a draft of its final report to the Board of Regents.

The 2009 Louisiana Legislature, with strong support from Governor Jindal, passed legislation sponsored by House Speaker Jim Tucker (Act 309) creating the Postsecondary Education Review Commission to study the governance, facilities, funding, operations, and number and alignment of degree programs at Louisiana public colleges, and to provide a written report of findings and recommendations to the Board of Regents by February 12, 2010. The Board of Regents will review the report and submit comments to the Legislature no later than February 26, 2010.

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