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Regents Adopts Postsecondary Education Review Response

Work Underway or in Planning Phase for 15 of 22 Recommendations

BATON ROUGE, La. –The Board of Regents approved their response to the twenty-two recommendations of the Postsecondary Education Review Commission today during their regular meeting. Regents' staff presented the response yesterday in detail, explaining that 15 of the 22 recommendations are already underway or in the planning phase in anticipation of the redesign of higher education in Louisiana as necessitated by the budget.

“This is a time of great opportunity and great challenge for higher education in Louisiana,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen. “In the upcoming months, we will continue to concentrate on re-engineering our higher education enterprise to better serve the needs of our students in addition to being cost-effective and workforce relevant.”

The report presented to the Regents for approval focused on the need to educate more of Louisiana's citizens in order to ensure the state's economic vitality and quality of life. It stressed the importance of focusing coordination of funding, coordination of offerings and coordination of resources to achieve the goal of a better educated population. It also includes a response to the proposed change in the higher education governance structure in Louisiana.

During the presentation, members were also reminded that Governor Bobby Jindal's LA GRAD (Granting Resources and Autonomy for Diplomas) Act, which focuses on increased autonomy and tuition authority in exchange for increased performance, fits into many of the initiatives outlined in the Regents' response. Governor Jindal announced during a press conference on Tuesday that the LA GRAD Act will be one of his priority pieces of legislation during the upcoming session.

“Higher education is at a crossroads in this state,” said Board of Regents Chairman Artis Terrell. “We can either do things differently, in a way we think best serves students, or remain with the status quo and fall off the budgetary cliff when the federal stimulus money runs out. This board has shown strong leadership in its dedication to change and we will continue to support the bold initiatives we know will bring about a more productive and streamlined higher education system, serving the state both in the near-term and in the future.”

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In its presentation to the board, Regents' staff divided the PERC response into five focused areas each with its own set of supporting initiatives that are currently underway and will positively impact the quality and performance of higher education in the state. The five areas discussed and endorsed by Regents include:

- 1. Successfully Educate More**--Regents supports higher admission standards, increasing the number of graduates produced in Louisiana by 10 thousand by 2015, academic course redesign focused in the area of math in order to increase student progress and save money, and greater institutional autonomy as reflected in the LA GRAD Act which calls for the Board of Regents to be the chartering entity for voluntary, six year institutional performance contracts.
- 2. Coordination of Funding**--Regents continues to build its funding formula to redirect as much as 25% towards performance. In addition, Regents will analyze Louisiana's current tuition and financial aid policies with an eye toward increasing student access to postsecondary education.
- 3. Coordination of Offerings** --Regents will adjust campus mission statements to ensure that they are streamlined and focused on unique areas of excellence. In 2009, the board has eliminated approximately 250 academic programs to date and will continue to review academic programs for performance and efficiency.
- 4. Coordination of Resources**--Regents is promoting a regional delivery focus rather than one that is institution-based. This will expand the reach of institutions given the additional anticipated budget reductions due to the elimination of federal stimulus funding in 2012. Regional delivery will focus on shared facilities and faculty and is workforce relevant. In addition, the board approved an Electronic Learning Task Force to develop and drive a statewide e-learning plan that will increase student access, eliminate unnecessary duplicative programs, deliver courses at a lower cost and respond to students' preferred method of learning.
- 5. Coordination of Postsecondary Education Governance**--The board reaffirmed the importance of a coordinating board as a critical need in order to drive collaboration and shared services. They also endorsed the need for strong enforcement authority for Regents.

The 2009 Louisiana Legislature 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.

As required by law the The Board of Regents has until Friday, February 26, 2010 to provide comments on the PERC report to the Legislature. The report approved today will meet that requirement.