

**RESPONSE TO SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
17 OF THE 2012 REGULAR SESSION
OF THE LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE**

LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS



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Assessment of the Technical and Two-Year Postsecondary Education Needs In Baton Rouge Region, Louisiana

*Response to Concurrent Resolution 17 by Senator Dorsey-
Colomb*

Final Report

Prepared for:

Louisiana Board of Regents
Louisiana Community and Technical College System

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INTRODUCTION

Employers in the Baton Rouge region are hiring people with higher-level skills for more technically complex jobs in both traditional and new industry sectors. Most of these jobs will require some type of postsecondary credential: a technical certificate, Associate's degree, or Bachelor's degree. A recent report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce projects that by 2018 51 percent of the state's jobs will require some type of postsecondary credential. The state's educational system needs to almost double the share of working age adults who hold at least a two-year degree to meet industry's demand for credentialed workers by 2018.¹

That means the Baton Rouge region needs to continue to build a workforce that is increasingly productive, skilled, and credentialed. Area employers are demanding that type of workforce to keep up with advanced technologies and grow. Moreover, an appropriately educated, credentialed workforce sends a strong message to existing companies and potential new companies that the region can meet their needs if they want to expand or locate there. And, not to be overlooked, rising educational attainment is the surest way for the region and state to increase income and give people pathways out of poverty and into the middle class.

This report offers recommendations to organize technical and two-year postsecondary education in the Baton Rouge region to meet the growing credentials needs of the region's companies, its economy, and its people. It is a response to Senate Concurrent Resolution 17, sponsored by Senator Dorsey-Colomb in the State of Louisiana's regular legislative session in 2012. The resolution asks the Board of Regents and Board of Supervisors of Community and Technical Colleges to "study the feasibility of merging Capital Area Technical College and Baton Rouge Community College in order to more adequately address the educational needs of students and the economic and workforce development needs of the greater Baton Rouge area."

The Board of Regents and Louisiana Community and Technical College Board of Supervisors hired FutureWorks to conduct an analysis that would address the directives of the senate resolution and provide an assessment of how the region's educational needs best could be met. This report is a compilation of FutureWorks' industry and labor market analysis, extensive qualitative research gathered through interviews and focus groups in the region,² and review of secondary research and reports on the economic, workforce and higher education systems in the Baton Rouge region. The report outlines a clear path forward to align education delivery system for residents and the regional economy through a merger of Capital Area Technical College and Baton Rouge Community College. It urges leaders in the region to take steps to improve access to and elevate the overall quality of technical and two-year postsecondary education for area residents and companies.

¹ Carnevale, Anthony P., Smith, Nicole and Strohl, Jeff. "Help Wanted Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018," The Georgetown Center on Education and the Economy, 2010 and "A stronger nation through higher education," Lumina Foundation, February 2009.

² FutureWorks interviewed and met with more than 40 people during the Baton Rouge site visit, including employers, economic developers, educators, legislators, and civic leaders.

Demographics

For the purposes of this study, the Baton Rouge region of Louisiana consists of seven parishes: East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, West Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, and Point Coupee. The parishes have widely varying population sizes. East Baton Rouge is by far the largest parish with over 400,000 residents, while East Feliciana Parish to the immediate north has only 20,000 residents. In the middle is Livingston Parish, a rapidly growing parish to the east of Baton Rouge with 128,000 residents. (See table 1 on next page.)

East Baton Rouge and Livingston Parish are not only the population centers in the region but also have the highest rates of educational attainment and incomes. Livingston Parish is a rapidly growing suburban parish. Its residents have the highest median household income and the lowest rate of poverty in the region. With the exception of its high incomes, the characteristics of Livingston Parish place it in the middle of the demographic spectrum in the region. And this would suggest that educational access and resources needed by residents are different, perhaps than the parishes at the other extremes.

The region contains a wide spread of socio-demographic characteristics that is in some ways a reflection of the difference between rural, suburban, and urban parishes. Some of these differences are extreme. In West Feliciana Parish, data from the US Census show that only 36.7 percent of the population over 16 years is in the labor force. East Baton Rouge Parish, on the other hand, has a labor force participation rate of 67 percent, which is the highest in the region and well above the state as a whole.

In general, labor force participation is associated with income, unemployment, and poverty rates. Parishes with the lowest rates of labor force participation -- East and West Feliciana, Point Coupee and Iberville Parishes -- have the highest rates of poverty and lowest educational attainment in the region. Interestingly, only Iberville has an unemployment rate (10.8 percent) that is dramatically higher than that of the state as a whole (7.3 percent). This suggests that whatever the effect of the economic recovery and the impact of oil and gas production on the region, the benefits seem to have passed-by Iberville Parish. In the other three parishes, the relatively low unemployment rates may not capture the full extent of economic distress. Parishes like these with low rates of participation in the labor force have many people who have stopped seeking work, been unemployed for a long time and become "discouraged workers" who drop out of the labor force, or may not physically or mentally be able to work.

The combination of low labor force participation and low educational attainment suggests there are deeply disadvantaged populations in some of the parishes in the region. Educational access in these parishes becomes very important as a means to get out of poverty.

Table 1. Selected Demographic Characteristics of the Baton Rouge Area, by Parish

Parish	Population	Percent in Labor Force	Median Household Income	Unemployment Rate, 2011	Family Poverty Rate	Percent with Assoc. Degree	Percent Some College No Degree	Percent with Bachelor Degree +
Louisiana	4,533,372	61.7	43,445	7.3	15.6	4.8	20.5	20.9
East Baton Rouge	440,171	67	46,179	8.2	14.7	4.4	23.3	32.9
West Baton Rouge	23,788	66.4	47,298	7.8	14.3	4.1	14.7	16.5
East Feliciana	20,267	51	35,335	8.7	18	4.7	21.5	12.4
West Feliciana	15,625	36.7	43,411	8.3	11.4	2.9	14.7	12.8
Iberville	33,387	51	42,215	10.8	14	2.7	17.0	11.0
Livingston	128,026	64	54,708	7.0	9	4.1	22.9	16.4
Point Coupee	22,802	58.7	41,177	9.0	18	3.8	17.1	15.3

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, 2010; American Community Survey, 2006-2010; LA Works; BLS-LAU; labor force data are for population 16 years or older; educational attainment are for population 25 years or older, poverty rate is for families; percent with Bachelor Degree + is for educational attainment of population earning a Bachelor's degree and/or post-graduate degree.

Industry and Occupations

The Baton Rouge region, home to Louisiana's flagship university and as the state capital, is a service center to the state. It has high concentrations of jobs in state government, education, health care, professional and management services, and construction. A recent report on the economic outlook of the region confirms this industrial mix. It shows the region's largest and growing sectors as health care and social assistance; specialty trade contractors; professional, science, and technical services; and heavy and civil engineering.³

Educational services and health care employ almost 23 percent of the area's labor force, by far the largest proportion of employment for people in any one sector in the region. These are people who work for the LSU System, Southern University, LCTCS, Baton Rouge Community College and in the region's large health care institutions such as Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center and Baton Rouge General Medical Center. Health care, in particular, continues to become a much more technically, specialized field. Changes in national health care policy will only reinforce the need for credentialed employees for the region's health care employers, whether for growing jobs in healthcare information technology, laboratory and clinical technicians, or nursing. (See table 2 on next page.)

³ Baton Rouge Area Chamber, "2012 Economic Outlook," 2012.

Table 2. Baton Rouge Region Occupation and Industry Employment, 2010		
OCCUPATION	Louisiana	Baton Rouge Region
Management, professional, and related occupations	30.7%	33.3%
Service occupations	18.0%	17.3%
Sales and office occupations	25.4%	26.3%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations	13.0%	11.2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12.9%	11.8%
Civilian employed population 16 years of age and older	1,952,818	315,967
INDUSTRY		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	4.4%	1.1%
Construction	8.8%	9.4%
Manufacturing	8.4%	8.9%
Wholesale trade	3.1%	2.9%
Retail trade	12.0%	11.8%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.1%	4.2%
Information	1.6%	1.7%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.5%	6.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	8.3%	9.8%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	22.7%	22.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.3%	8.9%
Other services, except public administration	5.2%	5.4%
Public administration	5.5%	7.0%
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2006-2010; The Baton Rouge region includes East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, West Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, and Point Coupee parishes.		

The region also has a very high concentration of jobs in construction and oil and gas production. Construction employs 9.4 percent of the area labor force. Our interviews with business and civic leaders in the region highlighted the importance of these industries. Most spoke of the industry growing rapidly with new companies expanding to provide services to existing production sites as well as potential new natural gas sites. A common theme among many of those we interviewed was the importance of industrial construction related to the oil and gas industry. Welders, industrial maintenance, and manufacturing around parts and supplies to the oil and gas, and petro chemical industries are in short supply now. In the near future, the demand for skilled workers in these industries is expected to rise dramatically. Among occupations projected to grow the fastest in the area that require a two-year degree are construction managers, engineering technicians, and chemical technicians.⁴ Evidence of that demand is Exxon Mobil's recent commitment of \$215 million in the area to expand operations, revive and modernize equipment and construct a state-of-the-art blending center for synthetic oil in Port Allen.

⁴ Louisiana Workforce Commission, Regional Labor Market Area Occupation Projections, 2010-2020.

For its part, about 10 percent of the region's employment is in professional, science, and technical services industries. Some of these jobs are in the industries that service construction and oil and gas, such as engineering management firms. Other jobs are coming from new emerging industries. One of those is digital media and software, an industry identified by the state and region's economic developers as beginning to show signs of growth and demand for technicians. Indicative of the growing presence of the industry is the location of gaming giant Electronic Arts' global quality assurance center in Baton Rouge and the multiple special effects, production, and filming studios located at the Celtic Media Centre.

Manufacturing is another of the region's relatively large industries, employing 8.9 percent of the area labor force. A larger share of those jobs, proportional to other industries, is located in the outlying parishes. For example, just about 17 percent of Iberville's labor force is employed in manufacturing. That is double the statewide share of 8.4 percent of Louisiana residents employed in manufacturing. Other parishes with high concentrations of manufacturing jobs include West Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, and Livingston. A recent study by the Boston Consulting Group identified the Baton Rouge area as one five areas among the fifty largest manufacturing centers in the country that is experiencing a severe skilled labor shortage. The study identified welders, machinists, and industrial-machinery mechanics as occupations in shortest supply.⁵

Public administration (e.g. government jobs) accounts for another 7 percent of employment for the area's labor force, a slightly higher proportion than the state. The region is home to at least four correctional facilities. There are high proportions of public sector employment in the rural parishes that house these facilities. The concentration of public sector jobs in East Feliciana (11.4 percent) and West Feliciana (11.6 percent) is more than twice the proportion of public sector jobs for the state as a whole (5.5 percent).

Data from reports and information collected through our interviews show that most of the region's key industries – health care, construction and petro-chemicals, manufacturing – and those that are emerging – digital media and software – increasingly rely on workers with technically-based skills and credentials. Not only are employers saying that workforce issues are a significant obstacle to their business growth, but they are saying the limited availability of a skilled workforce is one of the area's biggest weaknesses.⁶

For example, manufacturers now rely more on advanced technologies, higher thinking work processes, and technically enhanced work organizations to compete. Healthcare has increased the requirements for technically skilled, credentialed workers, from environmental services up to the clinical professions. And, the same is true for construction, oil, gas and petrochemical production. Petrochemical companies are required to demonstrate a credentialed workforce that can meet a host of safety training and technical skills, largely driven by federal safety and environmental requirements. These same companies and associated industries need workers with higher levels of training and education to meet licensing and permitting requirements.

⁵ Boston Consulting Group, "Skills Gap in U.S. Manufacturing Is Less Pervasive Than Many Believe," Press Release, October 15, 2012.

⁶ Baton Rouge Area Chamber, "The Current Economy and the Capital Region," in The Creative Capital Agenda 2011-2015 Prospectus, 2012.

Moreover, there is a rapid escalation in complex technology used in the field for construction, operations, and maintenance. New drilling technologies, sophisticated sensing equipment, and the integration of electronics into mechanical equipment have increased the skill requirements for nearly every on-shore and offshore position in the industry.

Overall, employers in the Baton Rouge region are hiring people with higher-level skills for more technically complex jobs in both traditional and new industry sectors.

Postsecondary Educational Resources and Services

Technical College: The Capital Area Technical College (CATC) has four campus locations distributed across the region. The Baton Rouge campus of the technical college is the largest campus and offers 23 programs across a range of technologies and occupations, including several healthcare programs and practical nursing. Baton Rouge also maintains extensions in Port Allen and Frazier. The Folkes Campus in Jackson is the administrative home of programming in four correctional facilities in Iberville and West and East Feliciana Parishes.

CATC in Baton Rouge reports significant waiting lists for some programs like welding, automotive services, and information technology. These programs are limited in size because of equipment access and safety considerations. On the other hand, some of the campuses and extensions of CATC are quite small and offer very limited programming. Both the Port Allen and Frazier extension campuses list only two diploma program offerings in pharmacy technician and welding. Port Allen is also the home of CATC's Baton Rouge Construction and Heavy Equipment Program operated in conjunction with building trades apprenticeship program.

The other three smaller campuses each offer only four or five diploma programs. Each of the three campuses offers welding and two campuses offer LPN technical diploma programs. In part, the limited offerings at CATC are due to budget reductions and the consequent decision to reduce the numbers of programs on a campus. High cost programs tend to be eliminated as budget funds have become restricted over the last few years. One response to reduced funding at the smaller campuses has been to use limited funding (faculty salaries) to provide occupational instruction at high schools in dual enrollment programs or under contract in specific technical areas such as automotive or information technology. As a result, a significant proportion of enrollment at CATC is high school students in dual enrollment classes. The Westside Campus, for example, reports a total student enrollment of 500. Four hundred (400) of these are dual enrollment students. In addition, the CATC serves substantial numbers of people in correctional facilities. The vast majority of enrollment at the Folkes Campus appears to be through prison-based educational programs.

CATC awarded diploma and certificate credentials to 860 students in 2012 across all of its campuses. Total enrollment for the same academic year was 3,609. The completion ratio of credentials awarded to enrollment is about 25 percent. This indicates a reasonably healthy ratio of people completing programs to those enrolled. CATC awarded 24 Associate's degrees, 478 diplomas, and 358 certificates.

The distribution of awards across fields at CATC is a little different than most of the technical colleges in Louisiana. CATC awards more credentials in fields like precision production and engineering technologies than it does in health care and business administration fields. For example, in engineering, precision production, and mechanical technologies, CATC awarded 352 credentials in the 2011-2012 academic year, or about 41 percent of all credentials. The school awarded 202 credentials in health care and business, about 23 percent of all credentials. Usually, those numbers are reversed. Most of the time health care and business administration account for a majority of all degrees awarded at the technical colleges in the state. It appears Capital Area Technical College is producing credentials across a somewhat broader range of occupations than most other technical colleges in the LCTCS. However, it is unknown how the data on credentials earned by students who are in correctional facilities may skew these numbers. Those data are not readily available in time for this report. (See table 3.)

Table 3. Capital Area Technical College, Programs of Study, and Credentials Awarded, 2012

CIP 2 Digit Code	Field of Study	Diploma	Certificate	Associate Degree	Totals Awards
01	Agriculture	15	16		31
10	Communications Technology	10	11		21
11	Computer and Information Technology	11	21		32
12	Personal and Culinary Services	53	61		114
13	Education			5	5
15	Engineering Technologies	13	14	9	36
19	Family and Consumer Sciences	11	23	6	40
46	Construction Trades	34	29		63
47	Mechanics and Repair Technicians	33	95		128
48	Precision Production	77	111		188
51	Health Professions	64	60		124
52	Business, Management, Administrative Services	37	37	4	78
	Totals	358	478	24	860

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents

CATC draws about half its enrollments from East Baton Rouge Parish, the largest and most urban of the parishes in the region. Other parishes provide much smaller percentages of students. The low percentage of students coming from Livingston Parish, the second largest in the region, may be because of the lack of a local campus in the parish or, to the east, the proximity of North Shore Technical Community College in Hammond as an alternative. At the same time, the distribution of students' home parishes at the technical college may be broader than that of the distribution of students attending BRCC. That is consistent with the findings from our interviews. Education, civic, and business leaders observed that CATC and its branch campuses serve an important role of providing access to education in parishes across the region.

We also note that West and East Feliciana and Iberville are home to four correctional facilities with educational programs operated by CATC. If the institutionalized population of these prisons is included in the enrollment figures shown in Table 4, then this would significantly affect the distribution of students by parish of origin. (See table 4.)

CATC Total Enrollment = 3,609	Enrollment Home Parish of Student	Percent Total Enrollment from Parish	Credentials Awarded		
			Certificate	Diploma	Assoc.
East Baton Rouge	1836	51%	197	124	
West Baton Rouge	1	0	-	-	
East Feliciana	255	7%	46	31	
West Feliciana	202	5%	49	65	
Iberville	510	14%	9	14	
Livingston	157	4%	8	8	1
Point Coupee	232	6%	24	15	
Regional Total		87%			

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents

Despite offering access to students in distant locations, the low numbers of programs offered by the outlying campuses and the limited kinds of program offered are signs of an institution with considerable challenges. Eliminating programs as funding decreases creates a downward spiral of options for students and relevant programming for the employers and communities in which the branches are located. Aside from welding programs, which are in high demand across the state, the other programs offered at the Folkes, Jumonville and Westside campuses are relevant only to a small slice of labor market demand. Unable to address demand in important occupational areas, these campuses are at risk of becoming less and less relevant in their communities and of experiencing continued decline in enrollment.

With this scenario, it becomes less likely that the state will change course and begin investing heavily again in these campuses. While the campuses have increased dual enrollment and services to high schools, this can also displace and further erode CATC’s mission of providing postsecondary occupational education to adults. It would appear that the current direction at the smaller campuses is unsustainable.

On the other hand, the more robust programming at CATC’s Baton Rouge campus presents a different picture. This campus—located in the midst of a low-income urban community—clearly offers residents more breadth and depth of occupational programs. Some of these, like information technology, graphics and design technology are related to rapidly growing jobs in the emerging digital technology sector that has made Baton Rouge a significant location for this industry. Moreover, occupational programs in machining, welding, HVAC, and culinary arts all support high demand fields in Baton Rouge. As noted above, the Baton Rouge area is one of a small number of metropolitan areas identified as having a severe skills shortage in manufacturing and other occupations. CATC plays a significant role in increasing opportunities for community members to get skills in these areas and move into good jobs.

Still, CATC's Baton Rouge campus faces significant challenges. First, the ongoing budget reductions have been difficult for the campus to sustain its current level of programming. Second, funding cuts limit how much the college can invest in equipment to stay current with employer need. And, cuts reduce the capacity of the college to offer important student services, such as those that help students enroll and, once matriculated, stay to complete a credential. Despite the need for technical education and programming now offered at the Baton Rouge campus, it is in danger of entering the same downward spiral as the technical college's other campuses.

Furthermore, the heavy reliance on dual enrollment and prison populations at CATC is a concern. Data 2011 show that there were 612 dual enrollment students at CATC and 867 students from the prisons at CATC. That suggests upwards of 35 percent of CATC's total enrollment of 4,260 in 2011 came from students enrolled in dual enrollment courses and prisoner enrollment. That leaves about 65 percent of CATC's total enrollment who are adult community residents neither incarcerated nor in high school. While dual enrollment and prison programs are both important efforts, it raises questions about how well and whether CATC is able to pursue its primary mission of serving adults and employers for career and occupational pathways, and if the reliance on these other areas of enrollment get in the way.

Community College: Leaders established and opened Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) in 1998. The college received SACS accreditation in 2004. Initially designed as a transfer institution, BRCC has begun to move toward the broader mission of a comprehensive community college, one that serves as both a transfer institution as well as an institution with a broad array of career, technical, and occupational education that serves students and the local economy. BRCC offers nine program areas with nearly 50 different associate degree and certificates, a distribution typical of comprehensive community colleges that are still largely transfer-oriented in nature. The large majority of degrees and certificates awarded are in health, business studies, liberal arts and general studies. The college offers a growing number of technical programs in health fields. It is also expanding its offerings in technology related fields that lead to an AAS degree. To date, BRCC has not duplicated programs offered at the technical college. That may change. BRCC just started to offer a program in process technology for the oil, gas, utility and petrochemical industries, similar to PTEC programs that often take place at technical colleges. BRCC leadership anticipates adding more programs and credentials in technology fields.

BRCC reported total enrollments of just over 8,000 students in 2012. In that year, the college awarded 397 Associate's degrees, about one-third of which were in liberal arts, general studies (111 Associate's degrees). BRCC awarded about 50 of its Associate's degrees in healthcare programs and only a relative few in technology fields. Like Associate's degrees, BRCC awarded the vast majority of its 199 certificates in liberal arts, general studies (134 certificates). It awarded most of the rest in business (57 certificates) and only a handful in other areas. (See table 5 on next page.)

CIP 2 Digit Code	Field of Study	Certificate	Associate Degree	Totals Awards
11	Computer and Information Technology	4	10	14
13	Education		14	14
15	Engineering Technologies		5	36
24	Liberal Arts, General Studies	134	111	245
41	Science Technologies		4	4
43	Homeland Security, Criminal Justice		19	19
50	Visual and Performing Arts		24	24
51	Health Professions	4	47	51
52	Business, Management, Marketing	57	107	164
Totals		199	397	596

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents

Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of BRCC’s students come from the parish in which its campus is located, East Baton Rouge. Only 20 percent of the students enrolling at BRCC come from the other six surrounding parishes in the region. Students from Livingston Parish, a rapidly growing suburban parish, make up 9 percent of that 20 percent from other parishes. Some of the concentration of residents from East Baton Rouge and Livingston may come from LSU and Southern University students taking general education or other transferable courses at BRCC. Overall, these data suggest that BRCC is more limited in its access to residents from the outlying parishes as compared to the technical college. (See table 6.)

BRCC Total Enrollment = 8,036	Enrollment Student Home Parish	Percent Total Enrollment from Home Parish	Credentials Awarded		
			Certificate	Diploma	Assoc.
East Baton Rouge	5177	64%	114		233
West Baton Rouge	276	3%	11		24
East Feliciana	132	2%	1		7
West Feliciana	106	1%	-		-
Iberville	235	3%	9		14
Livingston	716	9%	17		31
Point Coupee	139	2%	5		13
		85%			

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents

Leadership at BRCC is seeking to include a bigger role for occupationally focused technical programs in its mission. Yet, the relationship the college has with business, industry, and the economic development community is relatively undeveloped. That is to be expected because of BRCC’s historic role and focus as a transfer institution. However, as the college builds more

technically and occupationally oriented programs, engaging the employer community more deeply will be crucial to success. It will also be important if a merger proceeds between CATC and BRCC. Employers who are accustomed to two different postsecondary systems need to understand the advantages of a more unified educational service. BRCC appears to be positioned well to communicate those messages.

Another important characteristic of BRCC is its student support services. As part of its accreditation with SACS and as part of the general infrastructure at community colleges everywhere, considerable resources are devoted to student services—ranging from retention and student success services to career services to more traditional advising and enrollment services. Those supports are particularly important as BRCC enrolls more occupationally oriented students. Moreover, technical college students, many who come from more challenging backgrounds than the average BRCC student, may benefit from the enhanced student services available at the community college. On the other hand, technical college personnel rightly point to the close and supportive relationships between school personnel and faculty in their existing programs. CATC programs are relatively small and there is considerable contact between school personnel and students. In the community college setting that kind of contact may diminish, in part because BRCC is twice the size of CATC. Students who would have received ongoing support in the technical college classrooms will need additional supports to succeed in a community college environment.

Other Postsecondary colleges, Four Year Colleges and Universities: Baton Rouge is home to the flagship campus of Louisiana State University enrolling about 29,000 undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, the main campus of Southern University is in Baton Rouge. It enrolls about 7,600. Its Baton Rouge campus is the largest historically black campus in the university system. These institutions clearly shape the educational landscape. It is not surprising that BRCC functions as a transfer institution to these two universities.

BRCC and CATC are the second and fourth largest educational institutions in the region. Other postsecondary institutions in the Baton Rouge area are a mix of smaller private schools and for-profit technical schools. BRCC and CATC appear to offer an attractive alternative to the higher tuitions at many of these schools, both for technically-oriented and transfer-related programs. (See table 7 on next page.)

Table 7. List of the Largest Colleges and Universities near Baton Rouge, LA

College/University	Students	Institution Type
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College	28,810	4-year, Public
Baton Rouge Community College	8,275	2-year, Public
Southern University and A&M College	7,669	4-year, Public
Capital Area Technical College	4,260	2-year, Public
Our Lady of the Lake College	1,956	4-year, primarily associate's, Private not-for-profit
LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center	737	Professional, Public
Medvance Institute of Baton Rouge	610	2-year, Private for-profit
Southern University Law Center	531	Professional, Public
ITI Technical College	426	2-year, Private for-profit
Remington College - Baton Rouge	422	2-year, Private for-profit
Delta College of Arts & Technology	317	2-year, Private for-profit
Camelot College	314	2-year, Private for-profit
ITT Technical Institute - Baton Rouge	254	4-year, primarily associate's, Private for-profit
Diesel Driving Academy - Baton Rouge	222	< 2-year, Private for-profit
Aveda Institute - Baton Rouge	103	< 2-year, Private for-profit
Louisiana Culinary Institute	99	2-year, Private for-profit
Denham Springs Beauty School	88	< 2-year, Private for-profit
Baton Rouge General Medical Center School of Nursing	78	2-year, Private not-for-profit
Source: Education-Portal.com, 2012		

Key Points Emerging From Interviews

It became clear through our interviews that growing industry sectors in the region require skill sets that span a range of technical skills. Business leaders say they want to keep the flexibility and access of technical education, give more credit for applied experiences, and make seamless the transition between technical education and other credentialing to meet these skill needs. They also say a merger will help bring transparency to the system and bring the two paths of education closer together. Right now, the educational system appears fragmented and disconnected. A merger offers an opportunity to build deeper employer engagement, build pathways of educational credentials within key sectors, and be more responsive to fast changing needs in the economy.

In that context, most business, civic, and educational leaders interviewed view a merger between CATC and BRCC as an opportunity to align more closely two-year postsecondary education with employers' needs and the regional economy. Business and civic leaders, in particular, view a merger as a chance to update and broaden workforce and technical education offerings in the Baton Rouge area. Adding technical and occupational programming to the community college would also build BRCC's capacity in workforce and economic development. That would

strengthen the college's efforts to become a comprehensive community college. Moreover, community leaders see a merger as providing resources for a greater range of supportive services and credential options that are not currently available in either setting. Most of the current program offerings at CATC carry no credit toward related degree programs at BRCC, which reinforces a gulf between 'occupational' and 'academic' education.

Our interviews repeatedly indicated the need for better articulation between workforce, technical, and two- and four-year programs and institutions. Employers want educational services that have transparency and simplicity and want previous training to "count" if their workers go back to school or continue to add to their training credentials. Civic leadership wants articulation across institutions so residents can leverage and articulate their credentials to build careers.

There also is widespread acknowledgement that declining investments in CATC and its branches have resulted in a diminishing number of program offerings at its campuses. The smaller campuses, in particular, focus on a limited range of offerings and award relatively few credentials. The limited resources available to CATC and the technical college system overall mean that it will be difficult for the technical college to continue to invest in improvements. Those limitations also cut into the technical college's ability to keep up with the pace of changes in technology and programming demanded by industry. A new way to move forward is needed.

Leaders also acknowledge BRCC's evolving role in the region. The Louisiana Legislature established the community college 14 years ago with a primary purpose as a transfer institution for students to matriculate into LSU and Southern University. That means it has a relatively "young" set of offerings in the applied sciences. And, beyond a few programs, it has yet to establish the links to industry and the region's economic development priorities that its leaders and others would like.

A major concern among those we interviewed is access to high quality and diverse educational offering throughout the region. The multiple locations of CATC campuses have the potential to provide new educational opportunities to people in the outlying parishes, particularly to those people who are unemployed or low-income. Others noted the vastly different student populations that both institutions serve and expressed concern that low-skilled, low-income students would be left behind with a merger. In addition, leaders from Livingston Parish noted that its growing population and expansion of business warrants better access. It is the one parish in the region without facilities or presence from either BRCC or CATC.

Leadership at CATC and BRCC generally expressed a positive, if not appropriately cautious, view of a potential merger. They see the same benefits that others see -- the chance to meet industry and students needs with broader and more integrated offerings, help modernize CATC programs and facilities, and increase support services and reach new populations. Some in leadership also see the opportunity to build renewed capacity in workforce and technical education and share areas of competence. Still, there are concerns about shifting resources, meeting new accreditation standards, and merging student populations and learning cultures.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that leaders in the region accelerate the process to merge Capital Area Technical College and Baton Rouge Community College. The merger of the institutions should be substantially in place—at least in full plan and design—prior to the upcoming five-year review by SACS. This will avoid the time and expense of “re-qualifying” programs and procedures that would come into BRCC and fall under new accrediting requirements through a merger. Fortunately, leadership at the two colleges has already begun discussions about a merger. Those discussions need to accelerate and immediately involve key administrators and faculty from both institutions. And, leadership from the colleges and LCTCS need to identify and put resources behind drafting a plan for a merger. Once the legislature acts on the resolution, and if the legislature approves the merger, the two colleges, with the support of LCTCS, should move forward quickly to execute the plan by taking initial steps toward merger and meeting SACs requirements.

2. We recommend that the merger plan have both short- and longer-term steps laid out that describes how the merger will take place, a timeframe for the merger process, and steps addressing organization change, institutional change, and changes in programming of the two merging colleges. In particular, we recommend that leadership at both colleges, with the support of LCTCS, address the following key components to strengthen the overall, long-term quality and access of technical and two-year educational services in the area.

- a. We support the initial direction that college leadership has taken to plan for a more robust engagement with employers and industry in the Baton Rouge region. We recommend that leadership at both institutions be involved in this process and that the goal continue to be the building of a more robust and *unified* engagement with employers and industry. Deeper employer engagement can assist with the type and content of technical education programming needed and help build credential pathways within key industry sectors. One place to start would be to develop more substantial and ongoing relationships with groups like the Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, and other trade groups. The goal should be to find ways to coordinate employer engagement that goes beyond separate department-by-department and institution-by-institution engagement as it now stands.
- b. The large number of dual enrollment students and prisoners enrolled in CATC pose a dilemma in planning a merger. Both of these groups will need consideration in a merger of CATC and BRCC. Several high schools contract with and rely almost exclusively on CATC for career and technical education services. CATC also operates extensive prison programs. While both programs could fit into the organization of a merged institution, there may be alternatives.
- c. We recommend that part of the planning for a merger include a complete facilities assessment and review of existing technical programming. That calls for a thorough review of those needs demanded from the economy, how the current facilities and programming of technical education match up, what upgrades need to be made to ensure quality offerings, and how to make sure the offerings are more widely accessible to both industry and the population.

- d. We recommend a review and plan to widen supportive services and outreach efforts to the full-range of students and workers who want to enter the postsecondary pipeline. A merger of CATC and BRCC should enhance access by making available a fuller-range of postsecondary options in more parts of the region. It offers the opportunity to bring new resources to the table to develop deeper outreach and different forms of student engagement, in particular for lower-income individuals in outlying parishes.
- e. We recommend that leaders of the colleges, with industry, review the myriad of existing programs at the two institutions and find new ways to stack and articulate knowledge and skill competencies across programs and institutions so that they lead to stackable credentials. While articulation is growing, there appears to be a less transparent path of articulation between workforce, technical, and two- year programs and institutions.

3. We recommend transitioning Capital Area Technical College's accreditation with COE toward a single SACS accreditation for the merged institutions. While the reporting requirements and standards that colleges are required to maintain with COE accreditation are more attuned to occupational programs and occupational outcomes and are thus important metrics for technical education, it also seems that maintaining two different reporting systems is burdensome and inefficient. However, some of the data now required by COE—such as placement and labor market information—should become part of the new data collection and student information system. Also, we recommend a clear plan for migrating the CATC faculty and personnel into SACS compliance. Throughout the merger process, it is important to recognize the value and contributions both institutions can make to a newly integrated mission. Under SACS requirements most of the faculty at CATC would qualify for at least provisional approval through SACS' faculty credential requirements.

4. Lastly, we recommend an overall focus on degree/credential completion. While the senate resolution focuses more on organization and less on content or outcomes, our review suggests an equally important need to focus on the quantity and quality of outcomes produced by the technical and two-year system. We recommend that leaders guiding the merger ask two questions as they move forward. One question is how will the merger result in improved performance metrics and quality outcomes for the student and employer? The other is how will any proposed changes result in quicker completion for low-income and non-traditional working adults so they can get the credentials needed to go to work and signal to the employer that they have the right competencies?