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P. O. Box 3677

Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3677

Phone (225) 342-4253, FAX (225) 342-9318

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Contact: Kevin Hardy
(225) 342-4253

Regents Toughen College Admissions Criteria Changes Effective Fall 2012, Aimed at Increasing Student Readiness for Academic Rigors of College

Beginning with the graduating class of 2012, high school graduates will need to have successfully completed four units each of mathematics, science, English, and social studies to qualify for admission to a Louisiana public four-year university. The increased rigor in the Regents Core curriculum was approved today by the Board of Regents' Planning, Research and Performance Committee to bring the Regents Core into alignment with the new "Core 4" curriculum recently adopted for high school graduates by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and to help ensure that freshman students enrolling at the state's universities are better equipped for college-level coursework.

"It has been shown time and time again that the best predictor of student success in college is the academic rigor of his or her high school preparation," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "It just makes good sense – both for our students and for our institutions – to do all we can to give entering freshmen the best chance possible of earning a degree. We do that two ways: through our four-year university admission requirements, of which the Regents Core is a critical component, and through our community and technical college system, which provides an access point for students who can benefit from the environment of a two-year campus."

In addition to an increase in the total number of math and science credits required for public university admission, the Regents Core will now require an additional unit of approved social science and the option of two units of specially-designed speech courses in place of the foreign language requirement currently required (in response to a consensus among college administrators that too many students come to college only marginally skilled in verbal expression). In addition, the new Core removes the requirement of one-half unit in "computer literacy," since nowadays almost all students develop computer skills as a normal consequence of high school instruction and personal computer/internet use.

The net increase in required credit is 1.5 units, from 17.5 to 19.0. Full board approval of the measure is expected at tomorrow's Board of Regents meeting.

In other Regents business, the Board received a report today on the recently-updated Fall 2007 statewide enrollment figures. According to the report, Louisiana's public colleges and universities continue to recover from the enrollment hit suffered as a result of the 2005 hurricanes. Total enrollment across the state is up to 198,012 (including a near 6,000 student increase at two-year institutions) compared to 195,380 in 2006 and an estimated 177,230 immediately after the storms in 2005.

Notably, four of the New Orleans public institutions impacted by Katrina -- Delgado Community College, Nunez Community College, Southern University -- New Orleans, and the University of New Orleans -- showed increases in first-time freshman enrollment last fall. In addition, enrollment in developmental (or remedial) courses at four-year universities continues to decrease, down to 18.7% in 2007 from 20.5% in 2006. Developmental enrollment stood at 35% as recently as 2000.

Still another promising statistic revealed to the Board today was a statewide increase in "preparatory" students, up to 7,519, compared to 4,937 in 2006. Preparatory students are high school students who enroll in college credit courses before graduation.