

## **Revised Agenda Item IX.**

### **Legislative Matters Executive Summary February 17, 2014**

#### **IX. B. BOARD OF REGENTS' LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS**

##### **1. Proposed Amendment to Licensure Laws**

Currently, states regulate higher education within their borders, with varying requirements for licensing out-of-state institutions who seek to offer distance education within their state. At present, there is no alternative to each institution separately pursuing any needed approvals (state authorization) in each state where it enrolls students. Consequently, institutions offering distance education are required to contact and work through as many as 54 states and territories, a costly and burdensome process for institutions which ultimately decreases access to high quality distance education throughout the country.

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is a voluntary agreement among the four regional compacts (Southern Regional Education Board for the Southern states) and their member states that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. SARA's intent is to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by accredited degree-granting institutions based in another state, primarily by reducing the costs and administrative burden on institutions seeking authorization to offer distance education in various states.

SARA establishes a state-level reciprocity process, making state authorization more efficient and uniform. SARA shifts the principal oversight responsibilities for state authorization from the state in which the distance education is being received to the "home state" of the institution offering the instruction. Member states of SARA then agree to impose no additional (non-SARA) requirements on accredited institutions from other member states. Since under current law, the Board of Regents does not regulate totally online instruction, amending the legislation and participating in SARA will not entail the relaxation of the Board's current requirements for accredited academic degree-granting institutions.

In order for Louisiana to participate in SARA, R.S. 17:1808 (licensure of academic degree-granting institutions) and to a much lesser extent R.S. 17:3141 (the proprietary schools law) would need to be amended to allow the Board of Regents, on behalf of the state of Louisiana, to consider membership in SARA.

Staff will present further information and detail on SARA, as well as the proposed statutory changes at the Board Development meeting on February 16, 2014. At the Board of Regents meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup>, the staff will seek Board approval to craft legislative amendments allowing Regents' participation in SARA.

##### **2. Proposed Amendment to LaSIP Laws**

The Louisiana Systemic Initiatives Program (LaSIP) was established in 1992 through a five-year \$10M NSF grant, matched with \$10 million in BESE/BoR LEQSF monies, divided equally between the two boards. The program was sustained beyond five years through competitive NSF and U.S. DoE grants, BESE/BoR dollars, and State appropriations, along with limited formula dollars which the U.S. DoE allocates annually to the Board of Regents. The purpose of the program has been statewide systemic

reform of STEM education. Its signature initiative has been university-based year-long K-12 professional development for in-service teachers.

The broadly representative LaSIP Council, led by, yet separate from the Regents and BESE, was created by statute (R.S. 17:2751 through R.S. 17:2759) to reflect the collaborative and systemic purpose of the organization. All funding sources for expressly funding LaSIP have now ceased, the LaSIP staff has been terminated, and the LaSIP Council no longer functions. Under these circumstances it is appropriate that legislation authorizing the Council be repealed. The proposed bill will allow the Board of Regents, using the LaSIP title, to continue to administer the limited dollars for professional development which the U.S. DoE allocates annually to the BoR for teacher professional development.