



BOARD of REGENTS
STATE OF LOUISIANA

Notice of Meetings

Louisiana Board of Regents

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Phone: (225) 4253 ▪ Fax: (225-342-9318

www.laregents.edu

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Event	Time	Location
Northwestern State University Welcome and Campus Tour	9:30 AM	Orville Hanchey Gallery Creative and Performing Arts Annex 140 Central Avenue Natchitoches, LA 71497
(Meeting as a Committee of the Whole)** Board of Regents		
Finance Facilities and Properties Academic and Student Affairs Research and Sponsored Initiatives Statewide Programs Planning, Research and Performance	12:15 PM	Magale Recital Hall Creative and Performing Arts Annex 140 Central Avenue Natchitoches, LA 71497

ADA Accessibility Requests

If you have a disability and require a reasonable accommodation to fully participate in this meeting, please contact Karlita Anderson five (5) business days before the meeting date via email at Karlita.Anderson@laregents.edu or by telephone at (225) 219-7660 to discuss your accessibility needs.

INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE AGENDAS MAY BE FOUND AT WWW.LAREGENTS.EDU.

* The meeting may begin later contingent upon adjournment of previous meeting. Meetings may also convene up to 30 minutes prior to the posted schedule to facilitate business.

** The Board of Regents reserves the right to enter into Executive Session, if needed, in accordance with R.S. 42:11 *et seq.*



BOARD of REGENTS
STATE OF LOUISIANA

Kim Hunter Reed, Ph.D.
*Commissioner
of Higher Education*

Misti S. Cordell
*Chair
At-Large*

Darren G. Mire
*Secretary
2nd Congressional District*

David J. Aubrey
At-Large

Christian C. Creed
5th Congressional District

Blake R. David
3rd Congressional District

Stephanie A. Finley
3rd Congressional District

Robert W. Levy
5th Congressional District

Phillip R. May Jr.
1st Congressional District

Kennedy M. Orr
Student Member

Wilbert D. Pryor
4th Congressional District

Gary N. Solomon Jr.
2nd Congressional District

Terrie P. Sterling
At-Large

Collis B. Temple III
6th Congressional District

Felix R. Weill
6th Congressional District

Judy A. Williams-Brown
4th Congressional District

Agenda

Board of Regents Meeting*

Meeting as a Committee of the Whole
Wednesday, October 23, 2024
12:15 PM

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Public Comments
- IV. Approval of Minutes from September 25, 2024
- V. Chair's Comments
- VI. Meauxmentum Moment - NSULA
- VII. Reports and Recommendations of Standing Committees
 - A. Finance
 1. Approval of Budget Request for FY 2025-2026
 - B. Facilities and Property
 1. Board of Regents FY 2025-2026 Capital Outlay Budget Recommendation
 - C. Academic and Student Affairs
 1. Consent Agenda
 - a. Routine Staff Approvals

2. Academic Programs
 - a. AAS Health Information Technology – River Parishes Community College
 - b. BA Honors Traditions in Critical Thought and Scholarship – Louisiana State University A&M
3. Reports
 - a. MJ Foster Promise Executive Summary
 - b. MJ Foster Promise Report Year Two
 - c. TOPS Report Executive Summary
 - d. TOPS Annual Report 2024

D. Research and Sponsored Initiatives

1. Appointment of Endowed Chairholders without a National Search: University of Louisiana at Monroe

E. Statewide Programs

1. Consent Agenda

- a. TOPS Home Study Exceptions – TOPS statutory provision that requires a student to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade
- b. TOPS and M.J. Foster Exceptions - TOPS regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school

F. Planning, Research, and Performance

1. Consent Agenda

- a. R.S. 17:1808 (Academic Licensure)
 - i. Renewal Applications
 - a. Oral Roberts University
 - b. Remington College
 - c. San Joaquin Valley College

- d. United States University
- b. Advisory Commission on Proprietary Schools
 - i. Initial Applications
 - a. GBR Dental Assistant Academy, Prairieville, LA
 - ii. Renewal Applications
 - a. 160 Driving Academy - Shreveport
 - b. Acadiana Area Career College, Lafayette, LA
 - c. Accelerated Academy - Baton Rouge
 - d. Accelerated Academy - Denham Springs
 - e. Accelerated Academy - Hammond
 - f. Accelerated Academy - Houma
 - g. Accelerated Academy - Lafayette
 - h. Accelerated Academy - Lake Charles
 - i. Accelerated Academy - Metairie
 - j. Accelerated Academy - Monroe
 - k. Accelerated Academy - Slidell
 - l. Advance Nursing Training, New Orleans, LA
 - m. Ark-La-Tex Dental Assisting Academy, Shreveport, LA
 - n. Baton Rouge School of Phlebotomy
 - o. Blue Cliff College - Alexandria
 - p. Blue Cliff College - Lafayette
 - q. Blue Cliff College - Metairie
 - r. Blue Cliff College - Metairie, Satellite Location
 - s. Camelot College, Baton Rouge, LA
 - t. Coastal College - Alexandria
 - u. Cross Road CDL Academy, Harvey, LA
 - v. Digital Media Institute, Shreveport, LA
 - w. Fortis College, Baton Rouge, LA
 - x. Healthcare Training Institute, Kenner, LA
 - y. Life Care, Marrero, LA
 - z. MedCerts, Livonia, MI
 - aa. Medical Training College, Baton Rouge, LA
 - bb. New Orleans Medical Assistant School
 - cc. NOLA Institute of Gaming, New Orleans, LA
 - dd. Opelousas Academy of Nondestructive Testing, Opelousas, LA
 - ee. RelyOn Nutec USA, Houma, LA
 - ff. Remington College - Baton Rouge

- gg. River Cities School of Dental Assisting,
Shreveport, LA
- hh. Smith Institute, Shreveport, LA
- ii. Stick It Phlebotomy, Jonesboro, LA
- jj. Synergy Massage Institute - Metairie

VIII. Reports and Recommendations by the Commissioner of Higher
Education

IX. Other Business

X. Adjournment

**Note: The Board of Regents reserves the right to enter into Executive Session, if needed, in accordance with R.S. 42:11 et seq.*

DRAFT
MINUTES
BOARD OF REGENTS

September 25, 2024

The Board of Regents met at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, in the Louisiana Purchase Room 1–100, Claiborne Building, 1201 N. Third Street, 1st Floor, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Before the committee meetings, Uma Subramanian, the Board’s General Counsel, swore in Misti Cordell as the new Chair. Chair Cordell acknowledged her colleagues and pledged to reach out to all to collaborate for the benefit of students and the workforce in the state. In addition, Chair Cordell thanked Regent Solomon, the previous Chair, for his service and commitment to the Board’s work. Chair Cordell called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Doreen Brasseaux called the roll, and a quorum was established.

Present for the meeting were:

Kim Hunter Reed, Commissioner
Misti Cordell, Chair
David Aubrey
Blake David
Stephanie Finley
Robert Levy
Kennedy Orr, Student Member
Blake David
Wilbert Pryor
Terrie Sterling
Collis Temple III
Judy Williams-Brown

Mgt. Board Representatives present were:

LSU System representative, Rémy Starns
SU System representative, Dr. Leon Tarver
UL System representative, Dr. John Noble

Absent from the meeting were:

Christian Creed
Phillip May

T. Jay Seale III, Vice Chair
Gary Solomon, Jr.
Felix Weill

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Cordell asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 28, 2024 MEETING

On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Levy, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2024 meeting.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Chair Cordell made the following comments:

- She reiterated her desire to work with all Board members. She committed to driving from her home in north Louisiana to be wherever needed to do the Board's work. She invited Board members to stay in close contact and to let her know whenever there is anything she needs to be aware of. Regent Aubrey suggested that Chair Cordell meet with the other higher education board chairs when possible once they have been appointed by the Governor. He suggested this as a way to express good will from the Board of Regents and show a willingness to work together. Regent Aubrey also asked if she would be meeting with the Governor to which she replied that she soon would.
- She introduced Kennedy Orr, student member, who gave the following report:
 - She mentioned that on September 14, 2024, she attended the first Louisiana Council of Student Body Presidents (COSBP) meeting of the year. The meeting was productive despite having to be moved to a virtual platform because of Hurricane Francine. During the COSPB meeting Regent Orr shared some updates on behalf of the Board of Regents. COSBP reestablished committees in the following areas: executive initiatives, external affairs, research and development, and legislative and academic affairs. COSBP developed a resolution to address ensuring student participation in voting during this year's and future elections.
 - She added that COSBP discussed syllabus banks and that she will share additional information in the coming months.
 - She ended by noting that hurricane recovery is proceeding and that the various institutions are seeing successful voter registration drives. Regent Sterling asked if all the HBCUs have voting locations. Regent Orr said she was not sure but could find out. Grambling has petitioned for a voting site on the campus. Southern University A&M has a voting site on campus.

- Chair Cordell mentioned that the staff held their annual staff retreat August 28, 2024, at the Automotive Training Center at Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC). This was an opportunity for them to see various BRCC programs in person and to hear from Dr. Donna Beegle, a dynamic leader who worked her way out of generational poverty to earn her GED and later a Ph.D. Dr. Beegle is now doing research and providing training to help move people from poverty to prosperity. For this event, Regents staff wore their school colors to celebrate National College Colors Day and promote higher education.
- She mentioned that Commissioner Reed attended the Lumina State Policy Retreat on September 15, 2024, in Baltimore, Maryland and gave the gathering's keynote address. Commissioner Reed also discussed the Master Plan with the current Leadership Baton Rouge class.
- She noted that Dr. Tristan Denley, who is becoming one of the nation's foremost experts on artificial intelligence (AI) within higher education, was invited to participate in a panel discussion on September 18, 2024, on Capitol Hill hosted by the American Council on Education in conjunction with Senator Bill Cassidy's office. This event focused on how AI supports students on higher education campuses. Various experts discussed the use and integration of AI on college campuses.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE – MEAUXMENTUM MOMENT

Commissioner Reed gave introductory comments about progress toward the Master Plan goals. She stated that there is a clear path to success and thanked the campuses and students who are working to ensure that the goals are met. At this point, Dr. Tristan Denley gave the annual update on the Master Plan, mentioning that each year in September the Board evaluates progress toward reaching the goals, assessing what has been accomplished and what is left to be done. The current-year assessment shows that Louisiana is at 51% attainment rate, showing steady progress toward the Master Plan's goal of having 60% of Louisiana's working-age population (ages 25–64) holding a credential beyond high school by 2030. In 2024, 73,461 new credentials were awarded. Regents David and Temple commented that this ambitious goal has helped to improve the state bond rating and could open the door for a healthier population with lower rates of poverty and incarceration. Dr. Denley mentioned that 85% of Louisiana's graduates are in 3-, 4-, or 5-star jobs, but there is demand for more workers, especially in high-priority areas.

Reaching the 60% goal is a team effort both within higher education and across other agencies. Dr. Denley shared a quote from Susana Schowen, Secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, praising the collaboration between the Board of Regents and her department. Further, Dr. Denley noted the benefits to graduates and the state as a result of Louisiana's increasing educational attainment. Regent Williams-Brown voiced interest in spreading the message about the progress with the Master Plan and asked how this could be done. Chair Cordell felt that sharing the information with organizations like LABI (Louisiana Association of Business & Industry) and other economic development groups, as well as with campuses, should be considered.

Another component of the Master Plan, dual enrollment, has grown, with 41,000 students now participating. For three years in a row, higher numbers of African American students have participated. In addition, proactive outreach is increasing; emails have been sent to students in 13 parishes letting them know which institutions in their area they are already qualified to attend. A college access network is being created across the state to bring together community organizations already helping high school students to achieve their goals of attending college.

Dr. Denley announced that the third Meauxmentum Summit will be held in April. He mentioned the Work-Based Learning Initiative, a project funded by the Strada Education Foundation, that is infusing work-based learning into degree programs.

Regent Levy asked Chair Cordell to ensure that the information about the progress on the Master Plan is made available to the Legislature.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Chair Cordell inquired if any member of the Board wanted to take up any of the Committee reports separately before a motion was made to accept all reports.

On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Levy, the Board voted unanimously to approve all recommendations from the September 25, 2024 committee meetings.

AUDIT

INTERNAL AUDIT PRESENTATION

Mrs. Laura Soileau and Mrs. Kristin Bourque from EisnerAmper discussed the Internal Audit Charter Renewal, Internal Audit Independence Review, and Internal Audit Risk Assessment Update, and current year's proposed plan for approval. Mrs. Soileau presented the Internal Audit Charter for the Board of Regents and outlined the elements that contributed to changes, noting that the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) released new Global Internal Audit Standards in January 2024, which become effective January 9, 2025. Therefore, to best align with the new Global Internal Audit Standards, EAG Public Sector (a.k.a., EisnerAmper) made updates to Regents' internal audit charter applying the IIA's published charter for public sector as a model. She further explained the purpose of the Internal Audit Charter and the requirement to approve the Charter annually. Mrs. Soileau then certified EisnerAmper's independence and objectivity for internal auditing at the Board of Regents.

Mrs. Bourque continued with the presentation by discussing the completed FY25 Risk Assessment and proposed plan for approval. At present, the two areas to be audited by EisnerAmper include the Audit Structure Reorganization for the Board of Regents agency and the Daily Vessel Rate Computation at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) program. Once these audits are completed, EisnerAmper will present its findings,

and reassess to determine whether another internal audit is to be initiated. Mrs. Bourque also noted that EisnerAmper will complete a follow-up audit of observations identified during audits completed in prior years and any corresponding management action plans; these may include any audit findings from the Louisiana Legislative Auditor (LLA). Regent Williams-Brown requested a motion to reapprove the Internal Audit Charter.

On motion of Regent Sterling, seconded by Regent Finley, the motion passed unanimously. Another motion was requested by Regent Williams-Brown to approve the Internal Audit Plan for Fiscal Year 2024–25; the motion, made by Regent Sterling and seconded by Regent David, passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF THE NEW INTERNAL AUDIT CONTRACT WITH P&N

Ms. Bentley-Smith presented the new internal audit contract with EisnerAmper for FY25. She explained that work under this contract is required to be performed in accordance with Act 314 of the 2015 Regular Session and the Institute of Internal Auditors' *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. Regent Aubrey questioned the role of EisnerAmper related to the agency audit, and Mrs. Soileau and Ms. Bentley-Smith confirmed that EisnerAmper provides only internal auditing services, while the Louisiana Legislative Auditor completes an annual audit of the Board of Regents agency. Regent Aubrey also requested clarification of the EisnerAmper internal audit contract structure and cost. It was noted that while this contract is for three fiscal years and ends on June 30, 2027, it is brought to the Board annually for review. Further, the cost of the contract is \$127,000 per year. Regent Williams-Brown requested a motion to approve the internal audit contract with EisnerAmper. On motion of Regent Sterling, seconded by Regent David, the motion passed unanimously.

FINANCE

REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE FY 2024–2025 OPERATING BUDGETS

Mr. Matthew LaBruyere, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, began his presentation by stating that the September Board of Regents’ budget hearings provided an entire day for the Board to receive budget presentations from each of the management boards regarding their campus and system budgets as well as the Board of Regents agency budget, which includes the programs of LUMCON and LOSFA. The hearings focused on the FY 2024–2025 operating budgets.

The budget hearings allowed for questions and discussion on immediate and long-term budget needs as well as potential impacts of a proposed \$250M State General Fund reduction to higher education. Below is the schedule for the budget hearings.

Schedule of Budget Hearings for Tuesday, September 24, 2024 **Board Conference Room, Claiborne Building, 6th Floor** **Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

9:00 a.m.	Introduction
9:05 a.m.	Statewide Budget Overview
9:45 a.m.	Board of Regents
10:00 a.m.	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)
10:30 a.m.	Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA)
11:00 a.m.	University of Louisiana System
12:05 p.m.	Lunch Break
12:45 p.m.	Southern University System
1:45 p.m.	Break
2:00 p.m.	Louisiana State University System
3:00 p.m.	Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Following the hearings, the Finance Committee met to review and consider acceptance of the FY 2024–2025 operating budgets. At this time, BOR staff presented statewide summary information for the Board’s consideration.

On motion of Regent Temple, seconded by Regent Mire, the Board unanimously approved the funding recommendations for all Higher Education Systems, boards and agencies for FY 2024–2025.

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OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. LaBruyere mentioned that this month's actions complete the final step in the FY 2024–2025 budget development cycle. Next month, staff will update and prepare for approval a preliminary funding request for FY 2025–2026, which will be the first step in the FY 2025–2026 budget cycle. This budget request is required to be submitted to the Commissioner of Administration by November 1.

FACILITIES AND PROPERTY

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Chris Herring, Associate Commissioner for Facilities Planning and Emergency Management, summarized the Consent Agenda, containing the small capital projects approved by staff since the previous meeting:

SMALL CAPITAL PROJECTS

1. **LSU-AG: Rice Research Station Generator Installation, Rayne, LA** – Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Rice Research Board Funds \$300,000
2. **LSU A&M: Miller Hall Exterior Envelope Repairs, Baton Rouge, LA** – Louisiana State University and A&M College, Auxiliary Revenues \$208,000

On motion of Regent Mire, seconded by Regent Temple, the Facilities and Property Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the items on the Consent Agenda, including the small capital projects report.

ACT 959 PROJECT: SOWELA FLIGHT TRAINING SCHOOL AND MARITIME TRAINING CENTER

Act 959 of 2003 permits institutions to initiate certain capital projects not exceeding \$10M that are funded with self-generated/auxiliary revenues, grants, donations, or local/federal funds. The Louisiana Community and Technical College System, on behalf of SOWELA Technical Community College (SOWELA), submitted two requests for the purpose of constructing a new Flight Training School on the main campus and renovating an existing facility at the Port of Lake Charles as a Maritime Training Center.

The first project involves the construction of a new Flight Training School on the main campus. The new flight school will provide aspiring pilots with comprehensive training programs, both private and commercial, and will incorporate a state-of-the-art flight simulator, hangar facility, and meeting space to create a world-class flight training experience. The project scope includes construction of a new 12,390-square-foot (SF) metal hangar with 4,160 SF of conditioned space, a small parking lot, sidewalks, lighting, fencing, a covered canopy, and 13,367 SF in new paving to the existing taxiway. The total project cost of \$5.5M will be funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (\$3.5M) and a bond referendum from the City of Lake Charles (\$2M).

The second project involves the renovation of an existing facility located on a parcel of land adjacent to the Calcasieu River in Lake Charles, which has been pledged for use by SOWELA by the Port of Lake Charles. The Maritime Training Center will provide training through industry-based certifications and customized programs focusing on maritime safety, security, regulatory compliance, hazardous material handling, and technical systems. The project scope includes the renovation of an existing 34,500 SF warehouse, including 10,000 SF of occupied and conditioned space with classrooms, marine vessel simulation labs, offices, and

support spaces. Two enclosed multipurpose labs (9,700 SF each) and one open-walled lab (2,850 SF) will also be included in the renovation. The total project cost of \$5M will be funded via a Community Development Block Grant Program Disaster Recovery grant through the City of Lake Charles.

On motion of Supervisor Noble, seconded by Regent Temple, the Facilities and Property Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of two Act 959 project requests submitted by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, on behalf of the SOWELA Technical Community College, for the purpose of constructing a new Flight Training School and Maritime Training Center.

OTHER BUSINESS: HURRICANE FRANCINE AND ACT 751 (HOUSE BILL 940) UPDATES

Mr. Herring provided the Board with an update on the impact of Hurricane Francine. He noted that seven institutions and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) reported damage from the storm, primarily caused by water intrusion from wind-blown water, which led to leaking roof systems and building exterior issues. He informed the Board that each institution and LUMCON would be filing insurance claims and that a federal disaster declaration was issued on September 17, 2024, which would provide additional resources to the institutions for storm-related recovery.

Mr. Herring then provided the Board with an update on the status of Act 751, the College and University Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement Program, since the August 2024 Board of Regents meeting. He indicated that all project lists for FY25 have been approved by the state Office of Facility Planning and Control (FP&C) and projects are being initiated. He concluded with a summary of the projects by type (infrastructure, roofing/building exterior, mechanical/electrical/plumbing, etc.) that will be accomplished in FY25 across all four systems.

Regent Aubrey asked about the status of the capital outlay site visits. Mr. Herring noted the institutions previously visited and encouraged all members to attend upcoming visits.

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Denley presented the Consent Agenda, consisting of routine items including Staff Approvals. Regent Sterling asked for clarification on the states included in the SARA agreement. Dr. Denley advised that all states except California are included. Regent Temple asked why California is not included. Dr. Denley responded that California chose not to be part of the agreement and that California-based institutions are operating in Louisiana and are required to be licensed.

On motion of Regent Williams-Brown, seconded by Regent Orr, the Committee received and recommended Board of Regents approval of the items on the Consent Agenda.

2024 STATEWIDE STRATEGIC ACADEMIC PLANNING

Dr. Denley presented the 2024 Statewide Strategic Academic Planning, informing the Committee that institutions annually submit three-year plans, which detail the degree programs they plan to create over the next three years. He also advised that workforce needs are now being considered in the academic planning process.

He noted that new academic programs are not approved through this planning process and that institutions are still required to follow the approval process for new academic programs. He added that each plan has been reviewed by appropriate management board.

Dr. Denley then provided an update on the progress of programs in various stages of implementation, as well as those that may be proposed for termination.

Regent Aubrey asked when the Board will see the list of low-completer programs and whether completer numbers vary by degree program. Dr. Denley responded that established low-completer thresholds vary by degree level and that, over the next year, Regents staff will be reviewing the thresholds to ensure that they serve their intended purpose. He noted that he would like to update the Board at the beginning of the year

Regent Pryor inquired about the potential termination of a Master of Education program at Nicholls State University. Dr. Denley responded that Nicholls is looking to restructure, rather than eliminate, the program.

On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Pryor, the Committee approved the recommended actions on the 2024–2025 institutional academic plans.

ACT 790 DIFFERENTIAL TUITION FOR HIGH-COST PROGRAMS

Dr. Denley informed the Committee that Act 790 of the Louisiana Legislature’s 2024 Regular Session allows institutions from all four systems to set differentiated tuition rates for high-cost undergraduate programs.

He added that the Act charges the Board of Regents to create a list of high-cost program categories. He noted that a program’s inclusion on this list does not oblige a management board to increase tuition or fees; it simply provides the ability to set differential tuition and fees based on management board action. He added that prior to imposing any increase in tuition or fee, a management board must establish criteria for waivers in cases of financial hardship and notify prospective students.

Regent Sterling commented that the Board should keep in mind that potential budget cuts, if realized, will have implications for how institutions will use this list.

On motion of Regent Williams-Brown, seconded by Regent Aubrey, the Committee recommended approval of the list of High-Cost Undergraduate Program Categories for differential tuition authority according to Act 790 of the Louisiana Legislature's 2024 Regular Session.

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

CONSENT AGENDA

APPROVAL OF RULEMAKING

Dr. Boutté informed the Committee that the TOPS Scholarship and Grant Program administrative rules originally provided that circumstances related to a student's ability to pay for school are not sufficient to grant an exception to the requirement that a student must enroll full time, maintain continuous enrollment, and earn 24 hours each academic year because TOPS is a merit-based scholarship program. In 2019, the Board of Regents approved an amendment to this provision which would allow an exception to the general rule. This exception requires that a student provide documentation that the family's financial circumstances had changed due to unforeseen circumstances and that the student was required to work in order to supplement the household income.

Dr. Boutté noted that since adoption of the 2019 amendment, staff has seen an increase in the number of students requesting an exception based on the financial circumstances of their family. Many students have requested an exception because their TOPS award was not paid in a prior semester due to circumstances beyond the student's control and not related to a student's failure to earn the required cumulative grade point average or meet other requirements of the program, resulting in a past-due bill at their school. Because of the past-due bill, students were unable to enroll in a later semester to maintain continuous enrollment. Staff has also seen students whose one remaining parent has died, leaving the student to pay for all their school

expenses without family assistance. These students are only able to obtain an exception for one semester based on the death of an immediate family member, and their only reason for not enrolling in school is the inability to pay.

As a result of these trends, Dr. Boutté stated that staff proposes to broaden a student's ability to request an exception when financial circumstances prevent them from enrolling in school. Students will still be required to provide documentation that circumstances beyond their control caused them to fail to meet the TOPS continuation requirements; however, staff will be able to consider only the student's income rather than requiring that the family's financial circumstances be the issue. In addition, students will be required to provide a plan for preventing such circumstances from interfering with their ability to attend school in the future. She noted that the LOSFA Advisory Board had discussed this item extensively and had recommended this rulemaking for approval.

On motion of Regent Williams-Brown, seconded by Chair Cordell, the Statewide Programs Committee voted unanimously to recommend authorization of the Executive Director of LOSFA to publish a Notice of Intent to make these rules permanent.

TOPS ACT EXCEPTION

Dr. Boutté indicated that the TOPS statute requires that students achieve a qualifying score on the ACT no later than the national ACT test date in April of their year of high school graduation. The law provides for an exception to this requirement if the administering agency determines that the student was prevented from taking the test prior to high school graduation due to circumstances beyond the student's control and which were attributable to the administration of the test. The law allows an extension under these circumstances to September 30 of the year of the student's high school graduation, and it requires a one semester reduction in the period of the student's eligibility for TOPS.

One request for exception to earn a qualifying score on the ACT no later than the National ACT test date in April of the year of high school graduation was reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on September 11, 2024. The student has presented facts and documentation that they believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

On motion of Regent Williams-Brown, seconded by Chair Cordell, the Statewide Programs Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the request for exception that requires a student to earn a qualifying score on the ACT no later than the National ACT test date in April of the year of high school graduation.

TOPS HOME STUDY EXCEPTIONS

Dr. Boutté reminded the Committee that the TOPS statute requires that a student begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth-grade year. Act 95 of the 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature implemented a provision which allows the administering agency to grant exceptions to this requirement when a student provides documentation that the transfer to a home study program later than the statutorily provided time frame was beyond the student's control.

Two requests for exception to the deadline to begin a home study program were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on September 10, 2024. The students have presented facts and documentation that they believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

TOPS/M.J. FOSTER EXCEPTIONS

Dr. Boutté summarized TOPS and M.J. Foster regulatory provisions related to maintaining continuous enrollment. Sections 705.A.6 and 7 of the TOPS administrative rules require TOPS recipients to continue to enroll full-time for the fall and spring semesters of each

academic year, to remain enrolled throughout the semester, and to earn a minimum number of credit hours by the end of the academic year. Section 2103.E authorizes the governing body to grant an exception to the full-time, continuous enrollment and the annual earned-hour requirements when the “student/recipient has exceptional circumstances that are beyond his immediate control and that necessitate full or partial withdrawal from or non-enrollment in an eligible postsecondary institution.”

In addition, she noted that Section 2207.A.5 of the M.J. Foster administrative rules provides that students must maintain continuous enrollment, unless granted an exception for cause in accordance with §2103 of the Scholarship and Grant administrative rules. The same types of exceptions that apply for TOPS students apply to other programs administered by LOSFA for which the Legislature has provided the administering agency the authority to grant exceptions, including M.J. Foster.

Dr. Boutté informed the Committee that fifteen requests for exception to the TOPS requirements were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on September 11, 2024. Two requests for exception to the M.J. Foster continuous enrollment requirement were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on September 11, 2024. The students have presented facts and circumstances that the students believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

On motion of Regent Levy, seconded by Regent Orr, the Statewide Programs Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of requests for exception to the deadline to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth-grade year, to the TOPS regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year, and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school.

NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

Dr. Allison Smith, Assistant Commissioner for Student Health and Wellness, provided an overview of the state's college recovery programs and initiatives, noting that September is Collegiate Recovery Month nationwide. She summarized the history of the collegiate recovery movement, issues around student recovery, the necessity of solving related problems, and the benefit to both students and campuses in providing these services. She indicated that national organizations have identified a strong need for collaboration among local, regional, and state partners to ensure the success of recovery programs. Louisiana was featured as a higher education collaborative and she noted that this has been a statewide priority for several years. Dr. Smith then profiled several new recovery programs available at campuses across the state and ongoing activities to support these programs and the students they serve. Regent Finley asked about outcomes for students in recovery and Dr. Smith provided data on success as well as demographics on the Collegiate Recovery Program. She also profiled several collegiate recovery graduates who embody the remarkable impact of these programs.

Dr. Smith then introduced Ms. Kristina Canfield of SLU's Lion Up Recovery Program. She also noted support for mental health services provided during the 2023 and 2024 Regular Legislative Sessions, and the partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health in support of the work.

Ms. Canfield reviewed the history of the Lion Up Recovery program and data related to its impact on campus, as well as activities that has launched to help reach and serve students. Regent Finley asked how freshmen are recruited to these programs; Ms. Canfield discussed the on-campus outreach efforts.

Dr. Smith announced the establishment of two new collegiate recovery programs, at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Northwestern State University, with funding of \$750,000. Regent Temple asked how many institutions in Louisiana have recovery programs; Dr. Smith responded that Grambling State University, Southeastern Louisiana University, Tulane University, Louisiana State University and A&M College, Northshore Technical Community College, and the Southern University Law Center, in conjunction with Southern University and A&M College currently have programs. Dr. Erica Calais, UL System, spoke on behalf of the System about statewide efforts and the new recovery programs being launched. She summarized the value of these programs to students, campuses, and communities, and expressed the System's gratitude for the state's prioritization of these initiatives.

PLANNING, RESEARCH AND PERFORMANCE

R.S. 17:1808 (ACADEMIC LICENSURE): CONDITIONAL LICENSE EXTENSIONS

Dr. Susannah Craig presented the Consent Agenda, which included requests for extension of conditional licenses from two academic degree-granting institutions domiciled in Louisiana: American University of Technology located in New Orleans and Robert Cavalier University located in Gretna. Both institutions provide online education and are pursuing accreditation through the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC).

On motion of Regent Sterling, seconded by Chair Cordell, the Planning, Research and Performance Committee unanimously recommended that the Board of Regents approve extension of the conditional licenses as presented.

PERSONNEL

EVALUATION OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. Matthew LaBruyere, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, provided the Committee with an overview of the process for evaluating the Commissioner of Higher Education. Mr. LaBruyere then stated that the Personnel Committee is authorized to go into executive session and that the Commissioner had been advised of such as required by law. He noted that the Commissioner agreed to have her evaluation discussed in executive session. A motion to enter into executive session was made by Regent Finley and seconded by Regent Temple. A roll call vote was taken to enter into executive session.

Committee Members voting to enter executive session

Robert W. Levy – Chair
Terrie P. Sterling – Vice Chair
Blake R. David
Stephanie A. Finley
Collis B. Temple III
Judy Williams-Brown

Upon the conclusion of the executive session Regent Levy made a motion, seconded by Regent Finley to return from executive session.

Committee Members voting to return from executive session

Robert W. Levy – Chair
Terrie P. Sterling – Vice Chair
Blake R. David
Stephanie A. Finley
Collis B. Temple III
Judy Williams-Brown

Regent Levy stated that the Personnel Committee discussed the Commissioner of Higher Education's performance using the reflections and observations document provided by the Commissioner.

On motion of Regent Finley, seconded by Regent Temple, the Committee recommended that the Board approve the evaluation of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Commissioner of Higher Education Kim Hunter Reed presented several items to the Board:

- She announced that Dr. Michael Khonsari, LSU mechanical engineering professor, has been honored for a lifetime of service to mechanical engineering research and education with an honorary lifetime membership in the American Society of Mechanical Engineering.
- She mentioned that she and Chair Cordell attended the Call Me MISTER State Conference at Grambling State University, where 50 African American males enrolled in college of education programs around the state were recognized. Commissioner Reed expressed her excitement to see these students graduate and enter Louisiana's classrooms. Chair Cordell endorsed the Commissioner's view, celebrated the efficacy of the program, and suggested inviting members of the group to provide a presentation to the Board.
- She noted that Regents Williams-Brown, Levy, and Aubrey joined Chair Cordell and her for the investiture of President Martin Lemelle at Grambling State University.
- She mentioned that Regents would receive the latest "Louisiana's Got Talent" Podcast featuring Dr. Donna Beegle speaking about her upbringing and the impacts of intergenerational poverty across the country.
- Commissioner Reed also reinforced the need to spread the message of the Master Plan. She noted that printed copies will be mailed to legislators, as well as national and state partners. She said that Board staff will present to legislative committees on October 11 and October 17, and will distribute printed copies of the Master Plan at those events as well. Board staff will also look for opportunities to speak to various communities about progress on the Master Plan and would welcome any Regents who wish to join in this effort.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Cordell asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. There was none. Regent Aubrey reminded the Board of his meeting schedule suggestion and reiterated his suggestion, first mentioned at the Finance Committee meeting on Tuesday, September 24, to add an agenda item to cover two quarterly reports.

Chair Cordell reminded the Board that the October meeting will be held in Natchitoches. She asked the Board to review the tentative 2025 calendar before a vote at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Regent Temple, seconded by Regent Levy, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Appendix A
Board Meeting Guest List
Wednesday, September 25, 2024

NAME	AFFILIATION
Blair LeBlanc	HLS Fiscal
Kristin Bourque	EisnerAmper
Robert René	Southern University System
William Tulak	LCTCS
Jeannine O'Rourke	UL System
Margaret Finch	LSU A&M
Jackie Bach	LSU A&M
Brian Roberts	BOR/LUMCON
Dawn Diez	OBH
Felecia Johnson	OBH
Luria Young	SUBR
Annette Baldwin	Southeastern Louisiana University
Sujuan Boutte	LOSFA/BOR
Julia Gradney	OPB
Erica Calais	UL System
Jakob Ward	OPB
Amber Slater	OBH



BOARD of REGENTS
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Judy A. Williams-Brown
4th Congressional District

Agenda

Finance

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

VII. Reports and Recommendations

A. Finance

1. Approval of Budget Request for FY 2025–2026

Agenda Item VII.A.1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher Education Budget Request FY 2025–2026

In 2019, the Board of Regents issued its Master Plan for Higher Education, which established an audacious goal for Louisiana: 60% of working-age adults holding a degree or credential of value by the year 2030. Despite multiple years of major disruptions in our state, from the COVID pandemic to severe weather event, we have benefited from past record investments and achieved record educational attainment, increasing from 44% to 51% in 2023. Now is the time to build on this progress and accelerate our efforts.

Higher education is focused on using the Meauxmentum Framework to meet its 2030 attainment goal. Navigating this pathway requires implementing and maintaining coordinated strategies including prioritizing talent development and student support, increasing affordability, and advancing workforce and research solutions to build a stronger state. Having a shared vision that focuses on widening educational pathways, ensuring student success, and recognizing and counting all postsecondary education degrees and credentials of value unifies the mission and purpose of higher education around building prosperity for all Louisianians.

As Moody’s Investors Service noted in 2019, “if the [Board of Regents’] strategic plan meets objectives, Louisiana will benefit from greater economic competitiveness, a credit positive for the state.” To meet the demands of the future and position our people to thrive in the 21st-century world of work, we must continue to scale up the growth accomplished over the last five years by reinvesting in higher education and funding public institutions at levels that secure our competitive advantage within our region and nationally.

Today, despite multiple years of record-setting reinvestment, we lag most Southern states in both funding per student and per capita. Louisiana ranks last among the sixteen states within the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in state support per capita at \$244.97, significantly trailing the Southern average of \$345.69 by \$100.72 or 41% per citizen and resulting in a competitive funding gap of \$468.5 million (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association). As higher education faces budgetary uncertainty in the upcoming fiscal year, we recognize that falling even further behind peer states would disrupt our ability to provide a range of financial benefits to Louisiana including producing an increased number of taxpayers, decreasing dependence on social services, and providing the foundation for stronger workforce participation.

Additionally, by ensuring that college remains affordable by expanding proven practices such as need-based aid, early college opportunities like dual enrollment, and investments in reduced- and no-cost textbooks, Louisiana can improve access to and success in the education-to-employment pipeline across our state. This approach helps us to maximize the impact of limited state dollars by ensuring our most resource-challenged students secure the advantages of a high-quality, high-value postsecondary education.

Staff will present a detailed list of FY 2025–2026 funding priorities, developed in consultation with the systems, for the Board’s consideration. This information will support the Board of Regents higher education budget request letter to the Commissioner of Administration, which sets forth priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, in accordance with R.S. 39:32.1 (F).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends approval of the State General Fund operating budget requests for all higher education systems, boards, and agencies for FY 2025–2026.



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Board of Regents Meeting as a Committee of the Whole

Agenda

Facilities and Property

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

VII. Reports and Recommendations

B. Facilities and Property

1. Board of Regents FY 2025-2026 Capital Outlay Budget Recommendation

AGENDA ITEM VII.B.1.

Board of Regents FY 2025–26 Capital Outlay Budget Recommendation

The primary focus of the Board of Regents' FY 2025–26 Capital Outlay Budget Recommendation remains moving ongoing projects forward during the upcoming fiscal year. Within the recommendation presented, the BOR is prioritizing projects under construction or eligible to bid in FY 2025–26, followed by projects under design, and finally new projects that have not received funding in a prior year. Staff reviewed one hundred seventy-one (171) project requests submitted for consideration during the FY 2025–26 funding cycle. Unfunded projects that are strictly deferred maintenance in nature were not recommended due to the passage of Act 751 during the 2024 Regular Legislative Session. The funding demands for the recommended projects under construction, those eligible to bid in FY 2025–26, and those with design underway exceed the amount of capital project funding higher education will receive in the upcoming fiscal year (approximately \$275M from general obligation bonds and cash in the current fiscal year). For this reason, staff will meet and discuss project cash flow projections with each system and the Office of Facility Planning and Control in early 2025 to ensure as many projects move forward during the upcoming fiscal year as possible.

As required by law, institutions submitted project requests through their respective management boards, which in turn prioritized the projects among all member institutions and forwarded the system request to staff. In addition, Electronic Capital Outlay Request Tracking System (eCORTS) documents were prepared and submitted by all systems for each project contained within their capital outlay requests. eCORTS documents provide an electronic request for each project containing vital project information including, but not limited to, project budget, timeline, description, and types of space.

During the review of system requests, staff conducted site visits to institutions across the state to inform the analysis of campus priorities and needs. After reviewing all projects (including project timelines), a final recommendation was compiled for Board approval. Upon approval, the BOR's FY 2025–26 Capital Outlay Recommendation will be loaded into the Division of Administration's eCORTS system and sent to the Office of Facility Planning and Control by the November 1st deadline.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends approval of the Board of Regents' FY 2025–26 Capital Outlay Budget Recommendation.



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Board of Regents Meeting as a Committee of the Whole

Agenda

Academic and Student Affairs

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

VII. Reports and Recommendations

C. Academic and Student Affairs

1. Consent Agenda

a. Routine Staff Approvals

2. Academic Programs

a. AAS Health Information Technology – River Parishes Community College

b. BA Honors Traditions in Critical Thought and Scholarship – Louisiana State University A&M

3. Reports

a. MJ Foster Promise Executive Summary

b. MJ Foster Promise Report Year Two

c. TOPS Report Executive Summary

d. TOPS Annual Report 2024

AGENDA ITEM VII.C.1.a.

Routine Academic Requests & Staff Approvals

Institution	Request
LA Tech	Request to establish an Undergraduate Certificate in Environmental Sustainability (CIP 03.0103) and a Graduate Certificate in Health Informatics (CIP 51.9999) with a progress report on program implementation submitted as part of the institution's 2025 Academic Plan Approved
LA Tech	Request to change the CIP of the Graduate Certificate in Health Sciences from (CIP 34.0199) to (CIP 26.0102) to more accurately reflect the program's curriculum and purpose Approved
Nicholls	Request to establish Undergraduate Certificates in Studio Art (CIP 50.0702) and Art History (CIP 50.0703) with progress reports on program implementation submitted as part of the institution's 2025 Academic Plan Approved
Southeastern	Request to establish an Undergraduate Certificate in Medical Sales (CIP 52.1801) with a progress report on program implementation submitted as part of the institution's 2025 Academic Plan Approved
ULL	Request to establish an Undergraduate Certificate in Data Science (CIP 30.7001) a Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Cancer Registry Management (CIP 51.0000) and a Graduate Certificate in Gifted Education (CIP 13.1004) with progress reports on program implementation submitted as part of the institution's 2025 Academic Plan Approved
ULL	Request to make the following academic unit name changes: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Change the name of the Department of Biology to the School of Biological Sciences.2. Decouple the School of Music and Performing Arts into the School of Music and the School of Dance and Theatre. Approved

AGENDA ITEM VII.C.2.a.

Proposed Associate of Applied Science in Health Information Technology River Parishes Community College

Background Information

River Parishes Community College (RPCC) requests the Board of Regents' approval to offer an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Health Information Technology. The proposal was approved by the LCTCS Board of Supervisors and submitted to the Board of Regents for consideration. The proposal was favorably reviewed by Chief Academic Officers statewide and the proposed program was included in the institution's 2023–2024 Academic Plan.

Staff Summary

The 60-credit hour program, to be offered 100% online, was developed to provide graduates with a variety of career opportunities in healthcare settings that focus on managing health information and ensuring that it is accurately recorded, secured, and accessible. The proposed degree builds upon RPCC's existing Healthcare Access Specialist Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS) and Medical Coding Specialist Certificate of Applied Science (CAS). The curriculum for the Health Information Technology degree prepares students for two national certification exams: Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) and Certified Coding Specialist (CCS). Graduates with the Health Information Technology AAS and national certifications will be eligible and well-qualified for positions in large physician's offices, hospitals, medical records offices, insurance companies, home health agencies, and long-term care facilities.

1. **Value:** Per Regent's policy, this program meets the criteria of a Quality Credential of Value.
 - a. **Workforce Demand and Job Opportunities:** The proposed program will allow students to begin their educational journey in high school and gain entry-level employment in two years. The Health Information Technology degree is a logical next step for RPCC students enrolled in the Healthcare Access Specialist and Medical Coding Specialist programs and for graduates wanting to advance their education and increase their earnings.

Related Occupation	LWC Star Rating ¹	Current Jobs ²	Projected Jobs 2034 ²	% Change ²	Average Salary ¹
Health Information Technologists and Medical Registrars	4-star	259	322	24%	\$53K
Medical Records Specialists	4-star	2119	2382	12%	\$50K

¹Source – LWC

²Source – Lightcast (in Louisiana)

- b. **Curriculum Alignment with Employer Needs:** The proposed degree was created, in part, following conversations with the RPCC Allied Health Advisory Board and industry partners like Woman's Hospital and Baton Rouge General. Major courses in the program are aligned with specific student learning outcomes. The knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) incorporated into the course content align with those identified by the US Department of Labor for related professions.
 - a. **Same or Similar In-State Programs:** RPCC's primary service area includes parishes in at least three of Louisiana's eight (8) Regional Labor Market Areas (RLMAs). Currently only Delgado Community College offers an AAS in Health Information Technology in one of those regions.

- b. **Student Enrollment and Completion:** Students enrolled in the related certificate-level programs will be recruited and encouraged to complete the AAS in Health Technology. RPCC anticipates students in the program having overall higher retention and completion rates due to the program being a specialized program, with smaller class sizes and a dedicated advisor for all students.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
TOTAL Estimated Program Enrollment	26	39	52	62
TOTAL Estimated Program Graduates	5	10	15	20

2. **Resources:** The institution does not anticipate significant costs to implement the proposed program. Existing departmental facilities, student support, and technology will support the new degree.

	Current	Needed	Additional Costs
Faculty	Existing faculty in the department will support the program.	One additional full-time instructor will be needed.	Yrs. 1+: \$45,843
Physical (Facilities, Equipment, Library, & Technology)	Existing offices and classrooms are sufficient to support the program.	Other costs will be incurred for CAHIIM initial application and site visit fees and annual accreditation fees.	Yr. 1: \$15,500 Yrs. 2+: \$3,000
Student Support	Existing resources will meet the needs of the program for the foreseeable future.	No additional resources are needed.	\$0

3. **Master Plan Priorities:** The following aspects of the proposal directly address priorities or goals of the statewide attainment goal and 2030 Master Plan.

- **Accessibility:** This program is being offered 100% online allowing students with transportation and childcare challenges the opportunity to enroll.
- **Affordability:** RPCC will use either OER or low-cost textbooks for general education courses. Health Information Technology (HEIT) courses will use Cengage Unlimited at a one-time cost of \$249.99. Students who have already obtained certifications and/or licensure (e.g., Certified Coding Associate (CCA), Certified Coding Specialist (CCS), Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)) may receive credit for prior learning.
- **Partnerships:** Community partners on RPCC’s Allied Health and Medical Coding Specialist Advisory Boards fully support this program. Baton Rouge General and Woman’s Hospital submitted letters of support including statements of intent for externships.
- **Work-based Learning:** The proposed curriculum includes two externships for professional practice experience in coding as well as in health information management (HIM) or other HIM-related areas (such as Release of Information, Home Health Care, or Cancer Registry).
- **Other program attributes that contribute to closing the achievement gap with underserved populations:** As an extension of the Medical Coding Specialist CAS, students enrolled in the Health Information Technology degree may also qualify for the MJ Foster Promise Scholarship.

Staff Analysis

The proposed AAS in Health Information Technology was developed for students interested in a career in Allied Health, has a clear educational pathway that may be initiated while in high school, includes embedded credentials (CTS, CAS), and provides opportunities for students to engage in the profession via the two externships for work-based learning.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends conditional approval of the proposed Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Health Information Technology (CIP 51.0707) at River Parishes Community College with a progress report on program implementation submitted as part of the institution's 2025 Academic Plan.

AGENDA ITEM VII.C.2.b.

Proposed Bachelor of Arts in Honors Traditions in Critical Thought and Scholarship Louisiana State University and A&M College

Background Information

Louisiana State University and A&M College (LSU) requests the Board of Regents' approval to offer a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Honors Traditions in Critical Thought and Scholarship (TRACTS). The proposal was approved by the LSU Board of Supervisors and submitted to the Board of Regents for consideration. The proposal was favorably reviewed by Chief Academic Officers statewide. The proposed program was included in the institution's 2023–2024 Academic Plan.

Staff Summary

The proposed Honors TRACTS BA at LSU's Ogden Honors College (OHC) has been designed in line with LSU's Scholarship First agenda. The purpose of the proposed program, the first degree in the OHC, is to educate honors students with a strong foundation in critical and creative discernment, interdisciplinary perspectives, and research-driven inquiry. Upon completion, students will be prepared to take on leadership roles in a wide range of career opportunities, to address complex issues, articulate global perspectives, and perform across disciplinary boundaries, thereby contributing to workforce and economic development locally and on a broader scale. The program will provide students with a formal recognition of a rigorous honors curriculum that enables learners to make innovative connections across disciplines, solve problems, and develop personal leadership skills, thus improving the employment prospects and career trajectories for graduates and impacting workforce and economic development throughout the state, region, nation, and world in a 21st century society and economy.

Anchored in both humanities and the sciences, the proposed curriculum emphasizes an interdisciplinary approach to problem solving and decision making and is designed for exceptional students who want to lead the way in creating positive change for Louisiana and beyond. The college anticipates that most TRACTS majors will choose to pair this degree with other bachelor's degrees or minors across the university. Students will have increased exposure to a wide variety of disciplines that will enhance their knowledge and challenge their perspectives — complementing the focused specialization of their majors — and gain a broad education that cultivates leadership skills and conceptual thinking. The program will include an emphasis on mastering a foreign language (or exploring more than one) and completing Advanced Honors seminars in topics such as Technology and Society; Philosophy, Politics, and Economics; Comparative Civilizations; and Leadership and Scholarship.

1. Value: Per Regent's policy, this program meets the criteria of a Quality Credential of Value.

- a. **Workforce Demand and Job Opportunities:** OHC graduates are among the most highly sought after LSU graduates, and students who graduated between 2018 and 2022 reported an average salary of \$62,765, more than 12% above non-OHC bachelor's graduates. Through alumni networks and industry partnerships, the college aims to help secure employment for all students upon graduation.
- b. **Curriculum Alignment with Employer Needs:** The Ogden Honors College Advisory Council, composed of alumni, community representatives, employers and other external stakeholders, meets monthly with OHC administrators. This group was instrumental in shaping the design of the Honors TRACTS BA degree. Over the past two years, the curriculum has undergone regular review and revision to respond to the demand for rigorous, interdisciplinary learning that will benefit students as future professionals and contributing members of society.
- c. **Same or Similar In-State Programs:** While other similar programs exist in the region outside Louisiana, there are no other programs in the state designed exclusively for honors students.

- d. **Student Enrollment and Completion:** OHC enrollment has nearly doubled in the past ten years. The College aims to attract both in state and out of state students to LSU and work with employers to keep graduates in state. LSU anticipates that the program will enroll just 10% of OHC’s students to the program and expects about half of the students in the program will also have a second major.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
TOTAL Estimated Program Enrollment	100	194	282	365
TOTAL Estimated Program Graduates	0	0	0	83

2. **Resources:** With the large increases in OHC enrollment, three additional staff advisors have been hired in recent years. The college has also recently added three post-doc research positions with teaching responsibilities to cover the college’s capstone courses. Those three positions are included in the faculty line in the chart below. An existing faculty in residence will teach core courses in the program. All other courses in the program are currently taught by existing faculty in departments throughout the university.

	Current	Needed	Additional Costs
Faculty	Faculty from throughout the university will cover all courses for the foreseeable future.	The college’s three new post-doc positions will support the program.	\$187,500/yr.
Physical (Facilities, Equipment, Library, & Technology)	Existing offices and classrooms are sufficient to support the program.	No new facilities or equipment is needed.	\$0
Student Support	Existing advisors and other student support resources will meet the needs of the program for the foreseeable future.	No additional resources are needed.	\$0

3. **Master Plan Priorities:** The following aspects of the proposal directly address priorities or goals of the statewide attainment goal and 2030 Master Plan.

- **Accessibility:** The program will offer a variety of course delivery methods, with a focus on in-person classes for most courses. College support services address potential academic, social, and financial barriers and challenges, increasing students’ likelihood of degree completion.
- **Affordability:** The program’s core courses will make use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Affordable Educational Resources (AER) whenever feasible. The Ogden Honors College accepts transfer Honors and departmental honors courses from accredited institutions of higher learning, including community colleges. The Ogden Honors College will establish a comprehensive prior learning assessment (PLA) program that adheres to statewide PLA policy. Our HNRS 1010 Honors Core Experiences and HNRS 3100 Internships, Field Work, Off-Campus Programs courses are designed specifically to recognize and award credit for prior work experience, military service, and other non-traditional learning experiences
- **Partnerships:** The Ogden Honors College has garnered significant support from esteemed industry and legislative leaders across the state. The college has also established impactful partnerships with local community-based organizations, including the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, Volunteers in Public Schools, Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, Volunteers of America, East Baton Rouge Parish School System, The Water Institute of the Gulf, Office of the Public Defender, and the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless. It is the goal of OHC for all Honors TRACTS BA students to be

guaranteed in-state employment or placement in in-state graduate/professional programs upon graduation.

- **Work-based Learning**: The Ogden Honors College’s dedicated career development office collaborates with industry partners to secure paid and unpaid internship experiences for Honors students. The proposed new program will also incorporate experiential learning components such as project-based coursework, fieldwork, and service-learning opportunities. HNRS 3500 Internships, Fieldwork and Off-Campus Programs can provide academic credit for work- or research-based learning.
- **Other program attributes that contribute to closing the achievement gap with underserved populations**: LSU’s OHC prides itself on emphasizing a breadth of student support services aimed at reaching underserved students. The college implements tailored outreach and recruitment strategies to attract a diverse pool of applicants from underrepresented minority groups and prioritizes financial aid and scholarships specifically designed to support first-generation students and students from low-income backgrounds designed to alleviate financial barriers and make outstanding educational experiences more affordable for economically disadvantaged students. Tutoring programs, mentorship initiatives, counseling, and one-on-one and group advising are available. By addressing the specific challenges students may face, such as limited access to educational resources or navigating the higher education system, the college can foster a supportive learning environment that promotes success. The college has developed a culturally relevant curriculum that incorporates inclusive teaching practices, diverse readings, and opportunities for dialogue. Students engage with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (cultural, social, economic, political, natural, physical) and their implications for people’s lives, with the intent that they become informed, open-minded and responsible citizens.

Staff Analysis

LSU, in line with Regents Master Plan and LSU’s Scholarship First strategic plan agenda, aims to retain Louisiana’s top students and to attract talent from across the country in part by elevating the curricula available to the students attracted to its Ogden Honors College. The proposed program will provide students the opportunity to elevate their studies and signal academic excellence to employers and graduate schools.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends approval of the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Honors Traditions in Critical Thought and Scholarship (CIP 24.0101) at Louisiana State University and A&M College with a progress report on program implementation submitted as part of the institution’s 2025 Academic Plan.

AGENDA ITEM VII.C.3.a.

ACT 457 of the 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature

MJ Foster Promise Program Annual Report

STAFF SUMMARY

This Year Two report on the Murphy J. Foster Promise Award Program (MJFP) is legislatively required by Act 457 of the 2021 Regular Session. The legislation stipulates that an overview of specific data points be analyzed on a yearly basis and presented to the Legislature for outcomes assessment. The data for this Year Two report were compiled as the result of a collaborative effort by the Louisiana Board of Regents (BOR), Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), Louisiana Department of Revenue (LDoR) and the state's public and proprietary colleges.

In all, 3,038 students received funds to support their education in the second year of the MJ Foster Promise Program. Of those students completing a credential, a majority, 69%, were African American non-Hispanic, 24% were White non-Hispanic, and 3% were Hispanic. Slightly less than half (47%) of the recipients were 30 or older, and 52% earned less than \$24,999 annually. Altogether, 1,276 completers earned 1,480 credentials.

In addition to analyzing this year's cohort, we examined the financial impact of post-MJFP employment for the 2022–23 cohort. Salaries of MJFP students increased by 217% on average after completing their credential through MJFP. This means that, on average, the credentials earned enabled completers to more than triple their salary.

Second-year data results are encouraging in that they indicate that the program assists students in need and funds access to high-demand programs. We look forward to this program serving an increasing number of students in future years. In future years, we will also be able to analyze the economic impacts that the credentials earned have had on the prosperity of the recipients and their families knowing that the potential for success is significant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends approval of the “M.J. Foster Promise Program Annual Report” and authorizes the Commissioner of Higher Education to submit the report to the appropriate legislative committees on behalf of the Board of Regents.

2024 Year Two Report
Murphy J. Foster Promise Award Program

Act 457 of the 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature



BACKGROUND

Act 457 of Louisiana's 2021 Regular Legislative Session, created Louisiana's adult financial aid program. Named after former Louisiana Governor Murphy J. "Mike" Foster, this legislation established a \$10.5 million annual state fund to provide workforce training opportunities for the state's working-age adults who have not yet earned a postsecondary credential (legislation can be accessed here: [Act 457 \(2021\)](#)).

The purpose of the program is to provide financial assistance to eligible students enrolled in two-year public postsecondary institutions and accredited proprietary schools approved by the Board of Regents to pursue an associate's degree or a short-term credential aligned with Louisiana's workforce priorities. The M.J. Foster Promise Award Program's (MJFP's) effective date was the 2022–2023 academic year.

Award recipients must pursue an associate's degree or shorter-term postsecondary credential tied to specific high-demand, high-wage occupations aligned to Louisiana's workforce priorities. The program funds enrollment in priority majors related to growing industry sectors, including construction, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics (the complete list can be found at [MJFP Approved Programs](#)).

The M.J. Foster Promise Award Program is critical in helping to reach the goal outlined in the Board of Regents Master Plan, *Louisiana Prospers*, of 60% credential attainment for the state's population by 2030. With the growth of participants and completers in the program, the MJFP Award provides financial support for students to complete their education and training to earn high-demand credentials, ultimately contributing to a significant influx of working-age adults needed for high-value positions in Louisiana's economy.

Program eligibility requirements are as follows: applicants must be Louisiana residents (21 years or older), meet a family income threshold of 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)¹, or be unemployed or underemployed for six months. The awards are available on a first-come, first-served basis and accessible to the student for three years. The original program covered the cost of tuition and required fees after all other sources of aid have been applied (excluding student loans and federal work-study [MJFP Award Information](#)); however, Act 284 of the 2023 Legislative Session allows the scholarship to be used before all other sources of aid for an eligible student's first semester of support.

The award amount of \$3,200 per award year, or \$1,600 per semester, is provided to a student enrolled full-time. Part-time students receive a proportional amount. Students can receive a maximum of \$6,400 over three years.

¹A measure of income issued annually by the Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) determines eligibility for specific programs and benefits such as Medicaid. The 2024 income number of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for an individual is \$15,060, and for a family of four is \$31,200. [Federal Poverty Level \(FPL\) - Glossary | HealthCare.gov](#)

A student may receive the maximum award amount of \$6,400 in one year for certain high-cost programs ([MJFP Award Information](#)).

Students can use the annual M.J. Foster Promise Award from July 1 through June 30. Compliance with reporting requirements is a condition of an institution's continued eligibility to receive payments from the state on behalf of award recipients, which shall be determined annually by the administering agency.

As required by law, the Board of Regents has established an Advisory Council and identified qualified programs that provide the high-value credentials this program supports. The Advisory Council is comprised of the following members or their designees: chancellors of LSU Eunice and Southern University Shreveport, the President of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the State Superintendent of Education, the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, the Executive Director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC), the Chairman of the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council and the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Revenue. Furthermore, the law requires the Board of Regents to administer the program through the Louisiana Office of Financial Assistance (LOSFA).

Multiple pieces of legislation approved in the 2024 Regular Legislative Session made substantive changes to the M.J. Foster Program.

Act 102 made the following additional changes to MJFP:

- Increased the maximum amount that may be appropriated to \$40 million. Note that this increase only allows for a maximum appropriation; it does not require it.
- Provides that the Advisory Council shall be called by the Louisiana Workforce Commission rather than the Board of Regents.

Act 633 gradually reduces the minimum eligibility age for the M.J. Foster Promise Program from the current 21 to 17. This reduction in the minimum eligibility age will take place in a graduated manner over a period of four years, as follows:

- For the 2024–2025 award year, an applicant must be 20 years or older;
- For the 2025–2026 award year, an applicant must be 19 years or older;
- For the 2026–2027 award year, an applicant must be 18 years or older; and
- For the 2027–2028 award year and thereafter, an applicant must be at least 17 years old.

Overall, for the 2023–2024 award year, 10,878 applicants were evaluated for eligibility to receive program funds. Of the total applicants, 6,807 were eligible, 1,938 were ineligible, 773 were cancelled, and five were withdrawn. Cancellations and withdrawals consisted of students who voluntarily withdrew for various reasons, were not enrolled in an approved program, were not enrolled during the award year, or did not adhere to enrollment deadlines. In total \$9,949,882 was dispersed (as of 9/04/2024) to students in Year Two, compared to \$2,712,371 to students in Year One.

METHODOLOGY

To gather the requested data for the report, eligible institutions offering the program were identified: Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) institutions, LSU Eunice (LSUE), Southern University Shreveport (SUSLA), and accredited proprietary schools licensed by the Board of Regents. The dataset for year two of the program includes students enrolled in MJFP-approved majors and validated skills and learning programs at LCTCS institutions, LSUE, and SUSLA. In addition, approximately 155 proprietary institutions are licensed in the state; of those, 38 are accredited, and 33 offer credentials that are eligible for the award. BOR worked with these proprietary institutions to gather their enrollment and outcomes data.

Staff worked to identify both program awardees who enrolled in eligible credential programs and credential completers from all eligible institutions. Non-awardees in eligible programs were also identified to provide comparison data whenever possible. BOR, LOSFA, and LWC relied on previously established intra-agency Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) governing data-sharing to acquire the data required for this report, following all data privacy protocols.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Act 457 (2021) required that the Board of Regents submit a written report to the Legislature to include all the information for the preceding academic year as listed below:

- Demographic information of award recipients, including age, race, gender, and household income.
- The mean length of time required for award recipients to complete a qualified program as compared to other completers of the program who did not receive the award.
- Pre- and post-award employment information, including employment status, annual wages, and employer's industry sector.
- Recidivism rates of award recipients.
- The administering agency shall, with the cooperation and assistance of the state's public two-year postsecondary education institutions and proprietary schools, annually query each first-time award recipient to determine the extent to which receiving the award influenced the recipient's decision to enroll in postsecondary education.

All data requested and analyzed are reported in the aggregate only and contain no personally identifiable information.

Program Participant Demographic Information

Act 457 (2021) requires demographic information of program participants, including age, race, gender, and household income.

Table 1 considers the 3,038 MJFP recipients by race and gender. Black non-Hispanic students represent the majority of recipients at 67%, followed by White non-Hispanic students at 17% and Hispanic students at 2%. When gender is added to the analysis, Black non-Hispanic females represent the highest participation percentage rate at 56%, followed by White non-Hispanic females at 14% and Black non-Hispanic males at 11%.

Table 1. Race by Gender for MJFP Funding Recipients, 2023–2024

Race by Gender for MJFP Funding Recipients, 2023–2024							
Race	Female		Male		Gender Not Reported	Total	Percent of Total
	Headcount	Percent of Total	Headcount	Percent of Total			
Black, Non-Hispanic	1,695	56%	338	11%	9	2,042	67%
White, Non-Hispanic	416	14%	110	4%	5	531	17%
Hispanic	60	2%	12	0%		72	2%
Asian	214	7%	24	1%		238	8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	11	0%	3	0%	1	15	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	11	0%	3	0%		14	0%
Two or More Races	43	1%	8	0%	2	53	2%
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	54	2%	12	0%	7	73	2%
Grand Total	2,504	82%	510	17%	24	3,038	100%

Source: LOSFA’s MJFP Recipient File, as of 07/25/2024

Table 2 looks at the age ranges of MJFP funding recipients. Eligible students must be 21 or older. Of the total MJFP recipients (3,038), just under half (47%) are 30 or older, and 72% are 25 or older.

Table 2. Age Ranges for MJFP Funding Recipients, 2023–2024

Age Ranges for MJFP Funding Recipients, 2023–2024		
Age Range	Headcount	Percent
21–24	848	28%
25–29	768	25%
30–39	943	31%
40 +	479	16%
Total	3,038	100%

Source: LOSFA’s MJFP Recipient File, as of 07/25/2024

Another data point required by the law to be reported under demographic information is personal income for MJFP recipients. The program requires participants to meet a family income threshold of 300% of the [Federal Poverty Level](#)¹ or be unemployed or underemployed for six months.

Table 3 illustrates the self-reported adjusted gross income levels of recipients. 24% (740) of recipients fall into the two lowest income levels (less than \$15,000 per year); 73% (2,224) of recipients make less than \$34,999 per year, and 10% fall into the \$35,000–\$49,999 per year

income group. Only 7% of the recipients make \$50,000 or more, and 9% of recipients (286 students) did not report their income.

Table 3. Income by Groups for MJFP Funding Recipients, 2023–2024

Income by Groups for MJFP Funding Recipients, 2023–2024		
Self-Reported Adjusted Gross Income	Headcount	Percent
Less Than \$10,000	408	13%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	332	11%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	855	28%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	629	21%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	305	10%
\$50,000 and more	223	7%
Did Not Report	286	9%
Total	3,038	100%

Source: LOSFA’s MJFP Recipient File, as of 07/25/24

Almost 65% of recipients self-reported adjusted gross incomes below the ALICE Household Survival Budget for a single adult in Louisiana (\$27,420), and 97% self-reported adjusted gross incomes below the [ALICE Household Survival Budget](#) for a family of four (\$78,744). ALICE is an acronym for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed households with income above the Federal Poverty Level but below the basic cost of living [[About Us | Overview of ALICE Project \(unitedforalice.org\)](#)]. The ALICE Household Survival Budget is “the bare-minimum cost of household basics (housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and a smartphone plan, plus taxes and a small contingency)”.

The M.J. Foster Promise Program is clearly helping the students who need the most assistance to get on an academic track to success.

Program Completers Information

Table 4 shows the race and gender demographics of the 1,276 students who completed credentials. 53% of completers were Black non-Hispanic females, and the majority (69%) of the total completers were Black non-Hispanic.

These data align closely with those on recipients and demonstrate that program support is effective across races and genders in enabling students to complete their credentials.

Table 4. Completers by Race and Gender, 2023–2024

Completers by Race and Gender, 2023–2024						
Completers	Female		Male		Total for Race	Percent of Total
	Headcount	Percent of Total	Headcount	Percent of Total		
Black, Non-Hispanic	673	53%	210	16%	883	69%
White, Non-Hispanic	220	17%	85	7%	305	24%
Hispanic	23	2%	13	1%	36	3%
Asian	2	0.2%	1	0.1%	3	0.2%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	0.2%	3	0.2%	5	0.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	0.2%			3	0.2%
Two or More Races	19	1%	11	1%	30	2%
Race/Ethnicity Unknown	5	0.4%	6	0.5%	11	0.9%
Total	947	74%	329	26%	1,276	100%

Source: BOR’s Statewide Completers System, Enrollment and Completions, Statewide Student Profile System, LOSFA MJFP files

Program Completion Information

Table 5 provides the top five programs for MJFP program completions. In this report, completing an industry-recognized credential is limited to completions in the approved MJFP program *Classification of Instructional Programs* (CIP) code list, which is aligned to the five major industry sectors (listed in Table 5). Altogether, 1,276 completers were awarded 1,480 credentials.

In this second year, credential completions increased appreciably from 211 in 2022–2023 to 1,480 in 2023–2024. The healthcare profession had the most significant number of completers, a clear need in our state. Further analysis finds that the top five healthcare program completions were Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing, and Nursing Assistants (342); Allied Health and Medical Assisting Services (312); Registered Nursing, Nursing Administration, Nursing Research and Clinical Nursing (83); Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science/Research and Allied Professions (62); and Clinical/Medical Laboratory Science/Research and Allied Professions (58).

Table 5. MJFP Completions by Industry

MJFP Completions by Industry		
Program Description	2022–2023	2023–2024
Healthcare	156	965*
Transportation and Warehousing	15	310
Manufacturing	13	96
Construction	17	70
Information Technology	10	39
Total	211	1,480

Source: BOR’s Statewide Completers System, Enrollment and Completions, LOSFA MJFP files

*The majority of healthcare program completions (857) are in the top five.

Comparing year two MJFP completions by award level (Table 6) to year one data, the increase in completions is significant. This positive trend indicates that MJFP funding is accomplishing its intent of helping students earn the skills needed for the workforce. Additionally, the number of students earning stackable credentials of value suggests opportunities for this group of students to continue acquiring expertise in their chosen professions.

Table 6. MJFP Completions by Credential Level

MJFP Completions by Credential Level		
Degree Level	2022–2023	2023–2024
Career Tech Certification	55	393
Certificate (One Year)	11	94
Diploma	42	165
Associate	34	147
Cert. or Diploma < than 3 Months	3	24
Cert. or Diploma 3 to 6 months	6	134
Cert. or Diploma 6 months to 1 year	52	326
Cert. or Diploma 1 year to 2 years	7	179
Associate in Occ. Studies	1	18
Grand Total	211	1,480

Source: BOR’s Statewide Completers System, Enrollment and Completions, LOSFA MJFP files

Time-To-Degree

Program completion data compared the time to degree for MJFP award recipients in public and proprietary institutions with students in the same programs who did not receive MJFP funding.

Table 7 provides data for students who completed eligible credentials in public postsecondary institutions and proprietary schools in the program's second year. For each credential level, time to degree is compared for students who received and did not receive MJFP funding.

Table 7. Time-to-Degree by Credential Level 2022–2023 and 2023–2024

Time-to-Degree by Credential Level 2022–2023 and 2023–2024				
Degree Level	2022–2023		2023–2024	
	MJFP Completions	Non-MJFP Completions	MJFP Completions	Non-MJFP Completions
Career Tech 1-8 cr. hrs.	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.0
Career Tech 9-18 cr. hrs.	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2
Certificate (One Year)	2.0	1.5	1.5	1.4
Diploma	3.3	2.1	3.0	2.1
Associate	3.3	3.2	4.2	3.2
Cert. or Diploma < than 3 Months	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Cert. or Diploma 3 months to 6 months	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
Cert. or Diploma 6 months to 1 year	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8
Cert. or Diploma 1 year to 2 years	1.4	1.1	1.1	0.9
Associate in Occ. Studies	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.8

Source: BOR's Completions, Enrollment Files, Enrollment and Completion Data System, LOSFA MJFP files as of 7/25/24.

MJFP recipients and non-recipients earned credentials that could be completed in a year or less in similar, if not identical, lengths of time. These included Career Technical Certificates, short-term Diplomas, and Industry-Recognized Certifications.

Second, students also completed eligible diploma or associate's degree programs that cannot be completed in a single year. The average time to degree for these programs was a bit longer in some credentials for the award recipients than the non-recipients (3.0 vs. 2.1 years for diploma earners and 4.2 vs. 3.2 years for associate's degree earners). Further analysis of this population shows that many of these students began their college studies long ago. This analysis suggests that the funds provided by the MJFP award enabled students who had some college but no degree to complete their credentials.

Pre- and Post-Award Employment Information

As an element of this report, we analyze the financial impact of employment for MJFP completers. For this analysis, we examine the data for last year’s graduates. Of the 192 completers from the 2022–2023 cohort matched to Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) data, 174 had reported wages before accepting the MJFP Award. The average annual wage for this group was \$21,673 (Tables 8 and 9). This is below the ALICE Household Survival Budget for a Single Adult in Louisiana of \$27,420.

Tables 8 and 9. Pre-MJFP Enrollment Wage/ALICE Data

Pre-Completion Annual Salary:			
Median: \$19,026			
Mean: \$21,673			
Collection Year	2022–2023		
Below/Above ALICE* for Pre-MJFP Enrollment	Average Wage Within Group	Headcount	Percent
Below ALICE Household Survival Budget for Single Adult (\$27,420)	\$15,663	131	77%
Above ALICE Household Survival Budget for Single Adult (\$27,420)	\$39,984	43	23%
All Matched Students	\$21,673	174	100%

*Of the 192 MJFP completers reported for AY 2022–2023, 174 (91%) of those completers were found in pre-MJFP wage data.

Source: [State Reports | UnitedForALICE](#)

Of the 192 completers from the 2022–2023 cohort matched to LWC data, 135 (70%) had post-earnings after completing their credential in the LWC data set. The average annual salary for this group of 135 completers was \$40,566 (Table 10). This equates to a change from 77% below the ALICE Household Survival Budget pre-MJFP support to 64% above post-completion.

Table 10. Post-Completion Annual Salary

	Average Annual Salary Within Group	Headcount	Percent
Below ALICE Household Survival Budget for Single Adult (\$27,420)	\$13,509.67	48	36%
Above ALICE Household Survival Budget for Single Adult (\$27,420)	\$55,493.38	87	64%
All Matched Students	\$40,565.84	135	100%

Source: BOR’s Statewide Completers System, Enrollment and Completions Data System, LOSFA MJFP files, LWC Wage Data

Table 11. Post-Completion Annual Salary

Post-Completion Annual Salary:	
Median: \$36,256	
Mean: \$40,566	
Annual Salary After Completing MJFP, 2022–2023	
Post-Completion Annual Salaries	Headcount
\$0–\$9,999	16
\$10,000–\$19,999	19
\$20,000–\$29,999	20
\$30,000–\$39,999	21
\$40,000–\$49,999	17
\$50,000–\$59,999	16
>\$60,000	26
Total	135

*Of the 192 MJFP completers reported for AY 2022–2023, 135 (70%) of those completers were found in post-MJFP wage data.

Of the 192 MJFP completions, 128 had both pre- and post-wage data in the LWC data match. Changes in salary are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Post Completion Salary Bands

Change in Salary After Completing MJFP, 2022–2023	
Salary Increase	Headcount
<\$0	22
\$0–\$4,999	17
\$5,000–\$9,999	19
\$10,000–\$19,999	17
\$20,000–\$29,999	16
\$30,000–\$39,999	8
\$40,000–\$49,999	8
\$50,000–\$59,999	5
\$60,000–\$69,999	9
>70,000	7
Total*	128

Source: BOR’s Statewide Completers System, Enrollment and Completions Data System, LOSFA MJFP files, LWC Wage Data

*Of the 192 MJFP completers for AY 2022–2023, only 128 (67%) of those completers were found in both pre- and post-MJFP wage data.

Salaries of MJFP students increased by 217% on average after completing their credentials (Table 12). This means that on average an individual's salary more than tripled from the amount before the student received MJFP funds. The median (the mid-point of the data set) increase in salary is \$13,016, and the mean (average) increase in salary is \$ 20,520.

Recidivism Rates

The law allows people who have been previously incarcerated to receive MJFP funds provided they have not been convicted of a violent crime. In this second year of the program, BOR continues to work with the Department of Corrections to obtain data concerning the recidivism rates of MJFP recipients. Once obtained the data exchange agreement for the recidivism rates will provide a review to determine if students receiving MJFP funds return to prison. However, while we do not currently have data concerning previously incarcerated MJFP recipients, of the 1,192 students who received MJFP funds in 2022–2023, two individuals were incarcerated subsequent to the award.

Yearly Student Survey

The legislation requires an annual survey of every first-time award recipient to determine how the MJFP award influenced their decision to enroll in college. LOSFA was asked to survey all students who were MJFP recipients. The source for the data below is LOSFA's survey.

The total survey population consisted of 8,094 MJFP-eligible students. Of the total surveys sent through email, 5,172 students opened the email, 384 clicked on the survey, and 310 responded, yielding a 3.83% response rate. 49% of survey respondents reported learning about the MJFP program through a college advisor, admissions, or enrollment staff. 19% of survey respondents reported hearing about the program from family and friends (Table 13).

Finally, 15% heard about the program through personal web research for financial aid and scholarships. 64% of survey respondents learned about the MJFP program essentially through word of mouth, either at their institutions or through family and friends. This finding underscores the importance of socializing this program with college advisors and counselors who have direct contact with students and can inform them of this opportunity.

Of the 258 responses to the question "*Did M.J. Foster funds affect your decision to enroll in your college program?*", 135, or 52%, said the award influenced their decision to enroll in a postsecondary institution (Table 16). Table 17 drills down into the enrollment behavior of these students' responses. Of the 135 survey respondents, 55 enrolled in a certificate, diploma, or associate's degree, and 78 did not respond. In contrast, 48% reported that the award did not influence their decision to enroll. Overall, 81% of respondents (Table 18) reported enrolling in a program to complete a credential or degree that they had begun previously.

Table 13. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024		
How did you hear about the M.J. Foster Promise Program?		
College Advisor, Admissions, or Enrollment Staff	163	49%
Family, Friends	63	19%
Personal Web Research for Financial Aid/Scholarships	50	15%
Social Media	25	8%
Other	13	4%
Email from Friends, Colleagues, etc.	12	4%
Adult Counseling	4	1%
High School Guidance Counselor	1	0.3%
Total Responses^{1**}	331	100%

¹ Of the 310 survey respondents, the survey response rate for this question is 89%.

^{**}Students were able to select multiple responses to this survey question.

Table 14. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024		
Have You Attended College Before?		
Yes	269	87%
No	41	13%
Total Survey Respondents Awarded Funding²	310	100%

² Of the 310 survey respondents, the survey response rate is 100% for this question.

Table 15. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024		
Did You Have College Credit Already?		
Yes	155	60%
No	103	40%
Total Survey Respondents Awarded Funding³	258	100%

Table 16. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024		
Did M.J. Foster Funds Affect your Decision to Enroll in your College Program?		
Yes, It Did Influence	135	52%
No, It Did Not Influence	123	48%
Total Survey Respondents Awarded Funding³	258	100%

³ Of the 310 survey respondents, the survey response rate is 83% for this question.

Table 17. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

Yes, the MJFP Funds Influenced my Decision to Enroll	135
I did not enroll in a certificate/diploma/associate degree program or a short-term workforce training program.	2
I enrolled in a certificate/diploma or a short-term workforce training program.	38
I enrolled in an associate degree program.	17
No response	78
No, the MJFP Funds Did Not Influence my Decision to Enroll.	123
Did you enroll in a program to finish your degree? No	18
Did you enroll in a program to finish your degree? Yes	61
Did you enroll in a program to finish your degree? No response	44

Table 18. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024		
Did you enroll in an associate degree program or a workforce training program?		
Yes, I enrolled in an associate degree program	34	33%
Yes, I enrolled in a certificate/diploma or a short-term workforce training program	59	58%
No, I did not enroll in a certificate/diploma/associate degree program or a short-term workforce training program	9	9%
Total Survey Respondents Awarded Funding⁵	102	100%

⁴Of the 310 survey respondents, the survey response rate is 33% for this question.

Table 19. M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024

M.J. Foster Promise Survey Results, 2023–2024			
Did you enroll in a program to finish your degree?			
	Yes	126	81%
	No	30	19%
	Total Survey Respondents Awarded Funding⁴	156	100%

⁴Of the 310 survey respondents, the survey response rate is 50% for this question.

CONCLUSION

Implications/Recommendations

The Murphy J. “Mike” Foster Promise Award Program was developed to assist adult students by providing funding for workforce education and training opportunities in high-value programs. Funding is available to recipients for up to three years to attain an associate’s degree, diploma, or short-term stackable credential.

The data in this report demonstrate that the program, as established, directly benefits its intended population. 3,038 students received funds to support their education, almost double that reported last year. Of those students who received funds, 67% were Black, 17% were White, 65% were from lower socio-economic brackets, 47% were 30 or older, and 82% were female. The majority of completers (74%) were female, and 69% were Black.

While many of those students who received funds are still pursuing their credentials, 1,276 were able to complete within this second year of the award. The law allows a student to earn several stackable credentials in a qualified program. In total, the 1,276 recipients in 2023–2024 completed 1,480 credentials.

Recipients of the MJFP scholarship are eligible to enroll in programs in the areas of Healthcare, Transportation and Warehousing, Manufacturing, Construction, and Information Technology. This year, almost 1000 students earned credentials in the Healthcare field, and 300 more credentials were earned in Transportation and Warehousing.

In addition to the analysis of this year's cohort, we were also able to examine the financial impact of post-MJFP employment for the 2022–2023 cohort. That analysis shows that on average the credential earned enabled a completer to increase their salary by more than \$20,000.

BOR will continue to monitor progress and gather data related to the remaining students. These outcomes will be included in future reports.

In future years, we will also be able to analyze the economic impacts that the credentials earned have had on the prosperity of the recipients and their families. The potential for success is significant.

AGENDA ITEM VII.C.3.c.

2024 TOPS Report (as Required by R.S. 17:5067)

Background Information

Act 1375 of the 1997 Regular Legislative Session	Created TOPS awards
First class to receive TOPS awards	Entering freshman class of 1998
Act 1202 of the 2001 Regular Legislative Session	Prescribed that BOR prepare a yearly report analyzing the program
Act 227 of the 2015 Regular Legislative Session	Modified and clarified specific data points without making substantive changes to the report
Act 665 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session	Eliminated the inclusion of parental income data in the report
Act 447 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session	Added Geometry as a core curriculum requirement for TOPS <i>Tech</i>
Act 502 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session	Added specific computer science courses as an alternative to the foreign language requirement for TOPS <i>Opportunity</i> , <i>Performance</i> , and <i>Honors</i>
Act 267 of the 2023 Regular Legislative Session	Added Financial Literacy as a required, one-unit core curriculum course for the TOPS <i>OPH</i> and TOPS <i>Tech</i> core curricula. For TOPS <i>OPH</i> , it adds one core curriculum course, bringing the total courses required to 20. For TOPS <i>Tech</i> , it reduces the math electives to one course instead of two and adds Financial Literacy as the third required math
Act 211 of the 2024 Regular Legislative Session	Requires students to earn one Carnegie unit of credit in Computer Science to meet the TOPS <i>Tech</i> , <i>Opportunity</i> , <i>Performance</i> , and <i>Honors</i> core curricula

STAFF SUMMARY

- From 2014–2024 of the 190,006 students deemed eligible for a TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance*, *Honors*, or *Tech* Award, 161,060 (or 84.8%) accepted their award and enrolled in a postsecondary education institution in Louisiana.
- The proportions of eligible students who accept their awards differ by award level. The proportion of eligible students for *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* awards who choose to

accept their awards continues to decline.

- The average ACT score of all TOPS recipients between 2013–2014 and 2022–2023 increased to 24.5, and their average core GPA increased to 3.73.
- The average ACT composite for TOPS *Tech* recipients for 2023–2024 was 17.3, and their average core GPA was 3.05.
- From 2013–2014 to 2022–2023, the majority of TOPS recipients were white (70.5%) and female (57.2%).
- Despite the racial gaps among TOPS recipients, the number of minority students receiving TOPS has generally increased over time. This year, the number of African American and Hispanic students eligible for TOPS increased. However, overall, the pool of eligible students has been declining, a trend reflected at the national level.
- Students who begin college with a TOPS award persist and graduate at higher rates than non-TOPS students.
- The average time-to-degree for TOPS recipients at the same institution they first enrolled in, pursuing an associate’s degree, is 3.7 years, compared with 5.7 years for non-TOPS.
- The average time-to-degree for TOPS recipients pursuing a baccalaureate degree is 4.4 years, compared to 6 years for non-TOPS.
- From 1998–1999 through the 2023–2024 fiscal years, the state provided approximately \$4.9 billion in funding for the TOPS Program.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends approval of the "TOPS Report: Analysis of the TOPS Program from 2014-2024" and authorizes the Commissioner of Higher Education to submit the report to the appropriate legislative committees on behalf of the Board of Regents.

TOPS Report

Analysis of the TOPS Program

2014–2024

October 2024



BOARD of REGENTS
STATE OF LOUISIANA

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Executive Summary

The Tuition Opportunity Program for Students subsequently renamed the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) was created by Act 1375 of the 1997 Regular Legislative Session. The first college freshman class to receive TOPS awards entered postsecondary education in the fall of 1998.

Act 1202 of the 2001 Regular Legislative Session requires the Louisiana Board of Regents (BOR) to provide a report analyzing various aspects of the TOPS Program. Act 227 of the 2015 Regular Legislative Session modified prior law to clarify and specify data points to be reported without making any substantive changes to the program.

In accordance with Act 227, this report includes:

- An analysis of the relationship between high school courses taken and the student's American College Test (ACT) score;
- The number of high school graduates who are eligible for TOPS and subsequently enroll in college;
- Persistence (retention) rates of TOPS recipients;
- The number of and reasons for students losing award eligibility;
- Graduation data; and
- TOPS time-to-degree and degree attainment information.

Act 587 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session added new reporting requirements to the TOPS report, including:

- Demographic information of **program** award recipients (race, gender, parents' income);
- High school GPA and ACT scores of program award recipients grouped by mean; and
- Average high school GPA and average ACT score of students who lost the award.

Act 227 requires that this report be submitted annually by December 1 to the Senate and House Committees on Education. The report includes current and historical data on TOPS students (students receiving an *Opportunity*, *Performance*, or *Honors* award) and, where appropriate, non-TOPS students, to allow for comparison.

Overall, the findings indicated that:

- From 2013–2014 to 2022–2023, 84.8% of students deemed eligible for a TOPS award accepted the award by enrolling in a postsecondary education institution in Louisiana.
- The proportions of eligible students who accept their awards differ by award level. The proportion of students eligible for an *Opportunity*, *Performance*, or *Honors* award and choosing to accept it continues to decline.

- The average ACT score of all TOPS recipients between 2013–2014 and 2022–2023 increased to 24.5, and their average core GPA increased to 3.73.
- The average ACT composite for TOPS *Tech* recipients for 2023–2024 (included this year for the first time) was 17.3, and their average core GPA was 3.05. This as a slight decline from the 2012-13 ACT score of 18.3, but a slight increase in GPA from 2.86.
- From 2013–2014 to 2022–2023, the majority of TOPS recipients were white (70.5%) and female (57.2%).
- The number of minority students receiving TOPS has generally increased over time, but not at the rate needed to erase disparities in racial representation. This year, the number of African American and Hispanic students eligible for TOPS modestly increased. However, overall, the pool of eligible students has been declining.
- Students who begin college with a TOPS award persist and graduate at a higher rate than non-TOPS students.
- The average time-to-degree for TOPS *Tech* recipients pursuing an associate's degree at the same institution in which they first enrolled is 3.7 years, compared with 5.7 years for non-TOPS.
- The average time-to-degree for TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* recipients pursuing a baccalaureate degree at the same institution in which they first enrolled is 4.4 years, compared to 6 years for non-TOPS.
- From 1998–1999 through the 2022–2023 fiscal years, the state spent approximately \$4.9 billion on the TOPS Program supporting 435,578* students.

* Source: LOSFA Microsoft BI as of 10/14/2024.

Introduction and Background

TOPS Legislation

Act 1202 of the 2001 Regular Legislative Session charged the Board of Regents (BOR) to develop a uniform TOPS reporting system for policy analysis and program evaluation that would provide accurate data and statistics relative to the program's impact on the state and students (Appendix A). To satisfy the reporting requirements, BOR staff established interfaces between the major systems needed to identify and track TOPS students through the postsecondary education enrollment cycle. In addition to mandating the development of a TOPS reporting system, Act 1202 required the BOR to prepare a report on various aspects of the TOPS Program. According to Act 1202, the "TOPS report" should include:

- An analysis of the relationship between high school courses taken and students' scores on the ACT;
- The number of high school graduates who are eligible for TOPS and subsequently enroll in college;
- Persistence (retention) rates of TOPS students by award level;
- The number of and reasons for students losing award eligibility;
- Graduation rates by award category (within 100% [4-year] and 150% [6-year] of time); and
- The number of students eligible for TOPS by award category, school, and parish.

Act 587 (Appendix B) of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session added reporting requirements to the annual TOPS report, including:

- Demographic information of program award recipients;
- High school GPA and ACT scores of program award recipients grouped by mean, median, and mode; and
- The average high school GPA and ACT scores of those who lost the award and those placed in probationary status.

Act 587 mandates that this report be submitted to the Senate and House Committees on Education no later than December 1 each year. Therefore, to comply with the Act's established deadline, data on 2023–2024 TOPS recipients are not included in this report.

Act 227 of the 2015 Regular Legislative Session amended Act 1202 (Appendix C) for statutory clarity. The new law reorganizes, renumbers, and recodifies existing law without making substantive changes to the program beyond requiring additional data points to assess TOPS recipients' time-to-degree.

Acts of the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that impact TOPS are as follows:

- **Act 18** sets a floor for the TOPS award amount and provides that the qualifying ACT score shall be truncated to a whole number rather than rounded to the next whole

- number. These changes were effective beginning with the fall semester of 2016.
- **Act 388** increases the *core* grade point average (GPA) requirement to qualify for a TOPS *Performance* award from 3.0 to 3.25 and the GPA requirement for a TOPS *Honors* award from 3.0 to 3.50. These changes are effective for high school graduates of 2022 (per Acts 245 and 346 of the 2020 Regular Legislative Session).
 - **Act 503** changes the methodology for eliminating students' TOPS awards in case of a budget shortfall. When there is a budget shortfall, each student's TOPS award — including *Performance* and *Honors* award stipends — is subject to a reduction; National Guard stipends and TOPS *Tech* Early Start are not reduced. TOPS awards will be distributed to all students according to a pro-rata distribution of the available funds. Under Act 503, students can "opt out" of receiving their TOPS award during a budget shortfall. This change was effective beginning with the AY 2016–2017 award year.

Act 44 of the 2017 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature impacts TOPS as follows:

- **Act 44** clarifies Act 18 of the 2016 Regular Session to specify that the award level shall be the TOPS award amount charged to students during AY 2016–2017.

Acts of the 2018 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that impact TOPS are as follows:

- **Act 671** changes certain TOPS initial eligibility requirements and provides relative to sharing specific student data.
- **Act 583** establishes the TOPS Income Fund as a special Treasury fund. Monies in the Fund can be combined with other funds; however, all monies in the TOPS Income Fund shall be used solely to fund the TOPS Program.

Senate Resolution 10 of the 2019 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature impacts TOPS as follows:

S.R. 10 requires the BOR to study the feasibility of updating TOPS reporting requirements to include data on scholarship recipients' employment outcomes and other relevant information.

Acts of the 2020 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that impact TOPS are as follows:

- **Act 346** modified qualifications for the TOPS scholarships and continuing eligibility requirements for the 2019–2020 academic year.
- **Act 245** charges the administering agency to adopt rules to provide waivers and exceptions to initial eligibility requirements and continuing eligibility requirements for students impacted by the public health emergency declared by the governor in response to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.
- **Act 17** declared exceptions for Hurricane Laura-affected students and applied to students who had a home of record in an affected parish or enrolled in an eligible college or university in an affected parish.

Acts of the 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that impact TOPS are as follows:

- **Act 334** adds African American History as a core curriculum social studies option for TOPS.
- **Act 407** adds race and ethnicity data that may be collected and shared with BOR and LOFSA for assessment, evaluation, and policy development.

Acts of the 2022 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that impact TOPS are as follows:

- **Act 665** eliminates the requirement that parental income data be included in the report.
- **Act 447** adds Geometry as a core curriculum requirement for TOPS *Tech* beginning with 2027 high school graduates.
- **Act 502** adds specific computer science courses as alternatives to the foreign language requirement in TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* core curricula beginning with 2027 high school graduates.
- **Act 681** provides exceptions to the initial and continuing TOPS eligibility requirements for students impacted by Hurricane Ida.

Acts of the 2023 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that impact TOPS are as follows:

- **Act 267** adds Financial Literacy as a required, one-unit core curriculum course for the TOPS *OPH* and TOPS *Tech* core curricula. For TOPS *OPH*, it adds one core curriculum course, bringing the total courses required to 20. For TOPS *Tech*, it reduces the math electives from two courses to one course and adds Financial Literacy as the third required math. This is effective beginning with 2028 graduates.
- **Act 224** provides a tuition and fee waiver for certain disabled veterans who will not receive a TOPS award but will receive an exemption in an amount equal to the remaining tuition and fees owed to the public postsecondary institution after the application of federal benefits. Defines “disabled veteran” as an individual with a service-connected disability as determined by the US Department of Veterans Affairs and who is a resident of Louisiana.
- **Act 405** amends the definition of Louisiana resident to allow graduates of 2023 and later to meet the residency requirement if their parent or court-ordered custodian was a Louisiana resident for at least the 24 months preceding the date they moved out of the country, provided that they remained a Louisiana resident as demonstrated by ownership of property, maintenance of a home, payment of Louisiana taxes, etc. during the entire time the parent or custodian was living out of the country.

Act 211 of the 2024 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature impacts TOPS as follows:

- **Act 211** requires students to earn one Carnegie unit of credit in Computer Science as part of the TOPS *Tech*, *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* core curricula. The Act provides that this credit will be obtained for any core as a math or science elective. Students pursuing the TOPS *Tech* core may also earn this credit as one of the nine credits in Jump Start course sequences. Students pursuing the TOPS *Opportunity*,

Performance, or *Honors* core can earn this credit as an alternative to a foreign language. This is effective beginning with 2028–2029 graduates.

Brief History of the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

The Tuition Opportunity Program for Students, subsequently renamed the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), Louisiana's merit-based student aid program, was created via Act 1375 of the 1997 Regular Legislative Session. The first freshman class to receive TOPS awards entered postsecondary education in the fall of 1998. Although the founding legislation does not directly document the goals of the program, the four generally accepted purposes of TOPS are to:

- Promote academic success by requiring completion of a rigorous high school core curriculum;
- Provide financial incentives as a reward for good academic performance;
- Keep Louisiana's best and brightest in the state to pursue postsecondary education with the hope that they will remain in the state and become productive members of Louisiana's workforce; and
- Promote access to and success in postsecondary education.

Eligibility Criteria, Levels of Awards, Renewal Requirements, Distribution of Awards

Four TOPS awards are available to Louisiana college students: TOPS *Tech*, *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors*. Act 230 of the 2015 Regular Session changed the TOPS *Tech* program to allow students graduating from high school during the 2016-2017 school year and thereafter to use the TOPS *Tech* Award to pursue an associate's degree or other shorter-term training and education credential, including skill, occupational, vocational, technical, certificate, and academic, that the Workforce Investment Council and the Board of Regents have determined is aligned to state workforce priorities.

The *Opportunity*, *Performance*, *Honors*, and *Tech* eligibility criteria include completing a defined high school core curriculum with a minimum grade point average (GPA) in core courses and a minimum ACT composite score. Table 1 lists current eligibility criteria and award components for all TOPS awards. Currently, the TOPS Core Curriculum consists of 19 units. The specific course requirements of the TOPS Core Curriculum can be found in Appendix D. The list of 2023 high school graduates eligible by school and parish can be found in Appendix E.

Historically, the administration of TOPS was statutorily assigned to the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC); however, Act 314 of the 2016 Regular Session abolished LASFAC and transferred its duties to the Board of Regents. Therefore, subsequently, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has administered

the TOPS Program under the BOR, as directed by the acts of the Louisiana Legislature since that date. Program eligibility is determined using the high school transcript from the Louisiana Department of Education's Student Transcript System (STS) and official composite ACT scores. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the TOPS Online Application are the mechanisms by which to apply for TOPS.

Table 1. TOPS Eligibility Criteria and Award Components

TOPS Eligibility Criteria and Award Components				
Award	Core Units	Core GPA	ACT Composite	Duration
<i>Opportunity</i>	19.0	2.50	Prior-year state average, currently 20	4 years or 8 semesters
<i>Performance</i>	19.0	3.25	23.0	4 years or 8 semesters
<i>Honors</i>	19.0	3.50	27.0	4 years or 8 semesters
TOPS <i>Tech</i>	21 Jumpstart Career Path Core Units	2.50	17 or higher or a silver-level score on the assessments of the ACT WorkKeys system	2 years

Source: LOSFA website - TOPS Brochures & Flyers

To maintain eligibility, TOPS and TOPS *Tech* recipients must be continuously enrolled as full-time students, earn at least 24 semester hours each academic year (fall, spring, and summer), and maintain satisfactory academic progress as demonstrated by the cumulative grade point average. LOSFA determines continuing eligibility based on data from the postsecondary institution in which the student is enrolled. Table 2 lists the minimum renewal requirements for each award.

Table 2. Minimum Renewal Requirements

Minimum Renewal Requirements			
Award	Hrs. Earned /AY	Cumulative GPA for Continuation	Award Reinstated* (Upon recovery of req. GPA)
<i>Opportunity</i>	24.00	2.30 after 24 credit hours earned 2.50 after 48 credit hours earned Maintain steady academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS cumulative GPA)	Yes
<i>Performance</i>	24.00	3.00 after 24 credit hours earned Maintain satisfactory academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS cumulative GPA)	Yes, <i>Opportunity</i>
<i>Honors</i>	24.00	3.00 after 24 credit hours earned Maintain satisfactory academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS cumulative GPA)	Yes, <i>Opportunity</i>
TOPS <i>Tech</i>	24.00	2.5 after 24 credit hours earned Maintain satisfactory academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS cumulative GPA)	2 years

Source: LOFSA website - TOPS Brochures & Flyers

*Achievement of the required GPA must occur within two years for *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* and within one year for *Tech*

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of TOPS awards across systems for AY 2023–2024. This year, 47.2% of TOPS awards went to students attending a UL System campus. Of students with the highest level of award, *Honors*, 51.2% attended an LSU System campus, followed by a UL System campus at 39.4%. Data also indicate that most students (41.7%) with TOPS awards had an *Opportunity* Award.

Table 3. Distribution of Award Types Across Systems, AY 2023-2024

Distribution of Award Types Across Systems, AY 2023-2024							
Award	LSU System	Southern System	UL System	LCTCS System	Private Institutions	Proprietary Schools	% of all awards
Opportunity	37.3%	1.9%	51.8%	3.2%	5.5%	0.3%	41.7%
Performance	40.4%	0.8%	51.4%	1.5%	5.9%	0.1%	28.5%
Honors	51.2%	0.2%	39.4%	0.3%	8.9%	0.0%	27.6%
TOPS Tech	8.7%	0.9%	4.7%	75.5%	0.1%	10.1%	2.2%
% of all awards	41.4%	1.1%	47.2%	3.5%	6.4%	0.4%	100%

Source: LOSFA - TOPS Payment Summary by Academic Year 2023–2024 as of 09/20/2024

TOPS Report: Historical Analysis of the TOPS Program, from 2013–2014 to 2023–2024

METHODOLOGY

This report includes current and historical data on TOPS students (receiving an *Opportunity*, *Performance*, *Honors*, or *Tech* award) and, where appropriate, non-TOPS students, to allow for comparison. Some of the data provided in the "Preparation" section and all the data provided in the "Participation," "Persistence/Retention," and "Graduation" sections of this report do not include private postsecondary institutions since those institutions do not currently participate in Regents' reporting systems.

PREPARATION

With the 2001 Master Plan, the BOR adopted the TOPS Core as the Regents' Core, the most critical element of the minimum standards for admission to the state's public four-year colleges and universities. The TOPS/BOR Core currently consists of four units of coursework in English, Math, Natural Science, and Social Science, two units of Foreign Language, and one unit of study in Fine Arts. TOPS academic eligibility criteria require students to take this 19-hour core curriculum to prepare them for success after high school, particularly in postsecondary education (Table 4). With this change, students gained an incentive to complete the college-preparatory curriculum. Table 4 illustrates the average ACT composite of students who completed the Regents' Core compared to those who did not complete the Core. This year represents the first time since the pandemic that there has been a modest increase in the number of students completing the Core compared to those who did not.

Table 4. Average ACT Composite

Average ACT Composite								
High School Grad Year	HS Graduates Completing Regents' Core Yes		HS Graduates Completing Regents' Core No		HS Graduates Completing Regents' Core Unknown		Total High School Graduates with an ACT Composite from LOSFA	
	Avg ACT	Count	Avg ACT	Count	Avg ACT	Count	Avg ACT	Count
2019	21.3	33,934	15.0	6,059	20.0	2,086	20.3	42,079
2020	21.2	32,653	14.7	4,925	21.1	1,332	20.4	38,910
2021	20.8	31,636	14.4	5,301	21.5	981	19.9	37,918
2022	20.7	30,922	14.4	5,650	21.3	1,004	19.8	37,576
2023	20.9	31,090	14.7	5,662	20.5	1,152	19.9	37,904

Source: Louisiana Department of Education and LOSFA data

PARTICIPATION

A generally accepted purpose of TOPS is to attract and retain Louisiana's high school graduates who are more likely to persist and attain a postsecondary credential. A common slogan associated with the TOPS Program has been "to retain the best and brightest" students to attend Louisiana's colleges, with the hope that they will enter the state's workforce after graduation.

To that end, of the 190,006 students deemed eligible for a TOPS *Opportunity, Performance, or Honors* between 2014 and 2023, 161,060 (84.8%) accepted the award and enrolled in a postsecondary education institution in Louisiana (see Figure A1). For TOPS *Tech*, 66,336 students were eligible and 15,087 (22.7%) accepted the award. The percentage of students who accept TOPS *Opportunity, Performance, or Honors* awards and enroll in college has been steadily declining since 2018. The most recent rate of 80.6% is the lowest in ten years.

Figure A1. Number Eligible for TOPS vs. Percent of Eligible who Accepted and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education Institutions by High School Graduation Year (TH, TP, TO)

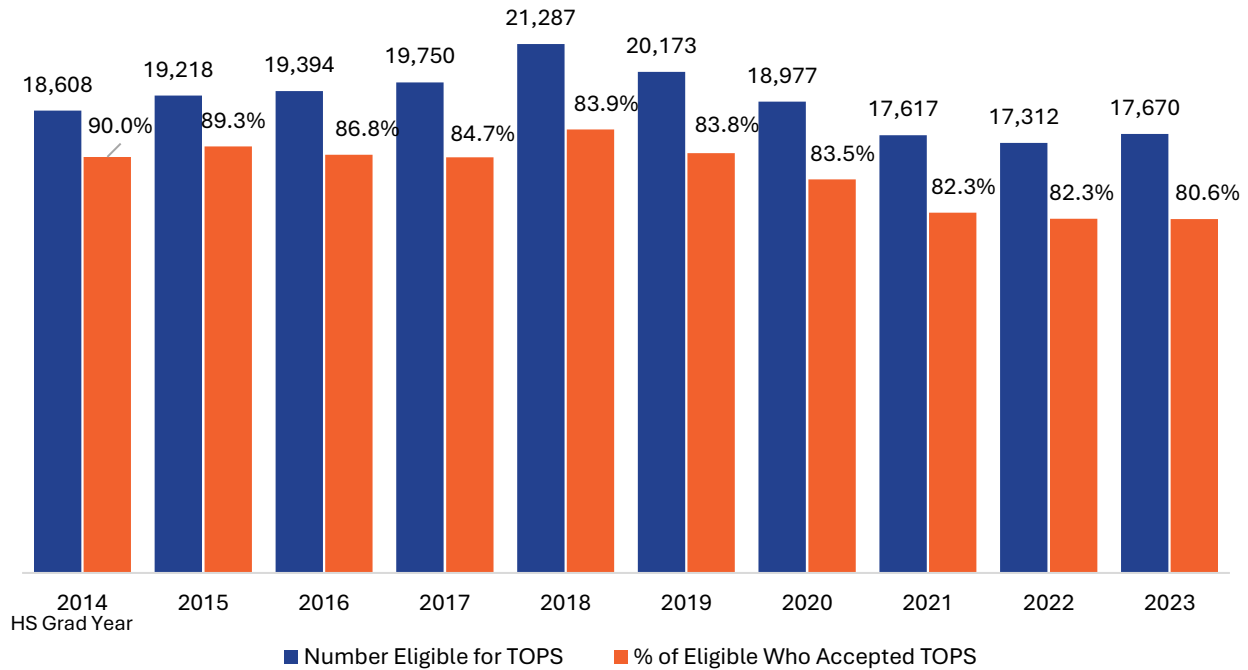
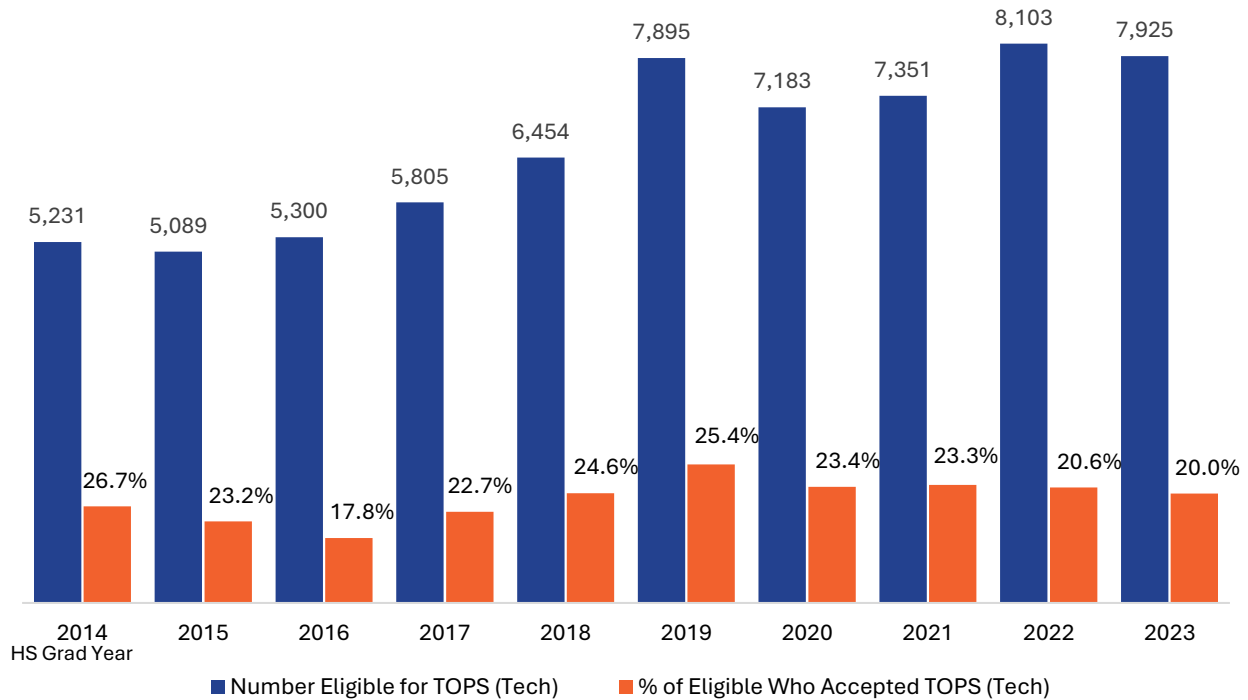


Figure A2 displays similar data for students who were eligible for a TOPS *Tech* award. Acceptance rates for TOPS *Tech* awards have always been much lower than those for *Opportunity, Honors* and *Performance*. There has been a decline in acceptance rates for TOPS *Tech* in recent years that mirrors that of the other awards.

Figure A2. Number Eligible for TOPS vs. Percent of Eligible who Accepted and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education Institutions by High School Graduation Year (TOPS Tech)



While data support the claims that participation in the TOPS Program keeps Louisiana students in the state to attain their postsecondary education, the declining numbers over the past several years of total high school graduates and college-going high school graduates continue to be of concern. The declines currently seen in Louisiana are following trends that are evident throughout the southern states. Southern Regional Board of Education data (SREB) indicate that total college enrollment is decreasing nationwide and in 13 of the 16 SREB states (of which Louisiana is a member) [Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, PAR Snapshot, February 2024].

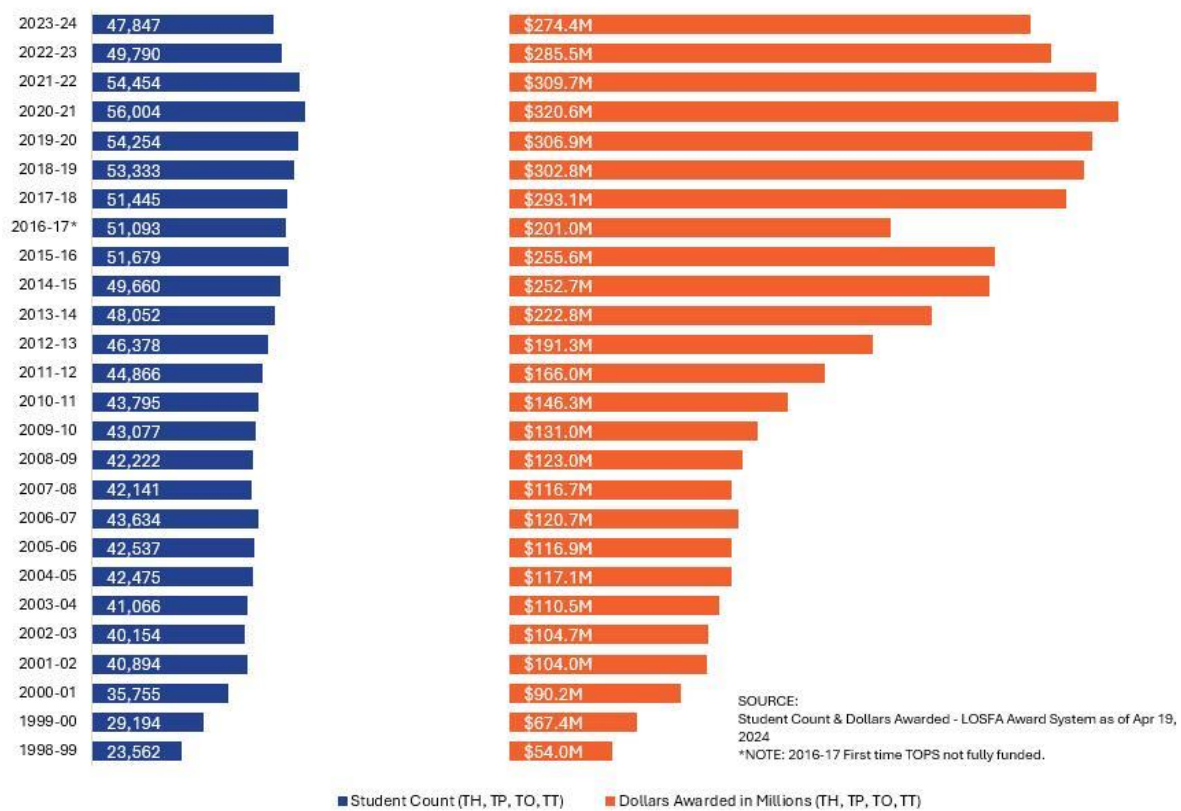
According to data from the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) (2024), students who need college financial aid the most apply at a lower rate than those who have less need. Nationally, an estimated 63% of seniors in the class of 2024 at high-income high schools completed a FAFSA application, while only 55% of seniors at low-income high schools did the same (NCAN, 2024).

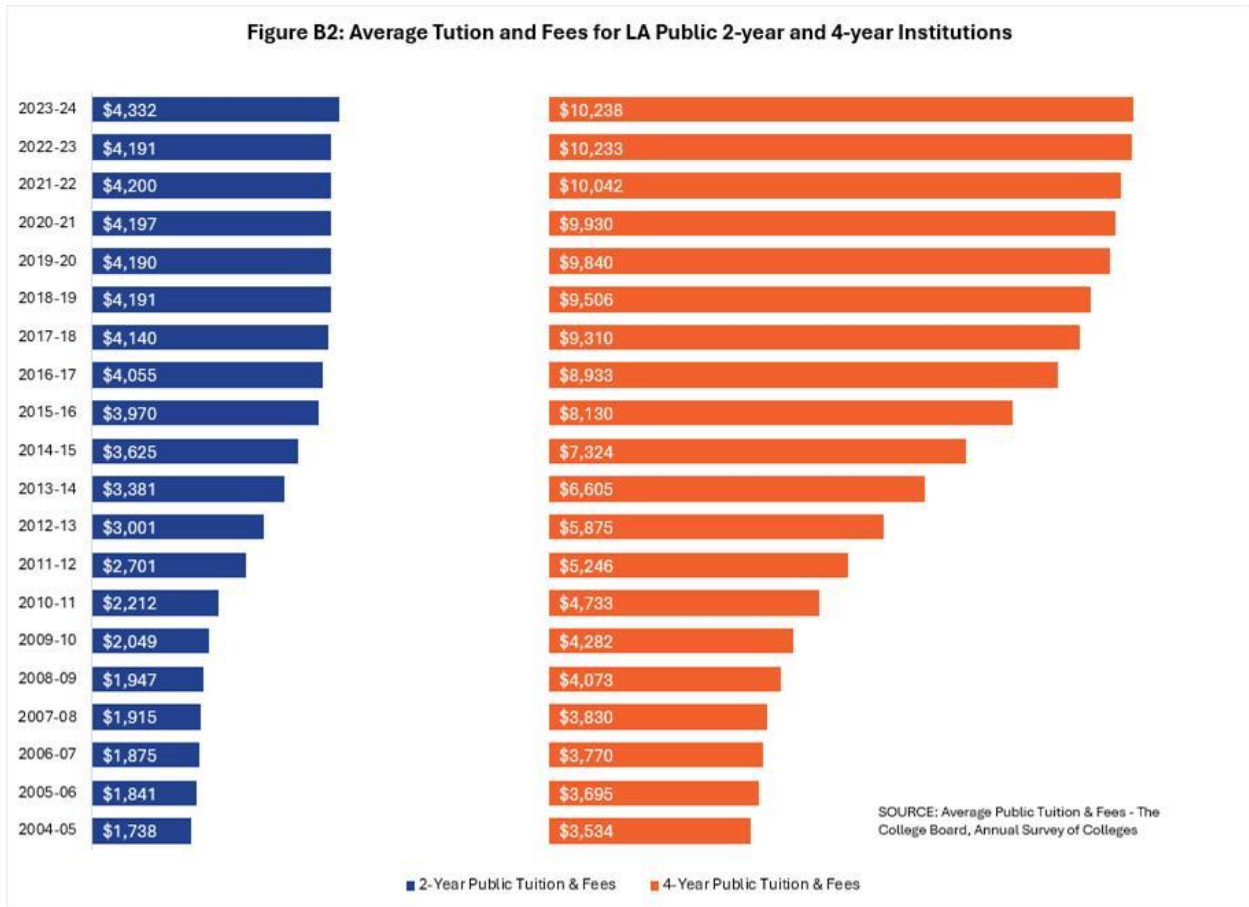
In 2023, Louisiana led the nation in FAFSA completion, with more than 71% of students submitting due to a Louisiana Department of Education policy requiring FAFSA submission to graduate. Compounded by the delay of the new federal application process, 2023 saw a further decrease in the number of students (60%) completing the FAFSA application, which is one of two ways students apply for TOPS. These challenges with the 2023–2024 FAFSA submission cycle have been particularly difficult for high schools serving students of color and

students from limited-income backgrounds. In March 2024, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) removed, effective in January 2025, the policy requiring FAFSA completion and submission to graduate high school. How this will impact FAFSA submission rates and TOPS participation will be analyzed going forward.

The factors listed above, several years of declining numbers of high school graduates as well as of TOPS-eligible students, combined with lower proportions of students receiving/accepting their awards, have resulted in a continued slide in the number of overall TOPS recipients and, for the third year in a row, an increase in TOPS funding was not requested (Figure B1). Figure B2 provides a comparison of tuition and fee rates at two and four-year institutions.

Figure B1: TOPS Recipients (including students maintaining their awards) and Total Dollars Awarded





While Figure A1 presents the overall acceptance rate, this average masks significant differences in acceptance rates across the four different TOPS awards.

While the acceptance rates for *Opportunity* and *Performance* awards have remained in the mid-80s in recent years (Table 5), a steadily declining proportion of *Honors* awardees have been accepting their award. That proportion has dropped from 80% in 2018–2019 to 73.2% in 2022–2023. This year saw declines in the acceptance rates across all TOPS award categories.

Table 5. TOPS Acceptance Rates

TOPS Acceptance Rates				
HS Grad Year	<i>Tech</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Performance</i>	<i>Honors</i>
2011–12	22.3%	91.4%	92.8%	84.2%
2012–13	26.7%	90.6%	92.7%	84.0%
2013–14	26.7%	90.6%	93.3%	84.3%
2014–15	23.2%	89.6%	92.9%	84.2%
2015–16	17.8%	86.6%	91.1%	81.9%
2016–17	22.7%	84.8%	89.4%	79.1%
2017–18	24.6%	83.6%	88.2%	79.4%
2018–19	25.4%	83.2%	88.1%	79.9%
2019–20	23.4%	83.1%	88.4%	78.7%
2020–21	23.3%	83.2%	86.6%	76.0%
2021–22	20.6%	83.2%	86.3%	75.3%
2022–23	20.0%	81.9%	84.5%	73.2%

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

Table 6a illustrates the mean ACT and Core GPA of TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* recipients. This year, the composite ACT and Core GPA increased from the previous year, indicating that academic quality is rising even as the number of students accepting TOPS is decreasing.

Table 6a. Mean ACT and Core GPA of TOPS Recipients (TH, TP, TO)

Mean ACT and Core GPA of TOPS Recipients (TH, TP, TO)		
HS Cohort	TOPS Recipients' Average Composite ACT Score	TOPS Recipients' Average Core GPA
2011–12	23.9	3.35
2012–13	24.0	3.37
2013–14	24.1	3.35
2014–15	24.1	3.35
2015–16	24.3	3.38
2016–17	24.4	3.40
2017–18	24.4	3.54
2018–19	24.4	3.58
2019–20	24.5	3.64
2020–21	24.2	3.68
2021–22	24.1	3.71
2022–23	24.2	3.70
2023–24*	24.5	3.73

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

* of those eligible

Table 6b illustrates the mean ACT and Core GPA of TOPS *Tech* recipients.**Table 6b. Mean ACT and Core GPA of TOPS Recipients (TOPS Tech)**

Mean ACT and Core GPA of TOPS Recipients (TOPS Tech)		
HS Cohort	TOPS Recipients' Average Composite ACT Score	TOPS Recipients' Average Core GPA
2011–12	18.4	2.86
2012–13	18.3	2.89
2013–14	18.5	2.80
2014–15	18.6	2.81
2015–16	18.4	2.83
2016–17	18.4	2.89
2017–18	18.0	3.00
2018–19	17.5	2.94
2019–20	17.6	3.02
2020–21	17.4	3.06
2021–22	17.3	3.07
2022–23	17.3	3.03
2023–24*	17.3	3.05

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024.

* of those eligible

As illustrated below in Tables 7a and 7b, TOPS recipients' average ACT scores vary by race. Composite ACT scores for African American students over the past ten years have increased to an average of 22.6 in 2022-2023, compared to 24.5 for white and 23.8 for Hispanic students.

This year, ACT reports that 66% of Louisiana graduating seniors (public and private) took the ACT more than once, an increase from 63.4% last year, and improved their composite score by an average of 1.3 points from their first test to their most recent test.

This trend is encouraging, as research by ACT has found that students who retest do better in the subsequent test administrations.

Table 7a. TOPS Recipients by Race and Average ACT Composite Score (TH, TP, TO)

TOPS Recipients by Race and Average ACT Composite Score (TH, TP, TO)							
HS Cohort	Asian	African American	White	Hispanic	Other	Race Not Reported	Total
2012–13	25.0	22.4	24.4	23.9	24.1	26.6	24.0
2013–14	25.0	22.4	24.5	24.3	24.1	24.9	24.1
2014–15	25.4	22.5	24.5	24.1	24.0	25.5	24.1
2015–16	25.8	22.7	24.7	24.3	24.3	25.4	24.3
2016–17	25.6	22.6	24.8	24.2	24.6	26.3	24.4
2017–18	25.5	22.6	24.8	24.4	24.0	26.1	24.4
2018–19	26.0	22.6	24.8	24.2	24.1	26.0	24.4
2019–20	25.8	22.8	24.8	24.2	24.6	27.9	24.5
2020–21	25.8	22.6	24.5	24.1	24.0	25.8	24.2
2021–22	25.6	22.7	24.4	23.8	24.0	26.5	24.1
2022–23	25.9	22.6	24.5	23.8	24.1	23.4	24.2

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

Table 7b. TOPS Recipients by Race and Average ACT Composite Score (TOPS Tech)

TOPS Recipients by Race and Average ACT Composite Score (TOPS Tech)							
HS Cohort	Asian	African American	White	Hispanic	Other	Race Not Reported	Total
2012–13	18.6	18.0	18.5	18.2	18.1	19.4	18.3
2013–14	18.2	18.2	18.7	18.3	18.5	19.8	18.5
2014–15	18.8	18.2	18.7	18.5	18.7	20.0	18.6
2015–16	18.4	18.1	18.6	18.0	18.3	20.5	18.4
2016–17	18.2	18.0	18.5	18.6	18.6	20.3	18.4
2017–18	18.1	17.7	18.2	17.9	18.6	22.0	18.0
2018–19	17.7	17.2	17.7	17.6	17.4	21.0	17.5
2019–20	17.7	17.2	17.8	17.4	17.5	19.7	17.6
2020–21	17.4	17.1	17.5	17.4	17.2	19.8	17.4
2021–22	18.3	16.9	17.5	17.1	16.9	20.0	17.3
2022–23	18.1	16.8	17.5	17.6	17.4	19.5	17.3

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

As Table 8 indicates, overall, TOPS recipients are predominantly white. In 2022-2023, white students comprised 70.5% of TOPS recipients in the first-time entering freshman student population (Table 9).

The number of minority students accepting TOPS has generally increased over time; this year, for the second year in a row, the numbers of African American (from 17.4% in 2022 to 18.1% in 2023 and Hispanic (from 4.4% in 2022 to 5% in 2023) TOPS recipients increased (Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8. TOPS Recipients by Race (TH, TP, TO, TT)

TOPS Recipients by Race (TH, TP, TO, TT)							
HS Cohort	Asian	African American	White	Hispanic	Other	Not Reported	Total
2012–13	509	3,377	13,114	464	269	24	17,757
2013–14	553	3,307	13,373	529	300	82	18,144
2014–15	550	3,444	13,471	546	302	34	18,347
2015–16	521	3,422	12,945	570	279	41	17,778
2016–17	530	3,377	13,190	589	332	33	18,051
2017–18	582	3,877	13,889	650	414	33	19,445
2018–19	553	3,643	13,593	666	414	36	18,905
2019–20	537	3,126	12,769	674	397	21	17,524
2020–21	536	2,594	12,013	639	391	35	16,208
2021–22	562	2,769	11,441	705	417	30	15,924
2022–23	539	2,862	11,149	784	453	34	15,821

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

Table 9. % TOPS Recipients by Race (TH, TP, TO, TT)

% TOPS Recipients by Race (TH, TP, TO, TT)							
HS Cohort	Asian	African American	White	Hispanic	Other	Not Reported	Total
2012–13	2.9%	19.0%	73.9%	2.6%	1.5%	0.1%	100%
2013–14	3.0%	18.2%	73.7%	2.9%	1.7%	0.5%	100%
2014–15	3.0%	18.8%	73.4%	3.0%	1.6%	0.2%	100%
2015–16	2.9%	19.2%	72.8%	3.2%	1.6%	0.2%	100%
2016–17	2.9%	18.7%	73.1%	3.3%	1.8%	0.2%	100%
2017–18	3.0%	19.9%	71.4%	3.3%	2.1%	0.2%	100%
2018–19	2.9%	19.3%	71.9%	3.5%	2.2%	0.2%	100%
2019–20	3.1%	17.8%	72.9%	3.8%	2.3%	0.1%	100%
2020–21	3.3%	16.0%	74.1%	3.9%	2.4%	0.2%	100%
2021–22	3.5%	17.4%	71.8%	4.4%	2.6%	0.2%	100%
2022–23	3.4%	18.1%	70.5%	5.0%	2.9%	0.2%	100%

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

TOPS recipients have been predominantly female for more than a decade. Male students receiving TOPS have had slightly higher average ACT scores than female students (Table 10). Table 11 shows that in 2022-2023, 57.2% of TOPS recipients were female, and 42.8% were male.

Table 10. TOPS Recipients' ACT Composite Score by Gender

TOPS Recipients ACT Composite Score by Gender				
HS Cohort	Female	Male	Unknown	Total*
2012–13	23.3	24.1	N/A	23.6
2013–14	23.4	24.1	20.0	23.7
2014–15	23.5	24.2	N/A	23.8
2015–16	23.7	24.4	N/A	24.0
2016–17	23.6	24.4	26.3	23.9
2017–18	23.5	24.4	22.5	23.9
2018–19	23.4	24.1	27.8	23.7
2019–20	23.4	24.3	28.7	23.8
2020–21	23.2	23.9	19.0	23.5
2021–22	23.1	23.8	27.0	23.4
2022–23	23.1	24.0	20.8	23.5

* This analysis includes 21 individuals who did not report their gender.

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

Table 11. TOPS Recipients by Gender

TOPS Recipients by Gender					
HS Cohort	Female		Male		Total*
2012–13	10,447	58.8%	7,310	41.2%	17,757
2013–14	10,677	58.8%	7,466	41.1%	18,144
2014–15	10,833	59.0%	7,514	41.0%	18,347
2015–16	10,488	59.0%	7,290	41.0%	17,778
2016–17	10,597	58.7%	7,451	41.3%	18,051
2017–18	11,361	58.4%	8,082	41.6%	19,445
2018–19	10,976	58.1%	7,923	41.9%	18,905
2019–20	10,277	58.6%	7,244	41.3%	17,524
2020–21	9,277	57.2%	6,930	42.8%	16,208
2021–22	9,147	57.4%	6,776	42.6%	15,924
2022–23	9,049	57.2%	6,768	42.8%	15,821

* This analysis includes 21 individuals who did not report their gender.

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

PERSISTENCE (RETENTION)

Persistence in postsecondary education is measured by the rate at which first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students are retained in (or return for) their second year. As illustrated in Tables 12a, 12b, 13a, and 13b, students who begin college with a TOPS award return to postsecondary education in subsequent years at higher rates than non-TOPS students. Furthermore, students receiving *Performance* and *Honors* awards, generally better prepared for

postsecondary education, are retained at higher rates than those receiving the *Opportunity Award*.

Tables 12a and 12b examine the overall retention rates (retention at any Louisiana public postsecondary institution, but not necessarily at the institution where the student started) of students with TOPS who began at a four-year institution through the second, third, and fourth years (Table 12a) and a two-year institution (Table 12b) compared to those who started without TOPS. This year, the retention rates for students with a TOPS *Opportunity, Performance, or Honors* award beginning at a four-year institution increased across the board for second-, third-, and fourth-year fall retention, with an all-time high of 90.2% rate of TOPS awardees returning for the second year. Additionally, 84.1% of TOPS *Opportunity, Performance, or Honors* who began at a two-year institution (Table 12b) were retained in the second-year fall semester, a new benchmark for that population.

Table 12a. Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a 4-year Institution

Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs. Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Four-year Institution (TH, TP, TO)						
Fall Semester Entering Class	2nd Fall Retention		3rd Fall Retention		4th Fall Retention	
	TOPS	Non-TOPS	TOPS	Non-TOPS	TOPS	Non-TOPS
2012	87.3%	68.9%	80.6%	57.0%	75.1%	50.5%
2013	87.4%	68.0%	81.0%	57.4%	75.5%	49.1%
2014	87.2%	67.7%	80.6%	56.4%	75.1%	50.4%
2015	86.9%	64.5%	80.4%	54.3%	74.5%	47.9%
2016	87.5%	67.3%	81.4%	56.9%	75.6%	49.3%
2017	87.7%	67.7%	81.3%	56.5%	75.6%	48.8%
2018	87.5%	66.7%	81.5%	54.8%	74.8%	46.1%
2019	88.9%	69.0%	80.6%	55.2%	73.2%	47.1%
2020	86.8%	63.6%	79.1%	51.3%	73.8%	45.0%
2021	88.1%	64.4%	82.2%	54.0%	NA	NA
2022	90.2%	70.4%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table 12b. Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Two-year Institution

Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs. Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Two-year Institution (TH, TP, TO)						
Fall Semester Entering Class	2nd Fall Retention		3rd Fall Retention		4th Fall Retention	
	TOPS	Non-TOPS	TOPS	Non-TOPS	TOPS	Non-TOPS
2012	76.3%	52.1%	65.4%	35.9%	55.1%	26.9%
2013	76.9%	54.5%	63.4%	37.8%	55.5%	29.3%
2014	74.9%	54.8%	62.5%	36.8%	53.8%	28.1%
2015	79.4%	53.2%	62.5%	37.6%	54.7%	27.5%
2016	78.0%	51.0%	66.2%	34.4%	54.2%	27.4%
2017	80.7%	51.3%	67.7%	35.0%	60.7%	25.8%
2018	77.9%	51.9%	60.0%	33.1%	47.5%	25.4%
2019	74.8%	50.1%	60.1%	34.6%	48.1%	26.7%
2020	75.3%	51.5%	59.4%	36.4%	46.5%	26.6%
2021	77.1%	56.7%	60.6%	37.5%	NA	NA
2022	84.1%	52.1%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Tables 13a and 13b examine overall retention rates by award level of TOPS students who began at a four-year institution (13a) or a two-year institution (13b) through the second, third, and fourth years. TOPS *Honors* recipients at four-year institutions were retained from the first to the second year at an all-time-high rate of 95%, with *Performance* retained at 92.4% and *Opportunity* at 85.9%, also all-time highs.

Table 13a. Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS Students Who Began at a Four-year Institution by TOPS Award Level

Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS Students Who Began at a Four-year Institution by TOPS Award Level									
Fall Semester Entering Class	2nd Fall Retention			3rd Fall Retention			4th Fall Retention		
	TO	TP	TH	TO	TP	TH	TO	TP	TH
2012	82.0%	90.7%	94.2%	73.4%	84.8%	90.1%	67.2%	79.9%	85.7%
2013	81.4%	90.5%	94.7%	73.5%	84.9%	90.5%	67.6%	79.5%	85.8%
2014	81.1%	90.6%	94.3%	72.4%	84.7%	90.5%	66.1%	79.9%	85.8%
2015	80.9%	89.9%	94.4%	72.7%	84.3%	90.3%	65.7%	78.8%	86.0%
2016	81.8%	90.5%	93.3%	74.3%	84.6%	89.1%	67.6%	79.3%	84.2%
2017	81.8%	90.8%	93.5%	74.1%	84.4%	89.1%	68.3%	78.6%	83.8%
2018	82.3%	89.7%	92.7%	74.2%	84.0%	89.3%	67.5%	77.6%	82.3%
2019	83.4%	90.5%	94.9%	72.2%	83.5%	89.0%	64.3%	76.2%	82.4%
2020	80.6%	88.7%	93.1%	70.5%	81.6%	87.9%	65.1%	76.7%	82.3%
2021	83.1%	90.0%	93.3%	75.7%	84.4%	89.3%	NA	NA	NA
2022	85.9%	92.4%	95.4%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

TOPS *Tech* recipients also showed positive increases in their retention rates across all award levels.

Table 13b. Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS Students Who Began at a Two-year Institution by TOPS Award Level

Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS Who Began at a Two-year Institution by TOPS Award Level									
Fall Semester Entering Class	2nd Fall Retention			3rd Fall Retention			4th Fall Retention		
	TO	TP	TH	TO	TP	TH	TO	TP	TH
2012	74.2%	84.0%	79.2%	63.3%	75.5%	58.3%	52.4%	66.0%	54.2%
2013	75.8%	79.0%	88.0%	62.5%	64.8%	76.0%	54.9%	57.1%	60.0%
2014	73.9%	77.3%	88.9%	61.7%	64.5%	72.2%	52.7%	58.2%	61.1%
2015	77.8%	84.7%	78.6%	61.0%	68.5%	57.1%	52.4%	61.3%	64.3%
2016	75.4%	85.5%	81.5%	63.9%	72.6%	70.4%	50.9%	61.3%	70.4%
2017	78.9%	85.3%	87.0%	64.5%	76.7%	69.6%	57.4%	70.5%	60.9%
2018	74.2%	88.0%	83.3%	57.7%	66.2%	62.5%	44.8%	54.9%	50.0%
2019	72.1%	84.3%	80.0%	57.2%	67.6%	80.0%	45.8%	52.0%	75.0%
2020	74.2%	77.3%	86.7%	57.5%	65.9%	60.0%	42.5%	59.1%	53.3%
2021	77.2%	79.0%	66.7%	60.1%	61.0%	66.7%	NA	NA	NA
2022	83.5%	83.3%	95.2%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table 14 examines the overall retention rate in the second year for students who began with TOPS at a two-year institution compared to those who started without TOPS (Non-TOPS students include only Louisiana residents who did not receive the award and were in eligible programs for comparison purposes). These retention figures only include students who are retained to TOPS Tech eligible programs.

Table 14. Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs. Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Two-year Institution and Enrolled in TOPS Tech-Eligible Programs

Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs. Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Two-year Institution and Enrolled in TOPS <i>Tech</i> -Eligible Programs		
Fall Semester Entering Class	2nd Fall Retention	
	TOPS <i>Tech</i>	Non-TOPS <i>Tech</i>
2012	69.4%	53.2%
2013	70.2%	50.0%
2014	65.8%	50.4%
2015	67.8%	50.4%
2016	67.9%	48.2%
2017	67.2%	48.6%
2018	66.1%	50.5%
2019	64.7%	42.9%
2020	66.4%	50.5%
2021	68.9%	49.7%
2022	68.2%	49.4%

RETAINING THE TOPS AWARD

As previously noted, students who receive a TOPS award must meet minimum academic criteria to retain the award (See Table 2). The award is canceled when students fail to maintain full-time and continuous enrollment, earn 24 hours of credit per academic year, or maintain the minimum GPA. Students may request and be granted exceptions for failure to meet these criteria for circumstances beyond their control, including illness, death in the family, military service, natural disasters, etc. TOPS awards are initially suspended for failure to maintain the minimum GPA and are permanently canceled after two years. TOPS *Tech* awards are permanently canceled after one year has passed during which the student has not attained the required GPA. As shown in Tables 15a and 15b, numbers of award cancellations have declined over time for all TOPS scholarships.

Table 15a. Percentage of TOPS Award Cancelled** by Cohort (TH, TP, TO)

Percentage of TOPS Award Cancelled ** by Cohort (TH, TP, TO)									
Entering Cohort	Total # of TOPS Awards	Total # of Awards Cancelled *		Cancelled: 24 Hrs Requirement		Cancelled: GPA Requirement		Cancelled: Non-Continuous Enrollment	
2013–2014	16,455	4,273	26.0%	3,648	22.2%	514	3.1%	111	0.7%
2014–2015	16,703	4,141	24.8%	3,683	22.0%	360	2.2%	98	0.6%
2015–2016	17,292	4,177	24.2%	3,738	21.6%	332	1.9%	107	0.6%
2016–2017	16,705	3,775	22.6%	3,378	20.2%	278	1.7%	119	0.7%
2017–2018	16,692	2,665	16.0%	2,344	14.0%	193	1.2%	128	0.8%
2018–2019	17,770	2,445	13.8%	2,164	12.2%	132	0.7%	149	0.8%
2019–2020	16,954	1,439	8.5%	1,265	7.5%	47	0.3%	127	0.7%
2020–2021	15,825	1,783	11.3%	1,622	10.2%	41	0.3%	120	0.8%
2021–2022	14,558	1,596	11.0%	1,473	10.1%	23	0.2%	100	0.7%
2022–2023	14,321	956	6.7%	875	6.1%	0	0.0%	81	0.6%
2023–2024	14,650	67	0.5%	46	0.3%	0	0.0%	21	0.1%
Total	177,925	27,317	15.4%	24,236	13.6%	1,920	1.1%	1,161	0.7%

Source: BOR data files as of August 2024

*Due to a change in methodology by LOSFA in 2018 regarding a timeframe change from 90 days to 9 months for data collection, these data are not available for awards canceled for 2023-2024 at this time and will be reported in the next year.

** Students whose awards are canceled for non-GPA reasons may request an exception and be approved under existing law.

Table 15b. Percentage of TOPS Award Cancelled** by Cohort (TT)

Percentage of TOPS Award Cancelled ** by Cohort (TT)									
Entering Cohort	Total # of TOPS Awards	Total # of Awards Cancelled *		Cancelled: 24 Hrs Requirement		Cancelled: GPA Requirement		Cancelled: Non-Continuous Enrollment	
2013–2014	1,278	304	23.8%	253	19.8%	42	3.3%	9	0.7%
2014–2015	1,358	347	25.6%	316	23.3%	22	1.6%	9	0.7%
2015–2016	1,337	375	28.0%	348	26.0%	23	1.7%	4	0.3%
2016–2017	956	267	27.9%	222	23.2%	34	3.6%	11	1.2%
2017–2018	1,305	307	23.5%	290	22.2%	10	0.8%	7	0.5%
2018–2019	1,502	294	19.6%	275	18.3%	9	0.6%	10	0.7%
2019–2020	2,098	136	6.5%	104	5.0%	7	0.3%	25	1.2%
2020–2021	1,693	163	9.6%	143	8.4%	2	0.1%	18	1.1%
2021–2022	1,664	330	19.8%	304	18.3%	2	0.1%	24	1.4%
2022–2023	1,684	315	18.7%	280	16.6%	0	0.0%	35	2.1%
2023–2024	1,750	161	9.2%	134	7.7%	0	0.0%	27	1.5%
Total	16,625	2,999	18.0%	2,669	16.1%	151	0.9%	179	1.1%

Source: BOR data files as of August 2024

*Due to a change in methodology by LOSFA in 2018 regarding a timeframe change from 90 days to 9 months for data collection, these data are not available for awards canceled for 2023-2024 at this time and will be reported in the next year.

** Students whose awards are canceled for non-GPA reasons may request an exception and be approved under existing law.

Furthermore, between the 2013–2014 cohort and the 2023–2024 cohort, 177,925 students received *Opportunity*, *Performance*, or *Honors* awards, and 16,625 received *Tech*. Of these *Opportunity*, *Performance*, or *Honors* award recipients, 15.4% had their awards canceled, while 18% of *Tech* recipients had their awards canceled during their postsecondary academic career.

From 2013–2014 to 2023–2024, the cumulative total of canceled awards was 30,316, a decrease from cancellations noted in last year's report (31,901). Of these 30,316 canceled awards, 26,905 were canceled due to students' failure to earn 24 hours of college credit during an academic year, 2,071 due to the GPA requirement, and 1,340 due to non-continuous enrollment. Most awards are canceled due to the students not meeting the 24-hour requirement. However, regardless, there has been a decreasing trend of award cancellations in recent years for TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* recipients.

The average ACT score of TOPS *Opportunity, Performance, and Honors* recipients who had their awards canceled between 2013–2014 and 2022–2023 (due to failure to earn the required 24 hours of credit per academic year, achieve the required minimum GPA, or maintain full-time and continuous enrollment) was 23.2. This group's average high school GPA was 3.19 (Table 16a).

Table 16a. Average ACT Score and High School Core GPA of TOPS Recipients Who had Their Award Canceled*, (2013–14 to 2022–23 (TH, TP, TO))

Average ACT Score and High School Core GPA of TOPS Recipients Who had Their Award Canceled*, 2013-14 to 2022-23 (TH, TP, TO)		
Reason Canceled	Average ACT Composite	Average High School Core GPA
24 Hour	23.2	3.19
GPA	23.0	3.07
Non-Continuous Enrollment	23.7	3.31

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

* Students whose awards are canceled for non-GPA reasons may request and be approved for an exception under existing law.

The average ACT score of TOPS *Tech* recipients who had their awards canceled between 2013–2014 and 2022–2023 (due to failure to earn the required 24 hours of credit per academic year, achieve the required minimum GPA, or maintain full-time and continuous enrollment) was 17.8. This group's average high school GPA was 2.8. (Table 16b).

Table 16b. Average ACT Score and High School Core GPA of TOPS Recipients Who had Their Award Canceled*, (2013–14 to 2022–23 (TT))

Average ACT Score and High School Core GPA of TOPS Recipients Who had Their Award Canceled*, 2013–14 to 2022–23 (TT)		
Reason Canceled	Average ACT Composite	Average High School Core GPA
24 Hour	17.8	2.79
GPA	18.4	2.79
Non-Continuous Enrollment	17.3	2.87

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of July 2024

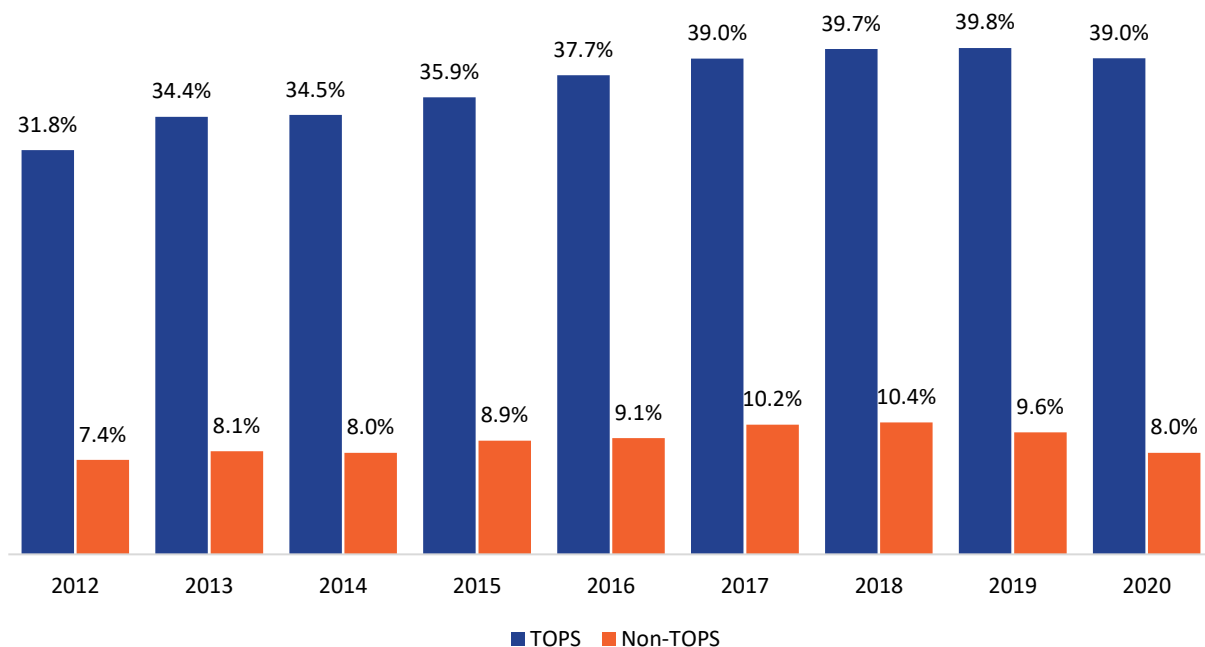
* Students whose awards are canceled for everything but GPA may request and be approved for an exception under existing law.

GRADUATION

A graduation rate is typically determined by calculating the rate at which first-time, full-time degree-seeking students earn their academic degrees within 150% of the time anticipated (i.e., within six years for baccalaureate degrees and three years for associate's degrees). However, because TOPS recipients are eligible for the award for a maximum of four years (or eight semesters), examining graduation rates at both 100% and 150% of time is essential.

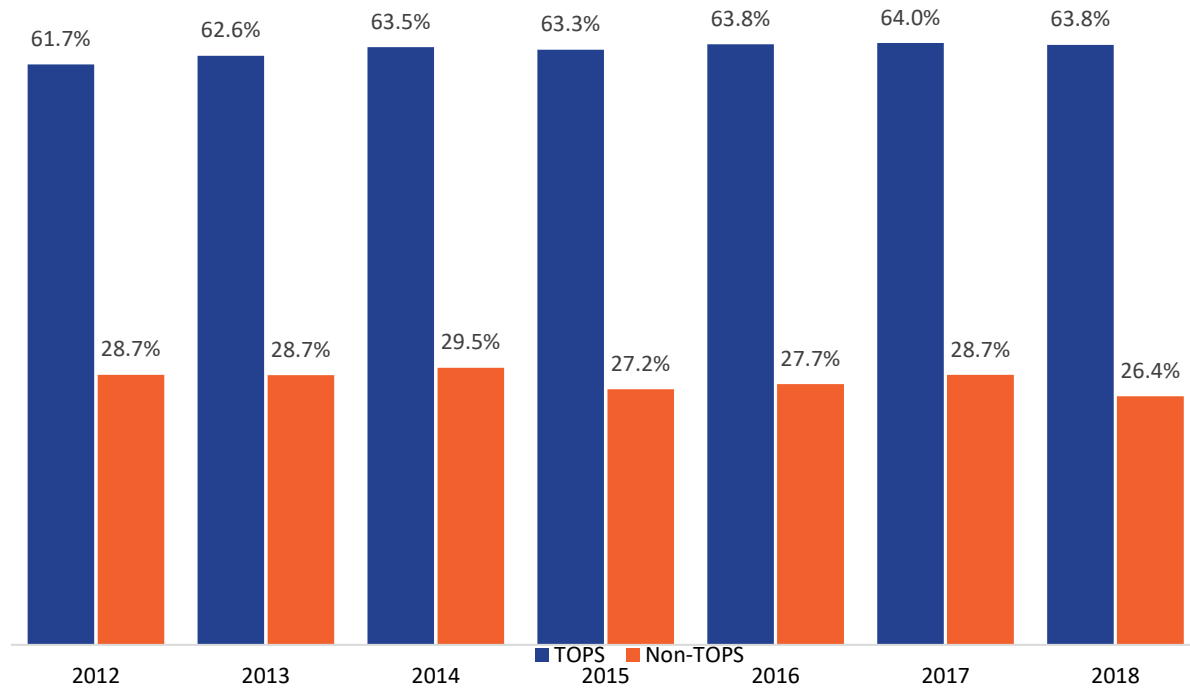
As noted in Figures C and D, students who begin a baccalaureate degree program with TOPS graduate within 100% and 150% of time at much higher rates than students without a TOPS award. The 2018 class is used to compare cohorts as both 100% and 150% data are available. Findings indicate that 39.7% of the 2018 first-time, full-time entering cohort of TOPS recipients completed a baccalaureate degree within 100% of time, compared with 10.4% of non-TOPS students.

Figure C. Statewide Baccalaureate Four-year Graduation Rate (100%) among TOPS and Non-TOPS Students First-time, Full-time Entering Cohorts



Furthermore, 63.8% of the 2018 first-time, full-time entering cohort of TOPS recipients completed a baccalaureate degree within 150% of time, compared with 26.4% of non-TOPS students.

Figure D. Statewide Baccalaureate Six-year Graduation Rate (150%) among TOPS and Non-TOPS Students First-time, Full-time Entering Cohorts



Graduation rates also differ across the type of award received. TOPS *Honors* recipients graduate at much higher rates than TOPS *Performance* and *Opportunity* recipients. The 2018 class is used to compare cohorts as both 100% and 150% data are available. As noted in Figures E and F, 56.8% of TOPS *Honors* recipients in the 2018 entering cohort completed a baccalaureate degree within 100% of time and 77.7% within 150% of time, compared with 43.9% and 25.9% within 100% of time and 68.5% and 51.8% within 150% of time for TOPS *Performance* and *Opportunity* recipients, respectively.

**Figure E. Statewide Baccalaureate Four-year Graduation Rate (100%)
by Non-TOPS, Opportunity, Performance, Honors**

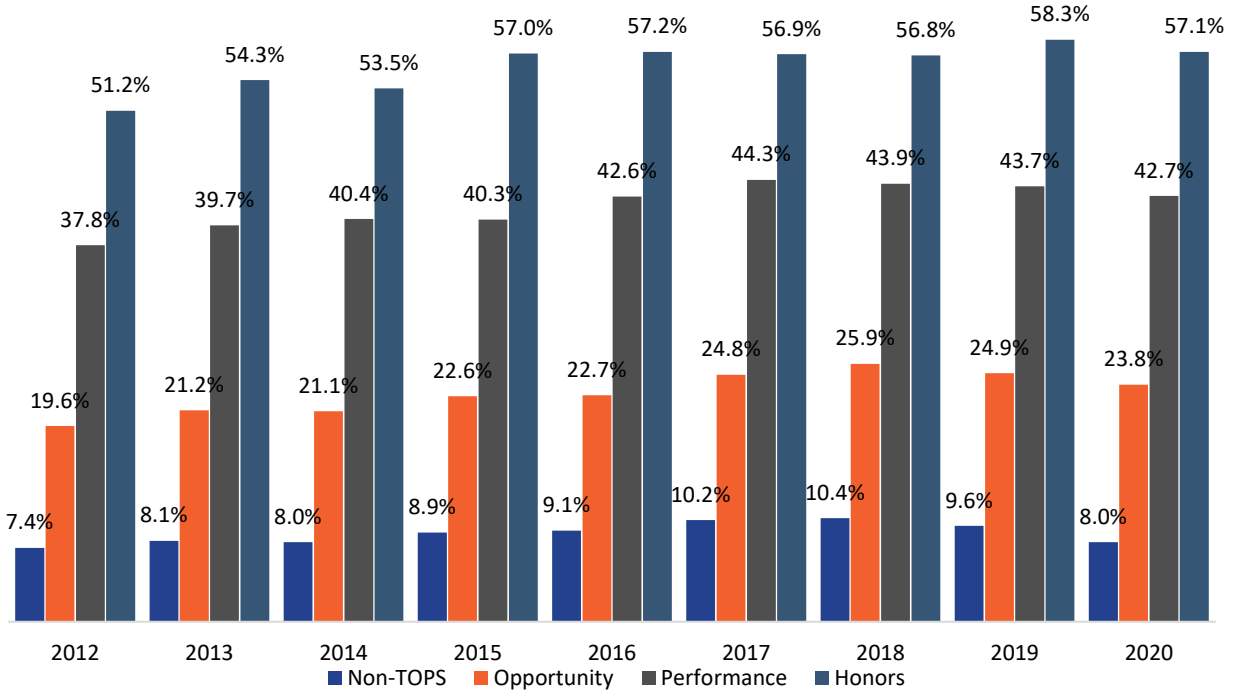
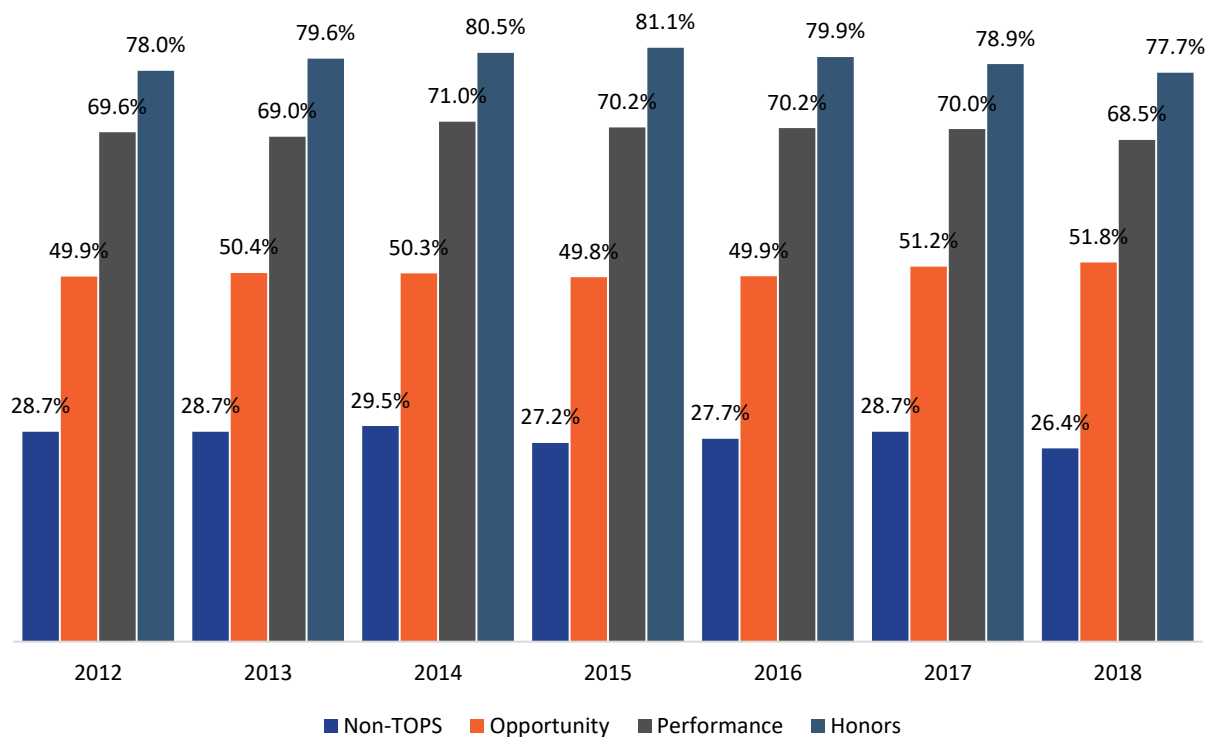
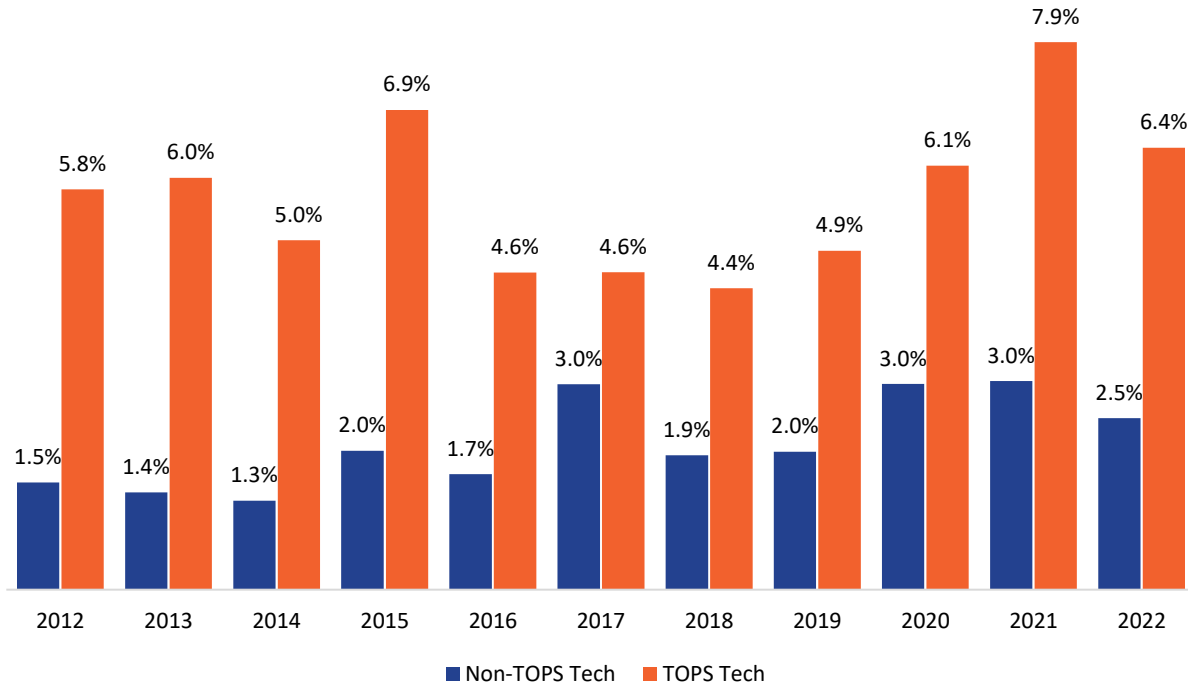


Figure F. Statewide Baccalaureate Six-year Graduation Rate (150%) by Non-TOPS, Opportunity, Performance, Honors

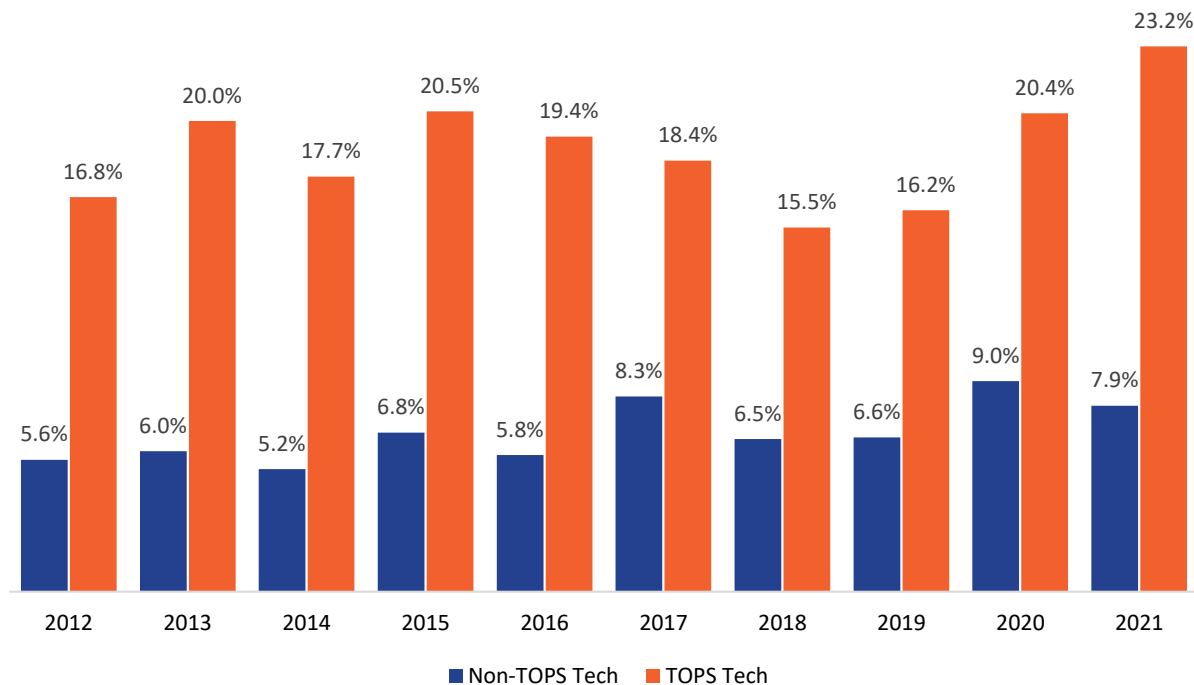


Like TOPS baccalaureate degree seekers, TOPS recipients who begin an associate's degree program graduate at higher rates than students without a TOPS award (Figures G and H); the 2020 class is used to illustrate both 100% and 150% graduation rates as data are available. Figure G shows that 6.1% of the 2020 first-time, full-time entering cohort of all TOPS recipients completed an associate's degree within 100% of time, compared with 3% of non-TOPS students. Figure H shows that within 150% of time, 20.4% of the 2020 first-time, full-time entering cohort of TOPS recipients completed an associate's degree, compared to 9% of non-TOPS students. Performance measures for out-of-state and international students were negligible and did not affect the data.

Figure G. Statewide Associate's Two-year Graduation Rate (100%) Among TOPS and Non-TOPS Students First-time, Full-time Entering Cohorts (Two-year Tech Programs only)



**Figure H. Statewide Associate's Three-year Graduation Rate (150%)
Among TOPS and Non-TOPS Students First-time, Full-time Entering
Cohorts
(Two-year Tech Programs only)**



The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) [2016] defines time-to-degree as "the time between initial enrollment in a postsecondary institution and graduation with a college degree." Tables 17a, 17b, and 17c examine this metric for TOPS recipients compared with non-TOPS students for the 2023–2024 Academic Year.

Consistent with trends discussed in this report, TOPS students took less time to complete the degree than their non-TOPS counterparts. Within the three tiers of TOPS (*Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors*), the higher the scholarship level, the fewer semesters taken to graduate.

In light of recent transfer legislation and Board of Regents transfer policies, TOPS and non-TOPS time-to-degree data were examined in two ways. Tables 17a and 17b compare time-to-degree by award level for students who remained at the institution of initial entry versus those who transferred elsewhere in any associate's (TOPS *OPH*) [17a] or technical (TOPS *TECH*) eligible programs (17b). Table 17c looks at time-to-degree for completers of baccalaureate programs.

Tables 17a and 17b examine time-to-degree for *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* awardees in associate's degree programs and TOPS *Tech* awardees in technical associate's degree programs. With the expansion of transfer initiatives such as the Universal Transfer Pathways and the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) policy, associate's degree programs have become more attractive to students as a bridge to a four-year degree, even if the student

transfers from one institution to another. While still relatively new, these programs and policies show promise as a vehicle for students to attain and subsequently transfer credentials. The data indicate that transfer students take a bit longer to graduate; however, as previously stated, the impact of BOR policies and legislative mandates enacted over the past couple of years may mitigate that trend in the future as standardized and more nimble transfer policies result in efficient transfer credit evaluation and application from one institution to another. Tables 17a and 17b provide an idea of present levels of time-to-degree for students with TOPS compared to those without TOPS.

Table 17a. 2023–24 Associate Average Time to Degree of TOPS & Non-TOPS Recipients

2023-24 Associate Average Time to Degree of TOPS & Non-TOPS Recipients			
Graduation Type	Award Types	Time to degree (in years)	Completer Count
Same Institution	Honors	2.4	52
	Performance	3.4	124
	Opportunity	4.2	257
	TOPS	3.7	433
	Non-TOPS	5.7	459
	Overall	4.7	892
Any Institution	Honors	2.8	113
	Performance	4.1	222
	Opportunity	5.6	443
	TOPS	4.7	778
	Non-TOPS	7.6	726
	Overall	6.1	1,504

Note: The numbers reflected here are those students whose program start dates were available.

Table 17b. 2023–24 Associate (Tech) Average Time to Degree of TOPS & Non-TOPS Recipients

2023-24 Associate (Tech) Average Time to Degree of TOPS & Non-TOPS Recipients			
Graduation Type	Award Types	Time to degree (in years)	Completer Count
Same Institution	TOPS Tech	3.4	266
	Non-TOPS Tech	6.1	543
	Overall	5.2	809
Any Institution	TOPS Tech	4.0	302
	Non-TOPS Tech	8.1	899
	Overall	7.1	1,201

Note: The numbers reflected here are those students whose program start dates were available.

Time-to-degree for *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* students who graduate from the same institution (4.4 years) versus those who transfer (4.7 years) is significantly less than for

associate's or technical programs. The benefit of BOR policies may be a factor in this metric as institutions refine the transfer process into a more consistent and supportive model.

Table 17c. 2023–24 Baccalaureate Average Time to Degree of TOPS & Non-TOPS Recipients

2023-24 Baccalaureate Average Time to Degree of TOPS & Non-TOPS Recipients			
Graduation Type	Award Types	Time to degree (in years)	Completer Count
Same Institution	Honors	4.0	2,824
	Performance	4.3	2,979
	Opportunity	4.9	2,796
	TOPS	4.4	8,599
	Non-TOPS	6.0	1,501
	Overall	4.6	10,100
Any Institution	Honors	4.1	3,037
	Performance	4.5	3,336
	Opportunity	5.4	3,307
	TOPS	4.7	9,680
	Non-TOPS	6.6	1,807
	Overall	5.0	11,487

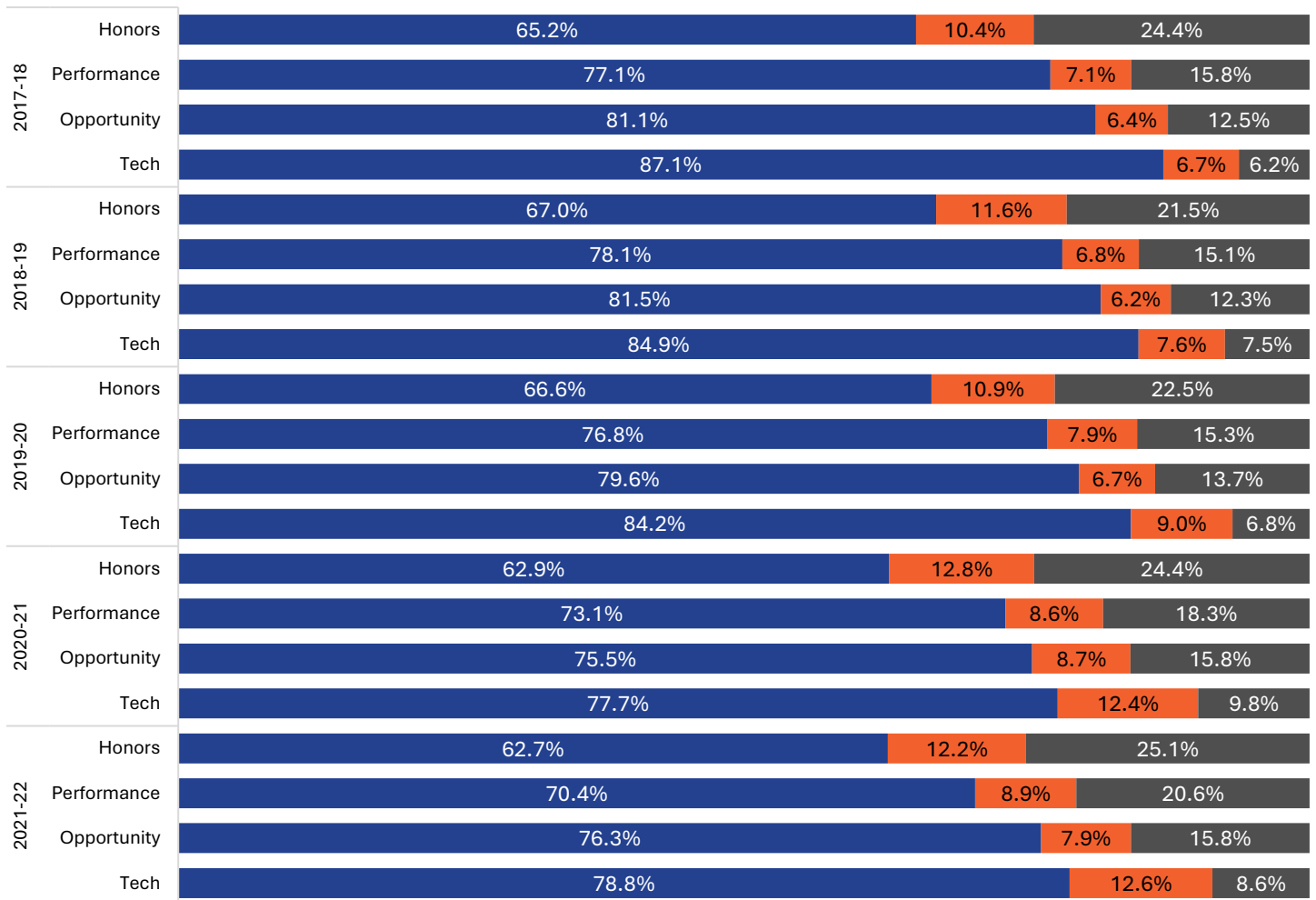
Note: The numbers reflected here are those students whose program start dates were available.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Study Resolution (S.R.) 10 of the 2019 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature requested the BOR study to determine the need for and feasibility of updating TOPS reporting requirements to include data on scholarship recipients' employment outcomes and other relevant data points. This year, the BOR obtained requested data on completers by award level from the Louisiana Workforce Commission to illustrate the post-TOPS status of recipients. Figure I shows the 2nd- and 6th-quarter post-completion status of TOPS completers.

TOPS *Opportunity* and *Tech* completers indicated the highest levels of established employment post-graduation. TOPS *Honors* completers are found in the workforce data in lower numbers but showed higher enrollment levels within two years of graduating. This finding correlates with the lower rate of time-to-degree for *Honors* completers (Figure 17c) and the potential for students to use their remaining TOPS funds to attend graduate school. It will be interesting to track how this number is impacted as BOR transfer and PLA policies increase opportunities for students to efficiently move from one institution to another and obtain the maximum benefit from their coursework.

Figure I. TOPS Recipients Completing An Award Employment Outcomes by TOPS Award Types



■ Found Employed w/n 18 Mos Post Completion ■ Found Enrolled w/n 2 Yrs Post Completion ■ Unknown

Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) data.

Conclusion

The TOPS eligibility criteria require students to take a more rigorous high school curriculum, which better prepares them for success in postsecondary education. Students who complete the TOPS Core earn higher ACT composite scores than students who do not complete the TOPS Core. Data indicate that the TOPS Program has succeeded in keeping more of Louisiana's high school graduates in the state to pursue postsecondary education.

This year, data showed an increase in the median ACT and GPA of TOPS recipients.

Since 2013–2014, of the 190,006 students deemed eligible for a TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance*, *Honors*, or *Tech* award, 161,060 (or 84.8%) have accepted their award and enrolled in a postsecondary education institution in Louisiana.

The proportion of students who are eligible for *Opportunity*, *Performance*, and *Honors* awards and accept their awards is steadily declining. Also of concern is that a steadily increasing proportion of TOPS-eligible students choose not to continue with postsecondary education. This trend is not limited to Louisiana, but is reflected in national trends that require further analysis.

TOPS recipients consistently attain ACT scores and high school core GPAs above the minimum for TOPS eligibility. Among TOPS recipients from 2011–2012 to 2023–2024, the average ACT score was 24.5 (four points above the minimum needed for eligibility for a TOPS *Opportunity* Award), and the average high school GPA (Core GPA) was 3.73 (significantly higher than the 2.5 minimum required for a TOPS *Opportunity* Award). This year, both those metrics had modest increases. The average ACT for TOPS *Tech* recipients was 17.3, with a high school GPA of 3.05. Data indicate that most initial TOPS recipients are white and female.

Despite the racial gaps among TOPS recipients, the number of minority students receiving TOPS has generally increased since the pandemic. In a positive trend, for the second year in a row, the number of TOPS recipients who were African American and Hispanic increased.

In terms of persistence, students who begin college with a TOPS award return to postsecondary education in subsequent years at a higher rate than non-TOPS students. This year, the retention rates for students beginning with a TOPS award at four-year institutions increased for second-, third-, and fourth-fall retention, with an all-time high of a 90.2% rate of TOPS awardees returning for the second year. Approximately 36% of TOPS recipients had their awards canceled between 2013–2014 and 2023–2024, with most cancellations due to students' failure to earn 24 hours of college credit during an academic year. Students may receive an exception to this requirement by filing an appeal due to extenuating circumstances.

Data indicate that students who began a baccalaureate or an associate's degree program with a TOPS award graduated within 100% and 150% of time at much higher rates than students without a TOPS award. 56.8% of TOPS *Honors* recipients in the 2018 entering cohort completed a baccalaureate degree within 100% of time and 77.7% within 150% of time, compared with 42.7% and 23.8% within 100% of time and 68.5% and 51.8% within 150% of time for TOPS *Performance* and *Opportunity* recipients, respectively. Of the 2021 first-time, full-time entering cohort of all TOPS recipients, 7.9% completed an associate's degree within 100% of time, compared with 3% of non-TOPS students. Within 150% of time, 23.2% of the 2021 first-time, full-time entering cohort of TOPS recipients completed an associate's degree, compared to 7.9% of non-TOPS students.

Data indicates that TOPS awards may correlate with time-to-degree, as TOPS recipients graduated in fewer semesters than non-TOPS students. Students who begin with a TOPS award complete at a higher rate, regardless of whether they retain the award for the entirety of their eligibility.

TOPS *Opportunity* and *Tech* completers indicated the highest levels of established employment post-graduation. TOPS *Honors* completers are found in the workforce data in lower numbers but

showed higher enrollment levels within two years of graduating, leading to the conclusion that these students entered graduate programs.

From the 1998–1999 through 2023–2024 fiscal years, the state provided approximately \$4.9 billion in funding for the TOPS Program. Despite this significant investment, several years of declines in the number of high school graduates and TOPS-eligible students, combined with lower proportions of students accepting their awards, have resulted in a third year of decreases in the number of overall TOPS recipients. As a result, in these years an increase in TOPS funding was not requested.

Senate Resolution 138 of the 2024 Regular Session calls on the Board of Regents to conduct a study of all the state’s higher education financial aid programs. The resolution asks the report to explain any barriers which prohibit the use of these programs and strategies that might enable these programs to work more effectively together, as well recommended modifications to improve the functioning and utilization of the state’s financial assistance. Ways in which TOPS might be productively modified, in light of the trends identified in this document, to better support progress toward the state’s education attainment goal of 60% of working-age adults holding a postsecondary credential by 2030 will be discussed within that broader context as part of that report.

Appendix A:

[Act 1202 from 2001 Regular Legislative Session](#)

Appendix B:

[Act 587 of 2014 Regular Legislative Session](#)

Appendix C:

[Act 227 of 2015 Regular Legislative Session](#)

Appendix D:

[TOPS Core Curriculum](#)

Appendix E:

[2023 High School Graduates TOPS-Eligible by School and Parish](#)



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Board of Regents Meeting as a Committee of the Whole

Agenda

Research and Sponsored Initiatives

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

VII. Reports and Recommendations

D. Research and Sponsored Initiatives

1. Appointment of Endowed Chairholder without a National Search: University of Louisiana at Monroe

AGENDA ITEM VII.D.1.

Appointment of Endowed Chairholder without a National Search: University of Louisiana at Monroe

Background Information

Since 2015 the Endowed Chairs for Eminent Scholars policy has included a provision to waive the requirement that BoRSF-matched Endowed Chairs be filled as the result of a national search to allow an internal appointment to be made. This provision was updated in August 2024 to clarify the requirements of internal appointments and seek documentation verifying that any internal appointment is fulfilling the goals of the Endowed Chairs for Eminent Scholars program.

Staff Summary

The University of Louisiana at Monroe requests to appoint Dr. Jana Sutton, Program Director of Marriage and Family Therapy, to the Hanna Sisson Spyker Eminent Scholars Chair in Education, a \$1 million Chair matched by the BoRSF in 1991–92. Dr. Sutton has been a member of the faculty at UL Monroe since 2003 and currently has the rank of full professor. She has held a variety of faculty and administrative positions on the campus, as well as maintaining a very active and productive research and scholarly career. UL Monroe's request is aligned with all policy requirements for such appointments.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Senior Staff recommends approval of the University of Louisiana at Monroe's request to waive the national search requirement to appoint Dr. Jana Sutton to the Hanna Sisson Spyker Eminent Scholars Chair in Education. As stipulated in Board policy, a copy of the Letter of Appointment to Dr. Sutton must be submitted to the Board within 90 days of this approval.



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Board of Regents Meeting as a Committee of the Whole

Agenda

Statewide Programs Committee

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

VII. Reports and Recommendations

E. Statewide Programs

1. Consent Agenda

- a. TOPS Home Study Exceptions—TOPS statutory provision that requires a student to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade
- b. TOPS and M.J. Foster Exceptions—TOPS regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school

Agenda Item VII.E.1.a.

Consent Agenda: TOPS Home Study Exceptions

Requests for exception to the TOPS statutory provision that requires a student to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade year

Background:

The TOPS statute requires that a student begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth-grade year. Act 95 of the 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature implemented a provision which allows the administering agency to grant exceptions to this requirement when a student provides documentation that the transfer to a home study program later than the statutorily provided time frame was beyond the student's control.

Two requests for exception to the deadline to begin a home study program were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on October 16, 2024. The students have presented facts and documentation that they believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation

The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends approval of the requests for exception to the deadline to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth-grade year.

Agenda Item VII.E.1.b.

Consent Agenda: TOPS and M.J. Foster Exceptions

Requests for exception to the TOPS regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school

Background:

Sections 705.A.6 and 7 of the TOPS administrative rules require TOPS recipients to continue to enroll full-time for the fall and spring semesters of each academic year, to remain enrolled throughout the semester, and to earn a minimum number of credit hours by the end of the academic year. Section 2103.E authorizes the governing body to grant an exception to the full-time, continuous enrollment and the annual earned-hour requirements when the “student/recipient has exceptional circumstances that are beyond his immediate control and that necessitate full or partial withdrawal from or non-enrollment in an eligible postsecondary institution.”

Section 2207.A.5 of the M.J. Foster administrative rules provides that students must maintain continuous enrollment, unless granted an exception for cause in accordance with §2103 of the Scholarship and Grant administrative rules. The same exceptions that apply for TOPS students apply to all programs for which the administering agency has been granted the authority to grant exceptions, including M.J. Foster.

Thirteen requests for exception to the TOPS requirements were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on October 16, 2024. One request for exception to the M.J. Foster continuous enrollment requirement was reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on October 16, 2024. The students have presented facts and circumstances that the students believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation

The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends approval of the requests for exception to the TOPS regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school.



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Board of Regents Meeting as a Committee of the Whole

Agenda

Planning, Research and Performance Committee

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Magale Recital Hall ▪ Creative and Performing Arts Annex
Northwestern State University
140 Central Avenue ▪ Natchitoches, LA 71497

VII. Reports and Recommendations

F. Planning, Research and Performance

1. Consent Agenda

a. R.S. 17:1808 (Academic Licensure)

i. Renewal Applications

- a. Oral Roberts University
- b. Remington College
- c. San Joaquin Valley College
- d. United States University

b. Advisory Commission on Proprietary Schools

i. Initial Applications

- a. GBR Dental Assistant Academy, Prairieville, LA

ii. Renewal Applications

- a. 160 Driving Academy - Shreveport
- b. Acadiana Area Career College, Lafayette, LA
- c. Accelerated Academy - Baton Rouge
- d. Accelerated Academy - Denham Springs
- e. Accelerated Academy - Hammond
- f. Accelerated Academy - Houma
- g. Accelerated Academy - Lafayette
- h. Accelerated Academy - Lake Charles
- i. Accelerated Academy - Metairie
- j. Accelerated Academy - Monroe
- k. Accelerated Academy - Slidell
- l. Advance Nursing Training, New Orleans, LA
- m. Ark-La-Tex Dental Assisting Academy, Shreveport, LA
- n. Baton Rouge School of Phlebotomy
- o. Blue Cliff College - Alexandria
- p. Blue Cliff College - Lafayette
- q. Blue Cliff College - Metairie

- r. Blue Cliff College - Metairie, Satellite Location
- s. Camelot College, Baton Rouge, LA
- t. Coastal College - Alexandria
- u. Cross Road CDL Academy, Harvey, LA
- v. Digital Media Institute, Shreveport, LA
- w. Fortis College, Baton Rouge, LA
- x. Healthcare Training Institute, Kenner, LA
- y. Life Care, Marrero, LA
- z. MedCerts, Livonia, MI
- aa. Medical Training College, Baton Rouge, LA
- bb. New Orleans Medical Assistant School
- cc. NOLA Institute of Gaming, New Orleans, LA
- dd. Opelousas Academy of Nondestructive Testing,
Opelousas, LA
- ee. RelyOn Nutec USA, Houma, LA
- ff. Remington College - Baton Rouge
- gg. River Cities School of Dental Assisting, Shreveport,
LA
- hh. Smith Institute, Shreveport, LA
- ii. Stick It Phlebotomy, Jonesboro, LA
- jj. Synergy Massage Institute - Metairie

Agenda Item VII.F.1.a.i.a.

**Oral Roberts University
Tulsa, Oklahoma**

BACKGROUND

Oral Roberts University (ORU) is a private institution with its main campus located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with an additional location at Church of the King in Mandeville, Louisiana. This university is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

ORU offers 25 academic programs that lead to bachelor’s and master’s degrees. These programs include subject areas of religious studies, business, healthcare, sports administration, communication studies, liberal studies, information technology, leadership studies, psychology, and political science. The university currently has sixty-nine (69) students in its Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment.

Degree Level	Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment
Doctorate	0
Master’s	0
Bachelor’s	69
Associate	0
Certificate	0
Other	0
Total	69

FACULTY

ORU has 9 part-time faculty members with either a master’s or a doctorate degree serving in Louisiana.

FACILITIES

RC offers online, classroom lecture/laboratory, and independent study instruction to Louisiana residents.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given the scope of the programs and the credentials of its faculty, the institution’s campus, program accreditation, and the general oversight by the home campus, Senior Staff recommends approval of the application for license *renewal* from Oral Roberts University (ORU).

Agenda Item VII.F.1.a.i.b.

Remington College Garland, Texas

BACKGROUND

Remington College (RC) is a non-profit, postsecondary educational institution with its main campus in Garland, TX. The College has campuses in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, and Shreveport. RC is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC). Louisiana campuses of Remington College are also licensed as Louisiana Proprietary Schools.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

RC offers 12 academic programs that lead to a diploma, associate, or bachelor's degree in a variety of fields including healthcare, criminal justice, business, electronics, and information technology. The institution currently has 557 students in its Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment.

Degree Level	Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment
Doctorate	0
Master's	0
Bachelor's	3
Associate	110
Technical Diploma	444
Other	0
Total	557

FACULTY

RC has 29 full-time and part-time faculty at various degree levels.

FACILITIES

RC offers online, classroom lecture/laboratory, and independent study instruction to Louisiana residents.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given the scope of the programs and the credentials of its faculty, the institution's campus, program accreditation, and the general oversight by the home campus, Senior Staff recommends approval of the application for license *renewal* from Remington College (RC).

Agenda Item VII.F.1.a.i.c.

**San Joaquin Valley College
Visalia, California**

BACKGROUND

San Joaquin Valley College (SJVC) is a private for-profit junior college with fifteen campuses in California and an online division. SJVC is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

SJVC offers 17 academic programs that lead to certificates as well as bachelor's and master's degrees. These programs include subject areas of business, medical, information technology, and technical career fields. The university currently has two (2) students in its Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment.

Degree Level	Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment
Doctorate	0
Master's	0
Bachelor's	1
Associate	1
Certificate	0
Other	0
Total	2

FACULTY

RC has 68 full-time and part-time faculty at various degree levels.

FACILITIES

San Joaquin Valley College provides online instruction to Louisiana students, and some programs required an externship to be completed within the state.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given the scope of the programs and the credentials of its faculty, the institution's campus, program accreditation, and the general oversight by the home campus, Senior Staff recommends approval of the application for license *renewal* from San Joaquin Valley College (SJVC).

Agenda Item VII.F.1a.i.d.

United States University San Diego, California

BACKGROUND

United States University (USU) is a private, for-profit university in San Diego, CA. USU is regionally accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

USU offers 21 academic programs that lead to undergraduate and graduate degrees in health sciences, business, information technology, education, and nursing. The institution currently has thirty (30) students in its Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment.

Degree Level	Louisiana Unduplicated Headcount Enrollment
Doctorate	0
Master's	28
Bachelor's	1
Associate	0
Certificate	0
Other	1
Total	30

FACULTY

USU has 15 full-time faculty at the doctorate level and 335 part-time faculty at various degree levels.

FACILITIES

USU offers online education to Louisiana students, and some programs require a field experience or clinical to be completed within the state.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Given the scope of the programs and the credentials of its faculty, program accreditation, and the general oversight by the home campus, Senior Staff recommends approval of the application for license *renewal* from United States University (USU).



BOARD of REGENTS
STATE OF LOUISIANA

Minutes

Advisory Commission on Proprietary Schools September 10, 2024

The Louisiana Board of Regents' Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission met on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, in Room 153 in the Claiborne Building. Prior to the start of the meeting, new Commission member, appointed by the Commission of Higher Education, Dr. Larry Tremblay, was sworn in. Chair James Fontenot called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. The roll was then called by Ms. Courtney Britton and a quorum was established. There were no public comments to be read.

Commission Members Present

Melanie Amrhein, Vice Chair
Sherrie Despino
James Fontenot, Chair
Randy Plaisance
Larry Tremblay

Commission Members Absent

Benjamin Baudoin
Chris Broadwater
Chandler LeBoeuf
Carmen Million

Staff Members Present

Courtney Britton
Chandra Cheatham
Mighan Johnson
Denise Kirkland
Anna Roberts
Antonio Williams

Guests Present

(See Appendix)

The first item of business was the approval of minutes from the Commission's meeting on July 9, 2024.

On motion of Sherrie Despino, seconded by Melanie Amrhein the Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission unanimously adopted the minutes of the July 9, 2024, Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission meeting.

The next item considered by the Commission was the initial application for licensure from GBR Dental Assistant Academy, LLC., located in Prairieville, Louisiana. The school, represented by the owner, Helen Mason, would offer one program: Dental Assisting at 40 clock-hours for 10 weeks. Discussion included the owner's motivation for opening the school, the benefits of the program and field, and praise for how clear, informative, and detailed the application was.

On motion of Melanie Amrhein, seconded by Sherrie Despino, the Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission unanimously voted that the Board of Regents approve the initial license application for GBR Dental Assistant Academy, Prairieville, Louisiana.

The next agenda item considered by the Commission was submitted license renewal applications. Over the previous two months, 35 schools submitted complete renewal applications.

On motion of Sherrie Despino, seconded by Larry Tremblay, the Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission unanimously voted that the Board of Regents renew the licenses of the following proprietary schools:

1. 160 Driving Academy - Shreveport – License #2364
2. Acadiana Area Career College - Lafayette – License #2357
3. Accelerated Dental Academy – Baton Rouge – License #2220
4. Accelerated Dental Academy – Denham Springs – License #2154
5. Accelerated Dental Academy- Hammond -- License #2235
6. Accelerated Dental Academy - Houma – License #2228
7. Accelerated Dental Academy - Lafayette – License #2219
8. Accelerated Dental Academy – Lake Charles – License #2308
9. Accelerated Dental Academy - Metairie - License #2230
10. Accelerated Dental Academy - Monroe– License #2223
11. Accelerated Dental Academy - Slidell – License #2224
12. Advance Nursing Training - New Orleans – License #2197
13. Ark-La-Tex Dental Assisting Academy - Shreveport – License #2131
14. Blue Cliff College - Alexandria – License #2358
15. Blue Cliff College - Lafayette – License #2359
16. Blue Cliff College - Metairie – License #2360
17. Blue Cliff College - Metairie, Satellite Location – License #2361
18. Camelot College - Baton Rouge – License #680
19. Coastal College - Alexandria – License #991
20. Cross Road CDL Academy - Harvey – License #2321
21. Digital Media Institute - Shreveport – License #2198
22. Fortis College - Baton Rouge – License #2134
23. Healthcare Training Institute - Kenner – License #2109
24. Life Care - Marrero – License #2182
25. MedCerts -Livonia, MI – License #2337
26. Medical Training College - Baton Rouge – License #969
27. New Orleans Medical Assistant School (formerly BRDAA-South) - New Orleans – License #2305
28. NOLA Institute of Gaming - New Orleans – License #2322
29. Opelousas Academy of Nondestructive Testing - Opelousas – License #2275
30. RelyOn Nutec USA - Houma – License #2156
31. Remington College - Baton Rouge – License #2277
32. River Cities School of Dental Assisting - Shreveport – License #2089
33. Smith Institute - Shreveport – License #2362
34. Stick It Phlebotomy - Ruston – License #2226
35. Synergy Massage Institute - Metairie – License #2365

There were two schools who chose not to renew their license for this renewal period, and staff has been in contact with the school owners about obtaining the student records.

- License #2363 – OceanPointe Dental Academy of Prairieville – Prairieville, LA
- License #2336 – Synergy Massage Institute - Slidell – Slidell, LA

An additional school, Baton Rouge School of Phlebotomy, License #233, did not submit a complete renewal application by the deadline, and after discussion with the owner, staff determined that the license had expired. However, the school owner asked for an extension and the request was presented to the Commission for consideration. Staff provided the Commission with the school's submitted renewal materials as well as a summary of timelines and staff's communication with the school. School owner, Jessica Shropshire was present to represent the school and discuss the missing materials. Discussion included previous business year dates, previous renewal timelines for the school, status of missing materials as of the meeting date, staff's compilation formula to determine school solvency, timeline and process for an extension, and recommendations to be sent to the Board of Regents.

On motion of Melanie Amrhein, seconded by Randy Plaisance, the Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission unanimously voted that the Board of Regents renew the license of Baton Rouge School of Phlebotomy, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on the condition that the school submit the correct required financial documents by close of business on September 10, 2024.

The next agenda item was program approval updates. Staff reminded the commission that program approvals are done by staff, and do not require the commission vote for recommendation.

The next agenda item was the fiscal year 2023–2024 updates. Ms. Anna Roberts, Grants and Contracts Manager, presented the fiscal year updates. Discussion included if a report of the actual student protection fund could be presented, that the total of the funds in the student protection account is currently \$1,073,076.20, and possibility of year-to-year comparison reports in the future. Ms. Britton presented the annual numerical summary of proprietary school activities.

Other business included discussion of the off-site storage units as part of the transcript digitization project and an annual student data collection update, as well as an update on the new online application system, EDvera.

The next meeting of the Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission is scheduled for November 12, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 1–153 of the Claiborne Building. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

APPENDIX A
GUESTS

Amanda LaGroue

LA Department of Justice

Helen Mason

GBR Dental Assistant Academy

Jessica Shropshire

Baton Rouge School of Phlebotomy

Proposed 2025 Board of Regents Calendar of Meetings

	Time	Room	Reason
January 2025			
Tuesday, January 28	10:00 am	Purchase ¹	Oaths, Committee and Board Meetings
February 2025 – no meeting			
March 2025			
Wednesday, March 26	9:00 am	Iowa Purchase	Board Development Committee and Board Meetings
April 2025			
Wednesday, April 23	9:00 am	Iowa Purchase	Board Development Committee and Board Meetings
May 2025 – no meeting			
June 2025			
Wednesday, June 18	9:00 am 10:30 am	Iowa Purchase	Board Development Committee and Board Meetings
July 2025 – no meeting			
August 2025			
Wednesday, August 20	9:00 am	Purchase TJ A&B	Joint BoR/BESE, Committee and Board Meetings
September 2025			
Tuesday, September 23	9:00 am- 4:30 pm	BCR ²	Budget Hearings
Wednesday, September 24	9:00 am	Purchase	Committee and Board Meetings
October 2025			
Tuesday, October 21	Noon	Off site	Board Development
Wednesday, October 22	9:00 am	Off site	Committee and Board Meetings
November 2025	No Board Meeting Potential Board Retreat – Off site – Exact Dates TBD		
December 2025			
Tuesday, December 9	6:00 pm	TBD	Board Holiday Social
Wednesday, December 10	9:00 am 10:30 am	Purchase TJ A&B	Joint BoR/BESE, Committee and Board Meetings

¹ Louisiana Purchase (Purchase) Room (1-100), Claiborne Building, 1201 N. 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

² Board Conference Room (BCR), (6-242), Claiborne Building, 1201 N. 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802