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Regents Tracks Graduates to Work

BATON ROUGE, La. - During its meeting today, the Board of Regents released its first report tracking Louisiana's higher education graduates into the workforce. The 2011 Employment Outlook Report analyzes employment data from the Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Board of Regents to determine the number of completers working in Louisiana six months and eighteen months after graduation.

"This report is a starting point that will eventually assist our colleges and universities in maximizing their success and improving Louisiana's economy," said Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell. "We hope to have information from other agencies including the Department of Revenue by next year to allow us to draw an even more complete picture in the future."

The major findings of the report include:

- Eighteen months after graduation, 73% of associate degree completers were employed in Louisiana compared to 50% of bachelor's degree recipients.
- Nearly 2/3 of in-state bachelor degree recipients were employed in Louisiana eighteen months after graduation. Comparatively, just one out of every five non-resident bachelor's degree graduates were employed in the state.
- Of the 2008-09 bachelor's degree completers, the following fields of study had the highest employment rates after eighteen months.
 - Healthcare (70%)
 - Education (69%)
 - Engineering technologies (68%)
 - Family and consumer sciences (67%)
 - Public Administration (67%)
- Eighteen months after graduation, bachelor's degree completers earned an average salary of \$32,742, compared to \$35,544 for associate degree completers. Data from studies in other states affirm this pattern but indicate that, by the fifth year, bachelor's degree recipients will have a higher income.
- The following fields of study had the highest average calculated salaries:
 - Engineering (\$56,853)
 - Health professions (\$46,537)
 - Engineering technologies (\$43,787)
 - Education (\$37,639)
 - Computer & Information Sciences (\$34,238)

"This report clearly shows that if we better educate Louisiana's residents they will participate in this state's economy at a much higher rate," said Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell. "To me, this is encouraging because it proves that we can raise our own economy by improving our success."

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“There has been a mismatch with the kinds of graduates our state has been producing and the kinds of jobs that are available now and in the future,” said Executive Director of the Workforce Commission Curt Eysink. “If we can fix that alignment, we can fix Louisiana for the long term.”

Over the past several years the Board of Regents has participated in data sharing initiatives with other state agencies to address job readiness, employment and transition patterns of public postsecondary education students. In March 2010, the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Commission took a formal step in the data sharing process enabling LWC to share confidential information obtained through its Louisiana unemployment compensation system with the Regents. That information was used along with the Regents’ Statewide Completers System to determine how many students are working in Louisiana from the graduating classes of 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09.

It is important to note that this report’s results are artificially low because it is based only on those employers that contribute to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Records System. The UI Wage System does not include those individuals who are self-employed, employed outside the state, employees of the federal government, or employed in occupations that do not participate in that wage system.

“In 2010, Georgetown University looked at labor reports and projected for each state what its workforce will look like in 2018. That report projected 51% of jobs in Louisiana will require some postsecondary credential,” said Commissioner Purcell. “We are at a turning point. Louisiana must decide whether to do a better job at diversifying and expanding its economy by educating its people or serve as a conveniently located source for cheap labor.”

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