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## **Regents Approve Fall Implementation of GRAD Act**

BATON ROUGE, La. – Today, the Regents voted in favor of allowing the Interim Commissioner and staff to continue working towards fall implementation of the Granting Resources and Autonomy for Diplomas (GRAD) Act. Staff is in the process of finalizing a standardized agreement for campuses wishing to participate in the program, as well as operational definitions and specifications for data and information that will be used to measure success.

“Based on the draft documents we reviewed today I have no doubt that we will be ready to enter into agreements this fall with any campus that wants to participate in the GRAD Act,” said Board of Regents Chairman Artis Terrell. “The focus of our initial efforts is on laying a strong foundation for improved student success. Through our collaborative efforts with the management boards and campuses we will continue to flesh out the details to develop robust improvement plans and agreements.”

To date, the Board of Regents has received letters from all four management boards specifying that all campuses except the LSU Health Sciences Centers in New Orleans and Shreveport desire to sign performance agreements in the fall. According to LSU System, the Health Science Centers intend to sign GRAD Act agreements for the spring, 2011.

“A tremendous amount of work has been done in the three weeks since the legislative session ended,” emphasized Terrell. “Our colleges and universities need this lifeline and our State needs more graduates. We certainly believe tuition plus performance is a good equation.”

The GRAD Act includes four performance objectives –student success, articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and institutional efficiency and accountability.

A fifth component of the Act includes extensive reporting of organizational data to the Board of Regents, the legislative auditor and the legislature. Regents members noted that this Act provides for a great deal of transparency to give policy makers and stakeholders a better understanding of how higher education in our state is performing.

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“This is transformative work for our state and we should all be very excited about its future implications,” said Commissioner Charlotte Bollinger.

Under the GRAD Act, the Board of Regents has the responsibility for entering into six-year performance agreements with participating institutions. In the agreement the institution commits to meet the performance objectives in exchange for increased autonomy and flexibility. Regents will monitor performance of the institutions and submit an annual report on the progress to the Legislature and the Governor. In addition, at any time, Regents may revoke an agreement for failure to abide by the terms.

For implementation of the GRAD Act this fall, management boards will have to take action on their institutions’ performance agreements, tuition increases and student hardship waivers, in addition to other designated responsibilities in the law. Participating institutions, with management board approval, may raise their tuition rates by an additional 5% this fall. Under separate authority from the Legislature, Louisiana’s higher education institutions have already raised fall tuition by 3, 4, or 5% depending on how far the institution is from the average tuition of peer institutions.

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