

Regents Recap

Highlights of the Official Actions of the Louisiana Board of Regents

January 22, 2004

Regents Express Support For Statewide Optical Network Proposal

The Louisiana Board of Regents expressed support for the concept of the Louisiana Optical Network Initiative (LONI), a proposed statewide, optical-fiber computer network with the potential to position Louisiana as one of the nation's top states in computer research network capacity. While there are still many details to work out, and, of course, funding sources must be secured, the Regents' response bodes well for the possibility of moving LONI from vision to reality.

The Board of Regents Technology Committee heard the details of the LONI proposal from Dr. Ed Seidel, LSU professor of astrophysics and director of the university's Center for Computation Technology. Dr. Seidel spoke on behalf of a collaborative of research universities and state agencies supporting the development of LONI, including LSU, Louisiana Tech, Southern University, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Tulane, the University of New Orleans, and the Louisiana Department of Economic Development.

According to Seidel, LONI would allow computer research networking among universities at a speed 1000 times faster than current capacity. He said that the research capability afforded by LONI would not only put Louisiana universities in a position to access over one billion dollars in federal research grants from such sources as the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education and NASA, but it would also help Louisiana make a case for access to the proposed national Internet (I2) "backbone," which is currently configured to bypass the Interstate 10 corridor because most Gulf-South states lack the optical networks needed to take meaningful advantage of the system. I2 is a parallel internet system reserved exclusively for university and scientific research.

"Optical networks are the hottest thing in computing science since the introduction of the worldwide web," said Seidel. "Optical switching technology allows high-speed, collaborative research networking among institutions." Seidel cited potential applications that could be particularly useful to Louisiana, among them coastal erosion modeling and complex

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Board Recommends Strengthening TOPS/Core Science Requirement

The Board of Regents today approved a response to House Concurrent Resolution No. 213 of the 2003 Louisiana Legislature, which urged the Regents to study the feasibility of adding AgriScience I and II (as one TOPS unit) to meet the TOPS requirement for the third science unit. The response recommends that a fourth science unit be added to the TOPS Core Curriculum. The new science core would include the current Biology (one unit) and Chemistry (one unit), a unit comprised of current general science courses plus AgriScience I and II (for one TOPS unit) and a unit of advanced science (those advanced science courses currently in the third unit). This additional unit of science would be effective for the 2008 high school graduating class, while the inclusion of AgriScience I and II in the general science unit would be effective for the 2004 graduating class.

The staff shared copies of HCR 213 and model course outlines for AgriScience I and II with each system board, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission, the Southern Regional Education Board, ACT Inc., and various Louisiana agriculturally-related entities for their response and recommendations. Although the responses were mixed, there were serious concerns expressed

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Program Approvals

The Board of Regents today approved the following proposed new academic/research center, academic programs and letter of intent:

Proposed New Academic/Research Center:

LSU Agricultural Center - Center for Natural Resources and Economics Policy

Proposed New Academic Programs:

Northwestern State University - B.S. in Addiction Studies
Southern University and A&M College - B.S. in E-Business

Proposed Letter of Intent:

Southeastern Louisiana University - B.S. in Occupational Safety, Health and Environment



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Regents Receive Update On Teacher Quality Initiatives

Dr. Jeanne Burns updated the Board of Regents on the progress of the state's Teacher Quality Initiatives. Burns apprised the Board of two recent notable acknowledgements of the state's reform efforts:

The publication *Education Week* has ranked Louisiana number 5 in the nation in its efforts to improve teacher quality.

Also, Burns reported that Louisiana was one of seven states selected to participate in Phase II of the SHEEO Teacher Quality Initiative. Louisiana has received a \$20,000 grant, which will be used to fully align the electronic PASS-PORT system developed for pre-service teachers with the electronic PASS-PORT system developed for district teachers and link the assessments to academic growth of K-12 students being taught by university graduates.

Electronic Campus Merger Announced

Associate Commissioner for Information and Learning Technology Mike Abbiatti reported to the Board that the merger of Louisiana's Electronic Campus and the Southern Regional Electronic Campus (a project of the Southern Regional Education Board, of which Louisiana is a member) became a reality January 1. Data entry for all summer courses will be completed by Jan 31

Abbiatti explained that the merger provides Louisiana students access to electronic courses available in all 16 SREB states in the event that a desired course is not available through Louisiana's Electronic Campus. Louisiana is the first SREB state to merge its *entire* electronic campus with the SREC. The SREB anticipates that other member states will follow Louisiana's example.

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computer simulations to aid collaborative development of "nanotechnology," the science of manufacturing of microscopic devices and materials. Several Louisiana universities are already very involved in nanotechnology.

"LONI's potential economic impact for Louisiana is considerable, from the influx of federal grant money to, to helping bring the national I2 backbone to the Gulf South, to attracting high-tech industries," Seidel said.

Members of the Regents Technology Committee were enthusiastic about the potential of the LONI concept, pledging the Board's backing to efforts to identify funding sources and devise a workable collaborative governance structure. They also urged Seidel and his colleagues to enlist the support of Louisiana's various postsecondary System boards as well. Early cost estimates put the initial price tag for LONI at around \$25 million.

"It's an attractive proposal," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joe Savoie. "LONI is cross-functional and it has significant economic potential. It's entirely consistent with the vision we have for postsecondary education and for our state. It's also consistent with Governor Blanco's identification of technology as a high priority for her administration. There are several fronts on which [Regents] can help the investigation process along."

TOPS/Core Science (continued from page 1)

regarding the strength of the existing science core *overall* and the current inclusion of both general and advanced science courses in the third unit.

With the development of the State Department of Education's Student Transcript System (STS), for the first time, staff could examine the performance of students on the ACT based on enrollment patterns in a variety of high school science courses. This STS review clearly demonstrated that students who enroll in Biology, Chemistry (both required for TOPS), and a combination of general and advanced science courses performed at higher levels than those students who enroll in general science courses only.

The staff concluded that although there was some merit in allowing AgriScience I and II in the science core, an examination of the performance of the 2003 Louisiana high school graduates clearly demonstrated that a strengthened science core would be much more beneficial in preparing students to take the ACT and in preparation for college-level work.

Staff had shared the draft report with Superintendent Picard for his review and response. Picard's response letter outlined a number of concerns with the staff recommendation, including staffing, student scheduling, availability of certified teachers, and the Career Options Law. The Board agreed that 'raising the bar' always presents challenges, but that the Regents needed to lead the way in improving college readiness. Commissioner Savoie assured the Committee that staff was prepared to work with the State Department of Education on any issues related to the recommendation, and if a change in the recommendation was necessary, staff would return to the Board with the revised recommendation.

The Board's response further instructs the Commissioner to continue discussions with the Department of Education regarding its concerns, and authorizes the Commissioner of Higher Education to submit the report to the Legislature on the Regents' behalf. In the event that discussions with the State Department of Education result in a revised recommendation, staff will resubmit the recommendation to the Board of Regents for its consideration and action.

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Board of Regents
actions,
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