

TOPS Report:
Analysis of the TOPS Program from 2005-
2014

Louisiana Board of Regents
December 2015



Act 1202 of 2001 and Act 587 of 2014

Act 1202 of the 2001 Regular Legislative Session charged the Board of Regents (BoR) with developing a uniform TOPS reporting system for the purposes of policy analysis and program evaluation, and to provide accurate data and statistics relative to the program's impact on the State and on students. In addition to the development of a TOPS reporting system, Act 1202 also required the BoR to prepare a report to analyze various aspects of the TOPS program (Act 1202 is included in Appendix A). To satisfy the reporting requirements, BoR staff developed interfaces between the major systems needed to identify and track TOPS students as they move through the postsecondary education enrollment cycle. According to Act 1202, the "TOPS report" should include:

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

Act 587 (Appendix B) of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session added several additional levels of analyses 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
- Average high school GPA and average ACT scores of those who lost the award and those who were placed on probationary status.

It is important to mention that ACT 587 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session mandates that this report be submitted to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education, no later than December 1st of each year. Therefore, in order to comply with the Act's established deadline, the data on the 2015-16 TOPS recipients are not included.

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

The Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), Louisiana's merit-based student aid program, was created via Act 1375 during 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 educational opportunities and become productive members of Louisiana’s workforce; and
- Promote access to and success in postsecondary education.

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

There are four TOPS awards available to students enrolling at Louisiana’s colleges and universities: TOPS Tech, Opportunity, Performance, and Honors. Because the TOPS Tech award has been historically underutilized, this report focuses only on those students receiving an Opportunity, Performance or Honors award (some limited statistical analysis on the TOPS Tech award can be found in Appendix C). Act 230 of the 2015 Regular Session made changes to the TOPS Tech program. Under Act 230, students graduating from high school during the 2016-17 school year and thereafter will only be able to use the TOPS Tech Award to pursue an associate's degree or other shorter-term training and education programs, including skill, occupational, vocational, technical, certificate, and academic, that the Workforce Investment Council and the Board of Regents determine are aligned to state workforce priorities. These changes are expected to increase participation, allowing for a more detailed analysis of the TOPS Tech program in subsequent reports.

The criteria for eligibility for the *Opportunity*, *Performance* and *Honors* awards include completion of 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 of TOPS.

Table 1: TOPS Eligibility Criteria and Award Components, 2015

Award	Core	Core GPA	ACT Composite	Award Components	Duration
Opportunity	19 Units	2.50	20	Full-Time Tuition	4 years, or 8 semesters
Performance	19 Units	3.00	23	Full-Time Tuition + \$400/year	4 years, or 8 semesters
Honors	19 Units	3.00	27	Full-Time Tuition + \$800/year	4 years, or 8 semesters

Source: LOSFA website- TOPS Brochures and Flyers

Currently, the TOPS Core Curriculum consists of 19 units (the specific course requirements of the TOPS Core Curriculum are contained in Appendix D).

Administration of TOPS is statutorily assigned to the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC). The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) administers TOPS under the direction of LASFAC. Program eligibility is determined primarily by using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or TOPS On-Line Application; the high school transcript from the Department of Education’s Student Transcript System (STS); and official ACT scores.

To maintain eligibility, TOPS recipients must be continuously enrolled as full-time students, earn at least 24 semester hours equivalent of credit each academic year (fall, spring and summer), and maintain academic progress as demonstrated by the cumulative grade point average. Table 2 lists

the minimum renewal requirements for each award. Continuing eligibility is determined by LOSFA based on data received from the postsecondary institution in which the student is enrolled.

Table 2: Renewal Requirements, 2015

Award	Hrs. Earned/Academic Year	Cum. GPA Each Academic Yr. (2.0 each semester/term)	Award Reinstated (Upon recovery of req. GPA)
		2.30- first year ¹ ;	
Opportunity	24	2.50- subsequent years ²	Yes
Performance	24	3.00	Yes, as Opportunity
Honors	24	3.00	Yes, as Opportunity

¹Students must have earned a 2.30 GPA at the end of the first Academic Year (between 24-47 hours of earned credit).

²Students must have earned a 2.50 GPA at the end of all other Academic Years (once 48 hours have been earned).

Source: LOSFA website- TOPS Brochures and Flyers

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of TOPS awards across systems for the AY 2014-15. In AY 2014-15, the majority (53.0%) of TOPS awards went to students attending a UL System campus. Data also indicate that the majority (52.8%) of students with TOPS awards had an *Opportunity* award. Of students with the highest level of award, the *Honors* award, 47.2% attended an LSU System campus.

Table 3: Distribution of Award Types across Systems, AY 2014-2015

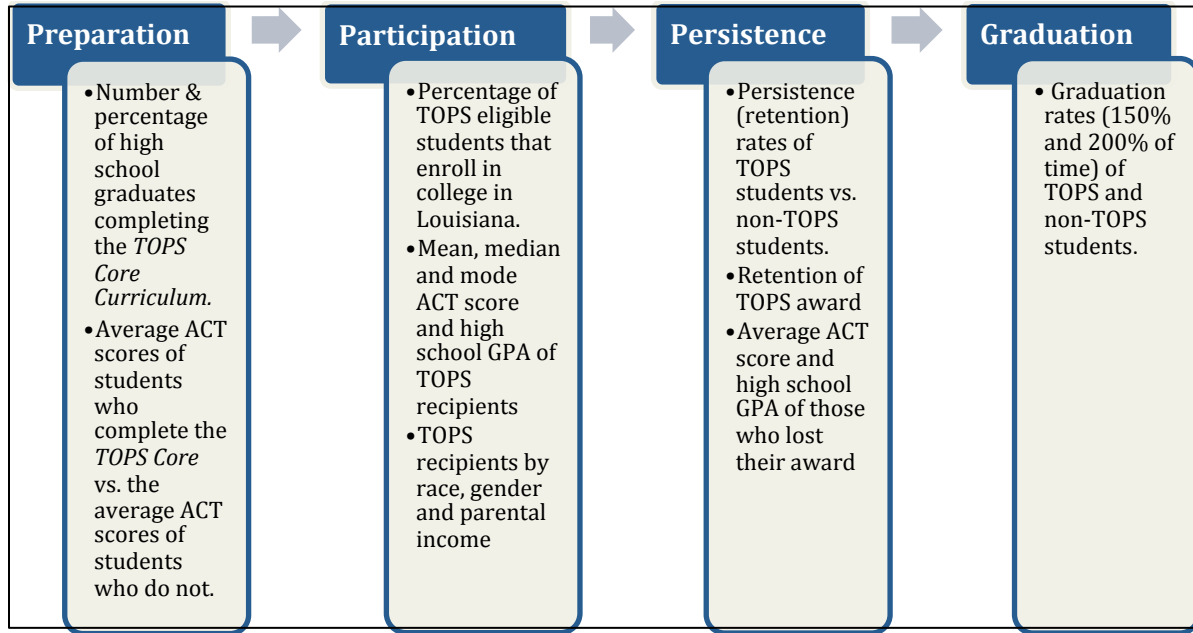
Award	LSU System	Southern System	UL System	LCTC System	Private Institutions	Proprietary Schools	% of all awards
Opportunity	27.4%	2.0%	56.6%	7.7%	5.9%	0.5%	52.8%
Performance	34.9%	0.7%	55.6%	2.5%	6.1%	0.2%	25.9%
Honors	47.2%	0.2%	41.0%	0.5%	11.1%	0.0%	21.3%
% of all awards	33.5%	1.3%	53.0%	4.8%	7.1%	0.3%	

Source: LOSFA- TOPS Payment Summary by Award Level for Academic Year 2014-2015 as of 07-24-15.

TOPS Report: Historical Analysis of the TOPS Program, 2005-2014

The data in this report include current and historical data on TOPS students (students receiving an *Opportunity*, *Performance*, or *Honors* award) and non-TOPS students, to allow for comparison. Some of the data provided in the “Preparation” section, and all of the data provided in the “Participation,” “Persistence” and “Graduation” sections of this report do not include private postsecondary institutions since those institutions do not currently participate in Regents’ reporting systems. As illustrated in Figure A, the report is presented in an order that follows the students’ progression through the postsecondary enrollment process; from preparation, to participation in postsecondary education, to persistence, to graduation.

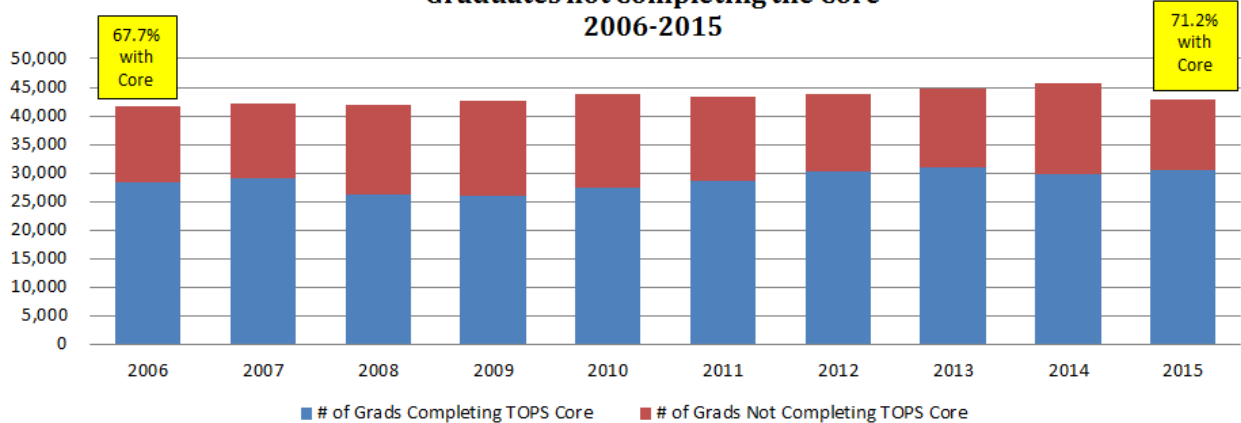
Figure A: Graphical Overview of Report



Preparation

TOPS academic eligibility criteria require students to take high school courses that will prepare them for success after high school, particularly in postsecondary education. The *TOPS Core Curriculum* is the key component for eligibility for a TOPS award. With the 2001 Master Plan, the BoR adopted the *TOPS Core* as the *Regents' Core*, the most important element of the minimum standards established for admission to the state's public four-year colleges and universities. With this change, students had a double incentive to complete the college-preparatory curriculum.

Figure B: Number of Graduates Completing the Core vs. Number of Graduates not Completing the Core 2006-2015



Source: LOSFA internal data files as of August 2015.

The *TOPS Core* was changed in 2008. An additional Math or Science requirement was added.

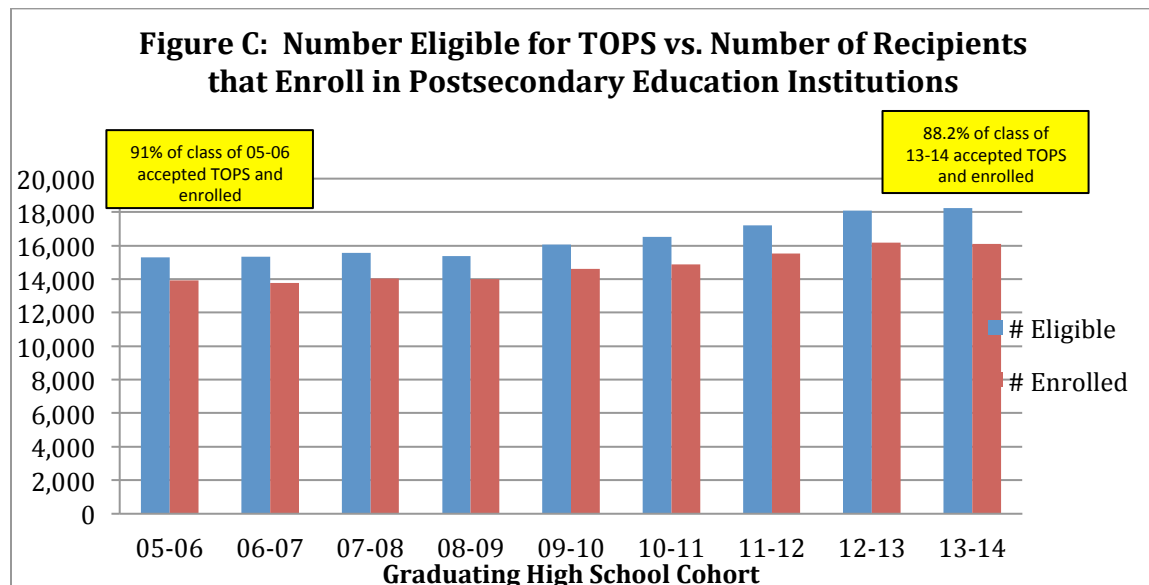
ACT conducted a study of the 2015 Louisiana high school graduates, which examined the correlation between the ACT Core -- which is closely aligned to the TOPS core -- and students'

performance on the ACT. The findings from the study indicated that students who reported taking the ACT Core earned higher composite ACT scores than students who did not take the ACT Core. According to ACT, 49,082 students in the 2015 graduating class took the ACT test. Of these students, approximately 70% took the ACT Core and 20% took less than the Core. Because some students did not indicate whether or not they completed the ACT Core, the numbers do not add up to 100%. The average ACT composite for those who completed the ACT Core was 20.7; whereas the average ACT composite score for those who did not complete the ACT Core was 16.1¹. It is reasonable to conclude that because the TOPS Core and ACT Core are closely aligned, that students who complete the TOPS Core earn higher ACT composite scores than students who did not complete the TOPS Core.

All indications are that the TOPS eligibility criteria require students to take a more rigorous high school curriculum, which in turn better prepares them for the ACT and for success in postsecondary education.

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. In fact, 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 147,635 students deemed eligible for a TOPS *Opportunity, Performance or Honors* award, 132,975 (or 90.0%) accepted the award and enrolled in a postsecondary education institution in Louisiana.



Source: LOSFA internal data files as of August 2015.

¹ACT Core or more results correspond to students taking the four or more years of English and three or more years of each math, social studies, and natural science.

Since 2005, both the average ACT scores and high school GPA of TOPS recipients have increased. For example, in 2005 the average ACT score of TOPS recipients was 23. By 2014, the average ACT score increased to 24 (the median score was 23 and the mode was 20). Additionally, in 2005 the average high school GPA (Core GPA) was 3.28. By 2014, the average high school GPA increased to 3.35 (and the median GPA was 3.35). Both the average ACT scores and GPA of TOPS recipients have been consistently higher than the minimum requirements for a TOPS *Opportunity* award.

Table 4: Mean ACT and GPA of TOPS Recipients*

HS Graduating Cohort	TOPS Recipients' Average Composite ACT Score	Statewide Average ACT Composite Score**	TOPS Recipients Average GPA
2005	23	19.8	3.28
2006	23	20.1	3.28
2007	23	20.1	3.29
2008	24	20.1	3.29
2009	24	20.1	3.28
2010	24	20.1	3.30
2011	24	20.2	3.34
2012	24	20.3	3.35
2013	24	19.5	3.36
2014	24	19.2	3.35

*Since 2005, the overall average composite ACT score of TOPS recipients is 23.8; the overall average of GPA is 3.31.

** The statewide average includes all high school graduating students (source ACT profile report).

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of September 2015.

As tables 5 and 6 indicate, TOPS recipients are predominantly white (79%) and female (59%). Data indicate there are large race disparities in TOPS recipients. These trends are found in other states with similarly large merit-based scholarship programs. Despite the race differences in TOPS recipients, the number of minorities receiving TOPS has increased significantly over time. For example, in 2014, 2,685 African Americans were TOPS recipients, compared to 1,873 in 2005. This represents a 43% increase since 2005.

Table 5: TOPS Recipients, by Race*

HS Graduating Cohort	Asian	American Indian	African American	White	Hispanic	Other	Total
2005	334	72	1,873	11,383	182	0	13,844
2006	364	57	1,881	11,412	195	0	13,909
2007	371	69	1,831	11,319	187	0	13,777
2008	374	67	1,962	11,448	234	0	14,085
2009	397	79	2,072	11,203	237	0	13,988
2010	412	79	2,340	11,488	289	0	14,608
2011	399	71	2,460	11,529	339	70	14,868
2012	479	76	2,807	11,645	421	95	15,523
2013	491	82	2,932	12,120	409	136	16,170
2014	502	139	2,685	11,773	548	140	15,787

*It should be noted that 2,520 individuals did not report their race. Therefore, they were not included in this analysis.

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of September 2015.

Table 6: TOPS Recipients, by Gender*

HS Graduating Cohort	Female	Male	Total
2005	8,179	5,748	13,927
2006	8,311	5,724	14,035
2007	8,139	5,742	13,881
2008	8,419	5,793	14,212
2009	8,312	5,845	14,157
2010	8,668	6,130	14,798
2011	8,753	6,347	15,100
2012	9,047	6,664	15,711
2013	9,561	6,809	16,370
2014	9,549	6,721	16,270

***It should be noted that 618 individuals did not report their gender. Therefore, they were not included in this analysis.**

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of September 2015.

Table 7: TOPS Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Recipients, by Parental Income

High School Graduation Year	\$0-\$14,999	\$15,000-\$24,999	\$25,000-\$34,999	\$35,000-\$49,999	\$50,000-\$69,999	\$70,000-\$99,999	\$100,000-\$129,999	\$130,000-\$149,999	\$150,000+	Total
2005-06	1,149	1,006	941	1,448	2,072	2,946	1,764	558	1,403	13,287
2006-07	984	984	960	1,350	1,860	2,907	1,740	622	1,694	13,101
2007-08	1,203	947	983	1,268	1,826	2,783	1,982	745	2,075	13,812
2008-09	930	1,010	935	1,300	1,704	2,674	2,067	822	2,128	13,570
2009-10	1,021	1,106	1,034	1,395	1,755	2,685	2,123	812	2,069	14,000
2010-11	899	1,123	1,064	1,397	1,739	2,615	2,047	857	2,223	13,964
2011-12	915	1,232	1,114	1,500	1,726	2,710	2,114	849	2,419	14,579
2012-13	1,007	1,237	1,098	1,505	1,754	2,624	2,224	1,043	2,726	15,218
2013-14	948	1,205	1,098	1,486	1,589	2,560	2,175	1,027	3,014	15,102

***It should be noted that 10,392 individuals either did not report their income or reported a negative income. Therefore, those individuals were not included in this analysis.**

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of September 2015.

As indicated in Table 7, TOPS recipients are increasingly coming from middle- and upper- income families. Since 2005, the number of TOPS recipients that came from households with incomes of \$150,000 or more has more than doubled; whereas, the number of recipients from lower-income households has remained relatively stagnant over time.

Persistence

Persistence in postsecondary education is usually measured by the rate at which first time, full-time, degree-seeking students are retained to (or return for) their second year. As illustrated in Tables 8 and 9, students who begin college with a TOPS award return to postsecondary education in subsequent years at a higher rate than non-TOPS students.

Table 8 examines the overall retention rate (retention at any public postsecondary institution, not necessarily the institution in which the student started) to the second, third and fourth year of students who began at a four-year institution with TOPS compared to those who began without TOPS (i.e., non-TOPS students).

Table 8: Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs. Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Four-Year Institution

Fall Semester Entering Class	2 nd Yr. Retention		3 rd Yr. Retention		4 th Yr. Retention	
	TOPS	Non-TOPS	TOPS	Non-TOPS	TOPS	Non-TOPS
2004	85%	62%	82%	54%	77%	47%
2005	88%	68%	81%	56%	76%	49%
2006	88%	68%	82%	58%	78%	52%
2007	89%	69%	83%	59%	78%	53%
2008	90%	70%	83%	58%	79%	53%
2009	89%	71%	82%	60%	77%	52%
2010	89%	72%	82%	61%	77%	54%
2011	88%	71%	81%	59%	75%	52%
2012	87%	71%	81%	59%	N/A	N/A
2013	87%	71%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: BoR internal data files as of September 2015.

Table 9 examines the overall retention rate to the second and third year of students who began at a two-year institution with TOPS compared to those who began without TOPS (i.e., non-TOPS students).

Table 9: Statewide Retention Rates of TOPS vs. Non-TOPS Students Who Began at a Two-Year Institution

Fall Semester Entering Class	2 nd Yr. Retention	
	TOPS	Non-TOPS
2004	69%	36%
2005	76%	54%
2006	74%	57%
2007	78%	57%
2008	81%	60%
2009	78%	55%
2010	76%	53%
2011	72%	53%
2012	74%	52%
2013	72%	52%

Source: BoR internal data files as of September 2015.

Students who receive a TOPS award must maintain minimum academic criteria to retain their award (see Table 2). The award is cancelled when students fail to maintain full-time and continuous enrollment, earn the required 24 hours of credit per academic year, or earn the required minimum GPA. As shown in Table 10, the number of awards cancelled has declined over time.

Furthermore, between fall 2004 and spring 2015, 172,356 students received TOPS awards. Of these TOPS award recipients, 52,942 (31%) had their TOPS award cancelled at some point during their postsecondary academic career. Of the 52,942 awards that were cancelled, 34,801 (66%) were cancelled due to students' failure to earn 24 hours of college credit during an academic year.

Table 10: Percentage of TOPS Awards Cancelled by Cohort

Entering Cohort	Total # of Awards	Total # of Awards Cancelled*	Cancelled: 24 Hr. Requirement	Cancelled: GPA Requirement	Cancelled: Non-Continuous Enrollment	Cancelled: Student Resignation
2004-2005	14,620	6,048 41%	3,424 23%	353 2%	2,271 16%	730 5%
2005-2006	14,443	6,109 42%	3,145 22%	356 2%	2,608 18%	699 5%
2006-2007	14,678	6,102 42%	3,819 26%	359 2%	1,924 13%	728 5%
2007-2008	14,230	5,777 41%	3,668 26%	496 3%	1,613 11%	658 5%
2008-2009	14,922	5,933 40%	3,786 25%	584 4%	1,563 10%	602 4%
2009-2010	15,300	5,661 37%	3,576 23%	615 4%	1,470 10%	569 4%
2010-2011	15,584	5,020 32%	3,129 20%	658 4%	1,233 8%	647 4%
2011-2012	16,045	4,316 27%	2,990 19%	532 3%	794 5%	615 4%
2012-2013	16,850	3,673 22%	3,165 19%	435 3%	73 0%	624 4%
2013-2014	17,737	2,886 16%	2,692 15%	156 1%	38 0%	596 3%
2014-2015	17,947	1,417 8%	1,407 8%	0 0%	10 0%	396 2%
Grand Total	172,356	52,942	34,801	4,544	13,597	6,864

Source: LOSFA internal data files as of September 2015. *TOPS Tech* award recipients not included.

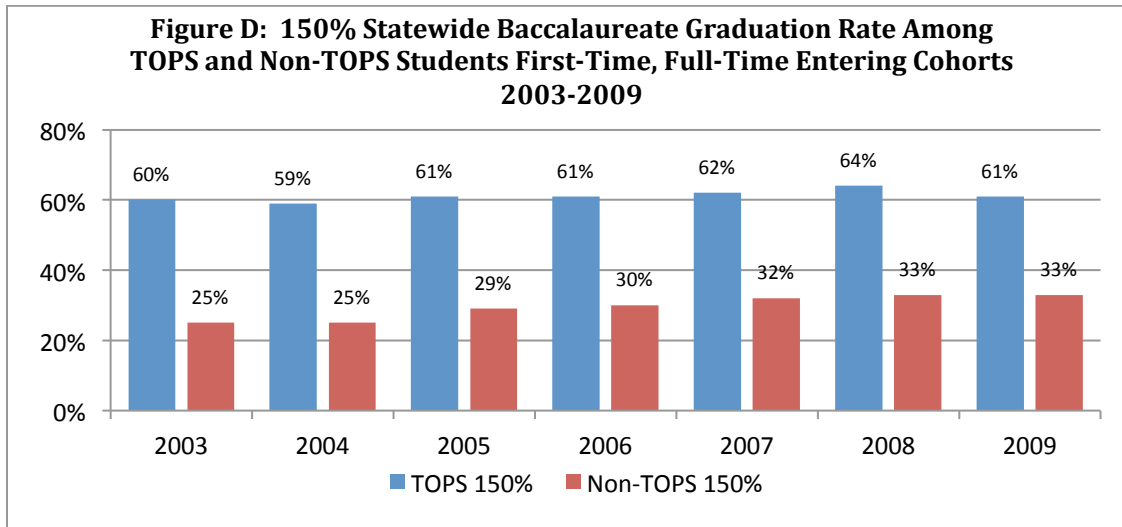
The average ACT score of all the TOPS recipients who had their award cancelled between 2004-05 and 2014-15 (due to a failure earn the required 24 hours of credit per academic year, earn the required minimum GPA, or maintain full-time and continuous enrollment) was 22.9. Among this same group the average high school GPA was 3.10 (Table 11).

Table 11: Average ACT Score and High School GPA of TOPS Recipients Who had Their Award Cancelled, 2004-2015

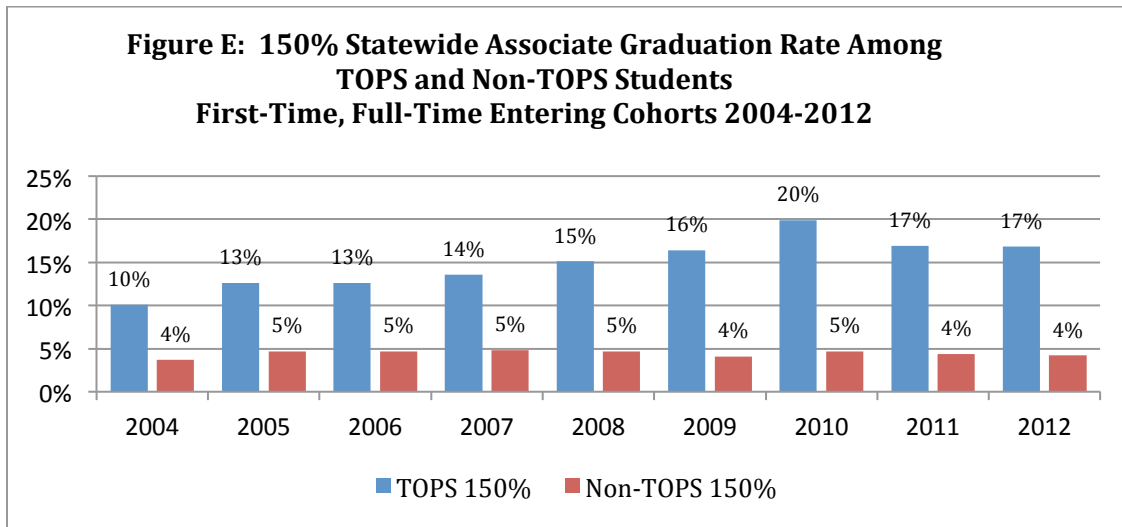
	Avg. ACT	Avg. High School GPA
Cancelled: 24 Hr. Requirement	22.9	3.10
Cancelled: GPA Requirement	22.6	3.06
Cancelled: Non-Continuous Enrollment	22.9	3.14

Graduation

Graduation is typically measured by calculating the rate at which first-time, full-time degree seeking students earn their academic degrees within 150% of the time required (i.e., within six years for baccalaureate degrees and within three years for associate degrees). This 150% protocol was adopted by the federal government and has become the standard followed by the states. As Figures D and E both illustrate, students who begin a baccalaureate degree program or an associate degree program with TOPS graduate within 150% of time at much higher rates than do students without a TOPS award. As Figure D illustrates, 61% of the 2009 first-time, full-time entering cohort of TOPS recipients completed a baccalaureate degree within 150% of time, compared with 33% of non-TOPS students who did so within the same time frame.

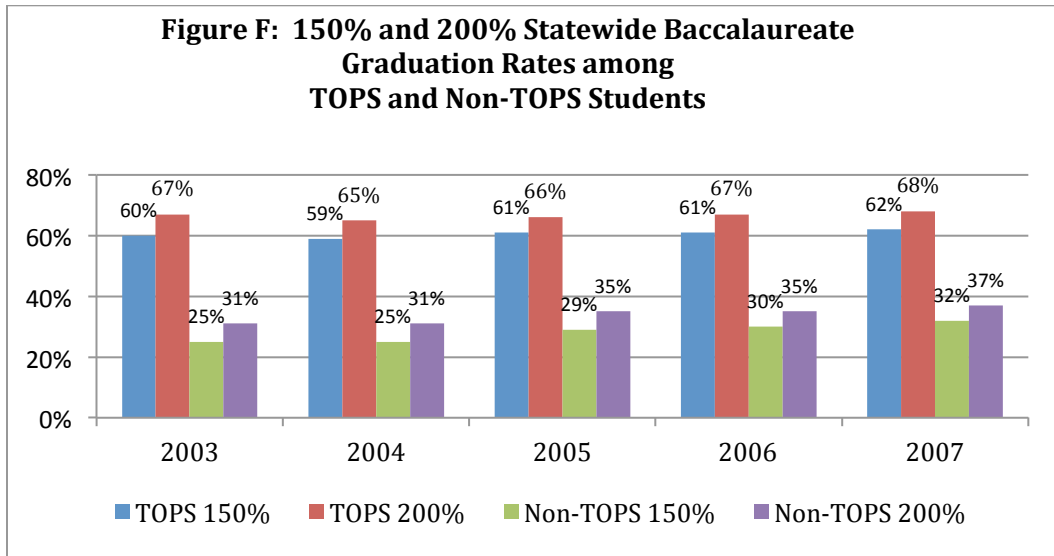


Source: BoR internal data files.

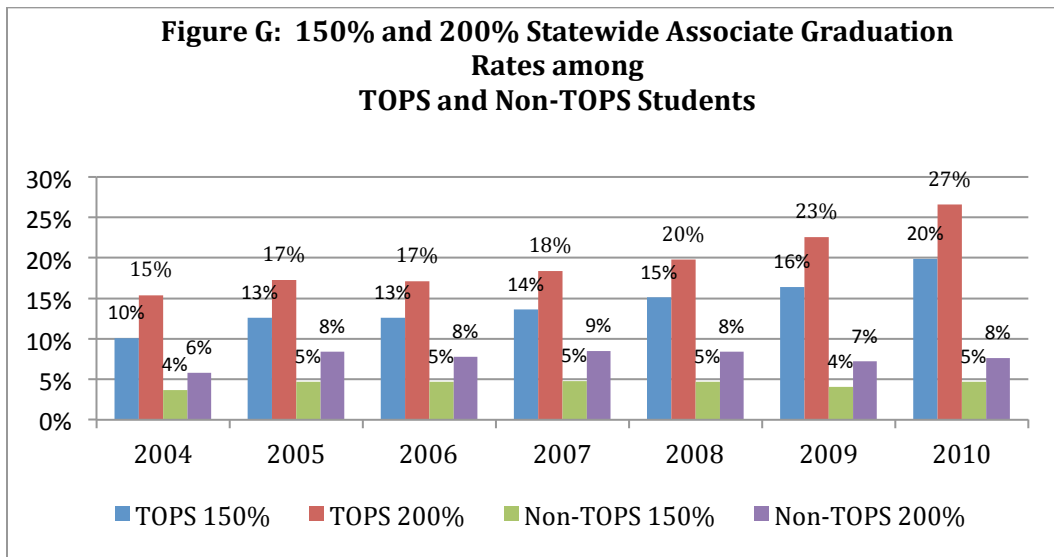


Source: BoR internal data files.

Figures F & G display the comparisons between the standard federally defined 150% graduation rates versus a 200% graduation rate. Again, TOPS recipients graduate at a higher rate than non-TOPS students.



Source: BoR internal data files.



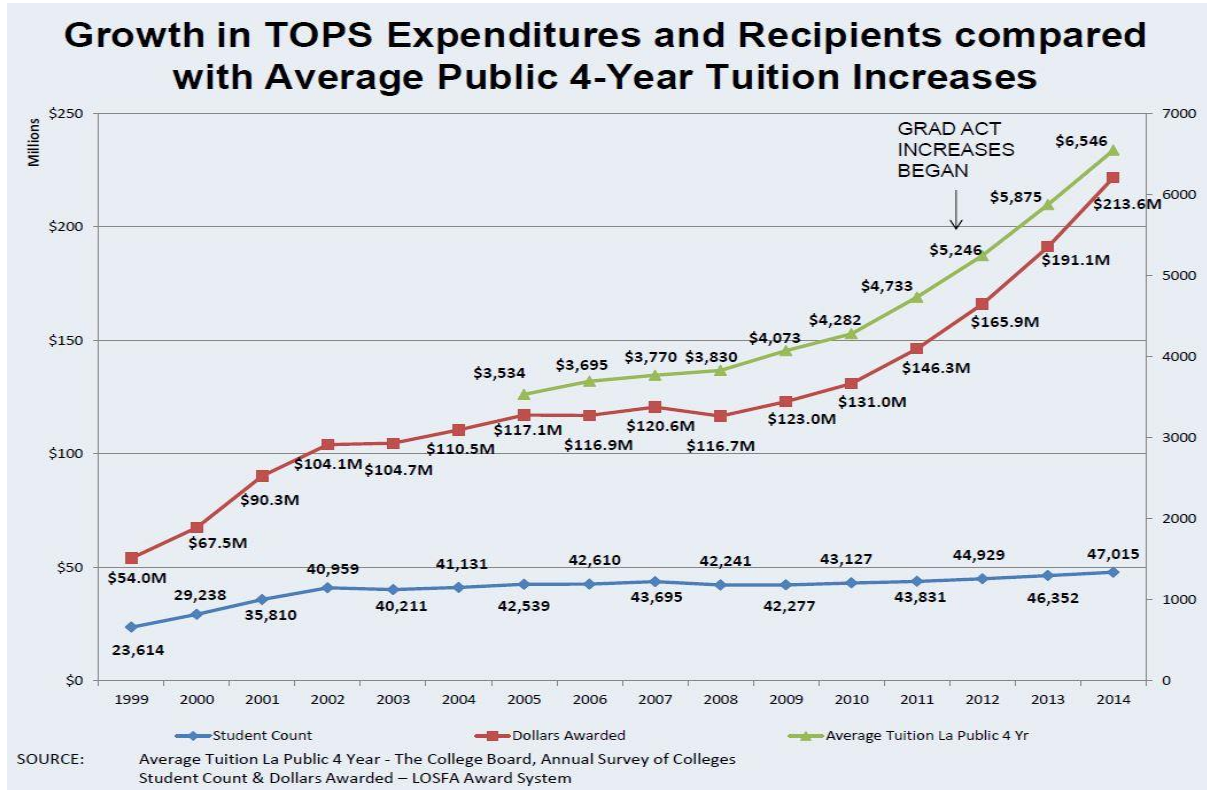
Source: BoR internal data files.

Funding TOPS

As depicted in Figure H below, the State spent approximately \$1.9 billion funding the TOPS program from 1999 to 2014. During that same time period, total expenditures on the TOPS program increased 296%. The growth is largely contributed to two factors: (1) increases in the number of students receiving the award and (2) the increasing tuition prices in the state's public institutions of higher education. As illustrated in the Figure H below, in 1998-1999, the number of

TOPS recipients was 23,614. By 2013-14, the number of TOPS recipients almost doubled to 47,015. Moreover, since 1998-1999, the average TOPS award amount also nearly doubled.

Figure H: TOPS Program Funding, 1999-2014



Source: LOSFA internal data files as of September 2015.

Conclusions

In accordance with Act 1202 of the 2001 Regular Legislative Session and Act 587 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session, this report has analyzed:

- The relationship between the high school courses taken and the student's score on the American College Test (ACT);
- The number of high school graduates who are eligible for TOPS and subsequently enroll in college on TOPS;
- The mean, median and mode ACT score and high school GPA of TOPS recipients;
- Demographic information on TOPS recipients;
- The persistence (retention) rates of TOPS students;
- The number of and reasons for students losing award eligibility;
- The mean ACT score and high school GPA of students who lost their TOPS award;
- Graduation rates of TOPS students; and
- Historical data on the cost of the TOPS program, to date.

All indications are that the TOPS eligibility criteria require students to take a more rigorous high school curriculum, which in turn better prepares them for the ACT and for success in postsecondary education. Students who took the ACT Core earned a higher GPA than students that did not take the ACT Core. Although there are slight variations between the ACT Core and TOPS Core, it is reasonable to conclude that students who complete the TOPS Core also earn higher ACT composite scores than students who did not complete the TOPS Core.

Data indicate that the TOPS program has succeeded in keeping Louisiana's high school graduates in the State to pursue postsecondary education. As mentioned, since the fall 2005, of the 147,635 students deemed eligible for a TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance* or *Honors* award, 132,975 (or 90.0%) have accepted a TOPS *Opportunity*, *Performance* or *Honors* award and enrolled in a postsecondary education institution in Louisiana.

TOPS recipients consistently attain ACT scores and high school GPA's above the minimum required for TOPS eligibility. Among TOPS recipients from 2005 to 2014, the average ACT score was 24 (4 points above the required minimum for eligibility for a TOPS *Opportunity* award) and the average high school GPA (Core GPA) was 3.35 (significantly higher than the 2.5 minimum required for a TOPS *Opportunity* award). Data also indicate that the majority of TOPS recipients are white (79%) and female (59%). It is important to note that although there are large race differences across TOPS recipients, the number of minorities receiving TOPS has significantly increased over time. Also TOPS students are increasingly coming from middle- and upper-income households.

With regards to persistence, students who begin college with a TOPS award return to postsecondary education in subsequent years at a higher rate than non-TOPS students. Overall, approximately 31% of TOPS recipients between 2004-05 and 2014-15 had their award cancelled, with the majority being cancelled due to students' failure to earn 24 hours of college credit during an academic year.

Data indicate that students who begin a baccalaureate or an associate degree program with a TOPS award graduate within 150% and 200% of time at much higher rates than do students without a TOPS award. Data also indicate that 61% of the 2009 first-time, full-time entering cohort of TOPS recipients completed a baccalaureate degree within 150% of time, compared with 33% of non-TOPS students who did so within the same time frame.

The State's growing investment in TOPS is contributed to (1) the increase in the number of students receiving the award and (2) the increase in tuition prices in the State's public institutions of higher education. In total, the State has spent approximately \$1.9 billion on the TOPS program. Between the 1999 and 2014 fiscal years, total expenditures on the TOPS program increased 296%. In 1998-1999 the average TOPS award amount was \$2,286 (including *TOPS Tech*). In 2013-2014, the average TOPS award nearly doubled (including *TOPS Tech*). These increases are due to increases in both enrollment and tuition, but primarily in tuition.

Regular Session, 2001

HOUSE BILL NO. 2012

BY REPRESENTATIVE DANIEL

AN ACT

To enact R.S. 17:3048.3 and 3048.4, relative to the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students; to provide for the establishment and implementation of a uniform information reporting system; to provide for applicability; to provide relative to compliance with reporting system requirements by colleges and universities, including requiring compliance as a condition of eligibility to receive certain payments by the state; to require that the reporting system include certain components; to provide for certain notifications to parents and others about program availability; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:3048.3 and 3048.4 are hereby enacted to read as follows:

§3048.3. Program information reporting system; implementation; requirements; applicability; participation by eligible institutions and others

A.(1) The Board of Regents shall formulate, develop, establish, and implement a uniform Tuition Opportunity Program for Students information reporting system for the purposes of policy analysis and program evaluation and for providing accurate data and statistics to the legislature, the governor and appropriate executive branch agencies.

and the public relative to the program's impact on the state and on students.

(2) In formulating and developing the information reporting system, the Board of Regents shall consult with and seek written recommendations from the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission, each college or university eligible for participation in the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students, each of the public postsecondary education management boards, the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, legislators, and knowledgeable others as determined appropriate by the Board of Regents.

(3) It is the intention of the legislature that the reporting system provided by this Section and the requirements thereof shall be applicable to all Tuition Opportunity Program for Students applicants, all award recipients regardless of eligible college or university attended, and all such eligible colleges and universities. Effective for the 2002-2003 award year and thereafter, compliance with the requirements of the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students information reporting system shall be a condition for an eligible college or university to remain eligible to receive payments from the state on behalf of an award recipient. Compliance determinations shall be made annually by the Board of Regents.

B. The Tuition Opportunity Program for Students information reporting system shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) A report prepared as of the end of the Fall semester and again as of the end of the Spring semester or equivalent periods of time during each academic year relative to the rate of retention of program

awards by students as they progress from semester to semester or other equivalent periods of time as may be applicable once enrolled at an eligible college or university. The data shall be reported by institution attended, by the two digit classification of instructional program, and by program award category and shall include the percent of students losing program eligibility due to not earning the minimum number of credit hours, the percent of students losing program eligibility due to not having the required cumulative grade point average, and the percent of students losing program eligibility for failing to make steady academic progress.

(2) The persistence rates at colleges and universities of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students receiving a program award reported by award category and by award year.

(3) The graduation rates or rates of completion of the chosen postsecondary education program if otherwise applicable for students receiving a program award, reported by award category and award year, including for those graduating with an academic degree at the baccalaureate level the rate for persons graduating within four years, within five years, and within six years, respectively.

(4) The mean length of time required for a student receiving a program award to graduate with an academic degree at the baccalaureate level or to complete the chosen postsecondary education program if otherwise applicable with such information being reported by award category and by award year.

(5) An annual report on the number of applicants as well as the percent of high school graduates by high school and by parish who

apply for a program award, by award category, and the percent of those students who subsequently enroll in a college or university.

(6) Statistical studies on the relationship between the courses taken and grades earned by a high school student and the student's score on the American College Test or the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Relative to public high schools, such statistical studies shall use student course and grade data that is otherwise available from the schools and such studies shall be conducted at no additional cost to the governing authority of any public high school.

C. When necessary due to limitations in existing secondary data sources and systems, the Board of Regents, consistent with the general provisions of this Section, may modify any specific requirement of this Section. However, prior to making any such modifications the board shall report in writing to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education on the proposed action and the board shall have received approval from each committee relative to the proposed action.

§3048.4. Notice to students and parents

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall require that the governing authority of every public secondary school include as a component of a student's Five Year Educational Plan as required by R.S. 17:183.2 comprehensive information relative to the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students and program eligibility requirements for each of the awards. Additionally, the parent or other person responsible for the student's school attendance at the ninth grade level shall be required to return to the school at the start of the student's ninth grade year a signed notice that the program information and

eligibility requirements have been reviewed by the parent or other responsible person and by the student and that, for informational and data collection purposes only, expresses the intent of the parent or other responsible person as to whether or not the student will be pursuing the necessary program of studies to be eligible for a Tuition Opportunity Program for Students award.

Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature by the governor, as provided in Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become effective on the day following such approval.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____

SENATE BILL NO. 599

BY SENATOR ERDEY

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AN ACT

To enact R.S. 17:3048.3(B)(7), (8) and (9), (D), and (E), relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students; to provide relative to the program's information reporting system; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:3048.3(B)(7), (8) and (9), (D), and (E) are hereby enacted to read as follows:

§3048.3. Program information reporting system; implementation; requirements; applicability; participation by eligible institutions and others

* * *

B. The Taylor Opportunity Program for Students information reporting system shall include but not be limited to the following:

* * *

(7) Demographic information of program award recipients, including but not limited to race, gender, and parents' household income.

(8) High school grade point average and ACT or concordant SAT scores of program award recipients grouped by mean, median, and mode.

(9) High school grade point average and ACT or concordant SAT score cross-referenced with those students who lost the award and those who were placed on probationary status and the reasons therefor.

* * *

D. The Board of Regents shall submit a written report including all of the information required by this Section for the preceding academic year to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education, not later than December first of each year.

1 **E. All information reported pursuant to this Section shall be reported**
 2 **in the aggregate only and shall contain no personally identifiable information**
 3 **for any recipient of a program award.**

4 Section 2. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
 5 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
 6 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
 7 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
 8 effective on the day following such approval.

 PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

 SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

 GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____

Appendix C Analysis of *TOPS Tech* Program

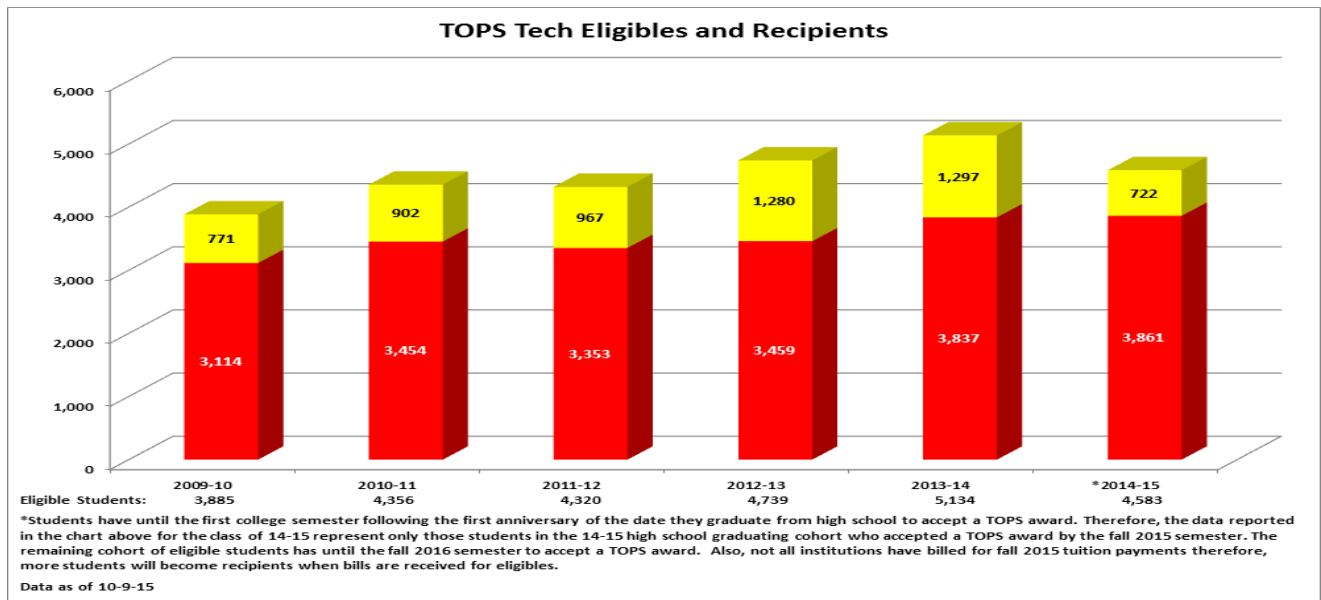
The *TOPS Tech* award may be utilized at any Louisiana Technical College and other public postsecondary school or at any member school of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU) that provides skill or occupational training, and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools. The criteria for eligibility for the *TOPS Tech* award includes completion of a defined high school core curriculum, with a minimum grade point average in core courses, and a minimum ACT composite score or minimum level score on the assessments of the ACT WorkKeys system.

Table 1: TOPS Tech Eligibility Criteria, by Award Level, 2015

	TOPS Tech Option 1	TOPS Tech Option 2
Core	17 Units	19 Units
Core GPA	2.50	2.50
ACT Composite or ACT WorkKeys	17 or Silver Level	17 or Silver Level
Max Award at Public Schools that do not offer a baccalaureate degree	Tuition	Tuition
Max Award at Public Schools that offer baccalaureate degrees and at LAICU institutions and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools	The average TOPS Tech payments paid to students attending public schools that do not offer a baccalaureate degree	The average TOPS Tech payments paid to students attending public schools that do not offer a baccalaureate degree
Duration	2 years	2 years

The *TOPS Tech* award has historically been underutilized. From 2009 to 2014, only 31% of eligible TOPS TECH Tech students accepted the award (Figure 1). It is important to note that students who graduated in 2014 have until the fall semester of 2015 to accept their awards.

Figure 1: ACCEPTANCE RATE OF TOPS TECH AWARDS





TOPS Core Curriculum

For the Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards

For High School graduates of 2014 through 2017.

For High School graduates of 2018 and thereafter [click here](#)

Units	Courses ¹
ENGLISH = 4 Units	
4 units	English I, II, III, & IV
MATH = 4 Units	
1 unit	Algebra I, or Integrated Mathematics I, or Applied Algebra I or Algebra I - Parts 1 & 2 (two units) or Applied Mathematics I & II (two units) or Applied Algebra 1A and 1B (two units)
1 unit	Algebra II or Integrated Mathematics II
2 units	Geometry, Pre-Calculus, Advanced Math-Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Advanced Math-Functions and Statistics, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics III, Integrated Mathematics III, or Algebra III
SCIENCE = 4 Units	
1 unit	Biology I or II
1 unit	Chemistry I or II, or Chemistry Com
2 units	Earth Science, Physical Science, Environmental Science, Integrated Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II, Physics for Technology I or II, or Anatomy and Physiology or both Agriscience I & II (both for 1 unit)
SOCIAL STUDIES = 4 Units	
1 unit	United States History
1 unit	Civics and Free Enterprise (1 unit, combined), ² Civics (1 year), or AP Government and Politics: United States
2 units	World History, Western Civilization, World Geography, European History, History of Religion or AP Human Geography
FOREIGN LANGUAGE = 2 Units	
2 units	Foreign Language (2 units in the same language)
FINE ARTS = 1 Unit	
1 unit	Fine Arts Survey or 1 unit of a performance course in music, or dance, or theater or 1 unit of studio art or 1 unit of visual art or both Speech III & IV (both for 1 unit)
TOTAL = 19 Units	

¹ Advanced Placement (AP) courses and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with the same name as a course listed in the TOPS Core Curriculum may be substituted.

² Can be used only by students who entered the 9th grade before July 1, 2011. (See R.S.17:274.1)



This core curriculum is accurate as of the date of publication and includes courses listed in TOPS statute and those determined to be equivalent by the La. Board of Regents and BESE.

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