

LOUISIANA PROSPERS: DRIVING OUR TALENT IMPERATIVE

It is difficult to imagine a more critical component of Louisiana's success, past, present, and future, than developing the talent of her people. Throughout our history, our colleges and universities have served as the gateway to economic advancement. The core mission of higher education is service: to students, to communities, to the people of the state, to partners in the private sector, and to the world far beyond the borders of Louisiana. The value of the work of colleges and universities is demonstrated every day as we build the Prosperity Pipeline, through which students access the tools and opportunities of education and training to secure good jobs and better lives while the state reaps the economic, social, and cultural benefits. A high-quality higher education system develops and retains talent in Louisiana, seeds innovation, grows opportunity, and launches us into a high-tech, highly connected future.

President Lyndon Johnson, in his first State of the Union address in 1964, captured the challenge Louisiana faces now: "Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptom. The cause may lie deeper in our failure to give our fellow citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities, in a lack of education and training, in a lack of medical care and housing, in a lack of decent communities in which to live and bring up their children." Recent studies have shown that education is the key to building the talent that leads to social mobility¹; Louisiana will thrive by cultivating this pathway from building educational success to lifting citizens from poverty into prosperity. Louisiana's Talent Imperative is a commitment to our citizens, families, communities, and employers to extend much more widely the benefits of postsecondary education. Data clearly demonstrate the value of higher education. During the period 2010-2014, in the aftermath of the Great Recession, individuals with postsecondary credentials worked full- and part-time at a rate of 10-30 percentage points higher than individuals who stopped out of the education pipeline during or immediately after high school. Of the 11.6 million new jobs created during this period, 11.5 million – almost all – went to workers with at least some college and more than 70% of these were filled by workers with a baccalaureate degree or higher. The impact of higher education on annual income levels is even more dramatic, with bachelor's earning at least 50% and professional degree holders earning up to 100% more than high school graduates.² These skilled earners are essential to this virtuous cycle: educated people are more likely to be employed in good jobs, pay taxes, and buy goods and services – supporting their local, regional, and state economies. A well-prepared workforce attracts businesses who need skilled employees, creating a vibrant community and region to sustain this structure. In addition, higher levels of education correlate with a number of social goods: better health outcomes, higher civic participation, and lower incarceration rates. By contrast, undereducated citizens directly cost their states and localities more in terms of increased social expenses and lost wages, and make it difficult for communities to contribute the trained and skilled workforce that can build broad economic strength and increase social mobility.

Louisiana has faced extreme challenges over the past two decades: natural disasters, uncertainty around the traditional industrial bases of the state, and severe reductions in state funding for higher education. The resilience of the state throughout these events reveals the strength of our communities and the need to help them maximize their potential. Postsecondary education has embraced this need despite hardship and instability, focusing on student success and enrolling and graduating more students than ever before.

To move Louisiana aggressively forward, the Board of Regents has embraced a robust new attainment goal that calls for 60% of all working-age adults (ages 25-64) in Louisiana to hold a degree or high-value

credential by 2030. As we stand on the brink of a new decade, this Master Plan, born of the Board of Regents' unique charge to guide postsecondary education across the state, will set the foundation to increase opportunity. ***Our Talent Imperative is to Educate, Innovate, and Collaborate.***

THE MISSION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MASTER PLANNING

Our mission is clear: *Coordinating the work of campuses, systems, and stakeholders, the Louisiana Board of Regents serves as the state's leading force for talent development through quality, affordable postsecondary education for all.* Though it is a constitutional responsibility, the Board of Regents does not view master planning as an exercise, but as an opportunity to set a vision for talent development in our state and a roadmap for how to get there.

Article VIII, §5 D (4) of the Louisiana Constitution requires the Board of Regents to “formulate and make timely revision of a master plan for postsecondary education”. In addition, Acts 241 of 1987 and 1360 of 1997 require Regents, in cooperation with each system management board, and with the chancellor and president of each institution, to establish a mission for each system, college, and university it serves. In this way, and through this structure, Regents enacts its role as the state's coordinating board, advocating for student success and educational quality by setting and enforcing minimum admission criteria within a differentiated system of campuses while driving performance through an outcomes-based funding formula. In fulfilling this role, the Regents works in concert with the four public management boards and systems – the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), Louisiana State University System, Southern University System, and University of Louisiana System – and the campuses that comprise each system. The 2019 Master Plan reaffirms the Board of Regents' constitutional responsibility to plan, coordinate and provide budgetary oversight for all public postsecondary education in Louisiana.

THE CHALLENGE

At a time when the premium has never been higher on skills and credentials too few of our citizens in Louisiana have earned one. Currently only 44.2% of our working-age population have a certificate or degree, well below the national average of 47.6%.³ Our challenge is to harness the state's enormous talent through higher education attainment, to build our prosperity.

Louisiana's economic future is inextricably linked to its talent pipeline. In fact, 96% of Louisiana's workforce is comprised of Louisiana residents who must be prepared for an evolving economy. By 2020, the Georgetown Center projections indicate that 60% of jobs nationally, and 56% of jobs in Louisiana, will require education beyond a high school diploma.⁴ It is estimated that 85% of jobs that will be available in 2030 have not yet been created or even imagined⁵, as a result of the ongoing development of our constantly evolving technology-rich society. This atmosphere of uncertainty and dynamic change provides a mandate for urgent and informed action by those who develop talent in our state.

The Board of Regents, along with the state's higher education leaders, recognizes the significant work yet to be done. Louisiana continues to struggle with high poverty, low educational attainment, uneven access to higher education, and a need for increased and diverse high-wage employment opportunities. When it comes to talent development ours is a three-fold challenge. Increasing attainment means the state must:

*expand access to and success in completing postsecondary education,

- *eliminate persistent and damaging equity gaps, and
- *significantly increase the education level for adults.

Expanding access and student success requires improvement in the traditional education pipeline and an expansion of it as well. Our current education system has too many leaks – we are losing students who never graduate high school, never enroll in college or, when they do, do not persist or complete. Of 100 incoming 9th graders, 78 will graduate high school. Of these, 45 will enter college immediately after graduation, and a meager 18 will earn a postsecondary credential within 150% of the standard time of completion.⁶ These numbers must improve. In addition, colleges and universities must enroll and successfully graduate a broader swath of our population including veterans, returning adults, single parents, foster youth and justice-involved individuals. Each of these populations reflect talent yet to be developed.

Erasing equity gaps is also critical to our success. In Louisiana, White students are significantly more likely than African Americans to complete a postsecondary credential: in 2017, 20.6% of the White student population who attended college received credentials, compared with 15.8% of the African American student population⁷. In fact, according to Education Trust, Louisiana has the lowest degree attainment rate – 20.7% – for African American adults, of the 41 states included in their latest *State of Higher Education Equity* report. Pipeline leakage for African American students is significantly worse than for the state as a whole: of 100 African American 9th graders, 73 will graduate high school, 40 will enter college immediately, and only 9 will complete within 150% of standard time to degree⁸. This gap represents a major loss of potential. The Lumina Foundation’s Equity Imperative (2018) indicates that access to high-quality education, including better definitions of pathways to success and more affordable education, is critical to erasing these gaps.

Finally, 47% of working-age Louisianians, approximately 1.15 million, hold a high school diploma or less as their highest level of education. That means nearly half of the state’s working-age population is at risk of not meeting the demands of the 21st-century workforce. This could result in them being unemployed or underemployed and in need of new educational opportunities to advance and thrive⁹. A significant challenge is that currently only 4.5% of adults 25-49 without a baccalaureate are enrolled in college, the second-lowest percentage in the nation.¹⁰ Serving our returning adults effectively and affordably in order to enable them to receive a first or follow- up credential must be a priority for our state.

Collectively, these data show that in Louisiana postsecondary education is being successfully delivered to too few and unevenly, leaving entire segments behind. If we can get these populations back to and through college, we will begin to maximize the tremendous potential in the state.

LEVERAGING PROGRESS SINCE 2001

The Board of Regents’ 2001 Master Plan was a watershed in Louisiana, changing the structure of higher education throughout the state. The 2001 Plan embraced the core idea that postsecondary education should be available to all, and set out to establish a framework to make that happen.

The plan embedded the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS), created by Constitutional Amendment in 1997, into the existing structure of higher education. The effect was to provide more opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds and with differing levels of academic preparation to identify and select the higher education path most likely to help them accomplish their goals. The Regents, in collaboration with two- and four-year systems, developed statewide articulation and transfer practices, linking different levels of undergraduate programs across campus types and smoothing students' path through higher education. Prior to creation of LCTCS, there were only a handful of public two-year institutions in Louisiana, leaving many four-year campuses to fulfill both two-year and four-year functions. With the development and expansion of open-admission two-year campuses, Louisiana had, for the first time, an opportunity to move to selective admissions at public four-year campuses without cutting off access for large student populations.

Minimum admission standards - including a required college-preparatory curriculum, a minimum high school Grade Point Average (GPA) and either a prescribed minimum score on the ACT Test or a minimum high school GPA or a prescribed minimum high school class rank - were established at appropriate levels for three categories of institutions: flagship, statewide, and regional. While Regents set minimum standards in 2001 for implementation in 2005, management boards, campus administration, and faculty were encouraged to consider implementing more stringent standards where appropriate.

The almost twenty-year experience since the implementation of the 2001 Master Plan provides a good vantage point from which to examine its impacts on the state, its postsecondary education system, and the individual students.

Louisiana: Then and Now

By the numbers, Louisiana has not changed significantly over the past two decades. The population has grown by 194,485, a minimal 4%, and the unemployment rate remained steady at 4.3%.¹¹ Median incomes have risen significantly – approximately 50% – in real dollars, but once adjusted for inflation the gains show slight increases in family and per capita income and a marginal decline in household incomes.¹² While the population has grown minimally over time, with net migration averaging .3 residents added per 100 during 2011-16, births to Louisiana residents are outpacing deaths by 50%, with 106,000 more births than deaths over the period 2013-17¹³. Nevertheless, 2018 Census Bureau estimates show Louisiana losing population, with a decline of almost 11,000 from 2017 to 2018, the fourth-largest loss in the nation.

While relative stasis of population metrics is disappointing, it does underscore the resilience of a state that has experienced multiple catastrophes over this timeframe, from the devastating hurricanes of 2005 to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the historic 2016 floods. The people of the State have stayed, rebuilt, and made better lives for themselves despite the hardship. Postsecondary education – providing opportunity, training, new knowledge, and community assistance – was a critical component in moving Louisiana forward through these setbacks.

Elementary and secondary education, while still in need of improved outcomes, has shown progress in the past twenty years – more high school completions (from a graduation rate of 58.5% in 2001 to 78.1% in 2017), more students graduating academically prepared by completing the Taylor Opportunity Program

for Students (TOPS) Core (61% completing the Core in 2008 to 73.6% in 2017), higher college-going rates (from 57.6% in 2002 to 69.5% in 2014), and the number one Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rate (77.1% in 2018) in the country.¹⁴ These successes offer building blocks on which to accelerate improvement.

Postsecondary Education: Then and Now

The Board of Regents’ 2001 Master Plan was transformative for Louisiana higher education in charting a path to advance students’ academic readiness, alignment of preparation with postsecondary opportunities, and beginning a steady growth in access and attainment. TOPS scholarships were introduced in fall 1998, and over the ensuing decades expanded in student participation, from approximately 39,000 in 2003 to more than 51,000 in 2017-18.¹⁵ With the introduction of the TOPS Core, students were guided to the curricula needed to enter college-level programs, while the growth of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System provided more and better programs for direct-to-workforce training. The creation in 2007 of Louisiana’s need-based GO Grants, despite chronic shortfalls in funding, helped more students access higher education. More than 23,000 college students enrolled in 2017-18 held GO Grants, almost five times the recipients in the first year of the program.¹⁵

During the last two decades, enrollments rose by more than 33,000, a remarkable 18.6%.¹⁶ Admissions standards keyed to institutional roles, scopes, and missions guided more students to the best campus match for their level of academic preparation and future goals, with the follow-up effect of boosting attainment as more students were able to persist and finish in the campuses they chose. The dramatic results are reflected in the data:

Growth in Louisiana Public Postsecondary Education, 2001-2018			
	2001¹	2018²	Change
Total Enrollment	178,990	212,361	+33,371 (18.6%)
1 st to 2 nd year retention	72.0%	72.7%	+0.7 points
Statewide Graduation rate	29%	43%	+14 points
Total Annual Credentials Conferred	29,901	41,680	+11,779 (39.4%)

Source: Louisiana Board of Regents, 2001 & 2018. Statewide Student Profile System & Statewide Completers System.

Louisiana’s College Student: Then and Now

Two decades into the 21st century, the profile of the “typical” postsecondary student has fundamentally changed. No longer an intermediate step primarily for 18- to 21-year-olds with limited life and work experience, college campuses attract students from across the demographic spectrum, and with an extraordinarily diverse set of experiences.

In addition to educating more students overall, the state has also increased enrollment and completion of African American students, Pell students and returning adults, as well as substantial growth of college-level work in high school. Since the 2001 Master Plan:

- African American students comprised 29.2% of the total enrollment, up from 26.7%, with enrollment growing from 27.4% to 32.6% of entering full-time freshmen. Gaps continue to appear in completion with only 24% finishing a postsecondary credential in 2017, down from

25% in 2003. However, it is notable that the number of completions in 2017 grew more than 2,000 over 2003.¹⁷

- Pell recipients have grown significantly since 2007, the first year for which reasonable comparison data exist: in 2017, 68,762 students received Pell, an increase of 29%. In 2017, 47% of credential recipients, more than 19,000 students, held a Pell award at some point during their college experience.¹⁸
- The number of adults over 25 earning an undergraduate credential grew by 2,660, a 29% increase from 2003.¹⁹ (Graphics)

AN AMBITIOUS GOAL: DOUBLE THE NUMBERS

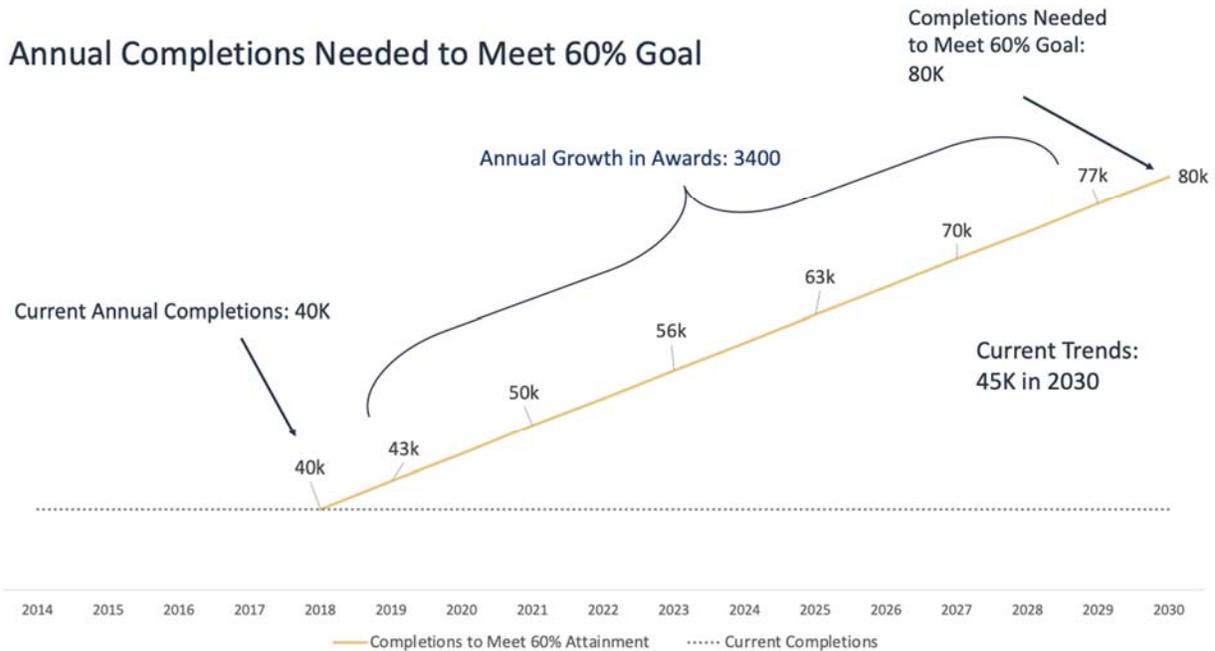
Reaching an educational attainment level of 60% will require Louisiana to more than double the number of annual credential recipients, from approximately 40,000 in 2018 to 85,000 by 2030.²¹ The status quo over recent years has yielded annual growth in credentials hovering around one percent. If our current trend continues, attainment in Louisiana will be at approximately 48% by 2030, far short of our 60% goal and the talent needs of our state.²² That means continuing to offer postsecondary opportunities ‘the way we always have’ or relying on demographic changes to ‘fix’ the problem will not be sufficient.

To double the numbers by 2030 will require that we expand our thinking about talent and the tools by which talent is developed. It will demand that Louisiana postsecondary education and its partners try new approaches, disrupt the status quo, implement new strategies for all potential student populations, enable all students to participate, and emphasize re-engagement of working-age adults.

Public and private postsecondary institutions must lead this work through a unified and collaborative statewide effort. Currently, Louisiana’s public postsecondary campuses annually produce approximately 70% of credentials conferred, with the remaining 30% produced by private institutions.²³ To maximize paths for students to pursue and receive meaningful credentials, both sectors must engage to remove existing barriers to success and increase completers. PK-12 and business and industry are critical partners, representing the preparation and outcomes ends of the pipeline, with postsecondary education as the gateway between them.

Projections show that achieving the 60% attainment goal will require increasing completers across every credential level, population group, socio-economic class, and region in Louisiana. And the goal is broader than simply reaching the percentage; it also encompasses achieving the right mix of credentials – high-value certificates, undergraduate degrees, and graduate degrees – to meet Louisiana’s needs. Thus growth in high-value certificates, projected to more than double, is higher than for doctoral degrees.

Annual Completions Needed to Meet 60% Goal



All postsecondary campuses, public and private, two-year and four-year, must be fully engaged in retaining and graduating their students at high levels, as well as working together to ensure that all postsecondary institutions are offering opportunities for Louisiana residents to access meaningful education and training. Student populations from all racial and ethnic backgrounds and all age groups, must succeed at levels significantly higher than projections based on current trends.

Within these significant increases in attainment, we must sharply focus on achieving equity. The attainment goal, which requires producing 45,000 more credentials in 2030 than were produced in 2017, is predicated on significant growth in credentials across all student populations. Producing the result for White residents requires a minimal growth of 4% over projections of credential production based on current trend. Increases for African American residents must be more ambitious, with 23% more credentials needed than current trends indicate will be produced.²⁴ A significant share of the goal, then, must come from Louisiana's African American population, who must be systematically engaged, their barriers understood, and strategies implemented to lead them to access and success.²⁴

Within these broad growth projections, we must develop and track subgoals for priority populations: returning adults, high school credential earners, and minority students. Goal-setting for these groups will ensure that we are intentional about engaging these populations in higher education and addressing their needs as they progress. Tracking progress by subgroup will also allow postsecondary education to monitor the impact of interventions, adjusting as needed to maximize results. Only by being deliberate in our approach, and constantly analyzing our progress, can we be sure that the 2030 attainment goal, and the broader mission of the Louisiana Talent Imperative, are met.

The significance of this work is evident: reaching our 60% attainment goal, and ensuring all populations are included in this growth, will yield profound benefits to the state and our citizens. According to NCHEMS, getting to the goal in 2030 will lead to an extra \$5,883 in cumulative personal income per

capita and will yield an estimated \$3.713B in state revenues. This includes an estimated \$9.9M in additional income taxes, \$6.6M in additional sales taxes and savings projections of \$17.7M in Medicaid costs and \$3.3M in corrections costs. The direct return to the state, then, is more than \$1.74 for every public dollar invested in building talent for today's student.²⁵

EXPAND OUR VISION OF TALENT IN THE PROSPERITY PIPELINE

Reaching our talent development goal requires that we expand the pool of talent to be developed. A strong PK-12 to college pipeline alone will not get us there. The work must prioritize all potential student populations: elementary and secondary students, working adults, and adults out of the workforce in order to create a truly lifelong Prosperity Pipeline. Without this pipeline serving Louisiana's citizens, our state will continue to miss opportunities for better livelihoods and stronger communities.

Given existing low attainment levels, the state must prioritize the education and training of our large adult population who currently have some or no college. Bringing them into postsecondary education and to a credential of value will improve their individual lives and boost standards of living across the state.²⁶

Louisiana's incarcerated population, currently the second-highest in the nation at 1,052 per 100,000 residents, is another critical group to draw into postsecondary education. This is consistent with national emphases on prison reform, driven by the knowledge that approximately 84.8% of this population will return to live in our communities.²⁷ Preparing these individuals for life after incarceration, releasing them with training, skills, and opportunities decreases the chance of recidivism, raises their earning potential, and sets them on a positive path for the future, all while decreasing the state's levels of investment in incarceration.

Other populations needing additional support to meet their full potential include foster youth, people aged 18-24 not working or in school (opportunity youth), and working residents of any age who are seeking additional skills. All should find encouragement and support to earn the credentials needed to realize their ambitions.

Our Talent Imperative includes a relentless commitment to today's students – the traditional secondary-to-postsecondary, first-in-family, working parents in need of training/retraining, adults in rural communities, and the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated. Our goal is to provide renewed hope and a vision for their future. For Louisiana, promoting postsecondary success across all population sectors is foundational for our evolving economy and society, increasing our ability to attract and grow 21st-century business and industry and developing the talent to fuel our economy.

GETTING TO THE GOAL: EDUCATE

To meet the ambitious attainment levels projected in this Master Plan, current systems of educational delivery and workforce preparation must change. Reaching the goal of 60% attainment requires us to accelerate talent development aggressively through identification of new pathways, leaving incremental change behind. In short, we must embrace solutions at the scale of the problem.

Mapping and Stacking Credentials

Paths from education to meaningful employment and personal and community prosperity will vary widely for individual students and their ambitions. However, for many, and particularly underserved populations with limited exposure to higher education, these paths to market-relevant credentials are often poorly marked or often altogether inaccessible. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty that often leads to yet another generation being undereducated, underemployed and underestimated. Intentionally designed and well-marked pathways, showing all steps and possible outcomes, will help us break the cycle: enable students to understand the process, see their way forward, and make informed decisions.

Credentials directly related to workforce skills must lead the way. A stackable approach is a strong first step for students, allowing them to earn credentials that are valuable in themselves, but can be also paired with others to accrue into a broader set of knowledge, skills, and abilities without the student losing time or repeating work. As students accumulate credentials across their lifetimes, they build a suite of skills necessary in the 21st-century economy and increase their ability to compete in the fast-moving technology-based economy, which generates new demands for skills and knowledge on an almost-daily basis. Understanding the evolution of competencies needed in our changing workplaces and supporting the development of new and responsive credentials is critical, and many new models should be evaluated and considered. Regents has already seized this opportunity, approving in February 2019 an undergraduate certificate as a market-relevant credential available to students enrolled in four-year universities, similar to those already offered by two-year campuses.

Closing Louisiana's Achievement Gaps

The Louisiana Talent Imperative brings an equity-minded focus to our attainment work. Louisiana cannot reach its goal nor fulfill the potential of all of its citizens without addressing educational inequities, which too often occur in the PK-12 system and continue in postsecondary education. Achievement gaps have stubbornly persisted, resulting in a high cost to the state in lost talent and lower prosperity. African American students perform significantly below average – more than 13 points, or 5% – on the National Assessment of Educational Progress administered in 8th grade, while White students score 11 points above average.²⁸ The four-year high school graduation rate for African American students, similarly, is 8% lower than average, while 7% higher for Whites. Gaps persist across almost every measure of academic success:

Equity in Results: High School to College		
	Minority*	Statewide
Graduate High School	73.2%	81.4%
ACT Score (Average)	17.3 points	19.3 points
Students Finishing TOPS Core	97.7%	98.1%
College Enrollment	55%	57.7%
Dual Enrollment	24.9%	34.2%

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, 2019. Data Center: High School Performance.

<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/high-school-performance>. *Note that LDOE data do not distinguish among minority student groups and are inclusive of all non-White racial and ethnic populations.

African American and Hispanic populations make up 32% and 5%, respectively, of Louisiana’s total population, and both have grown as a share of total population since the 2010 census.²⁹ Only 19% of Louisiana’s African American citizens hold an associate’s degree or above, a number almost doubled by the White population, at 35%.³⁰ Currently African American students represent 29% of students enrolled in postsecondary education and only 24% of postsecondary completers.³¹ Hispanic students, a much smaller segment of both Louisiana’s and higher education student populations, comprise 5.2% of postsecondary enrollment and 4% of completers, percentages consistent with representation in the general population.³²

For Louisiana, the key challenge, then, is building success for African Americans. A recent report by the Education Trust gave Louisiana a failing grade in achieving equity, identifying a 10-point gap between African American population and postsecondary attainment based on 2016 data.³³ Louisiana recognizes the need for action: in 2015 the Legislature passed a resolution to draw attention to these gaps and call for possible solutions; the Board of Regents will lead the way in developing and implementing key initiatives to eliminate performance gaps, bring equity, and provide opportunity and social mobility for these underserved Louisiana residents.

Evidence-based practices that assist students in finding and navigating their pathways, feeling connected to their education and their future, flourishing academically, and financing their postsecondary experience reflect the kind of broad approaches that can bear results. As our colleges and universities enroll more minority students, inclusive of all racial and ethnic minority populations, they also must focus on what it takes for these students to earn the credential best suited to their personal and professional goals. While important for all institutions, this must be an intentional focus for Louisiana’s two-year colleges, as they serve a significant minority population (42.3% of students enrolled),³⁴ along with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), whose mission is to serve and ensure success for minority populations. Promoting intentional, proven policies and practices designed to erase these gaps and engage with the impacted communities is critical to ensuring that opportunities for better jobs and better lives reach all Louisianians.

College in High School – Start Strong

To improve both access and success, we cannot focus exclusively on bringing more students to college; we also must find ways to bring more college to kids. This is a major component of the Louisiana Talent Imperative. Our high schools, public and private, currently graduate approximately 45,000 students a

year.³⁵ Through dual enrollment and other opportunities to gain postsecondary credits during high school, a clear opportunity exists for many more students to enter college with substantial earned credits or even to graduate high school with a credential.

Dual enrollment is a popular first step for high school students to undertake college-level work. In the fifteen years since 2003, the number of students taking college classes in high school has grown by a factor of eleven, from 2,814 to 31,344.³⁶ Though growth is impressive, access to college-in-high-school opportunities continues to be uneven, varying widely by schools, districts, costs to students, faculty availability, and other factors.

In addition to more systemic social and economic barriers, students' awareness and individual access issues can also be a barrier. Recent data indicate that more than half of Louisiana students who might be eligible do not participate – especially low-income students and students of color. Many students are unaware of the benefits of dual enrollment, including the opportunity to earn early college credit, cost savings related to entering college with a shorter time to degree, and the potential to enter the workforce earlier and directly into a well-paying, rewarding job. Louisiana's rural population can also have limited access to college-level work, simply because of geography. A statewide campaign to educate administrators, parents, and students on opportunities for college work in high school, along with a statewide framework will bring parity of access, expanding these opportunities to all schools and more students. This campaign will work in concert with efforts to map clear pathways to and through higher education, so students understand why they are doing college work in high school and understand it as an early step to a credential.

Louisiana's innovative career and technical education program, Jump Start, is providing career courses and workplace experiences for high school students to link both to their education after high school and certifications in high-demand, high-wage career fields. The Jump Start model and other "learn-to-earn" training models should continue to be implemented, providing more opportunities to engage students, school districts, postsecondary partnerships, and business and industry with a special focus on building our science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) workforce.

Louisiana's Talent Imperative requires that we seek deliberate and strategic approaches to provide universal access to college in high school – ensuring availability of high-level instruction and clearly charting the links between the college-level work and each student's plans. The PK-12 system has already made efforts to streamline students' access to different postsecondary education pathways. This work must also be coupled with strong advising to help students understand the potential applicability of earned credits to certificate and degree pathways.

Improve Outcomes

With Louisiana postsecondary campuses' persistence and completion rates lagging substantially behind leading public institutions nationwide, the Louisiana Talent Imperative will embrace proven practices that assist students in navigating the challenges of postsecondary education, from paying for it to choosing the right path to meaningful work. While our public and private institutions serve 247,000 students, graduating 34,000 per year, more than 9,200 students leave college annually with some credit but no degree.^{37,38} Louisiana can retain and graduate this talent pool by identifying and overcoming the barriers that lead students to stop out of college and often not return. These improvements can yield a high return

on effort and thus boost productivity. Two approaches in particular merit early attention and rapid implementation at scale: addressing academic deficiencies within credit-bearing courses; and implementing Math Pathways.

Although Louisiana's postsecondary leadership has made progress in providing tools to students to address academic deficiencies before leaving high school, many in Louisiana still require post-graduation remediation at a community college before becoming eligible to enroll in four-year colleges and universities. The need for remediation discourages many students, reduces access, drives up costs, and can be a barrier for adult students wanting to enroll in or return to college.

Institutions have been encouraged to implement remediation reforms, including mechanisms for students to receive supplemental instruction concurrently with credit-bearing courses. National and statewide studies, including those conducted by Community College Research Center (CCRC), Tennessee and Georgia, show that students succeed at a rate at least twotimes higher in co-requisite than traditional remedial courses; in their first year of full implementation of co-requisite math, only 11.5% of students completed traditional remedial courses, while 63.4% finished a co-requisite class.³⁹ The benefits of this increased success are numerous: rapid addressing of academic deficiencies, reduced time to credential, reduced cost to the student and the state, and establishment of a bridge, rather than a barrier, to college-level work. Implementing at scale these proven alternatives to traditional remediation would help Louisiana systemically address academic preparation challenges while keeping costs low and students fully engaged in their educational progress.

Paired with reform in methods to address academic deficiencies is a growing focus on the Carnegie Foundation's Math Pathways program, a proven, highly successful strategy to get students through a critical gateway course – college-level math – that is often a major barrier to higher education success. Studies have shown that an overwhelming majority of students enter college with academic deficiencies in math, and a significant share of them – as high as 80% – will never successfully complete college-level math and risk never completing a credential. By focusing on mathematics learning that is meaningful to students' everyday lives, academic areas of study, and career paths, Math Pathways enables more students to meet college math requirements, acquire skills needed for both college and work, and persist to complete their credentials.

FOCUS ON INVESTMENT AND AFFORDABILITY

As the Louisiana Talent Imperative makes clear through its focus on the urgent need to build skills and knowledge of Louisiana residents, postsecondary education is fundamentally an investment with extensive long-term benefits to individuals and communities, not an expenditure without a return. Strategic funding, with resources carefully aligned to well-defined priorities, benchmarks, and outcomes, is the bedrock of success for the entire endeavor: only through reinvestment from all sources can we create a postsecondary structure that provides our people with chances for more skills, better jobs, and social mobility and the state the tools to expand its 21st-century economy. Public reinvestment is particularly important in leveraging targeted private-sector investment. As important, public reinvestment will actually yield additional funds for the state as a more educated population working high-skill, high-wage jobs generate higher tax revenues and yield lower spending on welfare programs, Medicare, Medicaid, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, and other social support efforts. A

major study has shown that, on average, over a lifetime a four-year-equivalent degree holder provides \$471,000 more in income to the state than a high school graduate lacking a higher credential.⁴⁰ Failure to invest will come at a significant cost. Not only will the state lose the financial benefit of a more educated population, continued low attainment will also further entrench existing inequities and place students at an impossible crossroads: work to live in the present or pursue a better future. And the cost will not just be to students; private employers will continue to struggle to find enough qualified workers, the state will continue to operate at a disadvantage in recruiting new business and diversifying our economy, and we will continue to see ourselves in the bottom tier of the states in opportunity and quality of life. We have been near the bottom for too long, and have too much to offer.

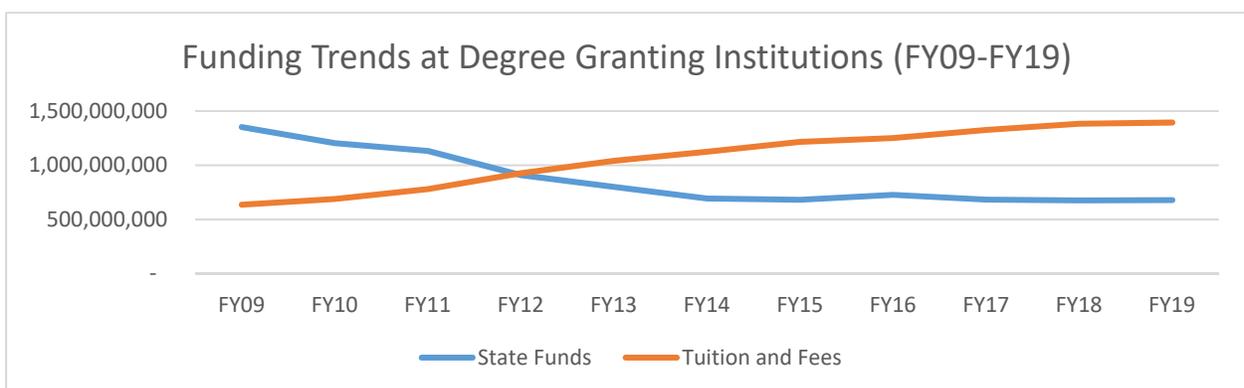
Incentivizing Success: Outcomes-Based Funding

The Louisiana Talent Imperative will continue to direct state dollars toward developing the talent we value and need. The Board of Regents currently uses a progressive outcomes-based funding formula to target state funding toward improving student outcomes. While the funding formula's overall distribution is a combination of the prior-year funding base, course delivery costs, and outcomes, a significant emphasis is placed on success in Louisiana's higher education priorities. The metrics driving the formula support the role, scope, and mission of each institution, while the formula as a whole incentivizes performance as measured by student progression and completion, workforce development, and research innovation. Additionally the formula rewards retention and completion of low-income students and adults 25 and older. A new Master Plan signals an opportunity to affirm, modify, and update the funding formula and metrics as needed, to ensure it properly incentivizes the goals and values of the Master Plan.

Make Pathways Attainable by Making Them Affordable

The Louisiana Talent Imperative commits to greater college affordability, particularly for low- and moderate-income Louisianians. Postsecondary credentials are necessary for getting and keeping a good job, and cost should not prevent talented individuals from accessing them. Even as this link between credential and opportunity has intensified, the cost to the student has skyrocketed as institutions have had to rely more heavily on student-paid tuition and fees rather than public support.

The figure below illustrates recent trends in higher education funding in Louisiana, showing a near-inversion in levels of state funding and tuition and fees even as total dollars remained flat. This indicates that in less than a decade the funding burden has shifted from 70% state-funded to 30% student-funded to 70% student-funded to 30% state-funded.²⁸



The shift of the financial burden to students certainly affects access, as more students, and a high proportion in traditionally underserved populations, cannot afford to attend college. It also can affect success, as students drop out of programs early and without the intended outcome due to lack of resources. The effects of this shift are exacerbated in Louisiana, where one in five individuals lives below the poverty line.⁴¹

According to the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB's) Affordability Study, a family earning less than \$30,000 annually – 28% of all families in Louisiana – would spend 18% of its income just to afford tuition (exclusive of fees) at lower-cost public institutions. Louisiana's merit-based scholarship support, through the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), is generous at \$1,601 per FTE student, which is almost four times the SREB average – while the state's need-based aid program, at \$161 per FTE student, is less than half the SREB average.⁴² The effect of this is to keep postsecondary education out of reach for too many Louisiana residents who could most benefit.

Tuition and fees are not the sole impediment to earning a credential. Non-academic factors including food and housing insecurity, childcare, health care, transportation, and work responsibilities can exponentially increase risks to completion.

A broader approach to affordability is critical to reaching our ambitious attainment goal and placing the majority of Louisianians within the Prosperity Pipeline. For traditional undergraduate students – those moving directly from graduation to college – more rigorous high school courses will lead more students to merit-based TOPS awards and stretch TOPS dollars further. While this is needed, it is not sufficient; the Prosperity Pipeline must expand beyond the high school-to-college bridge. Given high rates of poverty and economic challenges to Louisiana families, the state must demonstrate a stronger commitment to need-based aid. Louisiana's need-based GO Grants program must be prioritized. In addition, Louisiana must develop an effective affordability strategy to support returning adults who have earned a regular or alternative high school diploma and are pursuing credentials in high-demand areas. An adult Promise aid program for non-traditional adult students piloted by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, is showing promising early results. We will use findings from this pilot, as well as results from other states' adult aid initiatives, to improve and expand programs to support returning adults.

The Louisiana Talent Imperative recognizes that education costs students in both money and time. Ensuring access to and promoting the positive impact of a variety of time-saving approaches to educational success – early credit accumulation in high school, innovative stackable and short-term credentials and improved time to degree – will help to reduce college costs.

Ancillary costs of higher education, in particular the substantial costs of textbooks, pose a significant barrier for many of our students. The average student spends approximately \$1,200 on textbooks over the course of a year.⁴³ Cutting these costs through expanded adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) is a proven strategy, already yielding an estimated student savings impact of \$6.14M.³¹ New investments provided by Regents allow the Louisiana Library Network (LOUIS) to provide more resources to support student savings and further expand OER course development using the state's OER Commons repository. The OER Commons will allow 260 transferable courses to be aligned to existing OER textbooks and resources, streamlining the course redesign process.⁴³

Finally, increasing the Prosperity Pipeline requires that we leverage all sources of support for students, including public benefits, to increase the social mobility of our people. Federal resources such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) should be braided into a system to increase credential attainment and support students in need. Similarly, state programs such as workforce training and health care can also remove some of the barriers to pursuing and completing a credential. Collectively with improved coordination and alignment these investments of public dollars, can accelerate the number of people on a productive path, over the longer term saving the public sector millions of dollars.

By building a more accessible higher education system, in terms of time, money, and clear roadmaps to success, postsecondary education in Louisiana will be able to engage and serve more students and families. The result will be a better-educated population for Louisiana, leading to a higher quality of life, expanded opportunity, more social mobility, and stronger communities.

GETTING TO THE GOAL: INNOVATE

Innovating for a Prosperity Pipeline

The Louisiana Talent Imperative recognizes the centrality of innovation to catalyze and drive the talent development system our state needs. Building innovation ecosystems throughout the state, to allow creative ideas to be shared, advanced, and brought into use, is critical to establishing a Prosperity Pipeline. Innovation in this context encompasses three essential components: new and novel approaches to the way education is delivered, methods to measure the success of educational strategies and adapt them based on performance, and continuing to embrace the power and reach of research universities in advancing knowledge and new ideas.

Building the Prosperity Pipeline to engage all of the state's talent requires that Louisiana transition from a siloed, linear approach to education to one that more rapidly blurs the boundaries between PK-12, postsecondary education and business and industry. Therefore, work-based learning must become an integral part of the state's talent development system. A continuum of experiential learning, Apprenticeships, job shadowing, internships, and cooperative education from middle to high schools blend worksite and classroom learning, helping students connect theory to practice, and in particular allowing students to learn by doing. In addition to the practical benefit of the experience, if this blended education allows the student to earn postsecondary credits, it can accelerate both time-to-degree and post-graduation wages.

Louisiana's Talent Imperative demands the state expand apprenticeships in high-need fields like information technology, cybersecurity, health care, and advanced manufacturing. Linking education and work explicitly will not only help students in connecting the relevance of their education to employment, it will also forge stronger and more meaningful partnerships between PK-12, postsecondary education, and Louisiana's private sector.

All Learning Counts

Our Louisiana Talent Commitment is anchored in the understanding that all learning counts. Thousands of Louisiana's citizens are returning to higher education campuses annually, bringing with them

knowledge and skills gained in the workplace. These developed talents, along with prior college experience and knowledge, should be systematically included in credential pathways. Census data indicate that there are in excess of one-half million adults in our state who have attended college but left without a credential; many of these adults, though, continued to gain skills after leaving through their jobs and other life events.⁴⁴ In many cases, these adults could leverage their informal learning in the classroom, to complete their progress to a credential. In addition to this pool of adults who could bring their experience back to college, there are 217,000 who never finished high school⁴⁵ and almost 100,000 ‘opportunity youth’ (ages 16-24, not enrolled in school or working) who could benefit as well.⁴⁶

We must evolve our system from seeing the diploma as a proxy for learning to a competency-based approach. This would allow students to advance in the prosperity pipeline based on mastery of skills, regardless of the environment in which they learn those skills. Students are then liberated from a schedule of knowledge transfer, and fixed benchmarks to measure progress, to move at their own pace through the competencies needed in the area of study. Focusing on skill development rather than seat time will help students master course content, and allow for the student’s competence to be demonstrated and documented. This approach is fully consistent with the evolving economy, which places a premium on demonstrated skills, self-motivation, and critical ability.

A well-defined Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) system is a critical tool for measuring the opportunities for these returning adults; institutions in Louisiana currently deploy a variety of PLA practices, with uneven effectiveness. Advancing a statewide PLA policy that covers all public campuses and ensures that credits awarded through PLA are treated equally with other credits in transfer policies is an important step. This will raise efficiency for campuses, reduce uncertainty for students, and make the system more predictable and transparent.

The rapid development of educational technologies has also enabled a myriad of new formats and types of learning experiences, extending from massive open online courses (MOOCs) that enroll thousands but provide little or no student support, to fully personalized models of teaching and learning. Through the Board’s eLearning Task Force, educational innovation of all kinds is supported across institutions, allowing faculty, administrators, and others to discover effective techniques for different learning styles and student populations. Continued, accelerated support of leading faculty innovators can build on this success, to improve student outcomes and cultivate new opportunities for student access and learning.

Understanding and Leveraging What Works

To build a strong understanding of what strategies work and how they boost student attainment, the Louisiana Talent Imperative will engage education researchers, seeding analysis of both trends and outcomes. Careful analysis will show how initiatives are working, and shape our approaches to better achieve the intended results. Research will also help us to understand how to invest to maximize results: what kinds of interventions work, what resources are needed to optimize their impact, methods to expand pilot or experimental approaches, and ways to balance the different needs of different populations within a shared goal. Investing in understanding our approaches will allow constituencies to share best practices and build on activities that are proven, rapidly and efficiently spreading effective innovation.

In fact, we are already implementing federal research findings with 35,106 students in 68 schools within 18 districts. The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance is using a combination of state and

federal funding to implement these findings, and it is seeing improved outcomes as a result of outreach efforts aimed at building a college-going culture in economically disadvantaged low-performing public middle and high schools with high percentages of potential first-generation college students.

Schools who participate in state-funded LOSFA Field Outreach Services are more likely to experience increased rates of FAFSA completion, high school graduation and matriculation. Students who are supported through both state and federally funded academic support services, such as tutoring/course credit recovery, dual enrollment, and/or Advanced Placement, are increasing in successful course completion, decreasing in the number of those who require remediation, and/or successfully earning college credit while in high school. Students supported through the federally funded priority model (district-wide middle through high school approach) are becoming eligible and ultimately receiving TOPS awards at a greater rate than those in public schools outside the priority model.

Harnessing the Power of Our Research Institutions

Higher education is the incubator of innovation in the United States as university faculty and students, supported by public and private investment, pursue knowledge in order to advance our understanding, abilities, and growth. Innovation functions as an ecosystem, bringing together, in symbiotic relationships, different types of and approaches to research and an array of stakeholders, from researchers, to technology transfer professionals, to end users or licensors.

Higher education is typically where the basic knowledge underpinning innovation is discovered, and universities are increasingly involved in every stage of development. Beyond basic knowledge, though, postsecondary institutions partner with business and industry to facilitate the movement to its deployment in society and the market.

The universities' role in the innovation ecosystem is both broad and critically important. It must include all of the following components: basic research, applied research, and translation and commercialization. In addition, the research environment should embed training, providing opportunities for students at all levels to see, experience, and engage with the processes of knowledge discovery and understanding. All these components are complementary and co-dependent, each needing the others to continue the cycle of invention.

In addition to the broad goals of building knowledge and understanding and contributing to the economy, research universities are essential contributors to the quality of life in the places in which they are located. Research universities practice "stewardship of place," focusing efforts on resolving issues that affect their communities. In Louisiana, for example, significant statewide research partnerships investigate diseases that disproportionately affect our citizens – heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and infectious diseases – threats to our environment, uses of our natural resources, and new technologies that can serve as platforms for our growing economy. The purpose of university research is not to create knowledge for its own sake, but to serve its environment and transform lives through the knowledge and innovation it generates; it begins that work in its own communities. Our Talent Imperative requires that our institutions improve not only the education, but also the health, well-being, and social mobility of our citizens.

For more than 30 years the Board of Regents, through the BoR Support Fund (BoRSF) as well as statewide federal grants, has seeded these activities and made significant progress in growing both federal

research funding and industry partnerships. During the years of BoR operation of BoRSF and federal programs, more than \$255 million in State monies have been distributed to the campuses, leveraging more than \$1 billion in federal and private monies.⁴⁴ Much BoRSF investment, moreover, has been focused on projects directly studying and benefitting our region and the state.

Per National Science Foundation (NSF) data, annual higher education research expenditures in Louisiana from all sources have grown from \$154 million in 2001 to more than \$683 million in 2016, a more than fourfold increase.⁴⁷ Essential to securing and continuing this trend is identifying ways to maintain and grow research infrastructure, ensuring that all participants – faculty, students, industry partners, and others – have access to cutting-edge tools and services necessary to a healthy and productive research environment. The tremendous assets in Louisiana – both a strong research infrastructure across numerous critical areas of study (advanced manufacturing, computer technology, energy, and health sciences) and a set of research issues of critical regional importance – will be the launchpad for our next generation of research and technology development.

GETTING TO THE GOAL: COLLABORATE

For postsecondary education to grow as this Master Plan envisions – and as the state urgently needs – stakeholders across all sectors must embrace the vision for the future and pull together strategically to move it forward. We must be inclusive and intentional in building partnerships, but also clear that everyone is actively engaged in the work. Collaboration based in mutual commitments shared by a broad spectrum of stakeholders will be essential for tapping the state’s unmet potential. This approach requires that we expand our efforts to deepen productive partnerships with state and federal agencies and non-profit groups, as well as across the private sector both regionally and statewide. These partnerships cannot run on parallels or come together on an occasional or ad hoc basis, but will be deliberate, formal, and fully unified. We must pull as a single team to produce generational change for Louisiana.

In the highly integrated culture of the 21st century, relationships across all sectors involved in postsecondary education and workforce development will be the critical driver of opportunity. The role of the Board of Regents in establishing, maintaining, and growing these partnerships is clear: we must facilitate, advocate, serve as liaisons, track prospects for collaborative effort, and act as the statewide voice for work that must be done together.

In 2018, the Governor created the Education and Workforce Subcabinet as a formal collaborative effort to bring together a cross-section of agencies committed to talent development – economic development, workforce, child and family services, health, corrections, juvenile justice, and housing joined PK-12 and higher education. The focus is on cross-agency policy work specifically designed to improve Louisiana’s progressively skilled workforce through alignment with education and credential accumulation. The subcabinet represents a promising opportunity to leverage resources and develop policy and practice to improve educational attainment and workforce readiness. Maintaining and growing these partnerships on behalf of higher education on a state level will be essential to improve our success in reaching the shared populations we serve and in aligning campus/program priorities with Louisiana’s economic and community needs, present and future.

The Louisiana Talent Imperative builds on an already-extensive PK-12 partnership. To develop our talent from within the state and provide more opportunities for Louisiana's residents, we must maintain strong links at all points of the education pipeline and work to expand college into high school. The likelihood of success for students in higher education is clearly rooted in the preparation they receive in PK-12 and aided by early exposure to college.

Excellent relationships and joint efforts will ensure that the path from high school to college becomes seamless through early credit accumulation and credential attainment in high school. The Board of Regents, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Department of Education work closely to develop complementary policies, lay out clearly marked pathways through high school to higher education, and promote student success. This partnership has already yielded results in the expansion of dual enrollment opportunities, alignment of academic expectations and preparation, teacher preparation and more. We must continue to advance a shared vision for equity in opportunity and academic success.

Higher education across the country has recognized the need to act as a liaison between the student population – people in search of personal and professional growth and new opportunities – and business and industry – the source of most of the high-skill, high-wage jobs in Louisiana. Aligning program offerings and curricula with market needs is critical to building the classroom-to-work pipeline and positioning today's students for tomorrow's job opportunities. While postsecondary education has increasingly pursued deep partnerships with business and industry, they have grown up largely in response – rather than ahead of – demand. Relationships must be developed more proactively and deliberately, to ensure the depth and nimbleness necessary to adjust to new needs and possibilities for Louisiana's workforce. Maintaining and building these networks of innovation increase Louisiana's capacity for research and development at the highest level, helping position the state as a hub for industry-based innovation, in turn bringing more and better opportunities to our state.

Through such intentional, long-term collaborations, employers can advocate for the importance of higher education, provide student internships and projects, and inform and support academic programs designed to accelerate the development of needed skills. Institutions can partner with employers to develop work-based learning opportunities that may be credentialed, integrate competency-based learning models that allow students to receive credit for and build on what they already know, and integrate internships, project-based learning, and other experiential learning into curriculum and program design. When done correctly, these partnerships form the basis for long-term investment and mutual support between public- and private-sector stakeholders.

THE IMPERATIVE TO MEASURE AND FUND IMPROVED RESULTS FOR LOUISIANA

Louisiana's greatest asset is her people. As we mark progress against the new Master Plan, our goal is to translate that success into real benchmarks of prosperity and upward mobility. We will measure our effectiveness toward reaching our talent development goals and by how well our state as a whole is improving the lives of our citizens.

The Board of Regents will publish annually a progress report on Louisiana's Talent Imperative. The report will present traditional measures of college success, such as enrollment, retention, completion and attainment, to show the impact of this Master Plan throughout implementation. Significantly, though, we will also report broader, society-wide measures such as income, poverty and employment through a Prosperity Index. This tool will allow us to track and demonstrate the extent to which talent growth is driving improvements in the state's overall well-being. To consider success in addressing equity gaps, we will disaggregate Prosperity Index data by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic factors. Partners in this work will also be encouraged to report complementary measures within their individual areas of work, to build both high-level and sector-based views of our progress.

With evidence of how the state, overall, is benefiting from this laser focus on building talent, we will develop a comprehensive finance plan to measure the total resources we need to reach our attainment goal, how all available funds can be leveraged, the productivity impacts of innovations implemented, and returns on these investments.

This report will provide direct evidence of the impacts of the Louisiana Talent Imperative on the state and show the results of the bold and new approaches we pursue together. Louisiana's disinvestment in higher education over the last decade cannot be sustained. Building a Prosperity Pipeline requires smart, strategic, and targeted new investments in talent development. By financing this Talent Imperative and improving attainment, Louisiana's taxpayers will realize a significant return on their investment in real dollars and quality of life.

Conclusion

This Master Plan envisions a focus on postsecondary talent development that disrupts the standard approach to evolve rapidly, aligned with 21st-century needs, into a Prosperity Pipeline for all Louisiana residents. Such an approach will require innovative thinking, transformative actions, and deep collaboration. We must educate, innovate and collaborate to drive dramatic change. This demands a laser focus on results, grounded in a mission to serve the people of this state as we advocate for talent development.

To accomplish these goals, we will take a broad approach. We have to focus our actions comprehensively on all age groups and populations:

- The PK-12 pipeline, building the number of students who leave high school with a credential
- The bridge from high school to college, bringing more graduates directly into higher education
- The college-goers, giving them the education and support they need to stay in college and finish
- The returning adults, showing them that higher education can help them access opportunities to improve their jobs, quality of life, and communities

Because these groups are diverse, with widely differing needs and goals, we must focus on making the many pathways to and through postsecondary education recognizable, accessible, affordable, and attainable. For this reason, we focus on the three primary drivers of the work: Educate, Innovate, Collaborate. By embracing new ideas and approaches in a collaborative atmosphere, we can support the learning and achievement that are the hallmarks of higher education.

Reaching our goal of doubling the number of credentials in Louisiana by 2030 will yield unprecedented gains in access, equity, and return on investment to our state and our people. It is our imperative. Our future demands that we get this right.

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