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Gary N. Solomon, Jr.
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Felix R. Weill
Jacqueline V. Wyatt
William S. Jewell, Student

BOARD OF REGENTS
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AGENDA
STATEWIDE PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, September 25, 2019
11:00 a.m.

Louisiana Purchase Room 1-100
Claiborne Building, 1st Floor
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Final Rulemaking – Scholarship and Grant Program
- B. Approval of TOPS Exceptions

IV. Other Business

V. Adjournment

Committee Members: Robert Levy, Chair, Gerald Theunissen, Vice Chair, Charles McDonald, Wilbert Pryor, T. Jay Seale III, Collis Temple III, Jacqueline Wyatt

Consent Agenda
Agenda Item III.A.

Consider rulemaking to amend Section 703 of the Scholarship and Grant Program Rules to add certain Cambridge University courses as equivalents in the TOPS core curriculum for graduates of 2018 and later and to add certain Cambridge University courses as honors courses that may be graded on a 5.0 scale for graduates of 2018 and later.

BACKGROUND:

The TOPS statutes authorize the Board of Regents to “establish course equivalencies for any course included in the definition of core curriculum” provided that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) has given prior approval. The statute also requires recommendations from the Board of Regents on establishing a TOPS Core Curriculum course equivalency.

In addition to authorizing the establishment of course equivalencies, the TOPS statutes provide that certain honors, advancement placement, gifted, and dual enrollment courses will be graded on a 5.0 grading scale for purposes of calculating students’ grade point average on the TOPS core curriculum courses beginning with 2018 high school graduates. The TOPS statutes provide that the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will determine which of these courses will be eligible for the heightened grading scale.

At its joint meeting of June 19, 2019, the Board of Regents and BESE approved the addition of Cambridge University courses to the TOPS core curriculum. The Board and BESE also approved a number of these courses as honors courses to be graded on a 5.0 grading scale.

In addition to adding the Cambridge courses, this rulemaking adds Honors courses that have been approved by the Board and BESE which have not previously been codified in rulemaking.

Consent Agenda
Agenda Item III.B.

Requests for exception to the TOPS regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year.

BACKGROUND:

Sections 705.A.6 and 7 of the TOPS administrative rules require TOPS recipients to continue to enroll in the fall and spring semesters of each academic year, to remain enrolled throughout the semester, and to earn the annual credit hours required by the end of the academic year. Section 2103.E authorizes the governing body to grant an exception to these requirements when the “student/recipient has exceptional circumstances that are beyond his immediate control and that necessitate full or partial withdrawal from or non-enrollment in an eligible postsecondary institution.”

Four requests for exception were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting of September 5, 2019. The students have presented facts and circumstances that the students believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

Although all four requests for exception were approved, the Advisory Board determined that further action should be taken with respect to one of the requests. The student had enrolled part-time in the fall semester, on advice of his counselor, in order to maintain NCAA eligibility upon transfer to a four year school. The student enrolled in sufficient hours in the spring semester of that same academic year to earn the minimum required to be earned in the academic year. The Advisory Board directed staff to draft a letter to be sent by the Advisory Board to the college/university board in question as well as to other boards responsible for the oversight of two year schools explaining the circumstances giving rise to the student’s exception request and advising that exceptions of this type would not be granted in the future. A draft of this letter is attached.



A Program of the Board of Regents
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September 11, 2019

LOSFA

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F. King Alexander, President
Louisiana State University System
265 South Foster Drive
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

RE: NCAA Transfer Rules and Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

Dear President Alexander:

At its meeting of September 5, 2019, the LOSFA Advisory Board considered a request for exception to the TOPS Award requirement that a student must enroll full-time each semester during the academic year, excluding summer sessions, for a student attending a Louisiana State University (LSU) System school. The student was a baseball player, and in order for him to maintain his NCAA eligibility to play baseball when transferring from a two year to a four year school, he was advised that he should enroll part-time during the fall semester of 2018. The student did so, and as a result, his TOPS Award was canceled.

The LOSFA Advisory Board has serious concerns that the student was advised only on the rules for maintaining his NCAA eligibility and was not advised on the effect of enrolling part-time on his TOPS Award. As a result, and on behalf of the LOSFA Advisory Board, I write to request that LSU System schools provide its students with information on the effect of enrolling part time on their eligibility for TOPS when giving advice regarding maintaining NCAA eligibility.

All students who receive a TOPS Award, regardless of what award level, are required to enroll full time each semester or term, maintain continuous enrollment during each semester or term (i.e., not resign), and earn a minimum of 24 hours each academic year. Failure to meet any of these requirements will result in cancellation of a student's TOPS Award. A student may request an exception to these requirements for circumstances that are beyond his control; however, enrolling less than full time in order to maintain NCAA eligibility is not a circumstance that is beyond the control of the student.

President F. King Alexander
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The LOSFA Advisory Board approved the student's request in this case only because the student was following the advice of an advisor at the school, and he was not advised as to the effect of such actions on his TOPS Awards. Please be advised that no exception requests on the basis described herein will be approved in the future.

LOSFA staff will be more than happy to schedule training for your schools' academic and/or other advisors on TOPS as well as the other programs it administers so that students are getting the best advice possible for their individual situations.

If you would like to discuss this matter, please contact Robyn Lively at LOSFA at 225-219-7652 or by email at Robyn.Lively@la.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Cable, Louisiana Community and Technical College System

Mary Ann Coleman, Louisiana Association of Independent College and Universities
Chairwoman, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance Advisory Board

Raphael Curtis, Louisiana Department of Education

Dr. Leroy Davis, Southern University

Wendy Grubb, Louisiana School Counselor Association

Kristi Lawson, Louisiana School Counselor Association

Brooks Powell, Louisiana Association of Private Colleges and Schools

Katraya Williams, Louisiana Student Financial Aid Administrators

Shanco "Shawn" Williams, Student member, Council of Student Body Presidents

cc: Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, Commissioner of Higher Education
Mr. Marty J. Chabert, Chair, Louisiana Board of Regents