BOARD OF REGENTS
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AGENDA
BOARD OF REGENTS*
Wednesday, April 28, 2021
12:30 p.m.

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

I.   Call to Order

II.   Roll Call

III.   Public Comments

IV.   Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2021

V.   Chair's Comments

    A. Approval of New Member of the Executive Committee and Adoption of Committee Assignments

    B. Swearing In of New Member of the Executive Committee

VI.   Master Plan – Improving Affordability

VII.   Reports and Recommendations of Standing Committees

    A. Legislative

    B. Statewide Programs

    C. Academic and Student Affairs

    D. Research and Sponsored Initiatives

    E. Planning, Research and Performance

VIII.   Reports and Recommendations by the Commissioner of Higher Education

IX.   Other Business

X.   Adjournment

*Note: The Board of Regents reserves the right to enter into Executive Session, if needed, in accordance with R.S. 42:11 et seq.

The Board of Regents is an Equal Opportunity and ADA Employer

DRAFT

MINUTES

BOARD OF REGENTS

March 24, 2021

The Board of Regents met as a Committee of the Whole at 10:01 a.m., Wednesday, March 24, 2021, via video conference. Chair Blake David called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

Board Secretary Christine Norton called the roll, and a quorum was established.

Present for the meeting were:	Mgt. Board Representatives present:
Blake David, Chair	Willie Mount, LCTC System
T. Jay Seale III, Vice Chair	Mary Werner, LSU System
Sonia Pérez, Secretary	Leon Tarver, SU System
Marty Chabert	Mark Romero, UL System
Randy Ewing	
Stephanie Finley	
Robert Levy	
Charles McDonald	
Darren Mire	
Wilbert Pryor	
Gary Solomon, Jr.	
Collis Temple III	
Chandler Vidrine, Student	
Felix Weill	
Judy Williams-Brown	

Absent from the meeting was:
Phillip May, Jr.

CERTIFICATION FOR VIRTUAL MEETING

Chair David referenced the Board of Regents' certification of inability to operate due to the lack of an in-person quorum. The certification is available on the Board of Regents website and was included with the meeting materials.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair David asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 24, 2021

On motion of Regent Chabert, seconded by Regent Levy, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the minutes of February 24, 2021.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Chair David made the following comments:

- He thanked everyone for their participation in the Board Development regarding the Board of Regents Uniform Sexual Misconduct Policy.

- He acknowledged student member Chandler Vidrine and asked him to share his report. Regent Vidrine provided updates on some of the SGA activities around the state:
  o He highlighted his ACT prep program, SU ReACTion, which he created in response to the ACT Report, in order to boost the state's overall composite score.
    ▪ He said that this is a partnership between Southern University and A&M College and Louisiana State University and A&M College and that all high school students in the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board System are eligible, either online or in person. He explained that this is a way for universities to give back to the community. The courses will be taught by College of Education graduate assistants or professors. His goal is to be sure that all campuses within the state have similar programs.
  o He reached out to Regent Pérez to partner with AT&T in order to fix wifi problems on campus. Regent Pérez said that Regent Vidrine followed all instructions and suggestions provided and she thought it was positive to see a student taking charge. In addition, Regent Vidrine shared this information with other campuses.

MASTER PLAN – LABOR MARKET ANALYTICS

Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, Commissioner of Higher Education, reminded the Board that the Master Plan, adopted in 2019, established the goal of doubling the number of annual credentials conferred, in order to achieve 60% attainment among the working-age population in Louisiana by 2030. She said that, even throughout the pandemic, we still have the responsibility to review and approve academic programs. She noted that last year we received a Strada grant and used the resources to partner with Emsi, a firm that specializes in employment data and labor market analysis, which will allow us to collect accurate information on the current labor market.

Dr. Reed introduced Dr. Lisa Smith Williams, Associate Commissioner for Workforce Education and Training. Dr. Williams said that she was excited to share another tool that we have added to our arsenal of data and analytics. She explained that through its Recovery Incubator process, Strada Education

Network fostered the design and early implementation of innovative education and training systems to help accelerate economic recovery. She said that data for training providers, employers, and supports for job seekers are often fragmented and they are reliant on antiquated sources of information, such as degree attainment, rather than on the actual skills job seekers and employers need, making the paths to employment opaque and expensive, when job seekers need clarity and efficiency. She noted that Louisiana is the home of the award-winning FastStart Workforce Development Program, which has been named the number one workforce development program in the country for the last 11 years. She said that the state's Regional Economic Development Organizational (REDO) Network is a major contributor to that success.

Dr. Williams introduced Ms. Angie White, Interim President of the North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP), who regularly uses Emsi for a variety of reasons. Ms. White said that regarding business development, she uses Emsi to analyze workforce data sets and specific skill sets in the market. She uses this information to determine skill gaps in existing and emerging target industries. She explained that this tool allows her to determine areas of focus needed to increase specific skills; it also shows where there are many residents with critical skill sets related to target industries, demonstrating that these areas are target markets for employers. Ms. White said that, in addition to her role at NLEP, she has been a part of the Northwestern Louisiana Jump Start team since its inception, and in this role she uses Emsi data when speaking to teachers and counselors, to help determine optimal workforce/university pathways, and provide economic overviews to parish leaders. She also works with community and technical colleges in program development.

Dr. Williams then introduced Mr. Andrew Fitzgerald, Senior Director of Business Intelligence for the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC). Mr. Fitzgerald said that the Emsi tool is an excellent way to determine wage rates, supply and demand. He added that the tool also helps to shape curriculums, including what skills should be taught based on what employers in the area are looking for.

Dr. Williams introduced Mr. Rob Sentz, Chief Innovation Officer, and Mr. Josh Franck, Senior Account Executive, both from Emsi, to talk about Louisiana's labor market conditions. Mr. Sentz said that he started work on the tool with the goal of being able to better understand and explain the value of education

for both people and economic development. He said that the focus is not on the data, but on accessing and relating to the audience. He said that the Emsi tool simplifies the labor market dynamics between people, business and education, and connects them in meaningful ways by developing a common language. He indicated that many Americans are interested in non-degree skilled training. He explained that during the pandemic, there is a low labor force participation rate and that nationally there are some sectors desperate for talent, such as logistics (trucking), healthcare, and tech, which rely on some of the top skills that are in short supply. He said that in order to understand the jobs, we must understand the skills that are required for these positions. He explained that, in Louisiana, while the state lost 50,000 jobs over the last two years and there has been a 2% decline in unemployment, there has been a 22% growth in job postings, which tells us that while the labor market declined, the labor market participation rate declined even more. He said that we need to be sure to retain our talent in the state by letting residents know what opportunities are available. Mr. Sentz introduced Mr. Franck, who told the Board that we are using the data language to help support economic prosperity in Louisiana by having one-to-one conversations about what is happening in the economy, how higher education is supporting that, and how to use that activity to drive economic growth. Other states are using these data for similar projects by connecting curriculum to the language of the workforce at the skill-level; identifying regional skill gaps and opportunities for upskilling; using data to diversify the economy; identifying saturated industries; building strategies for areas of potential growth, partnering with employers to retain talent; and aligning education programs to the current and future needs of the workforce.

Mr. Franck introduced Dr. Don Schillinger, Dean of Education at Louisiana Tech University. Dr. Schillinger said that he primarily works with K-12, specifically the GEAR UP program. He noted that it is essential to use data analytics and data modeling tools to develop relevant, in-demand programs that add value to the degrees offered while meeting the workforce needs of the people of Louisiana. He gave examples of the tools that he uses, including the analytics tool and Skillabi tool. He said that identifying regional skill gaps and opportunities for upskilling is important to aligning education programs to the current and future needs of the workforce. Dr. Schillinger introduced Dr. Lindsey Keith-Vincent, Associate Dean for Research,

Outreach, and Innovation in the Science and Technology Education Center at Louisiana Tech University. Dr. Keith-Vincent said that she was launching a program for high school students, partnering with Coursera, Dr. Tireka Cobb of GEAR UP, and Emsi. She told the Board that all Coursera work is accessible through the Emsi tool, and that companies like Facebook, Salesforce, and Google have a back-end hiring consortium, with positions offered at the end of this work. She also highlighted Workforce Wednesdays with Louisiana Delta Community College. She said that this morning about 300 students from the Monroe area gained access to the information, which focuses on better aligning programs with market needs, better engaging employers, marketing programs to students, and equipping students to market themselves.

Dr. Williams said that our job is to provide coordination of higher education so that business and industry can hire education. Dr. Reed thanked all of the speakers for their participation. She acknowledged that Dr. Keith-Vincent has been recognized as a University of Louisiana System Management and Leadership Institute Young Leader.

Chair David asked Mr. Sentz what his data sources are. Mr. Sentz said Emsi uses three key sources: occupational data from federal and state sources, skills and posting behavior data from job postings, and resume and profile data. Chair David asked specifically what data comes from the state. Mr. Sentz said that Emsi uses federal databases that capture state data and integrate them to job posting data to formulate skills data. Regent Ewing said this was an excellent presentation. He requested a single-issue agenda to focus on how to put the information into motion to implement the goals of the Master Plan. Chair David said that we will schedule a meeting to discuss this information and how to implement it. Dr. Williams said that time was limited, but there are many projects in the works, including the Louisiana Community and Technical College System's Reboot program, as well as a subcommittee focused on these data. She said that she would be happy to do a deep dive with the Board and other systems to present ongoing projects with Emsi to explore labor market analysis further.

Dr. Monty Sullivan, President of LCTCS, said the presentation was great and thanked his partners at Emsi. He noted two points to take away from the presentation: 1) while Louisiana unemployment is historically high, there are jobs available if you have the skills; and 2) we must keep in mind the 1:2:7

requirement, which is that every one professional engineering position is supported by two people with baccalaureate degrees and seven people with technical skills. We have to have the sevens in order to keep the ones and twos in our state. Dr. Reed thanked Dr. Sullivan and said that as we celebrate community college week, we must also promote the idea of honor in all pathways.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINANCE

EXECUTIVE BUDGET OVERVIEW

Mr. Terrence Ginn, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, gave an overview of the Governor's Executive Budget for fiscal year 2021-22. Mr. Ginn noted that this was the best Executive Budget presented for higher education in over a decade. He stated that $100M of state CARES Act funds in our budget from last year are being swapped for State General Funds, which means our actual increase is $65M. He noted that there has not been a statewide faculty pay raise since 2008 and that funds allocated in this budget will get us a step closer to bringing our faculty to the SREB salary average. Regent Weill asked if the swap was a pass-through item and Mr. Ginn explained that it was not. He said that we had previously used the state's CARES Act money for the General Fund and this allocation was to offset those dollars. Chair David said that this recommendation is phenomenal and a step in the right direction to get funding for higher education to the level it had achieved in 2008. He applauded the Governor and Legislature for their support of higher education.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE FY 2021-22 PRELIMINARY FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Ginn presented the fiscal year 2021-22 preliminary funding recommendations, which are required by law to be submitted to the legislature by system level on or before March 31 each year. He said that only in times of stable funding do we run a formula. The formula aligns with the Master Plan. This information has been shared with the systems and we have received questions and input. This is the largest formula allocation in a long time and it is very encouraging. We have until May to finalize the formula.

> **On motion of Regent Seale, seconded by Regent Pérez, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the distribution, which allocates available funding in accordance with the formula methodology of 58% base,**

17% cost, and 25% outcomes and to allow the Executive Committee to approve the final outcomes-based funding formula allocation when all data are available.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE

Mr. Ginn provided an update on the federal support coming to higher education related to COVID-19. He stressed that these funds are for COVID-related expenses only and, to the extent that there are no COVID expenses or revenue losses, these funds must be returned and may not be used for operating expenses. Regent Ewing asked if all of our colleges and institutions were eligible for funds allocated to minority-serving institutions. Mr. Ginn stated that all but five of our institutions are eligible for the minority-serving institution funds. Regent Seale asked if Mr. Ginn has any concerns over the Governor and Legislature reducing state funds due to the federal support available. Mr. Ginn said that he will share the very important message that these dollars are for COVID relief and not to supplant the operating budget.

LEGISLATIVE

UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE STUDY REPORTS

Ms. Erin Cowser, Assistant Commissioner for Legislative and External Affairs, provided a general update on Legislative study reports assigned to Regents.

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Ms. Cowser explained that this will be a fiscal legislative session and legislators are limited to only five non-fiscal bills. She highlighted bills in the Regents package as well as other bills that we will support.

> **On motion of Regent McDonald, seconded by Regent Weill, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to grant the Commissioner and Board Chair authority to finalize the 2021 Legislative Agenda and act on legislation as needed.**

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dr. Susannah Craig, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Innovation, presented the items for Academic and Student Affairs.

CONSENT AGENDA

      a.   **Revision to A.A. Policy 2.18 – Addition of Directed Self Placement**

      b.   **Routine Staff Approvals**

On motion of Regent Solomon, seconded by Regent Finley, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the items on the Consent Agenda.

HCR 81 OF THE 2020 REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Dr. Craig said that, in response to House Concurrent Resolution 81 of the 2020 Regular Session, the BoR was charged to create the Cannabis Workforce Taskforce and to study and make recommendations relative to workforce demands in Louisiana's cannabis industry and to report its findings to the Legislature. Dr. Alí Bustamante of Impact Econ Research conducted the workforce study. Dr. Bustamante provided an update on the report. He said that in the first year of the program, the state had about 191 people employed in the medical cannabis industry, split almost evenly between cultivation and dispensing. He said that by year ten of the program there will be roughly 350 more jobs available. He highlighted the specific jobs required in this industry, saying that while many of these occupations are not readily available, we must train people in anticipation of these jobs increasing in the future. The projected growth is relatively modest due to legislative constraints, including caps on production, cultivators, distribution and pharmacies. He noted that, overall, Louisiana has a relatively modest market, but it is expected to grow substantially about every three years or so, in relatively steady intervals as demand increases through greater awareness, education and willingness of physicians to prescribe medical cannabis. He highlighted the market constraints and opportunities for growth as part of his report. Chair David thanked Dr. Bustamante for his presentation.

On motion of Regent Solomon, seconded by Regent Vidrine, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to receive the response to House Concurrent Resolution 81 of the 2020 Regular Session.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

    a. **Letter of Intent**
        i. **BS Hospitality & Food Industry Leadership**
    b. **Program Proposals**
        i. **AAS Technical Studies – Louisiana Delta CC**
        ii. **UC Selling & Sales Management – UL Monroe**
        iii. **BA African & African American Studies – LSU A&M**
        iv. **PBC Advanced Supervision – Grambling**

> v. **PBC Modern Topics in Petroleum Engineering – LSU A&M**
>
> c. **Reconfiguration of PhD Pharmacy – UL Monroe**

On motion of Regent Seale, seconded by Regent McDonald, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the Academic Program items as presented.

RESEARCH AND SPONSORED INITIATIVES

CHANGES TO RESEARCH AND SPONSORED INITIATIVES UNIT POLICIES

Ms. Carrie Robison, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs, presented the item.

On motion of Regent Weill, seconded by Regent Ewing, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the Research and Sponsored Initiatives unit policies as revised, with policy changes effective immediately.

PLANNING, RESEARCH AND PERFORMANCE

Dr. Craig and Dr. Randall Brumfield, Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Planning and

Student Success, presented the Consent Agenda items.

CONSENT AGENDA

> a. **R.S. 17:1808 (Licensure)**
>   i. **Initial Applications**
>   (a) **World Quant University (WQU)**
>
> b. **Proprietary Schools Advisory Commission**
>   i. **Renewal Applications**
>   (a) **Baton Rouge School of Court Reporting (1/26/06)**
>   (b) **Becker Professional Education Online (1/9/17)**
>   (c) **Beso Beauty, LLC (1/9/17)**
>   (d) **Blue Cliff College – Lafayette (1/27/00)**
>   (e) **Burks Medical Training, LLC (1/14/19)**
>   (f) **Carter's Career Center, LLC (2/22/18)**
>   (g) **Coastal College – Hammond (2/23/89)**
>   (h) **Griffs Marine Training, Inc. (1/27/10)**
>   (i) **Hospitality Opportunity & Service Training (HOST) Program (2/19/20)**
>   (j) **ITI Technical College (1/27/00)**
>   (k) **LifeShare Phlebotomy School (2/19/20)**
>   (l) **Louisiana Dental Assistant School, LLC (1/27/05)**
>   (m) **Louisiana Dental Institute, LLC (2/21/18)**
>   (n) **Moore Career College, Inc. (1/14/19)**
>   (o) **Remington College – Knoxville (2/19/20)**
>   (p) **SNAP Medical Assistant Academy (1/9/17)**
>   (q) **Tulsa Welding School – Jacksonville Campus (1/27/10)**

On motion of Dr. Tarver, seconded by Regent Pérez, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the items on the Consent Agenda.

PETITION OF AMENDMENTS TO LOUISIANA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE TITLE 28 PART III AND TITLE 28 PART IX

Dr. Brumfield highlighted the proposed rules changes.

On motion of Regent Solomon, seconded by Regent Ewing, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve the proposed rules changes to be posted for public comment for forty-five (45) days, with a final draft of changes to be considered by the Board no earlier than its meeting on June 16, 2021.

PERSONNEL

APPROVAL FOR CHAIR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE CONTRACT WITH COMMISSIONER TO CONTINUE EMPLOYMENT

Chair David informed the Board that Dr. Reed's contract is set to expire before the next meeting.

He said that she is nationally recognized as a top leader in higher education and he is requesting authority

to negotiate her contract on behalf of the Board.

On motion of Regent Seale, seconded by Regent Levy, the Board, acting as a Committee of the Whole, voted unanimously to approve allowing the Chair to negotiate and execute a contract extension with the Commissioner to continue employment.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Commissioner of Higher Education Kim Hunter Reed presented several items to the Board:

- She said that campus faculty and staff are scheduled to receive about 7,000 doses of COVID vaccine this week. In addition, she noted that we want to be sure that people have access to the shots and to trusted medical professionals if they still have questions.

- Dr. Reed said that her last COVID conversation was with President Monty Sullivan and his campus leaders. It was a great opportunity to talk about lessons learned, and what new practices we in higher education should keep as we move and plan to get beyond the pandemic. She said there was sharing of ideas and honest feedback related to making sure we do not miss the opportunity to make transformational change as a result of COVID.

- She said that food insecurity, especially among college students, has increased dramatically during the pandemic, and this week many students are now eligible for SNAP benefits. We are working to spread the word about college student eligibility. In addition, many campuses offer food pantries and she encouraged continued support.

- Dr. Reed said that after more than 30 years of service at the Board of Regents, Jill Holton has announced she will retire on April 1st. Jill has worked in the Research and Sponsored Initiatives unit for decades, providing assistance to the Support Fund as well as EPSCoR. For the past two years, she has also added Board meeting logistics to her duties. She said that we wish the best for Jill in the future.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chair David said that he would like to get back to in-person meetings and asked Board members for their thoughts on this. Regents McDonald and Ewing expressed an interest in returning safely to in-person meetings. In addition, Chair David congratulated Dr. Williams on her recent marriage.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 12:51 p.m.

Board of Regents' Committees April 28, 2021

Academic and Student Affairs*
 (Standing Committee under R.S. 17:3399.5)
Phillip May, Jr., Chair
Gary Solomon, Jr., Vice Chair
Stephanie Finley
Wilbert Pryor
Terrie Sterling
Collis Temple III
Chandler Vidrine *(student member)*
LCTC System Representative
LSU System Representative
SU System Representative
UL System Representative
Staff: Susannah Craig

Audit Committee
 (Standing Committee)
T. Jay Seale III, Chair
Phillip May, Jr., Vice Chair
Randy Ewing
Darren Mire
Felix Weill
Judy Williams-Brown
Staff: Kim Hunter Reed

Executive Committee for 2021
 (Ad hoc Committee)
Blake David, Chair
T. Jay Seale III, Vice Chair
Sonia Pérez, Secretary
Phillip May
Darren Mire
Wilbert Pryor
Gary Solomon, Jr.
Staff: Terrence Ginn

Facilities & Property Committee*
 (Standing Committee under R.S. 17:3399.5)
Darren Mire, Chair
Robert Levy, Vice Chair
Randy Ewing
Stephanie Finley
Charles McDonald
Chandler Vidrine *(student member)*
LCTC System Representative
LSU System Representative
SU System Representative
UL System Representative
Staff: Chris Herring

Finance Committee*
 (Standing Committee under R.S. 17:3399.5)
Gary Solomon, Jr., Chair
Robert Levy, Vice Chair
Phillip May, Jr.
Wilbert Pryor
T. Jay Seale III
Collis Temple III
Judy Williams-Brown
LCTC System Representative
LSU System Representative
SU System Representative
UL System Representative
Staff: Terrence Ginn

Legislative Committee*
 (Standing Committee under R.S. 17:3399.5)
Collis Temple III, Chair
Randy Ewing, Vice Chair
Robert Levy
Phillip May, Jr.
Charles McDonald
Sonia Pérez
Chandler Vidrine (student member)
LCTC System Representative
LSU System Representative
SU System Representative
UL System Representative
Staff: Terrence Ginn/Erin Cowser

*This committee is comprised of members from the management boards.

Personnel Committee
  (Standing Committee)
Wilbert Pryor, Chair
Collis Temple III, Vice Chair
Robert Levy
Darren Mire
Sonia Pérez
T. Jay Seale III
Gary Solomon, Jr.
Staff: Terrence Ginn

Research and Sponsored Initiatives
  (Standing Committee)
Felix Weill, Chair
Sonia Pérez, Vice Chair
Stephanie Finley
Phillip May, Jr.
Darren Mire
T. Jay Seale III
Gary Solomon, Jr.
Staff: Carrie Robison

Planning, Research & Performance
  (Standing Committee)
Sonia Pérez, Chair
Phillip May, Jr., Vice Chair
Stephanie Finley
Robert Levy
Charles McDonald
Wilbert Pryor
Terrie Sterling
Felix Weill
Staff: Randall Brumfield

Statewide Programs
  (Standing Committee)
Randy Ewing, Chair
Charles McDonald, Vice Chair
Sonia Pérez
Terrie Sterling
Collis Temple III
Chandler Vidrine (student member)
Felix Weill
Judy Williams-Brown
Staff: Carrie Robison

Updated as of April 28, 2021

Master Plan Spotlight: Improving Affordability

In the Board of Regents Master Plan, *Louisiana Prospers*, adopted in 2019, the Board has established a goal to achieve postsecondary attainment among 60% of the working-age population in Louisiana by 2030. This is necessary not only to address the state's growing economic and workforce demands, but also to achieve meaningful prosperity and improve the quality of life for Louisianans. To reach this goal, the Master Plan identifies key strategies and objectives essential to double within the next decade the number of degrees and high-value credentials awarded annually (to reach 85,000).

To improve access to postsecondary education and workforce training, *Louisiana Prospers* acknowledges the need to improve affordability. "Given high rates of poverty and economic challenges to Louisiana families, the state must demonstrate a stronger commitment by prioritizing Louisiana's need-based aid program, GO Grants. 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."

With Louisiana's higher education system experiencing disinvestment by the state over the last decade, the cost burden of postsecondary education has been pushed to students and families. The state is not unique in shifting the financial burden of postsecondary education to the student – nationally students are covering 70% of the cost, versus 30% ten years ago. However, funding was reduced to public institutions by 35% in the last decade, while doubling average tuition. This ranks Louisiana third among states for the depth of funding cuts and fifth in percentage tuition increase. Even with tuition increases, the state ranks second lowest for total core funding per student (total appropriation and tuition revenue per full-time equivalent).

To help offset cost burdens to students, the state has invested in the GO Grant since 2007 to serve students with financial need. It coordinates with the Federal Pell Grant and other funding to target 60% of financial need and prioritizes adult learners. Postsecondary institutions have flexibility to set their own priorities and award amounts within state policy. The results of limited program increases combined with the constraint of the need target are widely variable policies with very few students able to receive the maximum award.

Recently the Board of Regents partnered with HCM Strategists to identify strategies that would allow the GO Grant to serve more students with financial need and support the state's talent imperative in the wake of the pandemic. GO Grant would benefit from policy adjustments and steady investments to reach more students, expand awareness of the program, and achieve a more equitable impact. This would be accomplished through: establishing new stable funding streams; removal of mandated financial need thresholds; allowing early awarding to students receiving public benefits; streamlining application processes; and expanding awareness of the GO Grant program.

Stakeholder recognition of the increasing cost burden to students, combined with adoption of the recommendations outlined in the report, would allow for improved affordability and access to postsecondary education across the state. In doing so this would provide the Board with a more effective need-based student aid strategy by which Louisiana prospers.

A Review of the Louisiana GO Grant

Recommendations to serve more students with financial need and support the state's talent imperative in the wake of the pandemic.

April 28, 2021

Prepared for the Louisiana Board of Regents.
Rachelle Sharpe, PhD

HCM STRATEGISTS

GO Grant Supports Louisiana's Talent Imperative

Louisiana's GO Grant has served students with financial need since 2007. It coordinates with the Federal Pell Grant and other funding to target 60% of financial need and prioritizes adult learners. The institutions have flexibility to set their own priorities and award amounts within state policy. The results of limited program increases, combined with the constraint of the need target policy, are widely variable policies with very few students able to receive the maximum award. The GO Grant would benefit from policy adjustments and steady investments to reach more students, expand awareness of the program, and achieve a more equitable impact.

Summary of Findings

- With only four parishes with attainment rates above 40% and as Louisiana recovers from the economic crisis, access to affordable postsecondary education is key.
- In the last decade, Louisiana has reduced funding to institutions and raised tuition rates, reducing opportunities for low-income students.
- Louisiana surpasses other states in the portion of higher education funding that is financial aid, prioritizing merit-based aid with the TOPS program.
- The GO Grant has received intermittent funding increases since its inception.
- Only 1/3 of campuses offer the maximum award amount of $3,000 and fewer than 2% of students received the maximum award.
- The percent of eligible students served across campuses ranges from 5% to 71%.
- Campus policies are variable; some target the highest need and others target higher Pell-eligible EFCs.
- Receipt of GO Grant and higher gift aid amounts are associated with higher persistence rates.
- Even with grant assistance, the majority of GO Grant recipients (77%) are borrowing money for college.
- Several program rules are creating delayed notification and disbursement of the award to students.
- The 60% of need target appears to be limiting the effectiveness of the program as campuses prioritize compliance over practices that may enhance the reach of the program.

Recommendations

We find that over time after the implementation of the 60% need policy, the variation in campus policies, reductions in maximum award amounts, differences in student characteristics, and impact on administration, make a "one size" percent of need calculation ineffective.

We believe removing the percent-of-need target and focusing on increasing awards to the program policy, combined with increasing program awareness and communication, would provide for a more streamlined, flexible, efficient, student-centered and equitable need-based program.

1. Provide predictable new investments to the GO Grant program.
2. Remove the 60% target.
3. Create a statewide review panel to consider the following:
    a) Examine the allocation and recalculation rules and methodology to allow more students to receive timely information and disbursements.
    b) Eliminate separate applications for GO Grant.
    c) Review the feasibility of early commitments of minimal awards to encourage FAFSA completion and college application.

Mixed Methods

The analysis draws from publicly available data through the Louisiana Board or Regents (BOR) and Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid (LOSFA) and other sources, as well as an administrative dataset provided by BOR, that included financial aid and enrollment information for Pell and GO Grant recipients attending public institutions in 2017-18. In addition, 11 individuals representing all systems were interviewed regarding GO Grant policies (Appendix A). A review of financial aid awarding policies from all GO Grant participating institutions provided insights into campus policies.

Future research could include data related to enrollment intensity, program of study, and cohort analyses of completion to continue to evaluate and enhance the GO Grant program to improve affordability for Louisiana students and families.

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1. Louisiana's Talent Imperative Requires a Broad Approach to Affordability

The economic and health crisis and the impact of hurricanes in Louisiana have disrupted educational pursuits and damaged job prospects for many. And with the highest incarceration rate and more youth disconnected from education or employment than most other states, Louisiana faces steep challenges as it recovers. Although Louisiana has made progress over the last decade in educational attainment, the state has 26% of children living in poverty and 16% of youth disconnected from work or education.[1] With 61% of the population aged 18 to 64 and access to opportunity reduced by the economic and health crisis, addressing postsecondary affordability is critical to the state's recovery and the well-being of its residents. A college education is key to addressing intergenerational poverty and economic mobility; increases in parents' education leads to improved educational outcomes of their children.[2]

The Louisiana Board of Regents issued a higher education attainment ten-year master plan, *Louisiana Prospers: Driving our Talent Imperative (LA Talent Imperative report)*, with a goal for 60% of working-aged adults (ages 25 to 64) to hold a credential of value by 2030.[3] The plan notes that the state struggles with high poverty, low educational attainment, uneven access to higher education, and a lack of opportunity to compete for high-wage employment. Issued just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis, increasing educational attainment is even more important to Louisiana's recovery. While attainment (earned postsecondary certificates or degrees) in the state has steadily increased over the last decade, reaching 47% in 2019, it remains below the national average of 51%, and there are regional differences.[4] In fact, in 51 parishes representing over 40% of the state's population, the majority of adults (at least 70%), are without postsecondary degrees (Associates and above). Only four parishes have attainment rates above 40% (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Louisiana Degree Attainment by Parish

Attainment Rate	# of Parishes	% of Population
<20%	21	10%
20 to 29%	30	31%
30 to 39%	9	35%
> 40%	4	24%

Source: (2019). A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds America's Talent. Tracking America's Progress Toward 2025. Lumina Foundation.
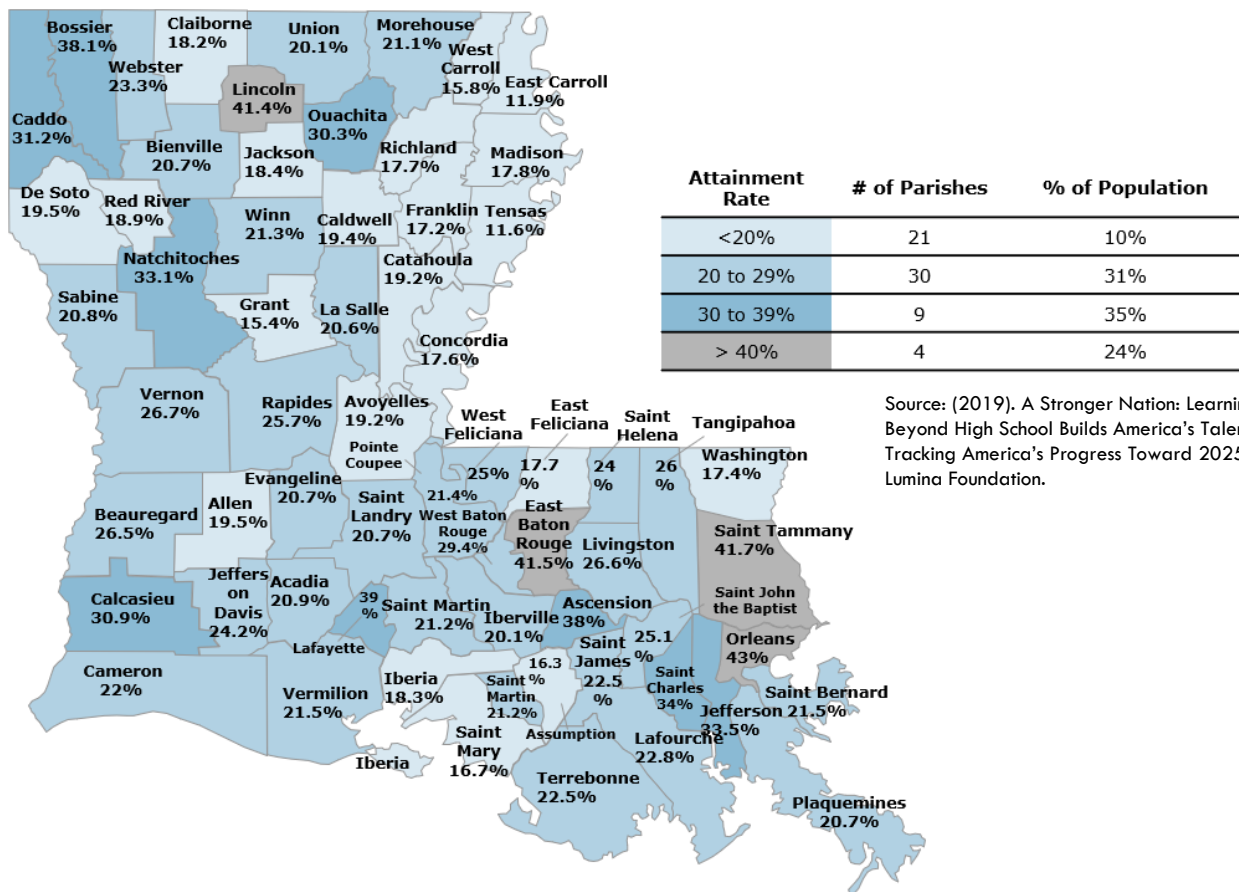
There are also stark gaps in educational attainment for racial/ethnic sub-groups in Louisiana. African Americans represent 32% of the state's population, yet this population has an educational attainment rate 16 percentage points below that of the White population.[4] Hispanic and American Indian populations also have attainment rates that fall significantly below the average (Figure 2). The Louisiana Talent Imperative report notes the state must demonstrate a stronger commitment to address the high rates of poverty and economic challenges Louisiana families are facing, and a broader approach to affordability is critical to reaching the attainment goal.[3]

Figure 2: Louisiana Population and Degree Attainment by Race/Ethnicity
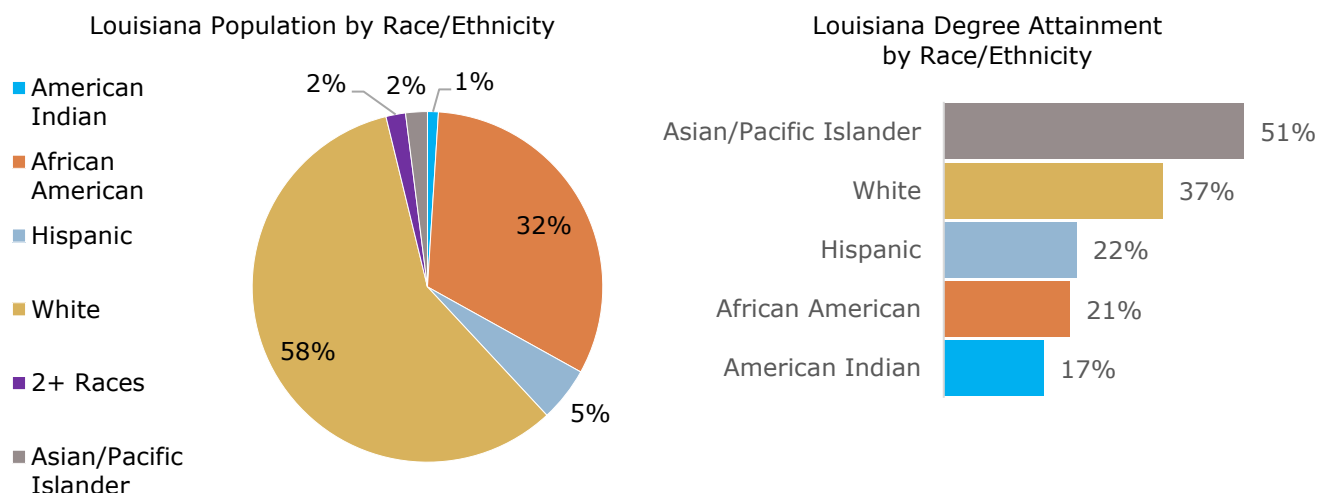
Louisiana Population by Race/Ethnicity

Louisiana Degree Attainment by Race/Ethnicity

Source: (2019). A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds America's Talent. Tracking America's Progress Toward 2025. Lumina Foundation.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Quick Facts. Louisiana.

2. Louisiana's High Tuition and High Aid Policy Approach

Louisiana's higher education system has experienced disinvestment by the state over the last decade, pushing the cost burden of postsecondary to students and families. The state is not unique in shifting the financial burden of postsecondary education to the student – nationally students are covering 70% of the cost, versus 30% ten years ago.[5] However, Louisiana cut funding to public institutions 38% in the last decade, while doubling average tuition. This ranks the state second among states for the depth of funding cuts and first in percentage tuition increase.[6] Even with tuition increases, the state ranks second lowest for total core funding per student (total appropriation and tuition revenue per FTE).[6]

> *Accessible, well-funded education is crucial for quality of life, a strong state economy, and thriving communities, but states weakened their futures by sharply cutting higher education funding and raising tuition, making college less accessible – especially for students with low incomes and students of color.*
> -Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

High tuition makes college less accessible, especially for students from families with low incomes, who are disproportionately students of color. A recent study found that a 10 percent increase in tuition at a public flagship resulted in a reduced likelihood of applying by eligible students, including aid-eligible students.[7] In Louisiana, there are wide variations in tuition across public

institutions, with the "sticker shock" potentially making some institutions out of reach for many families. While the public four-year institutions enroll nearly three-quarters of the students, average tuition rates are up to 2.5 times the two-year college tuition average (Figure 3). The community and technical colleges have the lowest tuition and nearly half of their students receive the federal Pell Grant (Figure 4). It appears that as declining state investment drives up tuition, lower percentages of low-income students are enrolling in the higher cost institutions.

Figure 3: Annual LA Public Higher Education Tuition Rates 2019-20
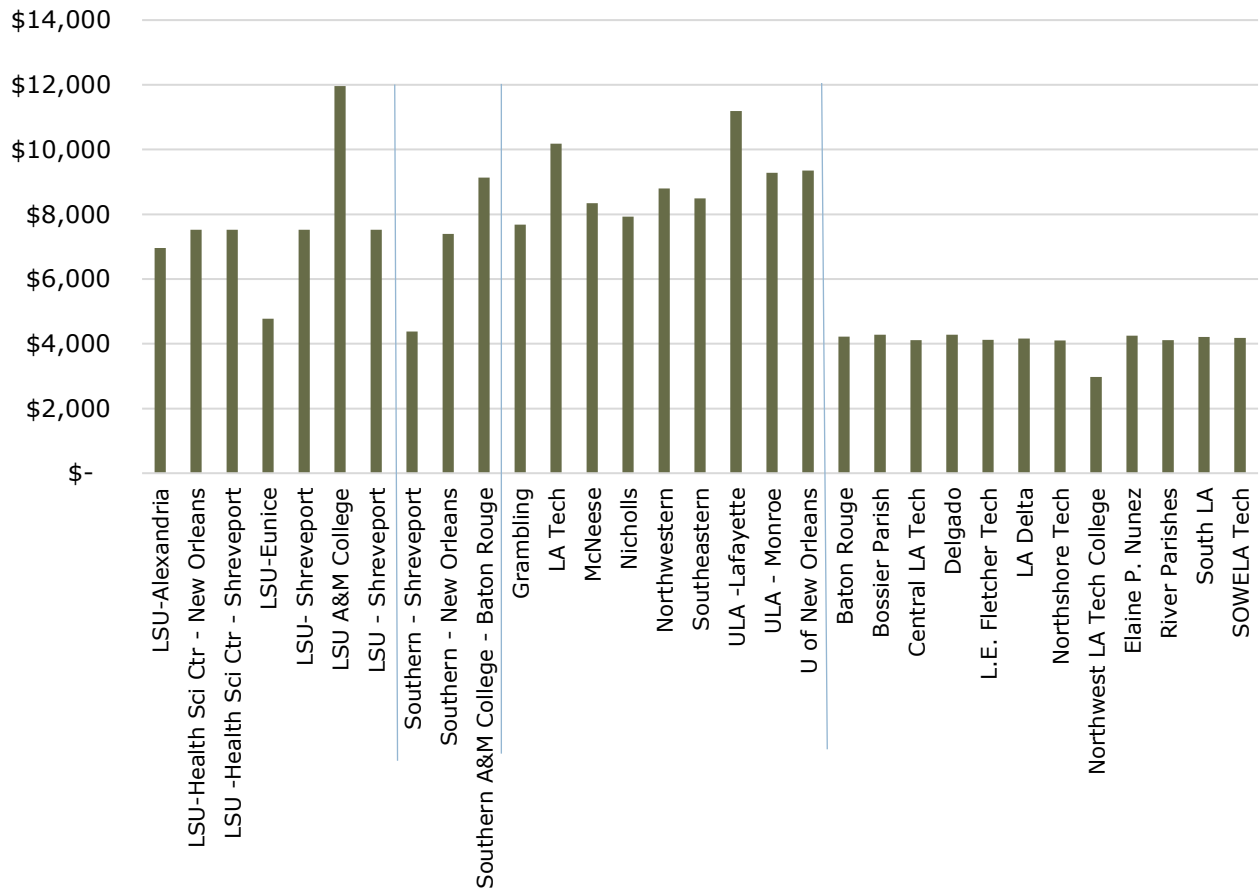
Source: (2021). *Higher Education State Fact Book.* LA Board of Regents.

Figure 4: LA Public Higher Education – Enrollments & Pell Portion 2019-20
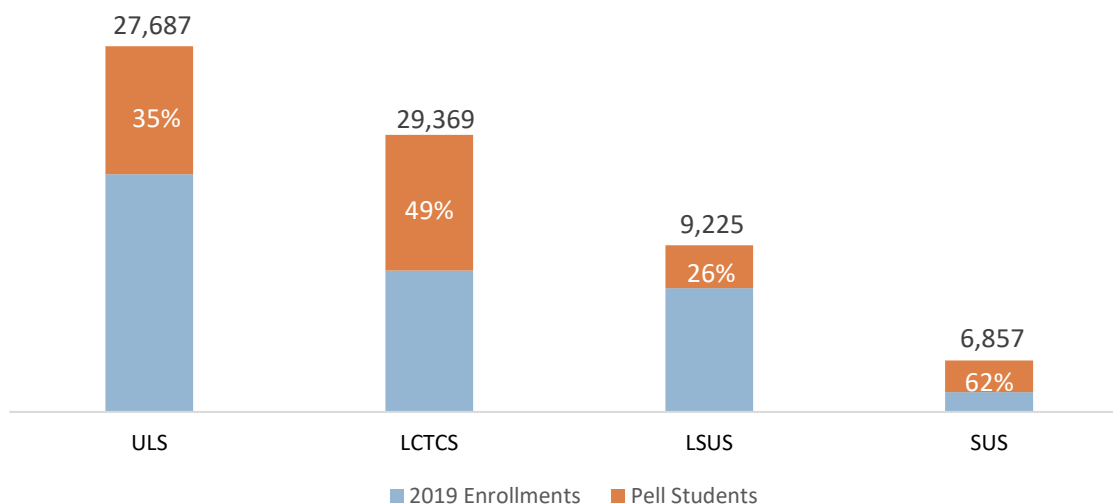
Source: (2021). *Higher Education State Fact Book*. LA Board of Regents.

Louisiana Prioritizes Merit Aid in Higher Education Funding and Policies

In light of tuition increases, the role of state financial aid is critical. Research has shown grant aid has a positive impact to enrollment, student persistence, and degree attainment.[8,9] And need-based aid has been found to increase enrollment intensity, persistence, choice of major, and completion.[10,11] Louisiana prioritizes financial aid more than any other state with over one-third of higher education appropriations directed to state scholarships and grants, primarily through the merit-based Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) program.[12]

Notwithstanding the commitment to aid, the majority of state funding per student is in the form of campus appropriation, subsidizing the cost of instruction and permitting discounted resident tuition rates (Figure 5). The Louisiana State University system receives the highest subsidies per student and total funding (Figure 6). To the extent admission requirements are also higher for institutions with more funding, that investment could be seen as a form of merit scholarship as well.

The state ranks 3rd among states in providing the most undergraduate grant aid for their population, when comparing to undergraduate enrollments or the state population as a whole. [12] The majority of Louisiana's state financial aid is explicitly merit-based, offered through TOPS. The second largest program is the GO Grant which assists students with financial need.

Figure 5: Average State Funding Per FTE

Figure 5: Average State Funding Per FTE
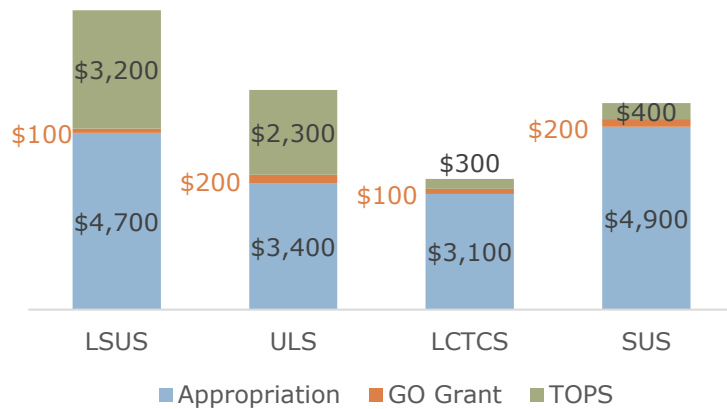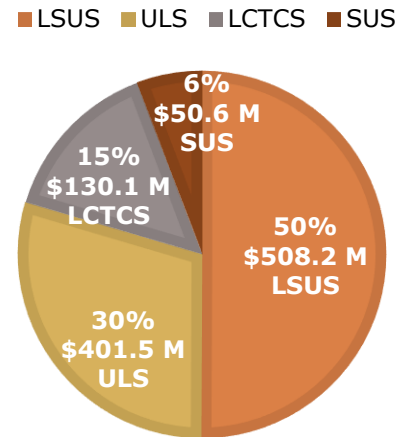
Figure 6: State Funding by System

Figure 6: State Funding by System

Source: Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance. 2018-19 Financial Aid Payment Statistics. IPEDS Finance, 12-Month Enrollment and Fall Enrollment. Estimated resident FTE based on % of first-time students who are state residents applied to total FTE. Excludes LSU Health Science Baton Rouge for per student funding.

Nationally, need-based aid constituted 44% of all aid to undergraduates, while merit-based aid accounted for nearly 20%, and 36% of aid was by hybrid need/merit programs. Figure 7 shows the states with the most state aid and what portion was dedicated to need-based, merit grant aid, or other aid (i.e. loans, work-study). Among the top student aid states, the GO Grant is the smallest need-based program and has the lowest per student average award.[12]

Figure 7: Total State Aid by Type - Top 15 States
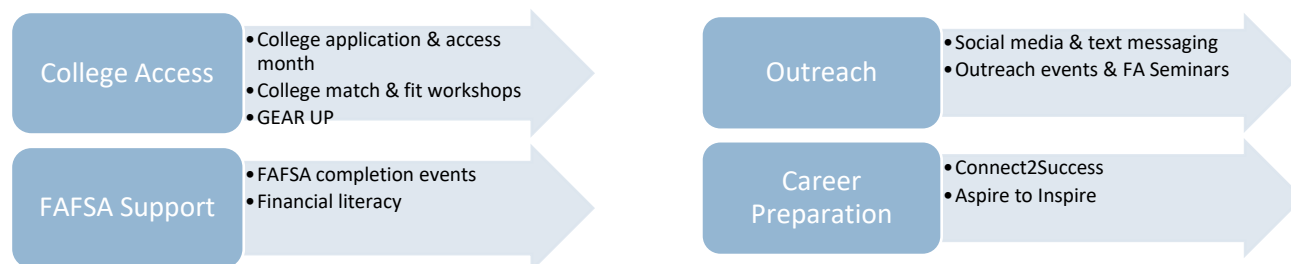(Dollars in Millions, Rounded - % Need-Based)
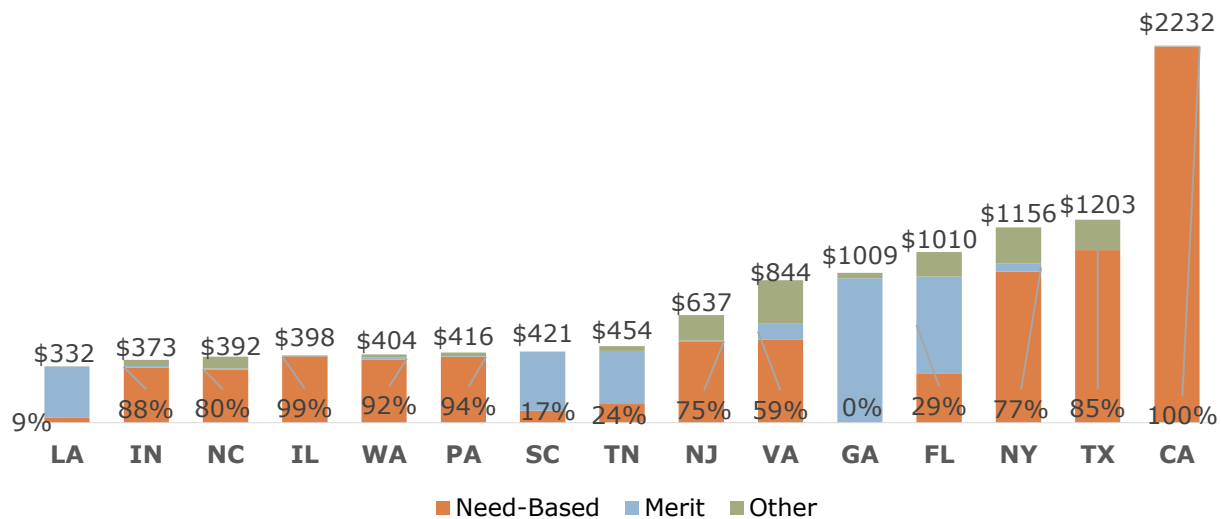
Source: National Association of State Student Grant Aid Programs Annual Report. 2018-19.

Together, these trends and priorities in higher education investments are harming access and success of students from low-income families in Louisiana and impeding progress on reducing equity gaps in educational attainment. According to the Louisiana Budget Project, Louisiana's reduced investments in higher education harms students of color and those with low incomes the most, as they are less likely to receive TOPS scholarships.[13]
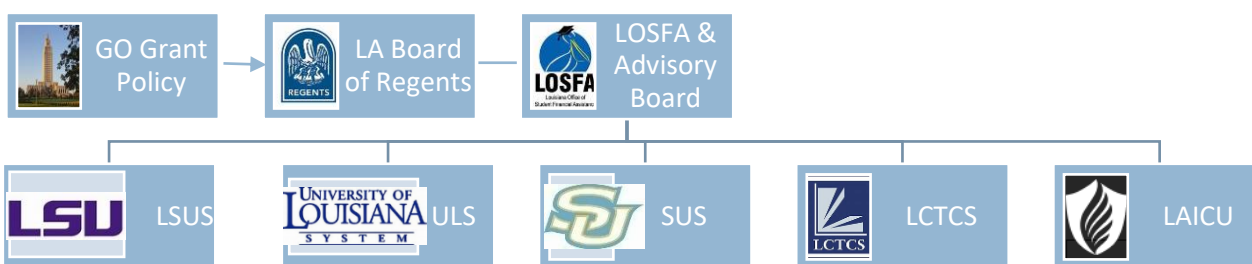
Louisiana Acknowledges the Importance of Financial Aid Applications and Outreach

The state's K12 education leadership has recognized the importance of filing the federal financial aid application to provide students with opportunities to maximize their ability to access financial aid. In 2015, the state's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education made filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) a high school graduation requirement.[14] Coupled with extensive outreach efforts, FAFSA filing rates moved from 56% of high school seniors to 83% in just a few years.[15] The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) and partners conduct a variety of school-based, city-wide and statewide activities to support postsecondary preparation and enrollment.

College Access	• College application & access month • College match & fit workshops • GEAR UP	Outreach	• Social media & text messaging • Outreach events & FA Seminars
FAFSA Support	• FAFSA completion events • Financial literacy	Career Preparation	• Connect2Success • Aspire to Inspire

3. Campuses Administer GO Grant Under State Guidance

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Aid (LOSFA), a program of the Louisiana Board of Regents, administers the state aid programs. LOSFA has an 11-member advisory board providing guidance on financial aid programs. The Louisiana legislature authorized the GO Grant in 2007. The program is decentralized with public and eligible private institutions receiving an allocation and working on the state's behalf to identify and select eligible students and determine the award amount within state guidelines.[16]

GO Grant Policy → LA Board of Regents — LOSFA & Advisory Board

LSUS | ULS | SUS | LCTCS | LAICU

LSUS	ULS	SUS^	LCTCS*	LAICU
LA State Univ – Alexandria	Grambling State Univ^	Southern Univ – Baton Rouge	Baton Rouge CC	Centenary College
LA State Univ – Baton Rouge	LA Tech Univ	Southern Univ – New Orleans	Bossier Parish CC	Dillard Univ
LA State Univ – Eunice*	McNeese State Univ	Southern Univ – Shreveport*	Central LA Tech CC	Our Lady of Lake Univ
LSU Health Science – New Orleans	Nicholls State Univ		Delgado CC	Louisiana College
LSU Health Science – Shreveport	Northwestern State Univ		LA Delta CC	Loyola Univ
LA State Univ – Shreveport	Southeastern LA Univ		Fletcher Tech CC	Tulane Univ
	Univ of LA – Lafayette		Northshore Tech CC	Univ of Holy Cross
	Univ of LA – Monroe		Northwest LA Tech CC	Xavier Univ
	Univ of LA – New Orleans		Nunez CC	
			River Parishes CC	
			South LA CC	
			SOWELA CC	

*Two-year colleges
^HBCUs

Strengths of the GO Grant Program

While TOPS is designed to cover the cost of public tuition, the GO Grant is designed to offer a supplement to the federal Pell Grant.[15] Students must file the FAFSA, be Louisiana residents and receive the Pell Grant. The flexibility for institutions to adjust targets within state priorities, consistency of funding, and focus on serving adult learners are strengths of the GO Grant.

Campuses Target GO Grant to Different Student Groups

Financial aid administrators shared appreciation for the ability to determine targets based on their students' needs, such as reducing the need to borrow, reaching students with fewer grant resources, or focusing on the lowest-income students.

Campus Reflections: GO Grant Strengths

- *Supports those students who do not want to borrow to cover the tuition balance that Pell doesn't cover. – SUS Campus*
- *Very helpful for online students with lower tuition – we don't offer institutional aid to these students because the tuition is lower – they are more likely to be older and eligible for GO Grant. – LAICU Campus*
- *GO Grant helps reduce the amount students have to pay out of pocket. – LCTCS Campus*
- *GO Grant is trying to ensure there is an even playing field. There is a middle tier of students with some Pell but not a lot, so they are challenged. They describe difficult financial circumstances with bills and insurance not captured on FAFSA – the GO Grant helps that group of students to have the means to cover expenses. – LCTCS Campus*
- *The priority to 25+ is important. – LCTCS Campus*
- *Our ability to select students based on our students needs is helpful. And the focus on Pell-eligible – those are the students who need the most help. – LCTCS Campus*
- *It does a good job of not "over-awarding" some students but spreads to those who may not be receiving other types of aid. And the focus on non-traditional students that may not qualify for freshman scholarships. – LSUS Campus*
- *The simplicity for students to access the award is key. – ULS Campus*

GO Grant Serves a Diverse Student Population

The average age of GO Grant recipients is 26. The GO Grant program serves a more diverse population than TOPS. While GO Grant serves 49% African American students, TOPS serves 16% (Figure 8). Over half of university GO Grant recipients are African American compared to 59% of the two-year college recipients.

Campuses Select Students

The Board of Regents (BOR) sets the award amounts and LOSFA publishes the information and manages the program with institutions. Institutions may set their own policies to select students and award amounts. There must be a priority for students 25 and older and part-time students are eligible. Institutions must have procedures for identification of transfer and re-entering students to be treated similarly to continuing students.

The institution's award policy may include priorities to limit the number of awards (such as first-come, first-served; priority to continuing students; etc.).[16] A review of campus policies and financial aid administrator interviews revealed additional criteria institutions use to select GO Grant recipients. In the two-year colleges, several representatives expressed belief that the program was intended to serve those who are not receiving full Pell, while others believed the program was best targeted to the neediest students who may have the largest gaps. Only two campuses require full-time enrollment for initial awards.

Several campuses note students must meet a specific deadline; many award first-come, first-served who meet the priorities. One campus noted a separate application is required for GO Grant since it is a limited fund source. Some campuses ensure that transfer and re-entering students are treated on an equal basis as incoming freshmen. Others interpret the policy as required to ensure mid-year transfer students who previously received GO Grant are prioritized, noting it is administratively challenging to monitor and can cause inequities for continuing students.

GO Grant Student Eligibility – Campus Criteria		
	Campus Priorities	**Application**
LCTCS (12)	4. adhere to state policies (3) 5. full-time (1) 6. neediest or 0 EFC (2) 7. higher EFC (7) ○ >299; >900; >2099; 5711	8. deadline (1)
LSUS (6)	9. need (1) 10. Pell<tuition & books (1)	11. date order (3)
SUS (3)	12. neediest (1) 13. no loans; on-campus; prior recipients (1)	14. deadline (1) 15. application (1)
ULS (9)	16. prior recipients (1) 17. full-time (1) 18. highest need (1) 19. unpaid balances (1)	20. deadline (2) 21. date order (2)
LAICU (8)	22. highest need (1)	23. date order (1)

Source: Results of financial aid administrator interviews and review of packaging policies for GO Grant participating institutions.

The impact of differences in campus policies is reflected in the variability average EFCs. They are lower among the UL system which tends to prioritize the neediest students, and are generally higher among the two-year colleges which as a system tend to prioritize higher EFC students (Figure 9).
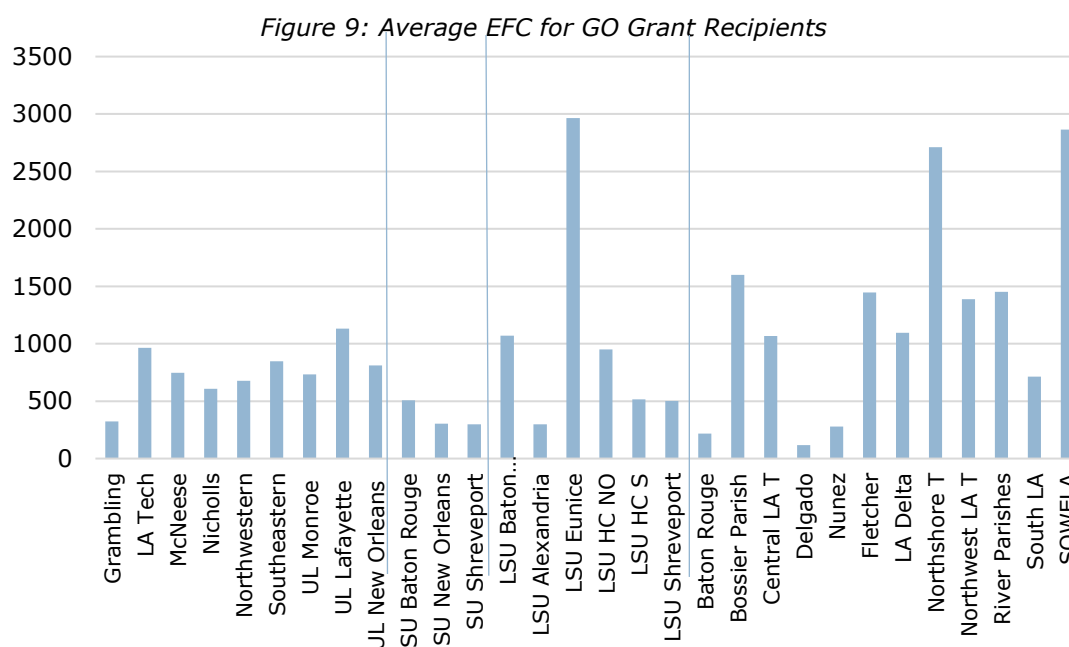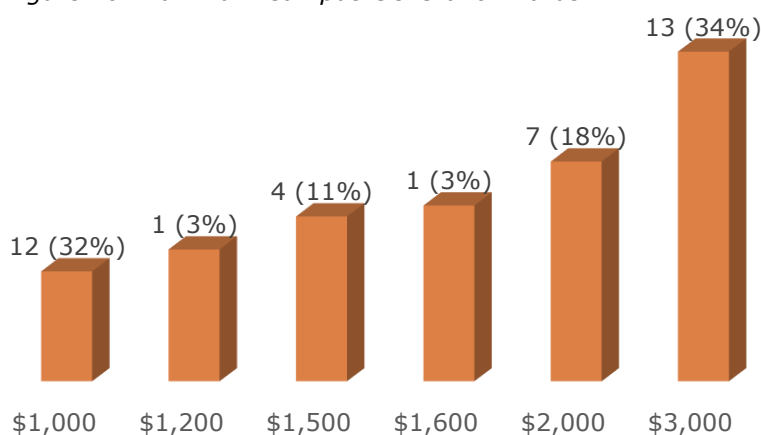

Figure 9: Average EFC for GO Grant Recipients

Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions.

Campuses Set Award Amounts

The maximum award is $3,000 per state rules and is pro-rated for part-time students. Institutions may implement a GO Grant packaging policy that provides a lower maximum award. The packaging policy must provide maximum award amounts and the basis for awards less than the state maximum, if applicable. Only thirteen colleges, all four-year institutions (public and private), are awarding GO Grant at the maximum award allowed under state rules (Figure 10).
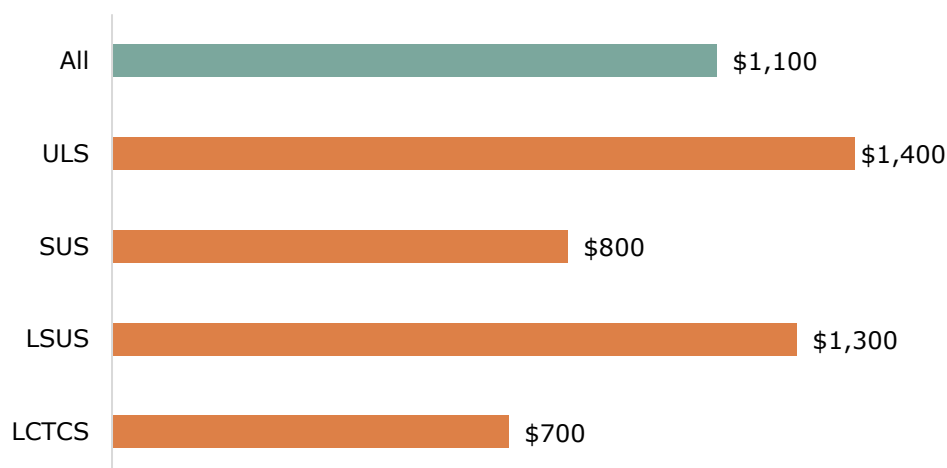

Figure 10: Maximum Campus GO Grant Awards

Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions. Review of packaging policies for private institutions.

Institutions are expected to make a good faith effort to reach students with the most financial need and to bring their maximum financial need met with gift aid to 60%.[16] The combination of this limitation and reduced campus-specific award amounts lead to lower award averages (Figure 11). Less than 2% of students attending public institutions receive the $3,000 maximum.
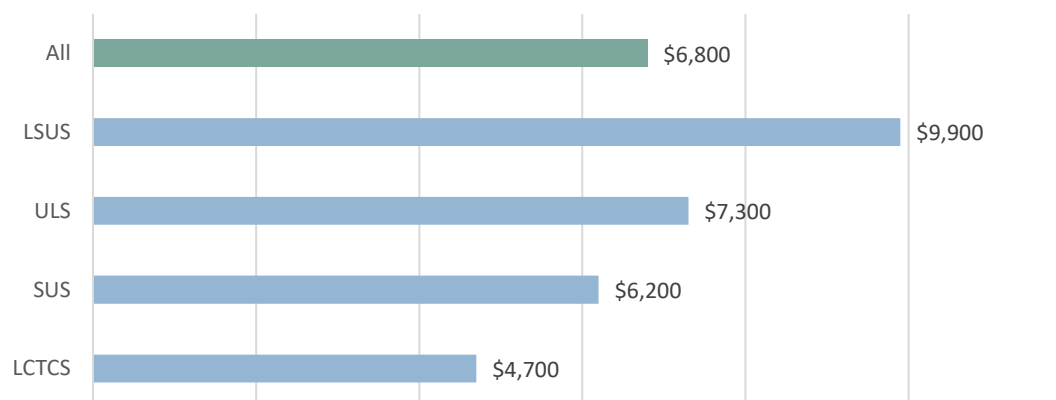
Figure 11: Average GO Grant

Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions.

4. GO Grant Recipients Receive Grants and Rely on Loans

The average <u>total gift</u> assistance (federal and state grants, unfunded waivers, and scholarships) for GO Grant recipients ranged from $4,700 in the LCTC System to $9,900 in the LSU System (Figure 12).

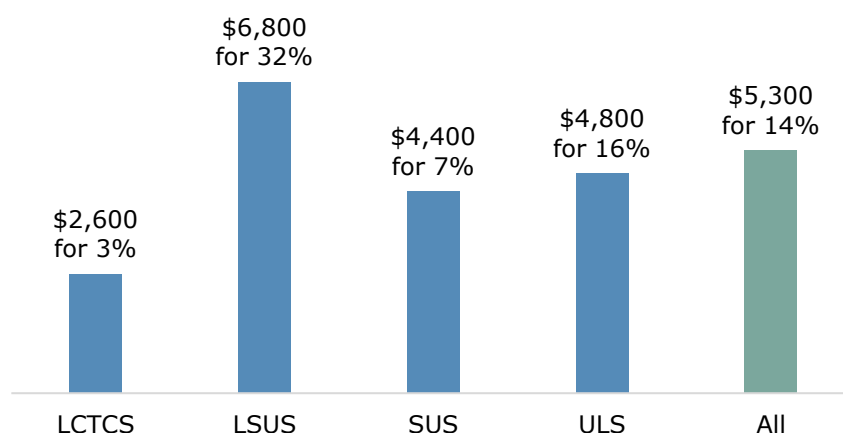*Figure 12: Average Gift Aid by GO Grantees*

Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions.

GO Grant recipients attending LSU System campuses were more likely to receive other gift assistance, including 10% with other merit (not TOPS), 72% with unfunded waivers, 14% with

other need-based aid, and 11% with aid awarded on talent. This may reflect LSU's Pelican Promise program that provides need-based funding to students within family incomes within 150% of the federal poverty level. In addition, nearly one-third of LSU System GO Grant students receive TOPS with an average TOPS award of $6,800 for those who receive it (Figure 13).
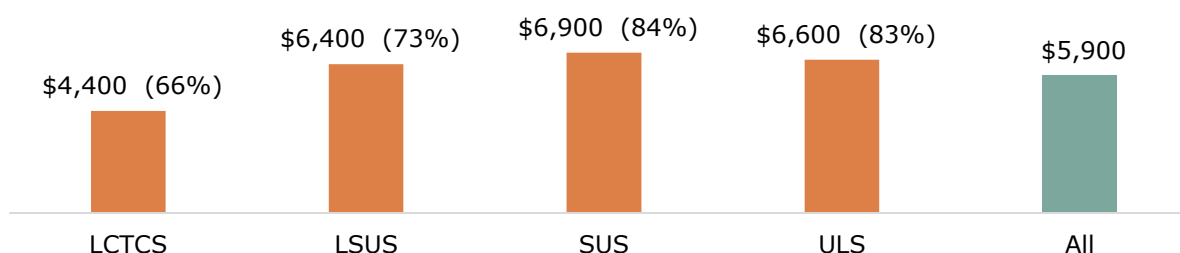
Figure 13: GO Grant Recipients with TOPS Awards

Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions.

Without other aid, Pell Grant and GO Grant covers between 60 and 72% of tuition at the public four-year institutions. Despite receiving grant assistance, the majority of GO Grant recipients (77%) are taking out student loans. While borrowers take out $7,700 per year on average, the debt for all GO Grant recipients is $5,900 (Figure 14).

Figure 14: GO Grant Recipients' Average Debt & Percent Who Borrow

Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions.

5. GO Grant Appropriations Have Increased Intermittently

Since inception, funding for GO Grant has nearly doubled, from $15 M in 2007-08 to $29.4 M in 2020-21(Figure 15). However, the program received an increase in its second and third year and remained unchanged for eight years. During that time, campus-based award policies led to wide variances in students served with the same funding levels, a range with a difference of 13,000 students. Beginning in 2019, an additional million dollars was added each year for three

consecutive years.[17] In addition, $11 million is proposed to be added to GO Grant for the 2021-22 fiscal year.[19]

Figure 15: GO Grant Service Over Time
(dollars in millions)
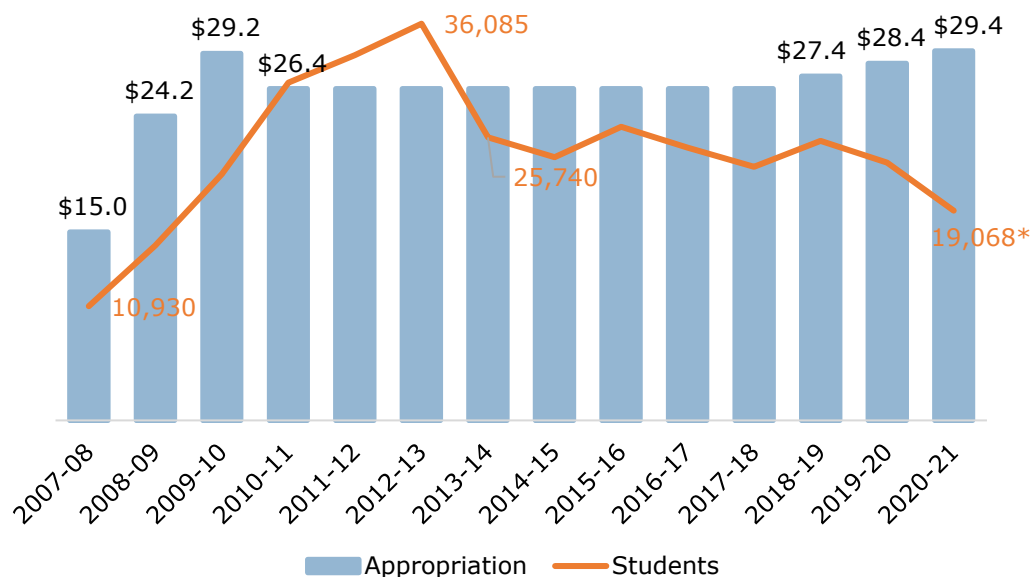
*The 2020-21 academic year reporting has not been finalized. Source: Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance. GO Grant Statistics. 2019-20.

The University of Louisiana System of nine institutions serves the majority of GO Grant recipients, with 53% of the funding and 45% of recipients in 2019-20 (Figure 16).

Figure 16: GO Grant Funding & Students by System
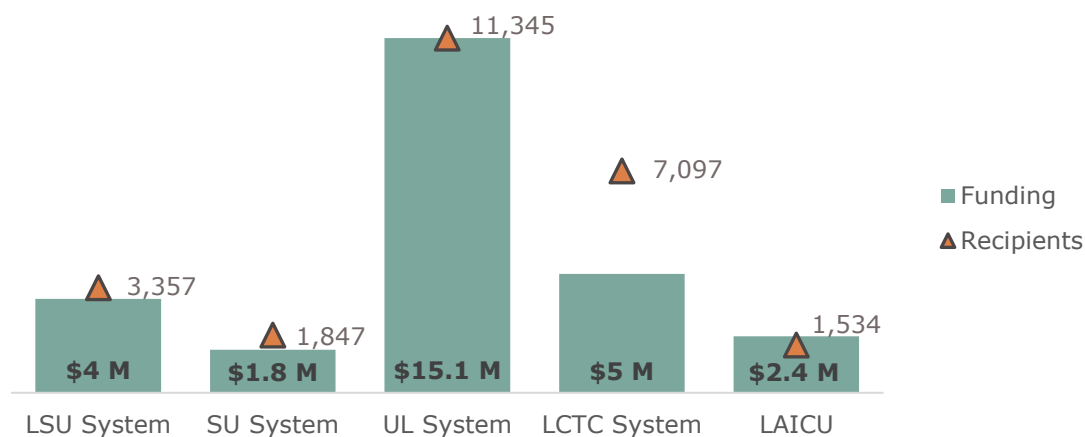
Source: Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance. GO Grant Statistics. 2019-20.

The combination of the campus award policies and allocations affect the percent of eligible students each campus is able to reach with GO Grant – which varies from 5% to 71% (Figure 17). Campuses that have set lower awards than the allowable maximum are able to reach a

higher percent of eligible students. For example, Northwestern State University set a maximum award at $1,200 and reached 48% compared to 31% at Grambling State University offering the maximum award of $3,000.

Figure 17: Percent of Eligible Students Served with GO Grant

Source: Distribution of Federal Pell Grant Funds by Institution, 2017-18. LOSFA GO Grant Payment Statistics, 2017-18.
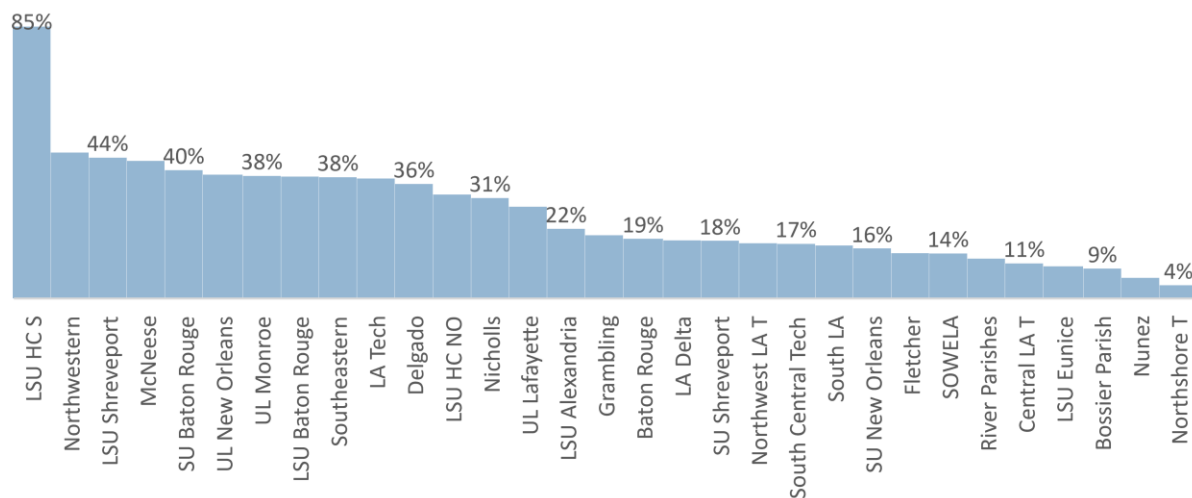
To Fully Fund Eligible Students Requires Additional $51 Million

To fund all eligible students attending public institutions in 2017-18 under campus-specific policies would have required an additional $51 million (Figure 18). If campuses extended the award maximum of $3,000 under state policy and still applied the 60% need policy, an estimated additional $10 million would be required. And inflating the private institutions at the same percentages based on 2020 data would require an additional $2 to $4 million.

*Figure 18: Estimated Cost to Fund All Eligible GO Grant at Public Institutions
(using campus-specific award policies)*
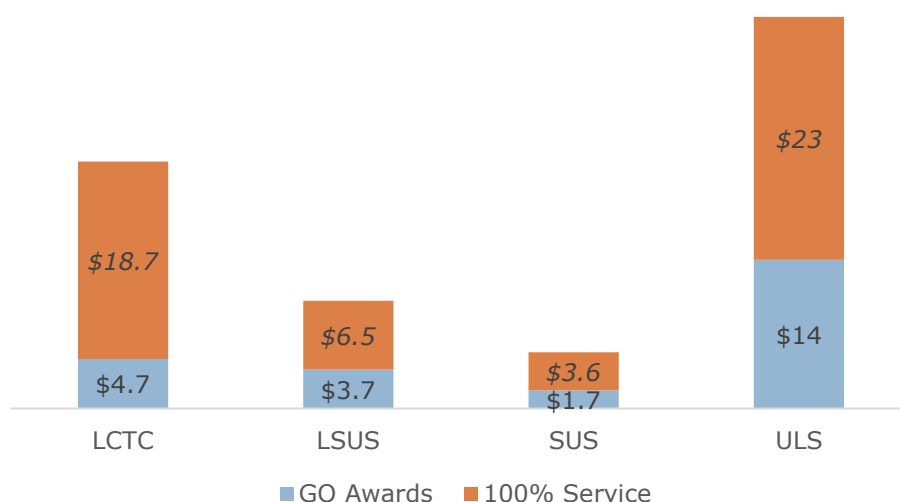
Source: Administrative data provided by the Board of Regents. 2017-18 financial aid data for public institutions.

6. Setting a Need Target No Longer Achieving Intended Outcomes

One of the research questions requested to be examined was whether the 60% of need threshold is effective. This target was established with a previous review of GO Grant in 2011.[20] The major findings of the Noel Levitz/AIR report included:

- In predicting fall-to-fall, same-school retention, high school Grade Point Average was the strongest academic preparation variable.
- Pell Grants help overcome differences in retention rates across income levels among students with equivalent academic preparation.
- After controlling for high school performance, the level of students' Need Met with Gift Aid is associated with retention.
- As a result of various analyses of retention for students in groups of percentage of need met with gift aid, the researchers recommended the award amount be increased to $4,000 and the percent of need be capped at 55%.

As a result of the study, a 60% of need target and $3,000 award amount were implemented. The Louisiana legislature in 2015 requested the Board of Regents (BOR) to examine the state's merit and need-based financial aid programs and submit findings and recommendations. BOR noted the Noel Levitz findings provided an impetus for policy changes that addressed how GO Grant funds would be allocated to ration a limited pool of funding more effectively, and although the changes benefited many students, a large cost gap remains for some of the neediest students. BOR proposed several GO Grant-related administrative and policy recommendations, including establishing a priority for working adults and revising the allocation process for GO Grant resources to campuses.[21]

Campuses Achieve a Similar Goal with Reduced Awards

The 60% of need was established based on data that indicated increased gift aid is associated with increased retention, with a tapering impact. There was an inherent assumption that the policy would be consistently applied. Financial aid administrators interviewed generally expressed

concern about this policy limiting their ability to target funding to students who need financial assistance. Two-year college representatives expressed a need to focus on tuition, whereas four-year college representatives were concerned about covering the cost of attendance. Some campuses interviewed stated that they understand the policy is intending to target the "middle income" and their policies align by prioritizing those with smaller Pell Grants. Others thought the 60% was interfering with the ability to serve the lowest income students who need the most help.

Campus Reflections: 60% Limitation
• *Our campus is having issues in that we are not able to fill the gap for our most needy students because of the 60% target – they are being left out. – LSUS Campus*
• *Prior to the 60% it was in the automated packaging philosophy and auto-jobs and 60% need prevents that. The objective it is trying to reach is unclear. – LSUS Campus*
• *We target institutional aid to the neediest students and they are being eliminated from GO Grant. – LSUS Campus*
• *The state should let campuses decide the amount since we know our students' needs and how to get the maximum benefit of the program. Four-year state schools, community colleges, and privates are all unique. – LAICU Campus*
• *We have a hardship appeal and consider GO Grant reductions before offering students emergency aid. – LAICU Campus*
• *The 60% formula. It is a mess – does it really amount to anything? If students are Pell-eligible, they have need. It's more trouble than it's worth. If it were up to me, I would keep the Pell criteria and ask schools to prioritize higher EFCs, regardless of sector. I would remove the 60%. The Lowest income students are eligible for more resources and benefits. – LCTCS Campus*
• *It's just gift aid that counts. It is working well to distribute funds fairly. – LSU Campus*
• *Cost of attendance is so high. I don't even know why they have it in there. I would rather have them say it can pay for tuition and fees in combination with Pell. All we have is Pell, SEOG and loans and work-study. – LCTCS Campus*

Due to the combination of increasing college costs since 2011 and lack of funding increases in GO Grant, the 60% threshold is rarely met with GO Grant. In fact, the 2% of students that are receiving the maximum award receive 40% of need covered by gift aid on average. While each campus determines the exact cost of attendance with tuition, living expenses, books, transportation, and other costs, the following table uses published figures on one campus web site for the current academic year (2020-21). With maximum Pell and GO Grant awards, which the large majority of students <u>do not</u> receive, students would receive between 39 and 55% of need in grant funds.

Sample 2020-21 Need by Public System – Lowest Income Students			
	LSUS	ULS	LCTCS
Cost of Attendance/Need	$24,500	$23,800	$17,300
Maximum Pell Grant	-$6,495	$6,495	$6,495
Maximum GO Grant per state policy	-$3,000	$3,000	$3,000
Remaining Need	$15,005	$14,305	$7,805
Percent Need Met	**39%**	**40%**	**55%**

We find that over time, after the implementation of the need target policy, the variation in campus policies, reductions in maximum award amounts, differences in student characteristics, and impact on administration make a "one size" percent of need calculation ineffective. Due to prioritizing compliance with the 60% limitation, the policy could also have a disincentive to offer institutional and other gift aid to GO Grant students. As a result of this analysis, we recommend removing the percent-of-need target and focusing on increasing awards to the allowable maximum. This, combined with increasing program awareness and communication, would provide for a more streamlined, flexible, efficient, student-centered and equitable program. If a threshold is set, system-specific targets or dollar amounts might be more meaningful since growing differences in institution's cost of attendance mean that 40% of unmet need is a much larger financial barrier at some institutions. However, this could serve to "over-engineer" the program, setting false targets if more students are not able to be receive award maximums.

Balancing Compliance and Student Support

GO Grant expenditures may not exceed the legislative appropriation. As outlined in program rule, LOSFA manages the fund by allocating amounts to eligible institutions based on their share of the prior year's expenditures.[18] Institutions are responsible to ensure their allocation is not overspent and as such, continued funding to eligible recipients is not guaranteed. As a result of the lack of certainty in legislative appropriations, program rules related to recalculating awards for enrollment changes and monitoring the 60% after scholarships, many institutions do not disburse the GO Grant until after the 14th day of the term. In some cases, students are not aware of their funding until after the term has started. Students who count on grant aid to cover expenses are not able to receive the funding until several weeks into the term. Some institutions have more flexibility to cover the award until reimbursed by the state. This issue was raised by interviewees and is outlined in campus award policies.

Campus Reflections: Fund Management

- *Ideally, we would like to have funding before the fee bills. We will award and won't bill LOSFA until 14th day. Until that time, we will float it. – LSUS Campus*
- *We post the award to the student account, and then after the census date we bill LOSFA for those funds. That protects us because if we award it up front, they may not be eligible. We disburse it after we get the money, which can be a month later. Some campuses will post it on the award early and some will wait. – LCTCS*
- *There are specific rules around recalculating when other funding received which is burdensome. – LSUS Campus*
- *Since it has not been reduced over the years, maybe we could receive a guaranteed portion of our allocation earlier. – LSUS Campus*
- *We don't have our allocation until July. So, the award is not a resource on the fee bill. – LSUS Campus*
- *We have not received additional funding even as our student numbers increase. – SUS Campus*

The Importance of Timing

The unpredictability with which GO Grant is disbursed creates inequities for students in the awareness and timely receipt of the award. One of the strengths of the TOPS program is that students know in advance what they will receive and that information can therefore influence their decisions about where and whether to enroll. GO grants, by contrast, cannot be as much of a factor in students' planning if they do not know whether they will get an award until after they have already made critical enrollment decisions: whether to enroll, where to go, and how many classes to take. For enrollment changes or withdrawals, the state could review the academic progress requirements to receive future funding or consider billing the few over-awarded students rather than delaying payment to all recipients. If the 60% requirement were removed, that should reduce many of the over-award scenarios for receipt of outside scholarship or other funding.

By continuing to leave the GO grant award decision until the last minute, Louisiana will lose much of the potential return on its financial aid investment. The earlier students know about financial aid, the longer the same amount of dollars can affect key decisions: whether to go to college at all, where to go, whether to fill out the FAFSA, etc. Aid that is entirely "last dollar" can be efficiently allocated in terms of students' current financial needs but cannot have the long-term impact of earlier awards. A landmark random control study in New Brunswick, Canada, found that low-income students who were told in advance that they would get financial aid in college, were more likely to attend and to graduate than low-income students who received similar amounts of aid through the traditional process.[19] Policymakers in Kentucky attribute part of their success in increasing attainment in the early 2000s to a program that commits at least a small amount of financial aid in advance to nearly 90% of the state's graduating high school students, with larger amounts dependent on demonstrated need or merit.[20] For potential adult students, using similar logic, qualification for programs like SNAP or Medicaid could be used to make an early minimum commitment of aid to anyone who fills out a FAFSA, leveraging the state's investment and greater federal support.

7. Recommendations to Improve GO Grant Service

The GO Grant program provides critical need-based aid to low-income students, providing access to one of 38 public or private, two- or four-year institutions. State policies allow coordination with federal Pell Grant and support for non-traditional students. Campuses have flexibility to set additional priorities to determine which students receive funding and how much.

While the 60% target is intended to ensure students are not over- or under-funded, most campuses achieve this objective through reduced award maximums. In addition, policies and fund management are causing additional barriers and delays for students.

GO Grant helps reduce net cost to price sensitive students. The program could build on the strengths of the TOPS program which has strong brand awareness among educators and students and families – as well as the outreach efforts by LOSFA and partners to support FAFSA filing. The state could consider improving the predictability of the award for some students by adjusting policies and practices.

Suggestions to improve GO Grant to use existing funds in an equitable manner and provide a framework for program increases include:

1. **Provide predictable new investments to the GO Grant program.**

The 2021 proposed $11million increase would be a significant investment in the program which combined with some of the policy adjustments would allow more students to be served effectively by GO Grant.

2. **Remove the 60% target.**

With cost increases and campuses setting reduced award amounts, few students are reaching 60%. The requirement is preventing campuses from offering sufficient funding to the lowest income students and harming students who qualify for merit funding.

3. **Create a statewide review panel to consider the following:**

    a) **Examine the allocation and recalculation rules and methodology to allow more students to receive timely information and disbursements.**

    Consider other approaches to compliance to ensure students are not over-awarded that are balanced with the need for expanded awareness and timely disbursements to cover expenses at the start of the term.

    b) **Eliminate separate applications for GO Grant.**

    GO Grant is generally an accessible program for most students and an additional application creates an unnecessary barrier.

    c) **Review the feasibility of early commitments of minimal awards.**

    Consider notifying students or potential students in advance of their eligibility for at least a minimal level (e.g., $500 or $250) initial grant, as part of a strategy to encourage applying to college and filling out the FAFSA.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Louisiana GO Grant Study – Campus Perspective Interviews

On behalf of the Louisiana Board of Regents, HCM Strategists is conducting GO Grant expert interviews to contribute to an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

Purpose

To analyze campus packaging policies, enrollment objectives, student outcomes, program effectiveness, and practitioner recommendations for the GO Grant program. Questions will address program design, administration, and campus policies and supports.

Interview Protocol

Inquiry-based conversation will collect consistent information regarding the campus policies, perspectives on strengths and challenges related to GO Grant, student outcomes, and recommendations.

Confidentiality

Because the purpose of the GO Grant study is in part to collect and compare perspectives and insights of the practitioners administering the program, and because differences exist by system and campus, most responses will not be kept confidential or anonymous. However, there will an opportunity for specific non-attributed feedback. And respondents will be provided an opportunity to review a summary of their responses and edits and omissions will be made prior to sharing the information.

Script and Interview Questions

GO Grant Interview – Scheduled for One Hour	
Introduction *purpose of study*	As you know, the LA Board of Regents is conducting a study of the GO Grant program and want to understand how program design and administration impact the program goals. They are interested in understanding your expert perspective and recommendations. Because the purpose is to understand campus perspectives, it would be identifiable. However, I will a share the summary of our conversation to give you an opportunity to make any corrections or omissions prior to sharing results. • Do you have any questions?
Transition *background*	• How long have you worked with the GO Grant? • What is your professional background related to financial aid?

Questions *consistent inquiry*	<u>GO Grant Design & Policies</u> • Do you think program administrative design and state-level policy is achieving the goals and supporting students within the context of your mission/system? • What are the top three strengths? And the top three challenges? • How would you describe the state's goals with the GO Grant program? • What do you think the right balance is between program service levels and impacting the financial gaps students face? • Do you believe the 60% of need is the right target? • Outside of limitless funding, what would your recommendations be to improve GO Grant policy or design for student success? <u>Campus Policy & Practice</u> • Which students does your campus prioritize for receipt of GO Grant? • How do you think GO Grant coordinates with other aid and which students are best served? • What enrollment, equity or other objectives are you trying to address? • Can you share a copy of your policy for review? • What are the considerations (trade-offs) for standardizing these practices versus individually determined by campuses? <u>Support Services</u> • We know that financial aid has stronger impact when combined with supports. Do you have any support practices that stand out that you would like to share?
Closing *follow-up*	• If something comes up in one of the other interviews that I want to get your perspective on, can I send you an email? I anticipate sharing a summary by {date} and if you could let me know if you have changes or not by {date} that would be great. HCM and the Board of regents really appreciate your sharing your time and expertise for this study.