

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 121

BY REPRESENTATIVES CARTER, AUSTIN BADON, BARRAS, BURFORD, TIM BURNS, CARMODY, CHAMPAGNE, CONNICK, CORTEZ, DANAHAY, ELLINGTON, FOIL, HARRISON, HENRY, KLECKLEY, LEGER, LIGI, LOPINTO, LORUSSO, MORRIS, NOWLIN, PEARSON, PUGH, RICHARD, ROY, SCHRODER, SEABAUGH, TALBOT, AND THIBAUT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To establish an understanding and shared vision between the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Legislature regarding the future of higher education in Louisiana.

WHEREAS, in order to provide a quality, cost-effective, and successful postsecondary education system in the state of Louisiana, the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Legislature must have a shared vision, clear expectations, and an understanding of the other's roles, duties, and responsibilities as they relate to postsecondary education, the needs of students, the need for a competent and capable workforce, and the limitations on the public fisc; and

WHEREAS, according to the Council for a Better Louisiana, "sustainability is critical because with 14 four-year institutions, 11 two-year colleges and 40 technical college campuses, post-secondary education in Louisiana is significantly larger than it was just 15 years ago" and "without strategic, targeted investment in state education priorities and smart new thinking about how state tax dollars are spent" there is a foreseeable risk of "on going budget reductions or little new support for post-secondary education"; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, the legislature established the Postsecondary Education Review Commission (PERC) "... to review all aspects of postsecondary education in order to ensure that the enterprise is operating efficiently, effectively, and in a manner that best serves students, their families, and the state and to make recommendations for changes necessary to ensure that the system is operating in that manner" and PERC issued a thorough report with specific recommendations for improvement of postsecondary education in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, the Louisiana Legislature, with the support of higher education officials, the governor, and business leaders, enacted the LA GRAD (Granting Resources

and Autonomy for Diplomas) Act which grants colleges and universities increased autonomy and flexibility in exchange for a commitment to meet clearly defined statewide performance goals; and

WHEREAS, even before the work of PERC and the enactment of the LA GRAD Act, the Louisiana Board of Regents recognized the importance of a strong community and technical college system to meet the workforce needs of Louisiana employers and, as such, in 1998 recommended the creation of such a system in order to provide cost-effective and quality two-year and technical postsecondary education; and

WHEREAS, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has noted that Louisiana's "economic future depends less on creating the next Research Triangle or Silicon Valley than on repositioning state colleges to better meet the needs of established industries, including shipbuilders and oil- and-gas companies" and "directing more people to community and technical colleges would build a better work force by ensuring that more students graduate with usable skills and at a price that fits the state's budget"; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana can now proudly say that the fundamentals are in place: a strong and growing community and technical college system which is nimble and responsive to short-term workforce needs; a robust regional university system, which is the backbone of an educated, professional citizenry; and a world class, research I university where the future is being charted; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana has not fully taken advantage of the fundamentals and continues to lean too heavily on its universities for short-term workforce needs, and the problems associated with this failure are many: universities lack clarity of mission because they are expected to be all things to all students; proper attention is not being paid to long-term social and economic health of the state because universities are distracted by pressures to meet more immediate needs; too many students are being ill served by being forced to borrow money to attend institutions for which they are not sufficiently prepared to be successful and are then left with debt but no degree; and

WHEREAS, with the major elements of an outstanding public postsecondary education system in place and broadly supported consensus that the way forward involves making sure each student is enrolled at a level that is appropriate to his or her abilities and interests, which, overall, will mean large increases in enrollment in the community and

technical colleges, now is a time for an aggressive push for the change of any and all policies that restrain Louisiana from achieving its vision; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana establishes a rather complex system of governance of public postsecondary education, which can be a hindrance to change but which in the current environment where the legislature, the Board of Regents, outside observers, the PERC commission, and the citizens of Louisiana are all in agreement about what change is needed will not be a hindrance so long as the goals and steps to be taken to achieve those goals are precisely articulated and efforts to execute are coordinated; and

WHEREAS, in order to accomplish this "right-sizing" of postsecondary education between four-year and two-year institutions, the Board of Regents has adopted policies aimed at matching students with institutions based on the students' level of preparation and institutional expectations; that primary among these policies is the Board of Regents' minimum admission standards for four-year universities and a statewide course placement policy implemented in the Fall 2005, and in 2010 the board further increased standards to be implemented in 2012 and 2014; and

WHEREAS, these policies have already impacted and will continue to impact the enrollment distribution between the two-year and the four-year institutions and that the legislature fully supports this redistribution of students and encourages the Board of Regents to continue its aggressive pursuit of this goal; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents and the legislature are also committed to ensuring that developmental postsecondary education and associate degree programs are delivered in the most cost-effective manner; and

WHEREAS, the LA GRAD Act and the Board of Regents, through implementation of the LA GRAD Act and previously enacted policies, provide that developmental education and associate degree programs will be delivered at the two-year institutions unless there is a lack of capacity to provide such courses in a region; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents is committed to decreasing time to degree by establishing policies that recognize time to degree as an important factor in producing an educated workforce and recognize that coordinated and prescriptive course scheduling and cohort programs have proven to reduce time to degree; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents has considered information, resolutions, and proposals offered by the legislature, recommendations of PERC, and the benchmarks and goals of the LA GRAD Act in establishing policies in its forthcoming update of the Board of Regents "Master Plan" charting the future course of postsecondary higher education in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to discussions with the Board of Regents, the legislature is aware of certain concepts to be included in the Master Plan and applauds the inclusion therein of the following: the development of "Regional Plans" that would redefine each institution's role, scope, and mission; identification of areas of excellence; continued evaluation of academic programs for duplication; and goals to increase degree production by more than fifty percent by 2025; and

WHEREAS, the legislature believes that the collection and tracking of certain information would be valuable in gauging success and determining an adequate and proper level of funding, and the Board of Regents has expressed a need and willingness to expand and make public such information which is to include: retention rates for first-time, full-time, degree seeking students and transfer students; four-, six-, and eight-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time degree seeking students and transfer students; average time for first-time, full-time students to obtain a degree; fraction of undergraduate body graduating each year with baccalaureate degrees or associate degrees; and number of graduates who obtained employment to the extent allowed by law.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish and record its understanding with the Board of Regents regarding the future of higher education in Louisiana and encourage the continuation of candid and open discussions between the two bodies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana urges and requests the Board of Regents to aggressively and fully implement its previously established admission standards, those standards the board set for implementation in 2012 and 2014, and additional admission standards as warranted; that the board continue to ensure that developmental education and associate degree programs be delivered by the two-year institutions unless there is a lack of capacity in a region to do so; that the board include in

its Master Plan the concepts outlined in this Resolution; and that the board track the data requested by the legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents submit a written report of its progress in all of these areas to the Senate Committee on Education and House Committee on Education not later than March 1, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents deliver a copy of the updated Master Plan to the Louisiana Senate and House of Representatives before September 1, 2011.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Board of Regents and the commissioner of higher education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE