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Board of Regents Draft Response to Act 619**From :** Jim Henderson <ulspresident@la.gov>

Tue, Jan 10, 2017 03:03 PM

Sender : Jim Henderson <ulspresident=la.gov@mail99.suw11.mcdlv.net>**Subject :** Board of Regents Draft Response to Act 619**To :** Joseph <president@louisiana.edu>**Reply To :** Jim Henderson <ulspresident@la.gov>

From the desk of System President Jim Henderson

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Good Afternoon,

Yesterday the Board of Regents presented its staff's [draft response to Act 619](#). The Act charged the Regents to supply a comprehensive analysis of Louisiana's postsecondary system.

The recommendations are vast, ranging from common sense collaboration to out-of-the-box ideas such as selling naming rights to the popular TOPS scholarship. The draft creates a framework to highlight work that is already underway at our universities and serves as an impetus to bring that work to scale. Many of the recommendations are immediately actionable and acceptable at face value.

A few recommendations may give us pause. For example, one recommendation suggests restricting our ULS research universities from creating new research doctoral programs.

We are committed to working closely with the Regents, our campus presidents, our partners, the legislature, and each of you to finalize and execute the plan but this is only part of the equation. Focusing on efficiencies in a state that spends less per student than any other state in the SREB is necessary but insufficient. This plan should be combined with a call for reinvestment in higher education and a commitment to an aggressive educational attainment goal. The return on investment that comes with educating more citizens will have a positive impact on all facets of life in our state ... even the budget.

We are coordinating with our Board and campus leadership on a formal cohesive

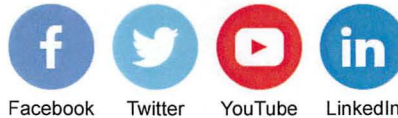
response from the System and welcome your feedback. Should you have ideas to contribute, please use this [form](#) to relay those thoughts by Jan. 27.

Thanks,



Jim Henderson

ABOUT THE UL SYSTEM: The University of Louisiana System is the largest higher education system in Louisiana enrolling more than 90,400 students at Grambling State University, Louisiana Tech University, McNeese State University, Nicholls State University, Northwestern State University, Southeastern Louisiana University, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the University of Louisiana at Monroe and the University of New Orleans.



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January 26, 2017

Université des Acadiens

Dr. Joseph C. Rallo
Commissioner of Higher Education
Board of Regents
P. O. Box 3677
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3677

Dear Dr. Rallo:

After reviewing senior staff recommendations for Board consideration in response to Act 619, I am writing to express my strong concern with Recommendation 3.3, which, in part, proposes to *"restrict approval of any additional research doctoral programs outside of LSU A&M – only under exceptional circumstances would the Board consider proposals for research doctoral programs at the statewide institutions"* (LA Tech, UL Lafayette and UNO).

Under the Board of Regents Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education, the mission of the three aforementioned universities is to *"educate undergraduate and graduate students in a variety of arts, sciences and professional programs and to conduct research in these fields."* Furthermore, the array of programs and services for statewide universities includes *"doctoral programs in a variety of arts, sciences and professional fields..."* Clearly, these universities have a long established mission that includes awarding doctoral degrees and engaging in research activities that are consistent with these programs. While these universities have a statewide mission, their doctoral research emphasis is limited and aligned with existing and designated areas of excellence. This focused doctoral research mission differentiates them from the state's comprehensive doctoral and research university, LSU and A&M College.

Designated by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as Doctoral Universities with Higher or Moderate Research Activity, these universities currently offer a variety of doctoral programs built on existing strengths, fostering regional/statewide economic development and preserving regional culture. Indeed, research doctoral programs are the cornerstone of any research university, and restricting their growth would have adverse consequences not only for these universities but also for the state of Louisiana and its citizens. If implemented, this recommendation will retreat from the established goals of the Board of Regents and Louisiana Economic Development; diminish the quality and attractiveness of these institutions for high-quality students and faculty; decrease the overall academic reputation of the state for students, faculty, business, and industry; reduce these institutions' ability to be more self-sufficient; and negatively impact Louisiana's economic development and job creation efforts.

The strength of Louisiana's statewide universities resides in their research faculty. Without the research and innovation produced by these faculty members, the significant contributions to economic development by these statewide universities is jeopardized. By investing in innovative research, these universities have been instrumental in recruiting companies and bringing new jobs to the state, creating startup companies, growing the state's innovation capacity, and

bringing in federal dollars. Collectively these institutions generated over \$120M in R&D expenditures in 2015, an amount that exceeds the \$98M appropriated by the state to support them.

By restricting approval of additional research doctoral programs outside of LSU A&M, the Board of Regents will curtail the ability of LA Tech, UL Lafayette, and UNO to grow research programs, and will severely restrict their ability to meet several of the priorities and performance metrics identified by the Board of Regents, including:

- 1) Recruiting world-class research faculty to fill vacant endowed chairs, which is a priority established by the BORSF Endowed Chairs for Eminent Scholars & Endowed Professorships Program. The availability of research doctoral students in existing programs, as well as the ability to create new research doctoral programs, are major factors in recruiting the best research faculty to available endowed chairs and professorships, and retaining those currently in place.
- 2) Increasing the level of *total research expenditures* and *research expenditures per FTE faculty, in the state* which are both research performance metrics identified within *Elevate Louisiana* adopted by the Board of Regents in 2015.
- 3) Increasing the number of *licensing agreements, invention disclosures, patent applications, and startup companies*, which are all innovation performance metrics identified within *Elevate Louisiana*.
- 4) Increasing the *percentage of faculty holding active research and development grants/contracts overall* as well as *in Louisiana's key economic development industries, the dollar amount of research and development expenditures overall* as well as *in key economic development industries, the number of intellectual property measures, and the direct federal research grants and contracts recorded* as specified by the *GRAD Act* legislation.

This potential BOR action would:

- **Abandon the Board of Regents' historical mission differentiation structure that currently provides for statewide universities to offer "doctoral programs in a variety of arts, sciences and professional fields" and require selective admissions criteria.** In 2005, the Board of Regents implemented admissions criteria for all public universities. The admissions criteria for Louisiana's three statewide institutions were set at a more selective level with a concomitant expectation that these institutions would place more emphasis on graduate programs and research than the comprehensive regional institutions. If implemented, Recommendation 3.3 would blur the mission differentiation

among Louisiana's universities, threaten elevated admission criteria and enrollment at other institutions.

- **Negatively impact the ability of the statewide universities to recruit and retain high level researchers to the state.** The strength of the UL Lafayette doctoral program in Environmental and Evolutionary Biology and access to its doctoral students, for example, were instrumental in the recruitment of a world-renowned biomedical research scientist, Dr. Francois Villinger, to become the director of New Iberia Research Center, the nation's largest non-human primate research center. Similarly, the international reputations of the doctoral programs in French and Francophone Studies allowed the University to recruit eminent chair Gaëtan Brulotte, a prominent scholar in his field.
- **Negatively impact the ability of statewide universities to recruit and retain research graduate students to the state.** Research doctoral education, which helps attract and retain highly-productive researchers and professors, also attracts qualified graduate students who become the highly trained, skilled labor-force for the state. This is particularly true in the Louisiana Master Plan Research Advisory Committee priority sectors, which are the very jobs and industries sought by Louisiana Economic Development and the Board of Regents for Louisiana to compete in the 21st century.
- **Negatively impact the ability of the statewide universities to self-generate funds to provide student support and increase scholarly research productivity by faculty.** At a time when universities are trying to overcome cuts to state funding, competitive research funding from external sources can help offset cuts and provide much-needed support to university budgets. Without research doctoral programs, however, these universities will not be able to retain and/or recruit the level of researchers, faculty, and doctoral students that can effectively compete for these grants. The overall level of research, scholarship, and academic publishing at the universities would be diminished since professors and higher quality graduate students—who are attracted by research and informed by doctoral education—will be harder to recruit. This, in turn, will make it difficult for these universities to compete for federal and other external grants.

Furthermore, the existence and development of doctoral research programs at statewide institutions does not cost the state of Louisiana any additional resources, as these programs are managed within existing budgets. And, as previously noted, these programs help generate more in R&D expenditures than the state provides for the total operations of these campuses.

- **Negatively impact the ability of statewide universities to continue to support economic and workforce development in Louisiana.** Research activities that spin off innovation and economic development are typically accomplished by high-level and productive researchers and doctoral students. Throughout the state, new industries have

come and are coming to the various regions within Louisiana due to geographically dispersed university assets rather than the activities from one research institution. Examples include cybersecurity in North Louisiana via LA Tech; oil industry, computer and information technology growth due to UL Lafayette; and biotech and manufacturing growth in New Orleans due to UNO. However, the lack of research doctoral education—or the arbitrary restriction of doctoral programs at state-wide universities—will deter efforts to recruit and retain these high level researchers, as well as initiatives to develop partnerships with business and industry across the state.

A recent (January 2017) American Association of State Colleges and Universities Policy Matters report states that “investing in research linked to the private sector remains paramount to state economic development.” Illustrative examples of research linked to the private sector resulting in economic development from UL Lafayette include:

- Recruitment of four IT companies — CGI, Perficient, Enquero and WAITR — to Lafayette, bringing 1,700 jobs to the Acadiana region since 2014. The strength and reputation of the University’s graduate programs, its research faculty, its doctoral students, and its innovation capacity were all immensely instrumental in helping recruit these companies. In the last two years, these companies have added more than 500 jobs, with more than 50% of those being graduates of Louisiana universities, reversing the historic trend of brain-drain of Louisiana’s best and brightest.
- Creation of a new startup cybersecurity company, Cythereal, by a research faculty member in computer science and his doctoral student in 2016, based on the strong computer science doctoral program through the Center for Advanced Computer Studies.
- Designation of UL Lafayette by the National Science Foundation as the nation’s only NSF Center of Excellence in the area of big data. This NSF Center for Visual and Decision Informatics (CVDI) alone was responsible for doubling the number of invention disclosures to the University between 2014 and 2016, and to date has generated over \$5M in external support. This Center builds on the foundations of strong research doctoral programs in Computer Science and Mathematics.
- As previously noted, the strength of the doctoral program in Biology and access to its doctoral students was instrumental in the recruitment of a world-renowned biomedical research scientist, Dr. Francois Villinger, to become the director of New Iberia Research Center. Since his arrival in 2016, Dr. Villinger and his team of post-doctoral researchers have generated \$12M in NIH funds.
- Recruitment and relocation of CrownBio, a biotech company from North Carolina to Louisiana, to co-locate at the New Iberia Research Center, and creating the first private sector bio-tech jobs in the history of Iberia Parish.

- Publication of a *Dictionary of Louisiana French* by members of the Francophone Studies graduate program, which coincides with the state's imperative in the area of language and cultural preservation.
- Driven by the strengths of research faculty and doctoral students in Systems Engineering, UL Lafayette continues to foster externally funded research, with the most recent example being a \$4.5M solar research and demonstration project funded by NRG. The Systems Engineering doctoral program has also been instrumental in stimulating collaborations with business and industry, recruiting, supporting, and/or growing 17 companies in the past two years. Faculty members from the Colleges of Engineering and Arts continue to work with doctoral students to develop sustainable solutions including solar homes and energy efficient buildings.

These successes at UL Lafayette and the economic benefits to the Acadiana region would not have been possible without strong research doctoral programs. Research universities are emerging as critical industry growth catalysts because of the presence of highly trained faculty associated with mentoring PhD students, access to PhD students supported by the industry partners who work on developing new technology and associated IP, the presence of high-end R&D and testing facilities primarily associated with PhD programs, and the opportunity to collaboratively submit R&D proposals (typically only competitive when PhD programs are tied to a proposal). For example, UL Lafayette is serving as an R&D asset to several regional industry partners – such as Cleco, Coastal Chemicals, the Waverobber, Swiftships, Chevron, Franks International, CGI Federal, and AVS. The ability to broaden these types of outcomes and produce similar results in new areas across the state would be eliminated if UL Lafayette, LA Tech and UNO are prevented from offering new research doctoral programs.

The Governor, the legislature, Louisiana Economic Development and the Louisiana Workforce Commission are looking to universities to help drive innovation, economic development and workforce development for the coming decades. As reported by the National Research Council's report "Research Universities and the Future of America", the future of America in terms of quality of life and its status within the global economy are critically hinged on the quality of its research universities. The value—and the shared responsibility—of doctoral education and research at Louisiana's public institutions have never been more important. Reducing opportunities for the development of future PhD programs and thus the R&D capacity of Louisiana is a step backwards.

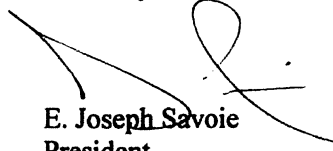
Finally, the analytic review requested by the Regents from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) found "little evidence of unnecessary duplication or excess" in doctoral programs throughout the state.

Dr. Joseph C. Rallo
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Recommendation 3.3 would begin the process of dismantling what has taken generations of passionate work and investment to build at the three statewide institutions, and severely curtail the positive impact they have on improving the state of Louisiana.

Recommendation 3.3 is unnecessary, counterproductive, and arbitrary. It should be deleted from the staff recommendations.

Sincerely,



E. Joseph Savoie
President

svc

C: Dr. James B. Henderson