

Agenda Item VII.B.

Response to HCR 170

Executive Summary

House Concurrent Resolution 170 of the 2013 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature (HCR 170) requests that the Louisiana Board of Regents, in consultation with the Board of Supervisors of Louisiana's Community and Technical Colleges, "study the feasibility of offering community college services in the Greater St. Mary Parish Area and to determine how the State can best meet the educational needs of students and the economic and workforce development needs of this region and state." In response, Regents asked FutureWorks, LLC to conduct a study and prepare a report responsive to the requirements of HCR 170.

In conducting the study, FutureWorks staff engaged in several types of research including: industry and labor market analyses, extensive qualitative research gathered through interviews and focus groups, and reviews of secondary research and reports on the economic, workforce and higher education systems in the Greater St. Mary Parish Area. Based upon this research, FutureWorks staff reached the following conclusions:

- Residents of the seven-parish Greater St. Mary Parish Area in general, and St. Mary Parish in particular, have low educational attainment overall when compared with statewide averages.
- The oil and gas industry (with relatively high wages) has a dominant presence in the Greater St. Mary Parish Area with tremendous demand for skilled workers in all segments of the industry.
- Programs and services at the four sub-baccalaureate colleges in the region (South Central Louisiana Technical College[SCLTC], South Louisiana Community College [SLCC], L.E. Fletcher Technical Community College [FTCC] and River Parishes Community College[RPCC]) are strongly focused on meeting the needs of the oil and gas, offshore operations, and petrochemical services. Demand for these services will likely increase.
- The number of awards is a very low proportion of enrollment at all four institutions in the region. Completion rates need to be increased.
- The proportion of students from St. Mary Parish attending 2-year colleges in the region is a small fraction of the total enrollments and credentials awarded.
- Most of the leaders interviewed acknowledged that the finances underlying all of higher education in the State make it increasingly difficult for technical colleges to deliver general education and occupational programming over the long term.
- There is concern that relationships with industry and the quality of technical education could be threatened if the emphasis changed to more academic-oriented education.
- Portions of the seven-parish area are underserved by sub-baccalaureate college services.

- There is healthy and real interest among educators to increase collaboration and identify practical means to extend college services to underserved areas in the region.

The study included the following recommendations:

In the short term:

- Increase collaboration between SCLTC and FTCC in an effort to reduce duplication of services and conserve resources, with planning for an eventual merger of the two institutions. Suggested collaborative efforts include:
 - o Offering a combined set of services in the Franklin area that integrate technical programming and general education courses, utilizing the facilities at Franklin High School. As part of this process, SLCC should work with FTCC and SCLTC to phase out its offering of courses in the Franklin area over 2-3 years.
 - o Examination of the feasibility of FTCC offering more general education and community college services at SCLTC's River Parishes campus.
- Provide additional resources and capacity to SCLTC's River Parishes Campus' PTEC program to further reassure employers of the institution's commitment to the industry.
- Increase collaboration between SCLTC's River Parishes Campus and River Parishes Community College (RPCC), especially with regards to both school's PTEC programs.

In the long term:

- Merge SCLTC and FTCC over a two-year merger process. . As part of this merger, the study further recommended:
 - o Transitioning to a single SACS accreditation
 - o The development of a clear plan for professional development to migrate SCLTC faculty and personnel into SACS compliance.
 - o A unified Center of Excellence to include the existing Young Memorial campus' Marine/Oil and Gas program, the PTEC program at the River Parishes Campus, and the proposed Center for Workforce Excellence at FTCC.

Finally, in addition to the recommendations made above, the study strongly urged increased attention on degree/credential completion at all institutions within the Greater St. Mary Parish area.

The senior staff recommends that the Planning, Research and Performance Committee approve the response to House Concurrent Resolution 170 regarding the provision of community college services in the greater St. Mary Parish Area and authorizes the Commissioner of Higher Education to make whatever non-substantive changes necessary prior to its submittal to the appropriate House and Senate Committees of the Legislature.