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**BOARD OF REGENTS**  
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**AGENDA**  
**STATEWIDE PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**  
Wednesday, August 24, 2022  
12:05 p.m.

Claiborne Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Thomas Jefferson Rooms A&B 1-136  
1201 North Third Street  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Initial Rulemaking – Rulemaking to amend Sections 509, 703, 705, 803, 805, and 2103 and to add Chapter 24 of the Scholarship and Grant Program rules to implement the provisions of Act 447, Act 463, Act 681, and Act 502 of the 2022 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature.\*
- B. TOPS Exceptions - Regulatory provisions that require students to remain continuously enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during the academic year.
- C. TOPS Home Study Exceptions - Statutory provision that requires a student to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade.

IV. Receive the Cost of College Report by VELA Institute.

V. Other Business

VI. Adjournment

*\* Act 447 – Adds Geometry to TOPS Tech Core Curriculum (Begins with 2027 High School Graduates); Act 463 – Implements Geaux Teach Program; Act 681 – Implements Proclamation 183 JBE 2021 (Hurricane Ida Exceptions); Act 502 – Adds two Computer Science courses as an alternative to Foreign Language courses to the TOPS Opportunity, Performance, and Honors core curriculum (Begins with 2027 High School Graduates)*

Committee Members: Randy L. Ewing, Chair; Charles R. McDonald, Vice Chair; Stephanie A. Finley, Darren G. Mire, Wilbert D. Pryor, Felix R. Weill, Catarena M. Lobré (*student member*).

## Agenda Item III.A.

### Consent Agenda: Initial Rulemaking

Rulemaking to amend Sections 509, 703, 705, 803, 805, and 2103 and to add Chapter 24 of the Scholarship and Grant Program rules to implement the provisions of Act 447, Act 463, Act 681, and Act 502 of the 2022 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature.

#### **Background:**

This rulemaking implements the provisions of House Bill 207, House Bill 346, Senate Bill 178, and Senate Bill 191 of the 2022 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, as follows:

- Act 447
  - Section 803: Adds Geometry as a required core curriculum course for students completing the TOPS Tech core curriculum beginning with 2027 high school graduates.
- Act 463
  - Adds Chapter 24 to the Administrative Rules to implement the Geaux Teach Program, a new program to provide financial assistance to students pursuing a teaching degree at Louisiana's colleges and universities.
- Act 681
  - Implements Proclamation 183 JBE 2021
  - Section 509: Provides an ACT deadline of December 31, 2021, for 2021 high school graduates if the student provides documentation that he was registered for an ACT exam that was canceled due to Hurricane Ida. Allows for exceptions to this deadline if the student was registered for a test that was cancelled due to Hurricane Ida and the student was unable to schedule a test prior to the deadline due to circumstances beyond his control.
  - Sections 703 and 803 provide exceptions to the initial eligibility requirements for TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards and TOPS Tech Awards, respectively:
    - Defines displaced student as one who was living in or attending a public or nonpublic high school or who was attending a home study program and living in Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Plaquemines, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, Tangipahoa, or Terrebonne Parish on August 27, 2021;
    - Displaced student shall not have to meet the core curriculum requirement if certified by the principal that the student was unable to meet the requirement because the course/courses were not available at the school attended;
    - Displaced student who graduates from an out of state high school shall not be required to have a higher ACT score; and
    - Provides an exception to the 2-year residency requirement.
  - Sections 705 and 805 provide exceptions to the continuing eligibility requirements for students whose home of record was located in or who attended school in Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Plaquemines, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, Tangipahoa, or Terrebonne Parish on August 27, 2021.
    - Steady academic progress
    - Continuation GPA
    - Extends period of suspension on a one for one basis for each semester a student is unable to enroll/complete due to the effects of Hurricane Ida.
  - Section 2103: Provides that TOPS-eligible students who were unable to enroll for the first-time as a full-time student by the applicable deadline, to enroll as full-time students, to maintain continuous enrollment in school, or to earn 24 hours during the 2021-2022 academic year (TOPS) may submit a request for exception in accordance with the normal exception procedures.

- Act 502
  - Section 703: Provides that a student may choose to complete two computer science courses rather than two foreign language courses to complete the TOPS Opportunity, Performance, and Honors core curriculum beginning with 2027 high school graduates

**LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation**

**The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends that the Board of Regents authorize the Executive Director of LOSFA to publish a Notice of Intent to make these rules permanent.**

## **Agenda Item III.B.**

### **Consent Agenda: TOPS Exceptions**

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

#### **Background:**

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

Twelve requests for exceptions were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on July 26, 2022. The students have presented facts and circumstances that the students believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

#### **LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation**

**The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends approval of TOPS requests for exception as presented.**

### **Agenda Item III.C.**

#### **Consent Agenda: TOPS Home Study Exceptions**

Requests for exception to the TOPS statutory provision that requires a student to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade.

The TOPS statute requires that a student begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth-grade year. Act 95 of the 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature implemented a provision which allows the administering agency to grant exceptions to this requirement when a student provides documentation that the transfer to a home study program later than the statutorily provided time frame was beyond the student's control.

Two requests for an exception to the deadline to begin a home study program were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on July 26, 2022. The students have presented facts and documentation that the students believe justify the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

#### **LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation**

**The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends approval of the requests for exception to the deadline to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade year.**

## **Agenda Item IV.**

### **Receive the Cost of College Report by VELA Institute**

Vela Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing access to evaluation, analytics and data tracking to education partners to improve student and community outcomes. Established in 2017, Vela Institute accomplishes its mission through applied research, data analytics, and the use of evidence-based practices. In Spring 2022, LOSFA contracted with the VELA Institute to help LOSFA and policymakers understand student perceptions of the value of postsecondary education and their ability to pay for it, Vela Institute developed a series of focus groups and surveys to assess perceptions of the value of college, accessibility of financial aid, and enrolling in postsecondary education.

### **LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation**

**The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends that the Board of Regents receive the Cost of College Report by VELA Institute.**



# The Cost of College: Perceptions of Financial Aid and College Affordability

First Look June 2022: Qualitative Analysis for Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance



## The Challenge

Given the public health and economic challenges of the past two years, as a result of COVID-19, students are enrolling in postsecondary education at reduced rates<sup>1</sup> and not taking full advantage of financial aid.

According to a report published by the National College Attainment Network<sup>2</sup> “the high school class of 2021 left an estimated \$3.75 billion in Pell Grants on the table by not completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).” Given these declines, the importance of having a post-secondary credential, and the impact that COVID-19 has had on underrepresented students<sup>3</sup>, it is critical to gather insights from a wide range of stakeholders to get their perspectives regarding the challenges and barriers of accessing financial aid and enrolling in postsecondary education.

## Understanding Perceptions

To help Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) and policymakers understand student perceptions of the value of postsecondary education and their ability to pay for it, Vela Institute developed a series of focus groups and surveys to assess perceptions of the value of college, accessibility of financial aid, and enrolling in postsecondary education.

### Five distinct groups participated in either a focus group or a survey in Spring 2022

1. 12th Graders
2. High School Counselors
3. Parents
4. Postsecondary Students That Accepted the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) Awards
5. Postsecondary Students That Did Not Accept TOPS Awards

## Analysis and Results

The data was collected from a total of 563 respondents. Thematic analysis of the focus group data and descriptive analytics of the survey data provided insight into the perceptions and knowledge high school students, postsecondary students, parents, and counselors have of the steps required to navigate the process of applying to, paying for, and enrolling in postsecondary education.

<sup>1</sup>Nadworny, E. (January, 2022). *More Than One Million Fewer Students are in College: Here's How That Impacts the Economy*. NPR

<sup>2</sup>AlQaisi, R., Breen, S., & DeBaun, B. (January, 2022). *\$3.75 Billion in Pell Grants Goes Unclaimed for High School Class of 2021*. NCAN

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. (June, 2021). *Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students* U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

## Respondents Expressed



**VALUE:** Families need college affordability and financial aid information from trusted sources to understand the value of college as an investment and the resources and aid available.

- **Almost 85% of both high school and postsecondary students aspire to attend college.** Most students are getting information from their family, yet almost half of parents don't believe college is an investment.
- **81.2% of all students reported that their family helped them** make the decision about what to do after high school, which included whether or not to attend college.
- **44.4% of parents do not believe that college is an investment in their child's future** with 91.7% of those parents not being able to accurately identify the increased lifetime earnings a college degree affords.
- **Counselors identified providing in-depth and accurate information to parents/families** as they assist their students through the college-going process as the most important outreach need.



**AFFORDABILITY:** Students and families believe they cannot afford the cost of college and need guidance to help them access financial aid to make it possible to afford college.

- **47.9% of high school seniors report they will struggle to afford college** and 44.4% of parents agree that even if their child gets into college, they will struggle to afford it.
- **42.5% of all students report difficulty with the FAFSA.** Some respondents are not aware of the FAFSA or that it is a high school graduation requirement.
- **Counselors find that students underestimate the cost of college.**
- **59.3% of postsecondary students report that even with some financial aid, they continue to struggle to pay for college.**



**TIMELINE:** Students and families need scholarship and financial aid information earlier in the college-going process to make informed decisions about college attendance.

- **Counselors report that more scholarship information, cost of college, and admissions requirements are needed** as resources to share with students and parents as early as possible.
- **87.5% of all students' report cost as a factor when deciding where to go to college.**
- **Students report the primary reason for declining a TOPS award is to attend college out of state** with the secondary reason being to work to help support family.



## Recommendations

Based on these findings and evidence-based practices found in literature review, policymakers in Louisiana may consider the following interventions to support students as they go through the college-going process and pay for college. Providing this support will help Louisiana students earn a post-secondary credential, be better prepared to enter the workforce, and make stronger contributions to the Louisiana economy.



### VALUE:

*Invest in school- and community-based support personnel and parent-led counseling/outreach*

This will help students and their families understand the value of a college degree and to navigate the complicated college-going and financial aid processes.<sup>4</sup>



### AFFORDABILITY:

*Provide direct, targeted outreach and mailings about college affordability*

Targeted outreach with families, early and throughout college, by using ACT/GPA data to explain TOPS and other scholarship/grant-based aid eligibility, and to educate on the true cost of college, how scholarships work, and to reduce the burden of taking out student loans.

Research showing there is a positive relationship between perceptions of affordability and college completion support the efficacy of this intervention.<sup>5,6</sup>



### TIMELINE:

*Communicate state financial aid estimates before May 1st*

This will help students and families understand the true cost of college before typical college decisions are required.

Given that most students who choose to attend an out-of-state college had made their decision before May 1st and attending out-of-state college was the top reason for declining a TOPS award, informing students earlier could help keep students enrolling in-state.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Dynarski, S., Nurshatayeva, A., Page, L. C., & Scott-Clayton, J. (2022). *Addressing Non-Financial Barriers to College Access and Success: Evidence and Policy Implications*, Economics of Education Review, working paper 30054.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *College Affordability Views and College Enrollment*.

<sup>6</sup>Lindsay C. Page & Judith Scott-Clayton. (2016). *Improving College Access in the United States: Barriers and Policy Responses*. Economics of Education Review, vol 51, pages 4-22.

<sup>7</sup>Caroline M. Hoxby & Sarah Turner. (May, 2015). *What High-Achieving Low-Income Students Know about College*. American Economic Review, American Economic Association, vol. 105(5), pages 514-17