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BOARD OF REGENTS
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AGENDA
STATEWIDE PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 14, 2022
1:15 p.m.

Claiborne Building, 1st Floor
Thomas Jefferson Rooms A&B 1-136
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Rulemaking –Rulemaking to amend Section 2103 of the Scholarship and Grant Program rules to add a mental health sub-type to the temporary disability exceptions available to students when they cannot meet certain TOPS continuation requirements.
- B. TOPS Exceptions – TOPS 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 - TOPS provision that requires a student to begin a home study program no later than the conclusion of the tenth grade.

IV. Other Business

V. Adjournment

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*).
Staff: Carrie Robison, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs

Agenda Item III.A.

Consent Agenda: Rulemaking to add Mental Health Sub-Type to the Temporary Disability Exceptions

Rulemaking to amend Section 2103 of the Scholarship and Grant Program rules to add a mental health sub-type to the temporary disability exceptions available to students when they cannot meet certain TOPS continuation requirements.

Background:

In addition to the exceptional circumstances exceptions that are presented to the Board of Regents, there are currently fourteen objective circumstances for which a student may receive an exception to the requirements to enroll full time, to maintain continuous enrollment, and to earn 24 hours each academic year. These objective circumstances range from physical rehabilitation to COVID-19, and all of these exception types have specific documentation requirements that must be met to be approved.

One of these objective circumstances is temporary disability, which is currently broken into two categories: temporary disability – self and temporary disability – care of immediate family member. The documentation required to be granted an exception based on temporary disability includes a letter from a qualified health care provider stating that there is a disability and that it affected a student’s ability to attend school or to earn the required annual hours. In the case of a mental health issue, a student is able to provide a letter from a clergyman in lieu of providing a letter from a qualified health care provider.

Over the past several months, LOSFA staff has seen a notable increase in the number of temporary disability exceptions that are related to mental health issues affecting students. At this time, the only method by which staff follows this trend is by counting the number of mental health exceptions that are processed in each TOPS objective circumstances meeting. In order to more efficiently follow this trend, staff proposes to add a sub-type to the temporary disability exception available to students who are unable to meet the full-time enrollment, continuous enrollment, and annual earned hours requirements for TOPS. This addition does not add a different type of exception; it simply allows for a more efficient manner of tracking the number of mental health-related exceptions that are received and/or granted.

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 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.

Six requests for exception were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on November 3, 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 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 November 3, 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.