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Agenda

Statewide Programs

Wednesday, August 20, 2025
11:25 AM

Claiborne Building, 1st Floor ▪ Iowa Room 1–153
1201 Third St. ▪ Baton Rouge, LA 70802

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Rulemaking - Geaux Teach Program
Rulemaking to Implement Act 59 of the 2025 Regular
Session of the Louisiana Legislature
- B. Approval of Rulemaking - M.J. Foster Promise Program
Rulemaking to Implement Act 152 of the 2025 Regular
Session of the Louisiana Legislature
- C. Approval of Rulemaking – TOPS, TOPS Tech, and TOPS
Tech Early Start Rulemaking to Implement Acts 152, 347,
268, and 359 of the 2025 Regular Session of the Louisiana
Legislature and to add core courses as equivalents in the
TOPS core curriculum
- D. TOPS Home Study Exceptions – TOPS statutory provision
that requires a student to begin a home study program no later
than the conclusion of the tenth-grade year
- E. TOPS and M.J. Foster Exceptions – TOPS regulatory
provisions that require students to remain continuously
enrolled and to earn the annual credit hours required during
the academic year and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a
student maintain continuous enrollment in school

IV. Other Business

V. Adjournment

Act 59 – Provides Awards for the Geaux Teach Program be applied before all other state or institutional financial aid instead of after.

Act 152 – Provides that the M.J. Foster Advisory Council determine eligible programs of study for M.J. Foster Promise, TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start.

Act 347 – Creates the TOPS Excellence Award and provides that students may qualify based on an equivalent concordant value to the ACT on the Classic Learning Test (CLT).

Act 268 – Pushes back implementation of the requirement that all students must complete at least one Carnegie unit in Computer Science to qualify for TOPS to the graduates of 2030–2031. (Previously students graduating in 2028–2029)

Act 359 – Eliminates the requirement that home study students achieve a higher score on the ACT than students who attend a public or approved non-public high school in Louisiana.

Committee Members: Wilbert D. Pryor, Chair; Samer Shamieh, Vice Chair; Phillip May Jr.; Christy Oliver Reeves; Terri P. Sterling; Devesh Sarda (Student Member)

Staff: Carrie Robison, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs

AGENDA ITEM - III.A

Consent Agenda: Approval of Rulemaking - Geaux Teach Program

Rulemaking to Implement Act 59 of the 2025 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature

BACKGROUND

The Geaux Teach Program was first implemented by the Legislature in 2022 as a last dollar program that could only be used to pay tuition, fees, and textbooks and instructional materials for undergraduate students and students enrolled in approved alternative teacher certification programs. Due to the restrictions on what the award could be used to pay, the funding has not been fully used and not as many students as expected were receiving the scholarship.

To increase the number of students receiving the award and to maximize the funding appropriated, Act 59 provides that Geaux Teach Program funds will now be considered a restricted first-dollar program. It will be applied to awarded students' tuition, fees, textbooks, and instructional materials prior to the application of any other state or institutional aid. This amendment will ensure that students receive the maximum benefit of the Geaux Teach Program as well as any other scholarships, including TOPS, and need-based aid for which they are eligible.

LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation

The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends that the Louisiana 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: Approval of Rulemaking – M.J. Foster Promise Program

Rulemaking to Implement Act 152 of the 2025 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature

BACKGROUND

Act 152 provides additional responsibilities with respect to the M.J. Foster Advisory Council. This Council was created as part of the original M.J. Foster Promise Program, Louisiana's adult financial aid program, when it was created in 2021 to identify programs in which an eligible student may enroll to receive an M.J. Foster Promise award.

Act 152 adds to those responsibilities and provides that in addition to selecting eligible programs for the M.J. Foster Promise Program, the Council will identify such programs for TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start. It requires that the Council consider the eligible programs for M.J. Foster Promise Program when identifying eligible programs for TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start, but it does not require that the eligible programs of study be precisely aligned.

LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation

The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends that the Louisiana Board of Regents authorize the Executive Director of LOSFA to publish a notice of intent to make these rules permanent.

AGENDA ITEM - III.C

Consent Agenda: Approval of Rulemaking – TOPS, TOPS Tech, and TOPS Tech Early Start and to add course equivalents in the TOPS Core Curriculum

Rulemaking to Implement Acts 152, 347, 268, and 359 of the 2025 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature and to add core courses as equivalents in the TOPS core curriculum

Act 152 provides that the M.J. Foster Advisory Council shall determine eligible programs of study for TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start in addition to those for M.J. Foster Promise. It requires that the Council consider the eligible programs for M.J. Foster Promise Program when identifying eligible programs for TOPS Tech and TOPS Tech Early Start, but it does not require that the eligible programs of study be precisely aligned.

Act 347 creates the TOPS Excellence Award and provides that students may qualify based on an equivalent concordant value to the ACT on the Classic Learning Test. To qualify for a TOPS Excellence Award, a student must have achieved at least a 31 on the ACT and a minimum 3.50 GPA on the TOPS core curriculum. The award amount for an Excellence Award at a public college or university is the actual tuition and fees charged by the institution as reported in the mandatory annual tuition and fee survey reported to the Board of Regents or \$12,000, whichever is less. The award amount at institutions that are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities is the actual tuition and fees charged by the institution or \$8,500, whichever is less.

Act 359 eliminates the requirement that home study students achieve a higher score on the ACT than students who attend a public or approved non-public high school in Louisiana.

Act 356 provides that all high schools must use a 10-point grading scale when reporting grades to the Student Transcript System (STS) for the purpose of determining a student's eligibility for a TOPS Award. This requirement went into effect for public schools during the 2024–2025 academic year, but it was not required of nonpublic schools. Note that for 2024–2025 graduates of any public or nonpublic school, the grades reported on a 10-point scale will only be courses taken during the 2024–2025 academic year to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum. Also note that this bill does not require rulemaking. Information is provided herein because it will likely affect the number of students determined eligible for TOPS due to the broader grading scale on which letter grades will be assigned for purposes of reporting to STS. This information will also be provided to our customers in presentations and in outreach activities.

During the 2024 Regular Session, Act 211 provided that all students must complete at least one Carnegie unit in Computer Science to qualify for TOPS beginning with graduates of 2028–2029. Act 268 pushes back implementation of this requirement to the graduates of 2030–2031.

In addition to implementing the 2025 Acts of the Legislature, this rulemaking adds core equivalents for TOPS. At its April 2025 meeting, the Board of Regents approved Creative Writing as an equivalent to Art for purposes of TOPS. This rulemaking also implements IB Psychology as an equivalent to Social Studies

and it adds Tagalog I-IV, Turkish I-IV, Urdu I-IV, and West Germanic Languages (Dutch) I-IV in anticipation of approval by the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education at the joint meeting of these boards on August 20, 2025.

LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation

The LOSFA Advisory Board recommends that the Louisiana Board of Regents authorize the Executive Director of LOSFA to publish a notice of intent to make these rules permanent.

AGENDA ITEM - III.D

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 year

BACKGROUND

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 timeframe was beyond the student's control.

One request for exception to the deadline to begin a home study program was reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on July 23, 2025. The student has presented facts and documentation that the student believes justifies the granting of an exception as an exceptional circumstance.

LOSFA Advisory Board Recommendation

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

AGENDA ITEM - III.E

Consent Agenda: TOPS and M.J. Foster Promise Program 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 and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school

BACKGROUND

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

Section 2207.A.5 of the M.J. Foster administrative rules provide that students must maintain continuous enrollment, unless granted an exception for cause in accordance with §2103 of the Scholarship and Grant administrative rules. The same exceptions that apply for TOPS students apply to all programs administered by LOSFA, including M.J. Foster.

Twenty-three requests for exception to the TOPS requirements were reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on July 23, 2025. One request for exception to the M.J. Foster requirement was reviewed and approved by the LOSFA Advisory Board at its meeting on July 23, 2025. 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 the 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 and to the M.J. Foster requirement that a student maintain continuous enrollment in school.