

Health Works Commission

Thursday, June 12, 2025

1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

Board of Regents Conference Room, Suite 6-200
6th Floor of the Claiborne Building
1201 N. 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Demetrius Porche called the Health Works Commission meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Mellyn Baker welcomed the Chair of the Board of Regents, Misti Cordell. Ms.

Melanie Sandahl called the roll and a quorum was established.

Members Present	Affiliation
Brandon Bomaster (designee)	Governor's Office
Christina Costanza	Louisiana State Board of Practical Nurse Examiners
Sharon Coulter (designee)	Southern University System
Susannah Craig	Louisiana Board of Regents
Sharon Dunn	LSU Health Sciences Center - Shreveport
Jeannine O'Rourke	University of Louisiana System
Tina Holland	Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges & Universities
Karen Lyon	Louisiana State Board of Nursing
Jessica Lemoine (designee)	Louisiana Community & Technical College System
Demetrius Porche, Chair	LSU Health Sciences Center- New Orleans
Paul Salles	Louisiana Hospital Association
Emily DiPalma	Louisiana Workforce Commission
Lesley Tilley	Louisiana Nurses Association
Wes Hataway	Louisiana Nursing Home Association
Members Not Present	Affiliation
Kathy Baldridge	Louisiana Association of Nurse Practitioners
Ahnyel Burkes	Nursing Supply & Demand Council
Drew Maranto	Department of Health
Ragan Leblanc	Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians
Rep. Dustin Miller	House Committee on Health & Welfare
Jim Carlson	Senate Committee on Health & Welfare
Ad-Hoc Member Absent	Affiliation
Daryl Lofaso	Simulation Medical Training & Education Council

APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 19, 2025 MINUTES

Dr. Porche asked for a motion to approve the March 19, 2025 minutes. On motion of Dr. Sharon Dunn, seconded by Dr. Tina Holland, the minutes were approved.

REGIONAL HEALTHCARE INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM UPDATES (H.E.R.O. FUND)

Dr. Porche introduced Ms. Mellyn Baker, Associate Commissioner for Student Success and Strategic Initiatives from the Board of Regents. Ms. Baker provided an update to the Regional Healthcare Innovation Partnership Program, supported via the H.E.R.O. Fund. Ms. Baker acknowledged recent changes due to Act 379 of the 2025 Regular Legislative Session, but highlighted the status update of each participating institution, noting a one-page summary of each institution is included in today's meeting materials. Ms. Baker indicated that some institutions have already completed their initiatives, with all expected to be finished by June 2026. She stated that these programs have directly impacted several hundred students and produced innovative outcomes, including new programs and regional workforce development. Examples of these outcomes include ensuring medical assistant training is available in underserved areas. Ms. Baker praised the leadership and continued support of staff and encouraged the Commission to review the materials provided to recognize the innovative work and student success being achieved. She noted that, moving forward, all monies related to the H.E.R.O. Fund will be administered by the Department of Health. Ms. Baker added that two of the programs will be spotlighted in more depth during the meeting.

Ms. Baker introduced Dr. Amy Hall, Dean of the School of Nursing at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (FMLHS). Dr. Hall presented the Wolves on the RISE program, created to support accelerated nursing students, especially BIPOC students, through

grants and partnerships with Our Lady of the Lake, FMLHS, and Hope Ministries. The program aimed to double enrollment, improve on-time completion, and ensure regional employment for graduates. She explained that key elements included intrusive advising, nurse mentorship, and financial aid tied to career and life coaching. These supports raised completion rates from 50% to 80–85% and boosted BIPOC representation to 80%. When support ended, completion rates fell, highlighting the program’s importance. Dr. Hall emphasized its success and the need for continued funding.

Dr. Porche introduced Dr. Edward Mahoney, Program Director of Physical Therapy, LSU Health Sciences Center - Shreveport. Dr. Mahoney detailed a new initiative to expand access to Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) education in Louisiana, especially in underserved Region 4, where no DPT program currently exists. He added that with support from grants and a partnership with Ochsner Lafayette General Medical Center, the team has secured a facility, which is expected to open in January 2026. The program will use a hybrid model with 45% online courses and periodic in-person labs, allowing students to stay close to home and reduce financial barriers. Dr. Mahoney stated that the goals include addressing the projected PT shortage by 2035, increasing healthcare access in underserved areas, and training students to return to their communities to practice. He confirmed that the program has received necessary approvals and plans to launch its first 24-student cohort in May 2026. The most recent \$425,000 in funding will support staffing, materials, and contributions from OLG clinicians. Dr. Mahoney concluded by noting that community and professional support has been strong, and the program aims to be a sustainable, innovative solution to address workforce and access gaps.

Ms. Baker emphasized the value of creative partnerships and in-kind contributions, such as using restaurants or churches as classrooms to expand healthcare education access in

underserved areas. She noted that such community support was a key component of the original program applications.

Dr. Porche thanked Dr. Hall and Dr. Mahoney for their presentations.

REPORT ON HEALTHCARE CAPITATION APPLICATIONS

Dr. Porche asked Ms. Baker to discuss the report on the healthcare capitation program.

Ms. Baker reminded the Commission of the origins of this program. Receiving funding again in 2019, the program's primary focus has been on nursing, though it was expanded in 2023 to include 11 allied health fields. Although the legislative session has not ended, in anticipation of funding availability in May 2025 Board of Regents staff surveyed institutions to gauge interest in participating in the program and received 57 applications from 33 institutions. Only \$3 million is available; therefore, Board staff recommend prioritizing high-demand nursing programs, including ASN, BSN, and practical nursing, while capping awards at 16 students per program. She reported that proposed funding allocations include \$2.8 million for nurse capitation, \$100,000 for faculty stipends, \$50,000 for certified nurse aide testing for LCTCS, and \$29,000 for the Simulation Council. Ms. Baker invited feedback, stressing the importance of aligning funding with workforce needs.

Ms. Cordell offered a suggestion for handling future applications to this program. She recommended compiling a summary of all 57 capitation program applications, including those not funded, to show unmet demand and support future funding requests. She noted that this data could be useful for influencing policymakers as budget planning begins in November. Ms. Baker confirmed that priority funding will go to ASN, BSN, and practical nursing programs, with awards covering up to 16 students per institution based on program capacity.

Dr. Porche asked for a motion to endorse the FY 26 State General Fund budget

scenario recommendation as presented, allowing staff to make any administrative changes. On motion of Dr. Dunn, seconded by Dr. Lyon, the motion passed without opposition.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Dr. Porche introduced Dr. Michelle Demeulenaere from the Board of Regents to provide an update on legislation. Dr. Demeulenaere reported that at the upcoming October meeting, the Health Works Commission will expand to incorporate the Nursing Supply and Demand Council and the Simulation Council as committees under the HWC, as a result of Act 469 of the 2025 Legislative Session. The Board of Regents is currently working on how to integrate these committees effectively. Additionally, three new members will join the Simulation Medical Training Committee: Xavier University School of Medicine, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, and an additional appointee from the LSU Board of Supervisors. It was also announced that this meeting would be the final one for the current Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges & Universities (LAICU) representative, Dr. Tina Holland, who expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve and learn from colleagues. Dr. Holland stated that her successor is expected to be appointed by next month, with Dr. Brian Rash serving as the interim designee in the meantime. Members expressed appreciation for the departing representative's contributions and unique perspective, particularly from the private sector, and extended best wishes for the future.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Porche asked if there were any public comments. Hearing none, he continued.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Dr. Holland, seconded by Dr. Dunn, the meeting was adjourned.

ADDITIONAL GUESTS

Edward Mahoney - LSU Health Shreveport
Diana Merendino - LSU Health Shreveport
Brian Rash - Fran U
Amy Hall - Fran U
Cynthia Bienemy

STAFF

Mellynn Baker
Dr. Michelle Demeulenaere
Melanie Sandahl
Christina Cheek