

HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 30, 2025 ▪ 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Governor's Press Room, State Capitol, 4th Floor
900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Members Present	Affiliation
<i>Dr. Cade Brumley, Chair</i>	Superintendent, Louisiana State Department of Education
John Alvendia	CEO, Starr Academy
Misti Cordell	Chair of the Board of Regents
Angelique Freel	Executive Counsel, Office of the Governor
Tim Hardy	Chair of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Dr. Kim Hunter Reed	Commissioner of Higher Education
Mark Romero	Chair of the Board of Supervisors of the University of Louisiana System
Dr. Wade Rousse	President of McNeese State University
Rep. Emily Chenevert (proxy)	House of Representatives Education Committee
Scott Ballard	Chair of the Board of Supervisors of the Louisiana State University System
Taylor Barras	Commissioner of Administration
Sen. Rick Edmonds	Chair of the Senate Education Committee
Members Not Present	Affiliation
Tony Clayton	Chair of the Board of Supervisors of the Southern University System

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Dr. Cade Brumley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. on Thursday, September 30, 2025. The roll was taken and quorum was established.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Brumley opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and expressing his gratitude for their participation and dedication to the task force's mission. He shared that the primary focus of today's meeting would be a presentation from the Commission for Public Higher Education (CPHE).

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES (AUGUST 2025)

Dr. Brumley asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2025, meeting.

On motion Mr. John Ballard, seconded by Mr. Mark Romero, with no comment or opposition, the task force approved the minutes of the August 28, 2025, meeting.

PRESENTATION BY THE COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. Brumley invited representatives from CPHE – Daniel Harrison, Thomas McBryer, and Cameron Howe – to present.

Mr. Harrison opened the presentation by outlining CPHE's founding philosophy, emphasizing that the organization was deliberately established to accredit public institutions rather than targeting specific geographic regions like traditional accreditors. He explained that CPHE aims to create a peer review system among public institutions with shared missions, governance models, and accountability structures. This targeted approach, he noted, will help to streamline processes and minimize redundant oversight, since public universities are already subject to state-level monitoring by executive agencies, auditors, and legislatures. He further highlighted that CPHE's core mission centers on student success, ensuring that accreditation prioritizes outcomes over bureaucratic procedures.

Mr. Harrison presented CPHE's proposed timeline:

- **Fall 2025:** Adoption of the initial set of approximately 20–25 accreditation standards.
- **Spring 2026:** Launch of the institutional application process and commencement of site visits for the first accreditation cohort.
- **Summer/Fall 2026:** Anticipated accreditation of the first group of institutions.
- **2028:** Expected recognition by the U.S. Department of Education.

Mr. Howe provided an update on CPHE's progress in developing its draft accreditation standards. CPHE initially proposed 24 standards, which, following a public comment period, have been refined to 21. Over 117 public submissions were received, totaling more than 500 pages of feedback from institutions, faculty, staff, associations of student government, and national organizations, including existing accreditors, student advocacy groups, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. In addition, CPHE staff held eight meetings with those stakeholder groups to solicit feedback.

Mr. Howe explained that draft standards are designed to align with the ten core areas mandated by the Higher Education Act, while remaining streamlined and adaptable. CPHE welcomes input and participation from Louisiana institutions and will notify stakeholders when opportunities for engagement arise. He also indicated that the draft standards aim to reduce redundancy, as CPHE intends to replace more than 190 standards commonly used by regional accreditors with a focused set emphasizing student outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Each standard will include "evidentiary guidance"—definitions, examples, and suggested forms of documentation—allowing for flexibility across institutions using varying state data systems. He added that the overarching goal is to ensure that accreditation remains rigorous without being overly burdensome, ultimately lowering institutional workload and costs.

Dr. Harrison shared that CPHE initially anticipated receiving 6–8 applications for its first cohort, but instead received ten, indicating strong interest from institutions. The first cohort represents a diverse range of institutions, with student populations ranging from 1,500 to over 30,000. It includes associate's- and bachelor's-degree-granting institutions, as well as R1 and R2 research universities. CPHE plans to possibly include community colleges in the future.

Dr. Harrison informed the task force that CPHE received an initial \$4 million in funding from the State of Florida, provided through the State University System of Florida Foundation with support from Governor DeSantis. CPHE receives these funds in phases, tied to the achievement of specific performance milestones. Additional in-kind support—primarily through dedicated staff time—is being contributed by the University of North Carolina and South Carolina higher education systems. He indicated that future funding would come from contributions of the six founding systems, along with potential grants from private foundations. He added that institutions will not be charged membership or application fees until CPHE obtains federal recognition. After recognition, CPHE will adopt a membership-based fee structure, scaled by institutional enrollment and designed to remain more affordable than current regional accreditors.

Dr. Harrison explained CPHE's governance, indicating that CPHE is established as a nonprofit corporation in Florida, with the Florida Board of Governors serving as its sole member. Governance of day-to-day operations has been delegated to a seven-member Board of Directors, which includes five chief academic officers from the founding systems, one public representative, and the vice chair from the University of South Carolina. Dr. Mark Becker, the immediate past president of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), currently serves as the public representative. As CPHE's membership expands, the Board will

grow to include representatives from additional states, promoting broader engagement and increased transparency.

Dr. Brumley inquired as to how CPHE plans to accomplish reductions in bureaucracy. Mr. Harrison and Mr. Howe emphasized that CPHE plans to simplify substantive change processes by aligning existing state-level approval systems. Additionally, CPHE is focused on reducing duplicative reporting requirements to streamline accreditation while remaining fully compliant with federal regulations. Accreditation will follow a ten-year review cycle, with biennial data reviews to allow for continuous improvement without creating unnecessary administrative burdens.

Dr. Kim Hunter Reed asked how CPHE would balance quality assurance and consumer protection with its goal of increased flexibility. Dr. Howe explained that institutions will rely on standardized national data sources, such as IPEDS, applied within adaptable frameworks tailored to individual state contexts.

Senator Rick Edmonds raised a question about how CPHE plans to maintain a reputation and level of credibility comparable to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Dr. Harrison emphasized that CPHE's strong academic rigor and focus on public accountability, along with the high quality of its participating institutions, will ensure continued credibility and high standards.

Dr. Brumley thanked the CPHE team for their presentation. A motion to receive CPHE's report was made by Mr. Scott Ballard and seconded by Dr. Reed. Without any public comment or opposition, the report was accepted by the task force.

OVERVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Dr. Brumley shared that the task force's next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 23, 2025, at 12:00 PM, indicating to members that he will distribute supplemental reading materials before the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Brumley requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. On motion of Mr. Ballard, seconded by Senator Edmonds, the meeting was adjourned.