

## MINUTES

### BOARD OF REGENTS

September 24, 2025

The Board of Regents met at 1:19 p.m. on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, in the Louisiana Purchase Room 1–100, Claiborne Building, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Chair Misti Cordell called the meeting to order.

#### ROLL CALL

Ms. Doreen Brasseaux called the roll, and a quorum was established.

#### Present for the meeting were:

Kim Hunter Reed, Commissioner  
Misti Cordell, Chair  
Terrie Sterling, Vice Chair  
Phillip May, Secretary  
David Aubrey  
Blake David  
Stephanie Finley  
Ted Glaser III  
Dallas Hixson  
Wilbert Pryor  
Christy Oliver Reeves  
Devesh Sarda, Student Member  
K. Samer Shamieh  
Judy Williams-Brown

#### Mgt. Board representatives present were:

LSU System Representative, Remy Voisin Starns  
UL System Representative, John Noble, Jr.  
Southern System Representative, Donald Ray Henry

#### Mgt. Board representative not present was:

LCTCS Representative

#### Absent from the meeting were:

Christian Creed  
Darren Mire  
Collis Temple III

#### Appendix A

Guest List

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Cordell asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

#### APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 20, 2025 MEETING

**On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Hixson, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2025 meeting in globo.**

## MASTER PLAN UPDATE – MEAUXMENTUM MOMENT

Chair Cordell introduced Dr. Tristan Denley, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Innovation, to review the Master Plan and report on progress over the last six years toward meeting its 2030 goal. She noted the significant strides being made to equip all Louisiana populations with credentials aligned to workforce needs. Each Board members received a hard copy of the report, which was also posted on the Board's website.

Dr. Denley noted that the Board enacted the Master Plan, entitled *Louisiana Prospers*, in 2019. The plan links the prosperity of the state to expanded educational attainment among its citizens. Dr. Denley, along with Commissioner Reed, thanked the thousands across the state who are contributing to the success of the plan.

The initial plan presented a three-part focus: 1) expand access to and success in completing postsecondary education; 2) eliminate persistent and damaging gaps in access and success; and 3) significantly increase the education level for adults. He noted that today's student is different from students of the past; students now are not only high school graduates but also veterans, first-generation students, incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals, foster youth, working parents, and adults in rural areas. At this point Dr. Denley thanked Chris Yandle for working diligently to design the report.

Dr. Denley noted the report identified Louisiana's 2025 attainment rate – the number of working-age adults with a postsecondary credential – as 52.5%, an all-time high for Louisiana. This puts the state on track to meet or exceed the Master Plan's 2030 goal of 60%. In many instances, earning a credential can change the trajectory of an entire family. Since 2019, more than 350,000 adults in Louisiana have earned high-value credentials. At that pace, on Louisiana will produce 85,000 new credential holders annually; as of today, that number is 80,000. A broad, diverse collection of institutions across the state contributes to this success.

Dr. Denley went on to note that, on average, each of the 80,000 annual credential earners will earn across the span of their working life a \$1M more than had they stopped at a high school diploma, totaling approximately \$82B more for the entire group. This will have a transformative effect on these individuals, their families, their communities, and the state, reflecting that state funds for higher education are more an investment than a cost.

This investment enables Louisiana to meet its workforce needs. Filling Louisiana's workforce talent pipeline is a major reward of the Master Plan. This is being accomplished through a number of factors including having a record-high 43,000 high school students participating in dual enrollment during 2024–2025 and employing a deliberate strategy to engage adults through programs like M.J. Foster Promise, which has seen over 4,000 enrollees obtain credentials since 2022. Data show that, on average, the median annual salary of M.J. Foster Promise graduates has increased by \$36,000, lifting

many out of poverty.

Dr. Denley mentioned highly effective work to ensure success for students in their early college studies through math and English corequisite courses, which are intended to support students who now have earned on average 60% more college credits at the end of their first year than students who in previous years did not receive such support.

In concluding his presentation, Dr. Denley shared quotes from Secretary Susan Bourgeois, Louisiana Economic Development, Secretary Susie Schowen, Louisiana Workforce Commission, and Dr. Nancy Zimpher, President of National Association of Higher Education Systems, about the success and importance of *Louisiana Prospers*.

Regent David noted a report about the Master Plan improving Louisiana's credit rating. Dr. Denley affirmed that the impact of the state's economy is mentioned in the report. He observed that this is transformative across the state. He added that the 52.5% credential attainment from Lumina ranks Louisiana 35<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states, but that there is still much more work to be done. Regent Hixson was impressed that an initiative could have an impact on Moody's credit rating. Dr. Reed mentioned that she would send out a link to the full report about the credit rating change. Chair Cordell thanked Dr. Denley and recapped the presentation.

#### CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Chair Cordell made the following comments:

- She recognized Regent Devesh Sarda, student member, who gave his report.
  - Regent Sarda thanked Commissioner Reed for hosting the recent summit on hazing. He mentioned that he is going through hazing prevention training and knows the importance of this sharp focus on hazing prevention issues.
  - He informed the Board that this year's first meeting of the Council of Student Body Presidents will be hosted in Baton Rouge on October 3–4. The theme for this meeting will be AI in higher education. He will report on students' perspectives on this topic during the October Board meeting.
- She presented highlights of the Board's participation in Louisiana's Innovative Pathways on Display at Oxford University in August. She and Commissioner Reed joined Dr. Sabrah Kingham, the Governor's Education Policy Advisor, Louisiana Workforce Commission Secretary Susie Schowen, and others who participated in a degree apprenticeship study. The study, led by NGA (National Governors' Association), Craft Education, and the national center for Grow Your Own, brought together education leaders and policymakers from across the nation to explore how higher education and employers can partner to create "earn to learn" pathways. Louisiana was one of only eighteen states invited to participate and to present on the state's collaboration among K–12, higher education, and workforce development.
- She and Commissioner Reed attended the inaugural meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Public Higher Education Reform on August 28. They will serve on the Task Force, along with board chairs from the four Louisiana higher education systems. The first meeting provided an overview of accreditation issues, with Dr. Denley presenting "Accreditation 101" to the group. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 30, in the Governor's Press Room.

- She attended the first Louisiana Hazing Prevention Summit on September 16. She and Commissioner Reed did several live television spots for the WAFB morning show to showcase the work of the summit named in honor of Southern University student Caleb Wilson. A number of state and local officials, as well as students and system representatives, spoke throughout the day. Summit attendees heard from Dr. Walter Kimbrough, an expert on hazing. Chair Cordell thanked the Regents team and Dr. Allison Smith for their work on this event.
- She thanked Board members for their engagement in numerous activities. Recently Commissioner Reed and Louisiana Workforce Commission Secretary Susie Schowen made presentations to Leadership Louisiana in Shreveport. During that visit, they hosted a dinner for higher education leaders in the area, which was attended by Regents Aubrey and Pryor.
- She ended her report by previewing the October Regents meeting to be held in Monroe, her hometown. The two-day meeting will include visits to the campuses of Louisiana Tech and Grambling State.

## REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Chair Cordell inquired whether any member of the Board wanted to take up any of the Committee reports separately before a motion was made to accept all reports. There were no requests.

**On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Hixson, the Board voted unanimously to approve all recommendations from the Committee meetings.**

## **FINANCE**

### REVIEW AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE FY 2025–2026 OPERATING BUDGETS

Chair David began noting the extent to which operating budgets were discussed at the budget hearings and the challenges facing higher education institutions across the state, urging the staff to maintain communication regarding budget shortfalls and funding for scholarship programs.

Ms. Elizabeth Bentley-Smith, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, began her presentation by stating that the September Board of Regents' budget hearings provided an entire day for the Board to receive budget presentations from each of the management boards regarding their institutional and system budgets, as well as from the agency, which includes the programs of LOSFA and LUMCON. She noted that the hearings focused on the FY 2025–2026 Operating Budgets, but also allowed for questions about and discussion of immediate and long-term budget adjustments. Below is the schedule for the budget hearings.

**Schedule of Budget Hearings for Tuesday, September 23, 2025**  
**Board Conference Room, Claiborne Building, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor**  
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

9:00 a.m.	Introduction
9:05 a.m.	Statewide Budget Outlook
9:45 a.m.	Board of Regents
9:55 a.m.	Break
10:00 a.m.	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)
10:30 a.m.	Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA)
11:00 a.m.	Break
11:05 a.m.	Louisiana Community and Technical College System
12:05 p.m.	Lunch Break
12:45 p.m.	Southern University System
1:45 p.m.	Break
2:00 p.m.	Louisiana State University System
3:00 p.m.	University of Louisiana System

Following the hearings, the Finance Committee met on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, to make recommendations to the Board relative to the FY 2025–2026 operating budgets. At this time, staff presented statewide summary information. Ms. Bentley-Smith noted that with today’s action, the FY 2025–2026 budget development cycle would be complete. Next month, staff will prepare a preliminary full budget request for FY 2026–2027 for consideration by the Board.

**On motion of Regent Hixson, seconded by Regent Williams-Brown, the Board unanimously approved the funding recommendations for all higher education systems, boards and agencies for FY 2025–2026.**

After approval, Regent Aubrey asked if the operating budget was a flat, state-funded budget; Ms. Bentley-Smith replied that the budget is at a standstill level per the governor’s request of all state agencies. Regent Aubrey followed up, asking if the growth was predominantly from self-generated revenues, which Ms. Bentley-Smith confirmed.

Regent Aubrey’s next question related to the Legislature’s increase of the sports wagering tax to support athletics and whether these funds were reflected in the budget amounts. Ms. Bentley-Smith explained the funding must be recognized by the Revenue Estimating Conference before it could be used.

## **FACILITIES AND PROPERTY**

### **ACT 959 PROJECT: LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE STUDENT UNION RESTROOM RENOVATION**

Act 959 of 2003 permits institutions to initiate certain capital projects not exceeding \$10M that are funded with self-generated/auxiliary revenues, grants, donations, or local/federal funds. The Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, on behalf of LSU A&M, submitted a request for the purpose of renovating restrooms within LSU's Student Union.

The LSU Student Union is a high-use facility serving students, faculty, staff, and visitors. This project will renovate existing restrooms on the first through fourth floors of the Student Union. The renovation will improve the functionality, accessibility, and user experience related to a heavily used core facility. The project scope involves replacing deteriorated components, upgrading fixtures to meet current code and accessibility standards, and refreshing finishes throughout each restroom. The total project cost of \$1.7M will be funded with auxiliary revenues.

**On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Reeves, the Facilities and Property Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Act 959 project submitted by the Louisiana State University Board of Supervisors, on behalf of Louisiana State University and A&M College, for the purpose of renovating the LSU Student Union restrooms.**

## **ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Dr. Denley presented the Consent Agenda, consisting of routine items including Staff Approvals.

**On motion of Regent Sarda, seconded by Regent Glaser, the Committee received and recommended Board of Regents approval of the items on the Consent Agenda.**

### **2025 STATEWIDE STRATEGIC ACADEMIC PLANNING**

Dr. Denley presented the 2025 Statewide Strategic Academic Planning, informing the Committee that institutions annually submit three-year plans, detailing the degree programs they plan to create and those to terminate over the next three years. He also advised that workforce needs are now considered in the academic planning process.

He noted no new academic programs are approved through this process, as institutions are still required to follow the approval process for new academic programs. He added that institutional plans have been reviewed by the appropriate management board.

Dr. Denley provided an update on the progress of programs in various stages of implementation as well as those that will be proposed for termination. He advised that there is now a focus on creating efficiency in the academic planning process by using Cooperative Academic Arrangements between institutions.

Regent Aubrey asked whether the Board is asked to approve would include just the year one planning or the full three years and whether campuses will bring forward specific proposals for consideration when launching new programs. Dr. Denley responded that only programs included in strategic academic planning may be brought to the Board for consideration.

Regent Aubrey asked if the proposed terminations are of low-completer programs and whether there is a designation for those programs. Dr. Denley responded that programs are proposed for termination primarily when the number of completers is low and that institutions, based on Board discussion, now understand that to create new programs, reinvestment of existing resources is needed.

Regent Sterling asked if this level of academic program review is new and Dr. Denley responded that this is the third year of the more detailed review process.

Regent Aubrey asked for a definition of a “low-completer program.” Dr. Denley responded that there are production thresholds, which are compared to a three-year average of program completers. Regent Aubrey asked for a document that sets forth the thresholds of low-completer programs.

Regent Sarda commented that, as part of academic program reviews, Regents staff should look for pathways that can be developed for students to earn additional credentials.

Regent Pryor asked about cross-enrollment opportunities among institutions in the state. Dr. Denley responded that several institutions do work together, providing as an example the LA Cyber Academy, which currently includes six institutions and a statewide footprint.

**On motion of Regent Aubrey, seconded by Regent Sarda, the Committee approved the recommended actions on the 2025–2026 institutional academic plans.**

## **RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS**

### **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRHOLDER WITHOUT NATIONAL SEARCH: LSUHSC–NEW ORLEANS**

Ms. Robison notified the Committee that LSUHSC–New Orleans has requested to appoint Dr. Gary Klasser, Professor in the Department of Diagnostic Sciences, to the Henry A. Gremillion, DDS Chair in Orofacial and Maxillofacial Pain, a \$1 million Chair matched by the BoRSF in 2019–20 that has been vacant since July 2020. Dr. Klasser has been on the faculty at LSUHSC–NO since 2011 and was promoted to full professor in 2017. This request is aligned with all policy requirements for such appointments and an external expert has affirmed that Dr. Klasser is a superior candidate for the Chair and would very likely win a national search, should one be conducted. If approved, this waiver request

would represent the first of LSUHSC–NO’s two uses of the national search waiver provision in FY 2025–26.

**On motion of Regent Shamieh, seconded by Regent Glaser, the Research and Sponsored Programs Committee recommended that the Board of Regents approve LSU Health Sciences Center – New Orleans’ request to waive the national search requirement to appoint Dr. Gary Klasser to the Henry A. Gremillion, DDS Chair in Orofacial and Maxillofacial Pain. As stipulated in Board policy, a copy of the Letter of Appointment sent to Dr. Klasser must be submitted to the Board within 90 days of this approval.**

#### BORSF ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS SUBPROGRAM: POLICY REVISION

Ms. Robison informed the Committee that the annual deadline for submission of Endowed Professorships is March 31, to ensure funding can be considered by the Board and funds distributed prior to the end of the fiscal year. Given the uncertainty around the continuation of the Board of Regents Support Fund, pending the April 18, 2026, vote on a constitutional amendment to repeal, in June 2025 the Regents approved an expedited funding cycle for FY 2025–26, with recommendations brought for consideration in March 2026. To ensure Endowed Professorships align with this timeline, staff request to change the deadline established in the Endowed Professorships pre-award policy from March 31 to February 28.

**On motion of Regent Hixson, seconded by Regent May, the Research and Sponsored Programs Committee recommended that the Board of Regents approve a revision to the Endowed Professorships pre-award policy to change the deadline established in the Endowed Professorships pre-award policy from March 31 to February 28.**

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Robison acknowledged Dr. Michael Khonsari, Associate Commissioner for Sponsored Programs Research and Development, for his recent appointment as Boyd Professor at LSU A&M.

Regent Aubrey asked whether, as a vote to repeal the Board of Regents Support Fund is pending, competitions should be adjusted to remove multiyear funding opportunities.

Ms. Robison responded that the Board had approved adjustments to the Support Fund budget to remove multiyear opportunities and focus remaining dollars on endowments and one-year grants.

Regent Pryor asked about the impact of the U.S. Department of Justice’s memo related to eliminating proxies for race and ethnicity in higher education on the Support Fund Endowed



First-Generation Undergraduate Scholarships subprogram. Ms. Robison indicated that an opinion had been requested from the U.S. Department of Education and institutions had been advised of steps they could take, with donor permission, to convert these scholarships to other types of endowments.

## **STATEWIDE PROGRAMS**

### **NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH**

Dr. Allison Smith, Assistant Commissioner for Student Health and Wellness, provided an overview of the state's college recovery programs and initiatives, noting that September is Collegiate Recovery Month nationwide. She highlighted the National Conference held in New Orleans, which was located there due to the growth of collegiate recovery programs across the state. She also featured testimonials from multiple students expressing gratitude for the community provided by recovery programs and their importance to student success.

Regent Pryor asked whether a statewide collaborative recovery effort would be useful. Dr. Smith responded that it would be, and that at the recent SLU/LSU football game the two programs hosted a joint tailgate. She emphasized the importance of ensuring students in recovery have the opportunity to have traditional social and fun college experiences.

**This item was for information only; no action was requested.**

### **CLARIFICATION OF BOARD OF REGENTS PROGRAM CONTRACT STRUCTURE**

Ms. Subramanian informed the Committee that R.S. 17:3454 designates BOR as the fiscal agent and governing body of LUMCON, authorizes BOR to enter into contracts and other agreements with other public agencies for LUMCON, and deems any liability of LUMCON as that of BOR. R.S. 17:3023 similarly eliminates the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission, the former governing board of LOSFA, and transfers all of its powers to BOR, including the administration of the various student scholarship and loan programs.

She observed that, partly due to historical practices, some of the contracts to which LOSFA and LUMCON are parties still are executed in the name of the program, i.e., LOSFA or LUMCON, rather than the Board of Regents; however, these programs no longer have the legal authority to enter into contracts. She therefore recommended that the Board clarify that all data-

sharing agreements to which the Board of Regents or either program is party apply to the entire agency, including its programs.

Dr. Denley indicated that this action is needed to integrate all data into LA FIRST, a legislatively created longitudinal data system housed in the Kathleen Babineaux Blanco Public Policy Center at UL Lafayette. Ms. Subramanian noted that the agreements under discussion do not compromise the privacy interests of individuals.

Regent Sterling recommended that the Board and staff engage in further discussion of data-sharing among institutions and agencies during a future Board meeting or Board Development session.

**On motion of Regent Williams-Brown, seconded by Regent May, the Statewide Programs Committee recommended that the Board of Regents recognize all contracts entered into in the name of LUMCON or LOSFA as properly those of the Board of Regents.**

## **PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND PERFORMANCE**

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Dr. Susannah Craig presented the Consent Agenda, which consisted of five license renewal applications from academic degree-granting institutions. All five institutions are accredited by a U.S. Department of Education accreditor and had previously been approved as licensed institutions by the Board of Regents.

**On motion of Regent David, seconded by Regent Hixson, the Planning, Research, and Performance Committee unanimously recommended that the Board of Regents approve the items listed under the Consent Agenda.**

- A. R.S. 17:1808 (Academic Licensure)
  - 1. Renewal Applications
    - a. Fuller Theological Seminary – Pasadena, CA
    - b. High Tech High Graduate School of Education – San Diego, CA
    - c. Texas Wesleyan University – Fort Worth, TX
    - d. University of Massachusetts Global – Aliso Viejo, CA
    - e. University of the Pacific – Stockton, CA

## **PERSONNEL**

### **EVALUATION OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Ms. Elizabeth Bentley-Smith, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, provided the Committee with an overview of the process for evaluating the Commissioner of Higher Education. Ms. Bentley-Smith then stated that the Personnel Committee is authorized to go into executive session and explained that, as required by law, the Commissioner had been advised of such and had agreed to have her evaluation discussed in executive session.

**On motion of Regent Finley, seconded by Regent Williams-Brown, followed by a roll call vote, the Committee unanimously voted to enter into executive session.**

**Committee Members Voting to Enter into Executive Session**

Terrie P. Sterling – Vice Chair  
Blake R. David  
Stephanie A. Finley  
Willbert D. Pryor  
Judy Williams-Brown

**Upon the conclusion of the executive session Regent David made a motion, seconded by Regent Finley, to return from executive session. A voice vote was taken and was unanimous in favor.**

**Committee Members Voting to Return from Executive Session**

Terrie P. Sterling – Vice Chair  
Blake R. David  
Stephanie A. Finley  
Willbert D. Pryor  
Judy Williams-Brown

Regent Sterling stated that the Personnel Committee discussed the Commissioner of Higher Education's performance using the reflections and observations document provided by the Commissioner.

**Regent Sterling recommended that the Personnel Committee approve the evaluation of the Commissioner of Higher Education. On motion of Regent Finley, seconded by Regent Williams-Brown, the Committee recommended approval of the evaluation.**

**REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Commissioner of Higher Education Kim Hunter Reed presented several items to the Board:

- She commended all of higher education and Regents staff for the progress and success reflected in the Master Plan report.
- She noted that Regents staff attended its annual all-staff retreat at the Louisiana Arts and Science Center. The “Out of this World” retreat presented opportunities for team building and learning. She thanked Dr. Susannah Craig and others for making the retreat a memorable one for all of the staff. Several new staff awards were presented by Chair Cordell: Innovation Award to Elizabeth Kelly, Impact Award to Brianna Golden, and Good Citizen Award to Christina Cheek.
- She mentioned that September is “Student Parents” month and that across the nation there are three million students who are also parents. Dr. Chris Yandle and his team are highlighting through social media how Louisiana’s colleges and universities are supporting student parents through efforts like on-campus childcare centers.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Cordell asked if there was any other business to come before the Board.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Regent May, seconded by Regent Hixson, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

## Appendix A

### Board Meeting Guest List

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

NAME	AFFILIATION
Brooke Ransome	LSU A&M
Blair LeBlanc	House Fiscal
Troy Blanchard	LSU A&M
Margaret Finch	LSU A&M
Amanda Mire	LSU A&M
William Tulak	LCTCS
Alicia Williams	GSU
Trang Nguyen	OPB
Jakob Ward	OPB
Helena Janssen	OPB
Brian Roberts	BOR-LUMCON
Jeannine O'Rourke	UL System
Scott A. Wicker	SUBR
Donald Ray Henry	SUBR
Jackie Bach	LSU A&M
Luria Young	SUBR