

Task Force on Career Alignment

Interim Report

January 2026



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Introduction

With the adoption of the *Louisiana Prospers* Master Plan in 2019, the Louisiana Board of Regents set out on a bold journey to significantly increase the state's educational attainment rates and to grow Louisiana's prosperity. Since then, together, we have raised the state's educational attainment rate to an all-time high of 52.5%. While there is still more work to be done to reach the Master Plan's goal of ensuring that, by 2030, 60% of working-age Louisianans will hold a postsecondary credential of value, there are also opportunities for us to refine this goal in ways that are responsive to emerging needs—for students, for our institutions, for our economy, and for our state.

Our strategies to increase college-going and our initiatives to enhance opportunities for students to complete their credentials are now bolstered by our commitment to meeting the economic needs of Louisiana. In short, Louisiana's higher education ecosystem has increasingly taken steps to align the portfolio of credentials offered by public institutions with the state's economic needs. Today, the Board of Regents and the state's public postsecondary institutions utilize real-time labor-market data as well as input from Louisiana's workforce-related agencies and regional economic development offices to anticipate opportunities and meet needs throughout the state. Although connecting institutions with Louisiana employers is vital to translating credentials into careers and retaining graduates in-state, doing so effectively will require more deliberate alignment and coordination across education and workforce systems.

As 2025 draws to a close, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in our work, one that hinges on a paradigmatic shift in our definition of success. Success is no longer solely achieved with the completion of a certificate or a degree; instead, success *begins* with that moment and extends forward, broadening ever outward. Achieving this broader vision of success necessitates stronger, more systematic alignment between Louisiana's public postsecondary institutions and employers to ensure that graduates are workforce ready and to maximize their opportunities to be employed in state. In this new model, we are committed to creating opportunities that enable our graduates to make good on the promise of the credentials through rewarding well-paying jobs that support them and their families—ideally right here in Louisiana.

This new model of success links college-going, retention, persistence, and completion to the beginning of a career life that can yield generational change for our learners not to mention a seismic shift in the cultivation of human talent—for our state. To meet this charge, we must continue to redesign our education programs and education-to-career pipeline in intentional, collaborative, and strategic ways. While higher education has long focused on intellectual growth and leadership development, its evolution demands an equally robust emphasis on preparing and connecting students to the workforce, thus equipping them to build a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Through [Senate Concurrent Resolution 38 \(2025\)](#), the Louisiana Legislature charged the Board of Regents and Louisiana Works to strengthen the state's education-to-career pipeline and to increase the retention of our graduates throughout the state: SCR 38 calls for us to embrace this new model of success, which starts with the recommendations of this Task Force. Our initial work has involved gathering baseline information about the current landscape of career advising in Louisiana's colleges and universities. It has also involved an investment in the expansion of work-based learning which integrates academic coursework and authentic, real-world experience. Drawing on the wisdom of state and national experts and working hand in hand with leaders in Louisiana's workforce and industry, this Task Force has developed a menu of best practices which are explored throughout this interim report. Our focus on refining and implementing these strategies will anchor the work of the Task Force in 2026, and that work will ensure that Louisiana builds a stronger, more responsive education-to-career pipeline that better serves students, employers, and the state's long-term economic future. In all of these ways, Louisiana prospers.

Progress to Date

The Task Force is co-chaired by the Louisiana Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, and Louisiana Works Secretary, Susana Schowen. Its membership includes state education leaders, legislators, workforce and economic development agencies, higher education systems, business and industry organizations, regional economic partners, and student representatives from across all higher education systems (see Appendix B for full membership).

In 2025, the Task Force prioritized a thorough landscape analysis and has convened four times to review current career advising efforts and resources available to students, discussed potential gaps, learned about nationwide best practices in coaching and career preparation, and identified a series of practices for further consideration. Beginning in 2026, the Task Force will explore:

- Developing a Work-Based Learning (WBL) Playbook for faculty that includes core elements for building and testing WBL elements for all campuses and disciplines, together with a statewide definition of *quality WBL*.
- Establishing a Career Coaching Transformation Network to promote ongoing learning and the establishment, sharing and adoption of best practices.
- Pursuing the adoption of a Work-Study-to-Work-Based Learning (WBL) model.
- Creating the Louisiana Opportunity Index, a scorecard for institutional implementation that measures and tracks progress on identified metrics, and which can be used to inform employer engagement and identify future growth opportunities.
- Ensuring workforce data reporting includes information on internships and work-based learning experiences, allowing the state to analyze and track these experiences and their impacts.

- Strengthening employer participation and engagement by centralizing processes, leveraging existing technology and partnerships to improve coordination, and collecting systematic employer feedback with an eye toward continuous improvement.

The Task Force will continue to explore these best practices in greater detail as it hears from national experts on key practices and career services practitioners at Louisiana postsecondary institutions, as well as reviews research briefs to inform the state's efforts.

Information about the Task Force, including membership, agendas, and meeting minutes, is available on the [Louisiana Board of Regents' website](#).

The major focus of the first year of the Task Force was to learn more about national best practices to improve education-to-workforce career guidance and gain an understanding of the current services, resources, and supports available to students at Louisiana's postsecondary institutions. This information was pivotal in identifying a framework and a list of recommendations to explore in greater depth in the upcoming year. Table 1 provides an overview of the Task Force meetings and key topics discussed.

Table 1: 2025 Task Force on Career Alignment Meeting Overview

Meeting Date	Major Activities & Topics Discussed
July 24, 2025	<p>Strada Education Foundation provided an overview of their findings from nearly ten years of research on the impacts of WBL, career coaching, and other efforts to improve education-to-career outcomes.</p> <p>Task Force members engaged in a design thinking activity to discuss how campus career offices can better connect students to meaningful, in-state job opportunities through stronger education-employer partnerships.</p>
September 4, 2025	<p>Osmar Padilla, Deputy Secretary at Louisiana Works, provided an overview of hiring trends in Louisiana, giving insight into what employers are looking for and what gaps exist.</p> <p>The Task Force engaged with a panel of Louisiana employers, including Ochsner, General Dynamics Information Technology, OxyChem, and AvexMRO. The panel discussed Louisiana's workforce needs, skills gaps, successful recruitment efforts, opportunities for stronger higher education/employer partnerships, and the benefits of WBL, including promising practices underway.</p>

Meeting Date	Major Activities & Topics Discussed
October 7, 2025	<p>The Task Force reviewed and discussed the results of a survey distributed to Office of Career Services staff across Louisiana public and private (LAICU) higher education institutions. The focus of the survey was to better understand the state of career readiness and to identify potential opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>The Task Force also engaged with a panel of Louisiana career services leaders who provided insight into current practices at institutions, opportunities to improve student awareness of services, and challenges associated with improving WBL for all students.</p>
December 3, 2025	<p>The Task Force reviewed and provided preliminary reflections on the interim report and six areas to explore in 2026. The Task Force also heard a presentation from Dr. Dave Clayton, Senior Vice President for Research at Strada Education Foundation, who provided an overview of the data behind Strada's State Opportunity Index which will inform their development of a Louisiana-specific version of the Opportunity Index.</p>

Principles for Quality Education-to-Career Guidance

To understand national best practices in career preparedness, the Task Force heard from [Strada Education Foundation](#) representatives who provided key insights from nearly a decade of national research on the impact of work-based learning, career coaching, and effective practices to improve education-to-career outcomes. Overall, Strada has found that 69% of students who experience education-to-career guidance have a first job that requires a degree compared to 52% of students who do not. Furthermore, students in fields where there is less direct alignment between education and the career (e.g., social sciences and liberal arts majors) experience better outcomes when quality coaching is available. For example, 77% of psychology graduates who experience quality coaching will have a first job that requires a degree compared to 37% who do not receive coaching. The gap is significantly smaller for accounting and finance majors where the gap is only 7%. This finding is particularly significant and provides evidence that career guidance must be scaled in order to ensure career pathways for all majors. Working with an advisory group of postsecondary leaders and practitioners, Strada has identified [five principles of quality education-to-career guidance](#). Initiatives should be:

- **Centered on education-to-career outcomes** by
 - integrating support for academic success with ongoing career exploration and planning.
 - directing students to identify education programs that are aligned with career pathways.
 - providing students with timely labor market and career insights for informed academic and career planning.
- **Committed to student agency** by
 - supporting students in exploring and recognizing their interests, values, and purpose.
 - guiding students in building mindsets, skills, and a sense of belonging critical to success.
 - validating students' identities and responding to students' personal circumstances and goals.
- **Foundational and universal** by
 - embedding career exploration in existing programs and services to ensure students receive guidance early on and continually throughout their program of study.
 - engaging students proactively and through multiple channels with the support of scalable technologies.
 - reaching and benefiting students who traditionally have been least served by postsecondary education.
- **Rooted in relationships** that
 - are based in interactions and relationships between students, faculty, and staff.
 - connect students to networks, resources, and services to build social capital.
 - engage students' communities of support.
- **Informed by data and evidence** that
 - can be leveraged to provide personalized and timely support.
 - incorporate recognized, evidence-based practices.
 - measure outcomes and continually improve through research and evaluation.

These principles will serve as a guide to evaluate existing practices, identify potential opportunities, and develop a strategy to transform Louisiana's education-to-career pathways. Furthermore, as the Task Force reflects on these key principles, it will also consider all aspects of career guidance, including the relevance of information, the level of engagement career guidance fosters, and the timeliness and frequency with which career guidance is delivered to Louisiana learners.

Framework for Developing Louisiana's Education-to-Career Coaching Strategy

Reflecting on the guiding principles, the Task Force participated in a design thinking activity in which participants discussed how campus career offices can better connect students to meaningful, in-state job opportunities through stronger education-employer partnerships; identified potential project goals; and determined next steps. The goal is to identify initiatives that leverage the institution and the local community as a whole to improve students' career outcomes at scale. Through this activity, two areas of focus emerged which will serve as a framework to explore in 2026:

- Building Stronger Education-Employer Partnerships
- Strengthening Campus Career Offices

Table 2: Major Themes & Initiatives to Improve Education-to-Career Coaching

Theme 1: Building Stronger Education-Employer Partnerships	
Types of Initiatives	Preliminary Goals
Early Career Exposure	Career exposure should begin in middle school, extend through high school, and be offered and encouraged immediately upon entry to college.
Work-Based Learning Opportunities	Expand paid internships, apprenticeships, and course-embedded projects to test skills development and create pipelines to employment.
Employer Engagement in Education	Proactively and intentionally bring together workforce, education, and students through partnerships. Some examples include working with faculty, career services, and area businesses to co-design curricula, increase participation at career fairs, and utilize Chambers of Commerce to facilitate connections between local businesses and institutions.
Community Connections	Partner with chambers, local businesses, and community organizations to develop pathways from the classroom to the workplace.

Theme 2: Strengthening Campus Career Offices	
Types of Initiatives	Preliminary Goals
Advisor & Faculty Integration	Expand the number of faculty advisors available and engage those advisors to identify supports and resources that can be provided to students in career discussions.
Targeted Career Fairs & Networking	Organize industry-specific fairs and identify other opportunities to bring employers to campus and into the classroom.
Better Data & Awareness	Use alumni outcomes and workforce data to guide students to in-state opportunities.
Student-Centered Support	Embed career planning milestones, coaching, and transparency about wages and job opportunities into all programs.

The ability to track the success of adopted initiatives is a vital component of any strategy. As part of the design thinking activity, the Task Force identified potential outcomes and measures of success which should guide future decisions on final strategy recommendations.

- **Retaining Talent in Louisiana:** Students see clear, attractive career opportunities at home and a clear achievable path to those opportunities.
- **Stronger Student-Advisor Connections:** Advisors and faculty guide students to think intentionally about careers early and often.
- **Career Readiness for All:** Upon graduation, every Louisiana student is well-informed about local and state career opportunities and prepared for the workforce.
- **Stronger Partnerships with Employers:** Industry has a voice in shaping curricula and pathways to ensure alignment with current and future workforce needs.

These outcomes will be revisited in more detail as the Task Force explores tools, metrics, and scorecards that can be used to assess the impact of initiatives and the Louisiana-specific plan that will be developed and implemented statewide.

Current State of Career Services in Louisiana

Understanding the current state of career services at Louisiana's postsecondary institutions is critical to developing and implementing a strategy to improve the education-to-career pipeline. To gain a better awareness of existing services, tools, and resources, the Task Force conducted a survey and hosted panels with employers and career services staff (see [Appendix C](#) for full survey results). The findings revealed that while a vast majority of responding institutions have a

career center or offer career services (80%), only half (50%) require students to engage in career exploration. More work must be done to increase student awareness of these services (an issue raised during the employer panels) and to incorporate career exploration into the educational experience in a systematic way.

Overall, most institutions (80%) recognize that career readiness is a priority for the institution and the state, yet more work needs to be done to scale opportunities to all students. Students are often introduced to career services during university orientation, and some may have additional early career exploration during First-Year seminar courses. Career Services Offices continue to support students throughout their journeys by providing them with resume writing assistance, mock interviews, career fairs, and workshops, and some provide learning modules and other forms of career exploration that are embedded into an institution's learning management system. Typically, however, these services are provided on an on-demand basis rather than as part of an intentional integrated campus-wide strategy.

As students progress through their programs, their experiences with career exploration vary by department or even instructors. Most institutions (83%) have at least one program that includes work-based learning requirements needed for degree completion such as an internship, clinical rotation, practice, or residency. In other programs, these opportunities are optional or altogether unavailable. Even if these experiences are available, some internships are unpaid, which poses challenges to students juggling work, school, and other commitments.

Furthermore, since internships are often handled by individual academic programs or departments, coordination with employers and data collection can be fragmented. Institutions reported that when engaging with them employers are looking for clearer points of contact in order to fully develop opportunities. To expand this work, institutions need staffing, resources, and more structured employer and community engagement. Some of this can be accomplished through stronger coordination across the institution, leveraging the knowledge, relationships, and connections of faculty and staff.

Interim Report Focus Areas

After considering national best practices and hearing more about the current state of career services in Louisiana, the Task Force has agreed as a next step to test the following six initiatives and goals for their potential to scale across Louisiana:

Initiative 1: Create a Louisiana Faculty Work-Based Learning (WBL) Playbook

To support faculty and staff in designing WBL experiences across all programs, the Task Force will review research and consider the creation of a WBL Playbook. Some potential uses of the Playbook include retooling degree programs to incorporate WBL to improve career exploration and navigation as well as job placement outcomes. These changes will provide students the opportunity to practice knowledge, skills, and abilities learned in the classroom in an everyday

work setting. The WBL Playbook, in concept, will be designed to support both new and veteran faculty in redesigning program/course curriculum, testing the impact of WBL, aligning with new BOR program approval standards which emphasize the connection of academic opportunities to employer requirements and workforce demands. This Playbook will also provide a statewide definition of quality WBL, which will inform further policy and implementation decisions. The exploration activity for this initiative will focus on identifying existing best practices, assessing the resources and training needed for implementation, and determining the supports required to scale high-quality WBL opportunities across all institutions.

Initiative 2: Developing a Louisiana Career Coaching Transformation Network

The Task Force will consider leveraging the existing interest and enthusiasm of career advisors by building a transformation network. This network will facilitate information-sharing on best practices and progress toward initiative implementation across the state's colleges and universities. Additionally, the Task Force will identify the campus leadership engagement needed to ensure faculty and staff work collaboratively to improve education-to-career outcomes, leveraging not only career services but the full range of campus resources. A similar approach has been used in the [Meauxmentum Scholars](#) program, where Faculty Learning Communities at each of our campuses have been established to engage faculty to drive best practices in teaching and learning. The exploration activity for this initiative will set the direction for advancing this work and identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

Initiative 3: Adopting a Louisiana Work-Study-to-WBL Program

The Task Force will review research and facilitate the adoption of an integrated work-study and work-based learning model. The initial goal will be to explore how best to transform existing campus work-study opportunities, ensuring that all work-study programs in the state are infused with program objectives to help students develop and master skills that will improve their career readiness. A similar approach has been implemented at Arizona State University through its [Work+ program](#). This program has established three goals: build participants' career readiness skills, develop better relationships between supervisors and student workers, and increase students' ability to identify and articulate the career skills they are learning. The model uses existing work-study positions at the institution as an opportunity to improve skill development and make high-impact practices available to all students. This exploration activity will review several models and consider the development of a Louisiana-specific model which will strengthen an existing program to align with the career-readiness vision of this Task Force.

Initiative 4: Develop a Louisiana Opportunity Index (Scorecard)

The Task Force plans to create a performance scorecard, modeled after [Strada's State Opportunity Index](#), to establish expectations for career-focused institutions and to measure and track progress on key initiatives. Strada's Index is designed to measure the postsecondary return on investment (ROI) by evaluating each state's performance in five key areas that improve outcomes for both learners and employers. These areas are: (1) the availability of clear earnings

and career outcomes, (2) quality coaching, (3) affordability, (4) work-based learning, and (5) employer alignment of academic programs. For each category, a state receives one of four scores with the highest score listed first:

- Leading: The state meets all criteria for the category.
- Advancing: The state partially meets the criteria for the category.
- Developing: The state is in the process of developing metrics and initiatives to meet the criteria for the category.
- Foundational: The state is currently does not meet the criteria for the category.

Since the release of the inaugural report in 2024, Strada has provided an annual update to allow policymakers, education leaders, and other stakeholders the opportunity to track initiatives and set goals to improve their states' performance in these key areas. Currently, the percentage of students experiencing a positive ROI is 69%. According to [Strada's Louisiana 2025 State Summary](#), three key areas in Louisiana for improvement are quality coaching, work-based learning, and employer alignment. The benchmarking report aligns well with the vision of Louisiana to ensure students across the state are well equipped for the workforce through a direct focus on institutional and leadership engagement. The exploration activity will provide a framework for BOR not only to track and measure key outcomes that are important to the state's vision for career readiness but also to identify and elevate activities that will define "career-focused institutions" and that will help to advance outcomes at state and national levels.

Initiative 5: Strengthening Workforce Reporting Requirement to Track and Evaluate the Impact of Initiatives

Data are crucial tools for measuring progress on initiatives. The Task Force will explore options, including proposing legislation, to improve the availability of data on WBL activities for students. As an example, the Task Force may consider the feasibility of expanding unemployment and insurance wage data reporting requirements to include the extent to which the employer provides internships and other WBL opportunities across the state. Improving workforce data reporting can provide new insights on: (1) the effectiveness of academic programs in advancing career readiness and work experiences for students, (2) the level of support employers are providing to college students in Louisiana, and (3) opportunities to scale WBL activities across the state through policy. The exploration activity will evaluate existing data systems, identify gaps in WBL reporting, and determine the policy and funding needs required to establish a statewide WBL data infrastructure that supports continuous informed decision-making.

Initiative 6: Strengthen Employer Engagement by Centralizing Processes, Leveraging Technology and Partnerships, and Systematically Collecting Employer Feedback

As a means of building stronger education-employer partnerships and improving overall education-career alignment and guidance, the Task Force will seek to identify ways to leverage existing technology and partnerships to engage employers and economic development offices to

garner feedback. This recommendation aims to address concerns revealed by the statewide career services survey, including the need for clear points of contact and effective communication channels between employers and institutions. This focus highlights a key opportunity to build a more responsive state higher education system which is vital for ensuring economic vitality across Louisiana by directly supporting the growth and prosperity of employers. A notable example of existing work to scale is the collaboration among [Baton Rouge Area Chamber \(BRAC\)](#), [LSU A&M](#) and [Southern University A&M](#), through which these partners have created a digital one-stop-shop where students can connect with local internships and job opportunities. There are opportunities to increase the functionality of these digital hubs to garner employer feedback and provide students with career guidance as they apply to internships and job opportunities. In addition, the Task Force will explore tax incentives and other types of incentives to encourage stronger employer participation in work-based learning, including from small- and medium-sized companies, to help expand and sustain meaningful business engagement across the state.

Further, by creating a robust, feedback-driven system, such as those introduced in [Iowa](#) and [Indiana](#), these efforts will significantly improve BOR's model for academic planning. Integrating employer needs and market-relevant data will allow BOR's planning process to move beyond traditional metrics, placing a greater emphasis on stronger post-completion outcomes for students, such as employment rates, wage gains, and career advancement, tying academic offerings more directly to the state's economic and workforce needs. This exploration activity seeks to leverage current approaches across the state and nation to build the core elements necessary to gather actionable feedback.

Conclusions & Next Steps

In 2026 the Task Force will explore the six recommendations and begin to build the Louisiana career alignment plan. Task Force members will receive research briefs in advance of each meeting and will engage with experts and practitioners in the field as they continue to develop and refine a proposed Louisiana strategy. Information on the Task Force, meeting minutes, and dates of upcoming meetings can be found on the [Task Force's website](#). The tentative schedule for 2026 meetings is as follows, with the meeting times and locations to be determined.

- February 11, 2026
- June 16, 2026
- September 10, 2026
- December 3, 2026

Acknowledgements

The Task Force thanks Senator Rick Edmonds for carrying the associated bill on this important work and championing stronger education-to-employment opportunities in our state.

Appreciation is also due to Ruth Watkins, Kimberly Sluis, Kevin Grubb, and Dr. Melissa Leavitt from the Strada Education Foundation, who have provided important technical support including background research on the topic of career coaching as well as best practices from across the country. Finally, the following individuals are thanked for providing insights on national research and participating on panels that have informed the Task Force's work to date:

- Osmar Padilla from Louisiana Works
- Missy Hopson from Ochsner
- Jay Johnson from General Dynamics Information Technology
- Peyton Chaisson from OxyChem
- Joseph Ng from AvexMRO
- Jesse Downs from LSU A&M
- Craig Marinello from Southeastern Louisiana University
- Kate Whitehead from River Parishes Community College
- Keyo Johnson from Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University

Appendix A: Senate Concurrent Resolution 38 (2025)

2025 Regular Session

ENROLLED

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 38

BY SENATOR EDMONDS AND REPRESENTATIVE CHASSION

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To create and provide for the Task Force on Career Alignment to study the development of a statewide strategy for implementing strategic education-to-career counseling across public postsecondary institutions in order to retain Louisiana's graduates in the state.

WHEREAS, the Legislature of Louisiana finds that establishing educational opportunities that lead to successful vocations in Louisiana is a priority and critical focus of Louisiana's higher education mission; and

WHEREAS, despite the priority of achieving successful vocations, the transition from postsecondary education to meaningful employment remains a challenge for many graduates, with national underemployment rates exceeding fifty percent in the first year after graduation; and

WHEREAS, there is an additional challenge in aligning vocational training with the location of jobs, thereby, leading many of Louisiana's credentialed graduates to leave the state to find meaningful employment elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, at the same time, many Louisiana employers cite workforce-availability as one of their top challenges and share the perception that their companies are unable to find

the talent they need for their businesses; and

WHEREAS, early and intentional education-to-employment alignment would increase Louisiana's graduate retention and boost the state's labor force participation; and

WHEREAS, a robust career services process, as well as expanded access to work-based learning experiences within Louisiana's public higher education institutions, will enable future graduates to make early connections with employers within the state, strengthen retention of Louisiana's graduates, and build a foundation for career success in the state; and

WHEREAS, research from the Strada Education Foundation, and other national studies, highlight the impact made by strategic early education-to-career counseling on student success, and workforce readiness; and

WHEREAS, education-to-career counseling should include personalized guidance, timely labor market information, structured support, and access to internships and apprenticeships; and

WHEREAS, evidence shows that education-to-career counseling and support strategies significantly reduce underemployment and expand a graduate's ability to achieve his or her career goals by connecting their credentials with suitable workforce opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Act 330 of the 2024 Regular Legislative Session advanced Louisiana's commitment to aligning education with workforce needs, reinforcing the role of the strategic partnerships among postsecondary institutions, employers, and workforce development agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Regents, through its modified academic planning process

and newly adopted funding formula, has taken steps to strengthen the alignment of the state's higher education offerings with the needs of Louisiana's economy; and

WHEREAS, a Louisiana Career Alignment Task Force, is needed to develop and implement a comprehensive, scalable framework for education-to-career services across the state's public colleges and universities and the task force will enable Louisiana to retain her talent by making graduates better equipped to find meaningful employment and prosperity within this state; and

WHEREAS, the task force is needed to assist the full implementation of Act 330 of the 2024 Regular Legislative Session to align Louisiana's higher education with Louisiana's workforce needs.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish and provide for the Task Force on Career Alignment to study the development of a statewide strategy for implementing strategic education-to-career counseling across public postsecondary institutions in order to retain Louisiana's graduates in the state, and to propose recommendations, together with specific proposals for legislation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force should include consideration of all of the following:

(1) Integrating a formal mechanism for employer feedback regarding the coordination of internship and permanent job placement in Louisiana by public and private higher education institutions and industry-driven guidance, to ensure these efforts align with current and future labor market needs.

(2) Providing recommendations to enhance Louisiana-based employer engagement within career services by establishing structured industry partnerships, integrating employer

advisory input, and aligning career counseling with Louisiana's workforce demands to better connect students with in-state job opportunities.

(3) Assessing and proposing strategies to expand work-based learning opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships, and cooperative education programs, as a key mechanism for strengthening career readiness, fostering industry partnerships, and increasing the retention of graduates in Louisiana's workforce.

(4) Analyzing the role of education-to-career counseling at Louisiana's public two-year and four-year institutions in order to establish best practices in addressing graduate out-migration; identifying gaps in employer engagement, career advising, and work-based learning that contribute to students seeking employment outside the state.

(5) Providing recommendations to strengthen career services, expanding partnerships with all sizes of Louisiana employers and aligning counseling efforts with in-state job opportunities to improve graduate retention.

(6) Establishing a timeline for full implementation of these best practices at all public higher education institutions, in collaboration with private colleges and universities in the state.

(7) Creating a report card and accountability framework to assess student engagement, workforce outcomes, and institutional progress in implementing the best practices to address graduate out-migration.

Leveraging existing state resources and private partnerships to fund and sustain effective career counseling initiatives.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consist of the following members:

(1) The commissioner of higher education, or her designee, who shall serve as co-

chairperson.

(2) The secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, or his designee, who will serve as co-chairperson.

(3) The chairman of the Senate Committee on Education, or his designee.

(4) The chairwoman of the House Committee on Education, or her designee.

(5) One member appointed by the governor.

(6) The secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, or his designee.

(7) The chief executive officer of the Leaders for a Better Louisiana, or his designee.

(8) The state Superintendent of Education, or his designee.

(9) One representative of Louisiana's regional economic development organizations, appointed by the secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission.

(10) One representative of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, appointed by the system president.

(11) One representative of the University of Louisiana System, appointed by the system president.

(12) One representative of the Southern University System, appointed by the system president.

(13) One representative of the Louisiana State University System, appointed by the system president.

(14) One representative of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, appointed by the association's president.

(15) One member appointed by the president and chief operating officer of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry.

(16) One member who is a student of the Louisiana State University System, appointed by the system president.

One member who is a student of the University of Louisiana System, appointed by the system president.

(1) One member who is a student of the Southern University System, appointed by the system president.

(2) One member who is a student of the Louisiana Community and Technical Colleges System, appointed by the system president.

(3) One member appointed by the president of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the names of designees for the task force to the commissioner of higher education no later than July 15, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than August 1, 2025, at the call of the commissioner of higher education, and shall meet at least quarterly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting this study the task force may request staff support from the commissioner of higher education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expenses reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall submit an interim report no later than January 21, 2026, with a final report to be submitted no later than January 21, 2027.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that both the interim and final reports shall be submitted to the governor, the Board of Regents, the chairs of the House and Senate Committees on Education, and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its final report or January 21, 2027, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the commissioner of higher education, the secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the governor, the secretary of Louisiana Economic Development, the Leaders for a Better Louisiana, the state Superintendent of Education, the secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, the president of the University of Louisiana System, the president of the Southern University System, the president of the Louisiana State University System, the president of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the president of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, and the president of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana.

Appendix B: Task Force Members

Name	Title, Institution/Organization
Dr. Kim Hunter Reed, Co-Chair	Commissioner of Higher Education
Secretary Susana Schowen, Co-Chair	Secretary of Louisiana Works
Senator Rick Edmonds	Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education
Representative Barbara Freiberg	Chairwoman of the House Committee on Education
Dr. Sabrah Kingham	Member appointed by the Governor
Tedra Cheatham	Secretary of Louisiana Economic Development or designee
Adam Knapp	Chief Executive Officer of the Leaders for a Better Louisiana or designee
Dr. Cade Brumley	Louisiana Superintendent of Education or designee
Angie White	Representative from one of Louisiana's regional economic development organizations
AcQueena Grant	Representative from the Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Dr. Katie Dawson	Representative from the University of Louisiana System
Dr. Scott Wicker	Representative from the Southern University System
Dr. Jackie Bach	Representative from the Louisiana State University System
Dr. Eric Turner	Representative from the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Mary Beth Dickerson	Appointee of the president and chief operating officer of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry
Abry Layrisson	Student from the Louisiana State University System
Cruz Cassard	Student from the University of Louisiana System
Sean Inman	Student from the Southern University System
Caleb Walker	Student from the Louisiana Community and Technical College System
Dr. Steven Procopio	Appointee of the President of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana

Appendix C: Survey Results

Office of Career Services Task Force on Career Alignment Survey

This survey was conducted in September 2025 across all Louisiana public higher education institutions and the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. A total of 35 institutions submitted responses prior to this Task Force meeting.

- 1. Does your institution currently have a career center/career services office?**
 - Yes: 80%
 - No: 20%
- 2. Is career readiness in your institution's strategic plan or a stated priority in some other way?**
 - Yes: 80%
 - No: 20%
- 3. If yes, how is career readiness in the institution's strategic plan?**
 - **Career Readiness as a Strategic Priority:** Embedded in strategic plans with goals for internships, job placement, and graduate employment.
 - **Work-Based Learning Expansion:** Multiple institutions report substantial increases in student participation in internships, apprenticeships, and experiential learning, with initiatives like Tulane's \$10M Mussafer Internship Initiative and LSU A&M's goals to require experiential learning for all majors.
 - **Quality Enhancement Plans (QEPs):** Several institutions are developing QEPs focused on curriculum-based career readiness activities, academic pathways, and co-curricular supports to ensure students are workforce-ready upon graduation
 - **Institutional and Leadership Commitment:** Presidents, provosts, deans, and faculty strongly support career alignment efforts, fostering employer partnerships, advisory boards, and early career exploration through first-year success programs and mandatory advising.
 - **Alumni and Employer Engagement:** Career services integrate alumni as mentors and recruiters while building structured partnerships with employers and offering job fairs, mentoring, and shadowing opportunities in regulated professions like law and nursing.
 - **Continuous Career Support:** Career readiness begins with exploration and planning in the freshman year, continues through internships and skill-building in junior year, and extends after graduation through lifelong access to career services and alumni networks.

4. Are students required to engage in career services activities?

- Yes: 50%
- No: 50%

5. Describe the requirements of engagement.

- **Capstone and Program Requirements:** Several programs mandate internships, practica, or capstone courses with career readiness lessons, while others strongly encourage engagement with Career Services.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Career readiness is built into courses, with assignments like resumes, mock interviews, career exploration projects, and faculty-mandated participation in fairs and workshops.
- **First-Year and Advising Initiatives:** Many institutions tie Career Services to first-year seminars, advising, and early assessments (e.g., Focus2, Handshake, Type Focus) to start career planning early.
- **Professional Development and Experiences:** Students gain skills through experiential learning, career fairs, professional development seminars, mock interviews, and structured student employment programs.

6. How early in an academic career is a student encouraged to engage in career services activities?

- **Majority Response:** Most institutions encourage engagement in the first semester or freshman year, often beginning with orientation, University 101, or First-Year Seminar courses.
- **Earliest Touchpoints:** Some institutions introduce career services as soon as students apply, at pre-orientation, or on day one of New Student Orientation.
- **Advising Integration:** Several responses indicate that career services are introduced during first advising appointments or embedded in early required courses (e.g., LSUA 1001, LSUS First Year Seminar).
- **Targeted Approach:** At-risk students are sometimes encouraged to meet with career coaches earlier than peers.
- **Later Engagement:** A few institutions acknowledged that while encouragement starts early, most students actually engage more fully in their sophomore or junior year.

7. How are students encouraged to engage?

- **Orientation and First-Year Courses:** Students are introduced to Career Services at new student orientation, University 101/First Year Seminar classes, and through required career-related assignments.

- **Faculty and Curriculum Integration:** Faculty embed career activities into coursework, such as resume writing, mock interviews, career exploration projects, and often require attendance at career events.
- **Workshops, Fairs and Programs:** Engagement happens through mandatory or encouraged participation in workshops, career fairs, networking events, job readiness trainings, and specialized programs like career bootcamps.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Career Services offices use emails, flyers, social media, event calendars, and in-class presentations to consistently promote opportunities.
- **Partnership and Support Models:** Collaboration with advisors, student affairs, and community/industry partners helps reinforce career readiness; some institutions also incentivize engagement through course credit, extra points, or co-curricular transcripts.

8. Do any programs at your institution include a work-based learning requirement?

- Yes: 83%
- No: 17%

9. Specify which programs and indicate whether the work-based learning is paid or unpaid.

- **Widespread WBL Requirements:** Many programs across institutions (e.g., Nursing, Allied Health, Education, Business, Criminal Justice, Social Work) require internships, clinical rotations, practica, or residencies as part of degree completion.
- **Paid vs. Unpaid Mix:** Technical and industry-based programs (e.g., Process Technology, Drafting, Industrial Manufacturing) often offer paid internships (\$15–\$25/hr), while health sciences and education programs typically require unpaid internships or practica.
- **Credit-Bearing Internships:** Numerous programs tie internships directly to course credit, with structured requirements for hours worked, employer supervision, and faculty approval.
- **Innovative Models and Partnerships:** Institutions offer service learning, externships, small business incubator placements, Wolves at Work (paid healthcare internships), and Nexus degrees that embed large internship components (LSUS in development).

10. What is the goal of the Career Services Office?

- **Career Services Mission:** Offices aim to prepare students for lifelong career success through counseling, advising, skill-building, and connections with employers.

- **Student Readiness:** Emphasis on developing job search skills, professional identity, and confidence to transition smoothly from college to the workforce.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Many institutions highlight internships, apprenticeships, and employer partnerships as essential pathways to career readiness.
- **Serving All Students:** Most institutions express a commitment to serving all students, including underserved and non-traditional populations, by providing broad career exploration and opportunities.

11. Who does the Career Services Office serve?

- All enrolled students plus alumni: 38%
- All students, alumni, and community members: 24%
- All students at any level: 18%
- Other: 20%
 - Southern University Law Center (SULC) specified *SULC students only*.
 - LSU Health New Orleans noted *Medical School students only*.
 - Some LCTCS institutions identified *Adult Education programs* as part of their service population.
 - One institution indicated they serve *Students (Degree Programs, Workforce, and Adult Education), Alumni, and Staff Members*.

12. In which ways does the Career Services Office serve/prepare/education students in career readiness? (Check all that apply)

- One-on-one appointments: 31 responses
- Workshops and programming: 31 responses
- Print resources (career guides, worksheets, handouts): 30 responses
- Class presentations: 30 responses
- Drop-in/triage appointments: 27 responses
- Integrations into curricula: 22 responses
- Group appointments: 20 responses
- Comprehensive education website: 19 responses
- Learning modules via Moodle, Canvas, etc.: 16 responses
- Co-curricular integrations: 16 responses
- Peer advising: 14 responses
- Asynchronous resources that leverage AI (resume review tools, interview tools, etc.): 12 responses
- Other: 3 responses
 - Developing a Canvas course
 - Guided Reflection on Work program
 - Resume writing and search tools

13. What types of services does your institution utilize? (Check all that apply):

- One-on-one coaching: 30 responses
- By appointment: 30 responses
- Other: 12
 - **Expanded Offerings:** Services include peer advising, expert-in-residence programs, faculty partnerships, workshops, class presentations, and career services days.
 - **Accessibility:** Many institutions tailor services for non-traditional, commuter, and online students through virtual and hybrid delivery.

14. Which of the following does your institution facilitate to connect students with employers? (Check all that apply):

- Career fairs: 32 responses
- Job board: 27 responses
- On-campus interviewing program: 24 responses
- Employer information sessions: 24 responses
- Employer table sits: 22 responses
- Employer integrated into career preparation activities: 20 responses
- Student organizations and employer connections: 19 responses
- Corporate partner program (sponsorships): 16 responses
- Employers connected to capstone projects: 13 responses
- Consulting services to employers regarding engagement on your campus: 11 responses
- Other: 5 responses
 - Newsletter
 - Grants

15. Open-ended description of options in #14.

- **Career Fairs:** Institutions host multiple fairs each year, ranging from large all-majors events to niche fairs in business, STEM, health, and technical fields, drawing hundreds of employers and students.
- **Employer Engagement:** Employers connect with students through job boards (Handshake), on-campus interviews, information sessions, table sits, classroom presentations, and capstone collaborations.
- **Work-Based Learning and Partnerships:** Many programs integrate employers into internships, mock interviews, career prep workshops, advisory boards, and corporate partner programs that provide scholarships, mentorship, and sponsorships.

- **Student Access:** Career services ensure students have multiple pathways, from fairs to job boards to direct employer contact, to explore opportunities and build professional networks.

16. Does the Office of Career Services engage with the local or state chamber?

- Yes: 38%
- No: 44%
- Not Sure: 18%

17. How are internships managed on campus?

- **Internship Management:** Most institutions manage internships at the department or program level, often supported by Career Services for postings, employer connections, and student preparation.
- **Data Collection:** Internship data is fragmented, captured through tools like Symplicity/Handshake, employer reports, faculty tracking, and surveys, with no consistent central system at many institutions.
- **Growth and Participation:** Internship participation has grown significantly in recent years, with expanding employer partnerships.
- **Challenges and Future Goals:** Key challenges include decentralization, limited staffing, and inconsistent tracking; strategic plans call for centralizing internships under Career Services to improve data access and employer engagement.

18. How do partnerships and/or collaborative work with local businesses occur?

- **Everyday Collaboration:** Higher education institutions work daily with employers through calls, meetings, and site visits, often co-developing programs like apprenticeships and industry-led instruction.
- **Events and Outreach:** Partnerships occur via career fairs, networking events, classroom presentations, guest speakers, mentorship, and panel discussions.
- **Work-Based Learning:** Employers provide internships, job shadowing, cooperative education, and project-based learning opportunities that align academics with workforce needs.
- **Community and Advisory Boards:** Local chambers, advisory boards, and industry associations play a central role in sustaining partnerships and aligning curricula with labor market demands.

19. Does the institution receive feedback from businesses on collaborations?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%

20. If yes, what does the feedback indicate?

- **Positive Employer Feedback:** Businesses consistently commend students for professionalism, preparedness, technical ability, and eagerness to learn.
- **Key Improvement Areas:** Employers highlight the need to strengthen soft skills (communication, teamwork, adaptability) and expand exposure to industry-specific technologies.
- **Structured Feedback Channels:** Feedback is gathered via surveys, advisory boards, career fair evaluations, and direct dialogue, helping institutions adjust programs and services.
- **Actionable Insights:** Employers request clearer single points of contact, more staff/resources for career services, and expanded work-based learning to strengthen pipelines.

21. Does the Career Services Office have annual goals and/or metrics for which they are accountable?

- Yes: 80%
- No: 20%

22. If yes, please provide examples of the metrics.

- **Student Engagement Growth:** Career services track advising sessions, event attendance, platform use (Handshake, Focus2Career), and student satisfaction, showing strong increases in engagement year over year.
- **Employment Outcomes:** Metrics include placement rates (e.g., 90% within nine months), graduate salaries, and first-destination survey data, ensuring accountability for student success.
- **Skill Development and Readiness:** Programs measure resume reviews, mock interviews, workshops, and networking strategies, with benchmarks for student competency gains.
- **Employer and Community Partnerships:** Offices monitor employer engagement, internships, and recruiting participation, often linking goals to strategic plans and accreditation standards

23. Are there any areas in which you feel the institution needs support to complete this work?

- **Staffing Needs:** Many institutions report being understaffed, sometimes just one person serving thousands of students, making it difficult to sustain partnerships, employer outreach, and student support.
- **Resource Gaps:** Additional funding, technology upgrades, and professional development are needed to expand career services, host more events, and improve tracking of outcomes.

- **Employer and Community Engagement:** Institutions want more structured support to expand employer networks, integrate career services into strategic plans, and strengthen pipelines that keep graduates in Louisiana.

24. Do you have any additional comments to share related to this survey?

- **Funding and Staffing Challenges:** National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) benchmarks and institutional feedback highlight insufficient budgets and staff, leaving students with limited career support.
- **High Value of Career Services:** Institutions stress the critical role career professionals play in preparing students, building employer connections, and advancing state workforce goals.
- **Need for Awareness and Support:** Calls for greater institutional recognition, professional development, and statewide alignment (Task Force work) to sustain progress.
- **Campus Commitment:** Despite resource gaps, institutions express strong dedication to career readiness, with some emerging as proactive models.

Completed Survey Responses

The survey was distributed on September 5, 2025, with a completion deadline of September 24, 2025. Listed below are all higher education institutions that submitted responses.

Louisiana Community and Technical College System
1. Baton Rouge Community College
2. Bossier Parish Community College
3. Nunez Community College
4. Fletcher Technical Community College
5. Louisiana Delta Community College
6. River Parishes Community College
7. South Louisiana Community College
8. SOWELA Technical Community College
9. Northshore Technical Community College
10. Central Louisiana Technical Community College
11. Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College
Southern System
12. Southern University and A&M College
13. Southern University Law School
14. Southern University at New Orleans
15. Southern University at Shreveport
LSU System
16. Louisiana State University and A&M College
17. Louisiana State University of Alexandria
18. Louisiana State University Eunice
19. Louisiana State University Shreveport

20. LSU Health Shreveport
21. LSU Health New Orleans
University of Louisiana System
22. McNeese State University
23. Nicholls State University
24. Northwestern State University
25. Southeastern Louisiana University
26. University of Louisiana at Lafayette
27. University of Louisiana at Monroe
28. University of New Orleans
Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
29. Centenary College of Louisiana
30. Dillard University
31. Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University
32. Louisiana Christian University
33. Loyola University New Orleans
34. Tulane University
35. University of Holy Cross