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**Regents Calls for Review of Excessive Hours for Degrees**

*Action sparks education leaders' discussions*

BATON ROUGE, La. –Intensive work initiated by the Board of Regents calling for Louisiana's college and university systems to review the number of hours being required to obtain a degree is producing results. This week, both the LSU Board of Supervisors and the Blue Ribbon Commission on Educational Excellence are discussing the need to streamline degree requirements in order to ensure that students can complete their studies in four years. In addition to the action being taken this week, the University of Louisiana System's Council of Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs endorsed a system-wide 120 hour degree requirement standard and tasked their university provosts to pare down the number of hours required to earn a four year degree at their eight universities.

Several months ago, Regents asked the systems to begin to audit their degree programs for excessive hours as a way to improve graduation numbers and to decrease college costs for both students and the state.

“This is one of many steps that will be necessary as we increase our graduation rates, maintain a high level of program quality and implement the Governor's LA GRAD Act,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Sally Clausen. “Identifying degree programs that have, over time, increased the number of hours required of students allows campuses to evaluate programs for both quality and efficiency. I am pleased that our efforts have been a catalyst for this week's discussions. The Blue Ribbon Commission, the LSU Board of Supervisors and the University of Louisiana System have all taken positive steps in response to this request to eliminate excessive hours and should be commended for their proactive approach.”

The LSU Board of Supervisors is expected to vote on a resolution Friday during their regular meeting that seeks to standardize the number of course credits required to earn a bachelor's degree at 120 hours. While the resolution stipulates 120 credit hours as the standard for earning a bachelor degree, there are several programs that will continue to require more hours due primarily to accreditation requirements.

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Meanwhile, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Educational Excellence today recommended that staff members from the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education work to develop an appropriate policy to limit the number of credit hours required for some undergraduate teacher preparation programs to 120.

These steps to streamline program requirements are timely as the Board of Regents continues to coordinate the development of a statewide transfer degree. In August, a Statewide Articulation Transfer Council was formed with faculty and system leaders from all management boards as members to establish a degree transferable between public two-year and four-year institutions. As early as this fall, students who complete 60 hours of prescribed courses at a community college and obtain a Transfer Associate's Degree can transfer to a public four-year university and immediately enroll with junior status in most majors.

“These efforts are all interconnected and designed to meet our ultimate goal of increasing educational attainment in Louisiana,” said Commissioner Clausen. “This is about serving students to the best of our ability in order to meet the state's current and future workforce needs.”

The Southern University System and Louisiana Community and Technical College System are conducting similar reviews of their academic programs.

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