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LSU Eunice Loses Tuition Authority for Failing GRAD Act

BATON ROUGE, La – Designations approved by the Board of Regents today indicate Louisiana State University Eunice (LSU-E) failed to achieve the progress necessary to pass the GRAD Act which ties performance to annual tuition authority as well as 15% of a campuses funding formula allocation. Also, as allowed in the Board of Regents’ GRAD Act Annual Evaluation Process, Southern University Shreveport (SUSLA) has appealed its preliminary designation of having failed to make sufficient progress. All other public colleges and universities were successful in meeting the targets outlined in their GRAD Act agreements and are now authorized to raise tuition 10% for the 2012-13 school year and will retain 100% of their formula dollars.

“GRAD Act continues to be an important tool for the higher education community to not only evaluate our performance, but also to hold ourselves publicly accountable for the success of the students we serve,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell. “We will be working with those who need to make additional improvements to get them back on track and we look forward to providing guidance in identifying some specific strategies for growth.”

Under the GRAD Act, which was approved by the Legislature in 2010, Regents enters into six-year agreements which set institution specific targets, including annual performance measures that result in educational improvements by the end of the timeline. Regents monitors the annual performance of each institution and submits a report to the Legislature and the Governor no later than July 15th. Regents may revoke a GRAD Act agreement with a college or university at any time for failure to abide by the terms.

Institutions submitted system-certified annual reports to Regents in May which were reviewed by staff for completeness as well as data verification before being scored on up to 62 individual measurements. The GRAD Act includes four performance objectives—student success, articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and institutional efficiency and accountability. Because each institution has its own targets for progress, it is measured against its own improvement plan during the annual review process. However, each campus MUST achieve successful attainment of the student success objective in order to retain its tuition authority and autonomy eligibility.

At the end of the scoring process, each institution is given an evaluation designation based on the score for each performance objective. This year, only LSU-E received a RED designation while all others received a GREEN designation. SUSLA’s designation is under appeal and will be considered by Regents no later than their August meeting.

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Below is a definition for each evaluation designation:

GREEN – Institution has passed the Student Success Objective and two or three other GRAD Act performance objectives. This allows the institution to retain tuition authority for the next academic year and makes the institution eligible for autonomies.

RED – Institution has failed the Student Success Objective or has failed all performance objectives. The institution loses the ability to raise tuition in the next academic year or seek autonomies. This designation will also require the institution to submit through their management board a remediation plan to the Board of Regents outlining the specific action to be taken to get the institution “back on track” to achieve its Student Success Performance Objective.

LSU-Eunice received a GRAD Act designation of RED based upon not meeting 3 of 5 Student Success targets. (1st to 2nd year retention rate, same institution graduation rate and statewide graduation rate)

“It will be important moving forward that campuses and systems evaluate how to implement current and future budget reductions,” cautioned Board of Regents Chairman Bob Levy. “Institutions that have eliminated services that directly impact student progression will find it more and more difficult to meet their GRAD Act targets. Certainly, we must all continue to focus on our core mission of ensuring students leave our colleges and universities with a credential.”

Under the Board of Regents’ GRAD Act Intervention Policy, 15% of LSU-E’s funding formula allocation (\$767,955) will be retained by the LSU System in a GRAD Act Remediation and Performance Improvement Fund Escrow Account. LSU-E can earn up to 75% of the withheld performance funding by entering into and meeting the requirements of a GRAD Act Improvement Contract containing activities the institution will complete to address the failed targets. The remaining 25% performance funding can be redistributed by the LSU System to institutions which have passed GRAD Act for activities designed to improve retention, graduation or completions.

At the conclusion of the one-year GRAD Act Improvement Contract, if a RED institution is determined by the Board of Regents to have met the terms of the Contract, the GRAD Act Performance Improvement Contract is terminated, reinstating the management board and the institution to the existing terms of the GRAD Act Agreement for the balance of the six-year term.

Institution specific GRAD Act agreements can be found at www.regents.state.la.us by clicking on the GRAD Act logo. Updated files containing Year 2 evaluation data will be posted when Regents completes the report to the Legislature and the Governor no later than July 15th.

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