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Governance Commission Elects Leadership and Sets Future Agenda

BATON ROUGE, La –Members of the Governance Commission elected leadership and approved their schedule for the next five months during their inaugural meeting today. As chair, Greg Davis of Lafayette will lead the efforts of the commission to study and make recommendations to the legislature on issues including governance, the performance funding formula, articulation and transfer, and tuition. Sean Reilly of Baton Rouge will serve as vice-chair.

“To me, higher education is a complex business and today’s meeting was a great opportunity to get us oriented,” said Chairman Davis. “One of our commissioners described this process in terms of his work as a physician. He said we have to analyze our patient’s needs and study its history in order to diagnose the problem and then prescribe a solution. As we hear from the experts in the coming months they need to not only provide data and information to us but also paint the historical picture so that we can better position our higher education institutions for the future.”

“We have a lot to do in a short period of time and I believe we will have to talk about some difficult issues,” said Vice Chairman Reilly. “We need to look at whether clear lines of authority exist in higher education and whether culturally are we functioning in that way.”

Today’s meeting of the commission focused on providing a basic context for and information on public postsecondary education in Louisiana for the newly appointed members. Dr. Aimes McGuinness with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems specifically gave an over-arching presentation on different governance structures across the nation as well as guiding principles for the commission to use in deliberations:

- Focus first on the ends, not the means.
- Be explicit about specific problems that are catalysts for reorganization proposals.
- Undertake reorganization only if it the most effective means for addressing the identified problems.
- Weigh the cost of reorganization against the short-term and long-term benefits.
- Distinguish between state coordination and system or institutional governance/management.
- Examine the total policy structure and process, including the role of the Governor, Executive Branch Agencies and the Legislature, rather than only the formal postsecondary education structure.

“If you get the right information, you’ll come up with good answers,” said Dr. McGuinness. “There is not one, specific, ideal model I can point you towards because each structure addresses that individual state’s history, culture and circumstance. It’s important to look at the state over a long period of time. I think this state has made great progress although there is always room for continued improvement as is the case with your state.”

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PAGE 2-GOVERNANCE COMMISSION MEETING

The Commission also approved a timeline of future meeting dates in order to submit the required report to the legislature no later than January 12, 2012. Meetings scheduled to date are:

September 28-29
October 24-25
November 28-29
December 12

The 18-member Governance Commission was established as a result of House Concurrent Resolution 184 of the 2011 Legislative Session and was authored by Representatives Thomas Carmody and John Schroder. Representatives Carmody and Schroder addressed the commission members and encouraged them to work diligently in order to guide the legislature in their decisions concerning the future of higher education in Louisiana.

“Every citizen of this state is interested in the direction of education because it is the future of our people and it impacts whether we live or die economically,” said Representative Carmody. “This exercise is an important critique. I am not here to criticize because we all have much to learn. Self critiques are a good thing.”

“Higher ed needs drastic reform in Louisiana and we are not making changes fast enough,” said Representative Schroder. “I think improving education is the key to the future of Louisiana and it’s time for an accountable system with the appropriate infrastructure and funding. I see no bigger issue in this state. I ask this commission to leave no stone unturned, and we look forward to your suggestions.”

“Today’s meeting laid a solid foundation for the commission to begin its important work,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Jim Purcell. “Regents looks forward to providing additional data and expertise to the commission so it can fulfill its charge of recommending innovative solutions for the challenges facing our higher education enterprise.”

Those unable to attend the meetings in person can watch the proceedings live via the internet at <http://streaming.louisiana.gov>. Additional information concerning the commission including membership, future meeting dates and presentations can be found on the Board of Regents website, www.regents.la.gov, under the “Administration” section.

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