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Governor-Elect Blanco Congratulates Regents, BESE On Collaborative Educational Achievements

Governor-elect Kathleen Blanco applauded the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) today for their collaborative successes in educational reform and highlighted several priorities of her administration's educational agenda. The governor-elect was a guest at a joint meeting of the two statewide education boards in Baton Rouge.

"We will continue to work to change the face of education in Louisiana for good, and our students will reap the rewards," Blanco said. "I appreciate the excellent work you have done in elementary and secondary education and in postsecondary education. I assure you that we will not stray from the path you have created. Louisiana has begun to receive national recognition for our educational reform efforts, but the measure of our success will be student performance. We've seen many pockets of success, but we still have many places of need."

Governor-Elect Blanco said that her administration will continue to focus on pre-kindergarten education because she regards it as a key to educational and economic success. She also stressed the importance of the continuing development of Louisiana's growing Community and Technical College System both because of its role as a postsecondary education entry point for Louisiana's students and because its success is a prerequisite for the state's four-year institutions to realize their missions.

"Education is the key to economic success," Blanco said. "Indeed, educational success *is* economic success."

After thanking Governor-Elect Blanco for her expression of support, Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie and Superintendent of Education Cecil Picard used the opportunity presented by the joint board meeting to highlight specific PK-16 collaborative reform initiative successes. The work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality received particular recognition. Among the accomplishments that resulted from the work of the Commission have been the redesign of all Louisiana teacher education programs, the streamlining of the alternate teacher certification process for non-education majors, the statewide creation of PK-16 councils, and the institution of Professional Development Schools aimed at fostering working partnerships between university colleges of education and local school districts.

Governor-Elect Applauds Regents, BESE
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“The work of the Blue Ribbon Commission is particularly noteworthy,” said Superintendent Picard. “As a result of the Commission’s commitment and tireless efforts, every teacher education program in our state, public and private, has been redesigned to ensure that our graduates know their subject areas and that they are prepared for the challenges of the real-world classroom.”

Also lauded at the meeting was the proliferation in secondary schools of early college awareness and academic readiness efforts such as the Regents-sponsored Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS).

“PK-16 collaboration has also yielded promising success in the critically important realm of early college awareness and academic preparation,” said Commissioner Savoie. “The Board of Regents has seen to it that every school district in the state is provided ACT’s Educational Planning and Assessment System, a series of academic readiness assessments, beginning in the eighth grade, designed to help students identify their academic strengths and weaknesses and take measures to ensure that they address college readiness skills gaps well before their junior and senior years. The program, now in its third year, has shown great promise.”

At the regular Board of Regents meeting, which followed the joint meeting, the Board of Regents approved a new system-wide policy standardizing the minimum ACT area scores required for enrollment in entry-level college English and mathematics. Beginning with the Fall 2005 semester (the same date that the new, more stringent minimum admissions standards will take effect across the state), the minimum ACT area score for both English and math will now be 18 at all Louisiana colleges and universities.

“Until now, the minimum ACT scores required to place out of developmental English or math varied widely and arbitrarily from institution to institution around the state,” said Commissioner Savoie. “These new, more consistent standards bring Louisiana more in line with the southern regional average requirements. More importantly, they help ensure that students graduating from high school know what’s expected of them when they enter a Louisiana public four-year university.”

In a special presentation, the Board of Regents honored Dr. Norman Hackerman, former president of the University of Texas at Austin and President Emeritus, Rice University, for his valuable service to Louisiana as a member of the Louisiana Educational Quality Support Fund Advisory Council.

The Board also approved the second and final distribution of a total of \$5 million appropriated by the Legislature for the continued development of LCTCS and the state’s two Academic Centers (in Jefferson and Rapides Parishes). In August, \$4,297,593 was distributed from the Pool Fund. Today, the remaining \$702,407 was distributed to individual campuses based on enrollment growth.

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