

**(KEYWORD, SUMMARY, AND DIGEST as amended by Senate committee amendments)**

**TOPS. Provides for a uniform information reporting system and for certain notifications to parents of public elementary and secondary school students.**

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DIGEST

Proposed law, relative to TOPS, requires the Board of Regents to formulate, develop, establish, and implement a uniform information system for the purposes of policy analysis and program evaluation and for providing accurate data and statistics to the legislature, the governor and appropriate executive branch agencies, and the public relative to the program’s impact on the state and on students. Requires that the board consult with and seek written recommendations from the La. Student Financial Assistance Commission, each college or university eligible for participation in TOPS, each public postsecondary education management board, the La. Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, legislators, and knowledgeable others as determined by the board.

States legislative intent that the reporting system and its requirements shall be applicable to all TOPS applicants, all award recipients regardless of eligible college or university attended, and all such eligible colleges and universities. Specifies that effective for the 2002-2003 award year and thereafter, compliance with the information reporting system shall be a condition for an eligible college or university to remain eligible to receive payments from the state on behalf of an award recipient. Requires the Board of Regents to make compliance determinations annually.

Requires that the information reporting system include but not be limited to the following:

- (1) A report prepared as of the end of the Fall semester and again as of the end of the Spring semester (or equivalent periods of time) during each academic year relative to the rate of retention of program awards by students as they progress from semester to semester or other equivalent periods of time as may be applicable once enrolled at an eligible college or university. Provides that the data shall be reported by institution attended, by the two digit classification of instructional program, and by program award category and include the percent of students losing program eligibility due to not earning the minimum number of credit hours, the percent of students losing program eligibility due to not having the required cumulative grade point average, and the percent of students losing program eligibility for failing to make steady academic progress.
- (2) The persistence rates at colleges and universities of freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students receiving a program award reported by award category and by award year.
- (3) The graduation rates or rates of completion of the chosen postsecondary education program if otherwise applicable for students

receiving a program award, reported by award category and award year, including for those graduating with an academic degree at the baccalaureate level the rate for persons graduating within four years, within five years, and within six years, respectively.

- (4) The mean length of time required for a student receiving a program award to graduate with an academic degree at the baccalaureate level or to complete the chosen postsecondary education program if otherwise applicable with such information being reported by award category and by award year.
- (5) An annual report on the number of applicants as well as the percent of high school graduates by high school and by parish who apply for a program award, by award category, and the percent of those students who subsequently enroll in a college or university.
- (6) Statistical studies on the relationship between the courses taken and grades earned by a high school student and the student's score on the ACT or SAT which, relative to public high schools, shall use student course and grade data that is otherwise available from the schools and at no cost to the governing authorities of public high schools.

Permits the Board of Regents, consistent with the general provisions of proposed law and when necessary due to certain data limitations, to modify any specific requirement of proposed law relative to the information reporting system. Provides that prior to making any such modifications the board shall report in writing to the House and Senate education committees on the proposed action and shall have received approval from each committee relative to the proposed action.

Proposed law additionally requires that the governing authority of every public secondary school include information relative to TOPS and program eligibility requirements in every student's Five Year Educational Plan which present law requires be prepared by the end of the eighth grade year. Further requires that the parent or other person responsible for the student's school attendance be required to return a signed notice that such information has been reviewed and expresses the intent of the parent as to whether or not the student will be pursuing the program required for TOPS eligibility.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 17:3048.3 and 3048.4)

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

##### House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill.

1. Adds provision permitting the Board of Regents, within certain guidelines and limitations, to modify any specific requirement relative to the information reporting system.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the reengrossed bill.

1. Specifies that relative to public high schools, the required statistical studies be done with course and grade data that is otherwise available and at no cost to such school's governing authorities.
2. Deletes requirement that the Board of Regents get written response from the Senate and House education committees prior to modifying any reporting requirements and requires instead that they get the committees' approval.
3. Replaces provisions for a special notification to the parents of 6th graders about TOPS requirement with a requirement that the information be included in an already required Five Year Plan done for each student at the end of 8th grade.