

2026 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 304

BY SENATOR EDMONDS

COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES. Provides for accreditation for public colleges and universities. (gov sig)

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 17:3125.1 and Chapter 25-B of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of
3 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 17:3171 through 3176, relative to public post
4 secondary institutions and governing boards; to authorize the Board of Regents to set
5 policy regarding accreditation of public postsecondary institutions; to authorize
6 public postsecondary management boards to select an accreditor under certain
7 circumstances; to provide for coordination between the Board of Regents and public
8 postsecondary management boards; to provide for implementation; to provide for
9 electronic notification by certain institutions of higher education; to provide for
10 powers; to provide for duties; to provide for prohibitions; to provide for definitions;
11 to direct the Louisiana State Law Institute to make technical changes; to provide for
12 an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

13 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

14 Section 1. R.S. 17:3125.1 and Chapter 25-B of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised
15 Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 17:3171 through 3176, are hereby enacted to read as
16 follows:

17 **§3125.1. Accreditation; powers of the Board of Regents**

1 The Board of Regents shall have the power to set policy regarding the
2 accreditation of all public postsecondary institutions, as provided in Chapter
3 25-B of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950.

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5 CHAPTER 25-B. ACCREDITATION OF
6 PUBLIC POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

7 §3171. Application

8 Except as otherwise specifically provided by law, this Chapter shall
9 govern the accreditation of all public postsecondary institutions.

10 §3172. Definitions

11 As used in this Chapter, the following terms have the following meanings
12 unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

13 (1) "Board of Regents" means the coordinating body for public
14 postsecondary education that oversees policies, budgets, academic program
15 approval, and facility planning for all Louisiana universities, community
16 colleges, and technical schools, pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5 of the
17 Constitution of Louisiana and R.S. 17:3121.

18 (2) "Management board" means a governing board of a public
19 postsecondary education institution that is responsible for supervising the
20 day-to-day operations of such institutions under the overall jurisdictional
21 planning and budgetary authority of the Louisiana Board of Regents. Article
22 VIII of the Constitution of Louisiana provides that the management boards are
23 the Board of Supervisors of Louisiana State University and Agricultural and
24 Mechanical College, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana
25 System, the Board of Supervisors of Southern University and Agricultural and
26 Mechanical College, and the Board of Supervisors of Community and Technical
27 Colleges.

28 (3) "Public postsecondary institution" or "institution" means a public
29 college or university that is under the jurisdiction of a management board for

1 postsecondary education created by or under authority of the Constitution of
2 Louisiana.

3 §3173. Powers of the Board of Regents; coordination with management boards

4 A. In coordination with each management board of a public
5 postsecondary institution, the Board of Regents shall have the power to set
6 policy regarding each of the following:

7 (1) Accreditation of public postsecondary institutions.

8 (2) Specialized accreditation of any individual program or unit at a
9 public postsecondary institution where such accreditation is required.

10 B. The Board of Regents shall adopt policies to allow a public
11 postsecondary institution, subject to the approval of the institution's
12 management board, to seek a new institutional accreditor from a list of
13 accreditors recognized by the United States Department of Education or to seek
14 a new specialized accreditor from a list of specialized accreditors maintained by
15 the Board of Regents.

16 C. The Board of Regents, in coordination with the management boards,
17 shall develop a process of changing an institutional accreditor in a manner that
18 ensures that a public postsecondary institution remains accredited at all times
19 by an accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education.

20 D. With respect to specialized accreditation of an individual program or
21 unit, the Board of Regents shall do all of the following:

22 (1) Identify a list of units, programs, and professional schools that
23 require specialized accreditation and a corresponding list of recognized
24 accreditors.

25 (2) Adopt policies, in coordination with the management boards, to
26 ensure that each program or unit requiring specialized accreditation remains
27 accredited at all times by an accreditor from the list of accreditors maintained
28 by the Board of Regents.

29 §3174. Process for accreditation; applications; accreditors

1 **A. A public postsecondary institution may seek a new accreditor for the**
2 **institution or for a specialized program or unit so long as the selection of an**
3 **accreditor and the process of seeking accreditation complies with this Chapter.**

4 **B. If a public postsecondary institution seeks a new accreditor, the**
5 **institution shall apply for approval with the institution's management board.**

6 **C. The public postsecondary institution shall seek an accreditor that**
7 **prioritizes all of the following:**

8 **(1) Promotes credential success and workforce outcomes.**

9 **(2) Promotes educational quality and affordability.**

10 **(3) Promotes financial stability of the public postsecondary institutions.**

11 **(4) Ensures appropriate accountability through a rigorous annual review**
12 **of the faculty.**

13 **D. The management board may not approve an accreditor unless the**
14 **accreditor has agreed, in writing, that the accreditor will not condition the**
15 **initial accreditation and will not condition any continued accreditation upon**
16 **any violation of law, as prohibited in R.S. 17:3175.**

17 **§3175. Management boards of public postsecondary institutions**

18 **A. If a public postsecondary institution applies for a new accreditor, as**
19 **provided in R.S. 17:3173, the management board shall do all of the following:**

20 **(1) Review the institution's application and determine if the proposed**
21 **accreditor meets the standards and requirements set forth in this Chapter.**

22 **(2) Determine if the application for a new accreditor complies with the**
23 **policies set forth by the Board of Regents, as provided in R.S. 17:3172.**

24 **B. With respect to a public postsecondary institution's accreditor or any**
25 **application for a new accreditor, the management board shall, in coordination**
26 **with the Board of Regents, do all of the following:**

27 **(1) Ensure that each public postsecondary institution that is under the**
28 **management board's jurisdiction shall post on the institution's website the**
29 **status of its accreditation and other documentation that the management board**

1 deems relevant that has been submitted to the accreditor to gain or maintain
 2 accreditation.

3 (2) Specify the manner and frequency that the institution is to notify or
 4 update the public on the progress of reaccreditation with the same accreditor
 5 or the process of accreditation with a new accreditor through the institution's
 6 website.

7 §3176. Prohibited accreditors

8 Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, no
 9 accreditor may be chosen that conditions accreditation upon any violation of the
 10 Constitution of Louisiana or any state law.

11 Section 2. The Louisiana State Law Institute, pursuant to its statutory authority, is
 12 hereby directed to delete "Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on
 13 Colleges" and replace with "accreditor recognized by the United States Department of
 14 Education" in R.S. 17:3164, 3223, 3351.17, and 5029 and in any other Section in Title 17
 15 or in any other Section or Code of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950.

16 Section 3. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
 17 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
 18 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
 19 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
 20 effective on the day following such approval.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part
 of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services.
 The keyword, summary, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof
 or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

DIGEST

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Present law provides that public colleges and universities are to be accredited by the
 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Proposed law provides that a public college or university may seek a new accreditor for the
 institution or may seek a new accreditor for a specialized program or unit so long as the
 selection of an accreditor and the process of seeking accreditation complies with proposed
law.

Proposed law provides that, in coordination with each higher education management board,

the Bd. of Regents has the power to set policy regarding accreditation of colleges and universities. Proposed law provides that Bd. of Regents is to adopt policies to allow colleges and universities, subject to the approval of their higher education management board, to seek a new institutional accreditor from a list of accreditors recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education. Proposed law provides that the Bd. of Regents is to identify a list of units, programs, and professional schools that require specialized accreditation and a corresponding list of recognized accreditors.

Proposed law provides that, if a college or university seeks a new accreditor, then the institution is to apply for approval with their institution's higher education management board. Proposed law further provides that any new accreditor must:

- (1) Promote credential success and workforce outcomes.
- (2) Promote educational quality and affordability.
- (3) Promote financial stability of the public postsecondary institutions.
- (4) Ensure appropriate accountability through a rigorous annual review of the faculty.

Proposed law provides that the higher education management board may not approve a new accreditor unless the accreditor meets the standards set in proposed law.

Proposed law provides that, if a college or university seeks a new accreditor, the management board is to coordinate with the Bd. of Regents to do all that is necessary to gain or maintain accreditation and update the public on the college or university's website as to the progress of accreditation with a new accreditor.

Proposed law requires that no accreditor may be chosen that conditions accreditation upon any violation of the La. Constitution or any state law.

Proposed law changes accreditation references in present law from "Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges" to "an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education".

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

(Add R.S. 17:3125.1, and 3171-3176)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

Committee Amendments Proposed by Senate Committee on Education to the original bill

1. Requires Bd. of Regents to list specialized accreditation requirements.