

Regular Session, 2011

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 121

BY REPRESENTATIVES CARTER, AUSTIN BADON, BARRAS, BURFORD, TIM BURNS, CARMODY, CHAMPAGNE, CONNICK, CORTEZ, DANAHAY, ELLINGTON, FOIL, HARRISON, HENRY, KLECKLEY, LEGER, LIGI, LOPINTO, LORUSSO, MORRIS, NOWLIN, PEARSON, PUGH, RICHARD, ROY, SCHRODER, SEABAUGH, TALBOT, AND THIBAUT

HIGHER ED/BD REGENTS: Establishes an understanding between the Board of Regents and the La. Legislature regarding the future of higher education in La.

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To establish an understanding and shared vision between the Board of Regents and the
3 Louisiana Legislature regarding the future of higher education in Louisiana.

4 WHEREAS, in order to provide a quality, cost-effective, and successful
5 postsecondary education system in the state of Louisiana, the Board of Regents and the
6 Louisiana Legislature must have a shared vision, clear expectations, and an understanding
7 of the other's roles, duties, and responsibilities as they relate to postsecondary education, the
8 needs of students, the need for a competent and capable workforce, and the limitations on
9 the public fisc; and

10 WHEREAS, according to the Council for a Better Louisiana, "sustainability is
11 critical because with 14 four-year institutions, 11 two-year colleges and 40 technical college
12 campuses, post-secondary education in Louisiana is significantly larger than it was just 15
13 years ago" and "without strategic, targeted investment in state education priorities and smart
14 new thinking about how state tax dollars are spent" there is a foreseeable risk of "on going
15 budget reductions or little new support for post-secondary education"; and

16 WHEREAS, in 2009, the legislature established the Postsecondary Education Review
17 Commission (PERC) "... to review all aspects of postsecondary education in order to ensure
18 that the enterprise is operating efficiently, effectively, and in a manner that best serves
19 students, their families, and the state and to make recommendations for changes necessary

1 to ensure that the system is operating in that manner" and PERC issued a thorough report
2 with specific recommendations for improvement of postsecondary education in Louisiana;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, in 2010, the Louisiana Legislature, with the support of higher education
5 officials, the governor, and business leaders, enacted the LA GRAD (Granting Resources
6 and Autonomy for Diplomas) Act which grants colleges and universities increased autonomy
7 and flexibility in exchange for a commitment to meet clearly defined statewide performance
8 goals; and

9 WHEREAS, even before the work of PERC and the enactment of the LA GRAD Act,
10 the Louisiana Board of Regents recognized the importance of a strong community and
11 technical college system to meet the workforce needs of Louisiana employers and, as such,
12 in 1998 recommended the creation of such a system in order to provide cost-effective and
13 quality two-year and technical postsecondary education; and

14 WHEREAS, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has noted that Louisiana's
15 "economic future depends less on creating the next Research Triangle or Silicon Valley than
16 on repositioning state colleges to better meet the needs of established industries, including
17 shipbuilders and oil- and-gas companies" and "directing more people to community and
18 technical colleges would build a better work force by ensuring that more students graduate
19 with usable skills and at a price that fits the state's budget"; and

20 WHEREAS, Louisiana can now proudly say that the fundamentals are in place: a
21 strong and growing community and technical college system which is nimble and responsive
22 to short-term workforce needs; a robust regional university system, which is the backbone
23 of an educated, professional citizenry; and a world class, research I university where the
24 future is being charted; and

25 WHEREAS, Louisiana has not fully taken advantage of the fundamentals and
26 continues to lean too heavily on its universities for short-term workforce needs, and the
27 problems associated with this failure are many: universities lack clarity of mission because
28 they are expected to be all things to all students; proper attention is not being paid to long-
29 term social and economic health of the state because universities are distracted by pressures
30 to meet more immediate needs; too many students are being ill served by being forced to

1 borrow money to attend institutions for which they are not sufficiently prepared to be
2 successful and are then left with debt but no degree; and

3 WHEREAS, with the major elements of an outstanding public postsecondary
4 education system in place and broadly supported consensus that the way forward involves
5 making sure each student is enrolled at a level that is appropriate to his or her abilities and
6 interests, which, overall, will mean large increases in enrollment in the community and
7 technical colleges, now is a time for an aggressive push for the change of any and all policies
8 that restrain Louisiana from achieving its vision; and

9 WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana establishes a rather complex system of
10 governance of public postsecondary education, which can be a hindrance to change but
11 which in the current environment where the legislature, the Board of Regents, outside
12 observers, the PERC commission, and the citizens of Louisiana are all in agreement about
13 what change is needed will not be a hindrance so long as the goals and steps to be taken to
14 achieve those goals are precisely articulated and efforts to execute are coordinated; and

15 WHEREAS, in order to accomplish this "right-sizing" of postsecondary education
16 between four-year and two-year institutions, the Board of Regents has adopted policies
17 aimed at matching students with institutions based on the students' level of preparation and
18 institutional expectations; that primary among these policies is the Board of Regents'
19 minimum admission standards for four-year universities and a statewide course placement
20 policy implemented in the Fall 2005, and in 2010 the board further increased standards to
21 be implemented in 2012 and 2014; and

22 WHEREAS, these policies have already impacted and will continue to impact the
23 enrollment distribution between the two-year and the four-year institutions and that the
24 legislature fully supports this redistribution of students and encourages the Board of Regents
25 to continue its aggressive pursuit of this goal; and

26 WHEREAS, the Board of Regents and the legislature are also committed to ensuring
27 that developmental postsecondary education and associate degree programs are delivered
28 in the most cost-effective manner; and

29 WHEREAS, the LA GRAD Act and the Board of Regents, through implementation
30 of the LA GRAD Act and previously enacted policies, provide that developmental education

1 and associate degree programs will be delivered at the two-year institutions unless there is
2 a lack of capacity to provide such courses in a region; and

3 WHEREAS, the Board of Regents is committed to decreasing time to degree by
4 establishing policies that recognize time to degree as an important factor in producing an
5 educated workforce and recognize that coordinated and prescriptive course scheduling and
6 cohort programs have proven to reduce time to degree; and

7 WHEREAS, the Board of Regents has considered information, resolutions, and
8 proposals offered by the legislature, recommendations of PERC, and the benchmarks and
9 goals of the LA GRAD Act in establishing policies in its forthcoming update of the Board
10 of Regents "Master Plan" charting the future course of postsecondary higher education in
11 Louisiana; and

12 WHEREAS, pursuant to discussions with the Board of Regents, the legislature is
13 aware of certain concepts to be included in the Master Plan and applauds the inclusion
14 therein of the following: the development of "Regional Plans" that would redefine each
15 institution's role, scope, and mission; identification of areas of excellence; continued
16 evaluation of academic programs for duplication; and goals to increase degree production
17 by more than fifty percent by 2025; and

18 WHEREAS, the legislature believes that the collection and tracking of certain
19 information would be valuable in gauging success and determining an adequate and proper
20 level of funding, and the Board of Regents has expressed a need and willingness to expand
21 and make public such information which is to include: retention rates for first-time, full-
22 time, degree seeking students and transfer students; four-, six-, and eight-year graduation
23 rates for first-time, full-time degree seeking students and transfer students; average time for
24 first-time, full-time students to obtain a degree; fraction of undergraduate body graduating
25 each year with baccalaureate degrees or associate degrees; and number of graduates who
26 obtained employment to the extent allowed by law.

27 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
28 establish and record its understanding with the Board of Regents regarding the future of
29 higher education in Louisiana and encourage the continuation of candid and open
30 discussions between the two bodies.

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana urges and requests
2 the Board of Regents to aggressively and fully implement its previously established
3 admission standards, those standards the board set for implementation in 2012 and 2014, and
4 additional admission standards as warranted; that the board continue to ensure that
5 developmental education and associate degree programs be delivered by the two-year
6 institutions unless there is a lack of capacity in a region to do so; that the board include in
7 its Master Plan the concepts outlined in this Resolution; and that the board track the data
8 requested by the legislature.

9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents submit a written report of
10 its progress in all of these areas to the Senate Committee on Education and House
11 Committee on Education not later than March 1, 2012.

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents deliver a copy of the
13 updated Master Plan to the Louisiana Senate and House of Representatives before September
14 1, 2011.

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
16 chairman of the Board of Regents and the commissioner of higher education.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, 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)]

Carter

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