

**REPORT TO THE  
LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS**

**BOARD OF REGENTS/SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD  
GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY SUBPROGRAM  
OF THE  
BOARD OF REGENTS SUPPORT FUND  
FY 2016-17 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2017-18**

**Dr. John Mayfield, Chair  
Emeritus Professor  
Iowa State University**

**Dr. Charles Ambler  
Dean of the Graduate School  
University of Texas at El Paso**

**Dr. Roger Chalkley  
Senior Associate Dean for Biomedical Research Education and Training  
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine**

## INTRODUCTION

The review panel for the BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity subprogram met on March 4, 2017 to discuss and make funding recommendations relative to proposals submitted in the FY 2016-17 competition for awards to begin in FY 2017-18. Members of the panel were Dr. John Mayfield (Chair), Iowa State University; Dr. Roger Chalkley, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine; and Dr. Charles Ambler, University of Texas at El Paso.

Four (4) institutions submitted a total of four (4) proposals in the BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram. All proposals were submitted under the leadership of the institutions' graduate schools or their equivalent.

Prior to arriving in Baton Rouge, consultants individually read and evaluated each proposal according to the guidelines provided by the Louisiana Board of Regents in the FY 2016-17 BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram Request for Proposals. Each consultant assigned a preliminary rating to each proposal before the March meeting. Preliminary composite scores were then computed. These composite scores facilitated discussions at the meeting.

After thorough assessment of the merits of each proposal, the consultants established a rank order for all of the proposals and recommended a number of fellowship slots for each. Recommendations were made consistent with the limits of available funding allocated by the Board of Regents.

The total amount of first-year funds requested in the BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram was \$425,000. Consultants were advised that \$225,000 in first-year funding was budgeted for the subprogram.

The panel recommends that all four (4) proposals submitted under the BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram be funded in the amounts specified in Appendix A. Appendix B consists of brief narrative assessments of submitted proposals and Appendix C contains a listing of all proposals submitted to the subprogram.

The cumulative requests exceed the total amount of funding available. Panel members made every effort to make recommendations within established funding limitations as well as in accordance with the collective assessment of each proposal's individual merits. Reviewers sought to ascertain the degree to which each award could bring about the successful recruitment of underrepresented minority students in keeping with the subprogram's goal of increasing diversity and elevating academic success in the submitting institutions.

Once again, the panel members commend all involved in this ongoing endeavor to elevate the level of graduate study in Louisiana's institutions of higher education.

**The panel urges applicants to carefully review the summary critiques, included in this report, relating to the submitted proposals. Most summaries offer suggestions to help applicants design future proposals for external funding.**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING**

**Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund  
BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity Subprogram  
FY 2016-17 Cycle for Awards to Begin in FY 2017-18**

**TABLE I  
PROPOSALS RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Proposal No.</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Number of Fellowships Recommended</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total BoRSF Money Recommended</b>
1	001SREB-17	LSU A&M	4	1	\$100,000
				2	\$100,000
				3	\$100,000
				4	\$ 80,000
				TOTAL	\$380,000
2	003SREB-17	TULANE	3	1	\$ 75,000
				2	\$ 75,000
				3	\$ 75,000
				4	\$ 60,000
				TOTAL	\$285,000
3	004SREB-17	UL LAFAYETTE	1	1	\$ 25,000
				2	\$ 25,000
				3	\$ 25,000
				4	\$ 20,000
				TOTAL	\$ 95,000
4	002SREB-17	LA TECH	1	1	\$ 25,000
				2	\$ 25,000
				3	\$ 25,000
				4	\$ 20,000
				TOTAL	\$ 95,000

## **APPENDIX B**

### **NARRATIVE ASSESSMENTS**

**COMMENTS ON PROPOSALS SUBMITTED UNDER THE BOARD OF REGENTS/  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS  
TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY SUBPROGRAM IN FY 2016-17**

**001SREB-17 LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE**  
**“Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2017-21”**  
**Requested: 5 Fellowship Slots**

**Recommended: 4 Fellowship Slots for 4 years = \$380,000**

LSU A&M has committed to an ambitious program to expand the diversity of graduate programs, particularly PhD programs, across the campus. This effort is coupled with the institutional plan to grow graduate education substantially. The strategy has met with considerable success. Minority graduate enrollments have grown from 12% to 18% of the total and the numbers of minority applicants for PhD programs have also expanded markedly. The most recent data, however, suggest that the numbers of applicants admitted have leveled off. Nevertheless, the proportion of those admitted who enroll remains high. Attrition rates for minority students are slightly higher than for the general PhD student population—which, as the proposal acknowledges, are themselves too high. LSU A&M’s success can be attributed to a strong collaboration between the Graduate School and individual programs across campus, and a focus on programs in the social sciences. This collaboration effectively stretches limited dollars, both in recruitment initiatives and in a number of creative mentoring and retention programs. Nevertheless care must be taken that cultures of mentorship and support for underrepresented students are built into each program. The focus on outreach to Louisiana institutions and Louisiana students appears to be yielding impressive results. Funding is recommended for four fellowship slots.

**002SREB-17 LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY**  
**“Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2017-21”**  
**Requested: 4 Fellowship Slots**

**Recommended: 1 Fellowship Slot for 4 years = \$95,000**

This proposal from Louisiana Tech focuses on the institution’s PhD programs in Engineering and Psychology—which collectively enroll about 200 students, half of whom are U.S. citizens or residents. The proposal documents a strong commitment to diversity and highlights a number of powerful success stories. Though anecdotal evidence is compelling, systematic data about minority recruitment, retention, graduation and placement for each program would be more persuasive. Moreover, the proposal does not set out a comprehensive plan, involving each of the included programs, to expand the pools of underrepresented student applicants and the numbers of those admitted and graduated. Louisiana Tech has had reasonable success attracting minority students in some fields. Currently 17% of the domestic students enrolled in Engineering and Psychology PhD programs are from underrepresented backgrounds, which is an impressive number compared with many other institutions. But that proportion has not really changed in the last five years. It is also not clear what differences there might be between the Engineering programs on the one hand and Psychology on the other. The proposal might therefore be more effective if

it provided a better indication of the goals of the initiative and explanation of how BoR/SREB fellowships would provide leverage to achieve those goals. Funding is recommended for one fellowship slot.

**003SREB-17 TULANE UNIVERSITY**

**“Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University”**

**Requested: 5 Fellowship Slots**

**Recommended: 3 Fellowship Slots for 4 years = \$285,000**

This proposal from Tulane University requests support for five BoR/SREB fellowships across the university as a whole. The effort and thought behind the proposal are considerable. The centralization in the dean’s office reflects a commitment on behalf of the entire campus. However, this structure runs a serious risk of moving oversight and student support away from departments, which are responsible for the implementation of their plans. Nowhere is this more evident than in the outcomes over the last five to six years shown in form 5-SREB. The number of underrepresented minority students enrolled has barely budged over the entirety of this support; at the same time, overall underrepresented minority student attrition is greater than 50%, though performance of majority PhD candidates is not much better. There is a lot of talk about mentoring in the application, but the panel is concerned that real mentoring is difficult, expensive, and time-consuming for mentors (i.e., not an activity done in a faculty member’s spare time) and the proposal does not demonstrate a tangible commitment to implementing and sustaining such activities. Also of concern was the indication in the proposal that if the mentor sees that the student is not doing well, then the mentor will report this to the dean’s office. This runs the risk of being seen as punitive rather than supportive and, as such, might do significant harm to a close mentoring relationship. Nonetheless this institution is trying to think in supportive ways, which could yield significant benefits. Funding is recommended for three fellowship slots.

**004SREB-17 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE**

**“Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity and Inclusion at UL Lafayette”**

**Requested: 3 Fellowship Slots**

**Recommended: 1 Fellowship Slot for 4 years = \$95,000**

This proposal has undergone major revisions and presents a stronger argument than previous submissions for UL Lafayette’s efforts to recruit minority students. The proposal is limited to STEM fields, in which the number of underrepresented minority doctoral-level students has increased from 11 to 15. This achievement is modest, but is trending in the right direction. It seems that the extremely high dropout rate across the campus is finally being seen as a major problem to be aggressively addressed. This is a good start, but it will take time to determine whether central administrative efforts can change the university culture. The dropout rate for underrepresented minority STEM students shown in the table on page 5 of the narrative is disheartening; but the panel notes that SREB retention over the past five years has been good. This shows that with good mentoring and adequate support it may be possible to greatly improve the completion rates of all programs. A guaranteed fifth year of support for BoR/SREB fellows is an important innovation which should help retention. Funding is recommended for one fellowship slot.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED**

**BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity Program  
2016-17 Competition  
Proposals Submitted**

<b>Proposal #</b>	<b>PI Name(s)</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Proposal Title</b>	<b>Slots Requested</b>	<b>Funds Requested</b>
001SREB-17	Michelle Massé	LSU A&M	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2017-21	5	Y1: \$125,000 Y2: \$125,000 Y3: \$125,000 <u>Y4: \$100,000</u> Total: \$475,000
002SREB-17	Sheryl Shoemaker	Louisiana Tech	Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2017-21	4	Y1: \$100,000 Y2: \$100,000 Y3: \$100,000 <u>Y4: \$ 80,000</u> Total: \$380,000
003SREB-17	Michael Cunningham	Tulane	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	5	Y1: \$125,000 Y2: \$125,000 Y3: \$125,000 <u>Y4: \$100,000</u> Total: \$475,000
004SREB-17	Mary Farmer-Kaiser	UL Lafayette	Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity and Inclusion at UL Lafayette	3	Y1: \$75,000 Y2: \$75,000 Y3: \$75,000 <u>Y4: \$60,000</u> Total: \$285,000

**BoR/SREB PROPOSAL SUBMISSION SUMMARY, FY 2016-17**

**NUMBER OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED: 4**

**FELLOWSHIPS REQUESTED: 17**

**FIRST-YEAR FUNDS REQUESTED: \$425,000**

**TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED: \$1,615,000**