

**REPORT TO THE  
LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS**

**BOARD OF REGENTS/SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD  
GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY PROGRAM  
OF THE  
BOARD OF REGENTS SUPPORT FUND  
FY 2015-16 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2016-17**

**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 Medical School**

## INTRODUCTION

The review panel for the BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity subprogram met in Baton Rouge on February 27 and 28, 2016 to discuss and make funding recommendations relative to proposals submitted in the FY 2015-16 competition for awards to begin in FY 2016-17. Members of the panel were Dr. John Mayfield (Chair), Iowa State University; Dr. Roger Chalkley, Vanderbilt University Medical School; 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 2015-16 BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram Request for Proposals. Each consultant assigned a preliminary rating to each proposal before the February 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 \$250,000 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.

The panel recommends to the Board of Regents that future Requests for Proposals require applicants to include a table that provides comprehensive data on progress and outcomes (status in program, publications and conference presentations, and first placement following graduation) related to student holders of all previously awarded BoR/SREB fellowships. The panel also urges applicants to provide a full analysis of how BoR/SREB funding leverages and complements other university efforts to expand underrepresented minority retention and recruitment.

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 proposals for future competitions of the BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity subprogram.**

**APPENDIX A**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING**

**Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund  
BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity Program  
FY 2015-16 Cycle for Awards to Begin in FY 2016-17**

**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-16	LSU A&M	4	1	\$100,000
				2	\$100,000
				3	\$100,000
				4	<u>\$ 80,000</u>
				TOTAL	\$380,000
2	003SREB-16	TULANE	4	1	\$100,000
				2	\$100,000
				3	\$100,000
				4	<u>\$ 80,000</u>
				TOTAL	\$380,000
3	002SREB-16	LA TECH	1	1	\$ 25,000
				2	\$ 25,000
				3	\$ 25,000
				4	<u>\$ 20,000</u>
				TOTAL	\$ 95,000
4	004SREB-16	UL LAFAYETTE	1	1	\$ 25,000
				2	\$ 25,000
				3	\$ 25,000
				4	<u>\$ 20,000</u>
				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 2015-16**

**001SREB-16    LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE**  
**“Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity 2016”**  
**Requested:    5 Fellowship Slots**

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

LSU A&M’s proposal demonstrates a strong commitment to increasing diversity as well as a broad and creative approach to achieving that goal. As the campus has committed to a substantial increase in the proportion of graduate students who are underrepresented minorities, it has also succeeded in increasing the proportion of underrepresented minority doctoral students – now approaching 20 percent. Minority applications have been essentially flat, which should be addressed; but the numbers of students admitted and, most notably, enrolling have increased. In the most recent year for which there is data, the University succeeded in enrolling almost all of those minority students who had been admitted. The decision two years ago to focus SREB fellowships in the social sciences seems to be yielding results. The proposal indicates that this focus has created communities of minority students. Creation of a pre-doctoral scholars institute and various department-specific programs has reinforced this focus. The Graduate School has also taken the lead in an especially promising mentoring initiative, developing professional development and academic support programming in collaboration with departments and colleges. LSU SREB Fellows have apparently been very successful, but the data on retention and time to degree generally could be more clearly presented. Funding for four fellowships is recommended.

**002SREB-16    LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY**  
**“Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University”**  
**Requested:    4 Fellowship Slots**

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

Louisiana Tech’s proposal targets the doctoral programs in Engineering and in Psychology, which collectively enroll slightly more than 200 students. About half of those students are U.S. citizens or residents. Of the U.S. students approximately 13% are minority. During the period for which data is provided, minority enrollments have been substantially static. The campus is certainly serious about the need to increase the numbers of minority graduate students, but the results are quite mixed. Over recent years minority enrollments in these programs are level or declining. More minority applicants have been offered admission, but the numbers enrolling are persistently low. A few programs have aggressively recruited promising minority students, and the proposal documents the successful academic careers of a number of those who came to Louisiana Tech. What is missing from the proposal is a broader strategy, with appropriate support, for using the SREB fellowships as part of a wider effort to increase recruitment and retention. A number of recruitment initiatives have now been in place for many years, yet success seems limited. The proposal might have incorporated an assessment of such initiatives and promoted new or revised strategies in their place. Funding for one fellowship is recommended.

**003SREB-16 TULANE UNIVERSITY**

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

**Requested: 5 Fellowship Slots**

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

Tulane’s proposal for support of underrepresented minority fellows is well written and strongly argued. The Regents-provided fellowship of \$20,000 per year can be, and often is, supplemented at the discretion of the department in which the student resides. Recent initiatives to build diversity are clearly showing considerable success. Overall Tulane now reports 870 doctoral students, of whom 110 are underrepresented minority students. The campus has also been working to reduce attrition among this group; data included in the proposal show that over the last five years 100 students, of which about 15 are underrepresented minorities, graduate each year. This is a very satisfactory rate, though on an annual basis Tulane appears to lose around 70 students through attrition, including close to 12 underrepresented minorities. In essence the data suggest that two minority students drop for every three who graduate. For the BoR/SREB students appointed since 2009, five have graduated and two dropped, with the rest still in their degree programs. These numbers seem likely to improve over the next few years as the special Office for Graduate and Postdoctoral Students (OGPS) becomes established. OGPS is certainly moving in the right direction and should be able to play a major role in supporting successes in diversity at Tulane. Recruiting, oversight and mentoring are now gaining much more support than in earlier applications. Funding for four fellowships is recommended.

**004SREB-16 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE**

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

**Requested: 3 Fellowship Slots**

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

The data presented in UL Lafayette’s proposal indicate that there is an institutional effort devoted to recruiting and training underrepresented minority doctoral students. Over the past five years, the number of minority doctoral-level students has increased from 43 to 76, the number of applications from 59 to 76, and the number of accepted students from 17 to 29. These are all very positive trends. But this is not the whole story, since increases in enrollment are offset by the low graduation rate. While 91 students were admitted, only 17 graduated. The very high non-completion rate, described by a recent review panel as “a culture of non-completion,” is a major problem that troubles the entire graduate education enterprise at UL Lafayette. Underrepresented minority students do not escape this culture; the number of minority students leaving without the intended degree was almost three times higher than the number of degrees granted (47/17) over the five years reported. The STEM disciplines that are the focus of this proposal do not fare any better, with two graduations and six drops over this period. The only sub-group that may be doing better is SREB fellows, among whom there have been no drops over the past four years. Only time will tell if these students succeed in their degree programs. The university has initiated a number of seminars and workshops to try to address the non-completion problem, but whether or not these will be

effective remains to be seen. The review panel has the sense that the underlying causes of the problem are still not well understood by the Office of Graduate Studies. Somehow, the campus must reach the faculty and departments and stem the excessive number of students leaving before they achieve their intended degrees. The guaranteed fifth year of support for SREB fellows is an important innovation which should help SREB retention. Funding for one fellowship is recommended.



## **APPENDIX C**

### **LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED**

**BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity Program  
2015-16 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-16	Michelle Massé	LSU A&M	Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity 2016	5	Y1: \$125,000 Y2: \$125,000 Y3: \$125,000 <u>Y4: \$100,000</u> Total: \$475,000
002SREB-16	Sheryl Shoemaker	Louisiana Tech	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University	4	Y1: \$100,000 Y2: \$100,000 Y3: \$100,000 <u>Y4: \$ 80,000</u> Total: \$380,000
003SREB-16	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-16	Mary Farmer-Kaiser	UL Lafayette	Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity 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**

**NUMBER OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED: 4**

**FELLOWSHIPS REQUESTED: 17**

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

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