

**REPORT TO THE
LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS**

**BOARD OF REGENTS/
SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD DOCTORAL SUPPORT
INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE STUDENT AND FACULTY DIVERSITY
OF THE
BOARD OF REGENTS SUPPORT FUND
FY 2020-21 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2021-22**

INTRODUCTION

An external reviewer, Dr. Charles Ambler, former Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas El Paso, evaluated proposals submitted in FY 2020-21 for funding consideration to the Board of Regents/Southern Regional Education Board Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Student and Faculty Diversity. Staff provided Dr. Ambler with the FY 2020-21 Request for Proposals (RFP) and subprogram policy.

Five (5) institutions submitted a total of five (5) proposals in the BoR/SREB Support Initiative. All proposals were submitted under the leadership of the institutions' graduate schools or their equivalent. Proposals were assessed based on the criteria for evaluation and scoring rubric set forth in the FY 2020-21 BoR/SREB Support Initiative Request for Proposals.

After thorough assessment of the merits of each proposal, Dr. Ambler established a rank order for all of the proposals and recommended a number of student support 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 \$270,000. Dr. Ambler was advised that \$150,000 in first-year funding was set aside for the subprogram as part of the Enhancement component of the Board of Regents Support Fund.

The five (5) proposals submitted under the BoR/SREB Support Initiative are recommended for funding in the amounts specified in Appendix A. Appendix B consists of brief narrative assessments of submitted proposals.

In addition, Dr. Ambler asks that the Board of Regents consider requiring applicants to disaggregate reported data by gender, race, and ethnicity, to allow a better analysis of yield and completion data. Since each campus defines its pool of qualified students differently, this requirement will allow reviewers a fuller picture of the applicant's success with different student populations.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING

BoR/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative, FY 2020-21 Competition										
Rank	Proposal #	Campus	Proposal Title	First-Year Funds Requested	Slots Requested*	History & Plans for URM Student Retention and Success (45 points)	Appropriateness of Financial & Academic Support (30 points)	History of & Plans for URM Student Recruitment (25 points)	Total Points (100 Points)	Slots Recommended*
1	001SREB-21	Louisiana State University and A & M College	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2021-24	\$45,000	3	43	28	22	93	3
2	004SREB-21	Tulane University	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	\$75,000	5	41	28	21	90	2
2	005SREB-21	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	Board of Regents/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	\$45,000	3	42	27	21	90	2
4	003SREB-21	Southern University and A&M College	Southern University-Board of Regents/SREB Doctoral Fellowship	\$45,000	3	40	25	20	85	2
5	002SREB-21	Louisiana Tech University	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2021-24	\$60,000	4	35	25	18	78	1

* Slot = \$15,000 per year (\$10,000 stipend supplement; \$5,000 SREB DSP membership) for three years

APPENDIX B

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENTS

**COMMENTS ON PROPOSALS SUBMITTED UNDER THE BOARD OF REGENTS/
SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD DOCTORAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE TO
PROMOTE STUDENT AND FACULTY DIVERSITY**

FY 2020-21 COMPETITION

001SREB-21 LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE
“Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2021-24”
Requested: 3 Student Support Slots

Recommended: 3 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$135,000

During the last decade LSU A&M has made admirable progress in attracting minority applicants to PhD programs and increasing its numbers of PhD graduates. The focus of its BoR/SREB program on social sciences recruitment makes good strategic sense and recent efforts to provide an appropriate range of support mechanisms in the form of workshops and related programs should impact retention and time-to-degree outcomes. These efforts will be especially important in the context of the pandemic, as it is already apparent that its effects are being felt disproportionately by underrepresented minority (URM) students at universities nationally. An apparent error in form B makes it difficult to assess recent success in retention (the table shows an increase in URM students enrolled from 2018-19 to 2019-20 from 346 to 869). Data on recruitment do suggest that focused efforts are paying off in the form of improved yields of admitted URM students. The decision to increase the stipends for fellowship awardees is commendable and should enable programs to leverage this and other initiatives to improve minority recruitment and retention more broadly. The large pool of minority applicants ensures that the BoR/SREB support can be effective in supporting diversity efforts. Funding is recommended for three slots.

002SREB-21 LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY
“Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2021-24”
Requested: 4 Student Support Slots

Recommended: 1 Student Support Slot for 3 years = \$45,000

Louisiana Tech clearly has a genuine commitment to expanding its numbers of minority PhD students and graduates, but numbers remain very small. The plan to focus recruitment on regional HBCUs and other institutions with large minority enrollments makes sense, as does the strategy to recruit from among undergraduates at Louisiana Tech. The proposal would be enhanced, however, by concrete, specific descriptions of ongoing or planned recruitment activities and metrics to measure success. The efforts to enhance mentorship, in particular involving minority faculty, should prove effective, but care must be taken not to over-burden the small numbers of minority faculty in the STEM disciplines. The proposal recognizes the key role that the BoR/SREB program could play in leveraging support for diversity and expanding minority student numbers and graduates. The data provided suggest that there is serious cause for concern about URM student retention and time to degree. On average only about two students graduate each year. The stories of the success of PhD graduates included in the narrative do attest to the importance of programs like those at Louisiana Tech, but they need to be updated to retain their persuasive relevance. Careful tracking of student career paths is extremely important to effective recruitment. Funding is recommended for one slot.

003SREB-21 SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE

“Southern University-Board of Regents/SREB Doctoral Fellowship”

Requested: 3 Student Support Slots

Recommended: 2 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$90,000

Southern University A&M has made impressive strides in recruiting underrepresented students to its PhD programs in Science Math Education and Environmental Toxicology, both areas of considerable importance for Louisiana. The data indicate increases in applications and in program enrollment yields. These same data also, however, suggest some cause for concern regarding retention and time to degree—although it is not unlikely that a number of students are working while pursuing degrees. The proposal presents a sensible plan for student support, including the use of Individual Development Plans and close monitoring. More information regarding graduate placement and career pathways would have enhanced the proposal. The proposal narrative underscores the importance of HBCUs in expanding the numbers of minority PhD graduates, in particular by Southern, which is a Land Grant institution. The participation in a national program to share names of prospective graduate students is commendable, especially given the very large numbers of URM undergraduate students (especially in the STEM disciplines) at Southern. The data tables present a definition of URM students, listing women as a stand-alone category, which is inconsistent with SREB Doctoral Scholars Program (DSP) eligibility criteria. This makes it difficult to analyze the presented data with certainty related to DSP-eligible students, which is important since BoR/SREB funds may only be awarded to these populations. Finally, low levels of funding for PhD students remain a concern. Funding is recommended for two slots.

004SREB-21 TULANE UNIVERSITY

“Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University”

Requested: 5 Student Support Slots

Recommended: 2 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$90,000

As an institution, Tulane has made very substantial progress in increasing the numbers of URM students enrolled and graduated, and during the last year those efforts have been re-emphasized through the restatement of Tulane’s commitment to diversity and opposition to racism, along with the provision of additional funding to support those commitments. While over the last five years both the numbers of URM students recruited and those enrolled have apparently increased notably, providing numbers by racial/ethnic group would make it easier to assess success. The relatively low number of URM students graduating annually (compared to US students generally) suggests some cause for concern about time to degree, but this concern is tempered by the relatively small numbers of students leaving their programs. Tulane has a highly decentralized system of graduate education and thus recruitment is substantially in the hands of individual programs. However, those programs have been required to develop meaningful plans to build diversity and most have made progress in completing and implementing those plans. SREB student support provides models for student support generally, including emphasis on Individual Development Plans. In general Tulane provides reasonable support for PhD students; in particular it has added significant support for SREB fellows. Funding is recommended for two slots.

005SREB-21 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE

“Board of Regents/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette”

Requested: 3 Student Support Slots

Recommended: 2 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$90,000

UL Lafayette clearly has a strong commitment to recruiting and graduating increased numbers of minority PhD students. The University has made impressive progress in diversifying the PhD student population compared to a decade ago, although numbers have been relatively static during the last five years. As the impressive data analysis indicates, while numbers of applications have actually declined, the number of acceptances has increased, if modestly. The proposal narrative also carefully demonstrates how intensified support efforts have substantially improved the retention of URM PhD students, to the point that URM retention is actually better than for the pool of US students generally. The proposal outlines a solid program to support diversity, beginning with a focus on appropriate holistic admissions practices. Like other institutions, UL Lafayette draws on summer REUs to recruit PhD students, and increasingly looks to undergraduates at UL Lafayette and regional institutions across Louisiana. SREB fellows (as well as other URM PhD students) are carefully tracked and supported, with the campus involving them in an innovative writing program, as well as providing financial supplements. More emphasis might be placed on tracking the career pathways of graduates. According to the information provided in the data tables, the institution did not succeed in recruiting the full complement of SREB fellows in the last cycle, suggesting a lower number of slots is appropriate in the current cycle. Funding is recommended for two slots.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED

**BoR/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Student and Faculty Diversity
2020-21 Competition
Proposals Submitted**

Proposal #	PI Name(s)	Institution	Proposal Title	Slots Requested	Funds Requested
001SREB-21	James Spencer	LSU A&M	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2021-24	3	Y1: \$45,000 Y2: \$45,000 <u>Y3: \$45,000</u> Total: \$135,000
002SREB-21	Bala Ramachandran	Louisiana Tech	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2021-24	4	Y1: \$60,000 Y2: \$60,000 <u>Y3: \$60,000</u> Total: \$180,000
003SREB-21	Patrick Mensah	Southern A&M	Southern University-Board of Regents/SREB Doctoral Fellowship	3	Y1: \$45,000 Y2: \$45,000 <u>Y3: \$45,000</u> Total: \$135,000
004SREB-21	Michael Cunningham	Tulane	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	5	Y1: \$75,000 Y2: \$75,000 <u>Y3: \$75,000</u> Total: \$225,000
005SREB-21	Mary Farmer-Kaiser	UL Lafayette	Board of Regents/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	3	Y1: \$45,000 Y2: \$45,000 <u>Y3: \$45,000</u> Total: \$135,000

BoR/SREB PROPOSAL SUBMISSION SUMMARY, FY 2020-21

NUMBER OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED: 5

SUPPORT SLOTS REQUESTED: 18

FIRST-YEAR FUNDS REQUESTED: \$270,000

TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED: \$810,000