

**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 2021-22 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2022-23**

## INTRODUCTION

An external reviewer, Dr. Charles Ambler, former Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas El Paso, evaluated proposals submitted in FY 2021-22 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 2021-22 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 2021-22 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 \$332,500. Dr. Ambler was advised that \$175,000 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, the reviewer notes that the Board of Regents implemented last year's recommendation that applicants be asked to disaggregate reported data by gender, race, and ethnicity, to allow a better analysis of yield and completion data. While these data are helpful, it is noted that multiple proposals provided inaccurate or incomplete data in the tables, making analysis difficult. Applicants are urged to verify that all information provided in the proposal narrative and tables is complete and correct in the final submission.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING**

**BoR/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative, FY 2021-22 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	005SREB-22	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	BoR/SREB Doctoral Scholar Fellowships at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	\$52,500	3	43	28	22	93	3
2	004SREB-22	Tulane University	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	\$87,500	5	41	28	23	92	3
3	001SREB-22	Louisiana State University and A & M College	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2022-25	\$70,000	4	37	27	18	82	2
4	003SREB-22	Southern University and A&M College	Southern University - SREB/Board of Regents Fellowship Program	\$52,500	3	36	23	17	76	1
5	002SREB-22	Louisiana Tech University	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2022-25	\$70,000	4	35	22	16	73	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 2021-22 COMPETITION**

**001SREB-22 LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE  
“Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2022-25”  
Requested: 4 Student Support Slots**

**Recommended: 2 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$95,000**

LSU A&M has a strong record of recruiting, retaining and graduating minority PhD students. As a recent NSF report (cited in the proposal) notes, LSU is a leading R1 institution in terms of numbers of Black PhD recipients. The Graduate School’s new strategic plan, emphasizing university-wide partnerships, places strong emphasis on building upon this success in diversifying the student population to establish LSU as a top choice for graduate applicants in Louisiana, the region and nationally, with particular emphasis on attracting underrepresented minority students. A strong and growing professional development initiative will benefit SREB scholars, as will efforts to provide support among faculty for enhanced mentorship. The focus on recruitment of scholars in the social sciences appears to be successful and the institutional commitment to enhancing student support makes these slots competitive. The annual SEC Emerging Scholars Workshop in Baton Rouge (already launched and in its first year involving 140 minority PhD students from 14 institutions) is a creative way to build community, while established efforts to sustain relationships with Louisiana and regional institutions, including HBCUs should continue to facilitate recruitment. It seems, though the data provided are incomplete, that LSU has been successful in maintaining US applicant numbers notwithstanding the pandemic, but the data also raise concerns about a declining yield among minority applicants. Perhaps SREB support could be deployed more strategically to address that concern. As in previous reviews, it must be noted that Table B is incorrect, making it impossible to evaluate minority student retention, time to degree and graduation rates. Funding is recommended for two slots.

**002SREB-22 LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY  
“Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2022-  
25”  
Requested: 4 Student Support Slots**

**Recommended: 1 Student Support Slot for 3 years = \$47,500**

Louisiana Tech has a commendable record of supporting diversity goals and has begun to put in place a number of concrete strategies to recruit and retain outstanding minority PhD students in engineering and psychology. Strong efforts have been made to diversify the faculty, a critical objective in minority student recruitment. In addition, a new program has been instituted with Grambling State University that should serve as a model for other academic areas: a combined bachelor’s and master’s program at Louisiana Tech for eligible Grambling students. Similar programs have been established to encourage Louisiana Tech undergraduates to move into master’s programs. These master’s programs should serve as pipelines to encourage talented graduates who might not otherwise have contemplated advanced work to move into PhD programs. The proposal includes biographical vignettes that illustrate the success of minority PhD students. These vignettes would make effective recruitment tools for prospective SREB scholars and

minority graduate students generally. Despite this progress, however, the data presented still suggest issues with minority student recruitment, retention and, particularly, time to degree. The number of underrepresented minority PhD students graduating each year remains low. Funding is recommended for one slot.

**003SREB-22 SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE**  
**“Southern University - SREB/Board of Regents Fellowship Program”**  
**Requested: 3 Student Support Slots**

**Recommended: 1 Student Support Slot for 3 years = \$47,500**

Southern University A&M makes a persuasive argument to provide SREB doctoral support for students in two PhD programs: Science/Math Education and Environmental Toxicology. The University has had quite good success in recruiting underrepresented minority students in its various doctoral programs. The data provided (which is a bit out of date) suggest that the Environmental Toxicology PhD is struggling, but the proposal does not address the issue or outline plans to rectify it. The proposal could have made a more direct case for the ways in which the SREB support will be used to enhance enrollments and retention. The overall enrollment data for doctoral programs (which seem to include incorrect dates) continue to provide cause for concern regarding retention, time to degree and graduation rates. Presumably many students hold jobs while enrolled, but no strategy is presented to support such students, particularly in the current pandemic context. That said, the University has put in place a reasonable strategy for recruitment and the proposal outlines significant measures to enhance the student experience and track their progress. As stated in previous reviews, the proposal uses a definition of underrepresented minority which is inconsistent with the SREB eligibility criteria. Finally, it is striking that the proposal makes no mention of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has presumably forced significant changes in recruitment and student support and proved very challenging for many students. Funding is recommended for one slot.

**004SREB-22 TULANE UNIVERSITY**  
**“Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University”**  
**Requested: 5 Student Support Slots**

**Recommended: 3 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$142,500**

Tulane’s commitment to increasing diversity in its PhD programs has shown very impressive results. Notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, applications and enrollments of US underrepresented minority students are up, reflecting a general trend among domestic applicants. Longer-term data show considerable success in graduating underrepresented minority PhD students, although there continues to be cause for concern about attrition. Graduate recruitment is highly decentralized, but the Graduate School has successfully worked with departments to institute diversity plans and has led the way in investing in campus visits for prospective students—a proven effective strategy. An established aspect of recruitment has been memoranda of understanding with a number of HBCUs. These agreements are regarded as highly successful, but they have been in place long enough that it should be possible to present some data regarding their effectiveness. In general SREB fellows have been successful, with good records of completion and placement. A careful system of fellow selection is in place, and fellows have the advantage of a range of student support mechanisms, notably including a commitment to individual development plans as a mechanism for support and tracking. Funding is recommended for three slots.

**005SREB-22 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE**

**“BoR/SREB Doctoral Scholar Fellowships at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette”**

**Requested: 3 Student Support Slots**

**Recommended: 3 Student Support Slots for 3 years = \$142,500**

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette clearly has a strong commitment to expanding minority enrollments in its PhD programs. The number of SREB-eligible applicants has increased, even in a challenging recruitment environment, and those increases have been matched by greater numbers of minority students enrolling. Led by the Graduate School, PhD programs have addressed troubling attrition issues with notable success. As the proposal notes, rates of persistence and graduation among underrepresented minority students are now equivalent to or better than those for the general PhD student population. The impressive financial packages offered to SREB scholars have been combined with creative collaborative recruitment strategies, holistic admissions practices and a range of innovative activities to improve retention and enhance broader professional preparation. These include, notably, efforts to involve Graduate Council members in PhD student support and preparing-future-faculty initiatives. There are clear plans in place for distributing fellowships and monitoring student progress. Funding is recommended for three slots.



## **APPENDIX C**

### **LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED**

**BoR/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Student and Faculty Diversity  
2021-22 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-22	James Spencer	LSU A&M	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2022-25	4	Y1: \$70,000 Y2: \$60,000 <u>Y3: \$60,000</u> Total: \$190,000
002SREB-22	Bala Ramachandran	Louisiana Tech	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2022-25	4	Y1: \$70,000 Y2: \$60,000 <u>Y3: \$60,000</u> Total: \$190,000
003SREB-22	Patrick Mensah	Southern A&M	Southern University – SREB/Board of Regents Fellowship Program	3	Y1: \$52,500 Y2: \$45,000 <u>Y3: \$45,000</u> Total: \$142,500
004SREB-22	Michael Cunningham	Tulane	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	5	Y1: \$87,500 Y2: \$75,000 <u>Y3: \$75,000</u> Total: \$237,500
005SREB-22	Mary Farmer-Kaiser	UL Lafayette	BoR/SREB Doctoral Scholar Fellowships at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	3	Y1: \$52,500 Y2: \$45,000 <u>Y3: \$45,000</u> Total: \$142,500

**BoR/SREB PROPOSAL SUBMISSION SUMMARY, FY 2021-22**

**NUMBER OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED: 5**

**SUPPORT SLOTS REQUESTED: 19**

**FIRST-YEAR FUNDS REQUESTED: \$332,500**

**TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED: \$902,500**