

**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 2022-23 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2023-24**

## INTRODUCTION

An external reviewer, Dr. Charles Ambler, former Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas El Paso, evaluated proposals submitted in FY 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 Support Initiative was \$315,000. 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 2022-23 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	004SREB-23	Tulane University	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	\$87,500	5	43	27	23	93	3
2	005SREB-23	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	BoR/SREB Doctoral Scholar Fellowships at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	\$52,500	3	41	24	22	87	3
3	001SREB-23	Louisiana State University and A & M College	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2023-26	\$52,500	3	28	25	24	77	2
4	003SREB-23	Southern University and A&M College	SU-BoR/SREB Doctoral Fellowship	\$52,500	3	35	20	20	75	1
5	002SREB-23	Louisiana Tech University	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2023-26	\$70,000	4	30	23	17	70	1

\* Slot = \$15,000 per year (\$10,000 stipend supplement; \$5,000 SREB DSP membership) for three years plus \$2,500 in year 1 for faculty member attendance at annual Institute

**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 2022-23 COMPETITION**

**001SREB-23   LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE**  
**“Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2023-26”**  
**Requested:   3 Student Support Slots**

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

LSU A&M has substantially expanded the proportion and number of minority students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and has achieved national recognition as a leading institution in terms of the numbers of Black PhD recipients. Since 2010 the proportion of Black graduate and professional students enrolled has risen from 8% to 13%, a strong gain, although still not reflective of the state’s population. The proposal outlines an impressive effort to recruit and retain minority students, notably the SEC emerging scholars workshop. This creative initiative should facilitate minority recruitment, although there is no indication whether the inaugural workshop yielded significant numbers of applicants. The proposal could also include data on the preliminary results of a revived effort to recruit at Louisiana institutions and HBCUs across the region. Importantly, graduate education leaders from LSU A&M and Southern University A&M have recently begun to develop a joint five-year plan to expand minority recruitment, an important collaborative effort to expand the number of minority students earning graduate degrees. The data presented show a sharp decline in the numbers of applicants for doctoral programs generally and among minority applicants in particular. While this concerning trend is not addressed in the narrative, it is possible that it reflects more targeted recruitment. The number of minority students admitted actually increased, as did the number who enrolled. Unfortunately, the proposal does not provide the data (as requested in Form 4B) needed to assess whether minority students are successful in completing degrees. Funding is recommended for two slots.

**002SREB-23   LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY**  
**“Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2023-26”**  
**Requested:   4 Student Support Slots**

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

Louisiana Tech has made a genuine effort to recruit minority students into its leading PhD programs in Engineering and Psychology and promises that “an aggressive and targeted recruiting program” that has been planned in consultation with national experts will soon be implemented. The proposal, however, does not provide a good indication of what that program will look like. Clearly a change in direction and commitment of additional resources are required. Notwithstanding substantial attempts to boost minority enrollment in PhD programs, that number actually appears to have declined, even as overall enrollments seem to have remained generally healthy. Programs seem to have had reasonable success in retaining and graduating minority PhD students, but the numbers remain very low. The plan to rely on SREB Fellows as mentors internally and ambassadors externally runs the risk of increasing pressure on students who need to focus on their academic and research priorities. Over a number of years proposals have stressed initiatives to work collaboratively with neighboring Grambling State University to expand the numbers of Black Grambling graduates going on to post-baccalaureate study and the Air Force-funded program detailed certainly represents a concrete step; but no data are provided indicating trends in the numbers of

Grambling graduates who have applied or been accepted. The same lack of information makes it difficult to assess efforts to recruit among Louisiana Tech undergraduates. Funding is recommended for one slot.

**003SREB-23 SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE**

**“SU-BoR/SREB Doctoral Fellowship”**

**Requested: 3 Student Support Slots**

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

Southern University A&M proposes a three-year initiative to increase underrepresented minority enrollments in three key doctoral programs – Environmental Toxicology, Science/Math Education and Urban Forestry – and across all five PhD programs, utilizing the SREB slots as part of a broader strategy that involves greater investment in resources and increased research opportunities. As a component of the only historically Black land grant system in the country, Southern A&M has had notable success in recruiting minority students to its signature PhD programs and the substantial representation of minority scholars on the faculty has certainly contributed to recruitment and retention strength. Southern A&M has had SREB Fellows since 2019 and all of them remain active in their degree programs. The data presented in Form 4A are difficult to assess (dates provided appear to be incorrect), but application, admission and enrollment numbers suggest that Southern A&M has targeted particular applicants – often an effective strategy. The information in Form 4B, although unclear, suggests that there are concerns with time-to-degree and retention that should be directly addressed. It is possible, for example, that students in some programs (notably Education) attend part-time, which should be recognized. The proposal also does not clearly explain the extent and levels of funding, which are of course key factors in both recruitment and retention. Enrollment numbers in Environmental Toxicology (which would seem like an important focus in Louisiana) appear to be faltering. The proposal outlines support that will be offered to SREB Fellows, but the key to the success of the Fellows is sustained engagement with their fellow students in strong programs where students are supported both financially and professionally. Funding is recommended for one slot.

**004SREB-23 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**

During the last several years Tulane has taken a series of concrete steps to enhance the experience of all PhD students and in particular to address underrepresentation of minority students in advanced graduate education. Increased stipends, more systematic mentoring, the introduction of family leave, and the creation of dissertation support groups will benefit all PhD students, but will likely particularly impact the experience of minority students. The Graduate School has leveraged the establishment of diversity recruitment plans for most programs in a highly decentralized graduate education environment and Tulane’s commitment has shown concrete results. In 2017-18 underrepresented minority students made up slightly more than 10 percent of the PhD student population; by 2021-22 that number had risen to 23 percent. In that year underrepresented minority students comprised more than 40 percent of entering U.S. PhD students. This represents a remarkable achievement that will require continued commitment to sustain. Clearly the existing recruitment strategies, mixing university efforts with support for departmental initiatives, have paid off. The emphasis on campus visits for prospective students has been particularly successful. Tulane has seen a substantial rise in PhD applications in general and among minority students, with admissions across the board becoming more competitive. The numbers of

minority students enrolled in recent years have been relatively stable (although much higher than several years ago). The data on time-to-degree and completion are unclear, and it is concerning that some of the SREB students remain in their programs after many years. Funding is recommended for three slots.

**005SREB-23 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 success of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in recruiting and retaining underrepresented minority PhD students is a testament to the effectiveness of sustained, intentional efforts to bring diversity to a relatively modest PhD student population. Over the course of five years, underrepresented minority PhD enrollment rose from 62 to 108 of a total U.S. PhD student population around 300 (approximately 400 including international students). Applications increased among minority students even during the pandemic. This has been achieved by providing enhanced funding, emphasizing the importance of minority student community, and building up effective mentoring and professional development opportunities. A focus on attracting applicants through programs such as McNair and LSAMP, as well as through REUs, matched with an emphasis on holistic admissions, has resulted in a striking change. The Graduate School works with individual programs in data-driven strategies to attract and retain minority PhD students. Investments have been made to build on departmental success, in particular supporting more students with various kinds of fellowship funding. The proposal recognizes apparent issues with attrition, although rates for minority students are in fact better than for other U.S. students. Appropriately, the proposal emphasizes involving SREB students in the range of support programs available to all PhD students. The overall record of success for SREB students is somewhat mixed, but very few have left their programs. Funding is recommended for three slots.



## **APPENDIX C**

### **LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED**

<b>BoR/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative, FY 2022-23 Competition</b>			
<b>Proposal #</b>	<b>Campus</b>	<b>Proposal Title</b>	<b>First-Year Funds Requested</b>
001SREB-23	Louisiana State University and A & M College	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2023-26	\$52,500
002SREB-23	Louisiana Tech University	Increasing Diversity in Doctoral Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2023-26	\$70,000
003SREB-23	Southern University and A&M College	SU-BoR/SREB Doctoral Fellowship	\$52,500
004SREB-23	Tulane University	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	\$87,500
005SREB-23	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	BoR/SREB Doctoral Scholar Fellowships at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	\$52,500

Proposals Submitted: 5

Total First-Year Funds Requested: \$315,000

Total First-Year Funds Available: \$175,000