

**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 2024-25 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2025-26**



Board of Regents Support Fund

INTRODUCTION

An external reviewer, Dr. Charles Ambler, former Dean of the Graduate School, University of Texas El Paso, evaluated proposals submitted in FY 2024-25 for funding consideration in the Board of Regents/Southern Regional Education Board Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Student and Faculty Diversity. Staff provided Dr. Ambler with the FY 2024-25 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 developed 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 2024-25 BoR/SREB Support Initiative Request for Proposals.

After thorough assessment of the merits of each proposal, Dr. Ambler established a rank order of all 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 \$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 the recent 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 2024-25 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-25	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	BoR/SREB Doctoral Scholar Fellowships at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette	\$52,500	3	42	28	22	92	3
2	004SREB-25	Tulane University	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	\$87,500	5	41	28	21	90	3
3	001SREB-25	Louisiana State University and A & M College	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2025-2028	\$70,000	4	35	26	19	80	2
4	002SREB-25	Louisiana Tech University	Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2025-28	\$70,000	4	35	23	19	77	1
5	003SREB-25	Southern University and A&M College	Southern University - BOR/SREB Fellowship Program	\$52,500	3	27	24	19	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 2024-25 COMPETITION

**001SREB-25 LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE
“Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2025-2028”
Requested: 4 Student Support Slots**

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

The application from LSU A&M suggests a renewed and ambitious commitment to the recruitment and graduation of underrepresented minority PhD students across the institution. Another positive addition is the strategy to build programs of support for URM students and indeed for all PhD students at the institution. With new leadership, the Graduate School appears to be taking the initiative in developing recruitment and retention strategies, including a promising effort to build links with HBCUs in the region and to develop a series of workshops and video casts that provide critical information for students on topics like proposal writing, funding opportunities and so forth. An effort is also underway to encourage decentralized initiatives to provide support for URM PhD students in departments and various centers, as well as through student associations. More specific information on how that is being achieved and monitored would enhance the proposal. LSU A&M in fact has a long and commendable history of enrolling and graduating large numbers of URM, and particularly African American, PhDs. In recent years those numbers have been relatively static and this proposal appropriately emphasizes the need for PhD program demographics to more closely mirror those of the state. In this year’s proposal, previously noted serious errors in the data provided have been largely corrected. Unfortunately, those data raise concerns about retention and time to degree. In recent years LSU A&M annually has enrolled approximately 50 new URM PhD candidates, but has only graduated 10 to 15. As noted in the past, the application provides no information on the placement of past SREB DSP students. Still, given the large numbers of URM PhD applicants and enrollees, LSU A&M is in position to assert a national leadership role in diversifying the ranks of PhD graduates. Funding is recommended for two slots.

**002SREB-25 LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY
“Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech
University 2025-28”
Requested: 4 Student Support Slots**

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

In recent years Louisiana Tech has demonstrated a strong and commendable commitment to URM recruitment into PhD programs, focusing on its strong programs in Engineering and Science and Psychology. The institution has a good record of recruiting SREB recipients and almost all complete their degrees and find positions in their fields. The University has developed a focused recruitment strategy, concentrating on campus visits and cultivating undergraduates at Louisiana Tech and nearby Grambling

State University. Nevertheless, little progress has been made in building the number of applicants. The targeted PhD programs are certainly competitive, but the yield rate for URM applicants who are admitted remains poor. As a consequence, the total numbers of URM PhD students enrolling and completing have changed little. The University has recently improved financial packages, which should encourage admitted students to enroll, but it does seem that University leaders need to consider new options in an environment that can be highly competitive. As this proposal makes clear, a good deal of thought has gone into the approach to building URM enrollment, but more assessment of these efforts would be helpful. Like many other universities, Louisiana Tech struggles to recruit U.S. student generally, and to the institution's credit a significant proportion of those students are URM. Perhaps it would be useful to begin to think of SREB and other graduate student support as a lever to build enrollment more broadly. In that sense, too much focus on the small number of SREB students rather than URM students overall may well be counter-productive. Efforts to build community on campus certainly make sense, but putting additional burdens on SREB students to achieve that is probably unwise. Funding is recommended for one slot.

003SREB-25 SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE
“Southern University - BOR/SREB Fellowship Program”
Requested: 3 Student Support Slots

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

The Southern University A&M application outlines an ambitious three-year plan that aims to increase the number and quality of URM students in STEM Education, Environmental Toxicology and Urban Forestry—the focus areas of PhD education at Southern and for the SREB Support Initiative—but it is too soon to determine whether this initiative will be successful. The proposal promises increased funding and research and mentoring opportunities for SREB students in these areas of importance to Louisiana. Data for the three targeted programs indicate generally steady enrollment, although the STEM Education program has experienced some decline. Urban Forestry seems to have a strong record of student completion, but data suggest the other programs have issues with retention and/or time to degree. As noted in last year's review, the two major tables do not align. Table A shows only URM applicants among U.S. applicants while Table B indicates there are substantial numbers of non-URM U.S. PhD students. The high percentage of applicants admitted to PhD programs is a cause for concern. Assuming the data on numbers of graduates are accurate, there would seem to be a serious problem with attrition. The data on levels of financial support also suggest that the University is not offering realistic and competitive support packages—a critical factor in ensuring PhD program success generally and for individual students. Plans for monitoring SREB students would be more persuasive if they extended to the general PhD student population as well. Previous SREB students seem to have relatively strong records, with only one having left the program. Funding is recommended for one slot.

004SREB-25 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 continues to be a leader in the preparation of URM PhD graduates nationally. In a highly decentralized graduate education environment, and reflecting the culture of the University, the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies has effectively supported departments in making diversity a central goal. Currently, nearly 30% of U.S. PhD students at Tulane are URM, an achievement the University should take pride in. Tulane attracts highly talented students from across the country and its programs remain very competitive. Over many years the University has developed an excellent record of graduating SREB students, largely by embedding them in the programs that support URM and all PhD students. Following national data, the University has turned to holistic admissions practices that better predict successful student outcomes, along with placing emphasis on various forms of mentoring. The high levels of financial support that Tulane provides enable programs consistently to attract the best applicants, who, if admitted, then have the means to allow them to focus on academic success. In short, Tulane remains a national model for achieving a high level of diversity in PhD education. Funding is recommended for three slots.

005SREB-25 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

Strong institutional leadership has produced remarkable progress at UL Lafayette in the recruitment, retention and graduation of URM PhD students. The most recent data show that fully one-third of all U.S. PhD students are URM. Admissions remain competitive for all applicants, and graduation rates for URM students exceed those of the PhD student population generally. The University appears to have reversed a recent slight decline in numbers of URM PhD students admitted. A strategy of providing support for programs that have already built substantial URM PhD student cohorts appears to have shown success. The proposal identifies a significant portfolio of support mechanisms that are available to students. Financial support for the SREB students is competitive, as is the guarantee that two of the five years of support comes in the form of fellowships. The University has a strong record with the SREB program. The proposal effectively demonstrates the data- and literature-driven approach that UL Lafayette is taking to building and sustaining URM PhD student enrollments. Funding is recommended for three slots.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED

**BoR/SREB Doctoral Support Initiative to Promote Student and Faculty Diversity 2024-25 Competition Proposals
Submitted**

Proposal #	PI Name(s)	Institution	Proposal Title	Slots Requested	Funds Requested
001SREB-25	Keena Arbuthnot	Louisiana State University and A & M College	Board of Regents Graduate Fellow Program 2025-2028	4	Y1: \$70,000 Y2: \$60,000 <u>Y3: \$60,000</u> Total: \$190,000
002SREB-25	Bala Ramachandran	Louisiana Tech University	Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2025-28	4	Y1: \$70,000 Y2: \$60,000 <u>Y3: \$60,000</u> Total: \$190,000
003SREB-25	Edwin Walker	Southern University and A&M College	Southern University - BOR/SREB Fellowship Program	3	Y1: \$52,500 Y2: \$45,000 <u>Y3: \$45,000</u> Total: \$142,500
004SREB-25	Michael Cunningham	Tulane University	Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane University	5	Y1: \$87,500 Y2: \$75,000 <u>Y3: \$75,000</u> Total: \$237,500
005SREB-25	Mary Farmer-Kaiser	University of Louisiana at 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 2024-25

Number of Proposals Submitted: 5

Support Slots Requested: 19

First-Year Funds Requested: \$332,500

Total Funds Requested: \$902,500