



## LA-NEXT Holds Inaugural Symposium in Baton Rouge

The Louisiana Networks of Excellence for Tomorrow (LA-NEXT) seeks to be the point of ignition for a transformation of Louisiana’s R&D ecosystem into a cohesive network of networks while expanding to involve a broader range of constituencies.

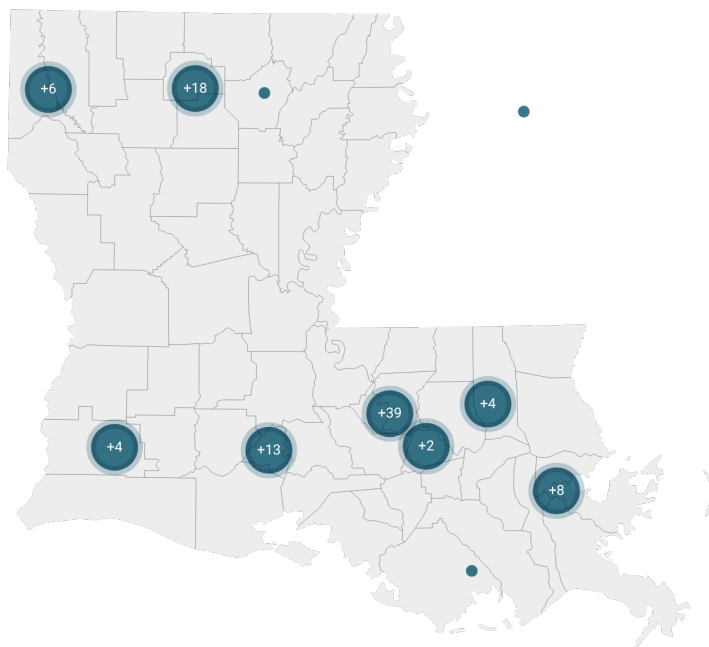
On January 8, 2026, LA-NEXT convened its inaugural Symposium on the campus of Louisiana State University and A&M College. There, at the LSU Energy, Coast, and Environment building, 95 Louisiana researchers, higher education leaders, students, and government officials gathered to celebrate student research achievements from across the State and to discover entryways into Louisiana’s research enterprise.



3 Minute Thesis Winners



### Symposium Attendance by Population Center



Above: The map of Louisiana identifies the areas of the State represented at the LA-NEXT Symposium, with the number of individuals in attendance from each area. Single dots represent cities with one individual in attendance.

### 3 Minute Thesis Competition

Twelve graduate students participated in the LA-NEXT Symposium to compete in a research presentation competition called *3 Minute Thesis™*. Students were given three minutes to present their groundbreaking research to leaders from across the State. Shown from left to right above, in first place was Melanie Wilson of LSU A&M; second place went to Jyoti Sharma of LSU A&M, and people’s choice went to Francisca Walden of La Tech University.

Below: Dr. Daniel McCarthy (left), Dean of the College of Science & Technology at Southeastern Louisiana University, and Dr. Greg Upton, Executive Director and Associate Research Professor at the Louisiana State University A&M Center for Energy Studies, discuss the needs of Primarily Undergraduate Institutions and the benefits of partnership with Research Colleges & Universities.



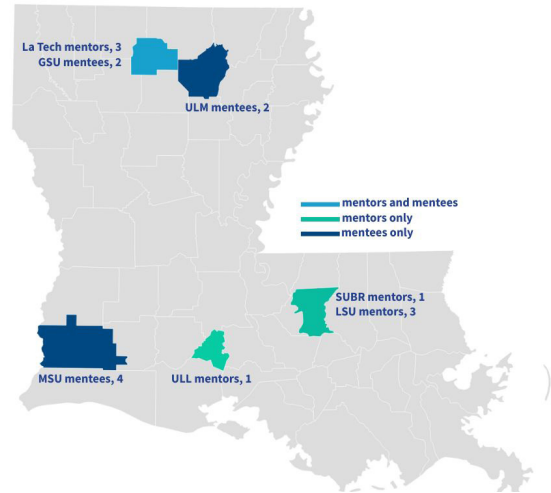
## LA-NEXT Initiating Growth through Networks and Interdisciplinary Teamwork (IGNITE) Awards Announced

The Research Capacity Building Core (RCBC) of LA-NEXT provides a competitive opportunity for researchers to earn funding for a collaborative research project through the IGNITE seed program. The objective is to increase research capacity through a mentor/mentee relationship between established researchers at Research Colleges & Universities (RCU) and Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUI).

For 2026, 14 proposals were entered into the competition and reviewed externally. Of those, eight have been identified as meritorious and approved for funding. The priorities strategically follow the those identified in the State's science and technology plan, FIRST Louisiana 2030.

Top Right: The map of Louisiana identifies the number of mentors and mentees funded per institution. Bottom Right: The figure identifies IGNITE projects funded by research area. Some of the 8 proposals funded address more than one target research area.

### IGNITE Mentees and Mentors by Parish & IHE



### IGNITE Awards by Research Area

