REPORT TO THE
LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS

BOARD OF REGENTS/SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY PROGRAM OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS SUPPORT FUND FY 2014-15 COMPETITION FOR AWARDS TO BEGIN FY 2015-16

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Emeritus Professor
Iowa State University

Dr. Charles Ambler
Dean of the Graduate School
University of Texas at El Paso

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Senior Associate Dean for Biomedical Research Education and Training
Vanderbilt University Medical School
The review panel for the BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity subprogram met in Baton Rouge on February 21 and 22, 2015 to discuss and make funding recommendations relative to proposals submitted in the FY 2014-15 competition for awards to begin in FY 2015-16. Members of the panel were Dr. John Mayfield (Chair), Iowa State University; Dr. Roger Chalkley, Vanderbilt University Medical School; and Dr. Charles Ambler, University of Texas at El Paso.

Four (4) institutions submitted a total of four (4) proposals in the BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram. All proposals were submitted under the leadership of the institutions’ graduate schools or their equivalent.

Prior to arriving in Baton Rouge, consultants individually read and evaluated each proposal according to the guidelines provided by the Louisiana Board of Regents in the FY 2014-15 BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram Request for Proposals. Each consultant assigned a preliminary rating to each proposal before the February meeting. Preliminary composite scores were then computed. These composite scores facilitated discussions at the meeting.

After thorough assessment of the merits of each proposal, the consultants established a rank order for all of the proposals and recommended a number of fellowship 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 $400,000. Consultants were advised that $200,000 in first-year funding was budgeted for the subprogram.

The panel recommends that three (3) of the four (4) proposals submitted under the BoR/SREB Fellowships subprogram be funded in the amounts specified in Appendix A. Appendix B consists of brief narrative assessments of submitted proposals and Appendix C contains a listing of all proposals submitted to the subprogram.

The cumulative requests exceed the total amount of funding available. Panel members made every effort to make recommendations within established funding limitations as well as in accordance with the collective assessment of each proposal’s individual merits. Reviewers sought to ascertain the degree to which each award could bring about the successful recruitment of underrepresented minority students in keeping with the subprogram’s goal of increasing diversity and elevating academic success in the submitting institutions.

The panel recommends to the Board of Regents that future Requests for Proposals require applicants to include a table that provides comprehensive data on progress and outcomes (status in program, publications and conference presentations, and first placement following graduation) related to student holders of all previously awarded BoR/SREB fellowships. The panel also urges applicants to provide a full analysis of how BoR/SREB funding leverages and complements other university efforts to expand underrepresented minority retention and recruitment.

Once again, the panel members commend all involved in this ongoing endeavor to elevate the level of graduate study in Louisiana’s institutions of higher education.

The panel urges applicants to carefully review the summary critiques, included in this report, relating to the submitted proposals. Most summaries offer suggestions to help applicants design proposals for future competitions of the BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity subprogram.
APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING
Louisiana Board of Regents Support Fund  
BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity Program  
FY 2014-15 Cycle for Awards to Begin in FY 2015-16

**TABLE I**  
PROPOSALS RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Proposal No.</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Number of Fellowships Recommended</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total BoRSF Money Recommended</th>
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<td>TULANE</td>
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**TABLE II**  
PROPOSAL NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal No.</th>
<th>Institution</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>004SREB-15</td>
<td>UL LAFAYETTE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENTS
COMMENTS ON PROPOSALS SUBMITTED UNDER THE BOARD OF REGENTS/SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY SUBPROGRAM IN FY 2014-15

001SREB-15  LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY – BATON ROUGE
“Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity”
Requested: 5 Fellowship Slots

Recommended: 4 Fellowship Slots for 4 years = $380,000

LSU has had considerable success in diversifying its doctoral programs: over a period of a decade the percentage of underrepresented minority students enrolled in doctoral programs rose from 12% to 18% of the total U.S. PhD student population. The campus continues to maintain high standards for BoR/SREB fellows and provides a substantial supplement to the funds provided by the Board of Regents. It is troubling to see a recent, significant decline in the numbers of minority applicants (and indeed all applicants); however, the numbers of those minority students accepted into programs who decide to attend LSU has remained high and the numbers of new minority students enrolled has actually increased as a result. It appears that some progress has been made in reducing the numbers of students who leave their degree programs without attaining the PhD. LSU recruits and supports minority doctoral students through an array of programs and mechanisms, and appears to be doing a good job coordinating these efforts. Last year’s review panel encouraged LSU to concentrate the fellowships in one or two areas so as to build critical mass. The current plan to focus recruitment in the social sciences, though still relatively broad, represents a step in that direction. The success of the summer Pre-doctoral Institute is promising, as are plans to become more aggressive in distributing funding and in brokering support services for incoming students. Funding for four fellowships is recommended.

002SREB-15  LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY
“Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2015-19”
Requested: 4 Fellowship Slots

Recommended: 1 Fellowship Slot for 4 years = $95,000

The proposal from Louisiana Tech University requests support for recruitment and retention of minority fellows in the PhD programs located in the Colleges of Engineering and Science and Education. The data presented on minority PhD student enrollment indicate that approximately 10% of U.S. students are classified as underrepresented minorities, which seems to represent a decline. It is impressive that the programs involved have succeeded in encouraging a growing number of minority applicants even as U.S. applications have been flat; yet very few minority students seem to have graduated. At the same time, attrition figures are low, suggesting either that the figures are inaccurate or time to degree is excessive. It is troubling that minority students appear to be admitted at a lower rate than the U.S. pool overall; this suggests that a review of both recruitment and admissions guidelines and procedures is needed. The university does have a commitment to diversity and, notwithstanding declining resources, has invested in building the kinds of long-term relationships with other institutions that may result in future growth in
enrollments. The partnership with Grambling State University is particularly notable. Louisiana Tech has also been taking advantage of an NSF ADVANCE grant to promote diversity broadly. Quite ambitious plans are in place to track and mentor BoR/SREB fellows, though there is little indication that such support extends to minority students in general. This program has received BoR/SREB funding in the past, but the proposal does not explain in any detail how that funding was used and why it has not resulted in expanded numbers of minority applications and enrollments. Funding for one fellowship is recommended.

003SREB-15 TULANE UNIVERSITY
“Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane”
Requested: 5 Fellowship Slots
Recommended: 3 Fellowship Slots for 4 years = $285,000

This proposal from the Tulane Graduate School requests five fellowships. To date, Tulane has been awarded 17 fellowships; two recipients have now graduated (with an average time to degree of 5.5 years), two have dropped, and the remainder are still working toward the degree, including several students who should graduate in less than six years. Thus, the BoR/SREB program seems to be working fairly well. That being said, the definition of underrepresented minorities at Tulane includes Asian students, who may be in the minority in Louisiana, but are a misleading inclusion in the context of nationwide participation. Tulane’s overall results in terms of student completion are of concern to the panel. By the data provided, over the last six years 69 underrepresented minority students have graduated, while 61 have left without the intended degree. This is a heavy attrition, and one wonders how recruiting and mentoring work in practice. Possibly BoR/SREB fellowship recipients receive better and more attentive mentoring, as is described in the application, though it is expected that this program should act as a mechanism to support the training environment for all underrepresented minority students. The data in the tables seem to include some discrepancies, showing approximately 15 underrepresented students matriculating per year over the last five years, and roughly 25 such students leaving each year, either with or without a degree. Funding is recommended for three fellowships.

004SREB-15 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE
“Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity at UL Lafayette”
Requested: 2 Fellowship Slots
Recommended: - 0 -

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette requests two fellowship slots in support of underrepresented minority doctoral student recruitment and retention. The data presented in the application indicate that there is an institutional effort devoted to recruiting and training minority PhD students. However, there seems to be a serious problem graduating enrolled students. Across the university and in the targeted programs, the number of underrepresented minority students has increased in the past five years (41 to 68 and 11 to 15, respectively). A partial explanation of this statistic is the very low graduation rate evident in the proposal. University-wide over the past five years the number of PhDs granted to underrepresented
minority students was 16 while the number who dropped was 45. For the targeted programs the ratio is four graduations to eight drops. These numbers reflect the university as a whole, where the graduation to drop ratio was 182 graduations to 275 drops. Focusing only on BoR/SREB fellows, of 13 fellowships granted over the past seven years, only one student has graduated, and eight are still enrolled. Although the proposal does acknowledge a problem, proposed solutions to what seems to be a university culture of non-completion are not presented. There is also concern about recruitment. Across the university, applications from underrepresented minority students showed an upward trend until two years ago and have since declined. It is not yet clear if this is an anomaly or a trend. To improve performance, the university must develop extensive mentoring plans or otherwise demonstrate that it can graduate underrepresented minority students and stem the excessive number of students leaving without the intended degree. No fellowships are recommended.
APPENDIX C

LIST OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED
### BoR/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity Program
#### 2014-15 Competition
#### Proposals Submitted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal #</th>
<th>PI Name(s)</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Proposal Title</th>
<th>Slots Requested</th>
<th>Funds Requested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 001SREB-15 | Gary Byerly         | LSU-BR           | Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity                | 5               | Y1: $125,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y2: $125,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y3: $125,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y4: $100,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Total: $475,000                   |
| 002SREB-15 | Sheryl Shoemaker    | Louisiana Tech   | Increasing Diversity in the Doctoral Student Populations at Louisiana Tech University 2015-19 | 4               | Y1: $100,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y2: $100,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y3: $100,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y4: $  80,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Total: $380,000                   |
| 003SREB-15 | Michael Cunningham | Tulane           | Board of Regents Doctoral Fellowships at Tulane                                | 5               | Y1: $125,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y2: $125,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y3: $125,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y4: $100,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Total: $475,000                   |
| 004SREB-15 | Mary Farmer-Kaiser  | UL Lafayette      | Board of Regents/SREB Graduate Fellowships to Promote Diversity at UL Lafayette | 2               | Y1: $50,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y2: $50,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y3: $50,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Y4: $40,000
|            |                     |                  |                                                                                |                 | Total: $190,000                   |

#### BoR/SREB PROPOSAL SUBMISSION SUMMARY

- **NUMBER OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED:** 4
- **FELLOWSHIPS REQUESTED:** 16
- **FIRST-YEAR FUNDS REQUESTED:** $400,000
- **TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED:** $1,520,000
- **TOTAL FELLOWSHIP SLOTS AVAILABLE:** 8
- **TOTAL FIRST-YEAR FUNDS AVAILABLE:** $200,000