

Continuing Education

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Higher Education Quote of the Week:

"You know you're in a good place where nobody's totally happy, but everybody's reasonably satisfied."

Governor John Bel Edwards on the budget deficit plan adopted during the Louisiana Legislature's Special Session.



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On Friday, the Louisiana Board of Regents chose to not move forward with a plan to increase the number of annual credit hours required by students in the TOPS program. A plan drafted in January by Board of Regents' staff recommended changing TOPS requirements as part of effort to boost on-time graduation rates. Under the draft plan, TOPS students would have had to complete 30 credit hours a year, instead of just 24, to keep their TOPS scholarship.

The Board of Regents rejected the draft recommendation after receiving more than 700 emails and phone calls on the proposed changes to the TOPS program. The primary concern with the credit hour increase was that it would pose a hardship on full-time students also holding down a job.

Regent Charles McDonald spoke against the change. "TOPS is a complex program. We don't need to do anything quickly. We want to get it right." ***The Advocate, 02.27.17***

Local Higher Education News

- The Caddo Parish Commission has approved a plan to form a higher education task force. This group will assess current post-secondary education capacity to meet workforce needs and develop a master plan. Task force members will include representatives from local colleges and the business community. ***Shreveport Times, 02.27.17***
- The University of Louisiana Board of Supervisors has voted to advance a proposal from Grambling State University to reinstate the school's undergraduate nursing program. The proposal now goes before the Board of Regents. The program was closed in 2015 when the Louisiana State Board of Nursing withdrew the program's accreditation. ***Monroe News-Star, 02.27.17***

Louisiana Higher Education News

- The plan approved by legislators last week to address a \$304 million mid-year budget deficit did not include cuts to higher education. Louisiana legislators instead opted to address the shortage by using \$99 million from the rainy day fund and cutting funding to government agencies,

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including a \$40 million cut to the Department of Health and Hospitals. ***[The Advocate, 02.22.17](#)***

- Governor John Bel Edwards has unveiled his budget plan for the next fiscal year beginning in July, and it funds only 70% of the TOPS program, the same amount funded in the current fiscal year. "It will be at the top of the list to be funded in the event that new revenue is recognized," said Jay Dardenne, Commissioner of Administration. ***[WAFB-TV, 02.23.17](#)***
- The Louisiana Board of Regents and the BESE Board are working on a plan to reduce the number of high school graduates needing remedial college coursework. In 2016, 61% of Louisiana high school graduates had an ACT math score below the minimum required to qualify for college-level math. ***[Shreveport Times, 02.27.17](#)***

National Higher Education News

- In a meeting last week between President Trump and CEOs from the largest manufacturing companies, Trump was urged to address the skills gap problem that has left many manufacturing jobs unfilled. The CEOs told the President that most high school graduates lack both the English and math skills to absorb technical manuals. "The jobs are there but the skills are not," said one CEO. ***[PBS Newshour, 02.23.17](#)***
- According to a study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the total amount in college tax credits has now surpassed what the federal government provides in college grants to low-income students. In 2014, Americans claimed \$35 billion in federal higher ed tax credits, which was \$4 billion more than was spent on the Pell Grant program. ***[Hechinger Report, 02.23.17](#)***

For more information on higher education in Northwest Louisiana, please visit our website at www.sbba4he.org

Sincerely,

***Johnette Magner, Ph.D., Executive Director
Shreveport-Bossier Business Alliance for Higher Education***

You are welcome to forward this newsletter to others in your network who are interested in higher education.

For more information on becoming a member of the SBBA, or providing direct support for our work, please contact Dr. Johnette Magner at jmagner@sbba4he.org