

Governor Jindal and Senator Conrad Appel Announce Bill Filed to Merge UNO-SUNO, Improve New Orleans Area Education System

BATON ROUGE – Today, Governor Bobby Jindal joined Senator Conrad Appel (District 9, Metairie) in announcing the filing of SB 183 by Senator Appel, which seeks to address the need for an effective system of public higher education for the New Orleans region.

Governor Jindal said, “This legislation creates a new path forward for improving the higher education system for all students in the Greater New Orleans region. The current system is simply failing our students and the new system proposed in Senator Appel’s bill will provide our students with the opportunity they deserve to gain a great education and a rewarding career, and create a critical collaboration with Delgado to better serve students and prepare them for the careers of the 21st century workforce.”

Senator Appel said, “Our fundamental goal is to create a system of post secondary education that will help New Orleans area citizens provide for their families by giving them an education that allows them to get a great paying job.

“We must be bold. The New Orleans region has a real opportunity to continue its growth forward and compete with the rest of the nation’s cities for jobs and businesses, but that means we must be bold and grab this once in a lifetime chance to plot a new course for the future of our young adults. That’s why we need to act quickly and aggressively in making the changes needed to properly educate—and ultimately graduate—our New Orleans area students.”

Speaker Tucker, who is filing a House version of this bill, said, "I believe the creation of UL New Orleans is the most important event for higher education in the New Orleans region since the original creation of the two schools some 50 years ago. The integration of programs, facilities, faculty and most importantly students, coupled with services provided by Delgado Community College, will propel the combined institutions to a new level of success—one long demanded by our constituents, both black and white, and our community."

Board of Regents Chairman Robert Levy said, "One thing became very clear to the Board of Regents during its study of public higher education in the New Orleans region; the status quo is unacceptable. This legislation substantially follows the recommendation made by Regents in March, and we look forward to working with all parties throughout the Session to produce a final plan for change. Regents firmly believes that increasing opportunities for students in the New Orleans region is an obligation that must be fulfilled. That includes not only providing access to a broad array of high quality public higher education options, but also producing more graduates who have successfully reached their goal of earning a degree."

SB 183 seeks to combine the University of New Orleans, Southern University at New Orleans, and Delgado Community College into one effective structure of regional higher education. This coordination is premised on two equally important educational components: the first for students who can move immediately into a baccalaureate degree program, and the second for students who do not possess the necessary academic foundation but can succeed in a baccalaureate program with some additional academic support. This support, including counseling and developmental course work, will ensure that students move seamlessly and as fast as possible into the degree program that fulfills their life goals.

The new education structure under this bill ensures three main goals:

1. Students are initially placed in the academic environment that is appropriate for their preparation and will ensure their academic success;
2. Students are guided and counseled through their college careers in order to graduate with a meaningful degree in as little time as possible;
3. The New Orleans region has a strong pipeline of graduates prepared to enter the workforce and grow the economy. Every student deserves a high-quality postsecondary experience that provides them with a meaningful and economically valuable credential; and this new structure provides a pathway for *all* students to achieve that goal.

Nearly one quarter of Louisiana citizens reside in the New Orleans region. Yet, the three public postsecondary institutions there today, University of New Orleans, Southern University at New Orleans, and Delgado Community College, belong to different university systems and do not collaborate as well as they should. In particular, there is no coordinated effort or overall strategy on how to address the chronic needs of underprepared students or the proper placement of students based on their academic preparation. The goal of these schools is to provide a strong education to all students in the New Orleans region. Today, this goal is not being met. Currently, UNO graduates only 21 percent of its students in six years, while SUNO graduates eight percent of its students during that time.

The new system of higher education for the region proposed by this legislation will have two parts: a new University of Louisiana at New Orleans (ULNO), within the University of Louisiana System, and a branch campus of Delgado Community Technical College. ULNO will have two colleges. The first will have a selective urban research focus, offering scientific and technical courses of study at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The second will offer a more traditional four-year undergraduate experience for those students who do not meet the admissions criteria of the research college. Students with demonstrated academic success will be able to transfer from one college to the other.

The second component, and perhaps the most important element of the design, is a common admissions gateway that will be unique in the state of Louisiana. Students who apply to ULNO will do so through an admissions and counseling process co-administered by ULNO, and its two colleges, and Delgado Community College. This gateway will

evaluate student preparation, provide academic and career guidance, and assist students with postsecondary financial planning.

Students who are prepared to enter a four-year degree will be guided to the appropriate college within ULNO based on their academic preparation and interests. Students who need additional preparation will be guided into developmental coursework and mentoring in a Delgado program housed on the ULNO campus. All students' academic progress will be monitored, and counseling services will be provided as needed. Students will have the experience of attending a four-year university, while receiving the academic services appropriate for their needs—and the support and preparation to succeed in their selected course of study.

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